

The Report of

# National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission

1994 (2050 VS)

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Academy Building, Kamaladi  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
April 13, 1994 (31 Chaitra, 2050 VS)

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Kathmandu, Nepal

Date: April 13, 1994(31<sup>st</sup> Chaitra 2050VS)

Honorable Minister Mr. Govinda Raj Joshi  
Minister of Education, Culture and Social Welfare  
Keshar Mahal, Kathmandu.

Honorable Minister,

The constitution promulgated after the restoration of democracy in Nepal following the people's revolution 1990 ending the thirty-year autocratic Panchayat regime, accepts that Nepal is a multicultural and multiethnic country and the languages spoken in Nepal are considered the national languages. The constitution also has ascertained the right to operate school up to the primary level in the mother tongues. There is also a constitutional provision that the state while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country shall pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity. For this purpose, His Majesty's Government had constituted a commission entitled National Language Policy Recommendations Committee in order to suggest the recommendations to Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare about the policies and programmes related to language development, and the strategy to be taken while imparting primary education through the mother tongue.

The working area and focus of the commission constituted on May 27, 1993 (14<sup>th</sup> Jestha 2050 VS) was the development of the national languages and education through the mother tongue. This report, which considers the working area as well as some other relevant aspects, has been prepared over the past 11 months, prior to mid-April 1994 (the end of Chaitra 2050VS), on the basis of the work plan prepared by the commission. The commission had collected opinions from seminars, field study, meetings, discussions, interviews and from reference materials. The following conclusion was reached after the discussion and analysis in the regular meetings of the commission.

The report has been divided into four parts. Chapter one includes a brief introduction of the language situation in Nepal whereas chapter two is about the preservation and promotion of national languages. Chapter three discusses the use of national languages for primary level education and chapter four suggests recommendations.

The following are some of the recommendations suggested by the commission:

1. To conduct a linguistic survey to identify the languages spoken in Nepal.
2. To take steps for the preservation of the national languages, for example, selection of the norm, devising of writing system (spelling, script,), development of vocabulary, preparation of dictionaries and grammars, including extending the domains of the language use (in media, administration etc.).
3. To conduct specific programs for the preservation of the endangered languages by identifying them.
4. To constitute National Language Council to serve as an institution to conduct and monitor plans and programs for the study, research and development of national languages.
5. To begin programs to provide education through the mother tongue for children on a priority basis by categorizing the languages into three categories, i.e. languages with literate traditions, languages that are developing literate traditions, and languages with no literate traditions.
6. To provide education through the mother tongue in schools with mother-tongue speaking children, provide bilingual education (in the mother tongue and language of the nation) in the schools with bilingual context and use the language of the nation in the schools with multilingual context.
7. To provide recognition and grants by His Majesty's Government to schools established or to be established with people's participation.
8. To make a provision to study the mother tongue as the subject in all categories of schools, mother tongue school, bilingual and multilingual schools.
9. To make a provision to teach the mother tongue instead of Sanskrit as an alternative subject within the current framework of the lower secondary level curricula.
10. To establish a department of linguistics at the university for the training of manpower related to the teaching of languages and preparation of teaching and learning materials.
11. To establish an autonomous and separate body within Royal Nepal Academy and to make a provision to provide affiliation and financial assistance to them.

12. To establish a separate branch under Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Centre for the development of the teaching materials, and for their implementation and monitoring.
13. To involve the linguists as well as experts for making the linguistic statistics authentic in the national census.

It gives me great pleasure to hand over the suggestions in the form of this report to you on behalf of the National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission after the comprehensive study, discussion and analysis of the suggestions gathered regarding the policies and programs including providing the education through the mother tongue. We wish to thank His Majesty's Government through you for offering us the task of preparing this report responsibly and I am optimistic about the immediate implementation of the recommendations suggested.

Mr. Til Bikram Nembang  
Coordinator  
National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission

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## **National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission**

We acknowledge Mr. Bairagi Kainla and the commission for their permission for translating the report into English. We also acknowledge CBS for its permission in reprinting Yogendra P Yadava's article 'Language' published in *Population Monograph* Vol. 1 (2003). Our thanks are due to South Asia Group for its support in translating and publishing this report.

**Editors**

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- Two: District-wise distribution of national languages
- Three: District-wise distribution of castes and ethnic groups
- Four: Literate tradition of the national languages
- Five: Name of the organizations giving suggestions
- Six: Current curricula and mother tongue

## Addendum:

“Language” *Population Monograph of Nepal Volume I*, CBS and UNFPA, Kathmandu, PP 137-172 (by Prof. Dr. Yogendra P. Yadava)

## **BACKGROUND**

*The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal* promulgated following the people's revolution 1990 has provided definite guidelines towards the preservation and promotion of the languages and culture of several ethnic groups residing in Nepal. The constitutional provision has also created awareness for preservation and promotion of their culture. Taking cognizance of this reality, the first elected government constituted the National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission (1993/2050 VS) to create initiatives for the development of the mother tongues, where several speakers of the languages were interested.

In such context, His Majesty's Government, in accordance with *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990* has constituted a committee to suggest recommendations to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare for implementation as stipulated in the Articles (6.2), 18 (2), and 26 (2), stating that while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country, the State shall pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity by promoting healthy and cordial social relations amongst the various relations, castes, tribes, communities and linguistic groups.

The eleven-member National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission was constituted under the coordination of Mr. Til Bikram Nembang (Bairagi Kainla) on May 27, 1993 (Jestha 14 2050 VS).

### **Terms of reference**

The following terms of reference of the commission were set by His Majesty's Government:

1. To make recommendations about the policy and programs associated with the development of national languages.
2. To suggest working policies for imparting education through the mother tongue at the primary level and to recommend whether the language of the nation would be appropriate to be taught as the subject or used as a medium of instruction.
3. To identify bases of priorities in order to impart primary education through mother tongues.
4. To suggest methods to be used for the effective implementation of the aforementioned recommendations.
5. To make other appropriate suggestions.

### **Meetings and discussion**

The first meeting of the commission was held on June 10, 1993 (28<sup>th</sup> Jestha 2050 VS), on Thursday. Altogether 61 meetings were held in

between June 10, 1993 (28 Jestha 2050VS) to April 12, 1994 (30 Chaitra 2050 VS).

### **Workplan**

The meeting held on June 24, 1993 (10<sup>th</sup> Asar 2050 VS) decided to proceed with the outline of the following work plan:

1. Establishment and management of office
2. Gathering of relevant materials
3. Preparation of working paper and discussion
4. Collection of suggestions and their study
  - (a) Field study and collection of suggestions obtained from talks and seminars.
  - (b) Interview with distinguished experts of the related field and collection of suggestions from national newspapers.
  - (c) Classification/Analysis of the suggestions
  - (d) Seminar at the national level
5. Preparation of report

### **Preparation of working paper and discussion**

Based on the data from various census reports, the papers entitled “An Analysis of Caste and Ethnic Groups”, “An Analysis of Mother tongue wise Population” and “Definition of National languages” were prepared by the following member respectively and presented to the meeting of the commission.

1. Dr. Hemanga Raj Adhikari
2. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yavada
3. Mr. Kasi Nath Tamot

Papers related to “Present Status of the Mother tongue and Situation of Publication” was prepared by the following members including some other persons and presented to the meeting.

1. Mr. Amrit Yonjan Tamang
2. Mr. Kasinath Tamot
3. Mr. Ghanbahadur Lamichhane Gurung
4. Mr. Tejnarayan Panjiyar
5. Mr. Ngawang Bosher Lama
6. Mr. Tilbikram Nemwang
7. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava
8. Dr. Novel Kishor Rai
9. Dr. Harshabahadur Budha Magar
10. Dr. Hemangaraj Adhikari
11. Mr. Umashankar Dwibedi

## 12. Mr. Sitaramsharan Chaudhari

### **Collection of opinions**

#### **Collection of opinions from seminar**

- (a) The two-day seminar on October 15-16, 1993 (29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Ashoj 2050 VS) was concluded at Royal Nepal Academy in accordance with the decision of the meeting held on September 15, 1993 (30<sup>th</sup> Bhadra 2050 VS), which requested that the Nepal Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities host a two-day seminar.
- (b) A seminar about National Languages Policy at Royal Nepal Academy was held on November 6-8, 1993 (21 to 23 Kartik 2050 VS). In the three-day seminar, the working papers were presented by the following and discussions over the papers were held:
  1. Dr. Chuda Mani Bandhu: Language Planning in Nepalese Context
  2. Dr. Madhav Prasad Pokharel: Language Policy and Language Planning to be adapted by Nepal
  3. Dr. Novel Kishor Rai: Primary Education through Mother Tongue
  4. Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava: Language Development in the Context of Nepal

Altogether 69 participants attended the three-day seminar including distinguished scholars, members of parliament, linguists, professors, teachers, social workers, journalists, politicians, litterateur, and member of other organizations.

#### **Seminar and collection of opinions from the field**

In accordance with the meeting held on October 17, 1993 (1<sup>st</sup> Kartik 2050 VS) the members of the commission visited numerous sites to gather opinions.

Pokhara: (Seminar) Mr. Kashinath Tamot, Mr. Ghan Bahadur Lamichhane Gurung

Butwal : (Seminar) Dr. Harshabahadur Budha Magar

Janakpur and Birgunj: (Discussion) Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava, Dr. Hemangaraj Adhikari, Mr. Umashankar Dwiwedi

Dharan and Damak: (Seminar/Discussion) Dr. Novel Kishor Rai

Kavrepalanchowk and Ramechhap: (Seminar/Discussion) Mr. Amrit Yonjan Tamang

#### **Collection of institutional and personal opinions**

Opinions from 44 institutions were obtained.

The commission also received personal suggestions from the people of different areas. The total number of such suggestions amounted to 1570 in number.

### **Interview**

60 distinguished scholars of diverse areas of development of the national languages and scholars working in the areas of language and education were interviewed.

### **Collection of opinions from other reference materials**

Additionally, the relevant information and suggestions were obtained from the following sources:

#### **1. Papers**

Papers related to Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Newari, Thakali, Limbu, Rai, Nepali, Tharu, Awadhi, Himali language (Lama, Sherpa etc.)

#### **2. Articles-notes**

Articles published in newspapers

#### **3. Working papers**

Seminar papers presented at the regional and national seminars.

#### **4. Published works**

Reference materials, articles and notes related to sociolinguistics, language planning, education through the mother tongue, bilingual education and the language of Nepal.

### **Notes**

The draft of the report was prepared by classifying and analyzing the information gathered using various theoretical and practical frameworks. The report was finally prepared after obtaining suggestions for revisions through considerable discussions about the draft with eminent scholars of related areas.

## 1. LANGUAGE SITUATION IN NEPAL

### 1.1 Classification

Nepal is a country of linguistic and cultural diversity. Despite its small size, many languages are spoken in this country. However, there is uncertainty related to the number of languages. The first modern census 2009-11 VS (1952/54) and the next census 2018 VS, mentioned 36 languages in the respective reports. Contrary to this the census, 2028 Census, 2038 Census and 2048 Census have mentioned only 17, 18 and 19 languages in their reports respectively. Based on the information of all the previous censuses in Nepal, the genetic classification of the languages spoken in Nepal in general is as follows:

- (1) Indo-European Family (15 languages)  
Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Awadhi, Urdu, Hindi, Rajbanshi, Bengali, Danuwar, Marwadi (Marwari), Majhi, Darai, Kumal and English
- (2) Tibeto-Burman Family (15 languages)  
Tamang, Newari, Rai, Magar, Limbu, Gurung, Bhote/Sherpa, Chepang, Dhimal, Thami, Thakali, Jirel, Byangshi, Sunuwar, Lapche, Meche, Pahari, Hayu and Raji.
- (3) Austro-Asiatic Family (1 language)  
Satar/Santhali
- (4) Dravidian Family (1 language)  
Jhangar/Dhangar  
(See Appendix: One)

In addition to the census reports, independent studies related to the identification of the number of languages estimate that more than 70 languages are spoken in Nepal. HanBan (1991) and Nishi (1992) among others are worth mentioning which identified 32 Rai languages:

Bahing, Thulung, Khaling, Jerung, Tiling, Dumi, Koyu/Koi, Kulung, Nachhiring, Bangdel, Chakwa, W(estern) Mewahang, E(aster) Mewahang, Chamling, Polmacha, Puma, Sangpang, Bantawa, Dungmali, Waling, Yamphu/Yamphe, N(orth) Lohorung, Yakkha, Lumba-Yakkha, Chintang, Lambichhong, Mugali, Belhare, Athpare, Phangduwali and Chulung.



In addition to the 19 Tibeto-languages included in the census reports, the following languages are also incorporated in the studies by Nishi:

Raute, Kham, Kaike, Chhantel, Marpha, Syang, Mananag, Nar, Ghale, Umbule, Chourase, Chhathare Limbu, Sam, Lingkhim, Toto and Bhramu.

In the similar way, Bote and Churaoti languages have been added in the Indo-European language family by Malla (1889). Some linguists have considered Yholmo as an independent language. In the similar vein, Bhote (Lama) is also considered a distinct language.

Among these languages, the identification of some languages is not without controversies. For example, it is not completely clear, whether Ghale and Manange are two independent languages or two different dialects of the Gurung language. One has to rely on some preliminary studies and the census reports, which, for several reasons, are not considered reliable (authentic). Therefore, there is an acute need for an authentic linguistic survey in order to determine the number of languages.

## **1.2 Geographical distribution**

The identification of the languages spoken in Nepal is briefly reviewed earlier, but the identification of the languages is not adequate in order to make policies and implement programs related to the development and preservation of the languages, including the language use in education, media and so on. In addition to this, it is equally important to obtain information related to the languages and the areas they are spoken in. In order to achieve this objective, an effort is made to present the distribution of the languages in the three different geographical regions (mountains, hills and terai). The distribution of languages discussed is based on the 2048 VS Census.

### **1.2.1 Mountainous region**

Nepali is the primary language in 9 out of 12 districts in the mountainous region (Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha, Solukhumbu, Dolakha, Sindhupalchowk, Dolpa, Mugu, Humla, and Darchula) on the basis of the languages and their distribution. In this region, Tamang occupies the primary language in Rasuwa but it has second position in Dolakha and Sindhupalchowk. Rai languages occupy the second position in Sankhuwasabha and Solukhumbu. The Gurung language is in the primary position in Mustang and Manang and in the third position in Humla. Newari occupies the third position in Sindhupalchowk and Thakali occupies the third position in Mustang. Moreover, a considerable number

of Sherpa speakers reside in Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha, Solukhumbu and Dolakha. Byangshi is spoken in Darchula.

### **1.2.2 Hilly region**

Nepali occupies the primary position in 39 districts out of 43 districts in this region ranging from Panchthar in the east to Baitadi in the west and it occupies the second position in the remaining 4 districts. In terms of the number of speakers, Tamang is the second major language in the hilly region. This language occupies the primary position in Makwanpur and second position in 5 districts (Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Kavre, Nuwakot and Dhading the third position in 7 districts (Terathum, Bhojpur, Okhaldhunga, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lamjung).

Newari is another major language of the hilly region. In the Kathmandu valley, the language occupies the primary position in Lalitpur and Bhaktapur and third position in the Kathmandu district. This language is in the third position in 7 other districts (Kavre, Ramechhap, Nuwakot, Makwanpur, Kaski, Baglung and Palpa) in addition to the speakers spreading sporadically in other districts.

Magar, another important language of the hilly region, occupies second position in 12 districts (Tanahu, Syangja, Parbat, Pyuthan, Arghakhanchi, Myagdi, Rolpa, Salyan, Baglung, Rukum, Surkhet and Gulmi) whereas it occupies third position in 3 districts (Khotang, Udayapur and Sindhuli).

The Rai languages in the eastern hilly districts occupy the second position in the 6 districts (Bhojpur, Dhankuta, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Udayaur and Ilam) and the third position in Panchthar. The Limbu language occupies the second position in 3 districts (Panchthar, Taplejung and Tehrathum) and third position in other 2 districts (Illam and Dhankuta). Sizable settlements of Limbu speakers are found in Solukhumbu. Aside from these, Gurung occupies the second position in 3 districts (Lamjung, Kaski and Gorakha) and the third position in 2 districts ((Tanahun and Syangja). The Tharu language in Surkhet and Chepang in Dhading occupy the third position.

The hilly region is also the most densely populated region in Nepal. In addition to the languages mentioned earlier, some other languages are also spoken in the hilly region including: Sunuwar in Ramechhap, Okhaldhunga and Sindhuli, Kumal in Arghakhanchi and Gulmi, Majhi and Danuwar in the east south region of Kathmadnu and Sindhupachowk, Thami in Ramechhap, Dolakha and Sindhuli.

### **1.2.3 Terai region**

Nepali is the primary language in 6 districts in the terai region (Jhapa, Morang, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Dang and Kanchanpur), occupies the second position in 11 districts (Sunsari, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Bara, Parsa, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Banke, Bardiya and Kailali) and the third position in 3 districts (Saptari, Siraha, and Rautahat).

Maithili has the second position in Nepal on the basis of the number of speakers. This is the primary language in 6 districts (Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, and Sarlahi) and it occupies the second position in Morang and Nawalparasi. Maithili is also spoken considerably in Rautahat, Bara, Parsa and Rupandehi). Tharu, which is spreading from Jhapa to Kanchanpur, occupies the primary position in 2 districts (Bardiya and Kailali) and the third position in 6 districts (Morang, Sunsari, Bara, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu and Banke).

Awadhi is the primary language in two districts of the western Terai, (Kapilvastu and Banke), and the third position in 2 districts (Dang and Bardiya). Urdu occupies the second position in Rautahat whereas it is in the third position in 2 districts (Dhanusha and Mahottari). Rajbanshi occupies the second position in Jhapa. Rajbanshi speakers also reside in Morang.

Tamang is in the third position in 3 districts (Sarlahi, Chitwan and Parsa), as is Limbu in Jhapa and Magar in Nawalparasi. Sizable Limbu speakers also settle in Sunsari and Morang. Aside from these, Dhimal speakers are found in Jhapa and Morang, Sattar/Santal in Jhapa, Jhanghar in Morang, Darai in Chitwan and Nawalparasi, Danuwar in Dhanusha and Sarlahi and Bengali in Jhapa and Morang, Raji in Kailali and Kanchanpur, Meche in Jhapa and Kumal in Nawalparasi and Majhi in Rautahat and Sarlahi. A small number of Marwari speakers are found in the urban areas of the Terai.

The linguistic diversity found at national and regional level parallels at the district level. The situation is very acute in the urban areas and in the northern belt of the Terai. The main reasons for this are the migration, opportunity of employment, access to transportation, settlement of the multilingual communities in Nepal etc.

Because several minority languages are spoken in these districts along with the predominant languages as stated earlier, they are obliged to focus on the minority benefits. Aside from these areas of linguistic diversity, there are several areas where only one or two languages are in use in the hilly regions.

### 1.3 Multilingualism

The existing linguistic diversity in the Nepalese communities could be seen as jeopardizing communication between different speech communities. The real language situation in Nepal is different, however. Although it is difficult to say exactly regarding to this matter because of the lack of reliable studies, two kinds of tendencies may be suggested.

Firstly, the languages spoken in the plains, Mechi (in the east) and Mahakali (in the west), are continuously related from the perspective of intelligibility. It is difficult to demarcate where one language ends and another begins. Owing to this, the people living in the two immediate vicinities can understand the language of other speech communities. Although it is the case in the immediate vicinities, intelligibility between these languages gets reduced with increases in distance. As a result, the residents living at the extremes of the two languages cannot communicate. In such a situation educated native speakers of the Terai languages use Hindi as *lingua franca* for intercommunity communication. This is also true with Tharu spoken in the Terai and in the inner Terai region.

A similar interrelationship is found among the language and dialects of Nepali spoken in the hills and mountains from the perspective of communication. In the hills and mountains, however, the communication among divergent languages is not possible among the speakers of different Tibeto-Burman languages, which diverge greatly in vocabulary and grammar. In such a situation, they are often found to use Nepali as their link language.

Multilingualism has thus become a reality in Nepalese society. Nepali is learnt as a second language by the other speech communities for diverse purposes (to use in education, study, administration, etc). Multilingualism is a necessity for day-to-day communication in several regions in the kingdom of Nepal.

### 1.4 Consequences of multilingualism

Numerous influences on the language (or languages) of Nepal are found as a result of this multilingual situation. Language convergence is one such influence, found in several languages. In the case of language convergence, linguistic features tend to converge from one language to another. As a result, a single language under the influences from other languages differs greatly. That is why the Gurung language (Manangwa) differs from Gurung spoken in Kaski and Lamjung. In a similar way, Nepali spoken in the Terai differs in vocabulary and structure from the standard Nepali spoken in the hills.

Another vital consequence of multilingualism observed in Nepal is language loss. It has been found that the speakers of minority languages gradually tend towards adopting Nepali eventually losing their own mother tongues. The speakers of minority languages who have settlements in the hills and migrated to the hills and mountains with a predominance of Nepali speakers have adopted Nepali. For example, as reported in Nishi (1992), 10 Rai languages have already died and another 12 Rai languages are on the verge of extinction. The Kusunda language is nearly threatened to extinction. There are several other languages nearing extinction. The Dura language is a case in point. It is necessary to conduct thorough studies before the languages are extinct in order to document and preserve their identity.

## **1.5 Castes-ethnic groups composition and language**

### **1.5.1. Classification of castes-ethnic groups**

People belonging to different ethnic groups/castes live in Nepal. They are distributed in the mountains, hills, inner Terai and Terai. They are classified as either Himali, Pahari, or Madhesi, named after the place they are from. The 1991 census report provided clear data on the caste and ethnic groups. This CBS listed 60 distinct castes/ethnic groups living in the mountains, hills, inner Terai and Terai.

Sherpa, Thakali, Bhote and Byangshi are known as the ethnic groups (castes) belonging to the mountains. Magar, Tamang, Rai, Gurung, Limbu, Sunuwar, Chepang, Thami, Thakali, Jirel, Lapche (Lepcha) belong to the ethnic groups (castes) of the hills. The other ethnic groups (castes) of this region are Chhetri, Brahmin, Kami, Darai, Sarki, Sanyasi, Badi, Churete and Gaine. Newar is known as the Pahari caste and ethnic group.

The ethnic groups/castes living in the inner Terai are Kumal, Majhi, Danuwar, Darai, Bote, Raute, and Raji. Although the major settlements of these people are in the inner Terai, they are found in the hills and Terai as well because of their migration tendencies and other reasons.

There are 22 ethnic groups known by their caste association in the Terai: Yadav, Teli, Chamar, Baniya, Dusadh, Mallah, Kanu, Dhobi, Dhanuk, Khatwe, Kayastha, Kumhar, Rajput, Haluwai, Marwari, Rajbhat, Kushwaha, Brahmin (Terai), Sudi, Kalwar, Kurmi, Musahar, Kewat. In addition, there are 7 groups known by their respective ethnic groups: Tharu, Rajbanshi, Satar, Gangai (Ganesh), Jhanghar, Dhimal and Meche. Musalban and Sikh (ethnic groups named after the religion they follow), and Bengali, (named after the place they belong to) also have settlements in the Terai.

Among these ethnic groups/castes, settlements of some of the castes have spread from east to west in a wide region whereas the settlements of some other castes have remained within a district or a specific region. Compared to the population categorized as ethnic groups, the caste groups have spread in several districts or regions. For example, Brahmin, Chhetri, Damai, Thakuri, Sanyasi etc in the hills and Yadav, Teli, Chamar, Kushwaha etc in the Terai.

The 1991 census failed to provide information related to the castes/ethnic groups, Pahari, Hayu, Dura, Bhujel, Gharti, Kusunda in the hills and Badhai, Lohar, Koiri in the Terai.

### **1.5.2 Castes-ethnic groups and mother tongue**

Nepal is a country of diverse castes and ethnic groups. The linguistic diversity coupled with the diversity of the castes is a characteristic feature of the nation. Taking into consideration the relationship between the castes/ethnic groups and the languages they speak, the following five major situations may be suggested:

#### **(a) One caste and one language**

It is sometimes the case that a caste will have its own distinct language. For example, Magar, Tharu, Tamang, Gurung, Limbu, Sherpa, Rajbanshi, Sunuwar, Kumal, Majhi, Danuwar, Chepang, Thami, Thakali, Bhote, Dhimal, Darai, Lapche (Lepcha), Byangshi, Raute, Raji etc. have their own mother tongues. Thus there is a one to one correspondence between an ethnic group/caste and its language. Therefore, when there is this relationship between a caste and its language, the language is referred to as an *ethnic language*.

#### **(b) One caste and several languages**

It is more common for a caste that is known by one name to speak several languages. For example Rai-Kiranti speak Bantawa, Chamling and Thulung etc. Although these are considered distinct languages of different castes/ethnic groups, there are certain traditions by which Rai communities are recognized from other communities. In such contexts, Rai may be regarded as a caste and the languages they speak as distinct languages.

#### **(c) Several castes and one language**

Although Newar community consists of several castes, they speak a single distinct language. Therefore, Newars belonging to different castes are affiliated to a single language.

**(d) One caste-ethnic group and several languages**

The people of the same caste/ethnic group tend to adopt the language of the region when they move to different linguistic situations. The terai dwellers are not found using the languages of their castes or ethnicity. The several castes in the terai (i.e. Yadav, Teli, Kurmi, Kushwaha, Chamar etc) speak Maithili in Maithili speaking area, Bhojpuri and Awadhi in their respective areas. In this way, the identification of the language in terms of ethnicity is not common in the terai.

**(e) Several castes-ethnic groups and one language**

Nepali is a language of several castes (Chhetri, Brahmin, Kami, Damai, Thakuri, Sarki, Sanyasi etc.). Nepali may be regarded as a language of several caste/ethnic groups because Magars, Gurungs, Rais, Limbus, and Newars (and some other castes also) adapt Nepali as their mother tongues. This language may also be regarded as “inter-caste language” because this language is used as a link language among several castes/ethnic groups.

**1.6 Literate tradition, literature and literacy**

Majority of languages in Nepal are so far confined in the oral tradition. Nepali, Newari, Maithili, Limbu, Bhojpuri and Awadhi may be regarded as the languages with literate traditions. Some of the languages which have recently taken to writing are Tharu, Tamang, Magar, Gurung and the languages of Rai groups like Thulung, Bantawa, Chamling, Khaling, Kulung.

Nepali is regarded as a developed and rich language among the languages that have a tradition literature. Since this language has already fulfilled some prerequisites for educational use, a separate initiation towards it may not be required for the same purpose. Since Nepali is the language of the nation and the official language, it is necessary to continue to develop it to fulfill that role. Newari and Maithili are considered developed languages in terms of established literate tradition and literature. Since they are subjects of study from secondary to the Master’s degree as optional subjects, these languages may be considered developed languages suitable for educational use.

The Limbu language has been taught up to the higher secondary level in Sikkim. Because of this, and because of the literary and linguistic activities in the Limbu speaking area, it is possible to use Limbu in education. Owing to the availability of the literary texts, Bhojpuri and Awadhi can also be used in education.

There has been considerable increase in the awareness and interest of Tharu, Tamang, Magar and Gurung in recent years despite their very brief written tradition. The use of these languages in education has viability because they are beginning to be used for writing literature, and publication. Similarly, there has been an increase in the linguistic and literary activities in the languages of the Rai group, which includes Bantawa, Thulung, Chamling, Khaling, Kulung etc. Additionally, such activities are increasing in Sherpa and Thakali.

The 1991 census has also included Hindi, Urdu, Bhote (Lama/Tibetan), English etc. in the census report. They are regarded as rich in written literatures.

In addition to the aforementioned languages, the awareness of the respective communities towards their languages tends to increase gradually. Taking this fact into consideration, primary education should be imparted in the mother tongues based on the wishes of the respective communities.

However, the pace and degree of language development is not equal in all languages. The pace of language development is greatly affected by language attitudes and the level of education in the language communities. The greater the number of literates and educated speakers, the greater the contribution towards the progress and prosperity of the language. If the number of educated speakers of a language are increased, they help in the betterment of the language by participating in literary activities. If the number of literate people is increased, the readers for the published materials in the respective languages will increase. If the number of literate people is increased in a particular language, its readers will obviously increase. But some people of speech communities are leading the lives of extreme illiteracy and poverty. Unless their living status can be improved from low standards, their awareness and ability to preserve their language and culture is unlikely to flourish. That is why economic factors are also a determinant factor in the development of the language. This statement is justified because there is a considerable increase in awareness towards preservation of their language and culture within the speech communities in which the percentage of the literacy is fairly high and vice versa.



## 2. DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES

### 2.1 Background

Languages are a component of social heritages. With effective utilization of resources there can be an increase in the preservation and promotion of the national culture, including an increase in the popularity of, and access to education. In addition, the increased contact among diverse linguistic groups will encourage national integration and good will. The nation must plan for the development of languages in order to sustain the use of the entire linguistic heritage and resources, in the same way other national resources are developed.

Following the restoration of democracy, the nation intended to adopt an orientation to language development reflected above. This is clear from the following statement in *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990)*.

The state shall, while maintaining the cultural diversity of the country, pursue a policy of strengthening the national unity by promoting healthy and cordial social relations amongst the various religions, castes, tribes, communities and linguistic groups, and by helping in the promotion of their languages, literatures, scripts, arts and cultures.

Under this constitutional provision it is obvious that the development of Nepalese languages is considered an aspect of language policy.

The process of formulating policies regarding language development in any linguistic community is an elaborate and multidimensional process. That is why it is important to focus on several aspects in this process. First and foremost, the established sociolinguistic theories (Haugen 1966; Ferguson 1968; Neutuspny 1970; Fishman 1974) have been taken as theoretical conceptions for language development. In addition, despite the uncertainty persisting about language related statistics, these statistics have been employed because there are no other alternative sources. Since language development includes not only language process but also social and psychological processes, attention has also been directed to the linguistic attitudes of different linguistic communities.

## **2.2 Processes**

For the development of national languages, it is necessary to take up the following five phases:

1. To identify the national languages.
2. To formulate corpus planning for the identified languages.
3. To formulate status planning for the identified languages.
4. To make programs for preserving the endangered languages.
5. To implement, monitor and evaluate the formulated plans.

### **2.2.1 Identification of national languages**

There is a constitutional provision to develop all national languages as mentioned earlier. However, it is first necessary to identify the national languages (mother tongues) before beginning development processes. For this purpose, until and unless an authentic linguistic survey is carried out, one has to rely on the census reports of Central Bureau of Statistics with some revisions. The genetic classification of the languages spoken in Nepal is included in part (1.1) based on these reports (1952-4 to 1991).

### **2.2.2 Corpus planning of national languages**

#### **(a) Selecting the norm**

Each language has variations because of geographic and social factors. It is usually necessary to choose a single dialect as a norm to use for language development. A comparative study of existing dialects is also necessary before selection of the norm. The choice becomes painless if the variations among the dialects are marginal. In such a context, it may be good to choose a variety which is used by educated speakers (with a literate tradition if possible) thereby simplifying development because the dialect is rich in vocabulary and more regular in grammar. It is usually necessary to choose a central dialect if the language has several dialects.

#### **(b) Writing system**

##### **(i) Script**

Several national languages of Nepal use Devanagari script for writing. Nepali written in Devanagari script is the official language. Maithili has its own traditional script, viz. Mithilaakshar or Tirhuta. However, because of the influence of Hindi and ease of printing, it has now been replaced by Devanagari script. Though quite a few ancient texts in the Newari language are found in Bhujimol and Ranjana scripts, most of them are written in the existing Newari script. Contemporary Newari speakers, have, however, adopted Devanagari script as its writing system.

Bhojpuri has also replaced Kaithi (similar to Mithilaakshar ) , its traditional script, by Devanagari. Limbu, however, is written in Kiraanti (Sirijangaa) script, and Lapche in Ring (Lapche) script. Tamang Sherpa and other similar languages use Laamaa (Tibetan) script especially in their religious and cultural texts. Recently the Magar language has adopted Akhkha as its own script and this choice has been popular. To sum up, most of the languages spoken in Nepal betray a common tendency to use Devanagari script in their writing. Awadhi and Tharu have also adopted Devanagari script. There have been attempts to write the languages of Rai groups including Rajbanshi, Danuwar, Chepang, Darai, Majhi, Kumal. Looking into this diverse condition of scripts of the languages spoken in Nepal, the following advantages may be achieved if uniformity in script is maintained:

1. Learning a second language in addition to one's mother tongue for intralanguage communication and contact has been a day to day necessity for people living in a multilingual country like Nepal. In such a context, if the uniformity in script is maintained, it will be more convenient to learn a second language because one does not have to become familiar with a new script first.
2. The constitution assures that each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children (Article 18.2). Owing to the fact that one has also to learn the second language in addition to one's mother tongue, it is obvious that it will be convenient to achieve education if the mother tongues and the national language have a similar script in the context of transitional bilingual education.

Although Devanagari script seems convenient for practical and linguistic reasons, it is relevant to consider the social and psychological attitudes of respective speech communities because its implementation will be difficult if the script is adopted without their consent. The following thoughts are relevant regarding the selection of the script:

1. To adopt Devanagari script for all languages of Nepal for maintaining consistency in language learning.
2. To adopt Devanagari script for all languages of Nepal but to preserve the conventional script of any language as a cultural heritage.
3. To adopt an indigenous script with some modification to make it more suitable.

## **(ii) Alphabets**

There is a need of some modifications of alphabets based in Devanagari script as it will bring simplification for writing and pedagogical purpose. The alphabets are primarily based on the phonology of Sanskrit language which does not have one to one correlation with sound system observed in Nepalese languages, and thus can not fully represent phonological system of the languages of Nepal. It is therefore appropriate to modify the orthographic system according to the sound system of Nepalese languages. It is necessary to adopt two kinds of processes:

- (1) To use the letters which represent the sounds of a language.
- (2) To add new letters or appropriate diacritics to represent sounds when there is a lack of such letters or diacritics.

The attempt at reducing the differences between the phonemes and graphemes will not only help in mother tongue education but also in the teaching of the second language. It is necessary to study the sound system of national languages and to make the aforementioned improvements. While following these processes, it is obvious that despite great consistency in the alphabets of the languages, some differences will remain owing to phonemic differences.

## **(iii) Spelling**

The phoneticization might naturally bring about a change in the form of spelling. It is possible that changes would bring about a one to one relation in phonemes and graphemes. Inconsistency in spelling is a hindrance to standardization. It is necessary to reduce the gap between the spoken and written form, thus developing a more consistent spelling system. Teachers of the respective languages, people involved in teaching and printing including journalists should have a leading role in this development because they will be most affected by the improvement of the spelling.

## **(c) Vocabulary**

Generally each language has adequate vocabulary to communicate the beliefs and concepts that must be communicated. Thus, while attempting to express new beliefs and concepts, there is a change in the meanings of some words and some new words are developed. With changes in the functional domains of languages, there is a need for planned development of vocabulary since the natural development of vocabulary will not be adequate.

Since there are constitutional provisions of right to operate schools in the mother tongue up to the primary level in each community residing within the kingdom there is a real need of formulating the planned development for the dimension of the vocabulary of national languages. However, attention should also be directed to the linguistic forms and social needs, including linguistic attitudes toward the national languages, in their planning and implementation. Vocabulary development in some nations has proved to be a complete fiasco because of the impracticality of their development plans. In this context, the following theories related to vocabulary development propounded by a UNESCO report (1953) are useful as guidelines:

- (a) Begin by making a study of the vocabulary already in use.
- (b) Avoid coining new words where native words are already in general use, or where there are words which could easily be stretched to include the new concept without confusion.
- (c) Before adding a word to the vocabulary, be sure that it is really needed either at once or in the relatively near future.
- (d) Where a whole set of terms applying to a given field of science has to be adopted, try to maintain general consistency among them.
- (e) Make necessary adaptations to the phonemic structure and the grammar of the language.
- (f) Once the new terms have been chosen, try them out on a number of people to see how readily they take to them.

Compilation of dictionary is of great importance in order to enhance uniformity and stability in the improved scripts, phonemic inventory, spelling, pronunciation including vocabulary and its use. On the one hand it is necessary to adopt new dictionary compilation processes and on the other hand there is a need for the revision of dictionaries already compiled in Nepali, Newari, Maitili, Limbu etc. based on these principles. It is also necessary to focus on the compilation of bilingual and multilingual dictionaries in addition to monolingual dictionaries in order to help the people of diverse speech communities to learn other languages.

#### **(d) Grammar**

The variations in a majority of national languages can be attributed to the lack of their written form. Lack of a standard grammar is another reason for this. Although Nepali has been established as the official language, medium of education, and as a lingua franca, and even though it has a rich written literature, there is not a high degree of consistency in its written form. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the irregularities in

linguistic structures, regularize them, and prepare a standard grammar in the respective languages. Nepali language is also learnt by mother tongue speakers of other languages as a second language or as a foreign language.

First and foremost, in the process of writing a grammar of the national languages, it is appropriate to prepare basic pedagogical grammars for teaching purposes. Since the tradition of writing grammars has already been established in Nepali, Maithili, Newari, Bhojpuri, Limbu etc, it is obligatory to prepare reference grammars along with the pedagogical grammars. This process should gradually be applied to other languages as well. While preparing the grammars of any languages, it is necessary to analyze the grammars in the framework of modern linguistic theories using written literature, incorporating data from several dialects and also using data from oral use of the language.

### **2.2.3 Status planning of national languages**

#### **Background**

*The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990)*, article 6(1) assures that the Nepali language in the Devanagari script is regarded as the language of the nation. Nepali is the language recognized as the national language in the previous constitution (2015 VS and 2018 VS) including other legal provisions.

The position that Nepali has gained is justifiable because Nepali is the mother tongue of a greater number of the population, lingua franca of the majority of the population, and it has a rich literate tradition. Aside from this, the other mother tongue speakers are also using Nepali as their second language. It is quite normal that Nepali has gained its position of the official language.

However, the domains of use of Nepali were not confined to official uses, but rather it is used in every domain. Consequently, aside from an official language, Nepali was exclusively used in education, media and employment and this trend seems to continue to the present.

It was argued that the national integrity will be strengthened by means of this kind of language policy. Contrary to this, it is a fact that Nepal is not a monolingual country, but a country of linguistic diversity. In such a context, it is not justifiable to assign a single language to fulfill communicative needs.

If a priority is given to a single language in a multilingual country like Nepal, the use of the remaining languages will shrink because their domains of use are reduced. There are several similar examples in other countries. Because of this, and several other reasons, the constitution promulgated after the restoration of democracy has accepted that all the

languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal (6.2). Although this constitutional provision has recognized Nepali as the only official language, all other languages including Nepali have also been recognized as national languages. The constitution has thus expressed the intention of establishing equality among the linguistic groups and languages. Consonant with this spirit, the constitution has offered opportunities to preserve and promote the languages, scripts and cultures in Article (18.1) of the constitution.

These constitutional provisions have realized the linguistic diversity in Nepal. Until and unless these languages are used in various domains of life, the use of linguistic diversity, including the preservation and promotion of several languages, cannot be realized. This will encourage the respective language communities to maintain their mother tongues by their widespread use.

### **Terms of reference**

It is necessary to identify the use of national languages. *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990* has made a provision that each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to the community's children. The use of the mother tongue in primary education including other levels is discussed in detail in section 3. The following may be other domains of language use aside from education.

#### **(a) Media**

The following three are the medium of media in Nepal.

- i. Audio medium
- ii. Reading medium
- iii. Audio-visual medium

Language has a key role in all these medium because language is mainly used for communication.

#### **(i) Audio Medium**

Radio is the most accessible and available among the medium of media in the context of Nepal because it is the least expensive and it is available in every part of the country. In addition, the illiterate also understand the news and other program by means of this medium.

In the context of the constitutional provision which has assured the right to information to every citizen, two kinds of improvements of the programs of Radio Nepal are needed for more effective and beneficial use of radio broadcasts:

1. Since Nepali is the official language, medium of instruction and also serves as *lingua franca*, it is necessary to simplify the oral use of Nepali in order to make it intelligible to a larger audience.
2. The use of national languages should be gradually increased to broadcast the events associated with public, cultural and local importance through news and other programs. The news may be broadcast in some national languages similar to Maithili, Newari and Hindi. The use of national languages may be gradually expanded by bringing the central and regional broadcasting channels into operation.
3. Special programs may be broadcast through radio and television for the preservation of the underdeveloped languages.

## **(ii) Reading Medium**

1. Government notices, gazettes, and other publications, meant for the public, should be translated into national languages as required by the terms of their use.
2. Newspapers should be published in the national languages on behalf of the government because these activities will develop and promote not only these languages but also the culture associated with them.
3. It is necessary that publications that include literary and other activities should be encouraged in the national languages. Such efforts will help in creating understanding and coordination among speech communities.
4. Since children will be affected if the mother tongues are adopted as the medium of instruction at the primary level, special attention should be paid towards the development of children's reading materials in national languages.

## **(iii) Audio-visual medium**

Television is the audio-visual medium of media. It is necessary to extend its area by telecasting the news and programs in the national languages.

It is necessary to see the linguistic efficiency and their forms in use in context while using any national language in media.

## **(a) Writing/Study**

It is necessary to better focus activities like literature writing, cultural and linguistic study/research, collection of folk literature and translation.



In order to encourage these activities, initiatives should be taken by the government and non-government sectors. Publication facilities, fellowships, and prizes may be the forms of such encouragements. Resources may be mobilized by organizations, native and foreign, to study linguistic and folk tradition.

#### **(b) Languages of official use**

It may be appropriate to use more than one official languages in order to interact the people of diverse speech communities similar to multilingual countries like India, Singapore, and Switzerland. It may be appropriate to take into consideration the efficiency of the other national languages, speakers' attitudes, and above all, the national betterment when making decisions about continuing the use of Nepali as an official language.

#### **(c) Religious-cultural program**

There is a need to establish a tradition to use local languages in local religious and cultural programs

### **2.2.4 Preservation and revitalization of endangered languages**

There must be a commitment from speech communities to continue the use of every language. However, when a language reaches the verge of extinction because of the lack of use, there is a gradual loss of commitment. In this context, it is indispensable to find out which languages are seriously endangered and to study them for the preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity. Additionally, it is necessary to commence revitalization processes for such languages.

### **2.2.5 Implementation and evaluation**

There is a need for a mechanism of implementation and evaluation in order to achieve goals related to language development, including language policies and other goals. There must be an autonomous National Language Council to implement plans in order to achieve a specific goal. A brief discussion is presented in section (b) of the Council of National Languages in order to implement programs related to the national language policies.

### **3. USE OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION**

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal mentions that all the languages spoken as mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal (Article 6.2). In article (18.2) the constitution assures that each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children as one of the fundamental rights. In consonance with that, respective materials related to educational purposes are mentioned herein.

#### **3.1 Mother tongue: as a medium of primary education**

According to the UNESCO report associated with mother tongue education (1953) the mother tongue is the natural means of self-expression of the experiences and thoughts learnt in childhood. There is ideological and emotional closeness of the child to it because it is the language learnt while playing in his childhood. Each person can express his view of the world himself, and his family through the mother tongue. This is also called the first language because this is the language a child learns first. In some contexts, this is also called the mother tongue even if he learns it later if it is the medium of easy expression of his thoughts and communication. Since the language is learnt along with the maturity of the child, its importance lies in the cultural surroundings. It is therefore natural that the mother tongue is easy and accessible for a child because this is the medium in which a child thinks, understands and expresses his desires and needs.

##### **3.1.1 Rationale**

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of community to which he belongs. Educationally he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium (UNESCO 1953:11).

It is easy to be literate in the mother tongue. The books written in the mother tongue are familiar and accessible for a child in terms of the socio-cultural surroundings. He pines for knowledge after he is literate. If his mother tongue is not adequate to quench the thirst of his knowledge, he tends to adopt the nearest clustered languages or any other means. First of all, a child should become literate in order to acquire education. It is

necessary to encourage the education through the mother tongue to boost up literacy. It is remarkable that the campaign of *Education For All*, started off by the World Conference of Thailand in 1990, has put an immense emphasis on it.

Only 65 percent of the children of school age attend school. There is a comprehensive expansion and improvement in the present context of His Majesty's goal of educating all the children of this age group by 2000. It would be easy to achieve the goal of educating children through their mother tongue while working towards the goal of making education accessible to all children.

The children enrolled at primary level tend to drop from the schools. In some cases, the students leave the school and enroll again. For these students it would take nine to twelve years to complete the primary education (National Education Commission 2049 VS). This is an indication of a great educational loss. The majority of the school dropouts are found in grade (1-2). This indicates that they find school life to be unfamiliar. One of the reasons given for this is the difference in the language they use at home and school. It would therefore be appropriate to educate the children through their mother tongue in order to make the break between home and school as small as possible.

On the whole, the following might be expected if education is imparted through the mother tongue:

1. To make the student familiar with his own home, family, and his environment,
2. To enable one to know and fully understand his social and cultural environment,
3. To arouse interest in his own language, literature and culture,
4. To provide education in appropriate, familiar, and easily accessible manner.
5. To make education accessible, interesting and attractive for children,
6. To help children increase their inborn emotional and creative abilities.
7. To make the break between home and school as small as possible.

### **3.1.2 Some major issues**

Psychological aspect has been mainly focused while discussing the importance of mother tongue education. However, the geographical-social milieu, economic, and political contexts are also present while working out the educational policy for a nation. An educational policy will be

formulated taking cognizance of several social and linguistic communities and their interrelationships including unity among diversity.

The purpose of education is to nurture the maximum inherent potentialities of the children. So it is not deemed logical to confine this within any level (primary, secondary etc). Education leads a person to knowledge and efficiency which are advantageous for his entire life. One should be able to keep such unrestricted potentialities open from the primary level of the children. Despite the importance of mother tongues at the primary level of education, the full benefit of education cannot be realized if education only incorporates the mother tongue. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to limit primary education to one language realizing the linguistic diversity and milieu of our nation.

The size of a specific language community within a community or area is also an important factor for mother tongue education. Generally, if a language community comprises ten percent of a population the question of mother tongue education must be considered (Fasold 1992:293). In Nepal, the number of such languages amounts to only five even we take language communities amounting to only five percent of the total population. 50 percent of the total population speaks a single language and about 81 percent is accounted for by these five languages. The priority of a country like Nepal is likely to be directed to major areas of basic needs. Some of the languages do not have a literate tradition. In these cases a great effort needs to be applied to their linguistic studies, developing writing system, teaching and learning materials including administration in teaching-learning etc. The materials should not only be adequate to impart primary education to children in their language but should also provide supplementary and complementary materials so they can expand their knowledge by using them. But in several languages in Nepal, it is difficult to translate this into reality. If the language has a literate tradition and a body of its own literature that is attractive to its speakers and there is active participation of the respective communities in the language matters, there is a possibility that the domains of language use will be expanded.

### **3.1.3 Requirements of selecting mother tongue as a medium**

Before selecting mother tongues for instruction at the primary level, it is important to notice what sorts of infrastructure have been developed in the language or not, and what further requirements need to be developed and how this can be resolved. Some of the requirements for imparting primary education will be discussed in this section.

### **(a) Developing writing system and its use**

It is necessary to note whether a language has devised a writing system or not before planning for education in the mother tongue. If the language does not have a written tradition, efforts should be made to create a writing system. First of all, there should be a proper study of the sounds and grammar system. This is followed by choosing a script and devising a practical writing system. While devising a writing system, it is easy for mother tongue speakers to learn the language and to expand their knowledge and experience if the writing system resembles the writing systems of neighboring (clustered) languages which they need in their daily lives in immediate future. After devising the writing system, it is important to prepare written materials and use them.

Although devising a writing system is not important in the language in which the writing system has already been devised and which has a written tradition, it might be necessary to improve the writing system and spelling in order to maintain consistency in writing system. There are a few languages in Nepal that have a developed writing system. It is therefore necessary to work immediately for the development of writing systems in several other languages.

### **(b) Preparation of teaching materials**

The preparation of textbooks is easier in languages with literate traditions than in other languages. One of the varieties of the language has already been established as a standard dialect in such languages. Consequently, one can proceed in accordance with the same trend. Although there may be diverse spoken forms, the written form has gained its social status. On the other hand, languages with an emerging written tradition may face hindrances owing to variations in local use. In such contexts, it is necessary to design curriculum and prepare textbooks by generalizing them or by selecting a language variety. It is also necessary to gain consent of the educated speakers of the speech community.

### **(c) Student number**

It is important to note the number of students required to impart primary education through the mother tongue. While managing the teaching, each education institution determines the quota and decides the subjects to teach through the mother tongue on the basis of its physical facilities and human resources. It is also relevant to determine how many students are required in order to use their language as a medium of instruction in an existing school, or how many are required to start a new mother tongue school, or just offer the mother tongue as a subject. A large amount has to be

invested when a new school is established and a new teacher has to be recruited when a new subject is introduced. So, it is important to determine the maximum or the minimum number of students required for different options.

#### **(d) Population and population density of speech communities**

Population size and density of speech communities is another factor in determining how to impart education through the mother tongue. The greater the population and population density, the greater the commitment to help the speech communities preserve and promote their languages. In Nepal, 50.3 percent of the population is Nepali mother tongue-speakers. There are only 12 languages which occupy more than 1 percentage of the total population. Since the remaining languages each represent less than 1 percent of the population, it is natural that there is great diversity in the possibilities of the development and expansion of language domains. Speakers of these languages become bilingual because they cannot communicate only in their mother tongue. Some language speakers are migratory rather than settling where their language is spoken by a large percentage of the population and therefore they become bilingual because they can not communicate through their mother tongue.

If there is a large language community in a locality, and if it is dense, the requirements for providing primary education can be easily fulfilled. On the other hand, even if there is a large language community, if they are settled in sporadic settlements, or if the settlements are a combination of several language communities, it is difficult to use a single language as a medium in education. Such a situation is present in urban areas in particular and in some villages as well.

#### **(e) Positive attitudes and help of speech communities**

The attitudes of the speech communities are important in determining whether to provide education through the mother tongue. If the speech communities want to use their mother tongue with their children to nurture pride in their identity and their surroundings, and if they think that the knowledge of the mother tongue will be helpful for their future, it is obvious that they are positive about their language. If the language speakers are inquisitive and aware of the development of their language, and they have begun to participate in the writing system of the language and the creation of literature, they should be regarded as helpful also.

If the language speakers are not conscious of, or are unable to be conscious of, the language development, they may not be in a position to

obtain help from others. In such a context, there is little chance of their language being developed. Some parents believe that education is an opportunity for better employment and prestige and suspect that the mother tongue will confine their children within the villages depriving their children of these opportunities. In such contexts, therefore, efforts and encouragements are required to persuade them that the mother tongue will be beneficial.

**(f) Availability of the teachers in mother tongue**

Mother tongue teachers are needed to teach the children through their mother tongues. The number of mother tongue speakers qualified to be teachers is an important factor. There are some languages in Nepal that have very few mother tongue speakers who have completed a School Leaving Certificate (S.L.C.). It is difficult to start mother tongue education in such languages immediately. In cases where there are no educated speakers, it is impossible to begin to teach a writing system immediately. It is necessary for the people to learn to read and write before a literate tradition can begin. Such problems are not encountered in the languages in which there are substantial educated speakers, or literate people.

**(g) Teacher training**

Teachers are the main bases for imparting education through the mother tongue. Only efficient and competent teachers make such programs successful. It cannot be taken for granted that all teachers to be involved in teaching at the primary level should be newly recruited. Such teachers may be those who are working as teachers with different mother tongue speakers at the primary level. Additionally, the need for efficient teachers is likely to be fulfilled by recruiting additional teachers of the mother tongues.

**(h) Government assistance**

Approval from the government is a precondition to operate a school in a private sector in the mother tongue because educational management of schools is guided by government policies and instruction. Moreover, the government should encourage the people to operate schools in the mother tongue and the government itself also should begin initiatives in mother tongue education by identifying the densely populated areas where people desire mother tongue schools. In addition, assistance from the government is important in the development of teaching materials, the recruitment of teachers for teaching, teacher training and so on.

### **3.2 Bilingual education**

Bilingual education refers to education that uses two languages as media of instruction. Such education is used in bilingual and multilingual contexts. Such education is relevant if the mother tongues of the children and the language of mainstream education in the community differ. Bilingual education may be useful to children because it can include them gradually into mainstream education without hindering their cognitive development.

Generally more than one language is used in several areas (settlements) in our country. In such contexts, one language is used at home whereas another is employed in the neighboring society. A child is not confined within a family. He becomes a member of a community with his growth. He begins to learn the language of his neighbor as he plays with other children. Since humans are social beings his familial activities are not restricted to his home either. People of the community visit the home. A child is influenced by such activities in a community where more than one language is spoken. As a child visits the local market with his parents or is involved in minor activities he can perform outside his home he has opportunities to be in touch with other language speakers. The opportunity to be in touch with the outer community expands as he begins to go to school. There might be more diverse linguistic experiences of children in urban areas. A child is also influenced by activities like reading books and newspapers, listening to radio and television broadcasts in an educated family. It is normal for some children to become bilingual by such informal activities. The aforementioned discussion reflects that in some circumstances the appropriate situation is bilingual at the primary level of education.

Although children can be taught in their mother tongue, it is appropriate for them to learn a second language in order to increase their interest in education, especially if materials are not available in their mother tongue. Providing bilingual education enables children to gradually become efficient in another language. It may be difficult to exist merely by learning the language of one's community. It might be the best utilization of time, labour and investment if children can be taught through bilingual education from the primary level because waiting until grade 6 might not allow enough time to gain proficiency in the language of the nation which is required to compete in the wider Nepalese context.

As students who have been in mother tongue primary schools reach grade six they might face difficulties joining students who have been learning in Nepali. It might be necessary to teach such children by dividing them into group/subgroups. Yet, teaching the children by dividing them



into groups/subgroups may be inappropriate for socialization. It may not be suitable to be deprived of the language of wider communication in the primary years, because the language might become a barrier to becoming acquainted with their friends and ultimately become an obstacle to teaching and learning. It is like opening another door to let them feel the experience of the language of wider communication from the outset for the growth of their knowledge because learning another language is a means to expand the horizon of knowledge.

Nepal possesses not only linguistic and cultural diversity but also has diversity in geographical remoteness. Although it is easy to make the primary education easily accessible and affordable in the cities and in the Terai, it is not that easy in the hills, and remote and distant places. Although schools may be started in each ward of the VDC (village development committee) proper placement of schools might not be available, making it difficult for the children to reach the school conveniently from their home because of the distance in the hills. In such a context, the mother tongue schools alone may not solve the problems. In bilingual areas and contexts, although separate mother tongue schools are established, this will not only increase the number of schools but also increase the need for more teachers and physical facilities in the same proportion. Considering the social structure, interrelationship and interdependence, this issue is more significant in the areas where more than one linguistic community resides. It is appropriate to create a cordial situation where the children go to school and mould themselves according to the diverse linguistic setting particularly in rural settings where the children of diverse linguistic communities live with strong mutual social cohesion.

On the whole, some of the characteristic features may be included in the following points (Pattnayak 1977:22-26).

1. Bilingual education helps children adjust to school because the mother tongue is primarily used and the second language is used marginally in the initial phase of bilingual education. This may decrease the tendency to drop out.
2. Bilingual education helps children transfer experiences learnt in their mother tongue to the next language.
3. Bilingual education helps increase mutual friendship among children of diverse backgrounds.
4. Bilingual education may accelerate the socialization processes of children in school.
5. Such education makes it easy for children to transfer from the mother tongue to the second language, and

6. There is an increase in the economic burden if separate schools in the mother tongues are established. Compared with that, this may reduce the economic burden as the children of diverse linguistic groups can be taught in the same schools.

### **3.3 Mother tongue: as the subject**

Language is not only the medium of instruction but a subject in itself. Learning a language as a subject implies learning the written form of the language but it could also simply refer to using the oral form of the language. If the children are proficient in the written form, they can be taught using that form but the language should be taught as a subject to help them develop reading and writing skills.

First of all, the language should be in a written form while introducing the mother tongue as a subject. Teaching literacy may be regarded as teaching the mother tongue as a subject. Thus, it is also necessary to teach the mother tongue to develop the language in the written medium. The language, in which written materials are available, should also be incorporated as a subject in schools where mother tongue education operates because unless one knows the written form, teaching and learning activities cannot be conducted in the language. A language with written materials can receive several benefits from teaching the language as a subject. The mother tongue as a subject is possible in those languages which have prepared written textbooks for several grades, or the textbooks which are likely to be prepared in near future. It is therefore natural that the language with rich literary traditions comes to the fore in this respect. Languages with emerging literary traditions can also be encouraged by teaching them as different subjects. On the other hand, it is natural that the possibility of teaching languages with no literary tradition is very low because they are lacking written materials. Thus, this may also be regarded as a means of preserving and promoting the languages with written literary tradition and with written literature.

Ability in listening, speaking, and writing can also be emphasized by teaching the mother tongue as a subject. Correct spellings of words, sentence structure etc can be taught. This also encourages the children to develop an interest in their mother tongue and to develop literature.

### **3.4 The language of the nation: as a medium and subject**

Nepali is the mother tongue of the majority of Nepalese people (50.3%). Nepali has therefore not only the role of being the medium of education, but also it has the roles of the language of the nation, and

official language. The non-Nepali speakers therefore need to develop proficiency in Nepali. Nepali, the language of the nation, is also used as a medium of instruction at the secondary level and its use has also been gradually expanding in higher education. In a context where inter-linguistic and interethnic activities, including professional, social, and political activities at the national level are functioning in Nepali, the other mother tongue children should master Nepali from the very basic level.

It is also necessary to teach Nepali as a subject to children whose mother tongue is Nepali as well as children from other mother tongues to develop in them the linguistic skills required for the language of the nation from the primary level (grade two or three).

### **3.5 The language of the nation : as a second language**

There is a sizable number of people speaking and adopting Nepali as a second language in a context where more than half of the population has non-Nepali speakers. Many non-Nepali speakers have to learn Nepali not only for educational and national activities but also for practical affairs particularly for the need of establishing relationships among others. The intentional teaching of the language of the nation is necessary to make other language groups have access to the social, economic, political and national activities and to eradicate the linguistic problems encountered through language competition in several areas. It is therefore appropriate to make the children proficient in the language of the nation by teaching it beginning in the primary classes.

Children in minority language communities often have not been exposed to a Nepali speaking environment until they attend school. Since it is difficult to teach those who do not have any exposure to Nepali language until they attend school, it is not desirable to teach Nepali using the theory and methodology of mother tongue teaching. Those students can be taught the language employing methodologies and theories of second language teaching in order to instill in them the exposure of the language of the nation effectively and purposefully. It is necessary to teach the children employing the materials which reveal the similarities and differences between the first and the second language based on the differences.

### **3.6 Informal education**

The informal education system refers to any activities outside of any formal education system (National Education Commission Report 2049VS). Informal education can be a medium of providing educational access and opportunities to adults and children who are not embraced in

the formal education in order to achieve a great educational goal like *Education for All*. There is a great importance of informal education in Nepal where only 41 percent of the population is educated according to the 1991 census report. Of late, literacy is provided to the children (8-12 years) and adults (15-25 years) who do not have an educational environment under informal education. In this context, the programs like Adult Literacy for the adults, *Chelibeti Karyekram* (Women Program) for the women, and *Bal Shikshya Sadan* (Child Education Sadan) for the children have been in operation.

Generally the medium of non-formal education so far is Nepali. Such programs are considered less attractive and ineffective for many non-Nepali speakers. It is necessary to prepare and use reading and teaching materials in several mother tongues when formulating such programs as an effective and comprehensive movement in order to eradicate illiteracy. The National Education Commission report (2049VS:138) has realized that the non-formal education materials may need to be in Nepali along with national languages or in dialects. It will help to educate the socially and economically backward people and it will also help teach the skills and knowledge for their overall development through literacy programs if the programs can be launched through the mother tongues.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Part A: Development and preservation of national languages**

#### **Identification of national languages**

1. It is necessary to identify the national languages before they are developed. For various reasons, uncertainty exists about statistics in the census reports. Therefore it is necessary to identify the national languages by conducting an authentic linguistic survey.

#### **Selection of a norm**

2. When developing a language, it is necessary to select one of the dialects of the language as a norm. All the dialects should be identified before the norm is selected. In doing this, the linguistic capability of the dialect speakers, number of speakers, literate tradition, attitudes of the speakers towards the dialects, etc. should be considered.

#### **Writing system**

3. For practical, educational, and language learning purposes, it is appropriate to have consistency in script for the languages spoken in Nepal. The indigenous scripts may be used however, if any language communities express their willingness to maintain the indigenous script.

#### **Alphabets**

4. It is desirable to revise the alphabets of the languages spoken in Nepal according to the sound system of the Nepalese languages. It is necessary to study their sound systems for this purpose.

#### **Spelling**

5. It is necessary to improve the spelling system in order to minimize the gap between the spoken and written form. Additionally, it is also desirable to bring consistency and stability in the spelling of the standard written dialect.

#### **Vocabulary**

6. Development of vocabulary in several languages is required for the expansion of education and communication of advances in modern science and technology. It is desirable to work in consonance with the principles of UNESCO guidelines (1953) when developing vocabulary.

7. It is necessary to lay emphasis on compiling monolingual, bilingual and multilingual dictionaries of the national languages in order to systematize spelling, pronunciation and vocabulary.

### **Grammar**

8. Writing grammars in national languages is deemed an essential prerequisite for regularizing and systematizing the languages. It is necessary to develop reference and pedagogical grammars for several languages.

### **Domains of use**

9. On the basis of feasibility and capacity of the languages, their domains of use should be gradually identified. Some possible domains may be education, media, administration, literature etc.

### **Media**

10. Audio Medium (Radio): Necessary preparation should be made to broadcast events associated with public, cultural, and local importance through the national languages, by means of news, as well as other programs. The domains of use should be gradually expanded depending on the capability of the languages in central and regional broadcasting. It is desirable to prioritize the languages with a literate or emerging literate tradition and expand their domains of use progressively. It is also necessary to use and expand the use of the languages have no literate tradition, but is likely to step towards literate tradition considering their practical possibility.
11. Reading medium: The translations of the government notices, and other publications, published for the people should also be made available in the other national languages. Attention should be paid towards the publication of newspapers and other teaching-learning materials in the national languages.
12. Audio-visual medium: Considering the linguistic efficiency and probability of the development of the national languages, the news will gradually be broadcast in the national languages. For this purpose, broadcasting of the national languages may be arranged under “National Language Program”.
13. Notices, advertisements etc. should be broadcast in the national languages through the radio and television.

### **Administration**

14. In order to make the local administration more efficient and beneficial for the people, the local languages should be supported, taking into consideration the practicality of the use of local languages.
15. In dealings with all local administrative authorities, it would be useful to make translators available for people who do not know the national language.

### **Literature**

16. It is appropriate to encourage the development of literature in the national languages. It would be desirable to administer publication facilities and incentives for such purposes.

### **Simplification of the language of the nation**

17. Since Nepali is the official language, the medium of education as well as the *lingua franca*, it is appropriate to simplify the language so it will be more comprehensible for a wider audience.
18. It is indispensable to preserve the languages which have no literate tradition and special Programs for this purpose should be formulated immediately.

### **Part B: Council of National Languages**

19. It is necessary to open (establish) the Council of National language as a regulatory body responsible for formulation and implementation of cultural and language policies related to identification of national language, corpus and status planning and identification of national languages.

### **Formation**

Government approval is required in order to implement language policies including the use of language in education, media, culture etc. Implementation of the policies will be difficult without help from the government. Therefore, it is appropriate to constitute the Council of National Languages on behalf of the government. Since language policy is closely related to education and culture, it is appropriate that this committee is an autonomous body at the Ministry of Education and Culture. This should be constituted as:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Chairman:  | 1 |
| 2. Linguists: | 2 |

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 3. Educationist:                            | 1         |
| 4. Representing several national languages: | 7 members |

### **Tenure**

The tenure of the chairperson and the members shall be five years.

### **Eligibility**

In order to be eligible for appointment as the chairperson or the members of the Council of National Languages, a person must hold a Master's Degree or should have made remarkable contributions in national languages.

### **Functions**

Language policy and planning

1. To formulate programs in order to implement status and corpus planning of national languages pursuant to part (A) of this section.
2. To suggest recommendations related to the language policies the nation should adopt, and
3. To explain the matters related to language policy if any.

### **Implementation**

There is a need of a team of language experts for the implementation of the formulated programs related to national languages. This team will consist of several departments as necessary, i.e. linguistic studies, compilation of dictionaries, preparation of teaching and learning materials, publication, etc coordinated by the experts of the respective fields. In addition, the council shall coordinate with organizations including other institutions/persons for the accomplishment of objectives and programs related to national languages.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This Council shall make improvements and revisions by monitoring and evaluating the implemented programs as required.

### **Part C: Use of national languages in education**

20. The primary mother tongues schools shall be opened in the areas where there are monolingual students. Approval shall be given to such schools to teach the children orally or in written form in their mother tongue if the teaching materials are presently available. If the languages lack written materials, the teaching activities can be conducted in the national languages, translating the materials written



in the language of the nation to the national languages orally. The medium of instruction can be either the language of the nation or the national language, or both, based on the availability of the teaching materials and willingness of the local communities.

21. His Majesty's Government shall provide approval and support for the mother tongue schools established in the private sector.
22. In the areas with densely populated monolingual speakers, mother tongue schools may be established if it is convenient for the linguistic community. His Majesty's Government shall provide recognition and grants to the mother tongue schools similar to other primary schools.
23. In the schools with a predominantly multilingual context, it would be appropriate to adopt the language of the nation as the medium of instruction.
24. Approval may be given to schools to use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the lower secondary level. If the community so desires, approval may also be given to schools to use the mother tongue as the medium of instruction with the upper level if the school has successfully used the mother tongue as the medium, and the language can satisfy appropriate requirements.
25. It would be appropriate to categorize the schools into three types at the primary level in terms of the medium of instruction.
  - (a) Mother tongue primary school
  - (b) Bilingual primary school
  - (c) National language primary school
26. While establishing the mother tongue schools, where there are densely populated monolingual areas or where it is otherwise convenient, first of all Basic Schools (schools of grades 1 – 3) will be established. Mother-tongue teachers shall be recruited for the Basic Schools.

### **Teaching the Mother tongue as a subject**

27. There would be a provision to teach the mother tongue as a subject in mother tongue and bilingual schools.
28. In primary schools that use the language of the nation as the medium of instruction the mother tongues will be taught as subjects based on the demand of the children.

### **Mother tongue: As an alternative or an optional subject**

29. It would be desirable to incorporate mother tongue languages as optional subjects within the existing curricula of the lower secondary level as an alternative to Sanskrit. It would be appropriate to include mother tongues as a subject carrying 100 full marks in the lower secondary schools in the future.
30. It is also necessary to include the teaching of the mother tongue in secondary and higher secondary level.

### **Mother tongue and national language in primary curricula**

31. It would be desirable to commence the teaching of the national language in the mother tongue schools from grade 2 or grade 3 within the prescribed framework of the existing curricula.
32. It would be appropriate to teach the mother tongue as a subject carrying 100 marks as an alternative to the optional subject for mother-tongue students in the schools that use Nepali as the medium.
33. It is difficult to begin to teach through the mother tongue with all the languages of different categories, i.e. those with literate traditions, the languages stepping to the literate tradition and language with no literature tradition. It would therefore be desirable to follow the phases prescribed in the following table for the study of the languages, development of teaching materials and their teaching.

*Table*

| Phases | Language with literate tradition | Languages inclined towards literate tradition | Language with no literate tradition |
|--------|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| First  | Teaching                         | Development of teaching materials             | Study of language                   |
| Second | -                                | Teaching                                      | Development of teaching materials   |
| Third  | -                                | -   | Teaching                            |

As the table demonstrates, the teaching of the languages may be started in the first phase with those languages with literate traditions in which teaching materials have already been prepared. On the other hand, for the languages with literate traditions in progress the teaching may be begun in the second phase only after the development of the teaching materials in the first phase. The languages will be studied in the first phase, the development of materials, and the teaching in the second and

third phases respectively for the languages with no literate tradition. The teaching of languages can thus be continued till grade 5 based on the availability of materials. For the languages with no literate tradition teaching will only begin after the study of the language, development of the writing system, vocabulary, grammar etc.

### **Development of curriculum and preparation of teaching materials**

34. It is necessary to formulate the objectives for teaching of the mother tongue as subjects, design the curriculum for students of each mother-tongue and to prepare textbooks.
35. While preparing textbooks, social and cultural features of respective communities and mother tongues will be incorporated as required to match different grades of school.
36. The design of curricula and preparation of the textbook should be accomplished with participation of the respective mother-tongue language consultants, and curriculum experts.
37. If the secondary and complementary reading materials have ever been prepared by the private sector in any mother tongues, they should be permitted to be used after assessing their standards.
38. Curricula can also be made by translating the textbooks into the respective mother tongues, except for Social Study, Environmental Science, Health and Physical Education, etc. for the languages without curricula and textbooks. The appropriate revision of the textbooks may be made to make the contents of the textbooks appropriate for local contexts and cultures of different mother tongues.
39. The books associated with basic reading and writing (teaching of literacy) should be prioritized while getting the textbooks prepared. This should be followed by the curricula designation of the following subjects in order.
  - a. Social Education
  - b. Environmental Education
  - c. Physical Health Education
  - d. Mathematics
  - e. Science

However, it would be appropriate to prepare textbooks for the subjects like Mathematics and Science after considering the degree of viability in different mother tongues.

### **Bilingual education**

40. It would be appropriate to adopt bilingual education particularly in schools located in the urban or rural areas with a predominantly bilingual context and multilingual context. The teacher would use both the language of the nation and the mother tongue as required in such an education system.
41. In bilingual education, teaching mother tongue as a subject in the mother tongue and teaching of other subjects in the language of the nation would also be possible. But the teachers should be competent in both languages.
42. The medium of instruction at examinations may be in one or two languages based on the desire of local population.

### **Education through the language of the nation**

43. The medium of primary education would be Nepali (the language of the nation) in the primary schools where national languages cannot be used as the medium of instruction.
44. While teaching the language of the nation as a subject to non-Nepali speaking children at the primary level, the emphasis should be laid to teach it as a second language.
45. Separate curriculum and textbooks for teaching the language of the nation as a second language will be prepared.
46. It would be necessary to keep on improving the curricula, textbooks and teaching methodology after studying the problems of teaching the language of the nation as a second language.

### **Teachers' management and training**

47. Having prepared an inventory of mother-tongue speaking teachers who are presently working as teachers in any place in the country, it would be appropriate to recruit them who speak the local language to mother tongue schools at their convenience. Additionally, some more teachers would be recruited as required in the mother tongue schools.

48. Teachers who speak the local mother tongue would be recruited for each of mother tongue education schools.
49. Training for mother-tongue speaking teachers involved in teaching through the mother tongue in bilingual and multilingual classes should be properly arranged.

### **Non-formal education**

50. Necessary initiatives should be taken to accelerate the literacy campaign in the country by beginning programs of informal education in several mother tongues.
51. Teaching materials in the respective mother tongues would have to be developed as required in order to make such programs a success.
52. In order to conduct effective mother-tongue non-formal education, the respective mother-tongue speaking teachers or volunteers should be properly trained.

### **Part D: Miscellaneous**

#### **Department of Linguistics**

53. A Department of Linguistics Tribhuvan University is urgently required for training the manpower related to the teaching of languages and preparation of teaching and learning materials.

#### **Language body in Royal Nepal Academy**

54. It would be appropriate to establish an autonomous and separate language section within the Royal Nepal Academy without incorporating any other sections in it to pursue the work of the preservation and advancement of national languages.

#### **Academic Institutions in the National Languages**

55. It shall be appropriate to coordinate with the academic institutions that are established or are likely to be established in the near future, to become affiliated with the Royal Nepal Academy and to provide financial assistance to them.

#### **Curriculum Development Centre**

56. A separate section (body) should be established under the Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Centre for the implementation of

suggestions associated with the curriculum and textbooks developed in the national languages.

57. In order to enhance national unity and coherence, it shall be appropriate to develop textbooks incorporating and reflecting existing social and cultural diversities of each caste and ethnic group from the school level.

**Language experts in the census**

58. It would be appropriate to involve the linguists as experts for resolving the language matters during the national census.

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**Appendix: One**  
**Comparative Table of National Languages**

| <b>Language Family/<br/>Language</b> | <b>2009-18</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2028</b> | <b>2038</b> | <b>2048</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Nepali                            | 4013567        | 4796528     | 6060758     | 8767361     | 9302880     |
| 2. Maithili                          | 1024780        | 1130402     | 1327242     | 1668309     | 2191900     |
| 3. Bhojpuri                          | 477281         | 577357      | 806480      | 142805      | 1379717     |
| 4. Tharu                             | 359594         | 406907      | 495881      | 545685      | 993388      |
| 5. Awadhi                            | 328408         | 477090      | 316950      | 234343      | 374638      |
| 6. Urdu                              | 32545          | 2650        | -           | -           | 202208      |
| 7. Hindi                             | 80181          | 2867        | -           | -           | 170997      |
| 8. Rajbanshi                         | 35543          | 55803       | 55124       | 59383       | 85558       |
| 9. Bengali                           | -              | 9915        | -           | -           | 27712       |
| 10. Danuwar                          | 9138           | 11624       | 9959        | 13522       | 23721       |
| 11. Marwari                          | -              | 6176        | -           | -           | 16514       |
| 12. Majhi                            | 5729           | 5895        | -           | -           | 11322       |
| 13. Darai                            | 3084           | 1645        | -           | -           | 6520        |
| 14. Kumal                            | 3510           | 1724        | -           | -           | 1413        |
| 15. English                          | -              | -           | -           | -           | 2784        |
| <b>(b) Tibeto-Burman</b>             |                |             |             |             |             |
| 1. Tamang                            | 494745         | 528812      | 555056      | 522416      | 904456      |
| 2. Newari                            | 383184         | 377721      | 4549970     | 448746      | 690007      |

|              |        |        |        |        |        |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 3. Rai group | 236049 | 239745 | 232264 | 221353 | 439312 |
| 4. Magar     | 273780 | 254675 | 288383 | 212681 | 430264 |
| 5. Limbu     | 145511 | 3705   | 170787 | 129234 | 254088 |
| 6. Gurung    | 162192 | 157778 | 171609 | 174464 | 227918 |
| 7. Sherpa    | 70132  | 84229  | 79218  | 73589  | 121829 |
| 8. Chepang   | 14262  | 9247   | -      | -      | 25097  |
| 9. Dhimal    | 5671   | 8188   | -      | -      | 15014  |
| 10. Thami    | 10240  | 9046   | -      | -      | 14400  |
| 11. Thakali  | 3307   | 6432   | -      | 5289   | 7113   |
| 12. Jire     | 2721   | 2757   | -      | -      | 4229   |
| 13. Raji     | 1514   | 801    | -      | -      | 2959   |
| 14. Byangshi | 1786   | -      | -      | -      | 1314   |
| 15. Sunuwar  | 17299  | 13362  | 20380  | 10650  | -      |
| 16. Lapche   | -      | 1272   | -      | -      | -      |
| 17. Meche    | 523    | 938    | -      | -      | -      |
| 18. Pahari   | 864    | 3002   | -      | -      | -      |
| 19. Hayu     | 233    | -      | -      | -      | -      |

**(c) Austro-Asiatic**

|                       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Sattar/<br>Santhal | 16751 | 29485 | 23853 | 28207 | 33332 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|

|                                  |                |                |                 |                 |                 |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>(d) Dravidian</b>             |                |                |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>1. Jhanghar/<br/>Dhanghar</b> |                |                |                 |                 |                 |
|                                  | 4832           | 9140           | -               | -               | 15175           |
| Others                           | 70340          | 114302         | 487060          | 764802          | 504171          |
| Not mentioned                    | 752            | 6432           | -               | -               | 9157            |
| -----                            |                |                |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>8235079</b> | <b>9412996</b> | <b>11555986</b> | <b>15022839</b> | <b>18491097</b> |

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Source: National Census (from 2019 BS to 2048 BS).

**Appendix: Two**  
**District-wise Distribution of National Languages**

| Region/Area                   | Total    | First Position  | Second Position | Other noticeable language   |
|-------------------------------|----------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
|                               |          |                 |                 | (upto 1,000 speakers)   |
| <b>(A) Mountainous region</b> |          |                 |                 |   |
| 1. Taplejung                  | 1,20,053 | Nepali (60,096) | Limbu (40,706 ) | Sherpa (10,696 )<br>Tamang (3,638 )   |
| 2. Shankhuwashave             | 1,41,903 | Nepali (77,701) | Rai(24,926 )    | Rai (2,426 )<br>Sherpa (10,803 )<br>Tamang (10,409 )<br>Limbu (5,840 )<br>Magar (3,152 )<br>Newari (2,134 ) |
| 3. Sholukhumbu                | 97,200   | Nepali(39,027 ) | Rai(19,893 )    | Sherpa (19,328 )<br>Tamang(7,658 )  |

|                   |                    |                   |                         |  |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 4. Dolakha        | 1,73,236           | Nepali(1,19,746 ) | Tamang(25,736 )         | Thami(9,420 )<br>Sherpa(8,040 )<br>Jirel(3,928 )<br>Newari (2,903 )                |
| 5. Sindhupalchowk | 2,61,025           | Nepali(1,37,268 ) | Tamang(81,761 )         | Newari(21,190 )<br>Sherpa(12,321 )<br>Danuwar(2,077 )<br>Thami(1,820 )<br>Rai1,189 |
| 6. Rasuwa         | 36,744             | Tamang(24,404 )   | Nepali(10,932 )         | -  |
| 7. Manang         | 5,363              | Gurung(2,571 )    | Nepali(1,575 )          | -  |
| 8. Mustang        | 14,292             | Sherpa(5,450 )    | Nepali(4,639 )          | Thakali(2,229 )<br>Gurung(1,489 )  |
| 9. Dolpa          | 25,013<br>(2,073 ) | Nepali(16,262 )   | Sherpa(6,393 )          | Local languages  |
| 10. Mugu          | 36,394             | Nepali(32,286 )   | Sherpa(3,919 )          | -  |
| 11. Humla         | 34,383             | Nepali (28,351 )  | Sherpa(2,704 )          | Gugung(1,493 )<br>Tamang(1,398 )   |
| 12. Darchula      | 1,01,683           | Nepali(97,919 )   | local languages(2,073 ) | -  |

**(A) Hilly Regions**

|              |          |                   |                |  |
|--------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|--|
| 1. Panchthar | 1,75,206 | Nepali (70,996)   | Limbu(63,648   | Rai(22,444 )<br>Tamang(10,315 )<br>Magar(4,677 )   |
| 2. Illam     | 2,29,214 | Nepali (1,33,784) | Rai (37,876 )  | Limbu (25,903 )<br>Tamang (9,955 )<br>Magar (8,346 )<br>Sherpa (2,820 )<br>Gurung (1,903 )<br>Newari(1,595 ) |
| 3. Tehrathum | 1,02,870 | Nepali (59,868)   | Limbu(31,874 ) | Tamang(4,761 )<br>Rai(1,846 )<br>Magar(1,793 )   |
| 4. Bhojpur   | 1,98,784 | Nepali (1,24,022) | Rai(51,471 )   | Tamang(9,119 )<br>Magar(4,361 )<br>Newari(4,361 )<br>Sherpa(2,236 )  |
| 5. Dhankuta  | 1,46,386 | Nepali (70,076)   | Rai(27,793 )   | Limbu(18,969 )<br>Magar(11,932 )<br>Tamang7,389<br>Newari(3,052 )  |

|                |          |                   |                 |  |
|----------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| 6. Okhaldhunga | 1,39,457 | Nepali (89,349)   | Rai(15,807 )    | Tamang(11,497 )<br>Magar(10,262 )<br>Sherpa(6,658 )<br>Newari(1,043 )  |
| 7. Khotang     | 2,15,965 | Nepali (1,34,539) | Rai(57,573 )    | Magar(6,084 )<br>Tamang (5,671 )<br>Newari (3,037 )<br>Sherpa(1,198 )  |
| 8. Udayapur    | 2,21,256 | Nepali (1,25,383) | Rai(28,238 )    | Magar (25,681 )<br>Tharu (19,631 )<br>Tamang(12,631 )<br>Maithili(4,072 )<br>Newari(1,703 )<br>Danuwar(1,437 )             |
| 9. Sindhuli    | 2,23,900 | Nepali (1,23,013) | Tamang(50,607 ) | Magar(20,945 )<br>Danuwar(10,294 )<br>Newari(6,308 )<br>Rai(3,872 )<br>Sherpa(2,280 )<br>Maithili(2,015 )<br>Majhi(3,652 ) |

|               |          |                   |                   |  |
|---------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| 10. Ramechap  | 1,88,064 | Nepali (1,10,414) | Tamang(37,370 )   | Newari(13,822 )<br>Magar(8,780)<br>Sherpa(4,070)<br>Majhi(3,652)<br>Thami(1,180)   |
| 11. Kavre     | 3,24,329 | Nepali (1,71,959) | Tamang(1,04,337)  | Danuwar (3,599 )<br>Magar (2,303)  |
| 12. Lalitpur  | 2,57,086 | Newari (1,10,800) | Nepali(1,09,196)  | Tamang(25,626)<br>Rai(1,512)<br>Magar(1,375)<br>Gurung (1,288)<br>Sherpa (1,222)   |
| 13. Bhaktapur | 172952   | Newari (1,05,263) | Nepali(59,378)    | Tamang(6,628)  |
| 14. Kathmandu | 6,75,341 | Nepali (3,49,158) | Newari (2,33,541) | Tamang(43,246)<br>Gurung(7,994)<br>Hindi(7,466)<br>Sherpa(6,063)<br>Rai(4,499)<br>Maithili(4,074)<br>Magar(3,788)<br>Urdu(2,694) |



|               |          |                   |                  |   |
|---------------|----------|-------------------|------------------|---|
|               |          |                   |                  | Bhojpuri(1,765)<br>Limbu(1,012)<br>Marwari(1,342)   |
| 15. Nuwako    | 2,45,260 | Nepali (1,45,196) | Tamang(85,457)   | Newari(8,860)<br>Gurung (1,771)<br>Sherpa(1,164)  |
| 16. Dhading   | 2,78,068 | Nepali (2,05,344) | Tamang(55,805)   | Magar(4,274)<br>Chepang(3,441)<br>Gurung(3,297)<br>Newari(2,280)<br>Rai(1,436)  |
| 17. Makwanpur | 3,14,599 | Tamang (1,39,198) | Nepali(1,31,226) | Newari (19,241)<br>Chepang(10,594)<br>Rai(3,914)<br>Magar(3,148)<br>Bhojpuri(1,238)<br>Maithili(1,484)<br>Hindi (1,187) |
| 18. Gorkha    | 2,52,524 | Nepali (1,96,908) | Gurung(31,213)   | Magar(7,188)<br>Sherpa(4,626)<br>Tamang(4,201)  |

|              |          |                   |                        |  |
|--------------|----------|-------------------|------------------------|--|
|              |          |                   |                        | Rai(2,909)<br>Newari(1,734)  |
| 19. Lamjung  | 1,53,697 | Nepali(96,507)    | Gurung(45,060)         | Tamang(7,489)<br>Newari (2,367)  |
| 20. Tanahun  | 2,68,073 | Nepali (1,68,943) | Magar(46,514)          | Gurung (25872)<br>Newari(13,778)<br>Rai(4,707)<br>Darai(2,246)<br>Urdu(1,298)<br>Tamang(1,164) |
| 21. Shyangja | 2,93,526 | Nepali (2,19,462) | Magar(36,458)          | Gurung (26,101)<br>Newari(5,265)<br>Rai(4,474)   |
| 22. Kaski    | 2,92,945 | Nepali (2,34,148) | Gurung(36,959)         | Newari (8,965 )<br>Rai (2,807 )<br>Tamang( 2,602)<br>Magar (1,764 )<br>Hindi (1,079 )          |
| 23. Myagdi   | 1,00,552 | Nepali (95,909)   | local languages(2,256) | Rai(1,404)   |

|                  |          |                   |                        |  |
|------------------|----------|-------------------|------------------------|--|
| 24. Parbat       | 1,43,547 | Nepali (1,31,353) | -                      | Gurung(7,519)<br>Magar(1,739)<br>Newari(1,325)<br>Rai(1,240) |
| 25. Baglung      | 2,32,486 | Nepali (2,26,933) | Rai(2,280)             | Newari(1,771)  |
| 26. Gulmi        | 2,66,331 | Nepali (2,59,060) | Newari(2,963)          | Rai(2,171)   |
| 27. Palpa        | 2,36,313 | Nepali (1,61,155) | Magar (64,234 )        | Rai (2,328 )   |
| 28. Arghakhanchi | 1,80,884 | Nepali (1,77,094) | Rai(2,361)             |  |
| 29. Pyuthan      | 1,75,469 | Nepali (1,69,199) | Magar(1,799)           | Rai (1,635 )   |
| 30. Rolpa        | 1,79,621 | Nepali (152759)   | Magar(15,190)          | Newari (1,480 )<br>Local languages (10,387 )                 |
| 31. Rukum        | 1,55,554 | Nepali (1,42,560) | Local languages(7,688) | Magar (3691),<br>Rai (1353)*                                 |
| 32. Salyan       | 1,81,785 | Nepali (1,80,145) | Rai(1,363)             | -  |
| 33. Surkhet      | 2,25,768 | Nepali (2,11,416) | Magar(5,299)           | Tharu (4,498 )<br>Local languages (1,711 )                   |

|                |          |                           |                         |               |              |
|----------------|----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|                |          |                           |                         |               | Rai (1,151 ) |
| 34. Dailekh    | 1,87,400 | Nepali (1,85,501)         | -                       | -             |              |
| 35. Jajarkot   | 1,13,958 | Nepali (1,12,550)         | -                       | -             |              |
| 36. Jumla      | 75,964   | Nepali (75,320)           | -                       | -             |              |
| 37. Kalikot    | 88,805   | Nepali (88,122)           | -                       | -             |              |
| 38. Bajura     | 92,010   | Nepali (90,680)           | -                       | -             |              |
| 39. Bajhang    | 1,39,092 | Nepali (1,35,896)         | Local languages(2,773)  | -             |              |
| 40. Achham     | 1,98,188 | Nepali (1,97,362)         | -                       | -             |              |
| 41. Doti       | 1,67,168 | Nepali (87,829)           | Local languages(75,626) | Magar(1,79,3) |              |
| 42. Dadeldhura | 1,04,649 | Nepali (1,03,820)         | -                       | -             |              |
| 43. Baitadi    | 2,00,716 | Local languages(1,86,863) | Nepali(11,310)          | -             |              |

**(C) Terai Region**

|           |          |                   |                      |   |
|-----------|----------|-------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1. Jhapa  | 5,93,737 | Nepali (3,46,292) | Rajbanshi (66,224 )  | Limbu (30,367 )<br>Sattar/Santhal (21,532 )<br>Rai (21,254 )<br>Maithili (14,814 )<br>Hindi (11,061 )<br>Tamang ( 0,819)<br>Urdu (7,313 )<br>Dhimal (6,465 )<br>Magar (6,058 )<br>Newari (5,132 )<br>Tharu(4,801 )<br>Bengali (4,613 )<br>Bhojpuri (1,744 )<br>Marwari (1,587 ) |
| 2. Morang | 6,74,823 | Nepali (2,63,506) | Maithili (1,43,200 ) | Tharu (52,460 )<br>Rai (28,177 )<br>Limbu (24,400 )<br>Urdu (18,480 )<br>Hindi (18,343 )<br>Rajbanshi (18,243 )<br>Magar (13,584 )  |

|            |          |                     |                   |   |   |
|------------|----------|---------------------|-------------------|---|---|
|            |          |                     |                   |   | Tamang (12,024 )<br>Sattar/Santhal (9,978 )<br>Newari (8,854 )<br>Dhimal (8,147 )<br>Marwari 5,303( )<br>Bhojpuri (4,628 )<br>Jhanghar(2,818 )<br>Gurung (1,763 ) |
| 3. Sunsari | 4,63,481 | Maithili (1,40,290) | Nepali(1,36,894 ) | Tharu (73,274 )<br>Urdu (22,727 )<br>Rai (20,135 )<br>Jhanghar (11,789 )<br>Hindi (8,405 )<br>Limbu (8,217)<br>Newari (6,731 )<br>Tamang (5,967 )<br>Bengali (4,734 )<br>Bhojpuri (3,844 )<br>Marwari ( 1,807)<br>Gurung (1,269 ) |   |
| 4. Saptari | 4,65,668 | Maithili (3,38,237) | Tharu (80,526 )   | Nepali (28,831 )<br>Urdu (9,741 )<br>Hindi (1,572 )   |   |

|              |          |                     |                   |  |
|--------------|----------|---------------------|-------------------|--|
|              |          |                     |                   | Magar (1,531 )<br>Bengali (1,019 )   |
| 5. Siraha    | 4,60,746 | Maithili (3,94,644) | Tharu (1,15,235 ) | Nepali (24,239 )<br>Urdu (13,680 )<br>Tamang (4,406 )<br>Hindi (3,941 )<br>Magar (2,767 )                    |
| 6. Dhanusha  | 5,43,672 | Maithili (3,59,947) | Nepali (37,855 )  | Urdu (12,542 )<br>Tamang (5,404 )<br>Magar (4,573 )<br>Hindi (2,639 )<br>Newari (1,889 )<br>Danuwar (1,023 ) |
| 7. Mahottari | 4,40,146 | Maithili (3,59,947) | Nepali (29,087 )  | Urdu (22,548 )<br>Magar (9,536 )<br>Hindi (6,526 )<br>Tamang (4,696 )<br>Tharu (4,598 )                      |
| 8. Sarlahi   | 4,92,798 | Maithili (2,81,554) | Nepali (73,443 )  | Bhojpuri (50,064 )<br>Tamang (24,128 )<br>Hindi (22,896 )<br>Urdu (13,175 )                                  |

|             |          |                     |                  |   |
|-------------|----------|---------------------|------------------|---|
|             |          |                     |                  | Tharu (11,371 )<br>Magar (7,739 )<br>Newari (3,031 )<br>Danuwar (1,162 )  |
| 9. Rautahat | 4,14,005 | Bhojpuri (2,88,144) | Urdu (46,969 )   | Tharu (14,759 )<br>Maithili (13,377 )<br>Hindi (6,034 )<br>Tamang (4,015 )<br>Rai (1,382 )<br>Magar (1,208 )<br>Sherpa (1,164 ) |
| 10. Bara    | 4,15,718 | Bhojpuri (3,16,261) | Nepali (55,026 ) | Tharu (19,779 )<br>Tamang (11,851 )<br>Urdu (3,769 )<br>Newari (2,038 )<br>Rai (1,189 )<br>Maithili (1,166 )                    |
| 11. Parsa   | 3,72,524 | Bhojpuri (30,35,52) | Nepali (39,215 ) | Tamang (5,817 )<br>Urdu (5,070 )<br>Newari (4,417 )<br>Maithili (3,026 )<br>Marwari (2,924 )                                    |



|                 |          |                      |                      |   |
|-----------------|----------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
|                 |          |                      |                      | Hindi (2,000 )<br>Rai (1,221 )<br>Tharu (1,203 )  |
| 12. Chitwan     | 3,54,488 | Nepali (2,44,521)    | Tharu (44640)        | Tamang (14,670 )<br>Chepang (9,694 )<br>Newari (9,586 )<br>Gurung (8,409 )<br>Rai (5,432 )<br>Magar (4,337 )<br>Darai (3,738 )<br>Hindi (2,740 )<br>Bhojpuri (1,859 ) |
| 13. Nawalparasi | 4,36,217 | Nepali (2,06,460)    | Bhojpuri (1,33,950 ) | Magar (44,963 )<br>Tharu (31, 598 )<br>Gurung (5,197 )<br>Newari (4,507 )<br>Hindi (2,636 )<br>Rai (2,534 )<br>Tamang (2,531 )  |
| 14. Rupandehi   | 5,22,150 | Bhojpuri (2,64,272 ) | Nepali (1,92,439 )   | Tharu (20,056 )<br>Hindi (8,259 )<br>Magar (7,629 )   |

|                |          |                   |                    |   |
|----------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|---|
|                |          |                   |                    | Newari (6,690 )<br>Urdu (5,304 )<br>Gurung (4,890 )<br>Awadhi (4,330 )<br>Rai (2,678 )<br>Maithili (2,085 ) |
| 15. Kapilvastu | 3,71,778 | Awadhi (2,48,881) | Nepali (75,594 )   | Tharu (37,571 )<br>Hindi (2,244 )<br>Rai (1,539 )<br>Newari (1,148, )<br>Magar (1,062 )<br>Urdu (1,059 )    |
| 16. Dang       | 3,54,413 | Nepali (2,33,707) | Tharu (1,05,018 )  | Awadhi (5,378 )<br>Hindi (4,194 )<br>Magar (1,993 )<br>Rai (1,441 )   |
| 17. Banke      | 2,85,605 | Awadhi (97,510)   | Nepali (96,433 )   | Tharu (44,197 )<br>Hindi (35,764 )<br>Urdu (4,407 )<br>Magar (1,733 )                                       |
| 18. Bardiya    | 2,90,313 | Tharu (1,49,865)  | Nepali (1,06,711 ) | Awadhi (15,615 )<br>Hindi (10,564 )   |

|                |          |                   |                    |  |
|----------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|--|
|                |          |                   |                    | Urdu (1,747 )  |
| 19. Kailali    | 4,17,891 | Tharu (1,98,497)  | Nepali (1,46,967 ) | Local languages (57,563 )<br>Hindi (5,456 )<br>Magar (2,268 )<br>Maithili (1,891 ) |
| 20. Kanchanpur | 2,57,906 | Nepali (1,84,793) | Tharu (59,795 )    | Local languages (5,558 )<br>Tamang (4,101 )<br>Hindi (1,477 )                      |

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Source: Statistical Yearbook of Nepal 1993

\* Unreliable

**Appendix: Three**  
**District-wise Distribution of Caste and Ethnic Groups**

| S.N. | District        | First position   | Second Postion   | Third Position    |
|------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1.   | Taplejung       | Limbu-49,077     | Brahmin-13,907   | Chhetri-13,655    |
| 2.   | Panchthar       | Limbu-69038      | Brahmin-25029    | Rai-24,020        |
| 3.   | Ilam            | Rai-56,326       | Brahmin-36,599   | Limbu-30,962      |
| 4.   | Dhankuta        | Rai-34,336       | Chhetri-29,551   | Limbu-21,026      |
| 5.   | Terhrathum      | Limbu-35,656     | Chhetri-20,101   | Brahmin-18,680    |
| 6.   | Shankhuwashabha | Rai-33,600       | Chhetri-27,805   | Tamang-19,971     |
| 7.   | Bhojpur         | Rai-65,874       | Chhetri-41,638   | Brahmin-18941m    |
| 8.   | Solukhumbu      | Rai-29618        | Sherpa-20241     | Chhetri-15251     |
| 9.   | Okhaldhunga     | Chhetri-34,745   | Brahmin-19,050   | Rai-16,679        |
| 10.  | Khotang         | Rai-83,725       | Chhetri-48168    | Brahmin-21,770    |
| 11.  | Udayapur        | Chhetri-46,494   | Rai-37,804       | Magar-31,852      |
| 12.  | Jhapa           | Brahmin-1,49,986 | Chetri-91,427    | Rajbanshi-52,753  |
| 13.  | Morang          | Brahmin-93,817   | Chhetri-75,834   | Tharu-60,391      |
| 14.  | Sunsari         | Tharu-57,029     | Musalban-45,730, | Brahmin-(T)39,215 |
| 15.  | Saptari         | Yadav-78,746     | Tharu-61,640     | Teli-35,515       |
| 16.  | Siraha          | Yadav-1,20,707   | Musalban-32,109  | Musahar-26,170    |
| 17.  | Dolakha         | Chhetri-59,209   | Tamang-27,036    | Brahmin-19,805    |
| 18.  | Ramechhap       | Chhetri-49,841   | Tamang-38,846    | Newar-26048       |
| 19.  | Sindhuli        | Tamang-52,414    | Chhetri-32,600   | Magar-31,612      |

|     |                 |                    |                  |                    |
|-----|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 20. | Dhanusha        | Yadav-1,13,443     | Muslim-41,229    | Kewat-35,170       |
| 21. | Mahottari       | Yadav-74,783       | Muslim-53,845    | Brahmin- (T)33,759 |
| 22. | Sarlahi         | Yadav79,408        | Kushahawa-35,971 | Muslim-32,724      |
| 23. | Kavrepalanchowk | Tamang-1,06,537    | Brahmin-76,354   | Newa-46,611        |
| 24. | Bhaktapur       | Newar-1,08,653     | Chhetri-31,604   | Brahmin-15,261     |
| 25. | Lalitpur        | Newar-1,18,439     | Chhetri-50,057   | Tamang-28,836      |
| 26. | Sindhupalchowk  | Tamang-85,972      | Brahmin-49,077   | Brahmin-30,974     |
| 27. | Kathmandu       | Newar-2,58,280     | Brahmin-1,30,760 | Chhetri-1,20,047   |
| 28. | Nuwakot         | Tamang-93,047      | Brahmin-53,252   | Chhetri-33,862     |
| 29. | Rasuwa          | Tamang-23,909      | Brahmin-6,169    | Chhetri-2,060      |
| 30. | Dhading         | Tamang-59,822      | Brahmin-51,910   | Chhetri-41,538     |
| 31. | Makwanpur       | Tamang-1,44,575    | Brahmin-45,232   | Chhetri-33,452     |
| 32. | Chitwan         | Brahmin-1,04,696   | Tharu-45,392     | Chhetri-37,108     |
| 33. | Parsa           | Muslim-45,653      | Tharu-32,701     | Kurmi-31,862       |
| 34. | Bara            | Tharu-49,389       | Muslim-48,642    | Yadav-45,283       |
| 35. | Rautahat        | MusRautahat-71,376 | Yadav-55,159     | Teli-24,552        |
| 36. | Gorakha         | Gurung-53,872      | Brahmin-50,585   | Chhetri-30,228     |
| 37. | Lamjung         | Gurung-51,590      | Brahmin-24,889   | Chhetri-24,832     |
| 38. | Tanahun         | Magar-69,814       | Brahmin-38,120   | Gurung-34,728      |
| 39. | Syangja         | Brahmin-98,350     | Magar-59,675     | Chhetri-34,475     |
| 40. | Kaski           | Brahmin-90,759     | Gurung-55,744    | Chhetri-43,184     |
| 41. | Manang          | Gurung-3,494       | Sherpa-689       | -                  |
| 42. | Mustang         | Gurung-7,720       | Thakali-2,810    | Maga-657r          |
| 43. | Myagdi          | Magar-43,768       | Chhetri-17,000   | Kami-5,120         |
| 44. | Parbat          | Brahmin-55,875     | Chhetri-23,255   | Magar-15,317       |

|     |              |                  |                |                |
|-----|--------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 45. | Baglung      | Magar-64,605     | Brahmin-54,660 | Chhetri-34,035 |
| 46. | Gulmi        | Brahmin-80,966   | Chhetri-59,595 | Magar-52,809   |
| 47. | Palpa        | Magar-1,16,694   | Brahmin-47,911 | Chhetri-20,150 |
| 48. | Nawalparasi  | Tharu-73,494     | Magar-72,463   | Brahmin-60,904 |
| 49. | Rupendehi    | Brahmin-64,758   | Tharu-55,803   | Muslim-42,828  |
| 50. | Kapilvastu   | Muslim-62,503    | Tharu-43,709   | Yadav-36,554   |
| 51. | Arghakhanchi | Brahmin-70,373   | Chhetri-32,384 | Magar-28,963   |
| 52. | Pyuthan      | Magar-52,105     | Chhetri-46,952 | Brahmin-22,271 |
| 53. | Rolpa        | Magar-79,846     | Chhetri-57,924 | Kami-21,889    |
| 54. | Rukum        | Chhetri-61,658   | Magar-39,584   | Kami-23,116    |
| 55. | Salyan       | Chhetri-94,995   | Magar-26,224   | Kami-20,619    |
| 56. | Dang         | Tharu-1,11,674   | Magar-39,058   | Brahmin-38,244 |
| 57. | Banke        | Muslim-45,784    | Tharu-45,564   | Chhetri-31,184 |
| 58. | Bardiya      | Tharu-1,53,322   | Chhetri-28,264 | Brahmin-27,414 |
| 59. | Surkhet      | Chhetri-65,327   | Magar-46,068   | Kami-42,166    |
| 60. | Dailekh      | Chhetri-65,751   | Kami-32,044    | Brahmin-23,460 |
| 61. | Jajarkot     | Chhetri-42,674   | Kami-24,974    | Thakuri-18,977 |
| 62. | Dolpa        | Thakuri-11,525   | Chhetri-11,243 | Gurung-4,899   |
| 63. | Jumla        | Chhetri-45,267   | Brahmin-9,410  | Kami-5,486     |
| 64. | Mugu         | Chhetri-17,248   | Thakuri-5,792  | Kami-4,090     |
| 65. | Kalikot      | Chhetri-25,228   | Thakuri-21,902 | Brahmin-17,461 |
| 66. | Bajhang      | Chhetri-71,461   | Brahmin-12,402 | Kami-9,296     |
| 67. | Humla        | Chhetri-4707     | Sanyasi-6,453  | Sherpa-2,904   |
| 68. | Bajura       | Chhetri-51,097   | Kami-11,810    | Brahmin-6,906  |
| 69. | Achham       | Chhetri-1,02,090 | Kami-38,002    | Brahmin-22,683 |

|     |            |                |                |                |
|-----|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 70. | Doti       | Chhetri-86,767 | Kami-18,928    | Brahmin-18,062 |
| 71. | Dadeldhura | Chhetri-52,125 | Brahmin-19,964 | Kami-6,995     |
| 72. | Kailali    | Tharu-2,06933  | Chhetri-60,421 | Brahmin-40,023 |
| 73. | Baitadi    | Chhetri-95,308 | Brahmin-41,730 | Kami-25,003    |
| 74. | Darchula   | Chhetri-61,054 | Brahmin-19,684 | Kami-7,508     |
| 75. | Kancharpur | Chhetri-73,008 | Tharu-70,544   | Brahmin-38,469 |

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Source: National Census 2048 VS  
T: Terai

## **Appendix: Four**

### **Situation of Literate Tradition of National Languages**

#### **1. Languages with literate tradition**

Nepali  
Newari  
Maithili  
Limbu  
Bhojpuri  
Awadhi  
Others: Hindi, Urdu, Bhote/Lama (Tibetan)

#### **2. Languages with literate tradition in progress**

Tharu  
Tamang  
Magar  
Gurung  
Thulung (Rai)  
Bantawa (Rai)  
Chamling (Rai)  
Khaling (Rai)  
Kulung (Rai)  
Thakali  
Sherpa  
Rajbanshi  
Bahing

#### **3. Languages without script or literate tradition**

Sattar/Santhal  
Danuwar  
Chepang  
Marwari  
Thami  
Jhanghar  
Dhimal  
Darai  
Jirel  
Chhantyal



Kham  
Kagate  
Kaikhe  
Yholmo  
Raji  
Kumal  
Bote  
Byangshi  
Languages of Rai group:  
Nachhiring  
Eastern Mewahang  
Western Mewahang  
Sampang  
Yamphu/Yamphe  
North Lohorung  
South Lohrung  
Yakkha  
Lumbayakhkha  
Athpare  
Umbule

#### **4. Endangered languages**

Hayu  
Dura  
Kusunda  
Raute  
Languages of Rai group:  
Koyu  
Puma  
Jerung  
Chhukwa/Chakwa  
Tilung  
Dumi  
Polmachha  
Dungmali  
Waling  
Chhintang  
Lambichhong

Mugali  
Belhare  
Phangdduwali  
Chhulung

**Appendix: Five**  
**Name of the Organizations Giving Suggestions**

1. Amarsingh High School, Pokhara
2. Continental Research Forum, Pokhara
3. Kalika High School, Pokhara
4. Kirant Dharma tatha Sahitya Utthan Sangh, Kathmandu
5. Kirant Yayukthung Chumlung, Central Committee, Kathmandu
6. Kirant Yayukthung Chumlung, Dharan, Sunsari
7. Kirant Yayukthung Bhasa Samiti, Taplejung
8. Kirant Rai Yayokkha, Central Committee, Kathmandu
9. Kirant Rai Yayokkha, Damak, Jhapa
10. Kirant Rai Yayokkha, Dharan, Sunsari
11. Kirant Rai Bhasa tatha Sahitya Parisad, Central Committee, Damak, Jhapa
12. Kirant Rai Yayokkha, Ilam
13. Gumba Byabstha tatha Bikas Samiti, Lalitpur
14. Chhantyal Pariwar Sangh, Kathmandu
15. Damphu Samuha, Kathmandu
16. Tamu Chhonj Dhin, Central Committee, Pokhara
17. Tamu Dhin Pariwar, Kaski
18. Tamang Gyoi Sengjang, Kathmandu
19. Thakali Sewa Samiti, Kathmandu
20. Thakali Sewa Samiti, Pokhara
21. Tharu Kalyankarini Sabha, Kathmandu
22. Tharu Bhasa Sahitya Parishad, Nepal
23. Danuwar Jagaran Samiti, Janakpurdhan
24. Dhimal Jatiya utthan bikas Kendra, Jhapa
25. Nepal (Gangai) Ganesh Kalyan Parishad, Jhapa
26. Nepali Janatati Mahasang, Kathmandu
27. Nepal Tamang Ghedung, Kathmandu
28. Nepal Tamang Samiti, Lalitpur
29. Nepal Bhasha Manka Khal, Kathmandu
30. Niko Thami Sewa Samiti, Dolakha
31. Nepal bhojpuri Sahitya Kala Parisad, Birgunj
32. Nepal Magar Sangh, Kathmandu
33. Nepal Magar Sangh, District Adhoc committee, Surkhet

34. Nepal Maithil Samaj, Kathmandu
35. Nepal Viswa Boudha Maitri Mahasangh, Kathmandu
36. Nepal Sadbhavana Party, Kathmandu
37. Nepal Santhal Bhasa Sanskrit Viksa Parisad, Jhapa
38. Nepal Tamang Sewa Samiti, Kathmandu
39. Magarati Itihas tatha Sanskriti Parisad, Kathmandu
40. Yholmbu Syrwa Chichhig, Kathmandu
41. Lasso Thetma Yambu
42. Samakhusi Tamang Pariwar Kosh, Kathmandu
43. Sunuwar Sewa Samaj, Kathmandu

## Appendix: Six

### Current Curricula and Mother Tongue

#### 1. Primary School

| Subject                          | Class (Full Marks) |            |          |            |            |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------|----------|------------|------------|
|                                  | <u>1</u>           | <u>2</u>   | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u>   | <u>5</u>   |
| 1.Nepali*                        | 150                | 150        | 150      | 100        | 100        |
| 2.Maths                          | 150                | 150        | 150      | 100        | 100        |
| 3.English                        | -                  | -          | -        | 100        | 100        |
| 4.Social Study and Environment   | 100                | 100        | 100      | -          | -          |
| 5. Physical Education            | 50                 | 50         | 50       | 50         | 50         |
| 6. Creative and Expressive Skill | 50                 | 50         | 50       | 50         | 50         |
| 7. EnvironmentalScience-         | -                  | -          | -        | 100        | 100        |
| 8. Social Study                  | -                  | -          | -        | 100        | 100        |
| 9. Optional**                    |                    | <u>100</u> |          | <u>100</u> | <u>100</u> |
|                                  | <u>100</u>         | <u>100</u> |          |            |            |
|                                  |                    | 600        |          | 600        | 600        |
|                                  | 600                | 600        |          |            |            |

\* This should introduce National languages (mother tongues)

\*\* Mother tongue school should introduce the language of the nation (Nepali) and the school with language of the nation should introduce mother tongue (the national languages).

## 2. Lower Secondary School (General)

| Subject                                      |                 | Class (Full Marks) |                 |  |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--|
|  | <b><u>6</u></b> | <b><u>7</u></b>    | <b><u>8</u></b> |  |
| 1.Nepali                                     | 100             | 100                | 100             |  |
| 2.Maths                                      | 100             | 100                | 100             |  |
| 3.English                                    | 100             | 100                | 100             |  |
| 4.Social Study and<br>Environment            | 100             | 100                | 100             |  |
| 5. Science                                   | 100             | 100                | 100             |  |
| 6. Health and Physical<br>Education          | 100             | 100                | 100             |  |
| 7. Sanskrit*                                 | 50              | 50                 | 50              |  |
| 8. Population and<br>Environmental Education | 50              | 50                 | 50              |  |
| 8. Arts or Pre-vocational                    | 50              | 50                 | 50              |  |

### 3. Secondary School (General)

| Subject |                                | Class (Full Marks) |                  |
|---------|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
|         | <b><u>9</u></b>                |                    | <b><u>10</u></b> |
| 1.      | Nepali                         | 100                | 100              |
| 2.      | Maths                          | 100                | 100              |
| 3.      | English                        | 100                | 100              |
| 4.      | Social Study                   | 100                | 100              |
| 5.      | Science and Environmental-     | 100                | 100              |
| 6.      | Health and Physical Education  |                    |                  |
|         | Or, Computer Science           |                    |                  |
|         | Or, Population Education-100   |                    | 100              |
| 7.      | Optional Subject**- <u>100</u> |                    | <u>100</u>       |
|         | 700                            |                    | 700              |

\* National language (Mother tongue) should be included as an alternative subject

\*\* National language (Mother tongue) should be incorporated as an optional subject

## **Addendum**

**“Language”. In *Population Monograph of Nepal Volume I*, CBS and UNFPA, Kathmandu, PP 137-172 (by Prof. Dr. Yogendra P. Yadava)**



# LANGUAGE

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## 1. Background

Despite its small size, Nepal accommodates an amazing cultural diversity including linguistic plurality. The 2001 census has identified 92 languages spoken mother tongues. However, a number of languages, reported to be 'unknown' languages, are still to be precisely recognized on the basis of field observation. This multilingual setting confers on Nepal a distinctive position on the linguistic map of the world and renders it as one of the most fascinating areas of linguistic research. It is important that the language situation in Nepal be analyzed to facilitate linguistic studies and language planning. Such an analysis is also important to examine the social structure of the country's population since language constitutes one of its main indicators.<sup>1</sup> This chapter is an attempt to deal with these issues related to the languages used in Nepal.

Census in Nepal was first introduced in 1911 to carry out a survey of population and its related aspects including its growth, migration, and social structure. But it has been only since the first modern census in 1952/54 that languages have been regularly been reported. There has been reported varying number of languages in different censuses. Of them the 2001 census has mentioned their largest number (viz. 92). Owing to its small area with multiple languages, it is but natural in Nepal that speakers of different languages are sometimes settled in the same locality, esp. in urban area, and come into closer contact. As a result, they need a link language to communicate and interact in carrying out socio-economic activities. Most of non-Nepali speakers are found using Nepali as a *lingua franca*. However, educated people from the Terai region often tend to use Hindi as a *lingua franca* for inter-community communication in the region. In addition to using Nepali as a *lingua franca*, most of non-Nepali speakers also have to learn Nepali for its use in education, administration,

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<sup>1</sup> See the various population censuses (1911-2001)

communication media, etc. As a result, bilingualism/multilingualism, i.e. use of two/more languages, has firmly established itself in Nepalese context. However, there do exist some isolated communities such as Raute which are confined to their native languages and have remained aloof from other speech communities. In addition, there are a number of speech communities which have either lost their native languages or whose languages are threatened with extinction under the pressure of linguistic and socio-political forces. Such linguistic diversity is not to be looked upon as a barrier to peace and development. What is required is to analyze and plan it as a social resource to mobilize its full potential (Eastman, 1983: ix).

From this language situation, there emerges a context in which Nepalis obligatorily use a mother tongue and optionally a second language. The term 'mother tongue' has been defined as "the language acquired first by children in their childhood from their parents and used in their households since they start speaking." In case of an infant, the language ordinarily used in his/her household is the mother tongue while the mother tongue of inborn deaf persons has been recorded as the Nepali Sign Language, which makes use of movements of the hands, arms, body, head, face, eyes, and mouth to communicate meanings. (CBS Guidelines...?). The 'second language' has been defined as any language other than the mother tongue learned for use while speaking with neighbours. Thus, a person may have Maithili or Nepal Bhasha as his mother tongue and Nepali as his second language for inter-community communication. As mentioned above, there also exist multilingual communities with proficiency in more than two languages. For example, a Newar-speaking person may use Nepali and English besides his mother tongue Newar, but no provision has so far been made in any census for the return of a third language.

The questionnaire designed for the 2001 census sought to specify one item for mother tongues and second languages each. These items are as follows:

- (i) Which language do you speak as a mother tongue?
- (ii) Which language do you speak as a second language? To elicit responses to these and other questions, people were contacted and interviewed individually. Since enumerators were not provided

with a working list of languages/dialects spoken in Nepal<sup>2</sup>, they returned some vague names of the languages spoken by various communities. To resolve this uncertainty a committee of linguists with various linguistic backgrounds was formed at the CBS. This committee tried to keep the returned language names intact unless it was obvious that the various names belonged to a single language. Finally, 92 languages were identified pending a number of languages as 'unknown' (or unidentified) since it was then not possible to ascertain their precise identity without doing their on-the-spot study.

This chapter is an attempt to deal with the situation of Nepalese peoples' mother tongues and their second languages. It consists of two main sections. The first section seeks to address the mother tongues and their related issues. In the second section second languages have been discussed. Finally, we sum up the major findings concerning the overall language situation in Nepal based on censuses, esp. the 2001 census.

## **2. Mother tongues**

There have been identified 92 mother tongues (barring some 'unknown' languages) in the 2001 census. The main aspects of these mother tongues to be discussed in this section include their identification, nomenclature, genetic affiliation, distribution, writing systems, ethnic relation, and use, policy and endangerment.

### **2.1 Identification**

There have been made some attempts to identify the numerous languages spoken in this country as mother tongues. One of these attempts is the enumeration of languages in the various censuses. Since the 1952/54 census languages have consistently been reported. However, their number shows variation in these censuses. Except 'other', 'unknown' and 'not stated' languages, there were recorded 44 (1952/54), 36 (1961), 17 (1971), 18 (1981), and 31 (1991) languages in the last five censuses (Gurung,

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<sup>2</sup> In the 1961 Census of India *Language Handbook on Mother Tongues in Census* (Nigam, 1972) was provided to find out whether or not such a language entry had been returned in an earlier census and to identify the language family to which it belongs.

2002:37) but their figures have drastically increased to 92.<sup>3</sup> However, there still remain quite a few languages (used by as many as 168,340 strong speakers, i.e. 0.74 per cent of the total population) which are lumped together into an ‘unknown’ slot in the lack of adequate information<sup>4</sup>. This increase is due to the fact that a large number of languages used as mother tongues have been returned for the first time because of the growing awareness of several ethnic minorities about their distinct cultural and linguistic identity. Such mother tongues include Bram/Bramu, Bhujel, Chhantyal, Dura, Ghale, Kaike, Kisan, Kusunda, Munda, Raute, Angika, Yholmo, Khariya, Lhomi, Dungmali, and Sadhani. Deaf’s Nepali Sign Language has been reported. Besides, the earlier censuses recorded all the Rai languages under a single heading, called ‘Rai group of languages’. In the 2001 census, however, there have been enumerated 22 separate languages in this group. Similarly, Angika and Bajjika, which were earlier considered the dialects of Maithili and Bhojpuri, respectively, have now emerged as distinct languages. In addition, there have also been reported some foreign languages (mostly spoken in India) for the first time; they are Hariyanwi, Magahi, Kuki, Mizo, Nagamese, Sindhi, Assamese, Oriya, Kurmali, Koche, Dzonkha, and Chinese, apart from English.

This considerable rise in the number of languages spoken in Nepal may be ascribed to a number of reasons. Since the restoration of democracy there has been continual increase in awareness among linguistic minorities (including indigenous peoples) about their mother tongues. Their ethnic organizations had been creating awareness of preserving and promoting their cultural identity including their languages. Taking cognizance of this reality, the CBS also sought the cooperation and support of these organizations during the enumeration for the 2001 census. Following the enumeration, some linguists were also consulted for the precise identification of Nepal’s languages.

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<sup>3</sup> But this census, unlike some previous ones, has not reported population with ‘not stated’ languages.

<sup>4</sup> The speakers of the unidentified languages are sufficiently large in number and cannot be ignored. It is important to visit the related fields in order to elicit necessary information for their precise identification.

Presented below is the complete list of the languages arranged in order of their number of speakers reported in the last six censuses (1952/54 – 2001).

**Table 1: Distribution of population of Nepal by mother tongue (1952/54-2001)**

| Mother Tongue     | Population     |               |                |               |                 |               |                 |               |                 |               |                 |               |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
|                   | 1952/54        | %             | 1961           | %             | 1971            | %             | 1981            | %             | 1991            | %             | 2001            | %             |
| A. Indo-European  | 6351899        | 77.13         | 7449604        | 79.14         | 9062435         | 78.42         | 12417886        | 82.66         | 14701283        | 79.50         | 17982769        | 79.1          |
| 1. Nepali         | 4013567        | 48.74         | 4796528        | 50.96         | 6060758         | 52.45         | 8767361         | 58.36         | 9302880         | 50.31         | 11053255        | 48.61         |
| 2. Maithili       | 1024780        | 12.44         | 1130402        | 12.01         | 1327242         | 11.49         | 1668309         | 11.11         | 2191900         | 11.85         | 2797582         | 12.30         |
| 3. Bhojpuri       | 477281         | 5.80          | 577357         | 6.13          | 806480          | 6.98          | 1142805         | 7.61          | 1379717         | 7.46          | 1712536         | 7.53          |
| 4. Tharu          | 359594         | 4.37          | 406907         | 4.32          | 495881          | 4.29          | 545685          | 3.63          | 993388          | 5.37          | 1331546         | 5.86          |
| 5. Abadhi         | 328408         | 3.99          | 477090         | 5.07          | 316950          | 2.74          | 234343          | 1.56          | 374635          | 2.03          | 560744          | 2.47          |
| 6. Rajbansi       | 35543          | 0.43          | 55803          | 0.59          | 55124           | 0.48          | 59383           | 0.40          | 85558           | 0.46          | 129829          | 0.57          |
| 7. Hindi          | 80181          | 0.97          | 2867           | 0.03          | —               | —             | —               | —             | 170997          | 0.92          | 105765          | 0.47          |
| 8. Urdu           | 32545          | 0.40          | 2650           | 0.03          | —               | —             | —               | —             | 202208          | 1.09          | 174840          | 0.77          |
| B. Sino-Tibetan   | 1795337        | 21.08         | 1813083        | 19.26         | 1982635         | 17.16         | 1811944         | 12.06         | 3098698         | 16.76         | 4183995         | 18.4          |
| 9. Tamang         | 494745         | 6.01          | 528812         | 5.62          | 555056          | 4.80          | 522416          | 3.48          | 904456          | 4.89          | 1179145         | 5.19          |
| 10. Newar         | 383184         | 4.65          | 377721         | 4.01          | 454979          | 3.94          | 448746          | 2.99          | 690007          | 3.73          | 825458          | 3.63          |
| 11. Magar         | 273780         | 3.32          | 254675         | 2.71          | 288383          | 2.50          | 212681          | 1.42          | 430264          | 2.3           | 770116          | 3.39          |
| 12. Rai, Kirat    | 236049         | 2.87          | 239745         | 2.55          | 232264          | 2.01          | 221353          | 1.47          | 439312          | 2.38          | —               | —             |
| 13. Gurung        | 162192         | 1.97          | 157778         | 1.68          | 171609          | 1.49          | 174464          | 1.16          | 227918          | 1.23          | 338925          | 1.49          |
| 14. Limbu         | 145511         | 1.77          | 138705         | 1.47          | 170787          | 1.48          | 129234          | 0.86          | 254088          | 1.37          | 333633          | 1.47          |
| 15. Bhote, Sherpa | 70132          | 0.85          | 84229          | 0.89          | 79218           | 0.69          | 73589           | 0.49          | 121819          | 0.66          | 129771          | 0.57          |
| 16. Sunuwar       | 17299          | 0.21          | 13362          | 0.14          | 20380           | 0.18          | 10650           | 0.07          | —               | —             | 26611           | 0.12          |
| 17. Danuwar       | 9138           | 0.11          | 11625          | 0.12          | 9959            | 0.09          | 13522           | 0.09          | 23721           | 0.13          | 31849           | 0.14          |
| 18. Thakali       | 3307           | 0.04          | 6432           | 0.07          | —               | —             | 5289            | 0.04          | 7113            | 0.04          | 6441            | 0.03          |
| C. Austro-Asiatic | 16751          | 0.20          | 29485          | 0.31          | 23853           | 0.21          | 28208           | 0.19          | 33332           | 0.18          | 40260           | 0.2           |
| 19. Satar         | 16751          | 0.20          | 18840          | 0.20          | 20660           | 0.18          | 22403           | 0.15          | 25302           | 0.14          | —               | —             |
| 20. Santhali      | —              | —             | 10645          | 0.11          | 3193            | 0.03          | 5804            | 0.04          | 8030            | 0.04          | 40260           | 0.18          |
| D. Dravidian      | —              | —             | —              | —             | —               | —             | —               | —             | 15175           | 0.1           | 28615           | 0.1           |
| E. Other          | 70340          | 0.85          | 114392         | 1.22          | 487060          | 4.21          | 764802          | 5.09          | 648627          | 3.51          | 28615           | 0.13          |
| F. Not stated     | 752            | 0.01          | 6432           | 0.07          | —               | —             | —               | —             | 9157            | 0.05          | 503295          | 2.2           |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>8235079</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>9412996</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>11555983</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>15022839</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>18491097</b> | <b>100.00</b> | <b>22738934</b> | <b>100.00</b> |

Source: Population Censuses (1952/54-2001)

The languages recorded in the 2001 census but not enumerated in the earlier censuses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Additional languages (2001)**

| Mother tongues          | Speakers | %    |
|-------------------------|----------|------|
| 1. Bajjika              | 237947   | 1.05 |
| 2. Angika               | 15892    | 0.07 |
| 3. Chhantyal            | 5912     | 0.03 |
| 4. Nepali Sign Language | 5743     | 0.02 |
| 5. Meche                | 3301     | 0.01 |
| 6. Lepcha               | 2826     | 0.01 |
| 7. Khariya              | 1575     | 0.01 |
| 8. Sanskrit             | 823      | 0.01 |
| 9. Raute                | 518      | 0.00 |
| 10. Kisan               | 489      | 0.00 |
| 11. Baram               | 342      | 0.00 |
| 12. Dungmali            | 221      | 0.00 |
| 13. Kusunda             | 87       | 0.00 |
| 14. Sindhi              | 72       | 0.00 |
| 15. Koche               | 52       | 0.00 |
| 16. Hariyanwi           | 33       | 0.00 |
| 17. Magahi              | 30       | 0.00 |
| 18. Kurmali             | 13       | 0.00 |
| 19. Dzonkha             | 9        | 0.00 |
| 20. Kuki                | 9        | 0.00 |
| 21. Mizo                | 8        | 0.00 |
| 22. Nagamese            | 6        | 0.00 |
| 23. Assamese            | 3        | 0.00 |
| 24. Sadhani             | 2        | 0.00 |

Source: Population Census 2001

In addition to these fresh entries, the Rai/Kirant group of languages, lumped together into a single entry, has been returned with separate languages. These languages have been presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Rai languages (2001)**

| Languages      | Speakers | %    |
|----------------|----------|------|
| 1. Bantawa     | 371056   | 1.63 |
| 2. Chamling    | 44093    | 0.19 |
| 3. Kulung      | 18686    | 0.08 |
| 4. Yakkha      | 14648    | 0.06 |
| 5. Thulung     | 14034    | 0.06 |
| 6. Sanpang     | 10810    | 0.05 |
| 7. Khaling     | 9288     | 0.04 |
| 8. Dumi        | 5271     | 0.02 |
| 9. Umbule      | 4471     | 0.02 |
| 10. Puma       | 4310     | 0.02 |
| 11. Nachhering | 3553     | 0.02 |
| 12. Bahing     | 2765     | 0.01 |
| 13. Kou        | 2641     | 0.01 |
| 14. Yamphule   | 1722     | 0.01 |
| 15. Chhiling   | 1314     | 0.01 |
| 16. Lohorung   | 1207     | 0.01 |
| 17. Mewahang   | 904      | 0.00 |
| 18. Tilung     | 310      | 0.00 |
| 19. Jerung     | 271      | 0.00 |
| 20. Dungmali   | 221      | 0.00 |
| 21. Lingkhim   | 97       | 0.00 |
| 22. Sam        | 23       | 0.00 |
| 23. Chhintang  | 8        | 0.00 |

Source: Population Census 2001

This uncertainty about the number of Nepal's languages and their reduced enumeration in the last five censuses may be attributed to their lack of required information and awareness about mother tongues and also the "one nation – one language" policy adopted during the Panchayat regime.

Setting aside the various censuses, attempts have also been made by some linguists to identify Nepal's languages by linguists. Malla (1989) and Toba (1992) mention 70 while Grimes (2000) lists 121 languages one of which, called Kusunda has been claimed to be dead. All these attempts (including censuses) for identification of languages spoken in Nepal as mother



tongues are some sort of approximation or rationalization of information and cannot be deemed final.

## 2.2 Nomenclature

Nepal's languages are found to be named in various ways. The names for several languages have been derived from the country or place names and bestowed by the-then ruling classes as their official names. Such regional designations have gradually gained currency among their users and others. One of such languages is Nepali, which has been established as the state language of the Kingdom of Nepal since Gurkha conquest in the eighteenth century. Its main alternative names used earlier include *Gorkhali*, *Khas Kuraa*, and *Parbatiyaa*. Other languages of Nepal whose nomenclature is based on place names are Maithili (< *Mithilaa*), Bhojpuri (< *Bhojpur*), Awadhi (< *Awadh*), Hindi (< *Hindustaan*), Santhali (< *Santhal*), Bangala (< *Bangaal*), Marwadi (*Mawaad*), Angika (< *Ang*), Tibetan (< *Tibet*), Meche (< *Mechi*), Punjabi (*Punjab*), Oriya (< *Orissa*), Sindhi (< *Sindh*), Marwari (< Marwar), Hariyanvi (< *Haryana*), Magahi (< *Magadh*), Assamese (< *Assam*), etc.

Secondly, there are many examples in Nepal of a language name derived from a community or tribe name. Such languages include Tharu, Tamang, Newar, Magar, Kiranti languages, Gurung, Rajbanshi, Sherpa, Chepang, Majhi, Danuwar, Sunuwar, Thami, Dhimal, Bhujel/Khawas, Darai, Kumal, Thakali, Bhujel, Chhantyal, Pahari, Lepcha/Lapche, Bote, Raji, Byanshi, Ghale, Khariya Raute, Kisan, Churaute, Baram/Maramu, Kusunda, Dhangar, Dura, Yolmo, Munda, etc. Some of the tribe names on which their language names are based have been further derived from place names, e.g. Sunwar (< Sunuwar 'a tribe' < Sunkoshi 'a river'), Jirel (< *Jiri*, 'a place in...'), etc.

Thirdly, Churaute is the only language spoken in Nepal named after the profession of its speakers have adopted. Even this name given by Nepali speakers is not palatable to its native speakers; instead, they prefer to call their speech 'Muslim Bhasha'.

Fourthly, Urdu, Sanskrit, and Tibetan are the three languages which are very much restricted to religions. Urdu, originated as *Dakshni* (the 'southern' language) used by the Muslim conquerors in northern Deccan and later called *Urdu*, the language of the court, called the *Horde*, in the main stronghold of Northern Hindustan, was finally adopted as the

language of the Muslim community in India as well as Nepal ( Cf. Breton, 1997:74). Sanskrit, enumerated only with 823 native speakers, is hardly used as a medium of mass communication but it has been actively used by Hindus in performing their religious rituals and also by scholars in scholastic study and deliberations.

Finally, Nepali Sign Language, which has been reported in the 2001 census, has been named after the medium or ‘signs’ used by the deaf in their communication.

There are quite a few languages with more than one name, e.g. *Gorkhali*, *Khas Kuraa*, and *Parbatiyaa* for Nepali, *Tirhutiya* and *Dehati* for Maithili, and so on<sup>6</sup>. Etymologically, the derivation of an Indo-Aryan language name may involve a productive adjectival Nepali suffix *-i* attached to a nominal stem (indicating place), e.g. *Nepal* (noun) + *-i* = *Nepali*, *Mithila* + *-i* = *Maithili*, *Bhojpur* + *-i* = *Bhojpuri*, *Awadh* + *-i* = *Awadhi*, etc. The Tibeto-Burman languages, however, do not involve such suffixation.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.3 Genetic affiliation

The languages enumerated in the 2001 census belong to the four language families, viz. Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan<sup>8</sup>, Austro-Asiatic, and Dravidian.

In Nepalese context, Indo-European family of languages mainly comprise Indo-Aryan group of languages, which forms the largest group of languages in terms of speakers, viz. nearly 80 per cent.

The Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Nepal can be genetically subcategorized in the following diagram:

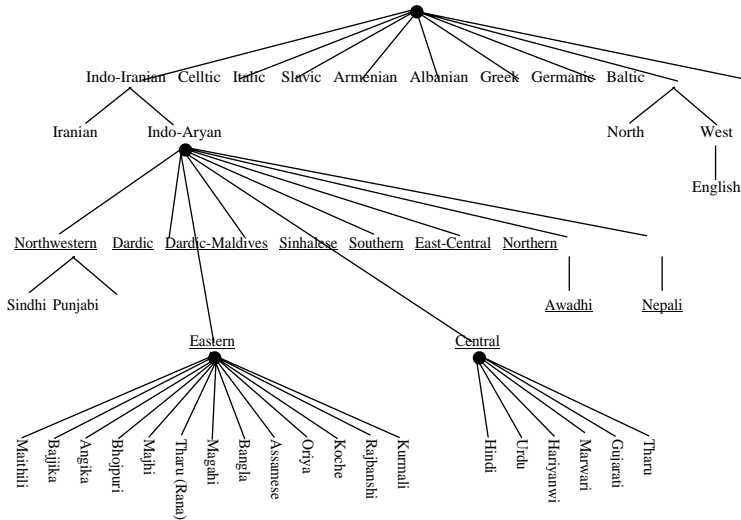
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<sup>6</sup> See Grimes (2000) for the various names used for a language.

<sup>7</sup> The only exception was Newari, which has ceased to be used now.

<sup>8</sup> Kusunda, whose genetic affiliation was considered undecided earlier, has now been said to belong to the Himalayish group of Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan) languages (Grimes, 2000).

**Diagram 1: Indo-European languages**



SUnclassified : Darai, Kumal, Sadhani, Danuwar, Charauti

Some of the Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Nepal are yet to be identified due to the lack of their description. These languages include Tharu, Bote, Darai, and Danuwar.

Another important group of Nepal's languages is the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan family. Though it is spoken by a relatively lesser number of people than the Indo-European family, it consists of the largest number of languages, viz. about 57 languages. Contrary to speakers of Indo-Aryan languages, there has been a steady decline in speakers of Sino-Tibetan languages from the 1952/54 to the 1981 censuses, viz. 21.8 (1952/54), 19.26 (1961), 17.16 (1971), and 12.06 (1981) per cent. In the last two censuses, they have, however, increased to 16.76 per cent (1991) and nearly 19 per cent (2001). Their decline and increase may also be due to the reasons ascribed to those of Indo-European languages.

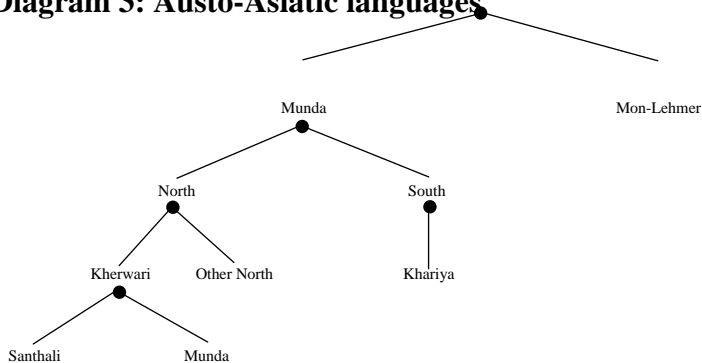
The Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in Nepal can be subcategorized as follows:

## **Diagram 2: Sino-Tibetan languages**

(Please see P. 122 Appendix 3)

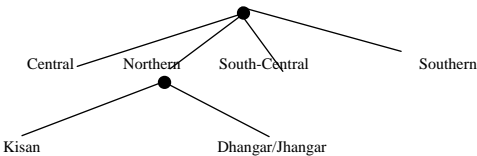
In addition to these two major language families, Nepal also includes two minor language families. They are Austric branch of the Austro-Asiatic family and Dravidian family of languages. The Austric languages comprise Santhali of the northern Munda group and Khariya of the southern Munda group. It is to be noted that Satar has been reported in all the censuses but Santhal has been wrongly reported as a separate language except in the 1952/54 census. The 2001 census lumps both Satar and Santhal together into a single language, called Santhali. It is suggested that Munda (with 67 speakers) should also be included within Santhali, in that it is just a variant name of the same language. According to the 2001 census, Santhali speakers are 40, 193 in number, i.e. 0.18% of Nepal's total population, as compared to 0.20% (1952/54), 0.31% (1961), 0.21% (1971), 0.19 (1981), and 0.18% (1991). Another Austric language of Munda branch is Kharia, which has been introduced in the 2001 census for the first time. This language is spoken by 1575, i.e. 0.01%. All the Austric languages are spoken by groups of tribal peoples from the eastern Terai and make up approximately 0.19 per cent of the total population. The genetic affiliation of the Austric languages spoken in Nepal is shown in the following diagram:

**Diagram 3: Austro-Asiatic languages**



A single language of Dravidian language spoken in Nepal is called Jhangar in the region east of Kosi river and Dhargar in the region west of Kosi river. It constitutes the northernmost part of Dravidian family of languages. It is said to be a regional variant of Kurux spoken in Jharkhand State of India though it shows divergence in its vocabulary and grammar (Gordon, 1976; Yadava, 2002). According to the 2001 census, it is spoken by 28,615, i.e. 0.13% of the total population of the country. Its speakers have been reported to be 4832 (1952/54), 9140 (1961), and 15175 (1991). But it was not listed in the 1971 and 1981 censuses. The genetic affiliation of Dhargar/Jhangar is presented in the following diagram:

**Diagram 4: Dravidian languages**



**2.4 Distribution**

The Indo-Aryan languages are spoken by the majority of Nepal's total population and thus constitute the largest group of Nepal's languages in terms of their speakers. In the last six censuses, their speakers constituted 77.13 per cent (1952/54), 79.14 per cent (1961), 78.42. per cent (1971), 82.66 per cent (1981), 79.50 per cent (1991), and nearly 80 per cent (2001) of the total population. These figures show increase in the speakers of Indo-

Aryan languages except their slight decline in the 1971 and 1991 censuses. Of the Indo-Aryan languages, there had been steady increase in the percentage of Nepali speakers from the 1952/54 till the 1981 censuses but it has declined in the 1991 and 2001 censuses. On the contrary, the non-Nepali Indo-Aryan languages except Bhojpuri declined from the 1952/54 till the 1981 censuses but it has increased in the 1991 and 2001 censuses. This increase in Nepali speakers and decline in other Indo-Aryan languages during the 1952/54-1981 may presumably be attributed to the growing emphasis on the “one nation–one language” policy imposed during the Panchayat regime. Conversely, the decline in Nepali speakers and rise in other the speakers of Indo- Aryan languages may be ascribed to the people’s awareness of promoting and preserving their mother tongues following the restoration of democracy in 1990.

The Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Nepal are mainly distributed from the western to the eastern hills and the Terai and also the far western mountain though they are spoken with low density in almost all the remaining parts of the country.

Another group of languages spoken in Nepal are the Tibeto-Burman languages. Their number is the largest, exceeding 50 languages, as compared to other groups of languages including the Indo-Aryan languages. The Tibeto-Burman languages which are mentioned in all the census are Tamang, Newar, Magar, Rai (Kirant), Gurung, Limbu, Bhote (Sherpa), and Thakali. Sunuwar has not been listed in the 1991 census. Similarly, Thakali did not appear in the 1971 census. According to the 2001 census, these languages are spoken by 84.4 per cent of Nepal’s total population and occupies the second position. However, the percentages of their speakers vary in the different censuses: 21.8 per cent (1952/54), 19.26 (1961), 17.16 (1971), 12.06 (1981), 16.76 (1991), and 18.4 (2001).

The Tibeto-Burman languages mainly extend over the eastern, central and western mountain and hills though they are also sparsely spoken in the other parts of the country.

The two of the Austric languages, viz. Santhali (inclusive Munda) and Khariya, have been returned in various censuses with some variations. They are reported to have been spoken by 0.2 per cent (1952/54), 0.31 per cent (1961), 0.21 per cent (1971), 0.19 per cent (1981), 0.18 per cent (1991), and 0.2 per cent (2001). They are mainly distributed in the southern parts of Jhapa and Morang districts.

The only language of Dravidian family, Dhangar/Jhangar, consist of 4,812 (1952/54), 15, 175 (1991) and 28,615 (2001) speakers. Mainly spoken in Sunsari district, it is also marginally spoken in Siraha and some other districts.

The distribution of the four language families and their speakers have been presented in the following table:

**Table 4: Distribution of population by the language families of mother tongues (1952/54-2001)**

**Table 4**

| Mother Tongue     | Population |        |         |        |          |        |          |        |          |        |          |        |
|-------------------|------------|--------|---------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
|                   | 1952/54    | %      | 1961    | %      | 1971     | %      | 1981     | %      | 1991     | %      | 2001     | %      |
| A. Indo-European  | 6351899    | 77.13  | 7449604 | 79.14  | 9062435  | 78.42  | 12417886 | 82.66  | 14701283 | 79.50  | 17982769 | 79.1   |
| B. Sino-Tibetan   | 1795337    | 21.08  | 1813083 | 19.26  | 1982635  | 17.16  | 1811944  | 12.06  | 3098698  | 16.76  | 4183995  | 18.4   |
| C. Austro-Asiatic | 16751      | 0.20   | 29485   | 0.31   | 23853    | 0.21   | 28208    | 0.19   | 33332    | 0.18   | 40260    | 0.2    |
| D. Dravidian      | —          | —      | —       | —      | —        | —      | —        | —      | 15175    | 0.1    | 28615    | 0.1    |
| E. Others         | 70340      | 0.85   | 114392  | 1.22   | 487060   | 4.21   | 764802   | 5.09   | 648627   | 3.51   |          |        |
| F. Not stated     | 752        | 0.01   | 6432    | 0.07   | —        | —      | —        | —      | 9157     | 0.05   | 503295   | 2.2    |
| <b>Total</b>      | 8235079    | 100.00 | 9412996 | 100.00 | 11555983 | 100.00 | 15022839 | 100.00 | 18491097 | 100.00 | 22738934 | 100.00 |

Source: Population Censuses (1952/54-2001)



A comparison of the distribution of rural and urban population by the language families according to the 2001 census figures shows that Indo-Aryan languages are spoken as mother tongues by 61.7 per cent in rural areas but 38.3 per cent in urban areas. Tibeto-Burman languages are spoken by 57.2 per cent in rural areas as compared to 42.8 per cent in urban areas. Similarly, Austric languages have been reported to be spoken by 82.1 per cent and 17.9 per cent in rural and urban areas, respectively. Finally, 82.8 per cent and 17.2 per cent of the total population have reported Dravidian languages as their mother tongues in rural and urban areas, respectively. A comparison of the distribution of rural and urban population indicates shift from rural to urban areas.

**Table 5: Distribution of rural and urban population by mother tongue (1991-2001)**

**Table 5**

| Language Families | 1991  |       | 2001  |       |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                   | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| Indo-European     | 91.99 | 8.01  | 61.7  | 38.3  |
| Sino-Tibetan      | 84.87 | 15.22 | 57.2  | 42.8  |
| Austro-Asiatic    | 97.97 | 2.10  | 82.1  | 17.9  |
| Dravidian         | —     | —     | —     | —     |
| Not stated        | 93.05 | 6.95  | 82.8  | 17.2  |

Source: Population Censuses (1991-2001)

## 2.5 Writing systems

Most of the languages spoken in Nepal are still confined to their oral traditions. Each of them has a rich oral heritage of traditional folk stories and songs handed down from parent to child over a long period of time, e.g. *Salhes* in Maithili and *Mundhun* in Kiranti languages. However, they are disappearing with the growth of literacy and language shift. It is, therefore, time to document them before they are lost to posterity to come.

Only a few of Nepal's languages have literate traditions. They include Nepali, Maithili, Tibetan/Sherpa, Newar, Limbu, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Lepcha in particular. All of them have long tradition of written literature. These languages have employed various writing systems or scripts. Most of the Indo-Aryan languages such as Nepali, Maithili (originally written in

Mithilakshar or Kaithi script), Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Hindi and Rajbanshi use the Devanagari script though Bengali is written in a different version of Devanagari script. The Tibetan script is used by Lamas for Tibetan. Newar has its own traditional script called Ranjana but it has also adopted the Devanagari script for the sake of convenience in reading and printing. Limbu uses its own Kiranti Srijanga script. Lepcha is written in Rong script.

Of late some other languages have taken to literate traditions. Initiatives have been taken by various language communities to develop writing systems appropriate to the sound system of their languages and practically acceptable to them. They are Tharu, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rajbanshi and Rai group of languages such as Bantawa, Thulung, Chamling, Khaling, Kulung, and so on. Tharu, Tamang and Gurung use the Devanagari script but some of the Gurung speakers advocate for the use of Roman script for this language. Magar has developed its own script, called Akkha. Recently, these languages have started developing some written literature in the form of newspaper, magazine, textbooks for adult literacy and primary education, and folk literature.

As in India, Santhali in Nepal is written in Roman script. In addition, some of the languages have adopted Devanagari script. Arabic script is used for writing Urdu. Thus, there have been used about nine scripts in writing Nepal's languages.

## **2.6 Language and ethnicity**

Nepal is a multiethnic nation. It comprises various ethnic and religious communities. Its ethnic and religious diversity is coupled with its linguistic plurality. They are found to interact with one another, resulting in the threefold ethnic/religious-linguistic structure. First, there are a number of ethno-linguistic communities in Nepal each of which has a common mother tongue. The mother tongues associated with jatis (also called *janjatis* 'indigeneous peoples') include Magar, Tharu, Tamang, Gurung, Limbu, Sherpa, Rajbanshi, Sunuwar, Kumal, Majhi, Danuwar, Chepang, Thami, Thakali, Bhote, Dhimal, Darai, Lepcha, Byansi, Raute, Raji, Dhangad/Jhangad and so on. Such a situation having one-to-to relation between languages and ethnic groups is "one tribe one language" formula. Besides, Urdu is the mother tongue of a community belonging to a particular religion, viz. Islam. Similarly, Tibetan-speaking Bhotiyas or Sherpas are Buddhists. (Cf. Breton, 1997: 16-17). It is, however, to be

noted that this formula is not exempt from exceptions. Secondly, there are, on the other hand, ethnic communities each of which speak several mother tongues. This “one tribe with several languages” in Nepal is the Rai (Kiranti) group in the eastern hills and mountain. This single group speaks various Kiranti language such as Bantawa, Chamling, Kulung, Yakkha, Thulung, Sangpang, Khaling, Dumi, Jirel, Puma, Umbule, Bahing, Yholmo, Nachiring, Dura, Koi, Hayu, Yamphu, Chhiling, Lohorung, Mewahang, Kaike, Tilung, Jerung, Lingkhim, Sam, Kagate, Chhingtang, Lhomi, etc. This trend is illustrated in the Terai also. In this region, various castes and tribes such as Brahmin, Rajput, Yadav, Teli, Kurmi, Chamar, Khatawe, etc. speak Maithili in the Maithili-speaking area, Bhojpuri in the Bhojpuri-speaking area and Abadhi in the Abadhi-speaking area. Thus, there exists no one-to-correspondence between ethnic communities and their mother tongues in the Terai. Thirdly, we find the “several tribes with a common language” formula. Different ethnic groups are found to speak a single mother tongue. This formula has been exemplified by Nepali, which is spoken as a mother tongue by various ethnic groups such as Bahun, Kshetri, Kami, Damai, Thakuri, Sarki, Sanyasi, and so on. Being a *lingua franca*, it has also been adopted as a mother tongue by people from different ethnic groups as well. Hence, it is called an “interethnic language.” Similarly, the Newars consist of various ethnic groups but all these groups speak a single language, viz. Newar or Nepal Bhasa.

In case of one-to-one relation between the tribes and their languages, a comparison of the population of different tribes and their languages can show the extent of language retention by each tribe. According to Gurung (2002: 7-8), there has been considerable increase in the speakers of the languages spoken by various ethnic groups except those of Dhimal, Bhote-Sherpa and Thakali languages. Rajbanshi and Raji are the two languages whose population exceeds the population of their tribes. Besides, Limbu, Jirel, Thami, and Magar have shown significant increase in their speakers. This is evident from the following table:

**Table 6: The population of tribes and their languages**

**Table 6**

| Ethnic Groups    | 1991  | 2001  | Ethnic Groups | 1991 | 2001 |
|------------------|-------|-------|---------------|------|------|
| 1. Rajbanshi     | 104.1 | 135.2 | 18. Chapang   | 68.5 | 70.5 |
| 2. Rajee         | 90.4  | 100.6 | 19. Darai     | 60.0 | 68.7 |
| 3. Hayu          | -     | 95.7  | 20. Newar     | 66.2 | 66.3 |
| 4. Satar         | -     | 94.1  | 21. Dura      | -    | 65.7 |
| 5. Limbu         | 64.0  | 92.9  | 22. Gurung    | 50.7 | 62.4 |
| 6. Jirel         | 86.5  | 92.5  | 23. Chhantel  | -    | 60.2 |
| 7. Tamang        | 88.8  | 92.0  | 24. Danuwar   | 46.7 | 59.8 |
| 8. Dhital        | 89.5  | 88.6  | 25. Kusunda   | -    | 53.0 |
| 9. Meche         | -     | 87.7  | 26. Thakali   | 51.8 | 49.6 |
| 10. Tharu        | 83.2  | 86.8  | 27. Magar     | 32.1 | 47.5 |
| 11. Yatha        | -     | 86.1  | 28. Jhangad   | -    | 36.3 |
| 12. Dhami        | 75.4  | 82.6  | 29. Bote      | -    | 35.4 |
| 13. Byansi       | -     | 82.4  | 30. Sunuwar   | -    | 27.9 |
| 14. Raute        | -     | 78.7  | 31. Pahari    | -    | 26.0 |
| 15. Rai–Kirant   | 83.6  | 78.3  | 32. Majhi     | 20.6 | 23.6 |
| 16. Bhote–Sherpa | 99.1  | 7.6   | 33. Bhujel    | -    | 9.1  |
| 17. Lepcha       | -     | 77.2  | 34. Kumal     | 1.8  | 6.6  |
|                  |       |       | 35. Baramu    | -    | 4.5  |

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

All these aspects of language-ethnicity relation reflect the dynamism of language shift in Nepalese context. They suggest a common tendency to shift toward regional and ethnic languages. As a result, there has been continuous decline in the numerical strength of Nepali speakers.

### **3 Second languages**

The linguistic diversity existing in the country has given rise to the three situations in the country, viz. monolingualism, bilingualism, and multilingualism. Of these language situations, only monolingualism or the use of mother tongues has been regularly reported since the first modern census in 1952/54. The 2001 census data on monolingual communities has been presented in Appendix A. The linguistically homogeneous communities figure 70 per cent of the total population of mother tongue speakers. They are mostly Nepali-speaking people, viz. 46 percent. Their mother tongue Nepali is also a lingua franca; they hardly need to learn a second language to communicate with a group of people, speaking a different language since they know Nepali. Besides Nepali speaking people, there are people from indigenous groups and also from the Terai who are able to use only their mother tongue. These people are usually old and illiterate and/or hail from remote rural areas with minimum contact with people speaking other languages.

Bilingualism or the use of mother tongues and their speakers' second languages (i.e. the languages most commonly used by them) has, however, been reported since the 1991 census. The 2001 census has reported only 12 second languages used by 92 mother tongue speakers. The total percentage of bilingual speakers is reported to be 30 per cent.

**TABLE 7: POPULATION BY MOTHER TONGUE AND SECOND LANGUAGE**

| MOTHER TONGUE           | TOTAL    | POPULATION THAT SPEAK SECOND LANGUAGE |          |          |       |        |       |       |        |         |        |       |         |        |              |
|-------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
|                         |          | NEPALI                                | MAITHILI | BHOJPURI | THARU | TAMANG | NEWAR | MAGAR | AWADHI | BANTAWA | GURUNG | LIMBU | BAJJIKA | OTHERS | NOT REPORTED |
| (1)                     | (2)      | (3)                                   | (4)      | (5)      | (6)   | (7)    | (8)   | (9)   | (10)   | (11)    | (12)   | (13)  | (14)    | (15)   | (16)         |
| TOTAL                   | 22736934 | 5722151                               | 115877   | 64724    | 64274 | 46078  | 34431 | 49378 | 23577  | 71713   | 29655  | 35272 | 7612    | 632443 | 10784        |
| NEPALI                  | 11053255 | 0                                     | 54488    | 24761    | 42921 | 29959  | 29959 | 40150 | 14796  | 9841    | 18426  | 10043 | 966     | 178991 | 4802         |
| MAITHILI                | 2797582  | 880593                                | 0        | 14997    | 11629 | 228    | 76    | 157   | 460    | 542     | 74     | 1768  | 2104    | 208438 | 912          |
| BHOJPURI                | 1712536  | 308756                                | 5727     | 0        | 1469  | 31     | 99    | 50    | 114    | 73      | 8      | 21    | 618     | 61830  | 10           |
| THARU<br>(DAGAURA/RANA) | 1331546  | 695550                                | 9752     | 10580    | 0     | 44     | 36    | 127   | 5569   | 145     | 8      | 101   | 467     | 3318   | 260          |
| TAMANG                  | 1179145  | 929660                                | 390      | 56       | 75    | 0      | 971   | 1928  | 10     | 1317    | 7314   | 1096  | 0       | 5237   | 388          |
| NEWAR                   | 825458   | 626813                                | 201      | 82       | 71    | 407    | 0     | 373   | 13     | 386     | 149    | 294   | 1       | 8544   | 419          |
| MAGAR                   | 770116   | 648600                                | 208      | 54       | 657   | 1802   | 240   | 0     | 1      | 1302    | 2514   | 1801  | 0       | 971    | 531          |
| AWADHI                  | 560744   | 71631                                 | 130      | 25       | 887   | 21     | 13    | 43    | 0      | 111     | 4      | 27    | 0       | 79086  | 14           |
| BANTAWA                 | 371056   | 314505                                | 30       | 13       | 67    | 777    | 95    | 1279  | 13     | 0       | 123    | 17169 | 0       | 3173   | 1085         |
| GURUNG                  | 338925   | 262076                                | 23       | 24       | 103   | 10161  | 202   | 2649  | 3      | 447     | 0      | 327   | 0       | 2479   | 968          |
| LIMBU                   | 333633   | 231161                                | 78       | 9        | 40    | 682    | 87    | 1785  | 2      | 54534   | 106    | 0     | 0       | 2751   | 253          |
| BAJJIKA                 | 237947   | 31389                                 | 1102     | 6304     | 185   | 2      | 1     | 21    | 0      | 3       | 3      | 3     | 0       | 27628  | 2            |
| URDU                    | 174840   | 57965                                 | 22423    | 3246     | 372   | 5      | 26    | 9     | 2076   | 27      | 0      | 17    | 3378    | 22484  | 23           |
| RAJBANSI                | 129829   | 80274                                 | 7402     | 9        | 1218  | 15     | 0     | 1     | 51     | 83      | 3      | 19    | 0       | 6453   | 350          |
| SHERPA                  | 129771   | 109312                                | 12       | 12       | 4     | 941    | 53    | 4     | 0      | 179     | 34     | 168   | 0       | 386    | 198          |
| HINDI                   | 105765   | 61609                                 | 1693     | 2624     | 280   | 2      | 158   | 17    | 352    | 11      | 1      | 6     | 75      | 2415   | 2            |

|                        |       |       |      |     |      |     |    |     |    |     |     |      |   |      |     |
|------------------------|-------|-------|------|-----|------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|---|------|-----|
| CHAMLING               | 44093 | 39842 | 2    | 1   | 19   | 43  | 9  | 140 | 1  | 559 | 0   | 485  | 0 | 93   | 49  |
| SANTHALI               | 40260 | 25420 | 2855 | 6   | 323  | 10  | 0  | 1   | 0  | 58  | 4   | 8    | 0 | 3312 | 2   |
| CHEPANG                | 36807 | 29829 | 349  | 148 | 0    | 7   | 1  | 30  | 0  | 2   | 369 | 1    | 0 | 23   | 4   |
| DANUWAR                | 31849 | 24012 | 1878 | 3   | 16   | 6   | 1  | 12  | 0  | 40  | 0   | 1    | 0 | 39   | 0   |
| JHANGAR/<br>DHANGAR    | 28615 | 15441 | 2921 | 889 | 2221 | 2   | 0  | 8   | 0  | 5   | 1   | 4    | 0 | 198  | 2   |
| SUNUWAR                | 26611 | 21022 | 1    | 2   | 2    | 114 | 4  | 13  | 0  | 587 | 1   | 77   | 0 | 258  | 403 |
| BANGLA                 | 23602 | 12060 | 1796 | 229 | 64   | 2   | 22 | 8   | 35 | 7   | 0   | 3    | 0 | 2349 | 2   |
| MARWARI<br>(RAJSTHANI) | 22637 | 16772 | 258  | 36  | 2    | 1   | 20 | 0   | 47 | 3   | 0   | 0    | 0 | 1829 | 0   |
| MANJHI                 | 21841 | 17544 | 1    | 85  | 34   | 317 | 4  | 237 | 0  | 245 | 2   | 20   | 0 | 367  | 12  |
| THAMI                  | 18991 | 15173 | 0    | 0   | 0    | 9   | 0  | 28  | 4  | 9   | 0   | 4    | 0 | 15   | 1   |
| KULUNG                 | 18686 | 15771 | 84   | 0   | 0    | 0   | 3  | 5   | 0  | 40  | 0   | 76   | 0 | 10   | 1   |
| DHIMAL                 | 17308 | 13132 | 4    | 3   | 807  | 19  | 3  | 85  | 0  | 93  | 0   | 178  | 0 | 1043 | 2   |
| ANGIKA                 | 15892 | 7940  | 865  | 3   | 0    | 1   | 0  | 0   | 0  | 8   | 1   | 1    | 0 | 3852 | 0   |
| YAKKHA                 | 14648 | 12140 | 0    | 3   | 1    | 10  | 8  | 1   | 0  | 110 | 0   | 1066 | 0 | 34   | 29  |
| THULUNG                | 14034 | 12795 | 3    | 1   | 0    | 4   | 2  | 0   | 0  | 205 | 1   | 106  | 0 | 84   | 3   |
| SANGPANG               | 10810 | 8930  | 0    | 0   | 0    | 5   | 3  | 0   | 0  | 302 | 0   | 148  | 0 | 58   | 18  |
| BHUJEL/ KHAWAS         | 10733 | 8554  | 80   | 0   | 477  | 1   | 3  | 0   | 0  | 20  | 0   | 12   | 0 | 118  | 0   |
| DARAI                  | 10210 | 8500  | 2    | 0   | 3    | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0  | 1   | 1   | 1    | 0 | 16   | 0   |
| KHALING                | 9288  | 8804  | 6    | 2   | 0    | 0   | 0  | 8   | 0  | 71  | 4   | 30   | 0 | 18   | 2   |
| KUMAL                  | 6533  | 6007  | 15   | 0   | 6    | 1   | 3  | 16  | 0  | 3   | 0   | 0    | 0 | 54   | 0   |
| THAKALI                | 6441  | 5667  | 59   | 2   | 34   | 0   | 29 | 3   | 0  | 4   | 22  | 2    | 0 | 24   | 0   |
| CHHANTYAL/<br>CHHANTEI | 5912  | 5010  | 0    | 0   | 0    | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0    | 0 | 3    | 0   |
| NEPALI<br>LANGUAGE     | 5743  | 1257  | 0    | 0   | 1    | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0  | 1   | 0   | 0    | 0 | 3    | 3   |

|                 |      |      |   |   |     |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |   |     |   |
|-----------------|------|------|---|---|-----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|---|-----|---|
| TIBBETAN        | 5277 | 4334 | 0 | 8 | 1   | 2  | 4  | 1 | 0  | 0  | 35 | 0  | 0 | 30  | 1 |
| DUMI            | 5271 | 4054 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 31 | 0  | 27 | 0 | 17  | 3 |
| JIREL           | 4919 | 4317 | 0 | 1 | 0   | 1  | 0  | 0 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 8   | 0 |
| WAMBULE/ UMBULE | 4471 | 4314 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 61 | 0 | 0  | 4  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 10  | 0 |
| PUMA            | 4310 | 4061 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 1  | 0 | 0  | 10 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0   | 0 |
| YHOLMO          | 3986 | 3683 | 2 | 0 | 35  | 12 | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 46 | 1  | 0 | 0   | 0 |
| NACHHIRING      | 3553 | 3293 | 2 | 0 | 0   | 2  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 68 | 0  | 12 | 0 | 15  | 0 |
| DURA            | 3397 | 3013 | 0 | 1 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 1  | 17 | 0  | 0 | 0   | 0 |
| MECHE           | 3301 | 2970 | 2 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 8  | 0  | 17 | 0 | 79  | 6 |
| PAHARI          | 2995 | 1985 | 0 | 1 | 0   | 6  | 92 | 0 | 0  | 9  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 195 | 0 |
| LEPCHA/ LAPCHE  | 2826 | 2222 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 24 | 1  | 7  | 0 | 2   | 0 |
| BOTE            | 2823 | 2413 | 0 | 0 | 161 | 0  | 1  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0   | 0 |
| BAHING          | 2765 | 1571 | 0 | 0 | 1   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 6  | 0  | 17 | 0 | 816 | 1 |
| KOI/ KOYU       | 2641 | 2487 | 1 | 1 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 31 | 0  | 26 | 0 | 2   | 0 |
| RAJI            | 2413 | 1098 | 0 | 0 | 5   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 3  | 0 | 17  | 1 |
| HAYU            | 1743 | 1603 | 2 | 0 | 1   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 1  | 0  | 1  | 0 | 0   | 1 |
| BYANGSHI        | 1734 | 1324 | 0 | 1 | 2   | 1  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 38 | 0  | 0 | 23  | 0 |
| YAMPHU/ YAMPHE  | 1722 | 1659 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 16 | 0 | 4   | 0 |
| GHALE           | 1649 | 1474 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 9  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 94 | 0  | 0 | 0   | 0 |
| KHARIYA         | 1575 | 137  | 1 | 1 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 320 | 0 |
| CHHILING        | 1314 | 1292 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0   | 0 |
| LOHORUNG        | 1207 | 712  | 0 | 0 | 0   | 1  | 0  | 0 | 0  | 49 | 0  | 20 | 0 | 9   | 3 |
| PUNJABI         | 1165 | 530  | 1 | 9 | 3   | 0  | 0  | 0 | 22 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 255 | 9 |



|               |      |     |    |   |   |    |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |    |   |
|---------------|------|-----|----|---|---|----|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|----|---|
| CHINESE       | 1101 | 767 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 9 | 0 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 3 | 0 | 42 | 3 |
| ENGLISH       | 1037 | 535 | 7  | 1 | 0 | 0  | 7 | 4 | 1 | 6  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 34 | 5 |
| MEWAHANG      | 904  | 522 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| SANSKRIT      | 823  | 663 | 0  | 0 | 3 | 0  | 1 | 0 | 1 | 31 | 0  | 9 | 0 | 6  | 0 |
| KAIKE         | 794  | 792 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| RAUTE         | 518  | 270 | 3  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 11 | 1 |
| KISAN         | 489  | 366 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 2  | 0 |
| CHURAUTI      | 408  | 391 | 2  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| BARAM/ MARAMU | 342  | 89  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0  | 92 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 |
| TILUNG        | 310  | 281 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1  | 0  | 1 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| JERO/ JERUNG  | 271  | 270 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| DUNGMAI       | 221  | 162 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 |
| ORIYA         | 159  | 85  | 19 | 0 | 0 | 5  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1 | 0 | 25 | 0 |
| LINGKHMIM     | 97   | 97  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| KUSUNDA       | 87   | 59  | 1  | 0 | 9 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| SINDHI        | 72   | 26  | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 7  | 0 |
| KOCHE         | 54   | 52  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| HARIYANWI     | 33   | 32  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 1  | 0 |
| MAGAH         | 30   | 30  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| SAM           | 23   | 23  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| KURMALI       | 13   | 11  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| KAGATE        | 10   | 10  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |
| DZONKHA       | 9    | 1   | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0 |

|                     |        |       |     |     |    |     |     |     |   |    |     |    |   |      |   |
|---------------------|--------|-------|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|-----|----|---|------|---|
| KUKI                | 9      | 9     | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0 | 0    | 0 |
| CHHINTANG           | 8      | 6     | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 2  | 0   | 0  | 0 | 0    | 0 |
| MIZO                | 8      | 8     | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0 | 0    | 0 |
| NAGAMESE            | 6      | 6     | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0 | 0    | 0 |
| LHOMI               | 4      | 4     | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0 | 0    | 0 |
| ASSAMISE            | 3      | 0     | 0   | 0   | 3  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0 | 0    | 0 |
| SADHANI             | 2      | 2     | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 0  | 0   | 0  | 0 | 0    | 0 |
| UNKNOWN<br>LANGUAGE | 168340 | 20520 | 995 | 491 | 62 | 396 | 117 | 181 | 5 | 36 | 159 | 28 | 3 | 2503 | 0 |

Source: Population Census 2001

Nepali as a second language has been mostly returned by speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages. In such language communities it serves as a *lingua franca*. There are also quite a few Indo-Aryan languages whose speakers have returned Nepali as their second language in a large number. Such speakers also live in close proximity with Nepali speakers. They are by and large bilingual except for a few isolated communities. Apart from contact with Nepali-speaking community, non-Nepali speakers also Nepali as medium of education, media and administration.

The choice of a speaker's second language is not constrained by the condition that it must belong to the language family to which his mother tongue belongs. For example, a Tibeto-Burman (e.g. Newar) speaker may use an Indo-Aryan language (e.g. Nepali or Maithili) as his second language. Instead, the use of a second language is conditioned by contact and pressure for inter-community communication.

It is thus found that many people make vigorous use of second languages while conversing with speakers of other mother tongues. However, this fact does not suggest any details about their level of proficiency in the second language they use. There is a need to evaluate their bilingual proficiency.

Multilingualism, i.e. the use of more than two languages, is not as widespread as bilingualism in Nepal. However, it does exist in the country to a large extent. A number of Nepalis are found proficient not only in their mother tongues but also in their *lingua francas* such as Hindi and English and/or neighbouring indigenous languages. But Census data is not available about third languages. It does not mean that they are equally proficient in all these languages. Such a multilingual situation can be attributed to electronic media, employment and education in India and abroad.

Most speakers of Nepal's languages have been found to be in close contact. As a result, these languages tend to converge through mutual borrowing and influences and gradually share a number of lexical and grammatical features. For example, we find Tibeto-Burman languages "Indo-Aryanized" and Indo-Aryan languages "Tibeto-Burmanized". There is a need for an intensive study of convergence as well as divergence to ascertain the precise nature of Nepal as a linguistic area.

The Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the Terai (e.g. Rajbanshi, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Avadhi, and Tharu) constitute a curious case, in that they are linked uninterruptedly from the viewpoint of intelligibility. That is to say, it is rather difficult to say where one language ends and another begins. However, the degree of intelligibility goes on decreasing with the increase in distance between the adjacent languages. In such a case, people adopt Hindi as a link language. Thus, these languages form a continuum.

In the hills and mountains as well, Nepali language forms an uninterrupted cline of its various regional varieties. However, speakers of linguistically distinct Tibeto-Burman languages generally fail to communicate through their mother tongues. Instead, they adopt Nepali as a link language for their interpersonal communication.

A comparison of the various census reports (1952/4 –2001) indicates two conflicting tendencies in language use, viz. language shift and language maintenance. Language shift is a change from the use of one language to the use of another language. This tendency is reflected by decreases in languages and increase in Nepali, the language of the nation, in the censuses ranging from 1952/4 to 1981.

This language shift may be attributed to “one language – one nation” government policy to prescribe a single language for use in administration, education, and media. It may also be due to the pace of migration from one speech community to another (esp. a multilingual community often in urban areas) with the increasing facilities of transport and communication. Besides, it may also happen because Nepali, a single language, is required for employment, opportunities and wider communication as a *lingua franca*.

There has, however, been perceived a different tendency since the 1991 census. This tendency, called language maintenance, occurs when a group is loyal to its native language and tries to promote, preserve and use it even in a bilingual or multilingual situation. As a result of this tendency, there has been decrease in Nepali and increase in minority languages by 1.7 per cent. It is evident from the comparison of population by mother tongues in the last three censuses (1981-2001). The language maintenance may be due to a number of socio-cultural factors such as restoration of democracy, constitutional provisions, linguistic (including ethnic) awareness and so on.

## 4 Other languages

In the 2001 census, there have been returned quite a few non-Nepalese languages as mother tongues. Table 8 presents these languages with the number of their speakers.

**Table 8: Non-Nepalese languages in 2001 census**

**Table 8**

| Languages    | Number of Speakers |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. Chinese   | 1101               |
| 2. English   | 1037               |
| 3. Oriya     | 159                |
| 4. Sindhi    | 72                 |
| 5. Koche     | 54                 |
| 6. Hariyanwi | 3                  |
| 7. Magahi    | 30                 |
| 8. Kurmali   | 13                 |
| 9. Dzonkha   | 10                 |
| 10. Kuki     | 9                  |
| 11. Mizo     | 8                  |
| 12. Nagamese | 6                  |
| 13. Assamsi  | 4                  |
| 14. Sadha    | 2                  |

Source : Population Census, 2001.

These languages include Chinese (1,101 speakers), English ( 1,037 speakers), Oriya ( 159 speakers), Sindhi (72 speakers), Koche ( 54 speakers), Hariyanwi (33 speakers), Magahi (30 speakers), Kurmali ( 13 speakers), Dzonkha ( 10 speakers), Kuki ( 9 speakers), Mizo ( 8 speakers), Nagamese (6 speakers), Assamese (4 speakers) and Sadhani ( 2 speakers).

Chinese (1,101 speakers), mostly reported from the Kathmandu Municipality, are presumably spoken by business communities. In Nepalese context, English (1,037 speakers) functions as the language of prestige in Nepal. It is considered as a means of upward mobility. It has assumed even greater significance in the age of globalization. It has been used as an international language and a link to the rest of the world. For these reasons, it has been not only taught as a compulsory subject at public school and university levels but also used as medium of instruction in private schools. Besides, it has been employed as medium of science, technology, and commerce.

The remaining non-Nepalese languages, spoken by marginal number of speakers, are all Indian languages except Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan and may be spoken by immigrants.

In the 2001 census Sanskrit has been enumerated as mother tongue with 823 speakers, who may be presumably Sanskrit scholars with a zeal to preserve and promote the language. This classical language has ceased to be spoken as a mother tongue by a speech community. However, it has continued to be used for many centuries as a medium of scholastic study and deliberations and has been actively used by Hindus in performing their religious rituals. Sanskrit is still learned by some students as an optional language. There are even television programmes (including news) carried out in Sanskrit.

## **5 Language use, policy and endangerment**

In the lack of a comprehensive study, it is difficult to say anything definite about the patterns of language use in Nepal. However, some broad generalizations can be made in this regard on the basis of some sporadic studies on the extent and domains in which some individual languages are used in the country<sup>9</sup>. This factor, coupled with lack of written literature and marginalized number of speakers, is likely to give rise to a phenomenon called “language loss.”

In all speech communities, mother tongues are normally used as intra- and inter-household languages. When they speak to others with mother tongues different from their own, they generally tend to switch to a *lingua franca* (e.g. Nepali in the hill region and Hindi in the Terai). Moreover, mother tongues have gradually been ceased to be spoken by their speakers of younger generation under the influence of their community school education and mass media which has invariably adopted Nepali as medium of instruction. Nepali, spoken by the largest number of Nepalese people (48.61 per cent), has been adopted by various language communities as a *lingua franca* for broader communication. It is, however, to be noted that apart from this national *lingua franca*, there also exists a regional *lingua franca*, namely, Hindi, which has been used as medium of broader communication mainly in the Terai.

**The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1991)** has recognized Nepali as ‘the language of the nation’ (*raashtrabhaasaa*) and all mother tongues spoken in Nepal as its ‘national languages’ (*raashtriyabhaashaa*) (Article

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<sup>9</sup> See Varenkamp (1996) and other sociolinguistic surveys.

6.1). Article 6.2. also accepts Nepali as the only official language. In addition, the constitution has also adopted the policy to promote and preserve Nepal's national languages (Art 6.2). It has also ensured the freedom of using mother tongue as medium of instruction at the primary level of education. It has been for the first time that some constitutional provisions have been made for languages other than Nepali in consonance with the existing linguistic plurality in the country.

Since these constitutional provisions, there have been made some efforts to promote and preserve Nepal's national languages at both government and non-government levels. In 1993/4 HMG/Nepal constituted a commission to spell out the details of language policy for developing the national languages and using them in education and mass media. Though the commission's recommendations were not fully implemented, they at least paved way for using some of the national languages in education and mass media and also helped to create awareness among various language communities for the preservation and promotion of their mother tongues. So far 18 languages ( viz. Maithili, Bhojpuri, Eastern Tharu, Western Tharu, Tamang, Newar, Magar, Awadhi, Rai (Bantawa), Limbu, Tamang, Maithili, Newar, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Gurung, Sherpa, Urdu, and Hindi) have been used by Radio Nepal for broadcasting news. Besides, textbooks have been prepared for 12 mother tongues (viz. Limbu, Tamang, Maithili, Newar, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Tharu, Rai(Bantawa), Magar , Gurung, Sherpa, and Rai (Chamling).

In addition, various language communities have been continuing with their efforts to develop writing systems (e.g. Gurung and Magar), prepare dictionaries<sup>2</sup> and grammars and compile reading materials<sup>3</sup>. The Central Department of Linguistics at Tribhuvan University have been engaged in developing expertise to boost up linguistic studies in Nepal. Its recent thrust on preparing an "Encyclopedia of Nepal's Languages" for their systematic study can be taken as a significant step in the field of Nepalese linguistics.

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<sup>2</sup> Recently, there have been published multilingual dictionaries in Chepang (Caughley, 2000), Limbu (Nembang, 2001) and Gurung (Glover and Gurung (2003).

<sup>3</sup> Some deaf organizations have also been found active in developing Nepali Sign Language including its training and designing materials.

An important consequence of bilingual/multilingual situation is language endangerment. In Nepal, speakers of minority languages (with marginal number of speakers) tend to shift to Nepali under socio-psychological pressures. A quite few of *Nepal's minor languages* are on the verge of extinction. These languages include Kumal, Majhi, and Bote of Indo-Aryan family and Bramu, Dura, Pahari, Raute, Raji, Hayu, Mewahang, Koi, and Tilung of Tibeto-Burman family (Toba and Rai, 2002). Kusunda has 87 speakers and is also endangered though it was reported be dead earlier. It has been suggested that the very few surviving speakers of Kusunda now remember just a limited number of lexical items (Personal communication to C. M. Bandhu, M. P. Pokharel, and B.K.Rana).

There have been suggested a number of factors responsible for language loss and endangerment in Nepal. They weaken language vitality and induce a language to become extinct. The major factors include lesser number of speakers, poor economic status, lack of language transmission to younger generation, migration to urban areas and foreign countries for job and/or education, the lack of literate tradition, the lack official recognition and initiatives for language maintenance, lack of language use in domains such as education, local administration, and mass media, official status and use and, above all, lack of language community's awareness. In these circumstances, it is important to initiate the documentation of endangered languages in collaboration with language communities, linguists and government and non-government agencies and preserve and promote them for future generation.

## 6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a glimpse of the language situation in Nepal on the basis of the data available from the 2001 census and some additional sources. There have been identified 92 languages. There has been, no doubt, improvement in the identification of Nepal's languages. However, there remain some issues which need to be addressed before we arrive at a more reliable picture of the language situation in Nepal. These issues include:

- (i) A number of languages spoken by a sizable chunk of population have to be lumped together as 'Not Stated' in the lack of information necessary identifying languages. Such languages are yet to be identified on the basis of field study.



- (ii) Languages such as Athpare<sup>5</sup>, Kham and Belhare have already been identified and well-documented (Ebert, 1994, 1996; Neupane, 2003; Watters, 2002; Bickel, 1996) but they have not been enumerated in the 2001 census.
- (iii) In many a case distinction between language and dialect has been problematic and needs to be sorted out through sociolinguistic studies.
- (iv) Language data are not strictly comparable in various senses.

Such uncertainty about the identification of Nepal's languages will continue unless reliable census enumeration is coupled with the linguistic survey of Nepal comprising both linguistic as well as sociolinguistic study of the languages and dialects used in the country.

Apart from mother tongues, the 2001 census has also recorded 12 specific second languages used by various mother tongue speakers. Nepali has been used as the largest-speaking second language, followed by Maithili. The return of second languages in the present census is helpful to ascertain the degree of bilingualism in Nepalese communities. In addition to bilingualism, there also exist multilingualism, the study of which requires the enumeration of languages other than mother tongues and second languages.

Barring a few unclassified languages, Nepal's languages mainly belong to four language families – Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, Austro-Asiatic, and Dravidian. The uncertainty and controversy in their genetic affiliation will persist unless they are adequately documented and analyzed.

Most of the minor languages spoken in Nepal lack literate traditions. As a result, if they are ceased to be spoken they are likely to lose their identity. However, there seems to be a positive sign for their retention since the 2001 census shows a tendency towards growing language vitality among various minor ethnic groups. Similarly, bilingualism has been found vibrant in different speech communities. Finally, a number of minor languages with critical number of speakers are on the verge of extinction and need to be preserved and promoted through the elaboration of domains of their use as well as their documentation.

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<sup>5</sup> Ebert (199..) and Neupane (2001) have worked on a comprehensive grammar of Athpare while Bickel (1996) has worked on the grammar of Belhare.

In view of these factors, it is important to suggest the following measures:

- (i) To provide orientation and a list of Nepal's languages to enumerators in order to record all the languages and avoid inconsistency
- (ii) To determine language-dialect controversy and identify specific languages through a linguistic survey
- (iii) To facilitate the return of languages (other than mother tongues and second languages) that people know
- (iv) To identify the genetic affiliation of unclassified languages through their adequate linguistic studies
- (v) To develop writing systems appropriate to specific languages with noliterate traditions
- (vi) To promote the domains of language use for their preservation

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Appendix 4.1: Population by mother tongue and second language.

| Mother Tongue        | Total    | Population that speak second language |          |          |       |        |       |       |        |         |        |       |         |        |              |
|----------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
|                      |          | Nepali                                | Maithili | Bhojpuri | Tharu | Tamang | Newar | Magar | Awadhi | Bantawa | Gurung | Limbu | Bajjika | Others | Not reported |
| (1)                  | (2)      | (3)                                   | (4)      | (5)      | (6)   | (7)    | (8)   | (9)   | (10)   | (11)    | (12)   | (15)  | (16)    | (17)   | (18)         |
| Total                | 22736934 | 5722151                               | 115877   | 64724    | 64274 | 46078  | 34431 | 49378 | 23577  | 71713   | 29655  | 35272 | 7612    | 632443 | 10784        |
| Nepali               | 11053255 | 0                                     | 54488    | 24761    | 42921 | 29959  | 29959 | 40150 | 14796  | 9841    | 18426  | 10043 | 966     | 178991 | 4802         |
| Maithili             | 2797582  | 880593                                | 0        | 14997    | 11629 | 228    | 76    | 157   | 460    | 542     | 74     | 1768  | 2104    | 208438 | 912          |
| Bhojpuri             | 1712536  | 308756                                | 5727     | 0        | 1469  | 31     | 99    | 50    | 114    | 73      | 8      | 21    | 618     | 61830  | 10           |
| Tharu (Dagaura/Rana) | 1331546  | 695550                                | 9752     | 10580    | 0     | 44     | 36    | 127   | 5569   | 145     | 8      | 101   | 467     | 3318   | 260          |
| Tamang               | 1179145  | 929660                                | 390      | 56       | 75    | 0      | 971   | 1928  | 10     | 1317    | 7314   | 1096  | 0       | 5237   | 388          |
| Newar                | 825458   | 626813                                | 201      | 82       | 71    | 407    | 0     | 373   | 13     | 386     | 149    | 294   | 1       | 8544   | 419          |
| Magar                | 770116   | 648600                                | 208      | 54       | 657   | 1802   | 240   | 0     | 1      | 1302    | 2514   | 1801  | 0       | 971    | 531          |
| Awadhi               | 560744   | 71631                                 | 130      | 25       | 887   | 21     | 13    | 43    | 0      | 111     | 4      | 27    | 0       | 79086  | 14           |
| Bantawa              | 371056   | 314505                                | 30       | 13       | 67    | 777    | 95    | 1279  | 13     | 0       | 123    | 17169 | 0       | 3173   | 1085         |
| Gurung               | 338925   | 262076                                | 23       | 24       | 103   | 10161  | 202   | 2649  | 3      | 447     | 0      | 327   | 0       | 2479   | 968          |
| Limbu                | 333633   | 231161                                | 78       | 9        | 40    | 682    | 87    | 1785  | 2      | 54534   | 106    | 0     | 0       | 2751   | 253          |
| Bajjika              | 237947   | 31389                                 | 1102     | 6304     | 185   | 2      | 1     | 21    | 0      | 3       | 3      | 3     | 0       | 27628  | 2            |
| Urdu                 | 174840   | 57965                                 | 22423    | 3246     | 372   | 5      | 26    | 9     | 2076   | 27      | 0      | 17    | 3378    | 22484  | 23           |
| Rajbansi             | 129829   | 80274                                 | 7402     | 9        | 1218  | 15     | 0     | 1     | 51     | 83      | 3      | 19    | 0       | 6453   | 350          |
| Sherpa               | 129771   | 109312                                | 12       | 12       | 4     | 941    | 53    | 4     | 0      | 179     | 34     | 168   | 0       | 386    | 198          |
| Hindi                | 105765   | 61609                                 | 1693     | 2624     | 280   | 2      | 158   | 17    | 352    | 11      | 1      | 6     | 75      | 2415   | 2            |
| Chamling             | 44093    | 39842                                 | 2        | 1        | 19    | 43     | 9     | 140   | 1      | 559     | 0      | 485   | 0       | 93     | 49           |
| Santhali             | 40260    | 25420                                 | 2855     | 6        | 323   | 10     | 0     | 1     | 0      | 58      | 4      | 8     | 0       | 3312   | 2            |

| Mother Tongue        | Total | Population that speak second language |          |          |       |        |       |       |        |         |        |       |         |        | Not reported |
|----------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
|                      |       | Nepali                                | Maithili | Bhojपुरी | Tharu | Tamang | Newar | Magar | Awadhi | Bantawa | Gurung | Limbu | Bajjika | Others |              |
| (1)                  | (2)   | (3)                                   | (4)      | (5)      | (6)   | (7)    | (8)   | (9)   | (10)   | (11)    | (12)   | (15)  | (16)    | (17)   | (18)         |
| Chepong              | 36807 | 29829                                 | 349      | 148      | 0     | 7      | 1     | 30    | 0      | 2       | 369    | 1     | 0       | 23     | 4            |
| Danuwar              | 31849 | 24012                                 | 1878     | 3        | 16    | 6      | 1     | 12    | 0      | 40      | 0      | 1     | 0       | 39     | 0            |
| Jhangar/ Dhangar     | 28615 | 15441                                 | 2921     | 889      | 2221  | 2      | 0     | 8     | 0      | 5       | 1      | 4     | 0       | 198    | 2            |
| Sunuwar              | 26611 | 21022                                 | 1        | 2        | 2     | 114    | 4     | 13    | 0      | 587     | 1      | 77    | 0       | 258    | 403          |
| Bangla               | 23602 | 12060                                 | 1796     | 229      | 64    | 2      | 22    | 8     | 35     | 7       | 0      | 3     | 0       | 2349   | 2            |
| Marwari (Rajsthani)  | 22637 | 16772                                 | 258      | 36       | 2     | 1      | 20    | 0     | 47     | 3       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 1829   | 0            |
| Manjhi               | 21841 | 17544                                 | 1        | 85       | 34    | 317    | 4     | 237   | 0      | 245     | 2      | 20    | 0       | 367    | 12           |
| Thami                | 18991 | 15173                                 | 0        | 0        | 0     | 9      | 0     | 28    | 4      | 9       | 0      | 4     | 0       | 15     | 1            |
| Kulung               | 18686 | 15771                                 | 84       | 0        | 0     | 0      | 3     | 5     | 0      | 40      | 0      | 76    | 0       | 10     | 1            |
| Dhimel               | 17308 | 13132                                 | 4        | 3        | 807   | 19     | 3     | 85    | 0      | 93      | 0      | 178   | 0       | 1043   | 2            |
| Angika               | 15892 | 7940                                  | 865      | 3        | 0     | 1      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 8       | 1      | 1     | 0       | 3852   | 0            |
| Yakkha               | 14648 | 12140                                 | 0        | 3        | 1     | 10     | 8     | 1     | 0      | 110     | 0      | 1066  | 0       | 34     | 29           |
| Thulung              | 14034 | 12795                                 | 3        | 1        | 0     | 4      | 2     | 0     | 0      | 205     | 1      | 106   | 0       | 84     | 3            |
| Sangpang             | 10810 | 8930                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 5      | 3     | 0     | 0      | 302     | 0      | 148   | 0       | 58     | 18           |
| Bhujel/ khawas       | 10733 | 8554                                  | 80       | 0        | 477   | 1      | 3     | 0     | 0      | 20      | 0      | 12    | 0       | 118    | 0            |
| Darai                | 10210 | 8500                                  | 2        | 0        | 3     | 0      | 0     | 1     | 0      | 1       | 1      | 1     | 0       | 16     | 0            |
| Khaling              | 9288  | 8804                                  | 6        | 2        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 8     | 0      | 71      | 4      | 30    | 0       | 18     | 2            |
| Kumal                | 6533  | 6007                                  | 15       | 0        | 6     | 1      | 3     | 16    | 0      | 3       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 54     | 0            |
| Thakali              | 6441  | 5667                                  | 59       | 2        | 34    | 0      | 29    | 3     | 0      | 4       | 22     | 2     | 0       | 24     | 0            |
| Chhantyal/ Chhantel  | 5912  | 5010                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 1       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 3      | 0            |
| Nepali Sign Language | 5743  | 1257                                  | 0        | 0        | 1     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 1       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 3      | 3            |

| Mother Tongue   | Total | Population that speak second language |          |          |       |        |       |       |        |         |        |       |         |        |              |
|-----------------|-------|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|
|                 |       | Nepali                                | Maithili | Bhojपुरी | Tharu | Tamang | Newar | Magar | Awadhi | Bantawa | Gurung | Limbu | Bajjika | Others | Not reported |
| (1)             | (2)   | (3)                                   | (4)      | (5)      | (6)   | (7)    | (8)   | (9)   | (10)   | (11)    | (12)   | (15)  | (16)    | (17)   | (18)         |
| Tibetan         | 5277  | 4334                                  | 0        | 8        | 1     | 2      | 4     | 1     | 0      | 0       | 35     | 0     | 0       | 30     | 1            |
| Dumi            | 5271  | 4054                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 31      | 0      | 27    | 0       | 17     | 3            |
| Jirel           | 4919  | 4317                                  | 0        | 1        | 0     | 1      | 0     | 0     | 1      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 8      | 0            |
| Wambule/ Umbule | 4471  | 4314                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 61    | 0     | 0      | 4       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 10     | 0            |
| Puma            | 4310  | 4061                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 1     | 0     | 0      | 10      | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |
| Yholmo          | 3986  | 3683                                  | 2        | 0        | 35    | 12     | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 46     | 1     | 0       | 0      | 0            |
| Nachhiring      | 3553  | 3293                                  | 2        | 0        | 0     | 2      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 68      | 0      | 12    | 0       | 15     | 0            |
| Dura            | 3397  | 3013                                  | 0        | 1        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 1       | 17     | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |
| Meche           | 3301  | 2970                                  | 2        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 8       | 0      | 17    | 0       | 79     | 6            |
| Pahari          | 2995  | 1985                                  | 0        | 1        | 0     | 6      | 92    | 0     | 0      | 9       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 195    | 0            |
| Lepcha/ Lapche  | 2826  | 2222                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 24      | 1      | 7     | 0       | 2      | 0            |
| Bote            | 2823  | 2413                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 161    | 0     | 1     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |
| Bahing          | 2765  | 1571                                  | 0        | 0        | 1     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 6       | 0      | 17    | 0       | 816    | 1            |
| Koi/ koyu       | 2641  | 2487                                  | 1        | 1        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 31      | 0      | 26    | 0       | 2      | 0            |
| Raji            | 2413  | 1098                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 5      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 3     | 0       | 17     | 1            |
| Hayu            | 1743  | 1603                                  | 2        | 0        | 0     | 1      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 1       | 0      | 1     | 0       | 0      | 1            |
| Byangshi        | 1734  | 1324                                  | 0        | 1        | 2     | 1      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 38     | 0     | 0       | 23     | 0            |
| Yamphu/ Yamphe  | 1722  | 1659                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 16    | 0       | 4      | 0            |
| Ghale           | 1649  | 1474                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 9      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 94     | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |
| Khariya         | 1575  | 137                                   | 1        | 1        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 320    | 0            |
| Chhiling        | 1314  | 1292                                  | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |



| Mother Tongue | Total | Population that speak second language |          |          |       |        |       |       |        |         |        |       |         |        |              |  |  |
|---------------|-------|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|--|--|
|               |       | Nepali                                | Maithili | Bhojpuri | Tharu | Tamang | Newar | Magar | Awadhi | Bantawa | Gurung | Limbu | Bajjika | Others | Not reported |  |  |
| (1)           | (2)   | (3)                                   | (4)      | (5)      | (6)   | (7)    | (8)   | (9)   | (10)   | (11)    | (12)   | (15)  | (16)    | (17)   | (18)         |  |  |
| Lohorung      | 1207  | 712                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 1      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 49      | 0      | 20    | 0       | 9      | 3            |  |  |
| Punjabi       | 1165  | 530                                   | 1        | 9        | 3     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 22     | 1       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 255    | 9            |  |  |
| Chinese       | 1101  | 767                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 9     | 0     | 0      | 1       | 0      | 3     | 0       | 42     | 3            |  |  |
| English       | 1037  | 535                                   | 7        | 1        | 0     | 0      | 7     | 4     | 1      | 6       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 34     | 5            |  |  |
| Mewahang      | 904   | 522                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 17      | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Sanskrit      | 823   | 663                                   | 0        | 0        | 3     | 0      | 1     | 0     | 1      | 31      | 0      | 9     | 0       | 6      | 0            |  |  |
| Kaika         | 794   | 792                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Raute         | 518   | 270                                   | 3        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 1     | 0     | 0      | 1       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 11     | 1            |  |  |
| Kisan         | 489   | 366                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 2      | 0            |  |  |
| Churauti      | 408   | 391                                   | 2        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Baram/ Maramu | 342   | 89                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 14     | 0     | 3     | 0      | 0       | 92     | 0     | 0       | 13     | 0            |  |  |
| Tilung        | 310   | 281                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 1       | 0      | 1     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Jero/ Jerung  | 271   | 270                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Dungmali      | 221   | 162                                   | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 13     | 0            |  |  |
| Oriya         | 159   | 85                                    | 19       | 0        | 0     | 5      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 1     | 0       | 25     | 0            |  |  |
| Lingkhim      | 97    | 97                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Kusunda       | 87    | 59                                    | 1        | 0        | 9     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Sindhi        | 72    | 26                                    | 1        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 7      | 0            |  |  |
| Koche         | 54    | 52                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Hariyanwi     | 33    | 32                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 1      | 0            |  |  |
| Magahi        | 30    | 30                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |



| Mother Tongue    | Total  | Population that speak second language |          |          |       |        |       |       |        |         |        |       |         |        |              |  |  |
|------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------------|--|--|
|                  |        | Nepali                                | Maithili | Bhojpuri | Tharu | Tamang | Newar | Magar | Awadhi | Bantawa | Gurung | Limbu | Bajjika | Others | Not reported |  |  |
| (1)              | (2)    | (3)                                   | (4)      | (5)      | (6)   | (7)    | (8)   | (9)   | (10)   | (11)    | (12)   | (15)  | (16)    | (17)   | (18)         |  |  |
| Sam              | 23     | 23                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Kurmali          | 13     | 11                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Kagate           | 10     | 10                                    | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Dzonkha          | 9      | 1                                     | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Kuki             | 9      | 9                                     | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Chhintang        | 8      | 6                                     | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 2       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Mizo             | 8      | 8                                     | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Nagamese         | 6      | 6                                     | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Lhomi            | 4      | 4                                     | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Assamise         | 3      | 0                                     | 0        | 0        | 3     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Sadhani          | 2      | 2                                     | 0        | 0        | 0     | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0       | 0      | 0            |  |  |
| Unknown Language | 168340 | 20520                                 | 995      | 491      | 62    | 396    | 117   | 181   | 5      | 36      | 159    | 28    | 3       | 2503   | 0            |  |  |

Source : Population Census 2001.

**Appendix 4.2 : Urban-rural composition of population by mother tongue (2001).**

| Mother Tongue        | Total    | Urban   | Rural    |
|----------------------|----------|---------|----------|
| Total                | 22736934 | 3227879 | 19509055 |
| Nepali               | 11053255 | 1680835 | 9372420  |
| Maithili             | 2797582  | 266901  | 2530681  |
| Bhojpuri             | 1712536  | 171283  | 1541253  |
| Tharu (Dagaura/Rana) | 1331546  | 98295   | 1233251  |
| Tamang               | 1179145  | 88401   | 1090744  |
| Newar                | 825458   | 474448  | 351010   |
| Magar                | 770116   | 49757   | 720359   |
| Awadhi               | 560744   | 69689   | 491055   |
| Bantawa              | 371056   | 41945   | 329111   |
| Gurung               | 338925   | 62257   | 276668   |
| Limbu                | 333633   | 21351   | 312282   |
| Bajjika              | 237947   | 4231    | 233716   |
| Urdu                 | 174840   | 35375   | 139465   |
| Rajbansi             | 129829   | 9063    | 120766   |
| Sherpa               | 129771   | 14390   | 115381   |
| Hindi                | 105765   | 59068   | 46697    |
| Chamling             | 44093    | 1235    | 42858    |
| Santhali             | 40260    | 1211    | 39049    |
| Chepang              | 36807    | 186     | 36621    |
| Danuwar              | 31849    | 2387    | 29462    |
| Jhangar/ Dhangar     | 28615    | 1351    | 27264    |
| Sunuwar              | 26611    | 2208    | 24403    |
| Bangla               | 23602    | 7021    | 16581    |
| Marwari (Rajsthani)  | 22637    | 18349   | 4288     |
| Manjhi               | 21841    | 682     | 21159    |
| Thami                | 18991    | 1019    | 17972    |
| Kulung               | 18686    | 347     | 18339    |
| Dhimal               | 17308    | 3365    | 13943    |
| Angika               | 15892    | 5       | 15887    |
| Yakkha               | 14648    | 437     | 14211    |
| Thulung              | 14034    | 306     | 13728    |
| Sangpang             | 10810    | 262     | 10548    |
| Bhujel/ Khawas       | 10733    | 179     | 10554    |
| Darai                | 10210    | 3540    | 6670     |
| Khaling              | 9288     | 83      | 9205     |
| Kumal                | 6533     | 523     | 6010     |
| Thakali              | 6441     | 2616    | 3825     |
| Chhantyal/ Chhantel  | 5912     | 127     | 5785     |

| Mother Tongue        | Total | Urban | Rural |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Nepali Sign Language | 5743  | 431   | 5312  |
| Tibbetan             | 5277  | 509   | 4768  |
| Dumi                 | 5271  | 39    | 5232  |
| Jirel                | 4919  | 84    | 4835  |
| Wambule/ Umbule      | 4471  | 3     | 4468  |
| Puma                 | 4310  | 28    | 4282  |
| Yholmo               | 3986  | 131   | 3855  |
| Nachhiring           | 3553  | 49    | 3504  |
| Dura                 | 3397  | 106   | 3291  |
| Meche                | 3301  | 637   | 2664  |
| Pahari               | 2995  | 0     | 2995  |
| Lepcha/ Lapche       | 2826  | 40    | 2786  |
| Bote                 | 2823  | 299   | 2524  |
| Bahing               | 2765  | 53    | 2712  |
| Koi/ Koyu            | 2641  | 45    | 2596  |
| Raji                 | 2413  | 80    | 2333  |
| Hayu                 | 1743  | 35    | 1708  |
| Byangshi             | 1734  | 73    | 1661  |
| Yamphu/ Yamphe       | 1722  | 8     | 1714  |
| Ghale                | 1649  | 58    | 1591  |
| Khariya              | 1575  | 155   | 1420  |
| Chhiling             | 1314  | 8     | 1306  |
| Lohorung             | 1207  | 79    | 1128  |
| Punjabi              | 1165  | 894   | 271   |
| Chinese              | 1101  | 807   | 294   |
| English              | 1037  | 650   | 387   |
| Mewahang             | 904   | 15    | 889   |
| Sanskrit             | 823   | 91    | 732   |
| Kaike                | 794   | 0     | 794   |
| Raute                | 518   | 47    | 471   |
| Kisan                | 489   | 273   | 216   |
| Churauti             | 408   | 22    | 386   |
| Baram/ Maramu        | 342   | 1     | 341   |
| Tilung               | 310   | 0     | 310   |
| Jero/ Jerung         | 271   | 0     | 271   |
| Dungmali             | 221   | 22    | 199   |
| Oriya                | 159   | 70    | 89    |
| Lingkhim             | 97    | 0     | 97    |
| Kusunda              | 87    | 55    | 32    |
| Sindhi               | 72    | 66    | 6     |

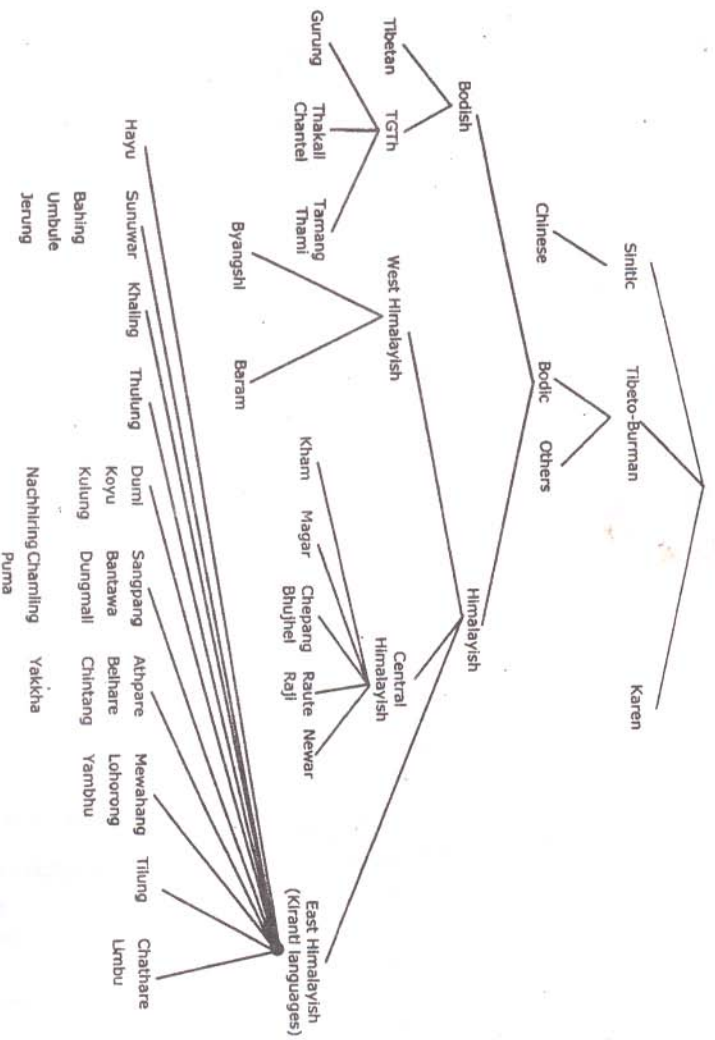
| Mother Tongue    | Total  | Urban | Rural  |
|------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Koche            | 54     | 0     | 54     |
| Hariyanwi        | 33     | 31    | 2      |
| Magahi           | 30     | 16    | 14     |
| Sam              | 23     | 1     | 22     |
| Kurmali          | 13     | 0     | 13     |
| Kagate           | 10     | 6     | 4      |
| Dzonkha          | 9      | 0     | 9      |
| Kuki             | 9      | 0     | 9      |
| Chhintang        | 8      | 0     | 8      |
| Mizo             | 8      | 4     | 4      |
| Nagamese         | 6      | 0     | 6      |
| Lhomi            | 4      | 1     | 3      |
| Assamise         | 3      | 0     | 3      |
| Sadhani          | 2      | 0     | 2      |
| Unknown language | 168340 | 27129 | 141211 |

Source : Population Census 2001

# Appendix: 3

Diagram 2: Sino-Tibetan languages

## Sino-Tibetan Languages



Adapted from Bradeley (2002) and David Watters (personal communication)





9 789993 352969

Price: Rs 99.00