KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF YOUTH SPEAKING NEPAL BHASA LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF BHAKTAPUR MUNICIPALITY

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This publication by the Nepal Institute of Research and Communications (NIRC) is part of a series of studies on ethnic communications practices in Nepal.

Published in February 2021

Cover Image: Chandra Chakradhar/Photos of Nepal
The cover image illustrates “the importance of having our mother-tongue greater than anything” written at the wall near Yattachhen Pukhu: (Yattachhen Pokhari), Dattatreya, Bhaktapur.

This study was carried out by Saurav Thapa Shrestha as part of his dissertation for Bachelor in Development Studies degree from National College, Kathmandu, affiliated with Kathmandu University.

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Castes have been the foundational cultural premise for the institution of Hindu society. Society is divided into different genera - *jat/jati* or groups, known as castes with varying degrees of characteristics corresponding to hierarchy and circle of social associations. During the reign of King Jayasthiti Malla, the caste system established its roots in the context of Kathmandu Valley, and with the introduction of the Muluki Ain (Old Legal Code) of 1854, it expanded all over Nepal. Jayasthiti Malla classified the population of Kathmandu Valley into 64 caste groups, each with different functional and occupational categories. (Subedi, 2011)

According to the 2011 census, the indigenous nationalities (*Adivasi Janajati*) comprise 36% of the total population of 26.5 million in Nepal. There were a total of 125 castes and ethnic groups, including 63 indigenous groups, 59 castes, including 15 Dalit castes, and three religious' groups, including Muslim groups, according to the 2011 census. Indigenous people have been subjected to discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, subjugation, domination, and exploitation in terms of resources, laws, customary, and political and economic opportunities despite a proportionally sound representation in the population. (Indigenous peoples in Nepal, n.d.)
Kathmandu Valley inhabits the indigenous community of Newa since the initiation of their civilization in 6th century B.C. (Bista, 1971) Newa present themselves as a distinct ethnic community and has their mother tongue “Nepal Bhasa” or “Newa Bhasa”, cultures, festivals, dresses, etc. In Nepalese history, the terms ‘Newa’ and ‘Nepal’ have been used interchangeably (The Newar Civilization, n.d.).

The dynasty of Gopal and Mahispal had the very first written history for Nepal. According to research, Gopali people still found in Tistung, Palung, and nearby villages, follow Newa culture. This indicates clearly that Newa was among the first rulers of Nepal. However, many immigrants to Nepal from surrounding places also adopted the Newa language and culture, thus effectively establishing the recognition as Newa. (The Newar Civilization, n.d.)

Language is considered to be an important and inseparable aspect of communication and interaction in social life. It helps to establish and maintain social relationships. It is a characteristic symbol of ethnic, social, and cultural identities and esteemed to be a reflector of a society and a nation. (Verdoodt, 1997) and (Llamas, Mullany, & Stockwell, 2007) Language, also, is a moderator of intergenerational transmission of the values, history, and philosophy of human life from generation to generation.

Nepal Bhasa is a primeval language of Nepal, having its roots of origination at the present-day Kathmandu Valley, which was once known as Nepal itself (Shrestha & Hoek). Bhaktapur of Kathmandu valley, a predominant Newa ethnic community, has celebrated and championed the values and the cultures to date, leading to its preservation. The community relies on its richness of traditional knowledge, experiences, and values for enriching their lifestyle and preserving their cultural heritage. Nepal Bhasa is still the most spoken language in Bhaktapur.

Culture and language play an important role in the cultural empowerment and participation in fostering the social and cultural growth of future generations. Therefore, youth can be centered upon the study on their take to Nepal Bhasa language. National Youth Policy (NYC) defines youth “as persons between the ages of 16 and 40 years old” (National Youth Policy, 2015). According to Nepal's NYC, about 20.8 percent of the country's total population falls in the 16-25 age group whereas 40.68 percent of the population lies in the age group 16-40. For this study, youth remains within the category of age 16-24, being the symbol of the intergenerational transformation of language and culture.

The Constitution of Nepal 1959 has made the “Nepali” language an official language of Nepal. However, the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has provided the right to language and culture i.e. every person and community shall have the right to use their languages. Also, every Nepalese community residing in
Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language script, culture, cultural civilization, and heritage. According to Census 2011, there are 123 languages spoken as a mother tongue in Nepal. The language of ethnic communities is significant, but in regards to their language survey, they are limited. Therefore, understanding the Nepal Bhasa language in particular to the youth population between ages 16-24 is a basis for recognizing their knowledge, attitude, and perception.

The vitality, integrity, and continuity of the Nepal Bhasa language, especially in terms of intergenerational transmission of cultural authenticity, values, and identity is important. It is equally significant to regard the indigenous language valuable as it is the protraction of culture and identities. Also, the study of language among young people speaking Nepal Bhasa as well as their attitudes towards their mother tongue is indispensable. This will help accelerate the possibility of further advancement of language.

According to the census of 2011, Bhaktapur has the highest number of Nepal Bhasa speakers compared to any other district/cities of Nepal. The total population of Bhaktapur Municipality is 83,658 out of which 64,775 are Newa population and among them, 63,133 have Nepal Bhasa as a mother tongue. (CBS, 2014) This is also an important validation that led to choosing Bhaktapur as a case study to assess the current state of youth's towards Nepal Bhasa.

To the author’s knowledge and upon verification of language experts and historians in Bhaktapur, there has been no significant study on understanding Nepal Bhasa from the youth's perspective. While many studies are being done on Nepal Bhasa in general, but concerning the age-specific domain, it is limited. Therefore, this study is an exploration of youth perception and knowledge about the Nepal Bhasa language.
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE

Indigenous peoples self-identify themselves as a descent from populations inhabited in the country or geographical region who have their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions that distinguish them from others. These people are often known by terms as native people, aboriginal, Adivasi, janajati, etc. (ILO, n.d.) Indigenous people are referred to as a group of people having diversity in themselves. They identify themselves as indigenous and are regarded as such by others. United Nations has not “officially” defined indigenous people instead has declared “indigenous” as those who have a distinct language, culture, and beliefs and have a historical link with pre-settler societies. Furthermore, it stated those who self-identify as indigenous people at the individual level and are accepted as a member by the community are Indigenous. (United Nations, Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Voices: Fact Sheets, n.d.)

Globally, approximately 6,700 languages are spoken by around 3% of the global population where less than 6% of indigenous people speak 4000 of the world’s languages. Indigenous languages are not just a way of communication but also serves as an identity, culture, and expression of self-determination. When indigenous languages are under threat, so are the community people. (United Nations, n.d.)

The Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) in 1994 defined “indigenous people” as- those who have their distinct tradition, language, and cultural traditions, or who do not claim themselves as “Hindu”, or those whose ancestors are first settlers and have their history (written or oral). Indigenous peoples have been living in Nepal for centuries. According to the census 2001, the total population of Nepal is 23 million and it constitutes 38.8% are indigenous people. The census of 2011 AD identified 125 castes/ethnic groups and 123 languages in Nepal. (IFAD, 2012)
LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

“For indigenous peoples, languages not only identify their origin or membership in a community, but they also carry the ethical values of their ancestors – the indigenous knowledge systems that make them one with the land and are crucial to their survival to the hopes and aspirations of their youth.”

- Minnie Degawan

It is generally believed that there's a connection between the language used by the members of a community and that of the community's identity. The speakers identify themselves by the accent, vocabulary, and discourse of the language and are identified as members of the particular linguistic community. By its language, the people who belong to the same language group feel pride as well as a sense of social importance and historical continuity in speaking the language. (Kramch, 1998)

Language is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity. It is the expression of culture. It is the way by which we pass on self-identity from generation to generation. The transmission and expression of the culture and values are shared through the language itself. “Language – both code and content – is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity”. (Gibson, 2004)

THE NEWA

The term ‘Newa’ (or Newah) refers to the original and historic inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley since the Newa Civilization in the 6th century B.C. (Bista, 1971). According to Dilli Raman Regmi, the term ‘Newa’ was first used to denote the people and society of Kathmandu Valley and dates back to the seventeenth century, but there are possibilities that the term may have been used for a long time. Local inscriptions and foreign accounts, mainly Chinese, on which an early Valley Nepal history can be based date back to the fourth century A.D. (Levy, 1991)

Newa is considered a distinct ethnic community. Newa is fully aware of their cultural uniqueness among other communities, and so are other communities. The most important reality in this regard is the nature of its independent caste structure. Newa is keenly aware of their language, rituals, and institutions that distinguish them. The Newa land of origin is the Kathmandu Valley, a circular bowl surrounded by Himalayan foothills that firms Kathmandu, the capital city that has been Nepal's political and economic center for more than two hundred years. The valley is dominated by the three medieval towns of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur; each of these was the center of a small new kingdom until 1768. (Quigley, 1987)

The word ‘Newa’ is nowadays commonly used to indicate the people living in the Kathmandu Valley and those speaking
Neva or Nepal Bhasa as their mother tongue elsewhere in Nepal and India. For centuries, the valley of Nepal remained a melting pot for migrants from the south and the north, and they were all called ‘Newa’. From the thirteenth century Malla’s reign until the dynasty’s downfall in the eighteenth century—the kings promoted literature in Nepal Bhasa, as well as in other languages such as Maithili, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, and Bengali. (Shrestha, 2007)

**THE NEPAL BHASA LANGUAGE**

The composition of Newa society is highly complicated, with divisions in caste and inclusion of caste hierarchies in the division. As the nineteenth-century chronicles and oral traditions testify (Vaidya Shrestha 1991: 180–90), the early Malla king Jayasthiti (1382–95 AD) introduced the division of castes among the Newa, but the caste hierarchy acquired a rigidity and direction after 1769 conquest of the Gorkha, and before that, there was a general subordination to the groups of Parbatiyas. (Gellner 1995: 12; Rosser 1979 [1966] as cited in (Shrestha, 2007)).

Later, under the Gorkha rule, the first Rana prime minister, Janga Bahadur, introduced a legal code in 1854. Despite having their caste system, the Newa were collectively labeled one jat (caste) in the 1854 legal code, and their castes were lumped together with other Parbate castes. The Parbates follow the Hindu varnasram caste hierarchies, which divide their society into four distinct levels. (Shrestha, 2007)

The 1854 legal code provided the Newa with their separate ethnic identity as a culturally and linguistically distinct group. However, the language of the Newa was gradually replaced with the Gorkhali language, which was called Nepali since the 1930s, and thenceforth Nepali became the only official language of Nepal. During the Rana rule (1846–1951), even writing in the
Newa language was forbidden, which provoked a section of the Newa elites into defying the government policy. The suppression of the Nepal Bhasa and intellectuals intensified during the reign of Chandra Shamsher (1901–28). In 1905, he banned the Newa language from the courts of justice and administration. The language of the Newa, or Nepal Bhasa, began to be called ‘Newari’ while the name ‘Nepali’ was used to designate the *Khasakura* or *Gorkhali* language. (Shrestha, 2007)

In 1951, the Rana regime ended in Nepal, but the Newa language did not gain much momentum in terms of re-establishing the status. The Nepali alone was made the medium of government, administration, and schooling. The 1959 Constitution of Nepal declared Nepali to be the national language of Nepal, ignoring the languages of all other nationalities. During the 30 years of the Panchayat regime (1960–90), the Newa language suffered great suppression as the government systematically imposed Nepali. (Shrestha, 2007)

Similarly, The 2015 Constitution of Nepal has highlighted the rights of indigenous people under the “Right to Language and Culture” which states, (i) every person and community shall have the right to use their language, (ii) every person and community shall have the right to participate in the cultural life of their communities, and (iii) every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language script, culture, cultural civilization, and heritage. Also, “Right relating to Education”, the constitution has ensured “every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to get an education in its mother tongue and, for that purpose, to open and operate schools and educational institutes, in accordance with law”.

**PRESENT CONTEXT OF NEPAL BHASA LANGUAGE**

Throughout history, the common language, Nepal Bhasa has kept Newa united to their culture and has been an important aspect of their cultural identity. It is not only central to their cultural identity but also represents the entire history of one of the most distinct civilizations in South Asia.

Before the 2001 census, the number of mother tongues listed was relatively few (in 1991 only 31 languages as mother tongue). In 2011, a total of 123 languages were listed and recognized after the awareness among ethnic minorities about their cultural and linguistic identity. The tables below show the difference between the numbers of native language speakers. For example, Newa native speakers in 2001 were 3.6% of the total population, down to 3.1% in 2011 (Table 1).
Table 1: Population by mother tongue (Nepal Bhasa) in three consecutive years of Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>19,405,505</td>
<td>690,007</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>22,736,934</td>
<td>825,458</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>26,494,504</td>
<td>846,557</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal (2011)

The Census of 2011, out of 1,321,933 Newa people (5% of the total population of Nepal), Nepal Bhasa is the mother tongue of only 8,46,557 Newa people (3.2% of the total population). It means a total of 64% of the total Newa population speaks Nepal Bhasa. This suggests that 36% of the Newa population have shifted their mother tongue to another language (*Khas*/Nepali).
According to Kerlinger, “research design is the fundamental strategy to plan and organize the study to find answers to research questions.” The plan is the overall study method which describes what the researcher should do from writing the theory and the practical implications for the analysis of data. (Kerlinger, 1986) This is a mixed-method study design which made use of qualitative and quantitative approach to gather the important data. According to (Johnson, 2007), Mixed methods study is the style of research in which a researcher or group of researchers incorporate the elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (e.g. use of qualitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the specific purposes of in-depth understanding.

**STUDY AREA**

Bhaktapur District is the smallest district of Nepal, covering an area of 119sq km². The district lies in the Bagmati Province under the current federal administrative division. The total population of this district as of the National Population and Housing Census 2011 is 304,651. It is one of the three districts of Kathmandu valley, along with Lalitpur and Kathmandu. Bhaktapur surrounds the Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Kavrepalanchowk districts.

The study site is Bhaktapur Municipality, with an area of 6.88 sq. km. which is the traditional place of inhabitation of the NewaCommunity. Bhaktapur Municipality is at the center of the Bhaktapur District, which is around 10 kilometers east of
Kathmandu. The city is surrounded by Changunarayan, Madhyapur Thimi, and Suryabinayak Municipality. According to Census 2011, Bhaktapur Municipality has a population of 83,658 living in 17655 households. The total youth population age 15-39 is 41,050, whereas the age between 15-24 is 18864. Similarly, the total Newa population is 64,775, and those having Nepal Bhasa as a mother tongue are 63,133 in total. (CBS, 2014)

The area is popular for Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Dattatreya Square, Pottery Square, Nyatapola square, among others, and is listed to World Heritage Sites by United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO). Also, the city is renowned for several traditions and festivals practiced overages such as Biska Jatra, Gaijatra, Navadurga dance performances, etc. It is also well known for its Royal curd (*Juju Dhau*) and *Bhadgaule* (*Bhadgaun*; traditional name for Bhaktapur) Topi (Cap).

The study was conducted in the Bhaktapur region among the Nepal Bhasa speakers of the Newa Community. The region is rich in both tangible and non-tangible heritage, which have been passed on from generation to generation. This acquaintance of cultural practices, knowledge, and skills with age-long civilizations and generations, has its unique associations with the Nepal Bhasa language. The target population of the study was the youths between 16-24 years of age who reside within Bhaktapur Municipality. Also, the study area was selected purposively because no studies have been conducted before this topic.
SAMPLING METHOD

For sampling, a non-probability sampling technique was used, and for an in-depth interview, convenience sampling was done. The in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys were carried out in a non-physical manner due to the existing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire survey was conducted online among the youth from Bhaktapur Municipality to know about their knowledge and attitude towards Nepal Bhasa language. Altogether 50 people responded to the survey. Similarly, the in-depth interview was conducted to understand and get more information about the perception and practice of the respondents towards their mother tongue. A total of 10 people were interviewed. The decision to interview 10 was made when it was felt that the information coming from data collection was repetitive.

ONLINE SURVEY

A questionnaire survey was carried out with the youth age between 16-24 through the simple random sampling method by sharing survey form online via Facebook (a popular social media platform) between August 10 to August 17, 2020. All together 75 respondents responded in which only 50 of them are under the criteria (Newa, between age 16-24, and within the ten wards of Bhaktapur Municipality), and the rest data were cleaned.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

An in-depth interview among youths who were students or working based on convenience sampling was carried for the primary data collection. The interview was carried out between August 18-20, 2020. A total of 10 students were interviewed through the convenience sampling method by calling via zoom (a video conferencing platform). The interviewees were decided based on the familiarity of the interviewer picked from a diverse academics and occupational background. A topic guide was prepared and was used for an in-depth interview with young students.

The mixed-methods study strategy is sequential explanatory in that the quantitative data were collected in the initial state of the research, which was then followed by the qualitative data collection.

PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

The study was carried out among the residents who were living within the periphery of the Bhaktapur Municipality. The data was collected using non-probability sampling for online surveys and convenience sampling for in-depth interviews. The first section of the questionnaire covered the demographic and linguistic information, and the
second section of the closed-ended questionnaire comprised questions on language knowledge and attitude, which was taken in reference from (FPCC, 2013) and the interview questions consisted of open-ended questions. The interviewer was determined to get detailed and affluent information about the attitudes of the respondents towards their mother tongue.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

The data obtained through the online survey and in-depth interviews were edited by combining both field editing and central editing processes. The in-depth interviews were transcribed and translated based on the audio recording and notes taken during the interview. The data from the online questionnaire survey were categorized based on the characteristics and were tabulated following the simple-tabulation method. The tabulated data were generated into a graphical representation. The processing of data was concluded with data cleaning that involved checking the data extensively for consistency. Likewise, the qualitative data from the in-depth interview was presented in narrative form. The analysis of data was done through both descriptive and graphical representations.

The results of quantitative data are first organized, followed by qualitative data. Direct interview quotes were also used to highlights and personalize the data. The quotes have been edited for grammatical clarity, and participant identity has been disclosed as age and gender.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical approval was obtained from National College and Kathmandu University to proceed with the data collection. Similarly, Informed consent was taken from all the participants before conducting a personal in-depth interview. Similarly, verbal consent was taken before recording audio. The individuals consulted during the study were not pressurized to participate and individual autonomy was provided with respect. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research, and responses wan not identified individually during the data analysis and presentation as well.
A total of 50 respondents participated in the online survey. Additional 10 respondents participated in-depth-interviewed based on convenience sampling for this study. All the respondents reside within the ten wards of Bhaktapur Municipality.

Out of a total of 50 respondents, 54% (27) are males whereas the remaining 46% (23) are females. There were no other groups of gender in the respondents. All the respondents of both genders are based on random sampling through the distribution of survey questionnaire online.

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

As the study objective is to assess the knowledge and attitude of youth towards
the Nepal Bhasa language, the age-group taken was between 16-24 only. The selection of respondents was based on random sampling through the sharing of survey form online. Total respondents taken for the study was 50 based on random sampling, among which 12% (6) of them were between 16-18 age group, 32% (16) of them were between 19-21 age group and 56% (23) of them were between 22-24 age group.

**RESPONDENTS BY WARD**

The fig. 3 represents the distributions of respondents by the wards of Bhaktapur Municipality. The respondents are observed higher from ward 9 i.e. 11 whereas the least from ward 7 i.e. only 1. Despite the survey being based on random sampling, the respondents from all across the wards were represented.

**RESPONDENTS BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

The fig. 4 shows the educational background of the respondents. Among the total 50 respondents from the survey, 92% have completed or are enrolled in Bachelor level of education whereas only 8% were from high-school (+2 level).
LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

The research was undertaken in the area of the Newa community and focused on the Newa youth whose mother tongue is Nepal Bhasa itself. Therefore, the mother tongue of all the respondents is Nepal Bhasa.

The majority of the respondents said Nepal Bhasa is their mother tongue, but the first language learned as a child has shown a reduction in the practice of Nepal Bhasa in general. As per the above figure, 76% learned Nepal Bhasa as a first language whereas 24% learned Nepali as their first language. This shows that people are driving away from Nepal Bhasa right from their childhood.

LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE

The fig.6 pointed out what language that youth speak the most now. Out of all the respondents, 40% said Nepal Bhasa, 38% said Nepali, 15% said Mixed Nepali and English whereas the rest 5% said Mixed-Nepalbhasa and Nepali. The regular practice of speaking the Nepal Bhasa language has seen significant decrement and is similar to the usage of Nepali language as observed through figure (4) and (5).

In terms of knowledge of speaking Nepal Bhasa (fig. 7), 44% (22) respondents have said they always speak whereas 28% (14) respondents usually speak, 16% (8) respondents sometimes speak, 10% (5) respondents rarely speak and a respondent never speaks Nepal Bhasa language in their daily life.
To examine their understanding of Nepal Bhasa, respondents were asked how well do they understand it. Overall, 66% (33) said they understand everything very well and there were 34% (17) who said they understand most of a conversation, but not completely. It is clear that the youth nowadays are familiar with the language but are not fluent and confident in speaking. This indicates respondents converse in Nepal Bhasa only if they are confident speaking to the other person in Nepal Bhasa. Figure (9) explains their fluency and understanding of the language.

![Figure 7](image)

**Nepal Bhasa speaking in daily life**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 8](image)

**Understanding of Nepal Bhasa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well; understand everything</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand most of a conversation, but not completely</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand somewords and phrases only</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While questioning to understand how well they speak Nepal Bhasa, the majority 43% (23) responded they could speak Nepal Bhasa fluently. Closely followed by 40% (20) respondents who mentioned they were somewhat fluent, understand but have certain issues with it. Similarly, rest 14% (7) of respondents said they don't speak very well; understand plenty of words and phrases but have difficulties communicating. Despite, Nepal Bhasa being the mother tongue of the respondent, it is questionable that only less than half are confident and are well versed in speaking it fluently.

[Figure 9]

**Fluency in Speaking Nepal Bhasa**

- **Fluently**
- Somewhat fluently; understand but have certain issues to it
- Not very well; understand plenty of words & phrases but have difficulties communicating
- Know some vocabulary, but can't speak in sentences
- Not at all

[Figure 10]

**Interaction with a fluent Nepal Bhasa speaker**

From the figure 10, most of the respondents i.e. 68% often interact with a fluent Nepal Bhasa Speaker. Similarly, 12% said weekly, 16% said sometimes, and the rest 4% said monthly. No respondent doesn't talk to a fluent Nepal Bhasa speaker. This shows that 2/3 of the respondents have a habit of speaking Nepal Bhasa with a fluent speaker.
Out of all the respondents, 60% said that they and their family always speak Nepal Bhasa at home. Among others, 26% said they usually speak Nepal Bhasa at home, 8% said they sometimes speak and 6% said they rarely speak Nepal Bhasa at home.

As illustrated in Figure (12), it is observed that the mother speaks Nepal Bhasa mostly at the home, followed by the father. Thereafter, generally, siblings and grandparents speak Nepal Bhasa at home.

While analyzing figure (11) and (12), it can be inferred that 60% of respondents who have said they always speak Nepal Bhasa at home mostly communicate with his/her mother in Nepal Bhasa.

Among all the respondents, 96% said that they have friends who used to speak or speaks Nepal Bhasa, and the rest 4% said they don’t have any.
Language starts from home itself and it is practiced in everyday life by everyone. It's only the concern which language is prioritized as a way of communication. In the Newa community, the use of language is important in day to day life as well as in particular occasions and jatras, etc. To find out youth’s attitudes towards the practice of Nepal Bhasa, I asked ‘What do you think is the current practice of youth using Nepal Bhasa?’ Let’s look into a few of the following quotes from the participants.

Participant 1 articulates in her own words, “We, youth use it to talk to elders or close peers (whom they have been talking in Nepal Bhasa for long). Also, I see very few people try to talk to and teach their children in Nepal Bhasa. Moreover, regarding the knowledge of scripts who can read or write are limited.” (Female, 24)
Highlighting the realization of the continuation of the language, participant 3 expresses, “Nowadays, the younger generation often understand the language but are very hesitant and uneasy to reply in Nepal Bhasa. However, this has also created a sense of realization in them and hopefully, they will be learning and teaching the upcoming generation” (Female, 23)

From the above narratives, it indicated that although youths understand, they are reluctant in answering back. Language is a practice harnessed by regular use it. But, with the increasing trend of using the non-Nepal Bhasa language, the speaking, and writing mode of the language is under threat. It can only be re-instated through the teaching of language from the individuals as well as community actions to revitalizing it.

Participant 9 shares his experience out of the practice of Nepal Bhasa Language as, “Those who speak Nepal Bhasa are confined to homes and among friend circles. I for one fairly understand most phrases, sentences in Nepal Bhasa but as I practice it only at home and with friends, I lack fluency. And the case is similar in most people of my age and many don’t even understand simple vocabularies” (Male, 22).

The language context is changing where the fundamental dialect and grammatical inaccuracy is noted. This may reduce the knowledge and understanding of Nepal Bhasa for a prolonged time.

Similarly, participant 5 states, “I believe I don’t even speak correctly. I’m told quite often that I’m using incorrect terms and grammar. Like I use “Mhaa: Masiya (म्हा: मसिया)” for saying “I don’t know,” but I think it’s incorrect. I don’t use any other pronouns except “cha, ji, wo” to which there are other pronouns that show respect and honor while we speak for elders. This way, I’ve lost a sense of seniority.” (Male, 19).

It is understood fairly that the speaking opportunity outside the home and friend circles forbidding the youth to delve more into it. This has certainly narrowed down the opportunity to learn
as well as experience it more often. They were confused with the language rules, structures, and effectiveness of expressions in the right form that lower the confidence level to speak Nepal Bhasa.

**ESSENTIALITY OF NEPAL BHASA**

The importance of Nepal Bhasa in the Newa Communities is as important as the identity of the people itself. Languages are recognized as a form of an integral part of people's cultural and historical identity. It is a symbolic badge of membership in a particular community. And with language, the knowledge, skills, and experiences are also shared with young generations to understand it better way.

Table 2: Attitudes of Youth towards Nepal Bhasa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nepal Bhasa is the identity of the Newa People</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal Bhasa is the basis for the practice of different Newa cultures and traditions.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to learn Nepal Bhasa.</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal Bhasa should be taught in school.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our parents should pass Nepal bhasa knowledge to our generations.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were asked to agree to disagree on the above-presented statements. The participants reported strongly agree with most of the statements. Among the total respondents, only 4% (2) have said not sure, whereas 30% (15) of the respondents have agreed on the statement and the rest 66% (33) of the respondents have strongly agreed. It was found out that 0% of the participants indicated disagree and strongly disagree with the given statements. It showed the positive attitudes towards the Nepal Bhasa language among the youth of the research area.
Correspondingly, the study asked what’s the importance of Nepal Bhasa among the following statements (figure 16) to which it is observed that all of them have pointed the importance of Nepal Bhasa for Newa Culture and Identity. Similarly, the respondents stressed the importance of producing art/music in Nepal Bhasa, broaden the knowledge, keep the language and culture alive, and even speaking with the family. There’s indifference in its importance regarding speaking with friends, i.e., 36% (18) respondents said important, 46% (23) said a little important, and 18% (9) said a little unimportant. Also, there’s somehow similar perspectives in highlighting the importance of Nepal Bhasa about “to speak at communal and traditional gatherings” 58% (29) said important, 42% (21) said a little important; whereas “to be able to read books and documents” 52% (26) said important, 30% (15) said a little important, 14% (7) said important and rest 4% (2) said a little unimportant.

Youths have the concept that parents should be obliged to pass Nepal Bhasa language skills to their children. It is also clear that youths feel that Nepal Bhasa is a part of their identity and that it is important. Overall, the attitudes of youth towards Nepal Bhasa is positive.
Results

To produce art/music in Nepal Bhasa
To keep the language and culture alive
To speak at communal and traditional gatherings
To speak with my friends
To speak with my family
Learning the Nepal Bhasa is vital to Newa Culture and Identity

![Figure 17]

**Attitudes of youth towards the importance of Nepal Bhasa**

![Bar chart showing the attitudes of youth towards the importance of Nepal Bhasa]

Participant 5 stressed the importance of Nepal Bhasa in this way, *“Without Nepal Bhasa, we lose something essential from our culture. For example, all the granthas, and bhajans are written and sung in Nepal Bhasa. And I can say for sure; we’re already losing that part as even the generation before me, i.e., my father’s generation couldn’t be able to read and write in Nepal Bhasa except for people that are in guthis and daphas.”* (Male, 19)

Similarly, participant 1 mentioned the importance as, *“The value of language expresses in the communication, history, culture, tradition, art, and more importantly identity. One shouldn’t forget that it didn’t only give identity to Newa people, it was this language and script that gave our country an identity as an independent state among the world in the United Nations (UN).”* (Female, 24)

Highlighting the language as a form of skill and fostering the vibrant scope of culture, literature, and art is important as said by participant 9, *“Cultures tend building up societies. and similar is the case with our Nepal Bhasa language. Language is a characteristic...”* (Male, 23)

Nepal Bhasa is not just a language but a face of all Newa. The art, culture, and tradition are all highlighted in it. The variation it has from different regions shows the variation in the traditions within the Newa culture as well. - Male, 23
feature of any community, I sometimes resemble unity, a form of skill that helps us communicate with each other. It prevents misunderstandings between generations. Most importantly it helps in preserving our unique culture. Flourishing our language and literature is a direct way to expand the chances of its preservation. (Male, 22)“

Furthermore, I asked “What is your view on Nepal Bhasa? How do you associate it with our culture, art, and tradition?” and each of them has reported a positive outlook on the Nepal Bhasa as an identity for the culture, art, and tradition. Participant 2 narrated, “Nepal Bhasa is not just a language but a face of all Newa. The art, culture, and tradition are all highlighted in it. The variation it has from different regions shows the variation in the traditions within the Newa culture as well. (Male, 23)“ The cultural variations within the diverse Newa community living across different parts of Kathmandu valley are also distinct from the dialect of Nepal Bhasa.

Participant 3 stated: “Nepal Bhasa is a treasure handed to us by our ancestors and our bhasa shows how rich the culture and civilization of the inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley was. Culture, art, and tradition is not something that pops out of nowhere in a short period. It takes years and years of discovery, practice, and use. So, Nepal Bhasa and our culture, art, and tradition are interlinked with each other.” (Female, 23)

Similarly, participant 5, a high-school student mentioned “Nepal Bhasa is the language in which all of our granthas, bhajans and old manuscripts were written. Without it, we won’t be able to either read or understand what they are saying. (Male, 19)“. Adding to its historical importance, participant 6 said “All of our traditional songs, dances, stories, even the history is prepared in Nepal Bhasa. If we don’t continue to practice, it would affect the authenticity of our culture, art, and tradition. (Female, 22)“

Participant 9 stated: “Nueva culture is one of the significant cultures that holds historical, traditional, and artistic values. A language in any culture is the envelope that packs in the art forms, traditions, rituals, attitudes, and many other elements of that culture when passed on. The language is important for its vocabulary (in recognizing things, ideas or recipes, stories, communication, and documents), the rituals (to keep traditions alive, the way we celebrate the way we act towards any social events), the communication (to understand the value of the culture, to understand the difference between activities, if they are traditions or stereotypes). Language keeps alive the love for one’s culture when we keep up with the language, we set a feeling that it is our own thus we don’t take culture as a burden/ some kind of formality, we tend to cherish the culture instead. (Male, 22)“

From the above narratives, language is enshrined in the community’s history and are a large part of cultural identity. It’s shared by the various festivals and rituals that are observed in Newa communities. There are thousands of granthas, bhajans, and old written in Nepal Bhasa as proof of the richness of the language to present traditional knowledge and literature. Nepal Bhasa as a symbol of Newa identity
is recognized as authenticity to Newa culture, art and tradition.

**BARRIERS TO FUNCTIONING NEPALI BHASA**

Regarding the question on “What do you think might prevent people from learning Nepal Bhasa? participant 5 shares, “the mentality of new being parents- my child will be backward in school if s/he doesn't teach Nepali bhasa to their child. (Male, 24) Participant 9 mentioned why people don’t use the language or haven’t learned it or don’t practice it in the following 5 points in his own words.

1. English is a language that is trending
2. Parents who can and do speak Nepal Bhasa practice the language with their young ones.
3. Reading, writing, working is done in Nepali and English languages only.
4. Trends of globalization have led people to prioritize the practice of the English language.
5. There has been a gap in recent years in Nepal Bhasa songs, music, literature, writings have not been of interest among the young people.

- (Male, 23)

Similarly, participant 5 says how the language has been slowly going backward and people aren’t interested in practicing Nepal bhasa as, “I’ve got a brother who can understand the language but cannot speak it because his parents speak with him in Nepali. We learn Nepali and English at school and formally there’s no schooling in the Nepal Bhasa language. And while one learns all of them, people tend to let go of things that they deem are useless, like Nepal Bhasa, as it doesn’t hold any significant importance and power in society. Nepal Bhasa isn’t used in administration, nor is it used in any official use. Nor are there an abundance of media to interact with.” (Male, 19)

**CONTINUATION OF NEPAL BHASA**

In order to understand the continuation of Nepal Bhasa in the present context, I asked: “What do you think helps to keep continuing Nepal Bhasa among youth in the community?” Participant 2 shares “The communication in Nepal Bhasa should be normalized, which must not be a compulsion rather a habit itself. (Male, 23).

Participant 3 emphasizes the worth of language in her own words. People must accept and realize that every language has its accent and that stays in one’s tongue once s/he becomes an avid speaker of that language—accepting the fact that it’s the word and ideas that matter and not the fluency will encourage the people to learn Nepal Bhasa. Doing this will erase the fear of getting humiliated because of his/her accent. Teaching the younger generation to have a close relationship with the grand generation also evokes the hunger to learn their language. (Female, 23)

Participant 9 mentioned, “Nepal Bhasa can be continued if it starts at homes. since a child learns to speak at home. When the children would listen to their elders conversing in Nepal Bhasa, they will surely learn the language partially. Trying to make them speak would give them the motive to
learn. Similarly, continuing the art forms in Nepal Bhasa, linking to the latest influence the songs like ‘Maicha’ has attracted a big audience and drawn the people to at least be familiar with a few vocabularies. Training of Nepal Bhasa writings, linguistic training at the local community, promotion of the language at publications (regular magazines), and practice within friend circles could be the best form to continue the use of Nepal Bhasa.” (Male, 23)

It’s important to create awareness of the need and promotion of Nepal Bhasa from the community level. The most notable factor was that teaching the language from the home i.e. from parents/grandparents to children is a motivating influence to keep up this language. Similarly, music is notably the best element to bring current generations to come together to feel it, own it, and preserve it. Thereby, youths are fascinated to communicate in Nepal Bhasa.

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**DISCUSSION**

It was interesting to note that the mother tongue of respondents, i.e. Nepal Bhasa, those of speaking regularly have now been reduced by 60% who either speak Nepali or Mixed with Nepal Bhasa and Nepali. This indicates that the Newa youth have practiced the consumption of other languages (Nepali/English) besides Nepal Bhasa in their daily life. It could be due to the influence of other languages in education, administration, a workplace that have narrow down the scope of communication on Nepal Bhasa among each other.

The research results show that there is a gradual decline in using Nepal Bhasa at home. There is a perception of the family members that if their child couldn’t learn Nepali or English well, s/he might have difficulties in assimilating with the present society with the demand of English/Nepal language in the career. Due to this understanding, they have drifted towards learning other languages besides their mother tongue. In the same way, among friend circles, it was indicated that 96% of the respondents used to speak or speaks Nepal Bhasa, where 88% are only comfortable speaking. It signifies that having the friend circles of the same community has encouraged youth to communicate in Nepal Bhasa. For instance, (Vajracharya, 2014) who examined a language survey among Newa from Kathmandu Valley, has found
that the trend of speaking Nepal Bhasa at home and among friend circles is in decline.

The findings of the study reported that most of the youth (66%) understand everything very well, and half of them (43%) mentioned they were fluent in speaking. As a result, it is analyzed that most of them did understand everything in Nepal Bhasa but couldn’t respond well in the same language. The youth are often very hesitant and feel uneasy about replying in Nepal Bhasa. This is because of their limited speaking scope at homes and among friend circles. Also, there’s increasing use of Nepali words throughout their conversations, and are seem to interact in mixed Nepal Bhasa and Nepali.

The respondents’ positive attitudes towards Nepal Bhasa have been established throughout their responses. The youth feel very much associated with their mother tongue and are aware of the need for its preservation. At the same time, youth consider themselves unable to maintain their mother tongue, indicating its absence of practice at home itself. Similarly, their attitudes towards language as an identity are also clearly reflected.

It was constantly stressed that Nepal Bhasa is associated with culture, art, and tradition. All the old inscriptions and manuscripts are written in the Nepal Bhasa language in a Ranjana script. Even the histories, traditional songs, and stories were prepared in Nepal Bhasa. Regarding this, (Tuladhar, 2004/05) mentioned that language and culture are attached to each other. Once the language disappears, culture and history become voiceless. It is unrealistic to believe that Newa people can still keep their cultural identity alive and strong by not speaking Nepal Bhasa, and pretend to be Newa. Similarly, the results indicate that almost all the respondents emphasized learning

**Once the language disappears, culture and history become voiceless. It is unrealistic to believe that Newa people can still keep their cultural identity alive and strong by not speaking Nepal Bhasa, and pretend to be Newa.**

Nepal Bhasa is vital to Newa culture and identity.

One of the respondents mentioned “Mhaa: Masiya” as an incorrect form but it is a correct and complete Nepal Bhasa sentence in Bhaktapur dialect. If she had spoken to people from Kathmandu or Patan they could have said “Mha Masyoo (म्हा मस्यो)”. *Masiya* is the earlier and correct simple present verb form for first-person used in Nepal Bhasa which has been changed to *Masyu* in Kathmandu/Patan (originally used for second/third person).
The Nepal Bhasa dialect is different in diverse regions within Kathmandu Valley as well. One of the facts that preserving Nepal Bhasa in Bhaktapur is also important to preserve the earlier or unchanged form of Nepal Bhasa.

One interpretation of the finding is that despite the use of language among families, friends, and at communal events or festivals, the Nepal Bhasa language is of no use in music, literature, writings, etc. Previously, there were music and films created in Nepal Bhasa, but lately, there has been a gap. The books, newspapers, and articles are rarely available and are exposed to youth. Therefore, youth are not provided with exposure to the vast utility of language to see its value and worthiness to learn the language.

In general, the study area is the predominant speakers of Nepal Bhasa, the practice is tending to decrease. However, it was learned that respondents have a sense of realization that this language is necessary to be preserved and passed on to the generations to generations. They become conscious of the wrong use of the terms and grammar while speaking Nepal Bhasa, which they realized could lose the essence of the language if this keeps on continuing. In order to keep this ongoing, the Nepal Bhasa language should be a focus on as a habit rather than a compulsion among youth just for the sake of this preservation. The real meaning of having this language serves last for years could be the youth's understanding of this language as a self-identity.
CONCLUSION

Among the indigenous communities in Nepal, the Newar community has distinct cultural identity, and traditions. In this study, I have tried to emphasize the youth’s perspective in general. Youth, in today’s time, are exposed to many cultures, traditions, languages and are confused about weighing the importance of their mother tongue. The dignity and importance of language are needed to pass on to the new generations, with passing old traditional values and norms.

In this study, changes in practice were observed despite having knowledge and attitude to some extent. However, in addition to knowledge and attitude, many factors influence changes in practice. These include the absence or presence of the speaking environment at home, among friends, and at communal events or festivals. The youth are very much profound about their mother tongue and feel responsible for preserving the language necessary for their identity, culture, and centuries of history. It was even noted the weaknesses from their own, family and community as a whole where the focus has shifted towards other languages such as Nepali or English. This was because of the state’s single policy of language, i.e., Nepali as an official language.

The research aimed to understand the youth’s perspective towards Nepal Bhasa and learn about their attitudes. Based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of the study, it can be concluded that regardless of the choice of speaking Nepal Bhasa at home and among limited friend circles, beyond that, there’s inadequate space for its practice as well as preservation. For a reason, youth aren’t concerned much about this- because for now, it’s just as a form of living, teaching language is yet
not formalized and aren’t exposed to them. In addition to this, there’s the inadequacy of language in every element of our everyday life, such as music, dances, stories, etc. which might make youth enjoy learning and speaking.

By analyzing changing context, this thesis has shown how education and media can play an important role in contributing to making the language in the consistent use and hearing among youth. For instance, the recent decision to introduce the compulsory local curriculum to be taught in Nepal Bhasa medium by Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) to school students from Grade 1 to 8 is a righteous move to make the upcoming youth generations keep up their language. Similarly, music like “Maicha” and “Thau Kane” by Emerge musical band in recent days have also elated youth towards listening and creating more like such. These kinds of initiatives were being stressed by the youth as a means to constantly engage their generations in preserving the language.

The study recommends that youth should be brought together to continue to practice and preserve their mother tongue and suggests the following recommendations:

1. Firstly, include the importance of local governments to realize the need for curriculum revision and emphasis on local language in school and workplace settings (both govt and non-govt) as a formal language.
2. Parents/guardians are recommended to stress the importance of Nepal Bhasa and encourage their children to learn and speak the language as it is very much related to the cultural and linguistic identity of Bhaktapur.
3. The Nepali language is introduced as an official language and in academic curricula, the language and scripts are taught irrespective of their mother tongue. With the establishment of the Federal System in Nepal, under the “Local Government Operation Act 2074” local level government can design courses on their own and implement them. The addition of the Nepal Bhasa course in the curriculum of primary education can be instrumental to serve the purpose of preserving language among upcoming generations.
4. Almost all of the books published in Nepal Bhasa are in Kathmandu dialect; Most Nepal Bhasa radio, TV programs, and songs are in Kathmandu dialect. People in Bhaktapur probably have a hard time understanding these? Do they think what is presented in books and media is the correct and standard form and what they are speaking is not? (thus, tend to not speak Nepal Bhasa?) This might be something to explore probably with another study.

2 Thau Kane- Emerge, Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blyk1Rnxo6k
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