

Minority Language Education in Nepal: The View From a Himalayan Village

Abstract: This paper, a case study in one group of communities of Nepal, considers the topic of minority language education in the face of increasing encroachment of the dominant and national language Nepali. Our over-arching research question asks, in the context of local education, what we can observe about the perceived value, use of, and competition between two local languages (Gurung, Gyalsumdo) and also between these languages and Nepali (the national language of Nepal) in the Manang District. What we find ~~is~~are persistent divisions amongst residents and educators about what the role of local languages currently ~~are~~is as well as what they should be.

I. Introduction

~~This paper is a case study, written as we consider the topic of minority language education in the face of increasing encroachment of the dominant and national language in Nepal.~~

Formatted: Normal

Although there are 6,000 languages catalogued worldwide (Lewis et al. 2016), the distribution and function of these languages is not even. In many multilingual countries, such as Chad, Botswana, Mauritius, Brazil, and Germany, a single or small set of languages are recognized for official, public use, with other languages serving more local and private or unofficial functions. Other countries, such as India, have attempted a more holistic recognition of multilingualism at official levels. We believe that as a country, Nepal may be moving in this direction. Regardless of how language is recognized by the national government, it is common knowledge that language is intrinsically linked with culture, and when a language of a particular ethnic group is not practiced, it increases the risk of language death, which leads to endangerment of the existence of many other cultural aspects associated with a particular language-speaking group, or ethnic group. It is of key importance for researchers to distinguish community perspectives about languages spoken in specific areas. Our study focuses on the geographic region of Manang, Nepal, which is an exemplar of a location where complex issues, such as those of modernity and tradition, intersect. Our findings of how language is used among members of these communities can serve as a model for minority language education in other areas in Nepal.

Formatted: Font: Font color: Auto

Minority Language education in Nepal is a complex and controversial topic, due to the country's extreme but fragile linguistic diversity and a documented history of linguistic oppression. More recent radical political shifts have resulted in a rise in ethnic (and linguistic) consciousness in Nepal and progressive language rights policies, but they have also resulted in competing frameworks for language preservation that vary according to ethno-linguistic and geo-political differences across the country. Layered on all of this is perceived ambivalence from local residents and educators about how indigenous minority languages can be valued and incorporated into primary and secondary ("K-12") schooling and the local employment marketplace in the face of dominant national and global languages.

All of these factors have real consequences for the vitality and viability of smaller communities and the minority languages spoken there. Of the approximately 100 languages in Nepal,

approximately 50% are classified within the range of “endangered” to “critically endangered” (<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/>). Of particular relevance in Nepal ([and in Manang](#)) is a combination one-two punch of the rise of boarding schools (often remotely located from children’s families and mother tongue environments), where instruction is completely in Nepali (the dominant and official language of Nepal) [or in mixtures of Nepali and English \(a global language\)](#), and also an out-migration trend of semi-educated young adults to seek employment opportunities in Kathmandu or abroad (Ministry of Labour and Employment 2014; Gajurel 2015). In Nepal and elsewhere, this lack of language valuation in local schools, combined with a perceived low value of local languages in the local and national marketplace has been shown to undermine preservation attempts and hasten language shift, and eventually, death (Fishman 2006; Dunbar and Skutnabb-Kangas 2008; Angdembe 2013; AUTHOR et al 2015).

The focus for this study, the Manang District is located in Nepal’s Western Development Region. Four Sino-Tibetan languages are indigenous to Manang, and the district is divided into two distinct linguistic and cultural spheres: Upper Manang (Nyeshang Valley) and Lower Manang. (Snellgrove 1961/1981; Thomas 2005). The practices observed in Manang are also compared to innovations taking place in other parts of the world, including Nepal’s capital, Kathmandu.

In this paper, we consider the history and the current reality of language education with an eye specifically to the complex situation in one village setting, Chame, Manang District, where two indigenous minority languages (Gurung and Gyalsumdo) co-exist and compete with dominant languages including Nepali (Nepal’s national language), Hindi (a regional language of economic significance) and even English (a prestige language due to tourism and mass media influences). [Our general research question asks, in the context of local education, what we can observe about the perceived value, use of, and competition between two local languages \(Gurung, Gyalsumdo\) and also between these languages and Nepali \(the national language of Nepal\) in the Manang District.](#) Our single case study approach is relevant and preferred in this case for these reasons: (1) By embedding examinations of people and various settings (Patton 2015) we gain access to the complementary data that are otherwise not easily triangulated. The combination of linguistic and educational interviews and individual observations provide a nested, or layered interpretation of how and why one specific region would want to (or not) utilize local languages in the educational setting. (2) [Our approach and findings allow for parallels to be drawn between the fact that the local languages are characterized by unique histories, as are the needs of the local residents.](#) (3) Our findings and recommendations allow for comparisons of individual researcher experiences in this specific educational setting with the goals set by current national mandates.

While most accounts of multilingual and minority language education focus on large-scale studies and emergent trends in national or multi-community contexts (Hough et al 2009; Taylor 2010; [Phyak 2013](#); Davis and Phyak 2015), our account takes a close-zoom examination

Commented [MW1]: I found this sentence confusing

Commented [J2]: Perhaps we should remove this point? Is this a comment that arose from our ‘old’ research questions?

of these variables in one village setting, investigating language education histories, current practices, and opinions about local language instruction¹.

II. Language Education in Nepal: History and Context

The history of language policies and indigenous minority language discrimination in Nepal is discussed in Awasthi (2004). Until recently, hundreds of years of official policies of what Hough et al quote as “one king, one country, one language, one culture” (160) resulted in a banning of indigenous linguistic and cultural practices and a virtual snuffing out of these practices anywhere but in the most private of domains and environments. This began to change in the 1990’s with a popular democratic movement in Nepal, which resulted in calls for recognition and protection of cultural and linguistic human rights. Nepal began a slow and arduous journey towards linguistic pluralism.

Progress in language rights again stalled during a decade-long Maoist militia uprising, followed almost immediately by controversies from the (now defunct) monarchy, and then from a long stalemate on the adoption/ratification of a national constitution. However, major improvements in Nepal have included a process of official registration of minority languages, recognition in interim constitutions of indigenous languages on at least some levels (including education), and the establishment of continuously active federations to promote indigenous-inclusive language rights (including the National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Languages/Nationalities/NFDIN), all of which have played a role in envisioning and constructing multilingual education programs.

However, the imprint of a long history of oppression has remained, particularly in the form of low valuation of local languages in broader contexts outside of home, socio-politically constructed identities at odds with lineage (e.g. surnames that do not align with ethnolinguistic histories), self-viewing and self-appreciation through western models and standards, and dropout and outward migration trends for betterment (Kukuczka 2001; Weinberg 2013). Adding to this, current initiatives coming from the national government are largely top-down and decentralized. This means that many primary school teachers are hired externally, so they have little or no access to local languages, traditions and practices, and there little oversight on teacher performance. Additionally, there is little attempt to overlap content with local application or values (Hough et al 2009; Weinberg 2013).

Figure/Map 1. HERE

In lower Manang, where Chame is located, two indigenous languages have co-existed for several generations: Gurung (the larger of the two languages at approximately 2,000 speakers distributed across approximately 10 VDC’s, and with approximately 200,000 speakers across the country²) and Gyalsumdo (a smaller Tibetan dialect with approximately 250 speakers

¹ Rai et al 2011 represent other close-zoom studies, in Rasua, Palpa and Kanchanpur Districts of Nepal with considerations of Rajbansi, Santhal, Tharu, Uraw, Maithili, Yakkha, and Athphariya.

² A VDC “village development committee” is a lower administrative branch of Nepal’s Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development; VDC’s have a local governing infrastructure including a chief, and are subdivided into wards. VDC’s also have schools.

Commented [MW3]: Some other overviews of LPP in Nepal are those by Eagle and Sonntag, which could be helpful

Commented [KH4]: KAH will do this

Formatted: Font: 10 pt

distributed across four VDC's). A note on language population is in order at this point. This difference--250 vs. 2,000--can be misleading. Although the raw speaker numbers are different, in Manang, both languages occupy the same precarious position when it comes to ~~future~~-vitality. Indeed, a number of recent publications on language endangerment have stressed that it is not so much raw speaker populations that is a reliable indicator of language vitality, but rather other variables such as average age of speakers, population stability, domains of daily language access, presence of an orthography, and most importantly to this study, presence in school curricula (Fishman 1991; Lewis and Simon 2010; UNESCO 2003). When these additional factors are considered, both Gurung and Gyalsumdo emerge as vulnerable. Both languages are threatened by increasing outward population migration of fluent speakers. Both languages are primarily oral in their practice and intergenerational transmission: Gurung does ~~has~~have a written orthography, but it is not regularly used by most speakers, and like many indigenous languages of Nepal, Gyalsumdo does not have a written orthography. Both languages have an aging speaker population (although this is true more so for Gyalsumdo than for Gurung). And, neither language is substantially incorporated into local education settings. Therefore, it is instructive to consider both Gurung and Gyalsumdo as on roughly the same level as they vie for a foothold amongst national and international languages introduced to the region.

When Nepal was unified as a country and divided into governmental zones and districts in the early 20th century, Chame VDC was established as the Manang District headquarters (similarly to a county seat in the U.S.). This has resulted in both benefits and challenges for Chame, including establishment of more stable infrastructures such as a cell-phone tower and a larger electric grid, but also in an influx of Nepali-speaking government employees. Additionally, because Chame is an important political and economic village along the larger Annapurna trekking route (having a bank, a post office, a health clinic and several small lodges and restaurants), it has become a major stopover point for foreign backpacker tourists, resulting in the rise of contact languages like Hindi and English. Not surprisingly, Nepali, Hindi and English are viewed as languages of economic and social advancement (prestige languages), while Gurung and Gyalsumdo are viewed as traditional languages with limited practical value beyond the home environment and cultural celebrations. The recent construction of a motor road from a major Nepalese highway to Chame (and beyond) furthers these resources, but exacerbates the linguistic competition, and Figure/Image 1 illustrates the co-existence of these encroaching languages in the local marketplace.

Figure/Image 1. HERE

Not all VDC's in Manang (and indeed, elsewhere in the country) are as developed as Chame, and in several communities, the schools are under-staffed and under-resourced, and have only a handful students. However, the schools of Chame have benefitted from its headquarters status. This resulting uneasy linguistic co-existence amidst the recent attempts at multilingual education movements described above makes Chame a good location for this close-zoom study.

Chame has three schools: a lower primary school serving kindergarten through fifth grade, a lower secondary school, up to tenth grade, and a higher secondary ("plus-two") school, providing more specialized training in subjects like education and commerce/business.

Commented [MW5]: It makes me uncomfortable when I see statements like this without information on how you know this – what segments of the population is this true for? For how long? How do you know? If you're not ready to get into those details here, perhaps something like "we found that..." so that the reader knows this is something that came from your research and not just from prior assumptions or your own heads

Commented [MW6]: Is this competition? I fully believe you that it is, but I think it's on you to prove that there is competition rather than coexistence. Nothing you've said so far has preempted the possibility of bi/multilingualism, which we all know is super common in Nepal.

Figure/Image 2. HERE

There are no statistics available for Chame village specifically, but the overall literacy rate of children aged 5 and over in Manang District is 74.8%, about 12 percentage points lower than that for Kathmandu (86.3%), but still higher than most other districts in the country (UNESCO literacy 2013). This suggests that schooling (particularly in Chame) is an important part of social development and organization. But the question remains: What role do (or can) local languages have in this environment?

Given the above context, our overarching goal for this article that has informed our methods is this: How can we bring to light and examine the tensions in linguistic practices, attitudes and language instruction that have been created in the Chame environment, particularly between educators and local residents, and how can our own observations be converted into recommendations that simultaneously respect the educational goals of the school system and also the desires of residents?

As stated in the introduction, our methods were shaped by a basic over-arching research question: Using complementary methods of sociolinguistic interviews and more in-depth discussions with local educators, what can we observe about how local languages are valued and practiced in local schools of the Chame area vis-à-vis Nepali?. These two-What we observe from the investigation of this larger question via interviews and discussions with local residents and with educators falls into two overlapping focused questions/themes that form the structure for the remaining sections of this paper:

1. How do Conflicts in what Chame community members and educators feel about current language practices and prospects in private (domestic) vs. public (educational) settings?
2. What do Conflicts in what Chame community members and educators want for local and languages in the future?

Commented [J7]: These don't necessarily show up in the data collected in the education setting.

In order to address these research questions, and therefore our overall goal, our investigation of Chame language attitudes, practices inside and outside the school employs different several but complementary methods: sociolinguistic interviews of members of the Chame community collected in 2012 and 2013, paired with tailored interviews with teachers and school officials in Chame, and also ethnographic observations by the co-authors as gathered in 2014. In the following sections, we describe the methods used to investigate our research question and the findings that underlie our two sets of general observations in 1 and 2 above.

III. Methods and Findings

A. Methods:

This study is a joint effort by the co-authors: a documentary linguist with almost 20 years fieldwork experience in Manang, with a vested and long-standing concern in issues of language preservation, and also a primary/secondary education scholar with an interest in how these challenges are manifested in teaching/learning design and delivery in Chame, a village with a comparatively highly functioning school system. This means that our methods are a combination of in-person and recorded sociolinguistic interviews (designed to ask specific questions about language background, current practices, attitudes, and future prospects), as well as an adapted ethnographic observation. As such, our methods are simultaneously distinct yet overlapping; they merge those designs that most closely correspond with our separate training histories in order to lend a broader view of the context and triangulation of the findings.

The sociolinguistic interview data for this study come a series of repeat-design sociolinguistic interviews, originally designed to provide an assessment of language promotion or vulnerability in private and public contexts in the Manang District as a whole. A total of 87 interviews were conducted across the four languages of Manang, including Gurung and Gyalsumdo and also Manange and Nar-Phu (AUTHOR et al 2015). The original methodological plan was to establish a ratio of residents to interview across the four languages based on individual village household counts, a “quota sample” (Patton 2005). The sampling approach was a combination of “snowball” (interviewees direct us to additional people) and “sample of convenience” (we interview any lifelong Manang resident who is available), which allowed us to interview at least some residents from a wide range of backgrounds from every Manang village, including Chame.

The survey questionnaire, modeled on similar surveys conducted in Nepal (Kansakar et al 2011), contains five sections: General and personal information; Family background and language practices; Current family situation and language practices; Work and education language practices; Subjective contemporary (opinions on language/variety locations and mutual intelligibility and opinions on future language prospects in official and cultural domains)³. All interviews were conducted in person, in Nepali language because of its regional lingua-franca status, and all interviews were audio-recorded⁴. In this report, we reflect on the specific questions that touch most directly on issues of the roles of local languages in local schools.

A sub-set of seventeen of the 87 interviews are used for this study, particularly interviews from Chame village proper as well as from those villages where children are served by Chame for primary or secondary education (not all villages have secondary schools and children regularly walk one to two hours each way to attend school in Chame). This results in a total of eleven Gurung and six Gyalsumdo interviews consulted for this study.

~~The adapted ethnographic-Participant-~~ observations of classrooms took place over a period of seven days in Chame, and four days in Kathmandu in 2014. ~~Seven-Eight~~ teachers and administrators were met with in both locations, and five of these teachers and administrators responded to the questionnaires, all of whom were located in Chame village, but most of whom had not received teacher training in the area. In addition, informal conversations with teachers and administrators were utilized to supplement ~~the-our data, adapted ethnographic approach.~~

³ The full questionnaire may be found at <http://www.mananglanguages.org/sociolinguistic-interviews.html>

⁴ In fact, only a few of the local educators spoke Gurung, and none that we were aware of spoke Gyalsumdo.

Formatted: Font: 10 pt

Formatted: Font: 10 pt

Formatted: Font: 10 pt

Formatted: Font: 10 pt

Formatted: Font: 10 pt

The typical daily structure for the researcher included meeting with teachers for tea in the main office, teaching three morning classes, and then meeting with an administrator in the afternoon or evening. In addition to the questionnaires, detailed accounts of the author's observations recorded in a field journal after each day's experience. Traditionally, ethnographies require prolonged periods of time spent in the field, collecting data on the shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting (Creswell 2014). In this study, carrying out field methods in an abbreviated fashion were validated by the triangulation of findings across co-authors.

The results of these two sets of data collection are organized according to how the questions connect our first two research questions: how residents feel about language practices and prospects, and what they want or would like to see in the future in their community. First, the responses to the sociolinguistic survey questions are summarized and discussed, and then responses to the ethnographic observations interviews are summarized and discussed. Given that two parallel data collection techniques were used in the same community, one expected method for data analysis would be via cross-tabulation. Cross-tabulation has obvious advantages, including the ability to examine relationships within larger datasets that are not always immediately apparent in an analysis of the total survey population. However, there are some reasons why we did not choose this method. First, the two field researchers were not always in the same community at exactly the same time, and therefore not interacting with exactly the same individuals. Therefore, the respondent population is a mixed one, where one resident who was interviewed by one researcher was not necessarily interviewed by the other. We also were restricted to interviewing residents over the age of 18 years, which eliminated students from our data collection design. Furthermore, the design of our survey instrument (the nature of the questions themselves) were geared towards distinct (but complementary) goals of language attitudes and pedagogical approaches. Therefore, as the nature of the questions differed across the researchers, the types of possible responses were also different enough such that quantitative cross-tabulation was not practical.

B. Findings

~~Our first research question focuses on the current situation in Chame, namely how Chame community members and educators feel about current language practices and prospects. In order to get at this question, we felt it would be useful to tap into residents' histories, their daily practices and experiences vis-à-vis the school system, and their own predictions about the future based on these practices. There are~~ We first present the results of six sociolinguistic interview questions that were designed to get at current attitudes and opinions, questions like these that tap into residents' histories, daily language practices and experiences vis-à-vis the local school system, and their own predictions about the future based on these practices. We pose these questions in turn, and comment on recurrent response types. We then turn to how direct observation and interaction with educators and community members ~~allow for further details further reveal regarding conflicting~~ attitudes and opinions in Chame.

Commented [MW8]: I'm sure this depends on the journal and reviewers you get, but I know some people who would object strongly to calling this ethnographic – observation, sure, but not ethnographic. But it sounds like this was not an issue that IJED had, so perhaps it isn't a big issue.

Commented [J9]: This may no longer be relevant.

Interview Question 1: “Did you receive formal education as a child, and if so, in what language?” This question contextualizes residents’ attitudes about language-education connections in their own education history. Until recently, primary education in Nepal was not compulsory, and so it may be the case that those without formal education experience may not have a strong sense about the role of schools in language promotion or hindrance, while those with formal education may have a more fixed range of opinions.

Fig. 3. HERE

Figure 3 shows that the degree of formal education for those interviewed in general is low; most interviewees reported between somewhere “none” and “up to 9th class,” but there were some teachers (primarily Gurung), who had completed their School Leaving Certificate education in a more specialized subject such as education or commerce. Those who had some formal education studied primarily in Nepali, or a combination of Nepali and English languages. A smaller percentage of respondents had access only to the mother tongue, and this was typically in the first years of education, when local teachers would use the mother tongue as a scaffold towards second language acquisition of Nepali.

Interview Question 2: “What language do you yourself use in your daily life?” This question is designed to reveal everyday language practices in and around the Chame area.

Fig. 4. HERE

The responses in Figure 4 show that even though the mother tongue functions as an everyday code of communication, already, in everyday language use, Nepali has emerged as on equal footing with the local mother tongue. AUTHOR et al (2015) show this to be the case throughout Manang, particularly in areas where VDC’s are located close to the developing motor road.

Interview Question 3: “What language do you use with your children?” This question was designed as a companion to Interview Question 2. While residents may find Nepali to have a higher function in everyday life, are mother tongue traditions continuing in domestic environments?

Fig. 5. HERE

Figure 5 shows that (for fourteen respondents, those with children) mother tongue-only language practices are more common, but not exclusively so. Those respondents who indicated mixed mother tongue and Nepali use either had some children living in boarding schools (and the children therefore felt more comfortable communicating with their parents, when they saw them, in Nepali), or else they spoke the mother tongue with older children and more Nepali with younger children. In some cases, respondents indicate that parents speak the mother tongue with children, but children respond to the parents in Nepali.⁵

⁵ This pattern can be contrasted with language use with spouses (if married), where the dominant trend is mother tongue use only (AUTHOR et al 2015, 113). It can also be contrasted to language use with respondents’ own parents, which is almost entirely in the mother tongue (113). This suggests a longitudinal shift, whereby the mother tongue is less favored with younger generations.

Interview Question 4: “What language do you use at work?” Like question 3, this question was designed as a companion to the question regarding general, everyday language use.

Fig. 6. HERE

The response patterns in Figure 6 reflect those in Figure 1; the mother tongue maintains a place in work settings (for those who are employed, eight respondents), but Nepali or other non-local languages (English, Hindi) have also found a foothold.

From these questions, the emerging reported usage pattern is a mixed one; The local languages (Gurung, Gyalsumdo) play a role in everyday, employment, and domestic scenarios for many Chame locality residents, but they are increasingly in competition with Nepali and other non-local languages. There is also a possible generational shift, whereby younger speakers witness a rising influence of non-local languages in domestic and public settings. These reported practices, however, do stand in contrast to how residents feel about and value their mother tongues for cultural practices. This is shown in interview question 5.

Interview Question 5: “How important is your mother tongue to your practice of your culture and religion?” It is often assumed that language endangerment or marginalization in Nepal is due to a lack of ethnic pride or identity, and historically this rejection of ethnicity was engineered into Nepal nation-building (Angdembe 2013). In Chame, what is the relationship between local language practices and local cultural practices?

Fig. 7. HERE

All respondents see an important language-culture connection for their mother tongues, and again, this attitude is echoed across the Manang District, with an almost 100% positive response (AUTHOR et al 2015, 119). This suggests a disconnect between how local languages are viewed as a marker of cultural identity and the realities of daily communicative practices amongst residents. There is value, but that value is mediated by national education and marketplace concerns. Given this asymmetry, it then becomes useful to survey what residents think the future of their mother tongues might be.

Interview Question 6: “In your opinion, will your mother tongue still have children learners (after one or two generations)?” This question functions as a barometer for language vitality. Local residents have somewhat split opinions about how they value and practice their mother tongues in a variety of settings, both public and private, every-day and ritualized. What do they think about the future of their languages?

Fig. 8. HERE

As shown in Figure 8, the picture is again a mixed one. One Gurung man feels that his mother tongue is safe for at least the next ten years. After that, the future of the language will be more uncertain. Two Gyalsumdo males feel that there is a trend of Nepali language replacement, and that nothing can be done to preserve the local languages in the face of Nepali. One Gyalsumdo female feels that if children leave home (leave their villages), that will ultimately result in the loss

of the language. Another Gyalsumdo female feels that children in future generations will retain at least part of the system.

What emerges from these six sociolinguistic interview questions is a mixed scenario. Local residents who are not educators themselves have less or no experience with formal education, and so their impressions of the value of local languages for their children's future are less certain. Current language practices are emerging as more mixed through time, whereby parents have transitioned to Nepali with children who live in remotely located boarding schools, or with younger children. This is different from reported practices with spouses, older children, and children who have remained local. These mixed practices, however, stand in stark contrast to the overall high value of the local languages in cultural practices and celebrations. It is a contrast of idealism regarding the role of local languages for celebration of cultural identity vs. realism regarding the role of these same languages for "practical" everyday life or professional training.

These conflicted practices and attitudes from the sociolinguistic observations are reflected and amplified in ethnographic surveys, conversations, and observations conducted with teachers and in schools at observations at the primary school in Koto, a bordering village of Chame, and the secondary school in Chame proper.

In an observation of the primary school in Koto, and in speaking with several teachers and the administrator of the school, it became evident that some students were able to keep up because they understood the Nepali language, and others were not able to keep up because instruction was not provided in their mother tongue. There did not seem to be an official remediating intervention to address the student linguistic and content needs or a system to scaffold Nepali acquisition, but rather a repeated encouragement that the students should mimic the language until they could use it effectively. One teacher, in particular, shared that she knew the local language of some of the students, and could speak with them; however, the use of the mother tongue did not seem to be held in high regard by other educators. The children's inability to speak Nepali was seen as a disadvantage or a challenge to be overcome. Without scaffolded linguistic support for a student to transition from their mother tongue language to Nepali, basic skills will not be learned. For these students, school may become a daunting task, as they are faced with both learning a new language and the subject material, and along with experiencing psychological damage (Hough 2009), they may become discouraged. These observations and educator responses suggest that by the time students come to secondary levels of education, mother tongue use is no longer an issue of concern or interest in the school environment, contrary to what residents care about. At the same time, teachers are well aware of the challenges faced by students who do not have early experience in Nepali. For example, in one questionnaire response one educator indicated that curriculum should be delivered in the mother tongue.

Our second research question focuses on gaining a better understanding what residents and educators in Chame want, what they would like to see happen with respect to local languages in the school setting amidst these conflicts and tensions. In order to get at this question, we report on three additional sociolinguistic interview questions that were designed to We also wished to learn about residents' wishes and concerns for the future place of local

Commented [J10]: Are they?

Formatted: Font color: Black

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0"

Commented [MW11]: Was this something you observed? Or heard from teachers? In my observations, students do somehow eventually learn without any mother tongue support, just well behind their peers.

Commented [MW14]: It wasn't clear to me that residents care about mother tongue being used in secondary school – if that point was made above perhaps it could be stated more clearly.

Commented [MW15]: One questionnaire from one teacher isn't all that compelling to me as evidence that teachers in general are aware of this issue... I wonder if there are more persuasive ways to present patterns in your data

~~languages in Manang schools. The following three interview questions and companion discussions again reveal some conflict between residents and teachers, which we elaborate on in the discussion in Section IV. We pose these questions in turn, and comment on recurrent response types. We then turn to how direct observation and interaction with educators and community members allow for further details regarding these wishes and recommendations.~~

Interview Question 7: “Currently in almost all Manang schools, the teaching language is Nepali. Would the use of your mother tongue in your local school be helpful or harmful (problematic, complicating to their education progress) to children?” This question raises the prospect to respondents of bringing local languages into school system, which currently is not standard practice. The responses can be revealing because of the gap between language practices and attitudes outside of school vs. those inside.

Fig. 9. HERE

Figure 9 shows that while respondents are open to their mother tongues being introduced into local schools, most elaborative comments suggest that the mother tongues should be taught *alongside* (and not instead of) Nepali. One Gyalsumdo woman stated, “A dedicated course in our mother tongue would be useful.” A Gyalsumdo male said that, “Our language should be taught alongside Nepali.” A Gurung male said that, “Perhaps our language would not be practical in Chame village, but it would be in other VDC’s.” A Gyalsumdo male felt that Gyalsumdo language would be nice in local schools, but perhaps not practical, as (standard) Tibetan was already the language of instruction in a nearby Tibetan school (located in Humde VDC, about a one-day walk north from Chame).

Interview Question 8: “What can or should people do to keep your mother tongue spoken into the future?” This question serves as a follow-up for those who are uncertain about the future of the language, or who are not familiar enough with the local education system to comment on that.

Fig. 10. HERE

What emerges in Figure 10 is a sense that local language use in both private and public (primarily education) settings is important for language survival. Two respondents (Gurung and Gyalsumdo) feel that language socialization and practice at home is the most important factor. Added to this, five respondents (Gurung and Gyalsumdo) all feel that the local language must be formally incorporated into the local school curriculum in addition to the home setting. These responses can be correlated with the final sociolinguistic interview question, namely, whether children should be the deciders of their own linguistic practices.

Interview Question 9: “Should children in your community be allowed to make their own choices about language practices?” This question allows local residents to evaluate just how important or valued the local languages are.

Fig. 11. HERE

Commented [MW16]: Or to exhibit opinions about their views of the autonomy of children...this seems to me like a tough question to interpret without more information about child-rearing in this context. But maybe that's what you get for asking an anthropologist 😊

Figure 11 shows a degree of non-commitment (including cases when respondents do not themselves have children), but those with a strong opinion feel unanimously that local children *should* be required to learn and practice their mother tongues in childhood. One Gyalsumdo male suggests that children be required to learn the mother tongue in the context of local use, local meanings, and local relevance. One Gurung male says that children will hopefully naturally absorb the local languages by hearing them used around them every day.

As with the first research question, people's desires regarding local languages are entrenched in the realities and practicalities of life in a multilingual environment like Chame. Residents feel that local languages should continue to serve a daily function alongside Nepali, and that language socialization must happen at home as well as at school. Not everybody interviewed had a strong opinion regarding the question as to whether local languages should be required for children, but those who did felt that this could happen at home, and also in local schools in a kind of bilingual language education model. Again, this variation in what people want are reflected, and magnified, in ethnographic observations in two specific incidents observed by the co-authors: a teacher training workshop, and a local religious celebration in Chame village.

[We now turn to how direct observation and interaction with educators and community members further reveal conflicting attitudes and opinions within the educational setting. In particular, we find 3 main challenges to community members and educators within this data: 1. A seemingly resolved challenge of increasing encroachment of the dominant and national language Nepali and the decreased persistence of use of the mother tongue language in schools themselves. 2. A challenge of context and expectation: incorporation of western pedagogy into this specific educational setting, and 3. The challenge of coexistence between spirituality and academia.](#)

[Language Encroachment and Mother Tongue Language](#)

[In an observation of the primary school in Koto, and in speaking with several teachers and the administrator of the school, it became evident that some students were able to keep up because they understood the Nepali language, and others were not able to keep up because instruction was not provided in their mother tongue. There did not seem to be an official remediating intervention to address the student linguistic and content needs or a system to scaffold Nepali acquisition, but rather a repeated encouragement that the students should mimic the language until they could use it effectively. One teacher, in particular, shared that she knew the local language of some of the students, and could speak with them; however, the use of the mother tongue did not seem to be held in high regard by other educators. It is the researcher's impression, from speaking to teachers, that the children's inability to speak Nepali was seen as a disadvantage or a challenge to be overcome.](#)

[At the Secondary School in Chame, we observed that students were able to follow along with Nepali being the primary language of instruction. Additionally, it was clear that the administration highly valued instruction in the English language, as one of the authors was asked to teach several classes ranging across different subjects in her mother tongue \(English\).](#)

[By observing and interviewing at the primary school and the secondary school, we see a micro-model of the sociolinguistic interviews: In the primary school, students bring with them the](#)

Formatted: Indent: First line: 0"

prior knowledge of speaking their mother tongue at home, which is where they spend their first and linguistically formative years of life. By the time they transition into secondary school, they have adjusted to using Nepali at school. Like their parents, students begin to realize and practice this social division of using? the mother tongue in private, domestic contexts only, and the dominant language in public (educational) contexts. However, these educational contexts are not static – they are strongly influenced by growth and development in education research and practice, as we will see in the following section.

Incorporation of Context-based Current Pedagogy

Ragsdale also notes that in schools, the curriculum of the time; the “New Education Plan”, was modified by teachers so that more day-to-day traditions and skills could be emphasized:

A discrepancy has always existed between the official curriculum, the coursework assigned grade levels, the yearly and daily scheduling, as well as other formal elements in the program, and the actuality of schooling in rural communities such as Lamnasa

Our observations of the secondary school in Chame did not reflect this discrepancy, but revealed a conflict between the encroaching western culture, and the realities of teaching in a rural area within a underfunded government school.

When arriving at the administrative building in Chame, we found that approximately twenty-five teachers from surrounding areas had come to participate in a professional development event. Not all of the teachers in attendance were from the Chame-provided area; some teachers had to travel for over a day by foot to attend this training, coming from the villages of lower and upper Manang. This was part of a year-long professional development program in which the teachers participated in a series of modules, with occasional workshops and progress checks. The teachers were using an Action Research approach (Mills 2016; McNiff and Whitehead 2011), an established method of teacher research (Patton 2015) to reflect meaningfully upon their teaching practice, and through this approach, teachers were examining how they could improve student attendance and motivation in their classrooms, and subsequently, their schools.

The high attendance at the teacher training, combined with the pedagogical and research methods that were being utilized, indicates that teachers and administrators in the region are committed to meaningful instruction and forward-thinking initiatives. It also shows that dominant languages like Nepali and English are the primary vehicles for professional advancement.

Our findings indicate that teachers at Chame district are learning pedagogical methods aligned with current education literature; such as action research, hands-on practices, and student-centered pedagogy. However, these methods come from a western perspective, where standardized testing is the norm. They need to be adapted for use in these settings, and we believe this is part of the tension. Teachers are exposed to new methods, see them working in

other settings (urban and suburban schools that are well-funded) and are frustrated when they are not able to implement these techniques to fruition (no resources) to cause the same results (within a different context).

Mostly I apply student centered teaching activities. Teaching language needs more and more practice and communication. Therefore, I let (allow) them to be fully participated in the classroom.

[I use] group work, pair work, individual work.

[I use] all four [English] skills, grammar teaching, creating peaceful learning atmosphere.

[There are] many more challenges, first teaching aids are not sufficient. Second, classroom management is not in the proper manner. Third, [it is] difficult to make them aware about the value of education, awareness campaigns [are] needed.

[There are] no means of [providing] audio, we need it.

In addition to observations and information gleaned from conversations, educators' feelings about language in their classroom can be observed from a questionnaire item that examined the types of teaching activities that were used. Responses from the educators indicated that they have a strong sense of current pedagogical initiatives and constructivist theory, as well as what is needed to effectively teach key concepts of their subject area, and they structure their instruction around that need. However, it was also evident from the answers that when the teachers were asked about how they teach language, teachers automatically assumed that the author meant either Nepali or English. A selection of educator responses is provided here as an illustration:

Spirituality and Academia

Ragsdale's seminal text; "Once a hermit Kingdom: ethnicity, education, and national integration in Nepal" sets the scene for our study. In his study of Lamnasa Village in 1974, he states that rural schools have a dual role, and in Lamnasa, in particular, schools have been facilitators of cultural change while at the same time remaining integrated with Gurung social structure". Analysis of the data collected in schools demonstrate this dual role – with some teachers being present to teach students, and other teachers celebrating holy days at another location.

The day after the teacher training, when we visited the secondary school, there were surprisingly few teachers from the immediate Chame area in attendance. When we asked the Vice Principal where they were, we were told that there was a multi-day religious holiday, and

teachers and other community members were celebrating. After the holiday was over, there would be a picnic for two days that everyone could attend.

On one of these days, the school day was shortened so that students could attend the picnic, and we were invited by the Assistant Principal to accompany him, several teachers, and the school Head to this event. At the picnic we saw gathering of small groups, with people playing cards, listening to music, cooking food, and general socializing. As we enjoyed the food and the festive atmosphere, we were encouraged several times by the Head of the school to walk around and observe the game-playing and other activities. Through time, his message became apparent: People were playing card games and gambling, and this is why they were not in school. The dichotomy was obvious: local residents (local teachers included) were enjoying their cultural event, while conversely, from the non-local teachers and administrators, there was general disapproval of this type of behavior. The administrators and some teachers at the school felt that this type of an event detracted from the academic nature of the school day, and that it was not beneficial.

Local festivals disturb the teaching and learning activities. [Also,] learning activities are passive due to [children's] household work [requirements].

For some, the religious holiday was the focus, and for others (the administration in particular) school was the focus. It is important to note, that our observations took place before these celebrations began, while these celebrations were happening, and once they completed.

In a related incident, we learned through interviews and observations that one educator had created plans to build a temple next to the school. By doing this, he felt that students would be able to both pray and attend school and attendance rates would rise. By having a temple in close proximity, attendance could improve, as students would not be forced to choose between one or the other due to distance. While this effort seems to emphasize that the idea of academics and spirituality can coexist, the administrator's religion is Hindu (while Gurung and Gyalsumdo of Chame are Buddhist), and this potentially introduces additional complications.

_____What do these responses and observed incidents tell us about what people of Chame (residents and educators) *want*, particularly in the context of local (language, cultural) practices as they align or conflict with education practices? From local residents, there is an expressed desire to more actively incorporate local languages into public (education) settings. While current local language usage is mixed, and while Nepali is viewed by local residents as critical for educational success, local languages still do have value. Locals would like to see a future where their mother tongues are practiced in schools (and even more so at home). But there is also a conflict. From some educator perspectives, it suggests that a non-local model of education still preservers, and that educators (particularly those who are not from Manang) look at local practices of culture as something "other", something that takes place separately from education. But on the other hand, particularly for a subset of educators, those who are from Manang, see a value in finding connections between cultural practices and educational ones.

Commented [MW17]: This seems like a pretty common way to be disparaging about janajatis...same with the "they don't care about education" trope. There's a great old educational ethnography by Todd Ragsdale called *Once a Hermit Kingdom* that touches on this

Commented [MW18]: Gosh, this seems like a *really* complicated (and fascinating) situation – is the temple he's talking about building going to be a Hindu shrine (it's pretty common to have a little Saraswati temple on school grounds) or a Buddhist one? Also, on the topic of the local holiday, schools can legally give a certain number of "local holiday" days off, so the school leadership *could* have given the day off if they so chose...the mismatch of government calendar and non-Hindu religious calendars has been a big issue post-1990...I can't think of scholarly work on this though I feel like Susan Hagen might be a good bet for finding something...

IV. Discussion

Specific to this study, in comparing the responses from the socio-linguistic interviews and survey responses, as well as observations in Koto and Chame, we are able to articulate four basic *conflicts* or *tensions* that exist between what community members see and want in relation to what is happening in local schools:

The two emergent observation themes as highlighted in section II: a conflict in attitudes and opinions that local residents have about current language practices at home vs. in school, and a conflict in what locals and educators want for local languages in the future. We tease these apart here.

Tension 1: We observe a clash of insider/outsider attitudes. Local residents and locally originating educators see the practical value of local language practices, both at home and at school, while outside-originating educators and administrators view local languages as a hindrance to academic proficiency. 100% of teachers surveyed were not from the local area. It stands to reason that there is a significant learning curve that exists for teachers, whether novice or experienced, who are posted in Chame, in learning about community viewpoints and perspectives.

Commented [MW19]: If this is the case, how can you make claims about locally originating educators' opinions?

Tension 2: We see that NNepali language proficiency is more important than mother-tongue language proficiency. This is true for local educators as well as some (but not all) local residents. Student success in an immediate and broader context is one that disregards local languages and practices (or considers them as interference). Disregarding students' mother-tongue language has been shown to result in psychological damage (Hough et al. 2009), and in the case of our study, a possible attrition of students.

Commented [MW20]: You might want to mention the SLC at some point! All that schooling is basically for naught if you can't pass the SLC in Nepali or English, and including the English section

~~Tension 3: There is a disconnect between academic goals and the desires of locals to preserve and practice cultural and religious traditions. When these two agendas clash, educators view cultural activities as a form of rejection or loss of investment in a national educational standard or goal. This can be seen by examining the construct of the school system. Even though it has been given local authority, the district still seems to model the dominant culture, mainly by not incorporating indigenous languages within the curriculum and by devaluing local customs and celebrations as distracting.~~

Tension 4: Turning to future hopes, there is a disconnect between academic goals prescribed by educators and the desires of locals to preserve and practice cultural and religious traditions. When these two agendas clash, educators view cultural activities as a form of rejection or loss of investment in a national educational standard or goal. This can be seen by examining the construct of the school system. Even though it has been given local authority, the district still seems to model the dominant culture, mainly by not incorporating indigenous languages within the curriculum and by devaluing local customs and celebrations as distracting.

Hough et al (2009) discuss the possible psychological damage that can affect students when a mother tongue is not taught at schools. There is a resulting lack of appreciation for indigenous culture, values, and languages, feelings of inferiority and humiliation when exposed to the dominating culture, denial of one's culture and language, self-hate, colonization of the mind, delayed or inhibited cognitive development, and increased dropout, repetition, and failure rates at the early grades. These impacts are specific to individuals that have no choice other than to participate in the dominant culture, in which Nepali is the national and prestige language.

In any country, the dominant culture has the luxury of creating the lens in which non-dominant beliefs, values, and interests are held up for critical inspection. In a locally originating educational setting, providing instruction in a language without providing a means by which students can practice or value the mother tongue, is a demonstration of the dominant culture's privilege, as reflected in Adrienne Rich's comments:

"When those who have the power to name and socially construct reality, choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing" (Rich 1985, 199).

When educators enforce outside languages to the exclusion of local ones, and when this enforcement is tied to academic success, particularly at primary school ages, it not only interferes with that success, but it also sends a message to students that they are an 'other'. This is observed in Chame via a chronic disconnect between local residents' conflicted opinions about the function and value of their languages in their cultural contexts, and by primary and secondary school educators' complaints of locally situated activities as a distraction or hindrance of state-mandated learning objectives.

In contrast, bottom-up approaches, which empower local communities to take control of their own learning needs (Hough et al. 2009), promote the value of indigenous languages when they are practiced in an educational setting. In turn, this practice values and empowers indigenous people. There are many benefits to including these languages within the curriculum, among them, increased attendance rates, the ability for students to draw connections between their home and school life, increased levels of engagement, ability to express themselves within existing cultural contexts, and ability to learn the basic literacy skills. In addition, a student-centered approach to learning requires that students question, discuss, collaborate, and present information. Our data evidences that these contemporary practices are being utilized by educators in Chame. However, in order for these practices to be successful, all children need to be able to understand the language that the teacher is speaking.

University and Teacher Training Faculty, as well as teachers at the primary and secondary schools play a major role in the practice of Critical Indigenous Pedagogy. University courses within the teacher education program need to provide opportunities for teacher candidates to learn and practice the skills needed to incorporate local culture into their teaching, both during their program and after their graduation. Current work being done by Ball Chandra Luitel and his colleagues at Kathmandu University in the practice of auto-ethnography, in which teachers are

expected to critically reflect upon their teaching practice and assess strengths and areas for improvement (Belbase et al 2008). Belbase emphasizes that support from the school administration and parents play a significant role in the pedagogical choice of the teacher in the classroom, and teaching and learning is a collaboration among the students and the teacher (Belbase et al 2008). To achieve a “pedagogical metamorphosis” (Belbase et al 2008), it is critical to provide “professional development that enables teachers to develop personally the transformative learning skills they are now being called upon to develop in their own students” (Taylor et al 2012). Currently practicing teachers can begin addressing the need for inclusion of indigenous cultures and languages in their classrooms by incorporating the many indigenous perspectives of Hough’s model: speaking about or inviting community speakers to discuss knowledge about herbal medicines and traditional healing practices; traditional modern knowledge and skills; history, numerical systems, weights and measures; religion, belief systems and practices; and life rituals, feasts, festivals, songs and poems.

We have focused on local issues and responses so far. It’s important to note also that the Nepalese government is not entirely insensitive to these issues. In 2015, The Ministry of Education published the “Education For All National Review Report”, which documented the current status of the education system in the country. Of the seven major goals for developing education in the country, one goal, Goal 7, specifically highlights the educational needs of indigenous people and linguistic minorities, with the intention of “ensuring the right of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue” (Ministry of Education 2015, 68). Goal 7 of the report identifies targets and challenges, such as acknowledging that most of the minority languages are still undocumented or under-documented and confined to pre-literate traditions, and making note of the languages that have begun to develop written literature in the form of newspapers, magazines, textbooks, and folk literature for both adult literacy and primary education. Goal 7 acknowledges that although there is a great amount of linguistic diversity in Nepal; at least 123 languages of different genetic affiliations are spoken by 125 castes and ethnic groups of 10 diverse religious faiths, the current education system persists as monolingual, as Nepali has been adopted as the national official language.

Goal 7 acknowledges that linguistic diversity can be seen as a societal resource, given the language is fundamentally inherent to communication and interpersonal interactions, and that “it has been widely accepted that all children should have the opportunity to receive basic and primary education through mother tongue as their right” (54), and that this is a pathway to achieve quality education and assist in learners’ cognitive development. Our study has demonstrated that Gurung and Gyalsumdo serve important private/domestic and public/community functions, and as such, deserve a place in basic primary education.⁶

⁶ Goal 7 lists several activities that have been initiated: At the administrative level, assistance has been provided by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Save the Children Norway, and the Finnish Technical Assistance Support. Six schools have been selected to pilot specific programs. Several studies have documented the effectiveness of the introduction of indigenous languages and the learning environment at the primary level. Materials, such as textbooks and supplementary reading materials have been developed and distributed. Conferences, workshops, and special training on how to use these materials in the educational setting have also been held.

Commented [MW21]: It’s amazing that the government is still touting those 6 pilot schools – the Finnish assistance ended in 2009, several of the schools have switched to English medium by now, and the promised cascading model has done nothing. Check out the report by Rai et al., the recent Australian-funded one I’ll attach, and Phyak (2013) in Current Issues in Language Planning

Even though plans have been laid for mother tongue language to be included in Nepali schools, before and after Goal 7, implementation of these plans has been spotty and restricted to specific regions or language communities (cf. Tumbahang 2016 for commentary; Dewan 2016 for Tharu case studies; CRED 2015 for Limbu case studies; Shrestha and Van den Hoek 1995 for Newari).

Models of proposed multilingual education integrate western practices and outcomes with a valuation of local knowledge and traditions. The idea is that both can be integrated, both can co-exist. There are a number of instances of current programs around the world that promote co-existence and integration of dominant, alongside indigenous/local ones.

As one example, in the United States, Native Language Immersion Programs are voluntary, additive, and supplemented by summer or after school programs, and take up the majority of the day in a number of US public schools. In this model, students' first language (English) is used as a foundation for learning their second, native language. Over 30 years of data indicate that providing this type of instruction to Native Americans benefits students in the areas of language acquisition, test performance, retention and graduation rates, college readiness, as well as parental involvement and cultural pride (McCarty 2014).

As a second example, in many Australian universities, teacher training programs in the area of indigenous languages have been established. Many of the best programs include the following aspects: "strong community support, links with a linguist expert in the language, proficient speakers as teachers, involvement of qualified languages education teachers, provision of training and ongoing PD for teachers, positive student outcomes (language success, participation, involvement, and positive school attitudes), longevity of the programme, principal, and staff support for programme" (Purdie et al 2008).

Returning to the Nepal context, Kathmandu University, has implemented teacher training methods that demonstrate a co-existence of western and eastern beliefs and practices. Scholars of mathematics education research have proposed making mathematics an inclusive learning experience, critically reflective practice, and culturally contextualized mathematics education (Luitel, 2007; Taylor et al. 2012).

Hough's Critical Indigenous Pedagogy emphasizes inclusion a variety of topics from an indigenous perspective. Following this model, and considering the constraints and limitations in the Chame environment (e.g. little financial support, the lure of the "outside world" as a means for economic advancement), we see two common benefits emerging from these 'bottom up' approaches:

- (1) Teaching indigenous languages has positive student outcomes in the areas of language acquisition, test performance, participation, involvement, retention, graduation rates, and positive school attitudes, parental involvement, and cultural pride.
- (2) Support at the community and national level arises from an understanding of the beneficial aspects of practicing indigenous languages in education.
- (3) Teachers must be carefully, continuously, and meaningfully guided and supported to adopt practices inclusive of indigenous cultures and languages.

V. Mother Tongue Integration Into Local Schools: Recommendations Towards The Future

Given the observed tensions and the potential benefits, how might ~~these benefits incorporation of local languages be successfully realized in the Chame area context?~~ We would put forth three recommendations we have three ideas that we feel are both realistic and impactful in this situation, and hopefully extendable to other rural regions of Nepal. First, ~~it would be instructive to have we recommend~~ Chame district administrators ~~to~~ invite local residents, who represent mother tongue users, to assist in the classroom as tutors or translators or as presenters of culturally or environmentally significant information or practices. Doing so would reinforce to local students that their languages carry practical utility, and it would also assist in scaffolding these students' learning experiences until they gain higher proficiency in speaking and understanding Nepali. Evidence of this type of a program is already being developed in the Lhomi community of Nepal, where teachers and community members are preparing for a multilingual preschool (SIL 2016).

Next, ~~we recommend most welcome would be any~~ continued action towards including mother tongue languages in the classroom. This involves providing materials and resources that represent one or more mother tongue languages and can bridge the gap between the mother tongue languages and Nepali. One example of this move in Chame comes from a newly published community based, practical dictionary of Gyalsumdo, co-produced via collaboration between the co-authors and Gyalsumdo community leaders (Dhakal et al. 2016). The co-authors worked with community leaders to create an orthography adapted from Devanagari (which children are most familiar with) and to include culturally relevant as well as general concepts. The dictionary contains entries for locally found and used items (local flora, fauna, food-related terms, ceremonial vocabulary), and it also includes images captured from daily life in Gyalsumdo-speaking communities, as illustrated in Figure/Image 12.

Figure/Image 12. HERE

The dictionary received community approval before going to print, and contains a forward written by Mr. Sangdo Lama, a Gyalsumdo politician and community leader. Multiple copies of this dictionary will be released to local schools in Chame, Thonce, Baggarchap and Danakyu, where Gyalsumdo families are concentrated. This is a good start at promotion of the legitimacy and usefulness of a local language, but what is needed from this point is an embrace by local educators to find ways for children to use this (and other) language-specific resources, either in structured classroom or in more informal learning settings.

Lastly, in the spirit of Luitel (2007) the functionality of local languages would benefit from connections between local schools and university-level teacher educators. Maintaining these linkages between the training institution and teacher posting in villages is a good way to provide needed support to new teachers as they transition from the role of teacher candidate to the role of teacher, and to facilitate interest or working groups that are focused on transforming current pedagogical practices into context-specific and meaningful learning experiences which achievable outcomes. One way we could see this happening would be a teacher exchange in which a teacher-educator from a major university or a local teacher-training center would visit the primary school in Chame, and two or three teachers from the Chame school would visit the home school of the teacher educator. This would serve two purposes: The teacher educators would be able to observe the ethno-linguistic dynamics and

the tensions that teachers face daily. In turn, the primary school educators would be able to observe and possibly have access to resources available to teacher education facilities.

VI. Conclusion

This paper has reported on the current tensions in language practices and attitudes in the school and community settings of multilingual Chame VDC, Nepal. Through the use of sociolinguistic interviews and adapted ethnographic, participant-observer methods, we have shown that primary and secondary schools in villages like Chame face the monumental challenge of incorporating international and national mandates to recognize and preserve indigenous language rights and practices, both in terms of educator attitudes and pedagogical methods, and also in terms of access to resources. We have also shown that local residents value their mother tongues and would like to see them incorporated into children's education in some way, but they recognize a compromise in the face of national and international language pressures. These challenges are exacerbated by the recent uptick in outward migration to pursue economic opportunities elsewhere.

At the same time, we hope to have shown that even small shifts in perspective, practices, and materials at the most local of levels can reverse the slow death that many indigenous, minority languages in Nepal face, including Gyalsumdo and Gurung. Specifically, a valuation of local educator experiences vis-à-vis pedagogy training in Kathmandu, the incorporation of basic print resources into community and school domains, and stronger educator-community member connections and cross-cultural recognition in classroom practices and materials can go a long ways towards building a scaffold by which local languages may retain a foothold and ultimately survive. The progressive policies adopted at higher levels of Nepalese government must find local and culturally relevant interpretation and implementation in order for these languages to survive amongst rapid, systemic changes taking place in Nepal.

Acknowledgements: This research was funded by a National Science Foundation CAREER grant (BCS 1149639). We thank the residents of Chame village for access to their insights and opinions. Any errors or misrepresentations in analysis are the responsibility of the authors.

References

- Angdembe, Tej Man. 2013. Saving Endangered Languages via Unnatural Selection and Utility Theory. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 39: 35-68.
- Awasthi, Lava Deo. 2004. *Exploring Monolingual School Practices in Multilingual Nepal*. PhD thesis. Copenhagen: Danmarks Paedagogiske Universitet/Danish University of Education.
- Belbase, Shashidhar, Luitel, Bal Chandra, Taylor, Peter Charles. 2008. Autoethnography: A Method of Research and Teaching for Transformative Education. *Journal of Education and Research*. 1.1: 86-95.

Biernacki, Patrick, and Dan Waldorf. 1981. Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods and Research*. 10.2: 141-163.

Centre for Research Education [CRED]. 2005. *Mother Tongue Intervention at Primary Level*. http://www.doe.gov.np/SoftAdmin/content/MOTHER_TONGUE_INTERVENTION_at_Primary_level2005_.pdf

Creswell, John W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches, 4th edition*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Davis, Kathryn A. and Prem Phyak. 2015. In the Face of Neoliberal Adversity: Engaging Language Education Policy and Practices. *L2 Journal* 7.3: 146-166.

AUTHOR. 2016. *Gyalsumdo: A Community-Based Dictionary*. Kirtipur, Nepal: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies.

Dewan, Shankar. 2016. Opportunities and Challenges. *My Republica*. 22-2-2016. [http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=72189. Last accessed: 2.21.2016]

Dunbar, Robert and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas. 2008. Forms of Education of Indigenous Children as Crimes Against Humanity? Expert paper written for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII). New York: PFII. [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/E_C19_2008_7.pdf]

Fishman, Joshua A. 2006. Language Policy and Language Shift. In Thomas Rincenc (ed.) *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*. Oxford: Blackwell 311-328.

[Fishman, Joshua A. \(ed\). 2001. Can Threatened Languages Be Saved? Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters.](#)

Gajurel, Deepak. 2015. Socio-economic Impacts of Labor Migration in Nepal. *Nepal Polity Blog*. Posted January 26, 2015. [<http://nepalpolity.com/?p=5515#sthash.ZCn4dzhh.dpbs>]

Gay, Geneva. 2010. *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice, second edition*. Multicultural Education Series, Banks, J.A., ed. New York: Teachers College Press.

AUTHOR. 2015. A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Languages of Manang, Nepal: Co-existence and Endangerment. *NFDIN Journal* 14.6: 104-122.

Hough, David. Ram Bahadur Thapa. Magar, Amrit. Yonjan-Tamang. 2009. Privileging Indigenous Knowledges: Empowering ^[SEP]Multilingual Education in Nepal. *Social Justice through Multilingual Education*, eds. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Robert Phillipson, Ajit K. Mohanty and Minata Panda Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 159-176.

Kansakar, Tej Ratna., Yogendra P. Yadava, Krishna P. Chalise, Balaram. Prasain, Dubi Nanda. Dhakal and Krishna. Paudel. 2011. A Sociolinguistic Study of the Baram Language. *Himalayan Linguistics* 10.1: 187-226.

Kukuczka, Anne. 2011. Negotiating Ethnic Identity in the Himalaya: The Tamang of Nepal. *Südasiens-Chronik (South Asia-Chronicle)* 1: 393-437. [<http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/suedasien/band-1/393/PDF/393.pdf>]

Language vitality and endangerment. 2003. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. [<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf>]

Lewis, M.Paul, Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2016. Ethnologue: Languages of the World. [<http://www.ethnologue.com> Last accessed: 7.6.2016]

Lewis, M. Paul and Gary F. Simons. 2010. Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* 55.2: 103-120.

Luitel, Bal Chandra, and Taylor, Peter Charles. 2007. The Shanai, The Pseudosphere, and Other Imaginings: Envisioning Culturally Contextualised Mathematics Education. *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 2.3: 621-655.

Mallinson, Christine., Becky. Childs and Gerard. Van Herk. (eds) 2013. *Data Collection and Sociolinguistics: Methods and Applications*. London, U.K.: Routledge.

McCarty, Teresa L. 2014. Teaching the Whole Child: Language Immersion and Student Achievement. *Indian Country Today Media Network*. [<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/09/01/teaching-whole-child-language-immersion-and-student-achievement-156685> Last accessed on 2.13.2016]

McNiff, Jean. and Whitehead, Jack. 2011. *All You Need to Know About Action Research, second edition*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Mills, Geoffrey E. 2010. *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher, fourth edition*. US: Pearson

Ministry of Education. 2015. Education for All: National Review Report 2001-2015. Kathmandu: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

Ministry of Labor and Employment. 2014. *Labour Migration for Employment. Government of Nepal*. [<https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/MigrationReportbyGovernmentofNepal.pdf>]

Patton, Michael Quinn. 2015. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, fourth edition*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Patton, Michael Quinn. 2005. Qualitative research. *Encyclopedia of Statistics in Behavioral Science*. Wiley Online Library.

[Phyak, Prem. 2013. Language ideologies and local languages as the medium-of-instruction policy: A critical ethnography of a multilingual school in Nepal. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 14.1: 127-143.](#)

Purdie, Nola, Frigo, Tracey, Ozolins, Clare, Noblett, Geoff, Thieberger, Nick, and Sharp, Janet. 2008. *Indigenous Languages Programmes in Australian Schools: A Way Forward*. Camberwell: Australian Council for Educational Research.

[Rai, Vishnu S., Maya Rai, Prem Phyak, and Nabina Rai. 2011. Multilingual Education in Nepal: Hearsay and Reality? Kathamandu, Nepal: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Office.](#)

Rich, Adrienne. 1994. *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Schulman, Lee S. 1986. Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching. *Educational Researcher* 15.2: 4-14.

Shrestha, Bal Gopal, and Bert Van den Hoek. 1995. Education in the Mother Tongue: The case of Nepālbhāsā (Newari). *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 22.1: 73-86.

SIL. 2016. *Lhomi Community of Nepal Prepares for Multilingual Preschool*. *SIL, Literacy and Education*. [<http://www.sil.org/about/news/lhomi-community-nepal-prepares-multilingual-preschool>]. Last accessed: 2.22.2016]

Snellgrove, David L. 1961/1981. *Himalayan Pilgrimage: a Study of Tibetan Religion by a Traveller Through Western Nepal*. Boston: Shambhala.

Taylor, Shelly K. 2010. Beyond Bilingual Education: Multilingual Education in Nepal. *GIST Education and Learning Research Journal* 4.1: 138-154.

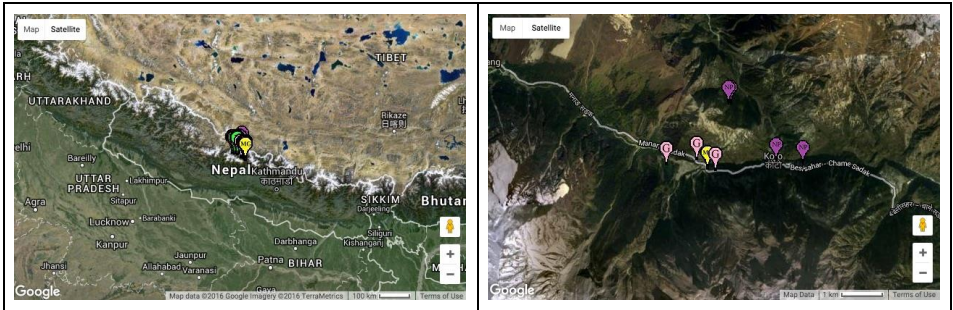
Taylor, Peter Charles, Taylor, Elisabeth Lily, and Luitel, Bal Chandra. 2012. Multi-Paradigmatic Transformative Research as/for Teacher Education: An Integral Perspective. In K.G. Tobin, B.J. Fraser & C. McRobbie (eds.), *Second international handbook of science education* (pp. 373-387). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Thomas, Bryn 2005. *Trekking in the Annapurna Region, 4th ed*. Surrey, U.K.: Trailblazer Publications.

Tumbahang, Govinda Bahadur. 2016. Situation Of Mother Tongues In Nepal. *The Rising Nepal*. 22-2-2016. [<http://therisingnepal.org.np/news/1826>. Last accessed: 2.21.2016]

UNESCO. 2013. Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. [<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/>]

Weinberg, Miranda. 2013. Revising history in language policy: The case of medium of instruction in Nepal. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics (WPEL)* 28.1: 61-80.



Figure/Map 1. Nepal (left) and the Chame/Koto/Temang/Thancowk Village Cluster (right)



Figure/Image 1. Bilingual Nepali and English Signage in Chame Village (author photos)



Figure/Image 2. Chame Higher Secondary School in 2012 (author photo)

Formal Education

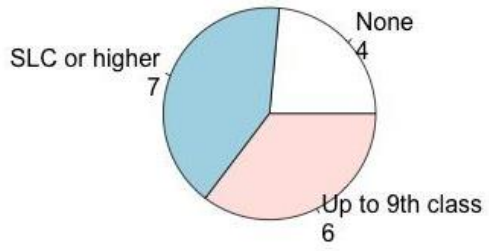


Figure 3. Degree of Formal Education

Daily Language Use

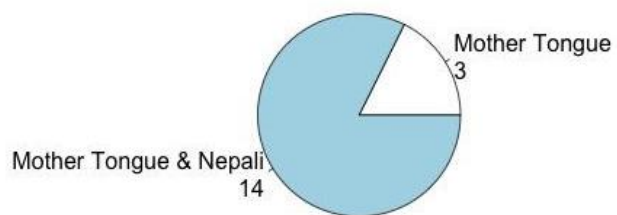


Figure 4. Daily Language Practices

What Language(s) Do You Use With Your Children?

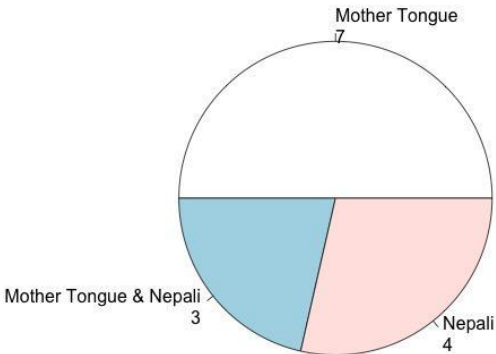


Figure 5. Language Use With Children

What Language(s) Do You Use At Work?

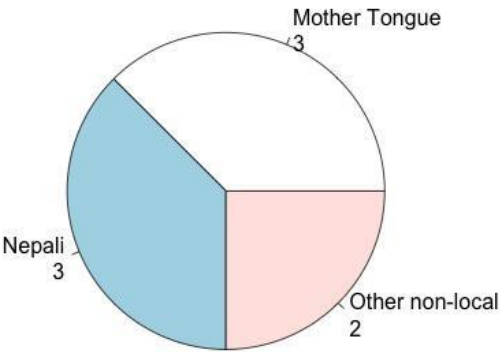


Figure 6. Language Use at Work

Is Your Language Imporant For Your Culture/Religion?

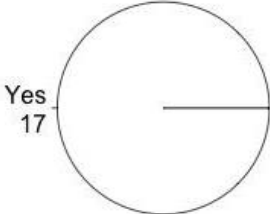


Figure 7. Language Value and Cultural Practices

Will Children Learn Local Languages in the Future?

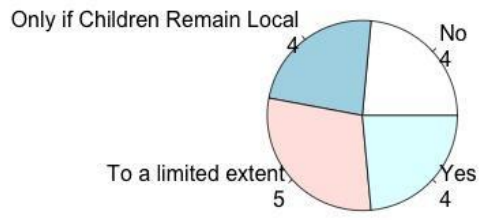


Figure 8. The Future of Local Languages

**Would It Be Helpful or Hurtful
to Introduce Local Languages to Schools?**

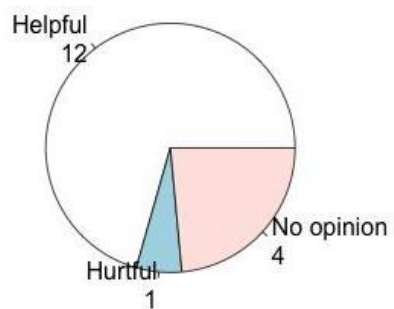


Figure 9. Local Languages in Local Schools?

What Advice to Promote Local Languages?

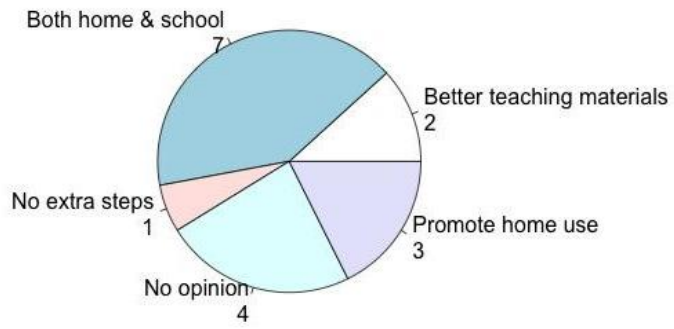
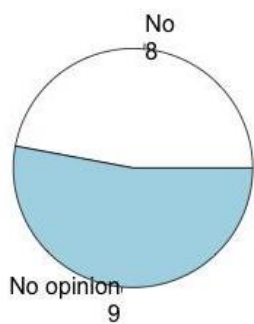
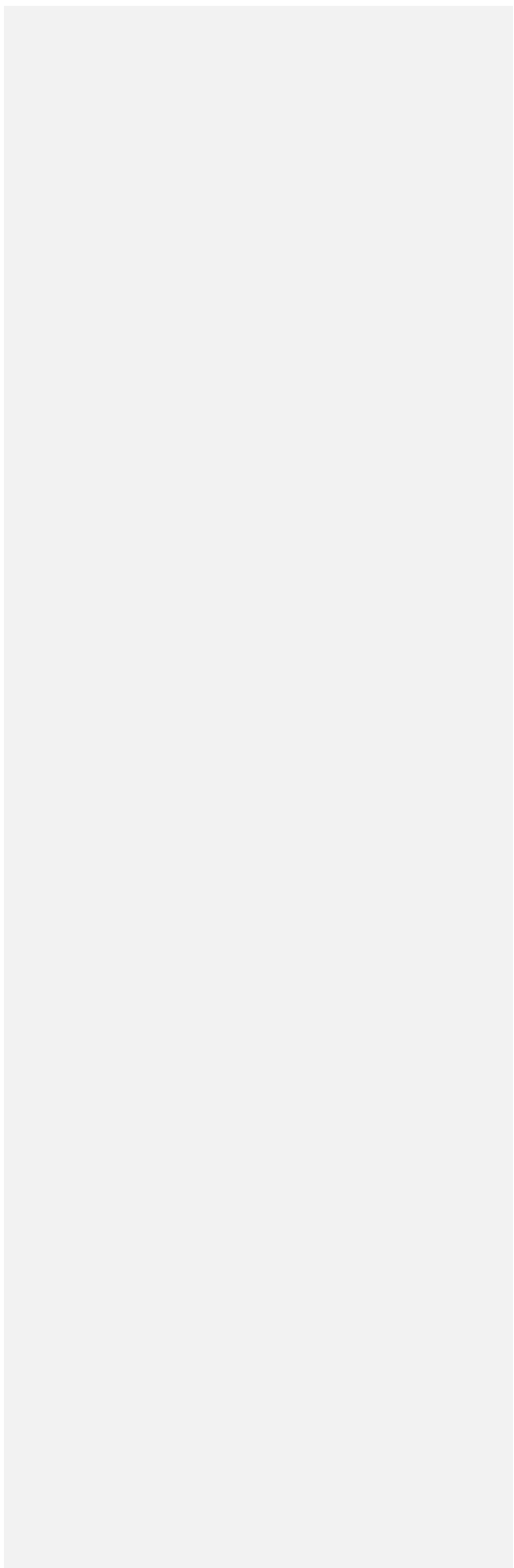


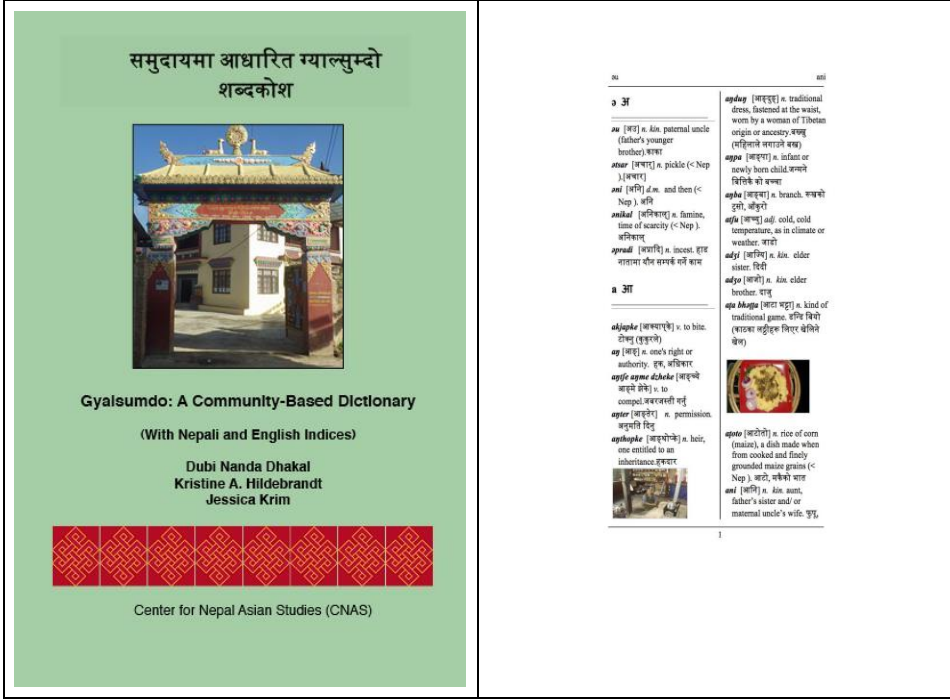
Figure 10. Advice to Promote Local Languages

Should Children Be Able to Decide Their Language Practices?



Children's Choices In Language Practice Decisions





Figure/Image 12. Cover and Entry Page, Gyalsumdo Community Dictionary