

Language Shift in Newar: A Case Study in Kathmandu Valley

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This paper explores the patterns of language shift in Newar, the ethnic indigenous language community living in Kathmandu, the multilingual capital city of Nepal. The research focuses on language contact situations in different domains viz. social, cultural, personal, and official as well as media related activities where the informants are asked to use different languages along with the use of their own mother tongue i.e. Newari. The data is collected during June-September, 2016 with 45 different informants having different age, sex, profession and educational background from four major areas of Newar community in Kathmandu valley viz. Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. This socio-ethnographic research aims at providing some clues as to how the discovery of a minority language triggers changes in representations and attitudes. The data is analyzed in quantitative as well as qualitative methodology based on some in depth open informal interviews as well. The language attitudes towards Nepali and English along with their mother tongue Newari seems to be influenced by positive affective socialization experiences in the new multilingual society and by the growing perception that knowing the languages make them member of the new community. A shift in a language often brings about a shift in identity and there may be resistance to adopting a new language. The new language and the new identity may be actively promoted or persuaded. Newars living in the capital city have been influenced directly and indirectly by the globalization and international linkage and communication. Moreover, they have been involved in various social, cultural and ceremonial activities with the new mixed society which motivates them to shift into new target languages from the ancestral source language.

Key words: language shift, use and attitude, ethno-linguistic, socialization

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