

BECOMING NEWAR FROM HALF-NEWAR: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF
NEWAR YOUTH AND THEIR IDENTITY

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मांभाय् हे झीगु म्हसीका खः ।
थःगु मातृभाषां थःगु नां च्यातःगु स्वयेबलय् गौरवया खँ जुइ ।
भाषा म्वानाच्चन धाःसा जाति नं म्वानाच्चनी ।

MOTHER TONGUE IS OUR IDENTITY
WRITING YOUR NAME IN OWN LANGUAGE IS A SYMBOL OF PRIDE
IF ONLY LANGUAGE SURVIVES, COMMUNITY SURVIVE

*The above saying is influenced from Poet Siddhidas Mahaju (1920) and participants
of this study.*

AN ABSTRACT

of the Dissertation of *Dikesh Maharjan* for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies presented on 5 September 2025 entitled *Becoming Newar from Half-Newar: A Narrative Inquiry of Newar Youth and their Identity*

APPROVED BY

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This dissertation brings in the journey of Newar youths in their identity reclamation through learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Those journeys were presented through narratives of their lived experiences while advocating for their losing identity while also resisting dominance from other languages and promoting revitalization. Realizing this, the study explored the historical decline of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi and the immerging journey for its revitalization. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how Newar Youths are reclaiming their cultural and ethnic identity through learning of the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi

The study was guided by multiple theories- from Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975), to Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development (Phinney, 1993) and Bourdieu's Symbolic Power (Bourdieu, 1991). This study presents how Newar youths rejuvenating the once suppressed historical language and script through learning and teaching them while also using innovative activism. The study starts from the personal detachment for being unable to read the historical inscriptions on an ancient gate in my home town and being labelled as Half- Newar. That was just as representation of huge intergenerational cultural disconnect among the youths regarding their culture and identity. Thus, through those narratives, the study brings in the journey of identity reclamation with Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi which was not

just ordinary learning of the language but a strategic initiation for identity reclamation while also protecting the heritage.

My research relied on a narrative inquiry. In this sense, I was conscious that the ideas are multiple, and no interpretation is fixed. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted among four participants for their narratives on their journey.

The narratives from the participants revealed Newar youths were brought into the state of realization after a long period of dominance in a growing mixed community. Various innovative events like Lipi guff and Callijatra workshops and also curriculum development of local public schools are changing the public perception and linguistic space for Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. The study adapted time, sociality and place factor to make the narratives more authentic and maintain the quality.

The study also advocates for shifting the blame on youths for being distant from their culture and being irresponsible in preserving their culture. Rather, it brings Newar youths as the new cultural agents who are misunderstood, used less not useless. So, it demands for the change is situation from grieving for language and culture loss to promoting them, from placing blame to youths to supporting them and from state promises and symbolic gestures of preservation and commitments to real actions of change.

This study challenges the well-established narrative with Newar community about the youths being culturally detached and failing to bear the accountability to its preservation. Rather, it presents them as cultural ambassadors and proving them of being used less than useless. It advocates for prioritizing intergenerational solidarity, communal ownership and the lived experiences of the youths as the ultimate strategy for cultural survival. At the end this study also found that the revitalization efforts were largely influenced by the socio-economic circumstance of the youths as it could slower or speed up the revitalization efforts so suggest not to ignore this as well.

.....

5 September 2025

Dikesh Maharjan

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सोध सार

विकास शिक्षामा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि दिक्केश महर्जन को शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक " अर्ध नेवारबाट नेवार हुने: नेवार युवा र उनीहरूको पहिचानको व्याख्यात्मक अनुसन्धान" २० भदौ २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

.....
उप. प्रा. सुरेश गौतम, पिएचडी

सोध निर्देशक

यस शोधप्रबन्धले नेपालभाषा र रञ्जना लिपि सिकेर नेवार युवाहरूको पहिचान पुनः प्राप्तिको लागि गरिएको यात्रा प्रस्तुत गर्दछ । उक्त यात्रा आफ्नो जीवित अनुभवको आख्यानको माध्यमबाट हराउँदै गरेको भाषाको वकालतसंगै अरु भाषाबाट हुने प्रभुत्वको प्रतिरोध र आफ्नो भाषाको पुनरुत्थानलाई प्रस्तुत गर्दछ । यो कुरा महसुस गर्दै, अध्ययनले नेपाल भाषा र रञ्जना लिपिको ऐतिहासिक पतन र यसको पुनरुत्थानको यात्रा अन्वेषण गर्दछ । यस शोध प्रबन्धको उद्देश्य नेवार युवाहरूले नेपाल भाषा र रञ्जना लिपि सिकेर कसरी आफ्नो सांस्कृतिक र जातीय पहिचान पुनः प्राप्त गरिरहेका छन् भनेर अन्वेषण गर्नु हो ।

ग्राम्सीको सांस्कृतिक आधिपत्य (ग्राम्सी १९७१ जसलाई बेट्स, १९७५ मा उद्धृत), फिलिपसनको भाषिक साम्राज्यवाद (फिलिपसन, १९९२) तथा बोर्डियुको प्रतिकात्मक शक्ति (बोर्डिउ, १९९१) जस्ता धेरै सिद्धान्तहरूद्वारा यस अध्ययन निर्देशित थियो । यो अध्ययनले कसरी नेवार युवाहरूले कुनै बेला राज्यद्वारा दबाइएको ऐतिहासिक भाषा र लिपिलाई सिकेर र सिकाएर पुनर्जीवित गर्दैछन् र साथै नवीन सक्रियता पनि प्रयोग गर्दैछन् भन्ने प्रस्तुत गर्दछ । यो अध्ययन मेरो गृहनगर किर्तिपुरको एक प्राचीन गेटमा ऐतिहासिक शिलालेखहरू पढ्न नसकेर मलाई आधा-नेवार भनेर गिज्याएको व्यक्तिगत अनुभवबाट सुरु हुन्छ । यसले युवाहरूमा आफ्नो संस्कृति र पहिचानको बारेमा ठूलो अन्तर-पुस्ता सांस्कृतिक विच्छेदनको संकेत गर्दछ । यसरी, ती कथाहरू मार्फत, अध्ययनले युवाहरूको नेपाल भाषा र रञ्जना लिपिसंग पहिचान पुनर्प्राप्तिको यात्रा प्रस्तुत गर्दछ जुन भाषाको सामान्य सिकाइ मात्र थिएन बरु सम्पदाको संरक्षण गर्दै पहिचान पुनर्प्राप्तिको लागि रणनीतिक पहल पनि थियो ।

मेरो अनुसन्धान कथात्मक सोधपुछमा आधारित थियो । यस अर्थमा, म सचेत थिएँ कि विचारहरू बहुविध छन् र कुनै व्याख्या निश्चित छैन । चार सहभागीहरूबीच उनीहरूको यात्रामा कथाहरूको लागि अर्धसंरचित गहन अन्तर्वार्ताहरू संचालन गरिएको थियो । नेवार युवाहरूलाई बढ्दो मिश्रित समुदायमा लामो समयसम्म प्रभुत्व जमाएको तर पछि चेत अवस्थामा ल्याइएको कुरा यस अध्ययनका सहभागीहरूको कथाले देखाउँछ । स्थानिय सार्वजनिक विद्यालयहरूको पाठ्यक्रम विकास, युवाबाट चलाइएका लिपि गफ र कलिजात्रा कार्यशालाहरू जस्ता विभिन्न नवीन कार्यक्रमहरूले नेपाल भाषा र रञ्जना लिपिको लागि सार्वजनिक धारणा र भाषिक स्थान परिवर्तन गरिरहेका छन् । यस अध्ययनले कथाहरूलाई अझ प्रमाणिक बनाउन र गुणस्तर कायम राख्न समय, सामाजिकता र स्थान कारकलाई अनुकूलित गरेको छ ।

युवाहरू आफ्नो कला संस्कृतिबाट टाढा हुने र आफ्नो संस्कृति संरक्षणमा गैरजिम्मेवार हुने जस्ता दोषबाट युवाहरूलाई यस अध्ययनले बचाउ गर्दै उक्त स्थापित कथालाई चुनौती दिन्छ । बरु, यसले नेवार

युवाहरुलाई नयाँ सांस्कृतिक आयाम बोक्ने रूपमा चित्रण गर्दै, युवा कम प्रयोग गरिएको तर बेकार नहुने भन्दै वकालत गर्दछ । त्यसैले, यसले भाषा र संस्कृति क्षतिको लागि शोक गर्नेदेखि लिएर तिनीहरुलाई प्रवर्द्धन गर्ने, युवाहरुलाई दोष दिनेदेखि लिएर तिनीहरुलाई समर्थन गर्ने र राज्यका प्रतिज्ञाहरु र संरक्षणका प्रतिकात्मक इशाराहरु भन्दा परिवर्तनका वास्तविक कार्यहरु गर्ने जस्ता प्रतिवद्धताहरुको माग गर्दछ । यसले अन्तरपुस्तागत एकता, साम्प्रदायिक स्वामित्व र युवाहरुको जीवित अनुभवहरुलाई सांस्कृतिक अस्तित्वको लागि अन्तिम रणनीतिको रूपमा प्राथमिकता दिन वकालत गर्दछ । अन्तमा यो अध्ययनले पुनरुत्थान प्रयासहरु युवाहरुको सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिस्थितिबाट धेरै हदसम्म प्रभावित हुने किनकि यसले पुनरुत्थान प्रयासहरुलाई ढिलो वा गति दिन सक्छ त्यसैले पनि बेवास्ता नगर्न सुझाव दिन्छ ।

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२० भदौ २०८२

दिकेश महर्जन

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This Dissertation entitled *Becoming Newar from Half-Newar: A Narrative Inquiry of Newar Youth and their Identity* presented by Dikesh Maharjan on 5 September 2025.

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I am aware that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below gives permission to the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for academic purposes.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work. Also, it has never been submitted to any other institution for candidature of any other or similar degree.

.....

5 September 2025

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DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated to entire Ethnic Youths who are willing to/ in verge of learning their mother tongue seeking their identity in language/discourse/subjectivity within their world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation is the ultimate result of my curiosity and self-exploration of the journey of the youths like me in reclaiming the faded identity. Here, I feel lucky working with diverse individuals who have heard, believed, and encouraged me in pain and gain in the process of academic research writing. Firstly, I am grateful for the perpetual support and backing from my supervisor Asst. Prof. Suresh Gautam, Ph.D. whom I respect, believe in, and get self-boosting in difficulties remembering his words as; a tough situation could not remain forever. He has patiently heard, believed, and stood in the favor of the standpoint of my agenda and tolerated for years while I delayed to submit my work. So, I have felt lucky to undertake this research under him.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AERA	American Educational Research Association
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
KMC	Kathmandu Metropolitan City
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MT-MLE	Mother Tongue- Multi-Lingual Education
NFDIN	National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities
NNEPC	Nepal National Educational Planning Commission
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cooperation

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a Newar Youth, Ranjana Lipi is a culture, a history, an identity and a jewel that enriches my ethnicity and civilization. I have started this chapter by sharing how I ended up with this research title and the study. I share one of my life stories from more than a decade ago which shaped by thoughts and assumptions that were instrumental in influencing this research. I then problematize my research issue and set my purpose and research questions. Finally, I have discussed the significance of my study from diverse perspectives.

Inception of the Research

I have borrowed the word “Half-Newar” from the novel ‘Half-Girlfriend’ by Chetan Bhagat (Bhagat, 2014). Bhagat clarifies on the idea of term ‘Half-Girlfriend’ stating that a boy may perceive his female friend as girlfriend when their friendship becomes stronger but his female friend may think otherwise. So, I felt the need of a term like ‘Half girlfriend’ where the female friend being more than a friend but she may not necessarily be the girlfriend. Similarly, some eleven years back, it was the first week of October, I was asked by my non-native friend about writings on an ancient gate while visiting my hometown during the New Year of Nepal Sambat and I replied, “I don’t understand”. Mocking me, another friend added, “He is a half-Newar so he can’t understand Newari.” and everyone laughed.

Like Bhagat’s concept of Half-Girl Girlfriend, I was born in a Newar Family but I can’t read/write Nepal Bhasa language (script). Even worse, I have witnessed similar behavior in many occasions with other Newar youths as well, where they were tagged as “*Naam ko matra Newar*” (Only the surname is of Newar) for being unable to read, write or communicate in *Nepal Bhasa* (Newar Language). The youths today are mistaken for being lazy, unreliable and worthless. Many consider Youths in Nepal are useless or at least the ‘grown-ups’ say such. Arnall & Fox (2016) mentions unlawful acts and crime comes into the mind of general public when someone mentions about young people and they are frequently accused responsible for any social troubles happening in the neighborhood. Earlier, Stanley Cohen (1972) had studied on how mass media created a societal ‘moral panic’ of youth as problem: ‘folk devils.’ As Liechty (1995) states youths are struggling negative emic or native

designation referring to a ‘a category of anti-social, vulgar, potentially violent young males.’.

For me, as Swami Chinmayananda (Chinmayananda, 1967) rightly said ‘Youth are not useless-they are used less. The youth are not careless-they are cared for less.’ Their strength and capabilities are never well recognized and thus never came to be worthwhile. The younger generations are better informed on the various aspects of the society and world as compared to earlier generations. The internet access and involvement in Information Technology (IT) world must have contributed in smart learning making them capable doing things in short time and save time.

Ranjana Lipi and Nepal Bhasa

One thing struck my mind at that time was that, only if I was able to read *Ranjana Lipi* besides my academic qualifications, none of my friends could look down upon me at least for that reason? *Ranjana Lipi* and Nepal Bhasa language wasn't in priority back then (before constitution of 2015) as the state (mostly governed by non-ethnic speakers-Nepali) nor the community saw its significance as they developed an inferiority complex towards their own languages so I did not dedicate myself towards learning the lipi. I did have some interest, but the usage was negligible. Learning English and Nepali language/scripts were beneficial in terms of academia and opportunities as the local Newar towns became a mixed community in no time. Gyan Maharjan (as cited in Community Homestay Network, 2024) mentions “People don't see any advantage of learning *Ranjana Lipi*. Neither can they earn from learning the script, nor is there any job guarantee from the script. That's why people would rather learn Japanese or Korean because learning those languages can guarantee a job in a foreign country”. Thus, youths like me lost interest in learning and schools too closing the Newar language lessons.

Journey of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi

It is evident that the Newar community were systematically repressed by the power holders of the country for known and unknown reasons, one known being the issue of control. The language policies enforced by the rules has thus been restricting in their usage in the form of Nepal Bhasa and *Ranjana Lipi* among others (Maharjan, 2018). In a paper, Shrestha et al. (1995), *Education in the Mother Tongue: A Case of Nepal Bhasa*, they point out how Nepal Bhasa and its scripts (including *Ranjana Script*) was historically dominated by the government from Shah rules to Rana Regime and Panchayat period including other mother tongue languages.

It is well known to all that the Shah Rulers of Gorkha overtook the Nepal Mandala (Kathmandu Valley and surroundings) in 1769 and replaced policies in the Nepal Mandala and expatriated local Newar symbols, languages and writings that were the state administration language and key to their ethnic identity.

The subsequent Rana policies not only declared all the activities and the testaments produced in Nepal Bhasa deemed invalid. However, they too formally forbade their use in public sphere from 1906. During Chandra Shamsher's rule, the repression of the Nepal Bhasa and academics/literatures grew worse (1901–28). In the Swanigah (Kathmandu Valley), the Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher J. B. Rana forbade the celebrations of the New Year (Nepal Sambat), as well as the publication or circulation of any literary works. The Rana dictatorship tortured and imprisoned the writers in order to increase resistance against them (Vajracharya, 2014). Yogbir Singh was penalized in 1924 for releasing a religious poem in Nepal Bhasa. In the years that followed, it was deemed unlawful to sing hymns or use Nepal Bhasa on the phone.

According to Gellner (2008), "the dominant language, previously known as Gorkhali or jokingly as Khas kura, was renamed 'Nepali' in about 1933 as part of the formation of the new national identity. Sukraraj Shastri, the author of the first Nepalese Bhasa grammar and the text books for students of class one and two, was punished with death in 1941.

Siddhicharan Shrestha received an 18-year sentence, as did Dharma Datta Yami, Chittadhar Hridaya received a six-year sentence, and Phatte Bahadur Singh received a life sentence. 8 monks were banished from the nation in 1944 including Dhammalok Mahasthavir, Pragyananda Mahasthavir, and Kumar Kashyap Mahasthavir by the Rana regime for promoting Theravada Buddhism and writing in Nepal Bhasa (Tuladhar, 2012). Nepal Bhasa was forbidden from appearing in courts of law and government in 1905.

The name "Nepali" was used to refer to the Khas kura or Gorkhali language, while the Nepal Bhasa started out being called "Newari." (Shrestha, 2021). The Rana regime in Nepal came to an end in 1951, but efforts to restore the status quo of Nepal Bhasa and the script (Ranjana Lipi) were mostly unsuccessful. The only language later used for government, administration, and education went Nepali. Following King Mahendra's December 15, 1960, coup, the government instituted a "one nation-one ruler, one religion, one language" policy; the Mahendra version of the "one

nation, one language" principle; and the new constitution with Panchayat system later declared Nepali to be the country's official language, disregarding the mother-tongue languages of all other ethnicities.

During the 30 years of the Panchayat regime (1960–90), the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi suffered great suppression as the government systematically imposed Nepali and Devnagari Lipi (script used for Nepali language) (Shrestha, 1999, p. 91). With this, the use of Nepal Bhasa and *Ranjana* Script slowly faded away to reach the status of extinction at present day.

Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Script as an Emerging Discourse

Nepal Bhasa is a Primitive Nepalese language known to be originated in the modern-day Kathmandu Valley, which was originally known as Nepal itself (Shrestha & Hoek, 1995). The language used to be the official language of the nation (Vajracharya, 2014), but since the turn of the 20th century, its significance has declined mainly due to restrictions imposed by Rana Regime and the one-nation, one-language policy implemented during the Panchayat period.

The Ethnologue, the world's most comprehensive language catalog, classifies Nepal Bhasa as Newar (as some do wrongly) and as a language of "wider communication," giving it the third level of status out of ten possible levels of evaluation (extinct). Khas/Nepali is listed as a level 1 language by Ethnologue, while for Nepal Bhasa, publication about its information is still going on. Nepal Bhasa speakers are far behind in the government jobs today compared to the Nepali language speakers (Vajracharya, 2014). This has led to abandon speaking in Nepal Bhasa ultimately sending to the position of "definitely endangered" language as stated by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2010). This shows the language is in dire situation today.

In terms of Ranjana Script, some of the documents saved from restrictions from Rana Regime and Panchayat period were successful to reach different Asian nations and west, thanks to some historians Brian Houghton Hodgson and Daniel Wright (as cited in Bajracharya, 2019). Vajracharya, (2014) thinks another reason for Ranjana Script being preserved to some extent is because of its frequent use in the religious sculptures and manuscripts that are holy and valuable. These manuscripts became the priority for investigation and exploration for groups like the Royal Asiatic Society, an Asian historian group that documents culture, language and history of Asian continent. (Kasa as cited in Bajracharya, 2019). As quoted in an article in Bhattarai (2018), Devdas Manandhar, a forceful proponent for the preservation of

Ranjana Script states, after falling into disuse, *Ranjana* has recently seen revived interest and use because of its historical, cultural and artistic significance. Today the script is seen used for headlines in Newspapers, the gates of local government offices and towns, commercial hotels and restaurants and many more. This can be enhanced with the reciprocal learning as well. Despite being more artistic in nature, *Ranjana* Lipi is comparatively less used in everyday use. Rather another Lipi, *Nepal Prachalit Lipi* is used more. So, *Ranjana* Lipi may be interweaved with *Nepal Prachalit Lipi* for improving its usage. Both the Lipi can be used side by side as script pairing to make learners easy to understand them. This dual script learning will help learning to learn both functional as well as aesthetic and historical script. Not only this, such practice will enable cross script fluency, digital encoding efforts and also assist in intergenerational communication as the two generations may be familiar with two different scripts.

Linguistic Catastrophe and Pedagogical Failure in Newars

I was born and grew up in *Kipoo* (known now as Kirtipur), an ancient Newar town where people once preferred reading newspapers printed in '*Nepal Bhasa scripts*'. The papers were printed in combination of *Bhujimol*, *Ranjana* and *Devanagari Lipi*. Among these, *Ranjana* is charming, lavish as well as creative. and is visually pleasing. *Ranjana* Lipi is also familiar in other locations like Tibet as *Kutila* or *Lantsa*. It was believed to have evolved around 199 BC and remained popular during 11th to mid- 20th century in Nepal and the neighboring Asian countries like India, Tibet-China and Korea. This wide popularity might be as the use of *Ranjana* script in Buddhist mantra and manuscripts (Acharya, 2019) which spread widely during Mongolian Yuan dynasty (1280-1367). Some notable evidences of this spread include the bronze temple bell in Gae-seong, Korea and the famous six language manuscript at the Great Wall around the same year.

Now, let's come back to Nepal. Nepal is known for its multiethnicity and multilinguistic features that is resided by more than 126 ethnic groups speaking at least 123 languages. Now having only few scripts known due to the ongoing linguistic catastrophe in the country (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2011). Literatures suggest the written use of the *Ranjana* Lipi began in the early Malla period (1200-1482 A.D.). However, the earliest evidence of the *Ranjana* Lipi was found in a palm leaf of Patan Ukū Bāhāl dated 1114 A.D (Shrestha, 2015). The next one is an epigraph of Sankhu Vajrayogini dated 1172 A.D. which was believed to be the first

before the Pāṭan palm leaf was found (Tuladhar, 1990, p120). Due to the growing diverse Nepalese community and the hegemony of Nepali language and its Devanagari script after being declared as official language and script, the usage of other languages and scripts faded. With lower usage in everyday life including education and career prospects, the native users of *Nepal Bhasa* language and their Ranjana Lipi also started losing interest in learning them. The current situation among youngsters seems even more worrying., as many have not even heard of it. The complexity of the Ranjana Lipi and a smaller number of expertise remaining regarding the script has also exacerbated the disinterest of the users in learning.

While many literatures suggest that Nepal is facing linguistic catastrophe (Gautam, 2018; Giri, 2009), there is a growing number of youths who are seen motivated to learn the Nepal Bhasa and the ancient Ranjana Lipi of the Kathmandu Valley (Bajracharya, 2019; Deupala, 2020). There was a swift change in language usage with gaps in intergenerational transmission. English and Nepali dominated the main domains while languages like Nepal Bhasa were sidelined in mainstream media and education sectors. At the present day, these youths are into the campaign of rejuvenating this endangered script and language through learning and sharing of *Ranjana* Lipi with the help from Nepal Lipi Guthi, an organization working to preserve ancient scripts and many others. Some of these youths, learners turned facilitators are now leading the ongoing Rejuvenating efforts of *Ranjana* script and Nepal Bhasa, through events like ‘*Callijatra*’, ‘*Lipi Guff*’ and ‘*LipiNakha*.’ throughout the country (Vaidya & Maharjan, 2019). So, there is a growing interest in the campaign of rejuvenating the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

These efforts are now being justifiable as the state and particularly the local governments are keen into this. Local governments are giving priority in protecting the languages and scripts through various programs school education in local languages and research initiatives like Mayor’s Research Program in Kathmandu Metropolitan City. So, rather than just blaming for the language catastrophe in Nepal, efforts should have been made to diagnose the pedagogical failure to promote the language co-existence. We shouldn’t be lamenting on the dying languages but focus on the system of Nepal that could not teach those languages together. Education sectors too failed to teach in multilingual pedagogies, encouraging to learn one another’s language. Learning one another’s language is not just for preservation but it’s a symbol of solidarity. Also, there has been multiple issues of missing alphabets

and pronounceable difficulties in Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Nepal Bhasa cannot be exactly converted or understood through Devnagari Script. The nuances get lost. The pronunciations are equally challenging for non-Newars. So, there is need of script innovations and creativities in pedagogies. Language co-existence could be beneficial here.

Statement of Problem

Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi has long being under dominance from the state and its policies (Maharjan, 2018; Shrestha & Hoek, 1995). They were once a state language and script for communication but are now in the state of dying. The language and script went through decades long state dominance with reduced relevance in the society despite its historical connection resulting in intergenerational disconnect.

The native speakers are losing interest due to its declining usage in everyday lives (education, newspapers etc.) (Maharjan, 2019; Vajracharya, 2014;). The cultural and ethnic identity of the Newar youths were questioned with the reducing relevance and usage of the language and script. However, there has been slight improvement in revival journey (Bhattarai, 2018). Although organizations like Nepal Lipi Guthi, Community Homestay, World Newarh Organization, Callijatra etc. have succeeded in increasing the visibility of Ranjana Lipi among the people in recent decades, there is still much to be done. Today, young adults of Newar community are primarily aware of Ranjana Lipi, but few understand it or know how to write it. Youths, stigmatized as “Half-Newar,” face an identity crisis shaped by systemic failure, not personal disinterest. Younger generations need more opportunities and enticements to study the endangered Ranjana Lipi (Evaluota, 2022). Thus, beneath this crisis lies a movement of cultural resistance: young Newars reclaiming their heritage through learning, teaching, and storytelling.

The growing interest of Newar youths in learning this language and script is yet to explore and represented in the academic apart from some daily newspapers (Bajracharya, 2019; Deupala, 2018; Vaidya & Maharjan, 2019). Some studies like Maharjan (2018) and Vajracharya (2014) tried to bring the reason of loss and need for revitalization, but none emphasized on the learning journey. The only way to safeguard their ethnic-cultural identity is to make the younger generation converse into their ethnic languages, both spoken and written languages. So, this study is aimed to fill up the gap of generational transmission of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

Research Question

The major research question of this study is:

How Newar youths narrate their journey of identity retrieval with learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how Newar Youths are reclaiming their cultural and ethnic identity through learning of the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi

By capturing the life stories and narratives of Newar youths who have learned and engaged with these cultural elements, the research aims to shed light on the complex, multifaceted nature of cultural preservation efforts.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to preserve cultural identity of the Newar youths and have other significance to the broader community. This study will interest calligraphy lovers and linguist. Also, this study will be contributory in enactment of national and international policies and agendas.

Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi for the Youths

The vitality, integrity, and continuity of the Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Lipi, 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 (Shrestha. 2021). So, it is likely that the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi moves into the direction of preservation enriching its relevance in the coming days.

Supporting International Agendas

UNESCO had declared that 2019 would be the year for indigenous languages during an assembly and expressed the necessity of preserving, revitalizing and promoting throughout the world. While Nepal turned into a federal state, efforts to preserve the diverse 123 ethnic languages which contributed to its distinct identity are surging.

There has always been priority to the spoken language but an important pillar for the spoken language i.e. written language is being neglected. In regards to Newar community, few studies have been conducted on the spoken language i.e. Nepal

Bhasa language, its extinction and its revitalization but the written language or the scripts used for communication has not been studied enough. Unlike earlier studies where disinterest of youths is among the reasons for language extinction, this study will explore other ways around where youths are now the drivers for language revitalization. It will assist in changing the perception towards youths for not being accountable towards their language and culture who now bear responsibilities for their preservation.

Supporting Constitutional Provisions and Nepal Bhasa Policy 2020

The constitution of 2015 in Article 31 (5) has clarified that all Nepalese citizens living in Nepal have the right to receive education in its mother tongue and to get that a separate school or institutes can be operated with law. For which Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) and other municipalities like Kirtipur Municipality has endorsed Nepal Bhasa Policy 2020 whereby all private and public schools under their jurisdiction implemented localized curriculum in Nepal Bhasa language. Thus, this study shall garner the necessity of such curriculum.

For Calligraphy Lovers and Linguists

This study aimed to explore what has motivated the youths to learn Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi which could be benefited by the calligraphy lovers, linguists and stakeholders for conservation of scripts, language and culture. Moreover, this study will bring in different stories of how youths are into learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi that would promote this learning process and preservation of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was conducted among the youths of age 25 years to 39 years who are the residents of Kathmandu Valley. The age limit is set so that the participants can provide rich data from their experiences even though age of youth starts at age 16 as per National Youth Policy of Nepal (2015). Newar youths who have taken any Nepal Bhasa/ Ranjana Lipi classes, trainings etc. were only included as a participant in the study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter initiated from the introduction and my lived stories with the initiatives of my research interest in the title of this research. I share my personal experience of being called "Half-Newar" for not understanding Nepal Bhasa, highlighting a common issue where young Newars are stigmatized for their inability

to read or write their ancestral language. Likewise, this study addressed the rational merging the issues of the problem statement, the purpose of the study followed by a research question. In this study, I have challenged the negative societal perceptions of youth, emphasizing their potential and informed capabilities.

It is evident that the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi which were the official language and lipi in the past had faced the systematic suppression from all the Shah, Rana and Panchayat Rule. The laws and policies enforced during those rules prohibited the language usage while also punishing for those who do not obey it. They emphasized the Nepali language use in all sectors making it the sole official language. This resulted in lesser to no economic benefits for knowing the language and lipi which further led the people to lose their interest. It got severe with time ultimately moving the level of "definitely endangered" by UNESCO.

In spite of these losing status, some of the efforts of rejuvenation are being notable enough to attract youths who are now continuing it. The fading charm of Ranjana Lipi is glowing again in public and digital spaces, thanks to some community led initiatives. With the documentation of the narratives of the Newar youths in learning this language, the study explores the insights for future preservation efforts. This effort has been critical to preserve the Newar identity through developing realization among the people and changing perception towards youths. The narratives of ages in between 25 to 39 years old Newars in Kathmandu Valley who have actively engaged with Nepal Bhasa or Ranjana Lipi either formal or informal means.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the existing literature relevant to my research study that presents the life stories of Newar youths who have learned Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana script. First of all, I discussed the thematic review, which as a whole concludes that despite the Newar community's language and script having faced both state-level dominance and native user reluctance, leading to their decline; recent youth initiatives in learning and promoting these cultural elements may prove crucial for their preservation and revival. The subsequent sections focused on theoretical review, previous research studies, and policy review with research gap followed by the conceptual framework of the study.

Forming Shared Newar Identity through ethnic belonging

Identity is a lively concept guided by socio-cultural and linguistic impacts. Many linguistic studies prioritize language and script as a major indicator for ethnic identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Hall, 1996 as cited in Yang et.al., 2021) claims identity is formed through cultural narratives and is continuously evolving. Similarly, shared identity is formed in Newar youths when they recognized commonalities and dedicate to the Newar norms and values. For this, ethnic belonging is a must. For half-Newar individuals, ethnic belonging is achieved with continuous involvement in ethnic activities including language learning (both spoken and written) and exercising them.

This shared identity can be relevant in the case of half-Newar individuals. Mambrol (2016) imagines a different world where individuals negotiate their identity between two cultural worlds. Meanwhile, Half-Newar youths are likely to form that shared identity not just an identity through language and script learning but they are in negotiation trying to balance both for reclaiming their shared Newar identity that connects them to their ethno-communal goals and ancestral heritages of the Newar community.

Learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi

Several studies like (Mellingner & Jeminez, 2019) alerts for the challenges coming ahead in this Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi Learning. Some include negligible institutional support, biasness from own community and insufficient

learning materials. For half-Newar youths, these obstacles are compounded by their mixed ethnic background, requiring them to make a conscious effort to reclaim their linguistic heritage.

Absence of transmission among the generations is key here. Crystal (2000) found parents not actively passing their ethnic languages to young ones so they struggle to learn. Same with Nepal Bhasa where elders don't speak much at home making young ones as named in this study as half-Newar youths to learn the language from their household.

Other challenge may see as the missing formal education systems. Nepal Bhasa is taught only in few schools as competed to Nepali and English. So, Newar youths had to learn in Nepali or English. Also, there aren't books readily available. So the young ones leave their language, and this leads to language shift (Fishman, 1991). But this can be resolved with language preservation campaigns.

Learning from a Global Case: A case of an Irish Language

The journey of rejuvenation of the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi can be moreover connected with a global case of an Irish language-Gaeilge. Looking at the past, this Irish language was gone through the systemic marginalization during the British Rule. As, Crowley (2005) mentioned, this language too faced the similar fate of Nepal Bhasa with dominance and decline, where the dominant English language benefitted in the administrations, education and media platforms by 19th century. So, the journey of fall and rise of both languages are aligned to one another.

As a revitalization's initiative, a communal movement began led by the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge) that was established in 1893 and it promoted the language as the symbol of national identity, pride and cultural sovereignty. The league's conducted the language and teachers' trainings similar to what Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana movement did. This was suggested as significant by the scholars for revitalizations of the Irish language (Hindley, 1990). Now, the language has adapted to modern technological inventions, online language courses, mobile applications and social media usage for better youth involvements (Walsh & Rourke, 2015). These initiatives are aligned with the Nepal Bhasa revitalization y youths through Ranjana script workshops, font development and google translate for Ranjana that resist dominance and build up in modern era of technological advancement. So, both these cases reflect the language revival is a thoughtful act and supports the argument that

with the support of technology, communal engagement can change from dominated to a reason of pride and acceptability.

Preservations Campaigns

Preservation campaigns start from personal efforts at home to professional teachings at school and institutions. Also, there are groups that are on the campaign of this revitalization mainly Nepal Lipi Guthi, Newaz group and Callijatra while there are some local clubs joining the same. Nepal Lipi Guthi being the oldest one established in 1979 has been the backbone of this revitalization effort (Maharjan as cited in Community Homestay Network, 2024). They are the inspiration for many new groups joining this campaign. Newaz group conduct wall painting campaign of Ranjana lipi at various locations in and outside Kathmandu Valley. Callijatra is a youth group in Kathmandu who have been especially active in organizing workshops for the preservation of the languages of Nepal Bhasa. They are also promoting Nepal Bhasa scripts such as Ranjana Script, Nepal Script, etc. They conduct various workshops on social media such as Facebook and Instagram as well as in-person workshops. Manju Maharjan and Yuvash Vaidya (Maharjan & Vaidya, 2021) mention that some of these workshops include teaching Kutakshar (monogram), which was used to hide secret information in ancient times.

In order to get further insight into their work, I got in touch with Sunita Dangol (member of Callijatra and now the deputy Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City) via Facebook. She shared that they had conducted 40 workshops in just two years of their journey. They conducted workshops at communal spaces for general public, talent competitions like Miss Newa: Competitions, corporate offices, colleges and even went international to Japan. The first one was conducted in Itumbahal, Kathmandu on 14 April 2018 while the 40th workshop was in a corporate office called AELOI (S Dangol, personal communication, 2020, July 23).

The workshops attract from 30 to 100 people from all age groups. There are no age, gender, or ethnic barriers to attending the workshop. Callijatra has also conducted group specific workshops targeting artists, architects, monks, foreigners etc. Sunita Dangol and Ananda Kumar Maharjan, members of Callijatra, first presented their work “Reviving Ranjana Script” internationally. Callijatra shared that their future plan is to develop user-friendly apps to learn Ranjana script, its tutorial which they have already being doing, further develop the font, publish more books, calligraphy manuals, Ranjana script keyboards and many more.

Theoretical Review

This research study dealt with the theoretical referent which has been linked with a research problem, research questions and guided the analysis, discussion and finding parts of my ways. Here, I have applied the 'Theory of Linguistic Imperialism, Cultural Hegemony Theory and Ethnic Identity Theory as the major theories of my research study. Also, Symbolic Power theory also comes into play at some part of this study.

Theory of Linguistic Imperialism

Robert Phillipson (Phillipson, 1992) defines linguistic imperialism as the dominance of one language over others, maintained through structural, ideological, and institutional mechanisms. It is a form of cultural imperialism where language becomes a tool of control, marginalization, and epistemic violence. In multilingual societies, linguistic imperialism often manifests through education systems, media, and state policies that elevate one language while suppressing others.

In the context of Nepal, linguistic imperialism is evident in the state-sponsored privileging of Nepali and English as languages of education, governance, and economic mobility. The systematic exclusion of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi from formal institutions, curricula, and public discourse. The internalization of inferiority among native speakers, who perceive their ancestral language as obsolete or economically irrelevant.

Phillipson's theory (Phillipson, 1992) helps explain how Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi were not just neglected but actively displaced by dominant language ideologies. The "one nation, one language" policy during the Panchayat era exemplifies this imperialist logic, where linguistic diversity was sacrificed for national unity. Even after the 2015 Constitution recognized mother tongue education, implementation remains weak, and linguistic imperialism continues through informal norms and institutional inertia.

This theory positions the revitalization efforts of Newar youths as acts of resistance against linguistic imperialism. By learning, teaching, and promoting Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi, these youths challenge the dominance of Nepali and English, reclaiming their right to linguistic and cultural self-determination.

Hegemony Theory

Theory of hegemony describes how dominant groups maintain their authority through cultural and linguistic means (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975). Nepal Bhasa was marginalized in Nepal due to prioritization of Nepali and English, supporting their linguistic hegemony. Nepal Bhasa being sidelined from formal education and state institutions reflects Gramsci's concept of ideological domination, whereby policy and social norms created by dominant language create the suppression.

Linguistic hegemony is obvious in the Nepalese education system as language like Nepal Bhasa is barely or not used in formal educations. Phillipson (2018) brings into light about the dominant languages shaping the society, where other languages struggle to thrive.

Studies by Dhakal (2021) and Phillipson (1992) claim this hegemony is exercised with the help of educational institutions, government mechanisms and media publications. In addition, Crystal, (2000) claims this hegemony imposed by state is more responsible to the language shifts leading to their disappearance.

In overall, this theory has helped to understand the broader power structures and how dominant language ideologies (Nepali, English) have shaped Newar youths' attitudes toward Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

Ethnic Identity Development Theory

Jean Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Theory (Phinney, 1993) outlines how individuals experience exploration, commitment, and belonging, highlighting how Newar youths engage in this process. This theory gives us a psychological lens to track how young Newar people come to explore, question, and embrace their ethnic identity. This is helpful in analyzing how learning Nepal Bhasa and the Ranjana script becomes part of their self-discovery and cultural belonging.

In this study, Newar youths, especially those labeled "Half-Newar", often begin with an unexamined identity, shaped by societal stigma and lack of exposure to their ancestral language. Through workshops, community engagement, and personal reflection, they enter the exploration phase, actively seeking knowledge and connection. Eventually, many reach the commitment stage, where they embrace Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi as integral to their identity. Phinney's model helps frame language learning not just as skill acquisition but as a psychosocial journey, a

process of reclaiming belonging, resisting marginalization, and constructing a shared Newar identity.

Theory of Symbolic Power

The symbolic power is not limited to the power use but about the ability to make something valuable, being respected in the society. These powers are obtained through support from people, social institutions like media and education centers as they are able to impact the thoughts of the people.

In this study, this theory is used to understand how the Newar youths are challenging this symbolic violence with the innovative initiatives like developing digital fonts, creating esthetic body tattoos, hosting various learning workshops and festivities like Lipi Guff, Callijatra for regaining the symbolic capital and relocating their heritage of language and script as relevant and significant. From Bourdieu's ideas (Bourdieu, 1991), these activities are changing the symbolic fields, what is best and valuable for their own community and people.

Policy Review of the Study

I intend that the research study contributes to re-assessing the current policy concerning language and script usage and protection prioritizing endangered ones given that the language planning is methodical arrangement to seek any language issues.

In terms of constitutions, different constitutions drafted during different rule had a differing position in terms of language and scripts to be used in state mechanism. Constitutions from 1948-1990 never recognized the multilingualism in Nepal. Though English was taught in Schools other ethnic languages beyond Khas/Nepali (Gorkhali/Khas language later termed as Nepali) was never permitted to use as a medium of education.

Nepali language was endorsed as National language of Nepal. Panchayat strongly enforced Khas/Nepali language in every administration of the state, education, mass media and restricted previously used languages including Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana script.

Constitution of 1990 included the provisions to speak mother tongue for education and encourage local culture, script and languages as mentioned in Article 26.2. However, it has not been trustworthy regarding the result as the state's accountability is unclear and brings in doubt whether all ethnic groups would be able to do so. The state has left that responsibility to the community itself while just giving

permission for running in early schooling though Nepali language being promoted for the highest level of education (Rai 2011, as cited in Vajracharya, 2014). However, National Language Policy and Recommendation Commission Report (1994) recognized the country as multilingual and multiethnic country. The Report has suggested to consider all spoken languages in Nepal as national languages, mother tongue languages to be used in primary education, conduct a linguistic survey and many more.

Later, the Republican constitutions came to clarify more provisions regarding ethnic rights. Under the Cultural and linguistic rights, all Nepalese can choose their language of communication, participate in cultural events and conserves cultural heritages and cultural capital. All individuals are entitled to learn via own home language for which educational institutes can be operated following legal rule. These provisions were strengthened in the High-Level Education Commission Report of 2074 which emphasized on promoting basic education in native languages aligning with the Constitutional provision, Article 31(2). Also, developing curriculum and teacher training in indigenous languages and recognizing linguistic diversity as a constitutional right was recommended. Similarly in the current language policy mention in education plans for 2030, for the school children whose home language is not Nepali, they should be taught in their own language till year 3 was strongly emphasized. Apart from this, textbooks and learning materials should incorporate the indigenous languages while for promoting the same, the nationwide policy guidelines to be drafted.

Review of Previous Research

Studies on Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi are still insufficient as there are still many unknowns. However, some of the studies have put effort in exploring the areas around this topic.

Maharjan (2018) studied about the journey of Nepal Bhasa whereby reasons of its downfall and hesitancy to use the Nepal Bhasa for those who know it. Also, this research explored the ways to revitalize the Nepal Bhasa. The findings were evidence of Nepali language dominance over Nepal Bhasa backed by the state policies pushing it towards extermination. It also clarifies on the systematic dominance from the government.

Shrestha (2021) studied on the knowledge and attitude of youths speaking Nepal Bhasa. The study found youths are not much concerned about the Nepal Bhasa

language as the usage of the language is not clearly exposed to them and there is an inadequacy of language in every element of our everyday life, such as music, dances, stories, etc. which might make youth enjoy learning and speaking

Vajracharya (2014) studied on the state policies and politics surrounding the languages particularly through the perspectives of Newar. It brought clarification on how relationships are maintained among state and its people that are affected by the politics on language followed by the people that became the rulers since the people first movement. In addition, it had also highlighted the reasons behind the Nepal Bhasa going into the state of vanishing.

Shrestha (2021) discovers pattern of alteration of language among Newars, the ethnic native people of the Kathmandu Valley. The study emphasized on language communication in various spheres of socio-cultural, personal, media and official happenings where the people were tasked to communicate via diverse language including their native one (Nepal Bhasa). This study was also evident in proving the impact in attitudes and representations after exploration of a marginal language.

Yadav (2007) studied on policies and diversity on languages. This study basically explores the conditions of linguistic diversity and the policies concerning them. Also, the exclusion of the minority languages and how a better policy under the federal structures of Nepal can bring inclusion to all the minority languages.

Acharya (2019) talks about brief information on Ranjana script in Ranjana Numeral System: A Brief Information while (Giri, 2009) tried to explore the strategies of ruling elites (mainly Khas/Nepali language speakers) to impose linguistic hegemony and as a result other languages are compromised including Nepal Bhasa to ultimately leading to status of endangered language.

The above studies have covered a vast area of socio-political and historical contexts emphasizing on the language shift and policy advocacy for the Nepal Bhasa. Studies like Maharjan (2018), Vajracharya (2014) and Giri (2009) studied on the systemic suppression of the language. But, one of the key areas of intergenerational transmission of both the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi is yet to be studied. Similarly, community-based narratives and technological usage in the journey of revitalization need more exploration. Methodologically, all the studies applied the classical approach of conducting surveys, interviews, historical reviews and document analysis while mixed and participatory approach need to be used. The classical approaches are suitable yet the new approaches can bring a new dimension to the findings. As a

recommendation, some studies like Vajracharya (2014) and Yadav (2007) emphasized on the need of inclusive policy while Shrestha (2021) suggested youths given more opportunities towards cultural exposures.

Research Gap of My Study

I studied the research of (Maharjan, 2018) about the journey of Nepal Bhasa whereby reasons of its downfall and hesitancy to use the Nepal Bhasa for those who know it were explored. Also, this research explored the ways to revitalize the Nepal Bhasa. Likewise, I studied (Shrestha, 2021) on the knowledge and attitude of youths speaking Nepal Bhasa. Similarly, I studied Vajracharya (2014) who explored the state policies and politics surrounding the languages particularly through the perspectives of Newar.

Further, Shrestha (2021) discovered pattern of alteration of language among Newars, the ethnic native people of the Kathmandu Valley while Giri (2009) tried to explore the strategies of ruling elites (mainly Khas/Nepali language speakers) to impose linguistic hegemony and as a result other languages are compromised including Nepal Bhasa to ultimately leading to status of endangered language. Yadav (2007) clarified on the exclusion of the minority languages and how a better policy under the federal structures of Nepal can bring inclusion to all the minority languages while Acharya, (2018) mentioned about the Ranjana script. They remained a milestone in my research study.

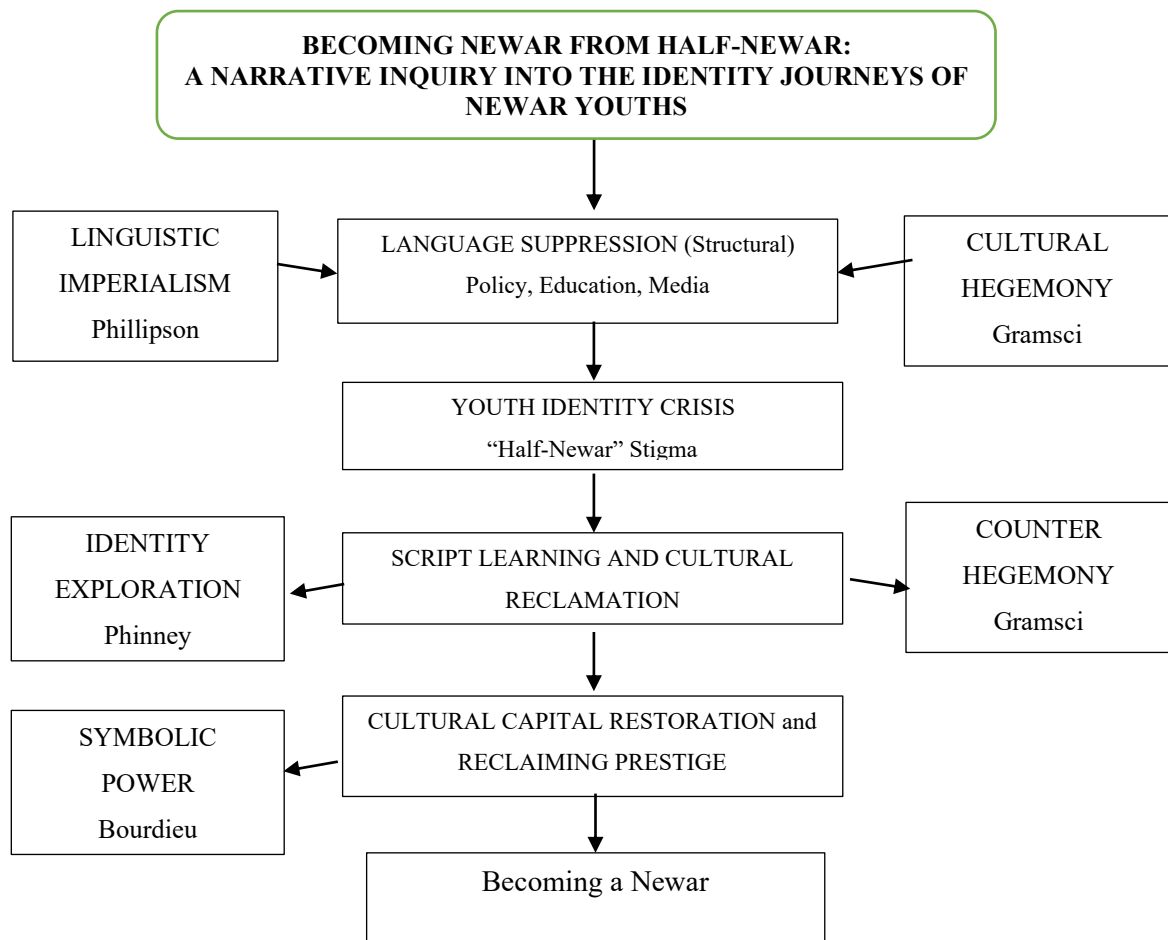
Even though there are number of studies concerning historical suppression and endangering state of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi, these studies have mainly explored the loss, disinterest of the community and policy challenges. The findings from these studies were significant in learning about the history of loss but they miss out largely in bringing out the journey of revival at the present day. One of the major gap is on the part of youth perspectives. Generally, studies imply youths being passive members when it comes to culture preservations but contemporary linguistic campaigns like Lipi Guff, Callijatra and Lipi Lakha are entirely youth led which is evidence for youth being in the driver's seat in reclaiming linguistic identity and heritages. However, these efforts from the youths are yet understudied in academia apart from few pieces in social media posts and occasional daily newspapers. Also, earlier studies miss out on the dimension of diverse individual stories and narratives who face differing culturally induced challenges as they are mostly inclined on historical reviews, surveys or policy analysis which ignored the lived experiences

or provided limited space for their emotional journey towards the linguistic learning and identity reclamation and revitalization of the languages. Moreover, the intergenerational linguistic transmission, technological involvement and esthetic activism is absent in academic discourse.

As a response to these above-mentioned gaps, the study builds on the narrative inquiry to collect the lived experiences of the diverse youths with the background of learning and promoting the language and script. It centers on the involvement of the youths with gendered perspectives, revitalization and role of technology bringing in the contemporary but holistic perspectives towards the journey of identity reclamation and revitalization of the language and script. With this, it not only contributes in the academic discourse but also towards communal accountability of preserving heritage, pedagogical reform on teaching-learning language and script and advocating for policy changes on language and ethnicity.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



This research is anchored in multi- theoretical perspectives: Ethnic Identity Development Theory (Phinney, 1993) and Linguistic Imperialism Theory (Phillipson, 1992). Complementing this internal journey is Robert Phillipson’s Linguistic Imperialism Theory (Phillipson, 1992), which critiques the structural dominance of powerful languages, particularly English as tools of ideological control and cultural suppression. In the Nepali context, this theory is adapted to examine how Nepali and English have been institutionally privileged, leading to the marginalization of indigenous languages like Nepal Bhasa. Phillipson’s concepts of linguisticism, ideological transmission, and center-periphery (Phillipson, 1992) dynamics help explain how language hierarchies are maintained through education, media, and policy. These systemic forces have contributed to the erosion of Nepal Bhasa, shaping the linguistic environment in which Newar youths must reclaim their identity.

Ethnic Identity Development Theory, as articulated by Jean Phinney (Phinney, 1993), provides a psychological framework for understanding how individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds progress through stages of identity formation. These stages unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search, and ethnic identity achievement are reflected in the lived experiences of Newar youths as they navigate their relationship with Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Initially, many participants exhibit limited awareness or passive acceptance of dominant linguistic norms, shaped by societal pressures and educational systems. However, through personal reflection and exposure to cultural marginalization, they begin to actively explore their heritage, eventually reaching a stage of affirmation where language becomes central to their sense of self.

By integrating these theories, this study situates personal narratives within broader socio-political structures, revealing how language revitalization is both a response to cultural suppression and a pathway to ethnic identity achievement. The use of narrative inquiry allows for a nuanced exploration of these dynamics, capturing the emotional, intellectual, and cultural dimensions of the participants' journeys. Their stories not only reflect individual transformation but also contribute to a collective movement toward linguistic and cultural reclamation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have accomplished the review of existing literatures by constructing a Newar Identity and ethnic belonging while exploring the challenges in learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi and contemporary revitalization efforts. For "half-Newar" individuals, ethnic belonging is actively negotiated through engagement with cultural practices like language and script learning, balancing mixed heritage.

I have reviewed the theoretical review: Robert Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), Antonio Gramsci's Hegemony Theory (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975) and Jean Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Theory (Phinney, 1993). I applied Linguistic Imperialism to understand the differences among the Nepal Bhasa and Nepali-English language as one being systematically sidelined while another being promoted by state structures and policies. Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Hegemony to understand how dominant language ideologies shaped attitudes toward Nepal Bhasa while Jean Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Theory (Phinney, 1993) provides a psychological lens to explore how learning these elements becomes part of Newar youths' self-discovery and ethnic-

cultural belonging. Furthermore, laws and policies concerning loss and preservation have been reviewed while a research gap was explored. The previous studies mainly explored history and loss, but rarely on the journey of revival or the changing attitude and efforts of youths actively involved in revitalization. I have also articulated related articles written by the authors in the academic journals and the researches. I have described a conceptual framework including themes with subthemes too.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodological procedures which are the basis to roadmap of my research. Besides, I articulated the research design, tools, study areas, sampling, techniques of data collection to guide the whole research to conclusion. In addition, I portrayed this chapter with interpretive paradigm to shape the philosophical foundations including ontology, epistemology and axiology along with narrative inquiry as my research method. Lastly, I portrayed the quality standards and ethical issues that I considered during the research process. Further, I discuss the participants narratives as information.

Philosophical Considerations of the Study

The philosophical consideration of research attempts to investigate and analyze the researchers' position and depict upon to guide their narratives based on knowledge and realities. Baden and Major (2013) discussed that a philosophical stance is based on the philosophical perspective i.e., reality, knowledge and the way to achieve knowledge that is considered as a guiding perception concerned to the nature of the truth and human behavior. The philosophical foundations of this study are deeply ingrained in its ontological, epistemological, and axiological stances, which collectively inform its approach to understanding the trajectory of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

My Ontological Positions

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained ontology as the philosophical study of the nature of reality. It included what we know about certain truths. This study embraces a social constructivist ontological position, viewing the reality of the decline and revitalization of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi as a dynamic phenomenon that is socially constructed and continuously evolving, rather than a fixed, inherent state. The reality is how we see the phenomena; our perception creates a reality based on our perspective. When I have processed the information, I gave my endeavor to have the uniqueness of the individual participants and their experiences in learning the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi where there may have multiple realities in the world. There are as many realities as individuals (Scotland, 2012), so my reality of knowledge is individually constructed.

With this constructivist ontological position, I was able to adopt qualitative methods which focus on the personal narratives guided by their lived experiences considering each narrative reflecting a unique reality. So, for my analysis I went to the path of thematic interpretation being able to create multiple truths from the narratives of the Newar youths who are learning the language.

My Epistemological Assumptions

As described by Lincoln and Guba (1989), epistemology is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known. This study accepts an interpretivist approach, with narrative inquiry as its research method. Life stories and lived experiences of Newar youths who have engaged with Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi will be the source for new knowledge. The aim is to "shed light on the complex, multifaceted nature of cultural preservation efforts" by capturing these narratives.

To ensure the participants' perspectives shaping the knowledge produced, I made sure to engage myself in active listening during all the interviews I had undertaken with my participants. Also, I requested them to review what they have said. For this I recited them about what they said in earlier interviews and requested to correct if I have misunderstood the information. This was necessary for validation from my participant for preserving the integrity of their experiences.

My Axiological Assumptions

Axiology is concerned with the theory of values or ethics. The value provides the quality of judgment we make from epistemological and ontological claims (Given, 2012). My identity as a "Newar Youth" and my acknowledgment of Ranjana Lipi as "a culture, a history, an identity and a jewel that enriches my ethnicity and civilization" emphasize a deep personal connection and a commitment to addressing the linguistic catastrophe. In this study, what mattered most was the reality of my study participants, and whatever reality existed was not judged or misinterpreted in any way. I believe that different groups are said to construct their realities or perspectives and these social constructions, reciprocally, influence how I see or understand the worlds what I see as normal and abnormal and how I should act.

I valued participants' stories, sharing, experiences, and perspectives during the process of interviewing, analyzing, interpreting, reflecting, and meaning-making. Additionally, I provided space for my own experiences and reflections and related them to the experiences of my participants using critical reflectivity. The Newar

youths like my participants who had learned or who are learning are expected to promote this language and script learning while preventing the culture.

Narrative Inquiry

One of the first forms of human communication is narrative, which is the sharing of experiences through storytelling. Accordingly, it has been said that humans are naturally good storytellers, both historically and socially. Religious writings can therefore be regarded as an ancient genre of narratives, i.e., genres that began as oral (such as Nepal Bhasa) and then evolved into written form (such as Ranjana Lipi). One of such examples is the '*Swasthani Brata Katha*'. This historical document was originally written in Nepal Bhasa. It can be considered as a rich precedent for narrative inquiry that is deeply connected with Newar epistemology. So, with inspiration from this narrative tradition of this document that contains unique story telling style embedded in symbolism, myth, moral reflection and cultural identity, I adopted the narrative inquiry as a method to honor the lived experiences of the Newar Youths who are learning the languages. Like the *Swasthani Brata Katha* invites for the reflection through various tales and dialogic narrations, I made sure that each story of my participants was not just recorded but co-constructed along for knowledge creation.

The art of narrative, which investigates the significance of events, has also been reported in literature for a long time. According to Saldana (2015), "a narrative is a storied account of events, a symbolic representation of knowledge and experiences" (p. 170,) . Here, I used my stories to combine the lived experiences and representative knowledge of my research participants by sharing their journeys of learning Ranjana Lipi and Nepal Bhasa in order to become 'Newar'. Thus, it seems appropriate to bring up Sartre (1964), who stated that narrative inquiry is relevant since "people are always telling tales." Both their own and other people's tales are all around them (as cited in Elliott, 2005, p. 116). This is the essence in narrative inquiry.

According to Creswell (2018), as a strategy, the narrative begins with the experiences as they are conveyed in the lived and reported stories of the people. In this regard, I believe it is necessary to refer to Creswell (2018), who said that narrative research requires particular knowledge, such as the accounts of people's learning methods. Participants in this study are able to explore their own sense of life more easily. Considering Connelly and Clandinin (2006) narrative inquiry achieved a remarkable space in the social sciences, education, and studies of experiences in

education. In my view, it gets remarkable respect exploring the stories of Newar Youths on the baseline of the narratives of my four participants to create, build and re shape their identity of becoming a 'Newar'.

This method aids in the Newar youths' development of their Newar identity. According to Kim (2016), the use of narratives helps people comprehend the difficulties and shifts that occur in life, as well as the differences and complexity of people's goals and pursuits. In order to convey their Newar identity, the Newar Youths' personal and professional experiences might be arranged and reflected through narrative inquiry. Storytelling shapes the identity construction of Newar Youths through their narratives. Here, I believe that the stories of my participants could have emerged as the umbrella term of the interest of Newar Youths which encourage and motivate them to find the meaning of being and becoming 'Newar'. In this sense, Saldana (2015) presents that it encourages researchers like me to document self and participant's perceptions in written form that represent the meaning of participants' interests. I did research and found the identity of Newar Youths exploring their personal, professional and social stories. Through their stories, Newar youths' identity building is shaped by storytelling. In this case, I think the narratives of my participants might have become the inclusive term for Newar youths' interests, inspiring and motivating them to discover what it means to be and become "Newar."

Moreover, Smith (1994) indicated that narrative identity is created through the process of managing the opposing forces of change and continuity (as cited in Elliott, 2005). It revealed that identity is grounded in experience that helps to understand the individual's world through the study of the individual and to invest, construct, re shape and negotiate identity. In order to get a broad picture of the difficulties and possibilities of studying Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi, I have employed a narrative inquiry as a research approach to collect stories. This allows my participants to create an identity based on their experiences and knowledge.

Selection of the Participants

The participants are the youths (age 25-39) from Kathmandu Valley particularly belonging to ethnic Newar community in this study. The participants of my study are the Newar youths who have studied Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi and who have willingness to share their stories. Only those who have continued learning process or been involved in teaching/learning or practice of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi were included in the study.

Participants were purposefully selected who can give enough information on the research questions besides meeting the other criteria (Merriam, 2002). Also, I borrowed the snowball sampling method to reach to other participants. For this process, I explored for the potential participants who meets the criteria i.e. have learned Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi being under the age of 40. First of all, I had contacted one of the leading youth trainers of the language and Lipi who met the criteria of the study to be become my participant. She was excited with the study and agreed instantly to participate in the study and we even had a preliminary conversation. Later she could not continue due to other priorities. However, she referred me to another potential participant with whom I approached via phone call. With him, I had multiple interviews and received rich information. I did not have to put any effort to convince him to be part of the study as he was already briefed by referral. It became easy for me. He became my first participant. Meanwhile, he also suggested another friend of him. Actually, they became friends through the language campaign as he mentioned to me. I also contacted that another potential participant. He too agreed to be part of the study and it went smoothly. As I needed more participants, he too suggested two of the potential participants. I had requested him to refer female participants as I already had two of the male participants. This was necessary to ensure the diversity. I contacted them and even had an interview with both of them. But I could not get them back for multiple interviews. So, I had to hold the interview in mid-way with them. I went back to the referral with this and requested again to refer for another one. He helped me again and got me into contact with one of the female participants. With her I had multiple interviews and got enough information. Through her, I waited for the potential female participant but none was successful. Two of the potential participants hesitated to agree for the interview as they never had such experiences. One of them even doubted on her own capability, questioning her eligibility to be the contributor (as a participant) in the study. She repeatedly suggested for other educated and trained female participants. This context delayed my information gathering for my study. At the end, I had to go for the male participant. However, I made sure the participant has a distinct characteristic that the other two male participant. In total, I had come across nine potential participants but only four of them became my real participants.

Profile of My Participants

Ratna

Ratna is a 34-year-old man, a resident of Yala (Lalitpur), and a member of the Shakya clan-top ranking group among Newars similar to Brahmans. He is the youngest son in his family. He is an artist, designer, and Nepal Bhasa instructor by profession. He is the Director of Newa Syanekuthi and the Managing Director of Chyalabula Jyasah. He completed his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting and Master of Arts in Nepal Bhasa from Tribhuvan University. He was the recipient of the Satya Hira Prize in NS 1134. He learned Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi from Thirteen, following his elder siblings. He took a formal 1-month training course from an institution, Nhu Pucha, but he learned most of it from self-practice. He has become an instructor, yet he does not miss any chances to learn when he comes across his mentors.

Rajamati

Rajamati (36 years) holds a Masters of Arts Degree in Sociology and she is also a school level teacher of Nepal Bhasa. She belongs to a Jyapu clan in Newar community which represents farmers that comes after Shrestha. During Malla reign, they are categorized as Sudras with service men but was challenged. She learned Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script for about 3 years. She is a mother of two living in a joint family bearing most of the family responsibilities at home. She lives in *Tapa: Hiti* in Lalitpur. Before marriage, she lived with her maternal uncle in *Nag Baha: Lalitpur*. She is pursuing her Master of Arts in Sociology while she is also a Nepal Bhasa teacher at a public school called *Buddhanagar Adharvut Vidhyalaya*.

Chikacha

Chikacha is chairman of Newar club in Yala: and also, a ward member of Lalitpur Metropolitan city ward no.25. He did not learn Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana lipi from the typical in-person schooling method rather he learned Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi through online medium in Zoom where he attended two-month online training course trained by "Shree Ram Khai" of Khopa (Bhaktapur). Subsequently, with the financial assistance of Lalitpur Metropolitan City Ward No. 27, he also got opportunity to attain a one-month in-person training session where Miss Newa Sunita Dangol (now deputy mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City) instructed in Ranjana Lipi.

Taremam

Taremam (37 years) is a development worker specializing in education sector. Ethnically, he belongs to a Jyapu Newar group. He got lucky to learn Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana lipi as a couple of teachers from Nepal Lipi Guthi organized an event in his locality. He is a resident of Sainbu Bhaisipati but originally belong to Patan. He spent childhood around the courtyard in Patan so he has witnessed many cultures practices during his childhood.

Data Generation

The Newar youths who are participating in the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi workshops/classes are my primary sources of data. I have conducted four interviews with about 90 minutes each guided by semi-structured questionnaire checklist sincerely keeping my research question in my mind. To create the semi-structured questionnaire, I identified key areas of study like intergenerational transmission, learning motivation and challenges, cultural identity etc.

Further, to get the answer to my questions which are based on the lived experiences of Newar youths in learning Nepal Bhasa Language and Ranjana Script, I took support of typology of questions such as interpreting, probing, follow-up, and direct open-ended as suggested by Qu and Dumay (2011). Some questions gathered the experiences of the participants, some went for deeper meaning while some questions were just for conformity of their sayings and some just gave open space for their free storytelling and reflections. The questionnaire was treated just as a guide rather than a script to make sure the interviews being taken becomes participant focused. In-depth interviews were taken with all the participants, and were audio recorded wherever permissible and note recorded where consent was not provided.

The recorded audios were transcribed at the earliest while for those not getting consent to audio record, I Immediately converted the notes to proper digital transcriptions. In most occasions, I included the original saying of the participants in Nepal Bhasa due to its Nepal Bhasa metaphors while I also did contextual translations for preserving its authenticity. Then the transcripts were manually coded for identifying core narrative threads along with narrative arc for producing a narrative story for analysis. While building the story participants' voice was given priority for maintaining ethical integrity.

Research Challenges

Research is "a voyage of discovery" (Kothari, 2004 as cited in Gupta, n.d.). We face a lot of challenges during this journey to seek the knowledge. The challenges can come in different forms, in different places and at different times. If the research is planned well, these challenges can be tackled well. As the interviews were taken multiple times for a single participant, there existed breaks in between, sometime a break of few days while even weeks for some. In this scenario, I made sure the information gathering was consistent. Before I started where I left in the earlier interviews, I made sure to revisit the earlier transcripts and checked if the information aligns with the research questions. I checked for any shifts in focus, context or even tone. Wherever diverted, I made sure to reconfirm with the participants of their views if they meant what they had said earlier. For this, I summarized and read them out the transcriptions from the earlier interviews, not to mention that I used the same questionnaire guidelines with typology of questions suggested by Qu & Dumay (2011) to maintain thematic coherence.

The Endless Talks and Time Management During Field Work

Time management was one of the challenges I faced during interviews. I truly enjoyed taking interview about Nepal Bhasa and Ranjan Lipi with the participants, as they had many interesting stories to tell. I was brought up listening to these stories, and I could add some more to my experiences through interviews.

However, while conducting interviews, it occasionally became difficult to stick to a topic. At times we, the researcher and the informant, wandered away from the main topic. Many times, the topic shifted from language to cultural heritage preservation. It also wandered to historic stories as an example.

After the Field Work

I had to pause my research work for about a year due to personal reason. I came back with a determination to complete it with the encouragement of my family in 2024. I contacted the interviewees once again to get their updated views. They were very supportive and with the help of social media like Messenger and Viber, we discussed the updated situations of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

Quality Standards in My Research

To maintain the quality of my study, I have borrowed Connelly and Clandinin's framework of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006),

highlighting three dimensions of temporality (time), sociality (people, social influences) and spatiality/place (space, environment).

Temporality

Temporality refers to time that helps us to understand the lived experiences across different time periods. As society changes with time, so does its norms and acceptance. In this study, time factor is crucial to understand the historical domination on the language across various periods that led to revitalization efforts till date. Narratives were slowly developed for the revitalizations as there was growing demand for identity reclamation.

Sociality

The personal and social condition combined represents the sociality in a study. So, in my study, I have incorporated the personal and social conditions in this study. The participants of my study had their distinct personal characteristics-with fear, curiosity, dedication, resilience, shame and pride. Their perspectives were different, and so are their challenges in their journey of learning. Some of these characteristics were shaped by the social conditions they live in. Considering these, I made sure of the narratives of my participants be brought into light with complete reality.

Place

The physical and any other symbolic elements where the participant's lived experiences take place is the place in a narrative inquiry. This study centers on the neighborhood of Kirtipur and other alley of Kathmandu valley that are prominent centers of the Newar community. They are the venue for socio-cultural learning, intergenerational communication while those venues were the sites for language and script learning as presented in this study. Events like Callijatra, Lipi Nakha came into reality in these places. Thus, they are crucial in the journey of Newar youths learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Keeping this in mind, I have given place a distinct significance in this study of identity reclamation.

Ethical Standards of My Research

Cohen (1972) believes a researcher has some moral duties and responsibilities in maintaining integrity, autonomy, beneficence including protection of the rights and values of the study and the findings generated in the study. All researchers have to do it as ethics are all about how we behave with people, particularly with the participants in any research (Bryman, 2008).

As Kim (2016) suggests "Narrative inquirers need to be phonetic researchers who navigate the world of narrative research with caring reflexivity" (p. 106). I have adopted American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2009) research standards for humanities fueled by phronesis (a moral-ethical judgement) through caring reflexivity.

Insider-Outsider Dilemma

Being an ethnic resident of a Newar Town of Kirtipur, Nepal Bhasa language was the only language of communication among my family members and my neighborhood. I was socialized around speakers Nepal Bhasa and users of Ranjana script. Weekly newspapers printed in Ranjana script was always around me wherever I be, the school, temple area, neighborhood and at home.

As an insider, I should make sure my prior knowledge on this do not appear more prominent than the sayings of my participants. As Fleming (2018) said, there are risks of ignoring the opinion towards the community for an insider researcher. Thus, to make this study a balanced one, I need to unlearn everything from my life journey and re-learn back from the participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarizes the research methodology, adopting an interpretive paradigm and employing narrative inquiry as the primary method. I have adopted a social constructivist epistemological stance while the study gives importance to narratives and stories of the participants.

Four Newar youths aged 25-39 from Kathmandu Valley, actively involved in learning, teaching, or practicing Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi, were purposefully selected through purposeful and snowball sampling methods. Multiple interviews were conducted to collect the information guided by a questionnaire checklist and recorded with permission wherever permitted. Profiles of participants like Ratna, Rajamati, Chikacha, and Taremam showcase their diverse backgrounds and engagement.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE OF LOSS OF LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT

This chapter deals with the participants' narratives about their experiences of the loss of *Nepal Bhasa* and *Ranjana Lipi*. This chapter deals with my four participants' two-month-long data generation journey. To maintain each participant's privacy, I assigned a pseudonym name for each of them reflecting their character from the popular Nepal Bhasa movie called "Rajamati". They are *Ratna*, *Rajamati*, *Chikacha*, and *Taremam*.

Field Setting

Kathmandu Valley, known as *Nepa:Gaa* in *Nepal Bhasa*, is a National Capital Area and is a bowl-shaped valley originally resided in by ethnic Newars. At present day, the valley is comprised of three major ancient cities of Kathmandu (*Yen*), Lalitpur (*Yala*), and Bhaktapur (*Kwopa*), with other major Newar towns like Kirtipur (*Kipoo*), Khokana (*Khona*), etc. It is a dwelling place of people with a diverse cast and ethnic origin. Its economy is based on trade, commerce, and industry, along with service sectors like education, health, transport, hospitality, and tourism including agriculture to some extent. The increasing growth of non-Newars has affected the socio-cultural, economic, and livelihood situations of valley residents.

Blaming the Elder Generation

It was the afternoon of 24 December 2023, and the weather was getting colder. Referring to our phone conversation earlier that week, I went to meet Ratna at *Gabahal, Patan*. As he is a *Nepal Bhasa* language and *Ranjana Lipi* trainer, he was busy giving training on writing *Ranjana Lipi* to his students. Upon noticing me, he indicated to me that he will finish the class in 5 minutes. He finished his class, and students left. While we just started our conversation on the status of *Ranjana Lipi*, his mother offered us tea. At that moment, Ratna began with his voice carrying a mix of disappointment and concern, "You know what hurts the most. It's not just about external pressures or modern distractions. The real wound comes from within, from our own elders, who were supposed to be the guardians of our heritage." Settling into his chair in his traditional Newari home in Patan, he continued speaking on what the elders did in the past. He said,

I remember clearly when the language shift began. Our parents' generation, many of them consciously decided to stop speaking Nepal Bhasa at home. They thought they were doing us a favor. They told us that our children need English and Nepali Languages to get success for which they broke that language chain which have been steady for centuries.

Meanwhile he stared at the old photo hung on the wall. He continued the blame towards the elders with an explanation and frustration. He said,

My grandfather could write beautiful Ranjana script and knew many Nepal Bhasa stories and songs. But do you know what's tragic? He never passed this knowledge to my father. He believed modern education was more important. And my father, following the same logic, never insisted on speaking Nepal Bhasa with us.

There was a strong hesitancy among the Newar parents in transferring the language and culture to their children; instead, they saw significance in education only. Ratna explained how the elders turned back to the younger generations. He blamed the elders who first introduced the Nepal Bhasa language to the younger ones and now they are discontinuing teaching Nepal Bhasa to the Younger generations. It's like they are the one who bear the responsibility to take ahead are now stopping it's intergenerational transfer of the language. He questioned, "How a language can survive in this scenario?" This act of the elders was viewed as a betrayal for Ratna from their own seniors. Leaning forward, his voice grew more intense; he further said,

In many Newar households today, you'll see this strange dynamic. The elders who are able to speak Nepal Bhasa fluently are now speaking broken Nepali language with their young ones. They seem comfortable speaking a language they are unable to speak well but they hesitate speaking in Nepal Bhasa in which they have expertise and they don't try to teach even the basics of Nepal Bhasa to their children. It's as if they've accepted its decline as inevitable.

For Ratna this was an act of assimilation by his elders. Pulling out an old manuscript from his collections, he continued,

The elders who could read and write this (Ranjana Script) beautifully didn't think it was important enough to teach the next generation. They saw it as something from the past, not realizing that every script that dies takes with it centuries of knowledge and wisdom.

His blame extended beyond the language and script. Ratna claims that their elders' act of discontinuing the teaching of the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Script is not merely the loss of a language and a script; rather, it resulted in the loss of centuries-old knowledge and wisdom. Ratna added, "What's even more frustrating is when these same elders now complain that young people don't know our language and script. But who stopped teaching them? Who decided it wasn't important enough?" People who should have been the cultural torchbearers chose to extinguish the flame themselves, and they happen to see young ones as neglecting their cultures. Ratna was ready to counter anyone from older generations who blamed the younger generations for failing to learn Nepal Bhasa and having disinterest in the Newar culture and traditions.

Meanwhile, he went for a quick metaphorical reflection, running his fingers over the Ranjana letters in the manuscript. He said,

You know, language transmission is like a river. Once you build a dam, the flow stops. Our elders built that dam, thinking they were protecting the future generation. But they didn't realize they were actually cutting us off from our cultural source.

This means the elders have stopped the cultural transmission by prioritizing the other languages and stopping to teach their own. They miss out that their own children could be prevented from learning their own culture and lose their identity.

He stated,

Now, we are trying to connect together. However, it is difficult to revive the language which already reached to endangered status than the one which is still alive. Instead, they became the breakpoint in our cultural continuity. Now, young people like me are struggling to reconnect with what should have been naturally ours. The young ones are now needing to work more to learn because of the elder's mistakes, which could have been much easier.

The conversation was taking long and it was getting dawn so we halted our conversation with a condition to meet next time. Standing up to show me out, Ratna shared a final thought. He said,

It isn't about blaming the older generation; they made choices they thought were right at that time. But we must learn from this. Every parent, every grandparent today needs to understand that when they choose not to pass on

our language and script, they're not just making a choice for themselves rather they're making a choice that affects generations to come.

I Remember My Grandmother

Rajamati is another main character of the research whose narrative was also similar to Ratna's. Among the four participants, she was the only female participant. When I met her for the first time in January 2024, she told she just celebrated her 36th Birthday. She was working as a Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana *Lipi* teacher in a public school. Earlier, we had a long phone conversation to get to know each other and discuss the purpose of the interview. She was convinced of it, and we became ready to have the conversation at her workplace for her ease and for me to observe her school. She too wanted me to visit her school.

When I reached at her school, she was still in her class. I informed the school guard but he was advised to take me to her class as I arrive. So, I went to her classroom. She was having class with early grade students. The classroom was modest with a couple of windows only at one side of the classroom. The walls were colorfully decorated with hand written paintings and also Ranjana Lipi characters drawn by the students. That made me feel good even though the characters were not so perfect. She insisted me to come inside the classroom; I hesitated initially but she used to students to lure me in. I was shocked that students greeted me in Nepal Bhasa with smiles, their voices were too soft. She had informed students that I am an expert in Nepal Bhasa and coming to interact with them which I learned later only. We had a very short formality. I asked one of the students whether she is loving to learn the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. To my surprise, she proudly said that she is happy because she is able to communicate with her grandmother because of this class. The response lingered me. This was the motive for the intergenerational transmission. The interaction continued for some time until the bell rang. As *Rajamati* was pre-informed about the topic of discussion and I wanted to have more conversation, she began, "Lets go sit over there, let me share something that deeply troubles me," straightening papers on her desk after her Nepal Bhasa class at *Buddhanagar Adharvut Vidhyalaya*. "As both a teacher and a mother, I see a painful pattern that started with our elder generation," she said. Her starting statement was quite clear that she was not pleased with her parents or the elders.

She continued while settling into her classroom chair while she indicated to me to sit on a bench nearby. She started talking about the elders, saying that the older

generations were the first ones who discontinued teaching Nepal Bhasa to the younger generation. "Isn't it ironic?" she questioned. She explained further, "The very people who first introduced our culture and language to us became the ones who broke the chain of transmission." Her voice carried a mix of frustration and sadness as she pointed to her classroom's empty chairs, "You see these seats?" she asked. I just nodded to her question while she kept continuing. "When I teach Nepal Bhasa here, I often think about how we reached this point. How did we get to a stage where we need formal classes to teach our children what should have been their mother tongue?" she lamented. Her question made me speechless. She too went into a deep thought. There was a moment of pause, so I did not feel right breaking that silence sooner. "The answer lies in the choices our elders made," she spoke finally. I could see she was deeply saddened by the present-day situation of the language and *lipi*. Her opinion reflected that having a situation to teach the mother tongue and *lipi* in a formal setting is a big failure of the elders and community, including the state. Having an opportunity to teach the students is an opportunistic situation, yet that situation should have been prevented in the first place. So, the question arises, who should choose the language if it is mother tongue; the parents or the school or other actors. For me, it's a collaborative choice. Parents have the crucial role, they are the initiators of the language. While, schools are the reinforcers having the ability to validate or even erase through their students, children are the one who embraces the language, they should have the final say on this. On contrary, structural support is the key in real world. So, when there is unclear state policies and resources for the language protection or in absence of ownership from its native people, the burden comes unfairly on the shoulders of families and children themselves.

Meanwhile, she tries to justify her statement of blaming the elders and says she has a deep thought about this as a sociologist and a language teacher. She said, "Our elders did face pressure, but they also made conscious choices. They decided that speaking Nepal Bhasa at home wasn't important anymore. They prioritized other languages, thinking it would give their children better opportunities." This suggests *Rajamati* does acknowledge the good intentions behind the decisions of the elders, yet their decisions were solely theirs, which could have been a wise one, as those decisions had an unimaginable cultural consequence, which she thinks was out of the elder's minds.

She continued with a question, "How can a language survive when those bearing the responsibility to pass it to younger generations also discontinue speaking?" looking at some student assignments on her desk. She elaborated on her question. "It's like cutting off a tree at its roots and then wondering why it doesn't bear fruit." The answer lies within the question anyone can answer. The answer was if you cut a root, no plant will bear a fruit. Similarly, if elders who know the *lipi* and language and bear the responsibility to teach others stop speaking Nepal Bhasa or using Ranjana *lipi*, the younger ones will never understand the significance of learning the language and *lipi*, let alone speaking or using the *lipi*. She elaborated with an example of her own family. She has lived this experience. Her grandparents chose to speak with them in Nepali despite being able to speak in Nepal Bhasa comfortably. They didn't even try to create that connection with their mother tongue. And then they wonder why the younger generation isn't interested in learning. So, it was clear that the traditional custodians themselves abandoned their role.

Drawing from her teaching experience, she said, "many parents of the school kids had admitted during a parents' teacher meeting that their own parents stopped speaking Nepal Bhasa with them when asked if they ever spoke Nepal Bhasa to their children at home. It seems it's a cycle that started decades ago, and we're seeing its effects now." "It was not about the language only. The transmission of the cultural knowledge, indigenous practices and wisdom all ended with this.", she continued. They created a generation of cultural orphans." I do agree that stopping the transfer of a single language too will impact many aspects of life. Language is the medium of communication and transfer, so it's not just losing of a language but many things whose transfer might be possible only due to the same language. It is evident that without the mother tongue language, no child learns the best, so there will always be the knowledge gap even while other languages replace the communication pattern. Standing up to look out her classroom window, *Rajamati* concluded,

As of now, being teaching Nepal Bhasa language to my students and also raising my own children, I see that the damage done and the responsibility we carry. We can't just blame our elders, but we must understand their role in this decline.

Her final thought carried a note of determination. She justifies her position as a Nepal Bhasa teacher. She claims she is trying to contribute to rebuilding what was broken. But she is also aware it's like trying to restore a centuries-old painting, which

is much harder. At the same time, she also wishes the elders had just preserved it properly in the first place. Further, she consoles herself that she is not just teaching a language every day in that classroom, but she is also trying to repair the broken link in her cultural chain.

Domination from the Rulers

I had a chance to meet *Taremam* for the first time at a café near the courtyard in Patan, surrounded by the aging walls that had witnessed generations of his family's stories. His childhood was spent playing beside that courtyard, which is a part of the Patan Durbar Square. Now, his family lives in Sainbu as the family got separated. There was an emigration for the family. This is a reflection of the larger displacement of Nepal Bhasa from its center position in the society to the boundaries. It is not only about the physical displacement or shifting, it also shifts the cultural knowledge and displace them. This can be verified with the differences in the past childhood memories of playing in those historic courtyards of Patan and his current situation.

Meanwhile, he indicated a Ranjana Lipi crafted wall depicting wishes for the New Year 1144 Nepal Sambat. He continued, "Before the Rana regime, our script filled these valleys. Every temple, every shop sign, and every legal document carried our letters. Rulers saw our language as a threat to their regime. But Nepal Bhasa was the voice of our civilization not just the language. " The mention of Ranjana script on walls celebrating Nepal Sambat 1144 serves as a powerful symbol of resilience, showing how traditional scripts persist as both functional communication and cultural assertion, even in the face of suppression. This comparison of present-day usage against historical suppression was an example of the ongoing nature of cultural resistance.

He went on into imagination of the old days when his *guru* told him that he was not even born when the crackdown intensified. He continued diving into his memories of old conversations with his *guru*. He mentioned,

I was told that the police would patrol our *bahals*, tearing down any signs in *Nepal Bhasa*. They used to burst into our community centers and schools, confiscate our books, and arrest teachers. One of the *gurus at monastery*, who was teaching Ranjana script, disappeared one night. But his disappearance was shadowed with the news of him returning back to his village home. We later learned he had been imprisoned for promoting so called anti-national elements.

His testimony became the evidence of oppression from the state, a language prejudice of Nepali language. Gradually, they got injected in the minds of people, shaped their attitudes and behaviors even after a long time. They created trauma which could transmit across generations without direct experience.

Taremam stood up and indicated towards the Patan Durbar Square while we were waiting for the waiter to serve us tea. "Look at our ancient city. Every street, every corner had undergone changes. With each change, they buried our history deeper under their authority," he said. His voice grew bitter as he recalled his old school days. He said,

In school, they made examples of us. I still remember the sting of the ruler on my palms for whispering to my friend in Nepal Bhasa. 'Speak Nepali!' they would shout. The shame they planted in us grew deeper than any physical pain.

He reminded me of my own school days, where we were also punished for speaking languages other than English or faced a monetary fine or confinement in a library as a punishment. More than punishment and monetary fine, there was a growing shame wave among us.

He asked me if I had heard about a policy from the period of Panchayat Period: '*Ek bhasha, ek bhash*' one language, one dress. To which I responded that I have heard during school days. Then he added,

They claimed it was for national unity, but we knew better. It was about power, about making us easier to control. They turned our own people against us. Those who spoke pure Khas Nepali got government jobs and promotions. Those who followed to Nepal Bhasa was labelled anti-national and denied opportunities.

With his words, we can say that the '*ek bhasha, ek bhash*' policy appeared as a deceptive form of cultural suppression. It used national unity as a pretext for cultural homogenization. This long-lasting impact of the policy created the divisions among the communities and within community. People rushed for rewards abandoning their mother tongue while escaped punishment for maintaining it.

"The saddest part?" He sighed heavily,

We (*referring to Newars*) began to believe them. Parents stopped teaching their children our language, hoping they would have better lives. I watched my own nephews and nieces grow up speaking only Nepali and English, seeing

our beautiful Ranjana script as nothing more than decorative art on temple walls. They made us doubt ourselves, made us see our own mother tongue as a burden.

Thus, this is the orientational problem of the teacher, absence of research and the problem of Newars themselves not to speak out of their concerns. Blaming just one is impractical. There is a systemic entanglement. Teachers do need the orientation, they need trainings on multilingual pedagogy that is culturally responsive. Similarly, ample studies are needed that support for advocacy of the language. The research could focus on economic and other significance of the languages. If there is no data from the research, they hardly be part of Policy making, teacher training and curriculum developing nor become part of development agenda. So, enough funds and publications are needed. Likewise, there is also the problem of Newars who barely speak out. Their minor involvements in temple and ponds preservations needs to be expanded where the youths can speak out and act.

Standing up straighter, his voice finding new strength, *Taremam* continued,

Even now, the damage continues. Not through police raids or explicit bans, but through the shame and fear they planted in us. Our young people chase English and Nepali, believing success only comes through the rulers' languages. The state no longer needs to suppress our language; we do it to ourselves.

This seemed like a similar approach used by the Britishers when they ruled modern-day India, where Newars and other ethnic people were similar to the Indians while rulers of Nepal (mostly Khas and Ranas) were like the Britishers of that time. Probably, the same shame wave could have engulfed the elders that intentionally chose not to use Nepal Bhasa language while communicating with the younger ones.

It was now evident how linguistic suppression operates not just through external force but by creating internal psychological barriers that persist long after formal restrictions are lifted.

Yet, as the evening light cast long shadows in the courtyard ahead, *Taremam's* expression softened slightly. He believed something is changing. He said,

Some young people are starting to ask questions. They come to old ones like me, asking about our script, our stories. When I teach them the curves and lines of Ranjana, I see in their eyes what the rulers feared most, the awakening of memory, the recognition of identity.

There was a potential cultural awakening that has fueled up the language preservers like him. There is a cautious hope of rejuvenation of Ranjana *Lipi* and heritage. He added,

You know, they thought they could kill a language through laws and punishment. However, we know until and unless some of us who knows the language keeps teaching, we won't be defeated. Small act is proving a big resistance for those who tried to erase our language. Every letter we write in Ranjana, every word we speak in Nepal Bhasa are strong resistant in this.

The individual acts of cultural transmission started serving as a form of resistance against historical erasure. As the day light gradually settling over Patan, *Taremam* looked out over the city one more time. "Our struggle isn't over.", he said. He believed the rulers' influence still echoes in every parent who thinks Nepal Bhasa is useless, in every young person who feels ashamed of their mother tongue. He proudly said, "We're still here, still remembering, still speaking. And maybe that's our greatest victory; that despite everything, we refuse to be silenced completely." His words were tired less; however, the conversation was going longer. Thus, I requested him to end it and promised to meet next time and listen more of his stories.

Systematic and Deliberate Hegemony

It was the second time I managed to get time to meet Ratna. There was a long gap from our first meet. I went straight to his office room as I was pointed to by his mother when I entered his house. He settled into his chair as the afternoon light filtered through his window in Patan. He asked where we left off last time. I told him that we were talking about his struggle. "Let me tell you about our struggle," *Ratna* began. "The loss of our script and language wasn't a natural decline, it was systematic and deliberate", he went on. He continued,

In 1990's, during the Rana regime, Newars were prisoned just for using their language. They prohibited using our Nepal Bhasa languages in all places whether it be schools, offices and also demotivated to speak in common places. State attacked our culture of Newar by changing the names of neighborhoods and rituals. The name of Maitighar replaced its old name *Phi Bwo Khya* (grassland with sand silica); Tudikhel replaced *Ti:Ni: Khya*, SinYala,al replaced *Sina Muga* (stone pillar), Lalitpur replaced *Yala: Bhonta* (Banepa), *Palati* (Panauti), *Dhau Kya* (Dhulikhel), *Balami* (Chitlang), *Sindhupalanchuka* (Sindhupalchowk), and *Dwaal Khya* (Dolakha). Can you

imagine? A language that once flourished in the courts of the Malla kings was suddenly criminal to speak in public.

For me this is a linguistic colonialism, a thoughtful policy of cultural destruction not just a linguistic change through natural evolution. For example, the changes in the place names which according to me changed not with evolution only as it is an act of erasing the cultural memory and disconnecting history to place. This fate has been experienced by the English itself in England. Other leading languages of Europe of that time like Latin and French dominated all areas of the country while their own English language was discouraged for using claiming being vulgar and unsuitable for elite population. However, it not only regained back its position later, but it became the language of hope, career opportunities, advancement and prestige. There are even “English-only” zones in private schools, for strictly compelling students to speak only English language or face penalties. This will definitely lead to the loss of language like the Jha Newars of Bhaktapur losing their historical language entirely yet now maintaining marital ties with Mathil Jha Brahmans. They are somewhat colonized, assimilated and hybridized.

Gazing at an old book written in Ranjana script, he said,

This script of *Ranjana* wasn't just writing. It was our identity, our connection to centuries of knowledge and culture. But the rulers wanted a one-language, one-script policy. They believed it would make governance easier, but for us, it meant watching our heritage slip away.

He recalled about his old days when his grandfather told him how people would secretly teach Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana script in private homes, in hidden corners of *baha:* and *vihars*. He added, ‘Those who were caught faced imprisonment. Campaigners like Master Jagat Sundar Malla kept teaching their family and children around even though others did not do due to fear from the state. It was a brave act.

With intense voice, Ratna stated,

Even Panchayat regime was similar to the Ranas. The '*ek bhasha, ek bhash*' policy ruined more. Khas Nepali was made compulsion in schools and offices. They stopped speaking Nepal Bhasa at home particularly when their children are around as they prevented them from learning so that they can succeed in life.

This is enough to understand linguistic diversity being threatened by the nationalist homogenization policies. Such policy reflects tricky yet common

assumption that national unity requires cultural and linguistic uniformity. Funny thing is such policies often achieve the opposite of unity. This gives birth to strong hatred and cultural trauma that can continue for generations. The Newars too seemed to be moving in that track.

“We internalized this oppression. Many started believing that our language and script were somehow inferior, outdated.”, he reflected as the saddest part. He elaborated, saying young people grew up disconnected from their linguistic heritage. Now, they are struggling to reconnect them with their roots which was the most upsetting thing for him. This linguistic suppression impacting the psychological state may be ignored but it may bring damages in a long term because it may not overcome even if the restrictions may end. He said,

We have not given up as we're seeing a revival movement. May young people like me are now learning Ranjana script again. They are learning the language not because they have to but because they want to reclaim what was taken from us. It gives me immense pleasure to see a young person write their first letter in Ranjana; I feel hope. It's like watching our culture reviving gradually at a time.

It was time to end the interview so I asked him for his final say.

He said that this isn't just about preserving a script or a language, it is standing against the cultural erasure. Small act of writing a word in Ranjana or just speaking a word in Nepal Bhasa contributes in reclaiming our identity. We lost much, but we're not defeated. Our story isn't over, it's being rewritten, quite literally, by new generations. But it has to go in a war like situation.

This powerfully frames language preservation as an act of resistance and cultural reclamation. The current revival movement, particularly among young people choosing to learn Ranjana script, suggests that cultural suppression, even when systematic and long-term, isn't necessarily permanent. It gives a message that the youths have realized what they have lost and are now in the movement to earn that.

The Obsession with Non-Newar Languages

I was meeting *Rajamati* for the third time. It was the same school-*Buddhanagar Adharvut Vidhyalaya*, her workplace, that we met at last time. Like before, she just ended her class. I went inside the class she was in. It was her classroom where she just ended her Nepal Bhasa teaching session. She said, "Let me share something that I feel different about," I have a two-side story bring a teacher in

my classroom and a mother at my home" She started looking onto the children's notebooks with Nepal Bhasa writing exercises before continuing. She said, "We often blame external forces for the loss of our language and script. But the truth that hurts more is how our own people gradually turned away from them. It started with our own obsession with English and Nepali medium education." She blamed more on herself rather than others for the loss of the language and script. One of the importance factors may be the economy. Learning Nepal Bhasa initially did not had any economic value. Learning the language and script was not beneficial at those time as there was no scope rather it only pulled them down, wasted their efforts and time. There was the belief that learning Nepal Bhasa spoiled learning Nepali for them which had economic value through prospects in employment. However, now it has seen the economic benefits. Those who learned Ranjana Lipi could use their skills in artistic innovations attracting modern businesses. Not only this, those who learned them opened door for their careers. Local governments now employ Language and Script teachers in public schools, hire them as trainers and translators in their administrations. She spoke in a soft voice,

It is sad to see how my parents who are well-educated prioritize English and Nepali. They believe mastering these languages will give their children better opportunities. They're not wrong about opportunities, but why does it have to be at the cost of our mother tongue?

Her statement gives rise to the practical versus cultural value tension. The Newar parents giving importance to Nepali and English for career scope creates false contradiction where Nepal Bhasa language preservation is seen as competing with, rather than complementing, educational advancement. It is similar to the global scenario where most of the indigenous languages of ten struggle against the truthful pull of dominant languages.

Rajamati shifted in her teacher's chair, her sociologist's perspective emerging, It's heartbreaking how our community developed this self-imposed hierarchy of languages. The Nepal Bhasa at the bottom of Nepali and English is sad. It's even worse to see how Newar parents being proud when their young ones recite English rhymes but show no worries and concern when these same children fail to speak a single sentence in Nepal Bhasa.

The internalized hierarchy of languages is particularly striking. It suggests a form of linguistic self-colonization, where communities have internalized external

value systems to the point of devaluing their own cultural assets. The image of parents proudly celebrating their children's English abilities while being indifferent to their inability to speak their mother tongue is especially telling.

With her voice growing more passionate, she continued mentioning about the reluctance of the parents getting deeper. She angrily said, 'Even when opportunities to learn are provided, many Newars hesitate. They question the practical value and ask what will my child do with Nepal Bhasa? It is better to focus on languages that will help in their career. This mindset, it's like we're willingly erasing our own identity.'

Drawing from her teaching experience, she added,

You know what's sarcastic? In my classes, I sometimes see more enthusiasm from non-Newar students interested in our script and language than from Newar children themselves. Our own people have developed this strange embarrassment about their mother tongue. They see it as unsophisticated, old-fashioned.

She thinks that is something Newars should not be proud of, but as a teacher, she admitted she was too happy for it. Indeed, Nepal Bhasa is not just the language of the Newars. It's also the national heritage, Nepal's asset. However, Nepal Bhasa is definitely the ancestral language of the people of Newar as it carries the historical, religious and cultural heritage. Calling Nepal Bhasa as the language of Newars may be for respecting its origin, its speakers and communities who still continued its preserved its continuation despite many challenges. Meanwhile, Nepal Bhasa is undeniably the cultural asset, the national cultural tapestry which enriches the diversity of the country. But, its not something like the English language. We do learn., protect and develop English language but we are not English nor we own claim its ours. We just do for our benefit, getting international access, diplomatic benefits and global education so it is just a tool for us not the cultural inheritance. Looking at the beautiful calligraphy on her classroom wall, she sighed, "As for Ranjana script, many view it merely as decorative art now."

This cultural elements like the Ranjana Lipi lost its vitality as it got limited to fancy eye pleasing designs. Her voice carried a note of hope as she says,

Yet I keep teaching the script and language. I kept teaching and trying to make them feel proud of their language and script. I keep telling my students that speaking Nepal Bhasa is not shame nor it makes you less intellectual. Some parents are beginning to understand this now. Whenever I get to meet such

parents, I convince them not to resist and demotivate people including their children while they speak Nepal Bhasa.

This seems the biggest challenge is not teaching the language or script. The difficult job is to make them realize of the significance of their mother tongue. They need to understand that they've left behind something precious which they own in the hope of something they may achieve with it. She was not completely hopeless. She acknowledges that some parents are now reflecting on it. Standing up to gather her teaching materials, she said,

Revival is not just possible with teaching languages. People need to own the teachings within. Diverse language learning needs to be considered as strength not weakness.

This becomes a testament for needing to confronting social and psychological challenges in order to understand the language preservation through the world. She even raised issues of communities overcoming the challenges in cultural preservation and doubts if those issues can really be solved. Those challenges are not just education rather they are strongly implanted into the minds of people altering their belief and values.

So, this is an alert for needing to go for the preservation of similar languages where challenges stand immensely. This is a lesson to learn that language preservation is expanded to influencing societal beliefs of the people so that they can reach to the state of owning identity which they have been losing.

Media and Technology Hegemony

For the second time I met *Chikacha* at this own home in Sainbu. Chikacha is the chairman of the Newaz club in Yala and also a ward member of Lalitpur Metropolitan City Ward No. 25.

I initially had a conversation with him relating to the topic. When I met him, he was occupied with his computer. So, I waited. As he approached me after he finished his work, he asked, 'You want to know about the situation of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana *lipi* and how I am learning?' I affirmed with a head nodding. *He* began, briefly looking up from his phone. He said, 'Let's look at this computer and the technology. They have two sides. One threatens the language while other supports its preservation. Setting his phone aside, he recalled his old days. He said,

Back in the day, when mass media first was introduced in Nepal, everything was in going well. Radio Nepal used to broadcast in Nepal Bhasa as well.

Later, TV shows, radio programs, and newspapers, they completely sidelined Nepal Bhasa. Our younger generation grew up in a media environment where their mother tongue was invisible.

He continued, pulling up some social media feeds. He said,

Look at entertainment. We cannot expect our children to give priority to Nepal Bhasa when all of their best song, videos or movies are not connected to Nepal Bhasa in any way. The media created a world where our language seemed irrelevant. Young minds naturally settle towards the languages they encounter in their most engaging experiences. When cartoons speak Nepali or English, when catchy songs come only in dominant languages, these become the languages of joy, entertainment, and connection for children. They no longer listen to Nepal Bhasa songs when they barely understand communication in *Nepal Bhasa*.

I could see his fingers scrolling through various social media platforms as he kept on explaining. He explained,

The early days of computers and mobile phones made it worse. There was no Unicode support for Ranjana script. No keyboard layouts, no digital fonts. Even writing a simple message in our script was technically impossible. Our language and script were effectively locked out of the digital revolution.

The technological development did not favor the Ranjana *lipi*. Lack of digital fonts to use in modern computers sent Ranjana *lipi* out of the race of the digital revolution that was essential for moving with the times.

"And you know what happens when a language isn't present in technology?" he asked abruptly, switching his finger up and down in his mobile screen. He added, younger ones generally perceive anything from the past as outdated. So, they are not interested. This makes them unable to use Ranjana Lipi nor speak Nepal Bhasa. This makes the language and script as artifact.

When Nepal Bhasa is not represented in the digital world, it not only lose an opportunity to be famous but it contributes in the narrative of the language losing its place in digital world. So. This creates a scenario where the young ones do not need to resent the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi themselves and go for other languages but the environment already becomes the place without Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. This scenario compels the young ones to believe the uselessness of their language before they could examine if they are actually useless or not.

But then his expression brightened. 'But here's where it gets interesting. The same technology that once excluded us is now becoming our ally. Look at this.,' he showed his social media profiles filled with Nepal Bhasa content. He said,

Various social media platforms are necessary to attract diverse audiences; Facebook is okay of adults but for the young ones, we need more that, like TikTok and Instagram. Each platform has its own community, its own way of engaging with our language and script.

It was time to wrap up our conversation for the day so I indicated him about the time. He then stood up to take some photos of recent Ranjana script artwork and said, "I'm thankful for these social media platforms. Without them, reaching young people would be so much harder. The key is to use technology on our terms, to make it serve our cultural goals rather than letting it erase them." His fingers moved swiftly over his phone screen as he gave his concluding remarks. He said,

You know what's beautiful? Seeing young people create TikTok videos about learning Ranjana script, sharing Instagram stories about Nepal Bhasa classes, and using Facebook groups to practice the language. The same technology that once threatened to silence us is now amplifying our voice. We just had to learn how to use it right.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discovers the narrative of the loss and efforts of revival of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

The loss of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi is attributed to various interconnected factors. The major distressing factor is the elders not promoting to speak at home as they instill the thought of such language and Lipi being useless as compared to Nepali and English. One of the patients, Ratna claiming the connection between generations been broken that broke the transmission of cultural knowledge. Rajamati, as a teacher, lamented that needing formal classes for their mother tongue is a big failure of the elders and community.

All these happened because of the past rulers, particularly the Rana regime and Panchayat era, who engaged in deliberate and systematic oppression. Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi were banned from schools and public places. People were punished for their use, books burned and teachers arrested. The policy like 'Ek bhasha, ek bhash' (one language, one dress) brought fear and shame among Newars and grew internal reluctance in language usage.

Yet, there is an awakening of memory, the recognition of identity, with young people actively reclaiming their identity by choosing to learn Ranjana script from elders. Importantly, the same technology which once helped the suppression in favor of dominant language is now becoming an ally for preservation of the same. Social media inventions are now promoting its significance among the people. Some are working to establish pride among the youths, fighting against that prejudice of inferiority.

CHAPTER V

NARRATIVE OF RESTORATION

This chapter shares the narratives of restoration in preservation and promotion of Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Lipi. The aim of this chapter is to draw attention on what was left behind when the language and script was losing and restoration began, what restoration of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi meant to the participants and how they came over the challenges they faced during this journey through the stories of the participants.

What if I was a Daughter Not a Daughter-in-law?

Rajamati was 36 years when I interviewed her for the second time. It was in January 2024. She is a mother of two living in a joint family bearing most of the family responsibilities at home. She lives in *Tapa: Hiti* in Lalitpur. Before marriage, she lived with her maternal uncle in *Nag Baha: Patan*. Rajamati had only an elder brother of her own. Her parents' whereabouts are unknown. Now, she is pursuing her Master of Arts in Sociology while she is also a Nepal Bhasa teacher at a public school called *Buddhanagar Adharvut Vidhyalaya*. I interviewed Rajamati twice while in another occasion I also had an informal conversation. However, she never preferred to be recorded while we were interviewing.

Rajamati claims she was interested in learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi from the early age of her life but never got chance to learn them because of her academic priorities. She recalls, her elder brother going to communal events where he comes back and shares proudly on the cultural events. She could not go to such events due to her young age. At those days, cultural events used to be the only fun filled outdoor events during festivals and usually happens during evenings and girls were not preferred going out alone. However, her maternal aunt sometimes allows her to go out with her friends after commitments of returning back soon and doing the household chores.

She gradually reached the age of marriage and eventually she got married. Since she never saw her parents, and being living with only her maternal parents, they got her married in a joint family where she could enjoy larger family bonding. The marriage was so unprepared that she barely remembers those days. It happened so quickly for her. Even she could not recall her exact age when she got married so she

had no time to agree or disagree on the marriage. Now, when someone talks about her marriage, she just happily accepts it as fate. She never blamed her maternal parents for her early marriage as she now understands the intentions of her maternal parents were not bad then. With marriage, her life moved on, gave birth to two children and got entangled with family responsibilities. However, she had a fair reminiscence of how her journey of learning and promoting Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi began. She said, “I was interested to learn Ranjana Script from the younger age but the learning interest got success only when there was a program organized by Nepa Lipi Guthi. I seized the chance of learning.”

Rajamati faced challenges related to her marital life and family responsibilities when she started learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. She initially had to make excuses, hide her training materials with a friend, and even hide the learning from her husband, unsure if he would support her. She said,

It was not a problem to go out and attend the event for once but it was impossible to learn in a day. I somehow made an excuse for some days and even hid it from my husband. I was unsure how my husband would take it. So, I used to leave my training materials with a friend at learning. I used to get home late in the evening after the classes and trainings. My family members didn't like that. For them, I did not fulfill the duties of a daughter-in-law; being a housewife and a caretaker to the family. Despite all these, I stayed late in till mid-nights to balance all that which was a must for me.”

Eventually, it was not long for her husband to find it out. When he found out, he was furious, not about the training but about her hiding it. She mentioned,

It was obvious my husband would be mad. If I was in his place, I would get hurt and go crazy. He did not talk to me for a week. It took some time but eventually convinced him that this will help him and the family more. He was swayed away with the benefits it would give everyone in the family and even glorified it. But to get consent from his parents, we both had to try harder.

That was the time when I started thinking what if I was their own daughter in this family instead of daughter-law. Maybe it would have been much easier to convey about taking language trainings of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

She pointed on how she being a daughter-in-law of a family struggled in convincing the need to learn Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. She quoted,

I knew success is no accident, it demands struggle, hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, risk, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do. I had them all with me. But, the major challenge was to convey to the family elders and that too I had to rely to my husband for it. I was brought up in a way where it is not wise for daughter in-law to confront their in-laws. At that moment, I felt would that be different if I was a daughter instead of daughter in-law as I would get some leverage to confront to my parents for getting their consent for learning.

She had to assure it could give opportunity for her to get job in schools or elsewhere and it would help her and the family more. Also, her husband had to try harder on her behalf. There was a gendered nature of cultural learning opportunities she faced as a daughter-in-law compared to potentially being a daughter. No doubt she had the gender roles and cultural expectations to fulfill.

Meanwhile, after learning to read and write in Ranjana script, her husband would show her writings to his parents and neighbors were optimistic of her going to trainings. With this, they eventually got overjoyed. Soon, she joined the Master's Degree in Sociology as well. For Rajamati, learning the language and script opened doors for her career. Her first earning came through teaching Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana script. She clarifies,

Since *Pariti Sikchya* is written in Ranjana Script, I was unable to study it when I was younger. However, after receiving this training, I was able to read Pariti Sikchya books with ease and any other Buddhist religious book when I visited Buddha Gumbas. Additionally, I could simply teach my students Ranjana Script. After observing my progress, my peers asked me to teach them Ranjana Script, so I fulfilled their desire by teaching them the language online but I wanted to take it slow, teaching them one by one. I want them to be proud of their language and script. As I could read and write in Ranjana Script and Nepal Bhasa, and because I could use my knowledge to contribute to society, I also felt that I now belonged to the Newar community.”

It was clear how language acquisition serves not just as a skill but it was a means for the cultural authentication and formation of the identity. Her ability to read Pariti Sikchya and other Buddhist religious texts transformed her from an observer to an ‘active participant in her cultural heritage’ making her feel she ‘now belong to the Newar Community’. Rajamati believes revival requires confronting internal biases

and reluctance. Her commitment is to instill pride in the language and script, telling students that knowing their mother tongue ‘makes them richer, not poorer. She is committed to this cause, working ‘one student, one parent, one family at a time,’ aiming to help people see their heritage as an asset. She also actively tackles the challenge of internalized reluctance and the self-imposed hierarchy of languages within the Newar community through her work as a Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi teacher in a public school. And now she has been instructing students in both Ranjana Script and Nepal Bhasa starting from 2078 B.S. at *Buddhanagar Aadarbhut Vidyalyaya*. She uses her position to change the mindset and instill pride. She persists in teaching and engaging with parents to make them realize what they've lost. Whenever possible she now attends various language and script training events and festivities on Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi and actively supporting and promoting the languages and scripts. She is now believed to be a familiar face among the Nepal Bhasa language enthusiasts.

From Childhood Curiosity to Cultural Guardian

As stated in the earlier chapter, Ratna grew up in the narrow, brick paved alley in the neighborhoods of Gabahal Patan. His language institute gets occupied most of the time. Whenever, I go to meet him, he is always occupied with his students or he would be busy with some artistic work. He is never found being sitting idle. I feel there's still significant interest in Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. It is of no doubt how much he is fascinated with the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. He claims he had learned Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi from the very young age. He said, “I was interested from childhood when I saw some senior brothers going for learning Nepal Bhasa language.” He seems to be inspired by his elder brothers but he claims he is a self-made man. He recalled,

There was an institution called *Nhu Pucha* (meaning New Group in Nepal Bhasa) which used to train youths about Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana. My brothers used to go there and learn. I was not allowed at that time due to my age but I wanted to learn. I felt like to retaliate but never did. Instead, I burrowed books from my brother and other elders who went to learn and self-practiced, with trial and error.

Sometimes the strongest connections to our heritage grow from moments of exclusion overcome by determination. Due to his age, he was denied of attending classes of script and language but the same denial led him to grow more curiosity and

dedication towards its learning. Ratna's interest in Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi gradually developed with the growing age. The image of a young boy, technically too young to join a language classes like *Nhu Pucha's* classes, borrowing books and teaching himself through trial and error, speaks to something fundamental about cultural preservation. This is a perfect example of a Proverb: *Hune Biruwa Ko Chillo Paat, Nahune Biruwa Ko Khasro Paat* (Any Plant Likely to have Good Growth in the Future will have Moist Leaves Whereas it may be Dry in the case of Non-growth Plant). His early age curiosity and dedication ensured his identity at present day.

However, being adult, he is still unsure why he was interested in learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi back then. He thinks he might just have followed his elder siblings learning the language and script. But, he is more convinced that he was attracted towards learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi due to the popularity of the Nepal Bhasa songs. He recalls,

Nepal Bhasa songs were popular back then and I enjoyed listening them. My brothers used to sing them often in the evenings with some of their friends. I used to try whatever they did from singing a song to learning musical instruments and following them wherever they go. Once I was asked to sing a song in the classroom. I assumed I sang well but it did not go well as per my classmates. Even class teacher asked to sing my own native Nepal Bhasa song instead but many did not understand. My classmates asked me to sing the song again and again. I thought they wanted to listen to but actually they were mocking at my accent. That might also have pulled me into the language and lipi learning. I exactly did not know then why I was learning until I finished school. Then only I knew this is about our culture, our identity, our language. Later, I had joined a training of three months where I started using the Ranjana in writing names in books and copies, shared with his friends, wrote and read for them. I also did art and paintings for free at some locations to depict the cultural significance.

Meanwhile, the interest grew for me and started writing professionally for Sandhya Times, a newspaper used with Nepali and Nepal Bhasa Language back then. Later, people just contact me to design and paint in Lipi for their business stuffs, sometimes the names of hotels and restaurants, book and magazine covers and many more. But I never thought of getting monetary

benefits out of it. I just agreed to do because someone I know comes to ask to do it for them.

Ratna's expression of uncertainty regarding his initial motivation being pulled in by the melodious Nepal Bhasa songs or just haphazardly following his elder brother's path displays an important truth about cultural transmission. Cultural connections and transmissions can be built through multiple ways. There is no dedicated path for cultural connections and transmission rather are mixture of influences from family socialization across communities. Ratna does get a lot of freelance job on designing and painting with Ranjana Script for business purposes as well. Ratna's current work, combining traditional language instruction with commercial applications of Ranjana Script, demonstrates how cultural practices can adapt without losing their essence. He was able to indigenize the cultural learning and that is obviously the smartest move in the cultural preservation. That's how he has been contributing in restoration of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

There was a transition from passion to profession. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Ratna's journey is how naturally his childhood interest evolved into a professional calling where he went beyond just having a job or career but it aligned with his core values and beliefs, leading to a sense of purpose and satisfaction. The progression from writing names in books for friends to becoming a trainer at age 18 wasn't pre-planned; never saw that coming in his life. Now today, his language center is jam-packed with national and international students performing number of activities.

But, one thing makes him sad that only one (he himself) out of his sixteen batchmates was able to successfully complete the course of learning Nepal Bhasa language and the script during school days. He said,

I was the only one who continued using the language and script learning even after the completion of the training. There were sixteen of us when we started learning. But, slowly some of them discontinued after a month. The number reduced even more at the end of the trainings. I even did get the chance to talk to them why they left. I always wonder why they left, whether they lost interest or situations did not favor them.

Ratna seemed to have lived his life successfully being able to utilize his learning into building his career. Yet, the sad part is the fact that he is the only one of his sixteen batch mates to have finished his language studies. A clear reminder of how

easily cultural knowledge may disappear, even within a single generation, is provided by this 1 in 16 ratio. He continues to wonder if his batch mates themselves lost interest in education or if their families did not provide for them or something happened with them. His unanswered inquiries regarding whether his peers were uninterested or unsupported by their families highlight the complex network of reasons that could probably affect cultural preservation. This serves as a reminder that interest is insufficient on its own. The difficulty is in establishing settings that allow cultural learning to start and continue for generations.

There's something deeply felt and satisfying about how the most important cultural work sometimes begins with the simplest of childhood curiosities. Ratna being raised in a small courtyard of Gabahal, Patan, proved that even a small act of inspiration turns into lifelong commitment for language preservation. He reminded us about the cultural preservation being an act of creating a lively cultural practice which can be adapted and succeed in growing world not just taking along the traditions. This story full of curiosity of a young boy converting into a lifelong mission to preserve languages provides us a lesson that an individual is enough to bring change even in a challenging situation. It is his bravery that he stood out alone at the end among his sixteen batch mates of learning class.

Whatever be the exact reason of learning during his early age, either following the tracks of his elders or he was attracted and influenced by the Nepal Bhasa music, the outcome is that he kept on learning, he was consistent. Only when he completed his school, he realized the need of learning the language and script. Back then too he had never imagined making money out of it. Within short time after his school years, he started working as a trainer for the Ranjana and Language from the early age of 18 that gave his earning. Then kept on continuing it to make it as a full-time job. Now, he is an artist and a trainer of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Script. He believes preserving historical cultural elements like language and scripts is not similar to preserving historical artifacts whereby they need to be stored in a safe space untouched by human. Preserving language and script needs more human touch but people should make sure to use them relevantly with time. Somehow, he was able to do the same. He kept contributing to cultural preservation by mentoring national and international students as well. His students include national and international students having interest to learn the language and script not limiting to Newar diaspora. He thinks his

efforts for cultural preservations can actually support to cultural expansion, creating new appreciation and understanding

Media and Technology for Language Preservation

Chikacha is a social media freak. He occupies himself in social media whenever he gets spare time from his work. When I met him for the second time, he was busy with his mobile at his residence. So, I waited for some time. Upon finishing, he apologized for being occupied with a mobile phone to which I accepted with a smile. Later, he hurried to state that he needed to post some pictures in the Instagram which made me believe that he is an active use of social media. He was using so fondly. I just waited for him while he was busy with his mobile phone. Meanwhile, he added in hurry before I gave any comments on his actions. He said,

I did not post some random pictures; instead, I posted some pictures and video clips of the events on Ranjana Lipi that was conducted a week ago. It is like a reporting as well as a promotion for the next event. The big job here is to prepare the captions and subtitles for the pictures and videos. Those captions and subtitles are prepared in Nepali language so that non-Newar users can also understand. Sometimes, they need to be done in English language as well.

This helps to attract non-Newar learners especially the foreigners.

He seemed concern about how I perceive him about his engagement with the mobile. He also mentioned that he had already posted clips in TikTok and Facebook but missed in Instagram. He actively uses various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to create and share Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi contents. However, he does need to modify the contents to suit the diverse audiences from young to old and from native speakers to the very unknown foreigners. It is evident that many non-Newar speaking population are now somehow familiar to Newar language and Ranjana. Thanks to all smart moves like these. Many music videos and movies now use subtitles to attract the diverse audiences and it is helping to expand the audience flow. I asked him, "Isn't Facebook enough?" He instantly replied and said,

All the social media platforms have a diverse audience. Regular Facebook users are mostly adults and Middle Ages these days. For younger ones, Instagram and TikTok are a must. With the use of these social media, I bring in the participation from the youths in learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. They are the necessity in this digital age if we want to survive among the

youths. I had collected the best pictures and videos from the language and script events and post them online through various social media platforms. They are accessed by many people mostly younger ones. Every like, share, and comment are helping to preserve our heritage for future generations as these activities somehow increases the visibility of the efforts on the preservation of Ranjana Lipi and Nepal Bhasa. Also, with this I get participants for the next language and script events. Most of my new participants come because they saw video clips or postures of the events and it ignited their interests.

Chakacha's work has been phenomenal. In this challenging digital age, he kept the cultural preservation go hand in hand with digital innovation. His initiatives improved engagements on Ranjana Lipi and Nepal Bhasa even though it is digitally. People clicked, shared, and even used hashtags for it. This means, almost lost language and Lipi are into the verge of reviving in this digital world. The language reached audiences that traditional preservation methods never could. That was not just casual social media use; he was skilled enough to strategically utilized social media for cultural transmission. Earlier I had asked him, whether globalization and modernization created challenges in the language preservation for which he partly agrees on. He said,

Globalization and modernization may bring in challenges in language learning. As technology do not emphasize minority language educators struggle to teach learners with ease. Social media is the product of that technology which later became the allies rather than creating challenges in language learning.

His approach of using social media to attract young people to language and script training offers hope that traditional cultures can not only survive but thrive in the digital age. These visual documentations can serve multiple purposes. They include creating an archive of cultural activities, promoting upcoming events, making traditional practices feel relevant and accessible, and building a sense of community around language learning. He highlights the importance of Unicode support for Ranjana script as a big factor enabling digital content creation. He said, 'Unicode support for our script was a game-changer. Now we can type in Ranjana, create digital content, and share our language online. Google Translate has started supporting Nepal Bhasa which is an advantage for us.'

By collecting and sharing photos and videos of language events, he uses technology to market cultural heritage. For all of his work, he is grateful towards the social media. He mentioned,

I feel thankful that someone made this social media platform. With it, I found new approach to contribute in the language preservation. Without this, it may not have been possible to attract the young ones in this language trainings. The technological development in the form of Unicode and Google translate has also increased popularity among the youths. Moreover, these days I even hear of AI which can create imaginary pictures of Newar people and culture which could attract more people into learning the language and script. I am confident, this social media and technological advancement is a big factor for Nepal Bhasa and Lipi intact with the people at present day.

His content creation kept changing forms as he explored emerging platforms. On Instagram, he shared info graphics about Nepal Bhasa grammar and beautiful Ranjana Lipi calligraphy while his posts about digital language preservation are on his LinkedIn account and attracts attention from linguists, researchers and international organizations interested in minority language preservation. He sees technology as an instrument of revival, embracing modern changes rather than resisting them, making the language accessible and bridging generational gaps. His approach is to use technology on their terms, ensuring it serves cultural goals.

Upon listening to him, I was curious so I asked him how he got these ideas of using social media for attracting youths in language and lipi learning. He responded,

I started using social media for few professional usages at the beginning. I was reluctant at the beginning to use for the language and Lipi learning as I was unsure if that would help. Also, the platform was not easy for using languages other than English so I assumed modern technology was not favoring the indigenous languages like Nepal Bhasa. Yet, I started posting few pictures of the language and Lipi training. Gradually, more people started viewing the posts and comments were flowing in the pictures with appreciations and more questions. Then, I started using the same platform often for reaching to young people sharing the works on Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. And that too got good response from the people and it continued.

His work challenges the ordinary narrative of considering the technology and modernity being a threat to indigenous languages. The future of indigenous languages

like Nepal Bhasa lie not in resisting technological change rather in actively embracing the contemporary changes. It is high time that such an idea must be erased instead incorporate the modern inventions and technological advancements for its preservations. His achievements in using the various platforms of social media to attract young people to joining the language and lipi training provides a hope that such indigenous language, scripts and even culture can not only preserve but also thrive in this digital age. He has understood that such technological usage increased the accessibility and promoted the work of preservation while bridging the generational gaps in cultural transmission and provided practical tools of language and script learning. He is strategically aware of diverse audience demographics so he actively utilized the modern technologies which are visually oriented, professional in its approach and more focused to youths, the most active population. This could be exactly what the 21st century demands for the language and script preservations to become sustainable.

The Script that Saved Us

As promised in the earlier meet with Taremam, I had arranged a space in a local park near by Lalitpur Metropolitan Office in Pulchowk to listen to his remaining stories. To remind, Taremam is a development worker focused on education sector. He was born in Patan but now lived in Sainbu, Bhaisipati. More than just a development worker, he is known more for his role in the Newar diaspora for his contribution in Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi preservation.

Since we already had a phone conversation on the issue of interview, he did not want to waste time and started sharing his opinions on Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. He began with the happiness he gets while practicing the script, something he can keep doing for joy not as a duty or obligation. He said, “Ranjana lipi was something that fascinated me. I could spend hours practicing it. It was like an art painting. His comparison of script practice to art painting suggests that cultural preservation doesn't have to be a burden, it can be a fulfilling creative pursuit. This positive approach to cultural preservation might be more effective than obligation-based methods.

I was eager to understand how that attraction grew up to him and turned into something he can cherish. He tried to recall his young days which he was barely able to. He said,

When I was in school days, may be year 7 or 8 during a Dashain and Tihar festival, I went to Banglamukhi Temple with my grandfather. On the way, I saw many people trying to hang lots of papers stitched in a rope, onto houses and trees. There was something painted on those colorful papers. So, I asked him about them. My grandfather promptly said, they are the alphabets in Nepal Bhasa language but they sound similar to the alphabets in Devnagari script that I learn in school. I replied back then saying my teacher never taught about them. Laughingly he said, they are the letters that I do not get to study in school. They are the pride of our community but many young people do not prefer to study them. I had another question so I asked, if that is the pride of our community then why I do not get to learn in school. He convinced me that I will get to learn them while I grow older. From that day forward, I always had a question to my grandfather whenever he gets time. While my cousins played with marbles and flew kites in the narrow gullies, I would sit for hours in his lap, listening to old historical stories and asking questions. My mother used to scold that my grandfather's legs would get tired and hurt while he seemed joyful and pride sharing them.

But beneath that pride lay a shadow of concern. With growing time, the speakers of Nepal Bhasa is reducing. Some only speak during festival greetings and occasional conversations among the elderly. As the situation was getting worse, Taremam was not happy so he decided to involve in preserving and reviving both the Ranjana script and Nepal Bhasa. He began by studying under aging gurus who still remembered the traditional methods of writing the script, learning not just the forms of the letters but their spiritual significance as well. He went to attend the trainings organized by Nepal Lipi Guthi.

While he got more involved with preserving the language, not all liked about his decision. Despite being proud of the Newa culture, his parents got worried about his future. His mother would ask for him getting job and earn. His father too suggested to sideline the learning interest into just a hobby and get a proper paying job.

Taremam couldn't deny that. Every day, he felt that pressure from his parents. So, he followed his father's suggestions. He did find a conventional career in an NGO but also kept his interest alive. He taught young people the art of writing in Ranjana. He would often say, "Each letter we write is a bridge to our ancestors, each word a

testament to our cultural heritage." His students learned not only the script but also the rich history and literature of Nepal Bhasa. His dedication caught the attention of cultural organizations like Nepal Lipi Guthi, Newa Dey Daboo (National Forum for Newar Organizations), Callijatra (youth organization working on Ranjana lipi led by Deputy Mayor, Sunita Dangol). With collective efforts they digitize ancient texts, improved teaching materials, and found ways to professionalize Ranjana script. Taremam worked with technology experts like Chikacha and other lipi experts like Ananda K. Maharjan among others to develop digital fonts that would make the script accessible to a new generation while preserving its classical beauty. Word spread slowly at first, then faster. A local grandmother brought him a bundle of old letters she couldn't read. A restaurant owner wanted to add traditional script to his signboard. A young couple asked him to write their wedding invitations in Ranjana. The revival movement grew stronger with each passing year. Taremam saw with joy as more people began to appreciate the cultural significance of Ranjana script. Gradually, local entrepreneurs approached him for designing their signboards.

However, working with technology experts proved challenging at first. Taremam, more comfortable with ink and papers than computers, struggled to explain the subtle nuances of each character. However, his hard work paid off much later with the invention of digital fonts.

When I asked about how the language and lipi can be protected. Taremam says,

The revitalization process is not possible single-handedly. Everyone's role is important and everyone's role is different. Even though the intention is alike, the approach should be different.

His words prioritizing unity is what is needed now. He thinks that the language and lipi must attract people first, people should take ownership in the language and lipi. He shared how the Ranjana lipi fascinated him, the language or lipi must do similar to others so that they are into the preservation of them. Many youths are into this language and lipi learning just because they are artistic and draws their attention. However, he thinks it may not be possible for all so, some efforts can be made. One of the efforts can be connecting people with identity. He believes one belonging to a Newar community, he/she must be able to speak and understand Nepal Bhasa and read and write Ranjana Lipi or at least one other scripts (Prachalit Lipi or Bhujimol). That is the minimum criteria to become a Newa: The real narrative of Newa: is still to achieve for many youths. Youths should be able to erase the image of

“Naam ko Matra Newar” and “Half-Newar”. This idea can be promoted in the Newar community which may push the entire community into the language and lipi.

In my opinion, for the successful language (spoken and written both) preservation, I believe require a mixture of knowledge on cultural authenticity and significance of incorporating the modern technologies. This reminds us that maintaining practices do not suffice cultural preservation. It needs to be kept relevant with changing digital age suitable for generations to come. All these efforts should not be limited to individuals and community efforts. Such efforts should have been strongly backed by the local government and language commission. Local government are the closest authority for the community so they should take that responsibility to protect the local languages as well. For this they could promote education in Nepal Bhasa at least for the primary level education. Funding for celebrating festivals or publishing in languages like Ranjana Lipi could also promote the culture and language. Another way could be officially using the authentic old names of places depicting their historical connection and also create their own archives—that could be the local history and festivities including the oral ones, partnering with linguist or historians could be beneficial.

Similarly, language commission could suggest for multilingual governance, promote language studies and research works while also monitoring and evaluating the exercising of language policies.

Meanwhile, Taremam added, "Many give credit to me for being one of the saviors of the script. I keep on saying. I didn't save the script; the script saved us. Script is the one which tells us about who we are and where we come from. It preserved our identity, our existence".

Inspired from his life story, culture preservation is definitely not just keeping the past alive but it should also give a new life to the present and some hope for the future.

Chapter Summary

This chapter brings together the personal journeys of my participants involved in the preservation and promotion of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Their stories highlighted what they lose and how they are working to get back what they have lost.

One of the participants, Rajamati's story made us emotional with her stories of grief. It explored hurdles faced by a daughter-in-law in a joint family in pursuing cultural learning. She even went on to not trusting her life partner and had to hide her

training materials and learning, fearing disapproval. Yet, she got success in convincing with the potential career benefits that she somehow proved herself becoming a Nepal Bhasa teacher. Achieving or learning the language is a medium of cultural authentication and building a personal identity for herself which transformed her into an active individual in her cultural diaspora. She is committed to instilling pride in students, helping them see their heritage as an asset and challenging the "self-imposed inferiority" within the Newar community.

Another participant had a different narrative. He grew up with curiosity as he observed his big brothers. He started self-learning from young age. His interest led hard work of service became a profession. He trains national and international language enthusiasts. But he is always saddened by the fact that only one out of sixteen of his batchmates completed their language studies, which was an example of failure in language preservation.

Similarly, Chikacha expresses the significant role of media and technology in restoration not just the loss. He smartly created contents in Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi for Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok posts just to target younger audiences particularly Newars. He claims social media is misunderstood and it is not just about trends and memes. It's a powerful tool for keeping our language and script alive in the digital age". The invention of Unicode support for Ranjana script and Google Translate for Nepal Bhasa has been blessing for its promotion.

Taremam's fascination with Ranjana Lipi as an "art painting" fueled his dedication to its preservation. Despite parental concerns about a conventional career, he pursued cultural preservation by teaching young people and collaborating with organizations and technology experts to digitize ancient texts and develop digital fonts. He profoundly believes, "I didn't save the script; the script saved us," emphasizing that preserving these ancient letters helped the community preserve its identity, stories, and soul.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This chapter interprets the narratives of loss and restoration of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi that emerged during this study. I have tried to foster understanding of the complex interplay of socio-linguistic suppression to hegemony and identity formation through restoration of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

Cultural Hegemony Leading to the Loss of Language and Script

The stories of Newar youths indicate the diverse form of hegemony accountable for the decline of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. The narratives of Ratna, Rajamati, Taremam, and Chikacha sadly illustrate the multifaceted nature of the loss of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. The major culprit for the loss of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi appear to be the state mechanism endorsed during the past. I believe, the Language Policy and the National Standardization through Education system, Media Regulation and Cultural Policing have largely contributed to the Hegemonizing Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

However, the choices of actors involved in the learning process matters the most. Families in the Newar community are strongly connected to their history so they may wish their children to continue the learning of Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Lipi as they being the linguistic history. Yet, many of the families are inclined in teaching their children in other languages for their career prospects. They may see learning their own language and script as the distraction or burden on the way to their success. So, the parents may hesitate in teaching their children.

For the children, Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi may be the subject of curiosity and for some it's a pride. They see the language and Lipi via festivals and other communal activities which helps them to develop the interest. But, their interest towards the language and Lipi learning may be overshadowed by the societal pressures they face. Learning the languages may put them into uncomfortable situations discouraging their learning.

Likewise, for the schools, the schools may support for the Nepal Bhasa education due to the local government policies or language commission pressure. But most of the schools subtly discourage its learning.

State Mechanisms for Loss

Official imposition of Khas (Nepali) as the sole language of government, education, and media under the Rana Regime (1846–1951) and Panchayat System (1960–1990) had systematically excluded Nepal Bhasa and other minority languages from formal domains (Onta, 1996). Stories of Tareman and Ratna were evidence of suppression during the Rana and Panchayat regimes which reflects the principles of linguistic hegemony. The loss of not natural but inclined to Gramsci's notion of Hegemony (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975). The stronger Nepali language overruled the identity of weaker Newar identity.

Hegemonizing Education System

Policies such as '*Ek Bhasha, Ek Bhesh*' enforced to establish Nepali as the sole national language and script. It sidelined Nepal Bhasa and its associated identity. The prohibition of Nepal Bhasa use in classrooms with punitive or corrective attitudes towards students speaking Nepal Bhasa in schools led the language shifts with children (Hangen, 2010). The state used the Education System as an Ideological State Apparatus then. Education became a key site for promoting a homogenized Nepali identity. Erasure of indigenous histories, public signage, scripts (like Ranjana Lipi), and oral traditions from textbooks disconnected children from their script (Ranjana Lipi) as functional literacy (Althusser, 1971). So, there has been a mixed issue. There exist a melting pot, bilingualism and multilingualism. A melting pot as Nepal Bhasa being a minority identity is erased with assimilation into Nepali only norms and culture. Bilingualism and Multilingualism as there are chances that youths may be fluent in Nepal Bhasa and Nepali as well but it not always benefits them. Also, there are issues of language immersion, submersion and coexistence. In language submersion, the Nepal Bhasa as a minority language, its learners are taught Nepali language as the dominant language leading to its language loss and fragmented identity. In language immersion, the Nepal Bhasa becomes to medium of usage supporting its preservation. Similarly, there could be language coexistence where many languages exist together without dominance of one another. This is the ideal state for the mutual respect among various communities promoting the shared linguistic identity.

Media Regulation and Cultural Policing

During the Panchayat regime, Nepal Bhasa publications, theater, and activism were regularly censored; script revival initiatives required surveillance and approval.

There was a central control over state-run radio/TV content; low airtime for Nepal Bhasa programming; denial of broadcast licenses to indigenous initiatives, intellectuals persecuted or silenced (Lewis, 2009). This led to the self-censorship among cultural leaders; shrinking auditory presence of Nepal Bhasa; declining cultural visibility (Onta, 2001). This has led to declining of usage of the language among the native speakers.

Various studies (Maharjan, 2018; Vajracharya, 2014) discuss, they took us to history where Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi being intentionally sidelined to extinct just to favor the Nepali language. As Ratna mentioned in his narrative on renaming of Newar places reflects a strong form of cultural hegemony that aimed to destroy the historical and cultural connections to place. Gellner (2008) also claims the renaming of Gorkhali to "Nepali," was for supporting the state policy.

Shifting in Language Education

There was a blockage in language transmission among generations. This was due to the systematic suppression but more it was the reluctance from the community itself which was the result of it. The continuation of language is key for survival but it shifted away. Forrest (2017) claims Parents are likely to increase chances of learning the languages for their child if they speak at home.

Economic Disincentives and Internalized Hegemony

Rajamati's narrative sheds light on the very internalized reluctance within the Newar community to embrace their mother tongue, a significant consequence of prolonged linguistic hegemony. The entire Newar community and other urban communities have been discouraged from using Nepal Bhasa in favor of Nepali/English for economic mobility and state employment for long time. The questions were raised regarding the relevance of the language and script even when their scope was growing. Native people just can't trust its usage. As Gramsci (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975) said, ruling group's worldview subtly becomes common sense.

This resulted native people to feel shame and backward on their mother tongue (Gellner & Letizia, 2017). Rajamati also expressed the similar embarrassment. Parents had intentionally stopped teaching own language to access jobs (Nisthani, 2020). This is similar to Wiley's (2000) argument that linguistic hegemony occurs when dominant groups successfully persuading others to accept their language for good.

Technological Usage

The mainstream media have always prioritized Nepali and indirectly convinced to its acceptance by all. This led to a guided invisibility of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi, supporting Gramsci's notion that hegemony (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975) thrives through the normalization of selective visibility. As Phillipson (1992) mentioned, when the global communication technologies were invented, they too supported the already established dominant languages, making other languages more invisible. These invisible languages gradually become vulnerable to become Endangered as they lack technological resources for their usage (Rangel, 2019).

One of the participant's narratives brings the discussion of the role of mass media and technology in making Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi endangered. Nepali and English language dominated other languages in television, radio, and early digital platforms. This established a scenario where Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi appeared irrelevant to all generations at that time. The initial lack of technological support like Unicode (later developed in 2016) and other fonts for Ranjana script effectively excluded it from the digital revolution, contributing to its perception as 'outdated'. This exclusion clearly demonstrates the structural marginalization. Now the Ranjana Lipi Font has been encoded in Unicode, yet its usage is limited. Such absences cultivated generational detachment, leaving young Newars with minimal exposure to their linguistic and scriptural heritage through mainstream media. This technological exclusion reinforced the linguistic hegemony by limiting the avenues for the language and script to thrive in the modern society.

Overall, the decline seems to be the results of historical state-level suppression building an internalized reluctance within the Newar community to give continuity to their mother tongue in their everyday life. This erosion was made worse by the initial predominance of Nepali and then English in the media sector as well as the absence of digital assistance in the market.

While digging deeper into the narratives of the youths and the literatures available, the "two-tier" linguistic hegemonic exercise came into light as the major culprit for this decline. The British language that held superior power and influence acted as the first one while the Nepali language became the second tier which either accepted or were compelled to accept the dominance of the first tier and transferred the same to other languages. When British ruled India, the British English dominated

the Nepali language or was compelled to accept the dominance during Rana Regime and then the same followed when Nepali language exerted the same dominance over the other languages including Nepal Bhasa during the Rana Regime and the Panchayat Era. Here, the Linguistic Imperialism theory by Robert Phillipson (Phillipson, 1992) counterparts this explanation by showing how certain dominating languages overpower minority ethnic language like Nepal Bhasa through national and international communication system.

The internalized reluctance within the Newar community appears to be the result of shame wave induced from humiliation that the elders faced during the early period of suppression. This weakened the position of Nepal Bhasa in the market leading ultimately to reach endangered status.

Restoration

The restoration of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi need a holistic approach that takes along the individual, state and community-driven initiatives. State mechanisms must be made effective ensuring the survival of these languages and scripts, which are central to Nepal's cultural heritage. The young ones have been pulled into the language use, preservation and promotion with the creative community led rejuvenating efforts like workshops and festivals. Pun & Gurung, (2020) claims that such initiatives are vital in the context where Nepal Bhasa speakers being reduced from 75% to 44% in the Kathmandu valley over several decades.

Ethnic Realization of Newar youths to Shared linguistic Identity

The Newar youths had their distorted Newa identity as they were disconnected from their mother tongue and Lipi. All this, probably due to not realizing the significance of their ethnicity. Ethnic realization is likely to assist in the preservation of their ethnic languages and developing their fragmented ethnic identity i.e. Newar identity for the Newar youths. This identity is important for their linguistic heritage. Based on Phinney's Ethnic Identity Model (Phinney, 1993), participants' narratives showed the growing status of the identity of Newar youths which were once lost or incomplete leading all way to getting a complete identity.

After the 1990 democratic transition and 10-year civil war, gradually people went to Ethnic realization in Nepal. Those ethnic and marginalized groups who were suppressed like Newar started to question the dominant narrative. Ethnic realization disrupts dominant cultural patterns. The mobilization was not just cultural but political, challenging Nepal's monolingual state ideology. Post-1990 Democratic

Transition in Nepal opened space for marginalized ethnic groups to mobilize and demand recognition, leading to constitutional provisions for mother tongue education. Youth who explore and commit to their ethnic identity often catalyze institutional recognition. There have been some efforts of improving the state mechanism for the preservation of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. The government has made some legal commitments to protect endangered languages, but implementation remains weak due to resource constraints and lack of authority commitment (Adhikari, 2022). At present, ethnic identity for the Newar youths might not suffice. It should go as shared linguistic identity. Any language needs to be reframed as collective heritage. Youths who just reclaimed their ethnic identity might go beyond their own community as educators or trainers. At that time, they just can stay put when other non-Newars come to learn the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. The same language and script become the cultural bridges between the communities. There will be occasions for co-learning among mixed learners, so it's not just Newa: Identity, it becomes the shared linguistic identity of the nation. Here, Identity development theory of Phinney (Phinney, 1993) presents how identity construction is key to cultural survival and when the youths come forward for their culture and heritage, they ultimately become the agents of their continuation.

Cultural Policies

After the 1990 political changes in the country favoring the public sentiments through democratic practices, there rose some hopes with corrections of some of the hegemonizing decisions of the state. Most appreciated one is the state acknowledging the sentiments of Newar community and correcting the term representing their language as 'Nepal Bhasa' replacing 'Newari'. Participant Ratna advocated against the state changing names of neighborhoods and rituals. The name of Maitighar replaced its old name *Phi Bwo Khya* (grassland with sand silica); Tudikhel replaced *Ti:Ni: Khya*, Sinamangal replaced *Sila Muga* (stone pillar), Lalitpur replaced *Yala: Bhonta* (Banepa), *Palati* (Panauti), *Dhau Kya* (Dhulikhel), *Balami* (Chitlang), *Sindhupalanchuka* (Sindhupalchowk), *Dwaal Khya* (Dolakha) and Kipoo (Kirtipur). All these names are gradually coming to at least co-exist alongside others. Every name has its meaning and significance. Thus, we are obliged to be conscious of proper terms and use them suitably like Nepal Bhasa, Ranjana Lipi and Nepal Sambat for our language, script and era respectively. It does not matter if we belong to the community or not.

The enactment of Mother Tongue education by the state was a praiseworthy initiation, despite having faced with criticisms and challenges. Also, official recognition of Nepal Bhasa as a national language can improve its status and encourage its use in public spaces like mass media and local administrations (Dhakal, 2021).

Allocation and distribution of budget and other resources for cultural festivals and language promotion initiatives can stimulate interest and participation in Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi (DRCN, 2019). While the policy, Mother-Tongue Based Multi-lingual Education 2007 claims to support multilingual education, it ultimately reinforces the hegemony of dominant languages, which could hinder efforts for the restoration and promotion of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi in educational contexts (Dhakal, 2021; Malone, 2007). So, there is the need of some visible transformation.

Educational Policies

Nepal seemed to be having an ethnic harmony for years. Lawoti (2012) claims there was discrimination in many sectors including politics and cultural representations. Ethnic realization emerged as a form of disagreement; rejecting this imposed singularity and reigniting pride in marginalized languages like Nepal Bhasa. Similarly, Lawoti (2012) adds, this compels state to restructure of its mechanism. Slowly, Nepal is moving towards mother tongue-based multilingualism.

The local curriculum has been revised to include Nepal Bhasa as subject to learn. This is highlighted in the narratives of Rajamati which is an example of language moving towards formal education. This might take long time but it has started intergenerational transmission. The same act promotes language proficiency and improves sense of identity. Shrestha (2024) also opines for the same calling for language preservation via education, this changes in preservation efforts not only preserve the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi but it contributes in promoting heritage and building Newar identity.

Some Schools (like Newa English Boarding School in Kirtipur) has implemented a multi-language learning, integrating Nepal Bhasa, Nepali, and English in the curriculum. This approach has been able to provide favourable environment for the students while also protecting the diversity of the languages (Bhattarai, 2018). There were some reforms triggered by ethnic mobilization after the ethnic realization. The Mother Tongue Education Policy (2007) included Nepal Bhasa as elective language; there was curriculum diversification with cultural festivals and oral

histories included in the text books while local bodies started using Ranjana Lipi in signage and publications. These shifts indicate that state mechanisms evolved not from top-down benevolence, but bottom-up cultural negotiation.

In overall, ethnic realization redefined the educational landscape; not through sudden policy reform, but via slow and persistent cultural negotiation. By asserting the value of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi, Newar communities helped push the state toward pluralism and participatory governance.

Individual/Community Initiatives for Intergenerational Transmission

All the participants of this study had mentioned that the recent decades have seen the growing community engagement in the form of grassroots movements led by brave individuals and community workshops on Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Bishwakarma and Bishwakarma (2023) mentions such events will aware and encourage the use of ethnic languages in daily life supporting their relevance. I too in the same line as events organized by Callijatra acted as counter-hegemonic initiatives, one of the participants has also highlighted the significance of Lipi workshops, online classes like the Callijatra group does in various cultural and communal places and through YouTube. They were started with an objective to reach majority of the community people in raising awareness about the importance of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. They mostly attract local leaders and educators as they are more influential to create a supportive atmosphere for language use

Youth-led initiatives introduced creative reinterpretations; tattoos in Ranjana Lipi, animated tutorials on YouTube, and gamified mobile apps; turning cultural restoration into aesthetic activism; acts that may appear small but serve as powerful counter-hegemonic gestures. These efforts created emotional resonance and reshaped how identity is “felt.” Phinney’s model (Phinney, 1993) provides a framework to interpret these acts: many participants altered between stages of ethnic identity exploration and achievement, forging new meanings of “being Newar” in modern Nepal. I think, these expressions have become rehabilitative not just emotional. Challenging the deep established believe of inferiority of Nepal Bhasa among Newars and accepting Nepal Bhasa with whole heart need a demanding effort to develop pride in the language and script. Then only, it can demonstrate their present and future relevance and significance. As shared in the stories of Taremam and Rajamati the growing significance of community led initiatives like Nepal Lipi Guthi and youth-led initiatives such as Callijatra, establish collective resistance and the formation of a

force to challenge the hegemony. This resistance must have gradually converted to retaliation. The same retaliation is now becoming the means to restoration. They now created the opportunities for Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi learning and promoting. This has challenged the old linguistic norms of the hegemonic languages. Here, as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power suggest marginalized groups reclaims their cultural capital through creative expression, this clearly resonates with the Newar youth's emerging initiatives of Lipi Guff, Callijatra workshops, creation of digital fonts and google translation, and some artistic activism.

Media and Technology

The mainstream media has initially discouraged in using the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Also, the absence of digital support also demotivating the users, some inventions and strategic use of those inventions like social media now gives ample opportunities for fighting against hegemony. This has made easier in reaching younger and older audiences in relevant ways. Technologies has created platforms for culture and identity reclamation. A study in Russia found, digital mediums of preservation practices are essential due to the erosion of traditional language transmission methods (Khilkhanova & Dugarova, 2022). So, the presence of digital media is even more significant now.

The stories of Newar Youths in this study displayed a multi-layered challenge faced by Newars. I firmly believe that the hard work in this journey needs more than just tackling the homogenizing forces but also need skills of persuading, motivating the internal forces while strategically using available resources like social media or other modern technological inventions.

Some of the new strategies could be the use of virtual Ranjana script keyboards and animated storytelling in Nepal Bhasa. Credit goes to all the creators from Nepal and beyond.

This is similar to Gramsci's idea that counter-hegemonic (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975) practices gain strength when they blend intellect with modern tools. Newar youths started using *Nepal Lipi/ Ranjana Lipi applications* to convert Devanagari to Ranjana, making the script more accessible among the public. Youth attractions like tattoos, and other creations with Ranjana Lipi connected modern inventions with original essence. Now, Youths from campaigns like Callijatra connect with elders as well via online workshops. This overcame the generational gap and international boundaries as well. This is the digital resistance as Gramsci mentioned

where users look for alternatives. People start challenging imposed linguistic hierarchies.

Similarly, Phinney's stages (Phinney, 1993) unfold in algorithmic journeys; users explore, diffuse, foreclose, or achieve identity based on their media interactions. Last decade has seen restoration not only being ideological but experiential. Today, restoration is no longer confined to ritual or academia; it's viral, visual, and dialect. Cultural restoration involved resistance encoded in hashtags, calligraphy strokes, and intergenerational echoes. Aesthetic revival invites intergenerational dialogue while the heritage has become emotionally visible, not just historically documented. Now, speaking one's dialect is an act of belonging, not deviation anymore. Thus, technology could be testament and promoter for reclaiming identity.

Also, changes in approaches to Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi rejuvenation as implemented by Chikacha is reversing the potential hindrance into the helping hand and a weapon for counter-hegemony. He smartly created contents in Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi to be posted on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. This initiation was also benefitted with the facility of Unicode support and Google Translate for Nepal Bhasa. Likewise, in the recent times, development of Artificial Intelligence like Grok-type AI not only assist the language translation between the Nepal Bhasa into Nepali and English but it also preserves the cultural nuances. The translation is also culturally sensitive. Now, even general public can create contents that is culturally and linguistically adaptable to everyone.

This has doubled the visibility and accessibility of the language and script to younger generations. No doubt now, this hands-on engagement with the digital world challenged the earlier exclusion and created new paths for linguistic expression and cultural connection. Developing online platforms and resources for learning and using Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi can facilitate wider access and engagement, especially among the youths (Maharjan & Vaidya, 2021). Shrestha (2024) mentions about the growing use of Nepal Bhasa in mainstream media and cultural events promoting its relevancy. However, the participants of this study warned for careful cultural commodification while promoting the relevance of the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. Cultural commodification yields the incentives for some people for some time, but such initiatives risks detaching them from the linguistic revival.

Summary of the Chapter

The chapter studies the decline and revitalization of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi connecting Antonio Gramsci's Hegemony Theory (Gramsci, 1971 as cited in Bates, 1975) and Jean Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development Theory (Phinney, 1993). The decline of the language and script is termed to be catastrophe, as participants felt of "two-tier" hegemony. First, English dominated Nepali, and Nepali dominated Nepal Bhasa. Throughout the past, the state system purposely prohibited the use and even punishing creators of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi.

These suppressive policies compelled Newar elders to intentionally avoid Nepal Bhasa at home and forbid children in using them as they gradually developed the believe about their children remaining behind in careers for learning their own language and script in a growing Nepali/English-dominated contexts. Mass media and early technology also became catalyst for demotivating Newars in using their both spoken and written languages. As there was a massive use, there were no digital support for the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi, ultimately creating a image of being outdated among their community.

Yet, revitalization is going on slowly with a growing sense of ethnic realization. As Ratna narratives reflect, all these due to individual and communal initiatives. With Chikacha's narrative, social media use is on full swing on this journey. Local governments are now moving in as well. All these for assisting youths like Rajamati to make them feel home for all Newar community.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

This chapter brings a summary, conclusions, and implications guided by the narratives of the participants in their Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi learning journey.

Summary

This study started with my personal identity as a Newar Youth from Kirtipur who experienced a criticism for not able to read Ranjana Lipi. The outcome was me being labelled as ‘Half-Newar’. So, this study brought in not just an academic inquiry but also my own personal journey of identity retrieval. The study examined the dominance of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi by the state in different time periods reducing its societal relevance and expanding the intergenerational gap in transmitting culture and language. Also, there was the growing sense of shame among elders who discontinued transmission of language. Also, the mass media and technology from old days have added marginalization by restricting the broadcast and not supporting digital innovations making it look like outdated. Yet, there emerged an growing movement led by the Newar Youths.

The study brought together the voices of Newar youths who are smartly using the learned language and scripts to create resistance for domination, bring in pride and relevance through the narrative inquiry. This movement is characterized by individual agency, with participants like Ratna demonstrating self-driven learning and dedication, transforming childhood curiosity into a professional calling. Being a double societal role of a mother and a teacher, Rajamati is able to implant pride and tackle the internal reluctance and feeling of inferiority within. Likewise, Chikacha being the symbol of blending technology into cultural transmission that is favored by all generations. At last, Tareman is the representation of historical suppression and continuation of language and script learning for language reclamation. The study took support from multiple theories to make sense of the narratives of the participants. The study prioritized on the need of intergenerational connection and youth space in this journey of revitalization. Also, it claimed that preserving of cultural heritages is insignificant for revitalizations rather they should be made accessible to teach, make them livable and emotionally connected. This revitalization is significantly supported by robust community-driven educational initiatives from organizations like Nepal

Lipi Guthi, Newaz group, and Callijatra. Also, Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi are getting priority from the local governments particularly after getting space in the education system.

At the end, the study is a contribution to the identity reclamation of the youths and their empowerment, indigenous language revitalization and culturally sensitive education practices. It highlights both the historical systemic failures for the linguistic preservation while also enjoys the determined local resilience from the youths and community. The narratives of these youths are not limited to the language and script rather, they reflect the history, belonging and the lasting power and determination of cultural imagination.

Conclusion

This dissertation started with a recall of my own personal uneasy moment being tagged as ‘Half-Newar’ after I was unable to read the Ranjana Lipi inscriptions at one of the ancient gates in my home town. That situation seems to be a short and momentary but it left me a deep consciousness on youths like me getting distanced from the culture, language and questioned my own identity. Nevertheless, this was not just my sole story, it indeed is the common story of many Newar youths who naturally received the cultural fortune from their elders but at the same time got the load of pressures of linguistic suppression and societal insignificance.

Through the narratives of the Newar Youths, the study explored the lived experiences of learning Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi. They are the strong testaments of resilience of Newar people. They are not limited to inactive beneficiaries of the cultural heritages; they are now the active cultural promoters and trainers. By challenging the historical narratives of being useless, now they are bringing in the ideas of pride and restoration.

The study explored the state dominance and its hidden intention in the language politics reducing the use of language and script by its own speakers. At the same time, the study also brought into light on the smart initiatives led by dedicated individuals and community for reclamation of the language and script. Also, the study highlights the cultural survival. The findings emphasize that the Language and script be in a state of teaching, lived and connected with emotions of the people for all the generations. So, youths represented in this study are not only learning the language and script, they are resisting the dominance, reclaiming youth space and re-building their identities in the changing technological age. There is the need of youth

participation and intergenerational connection and dialogue for cultural survival while the role of favorable policies and social validation speeds up this process of revitalization.

At the end, this journey of being tagged as 'Half-newar' to going along the path of advocating is not just my sole journey but it the representation for all the Newar youths.

Implications

The revitalization of the Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi is not a simple revival of a lost language and script. It is a strategic way of resistance against decades long dominance and advocating for shared identity reclamation. To convert this into reality, the state policies need to be favorable. The narratives of the participants reflect the intergenerational connection of youths with elder generations while also promoting socio-cultural solidarity. The ethnic identity of Newars as shared by the Newar youths were not passed passively to them rather the youths constructed them with their everyday hard work and dedication towards learning and promoting. They took learning of the language and lipi as getting back to their home of heritage.

Likewise, the language revitalization can be relational, the language and script restoration are likely to be influenced by the connection of state mechanism with the ongoing revival campaigns, the connection between the old generation and the modern inventions. Similarly, the bonding among the young and old impact the linguistic and cultural transmission from old to the young. Also, the study highlighted on the smart initiatives being crucial in this revitalization journey while also bringing in the experiences of female trainers and mothers to tackle the internal hesitancy towards learning the language and script.

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Appendices

Appendix I- Interview Schedule

BECOMING NEWAR FROM HALF-NEWAR: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF NEWAR YOUTHS

Research Question:

What are the life stories of Newar youths who had learned Nepal Bhasa Language& Ranjana Script?

Introductory

1. How do you introduce yourself? What are your current engagements?
2. Could you tell me what made you to learn Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script?
3. How did you learn Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script?
4. Was learning Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script easy for you?
5. What are the obstacles you had to overcome in the journey of learning Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script?
6. How was the response from the family after you decided to learn Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script?
7. How was the response from the family after you were able to learn them? Has there been any changes in their reactions?
8. What changes have you encountered in your everyday life after learning Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script?
9. Has learning Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script benefitted you in any way?

Perception on declining Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi

10. Many Newar youths are unable to speak/understand Nepal Bhasa Language and read/write Ranjana Script. Do you believe it?
11. Why learning Nepal Bhasa Language and Ranjana Script has reduced?
12. How do you see the decline in the number of speakers of Nepal Bhasa Language and users of Ranjana Script?
13. Do you think the state (or other) has something to do with this? What roles have the state played regarding Nepal Bhasa Language and Ranjana Script?
14. Do you think English language has some contribution in loss of interest in learning Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script? IF yes, why/how?

15. Do you think there is dominance of Nepali language and Devanagari Script over Nepal Bhasa Language and Ranjana Script? IF yes, why/how?
16. What do you see the differences among the youths who have learned the Nepal Bhasa Language & Ranjana Script from those who have not learned them?
17. How long it's been that you have learned Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script?
18. Historical Question
19. How economic prospects and educational opportunity leading to neglect of Nepal Bhasa language
20. Cultural practice declining?
21. How this decline in cultural practice has impacted in reduce in use of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjan Language? (Cultural Erosion)

Revitalization Process

22. What type of trainings, workshops or sessions have you attained? Have you learned them in a single trainings, workshops or sessions or you had learned them in a multiple attempt? Are you still learning them?
23. Which is the most effective method in learning Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script? Why do you think so?
24. How has the revitalization process going on? Do you think this revitalization process is satisfactory in preservation and promotion of Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script?
25. What are the challenges in the revitalization process?
26. How has media and technology assisting revitalization of Nepal Bhasa and Ranjana Lipi?
27. Do you consider yourself a complete Newar? When someone says, "*Naam ko matra Newar*" or "Half-Newar", what do you understand?
28. Do you think to become a complete Newar, you should be able to speak and understand Nepal Bhasa language and read and write Ranjana Script?

Changing Context

29. How learning of Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script is going on at present days?
30. How do you see the future of Nepal Bhasa language and Ranjana Script in our country?

31. How do you encourage more youths to learning Nepal Bhasa Language and Ranjana Script? Any suggestions to the stakeholders (Newa Deh Dabu, Guthi etc.)?
32. How do you perceive the continuation of linguistic hegemony and loss of Nepal Bhasa Language?

Appendix-II Interview Schedule in Nepal Bhasa

अनुसन्धानया विषयः बच्छि न्हूगुपाखें न्हूम्ह जुइगु : न्हूपिं ल्याय् म्हतय् गु आख्यानात्मक
न्यनेकने

अनुसन्धानया न्ह्यसः नेपाल भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेधुंकूपिं नेवार युवातय् जीवन बाखं

छु छु खः ?

म्हसीका

१. छिं थःगु म्हसीका गथे यानाः बियादी ? छिगु आःया इंगेजमेन्ट छु खः ?
२. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेत छु प्रेरित यात धयादिसँ ला ?
३. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि गुकथं सयेका दिया ?
४. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेगु छितः अःपुल ला ?
५. नेपाल भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेगु यात्राय् छु छु पंगःत पार यायेमाल ?
६. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेगु निर्णय यायेधुंकाः छँजःपाखें गुकथं प्रतिक्रिया वल ?
७. छिं इमित सयेके फयेधुंकाः छँजःपाखें गथे प्रतिक्रिया वल ? इमिगु प्रतिक्रियाय् छुं हिलासू वःगु
दु ला ?
८. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेधुंकाः छिगु न्हियान्हिथंया जीवनय् गुज्वःगु हिउपाः
खनेदत ?
९. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेवं छितः छुं कथं फाइदा जूगु दु ला ?

थहां वनाच्चंगु नेपाल भाषा व रञ्जना लिपिया धारणा

१०. आपालं नेवार युवात नेपाल भाषा भाय् ल्हाये/थुइके मफुपिं व रञ्जना लिपि ब्वने/च्वये मफुपिं
। छं थुकियात विश्वास याना ला ?
११. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेबलय् छाया् म्हो जुल ?
१२. नेपाल भाषा भाषा ल्हाइपिं व रञ्जना लिपि छ्यलीपिनिगु ल्याः म्हो जुजुं वनाच्चंगुयात छिं गुकथं
स्वयादी ?
१३. राज्य (वा मेमेगु) थुकी छुं स्वापू दु धकाः छिं तायेकादी ला ? नेपाल भाषा भाषा रञ्जना लिपि
सम्बन्धय् राज्यया छु छु भूमिका दु ?
१४. नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेगुलिइ रुचि मदइगुलिइ अंग्रेजी भाषाया छुं योगदान
दु थें च्वं ला ? खःसा, छाया् / गथे यानाः ?
१५. नेपाल भाषा भाषा रञ्जना लिपि पर नेपाली भाषा र देवनागरी लिपिको प्रभुत्व रहेको छला?
खःसा, छाया् / गथे यानाः ?

१६) नेपाल भाषा भाषा & रञ्जना लिपि सयेकादीपिं ल्याम्हतय् दथुइ मस्यंपिं ल्याम्हतय् दथुइ छु
फरक खनेदु ?

१७) नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकादीगु गुलि दत ?

१८) ऐतिहासिक न्हासः

१७) आर्थिक सम्भावना व शैक्षिक अवसर गुकथं नेपाल भाषा भाषायात उपेक्षित याइ

२०) सांस्कृतिक अभ्यास म्हो जुयाच्चंगु दु ?

२१) सांस्कृतिक अभ्यासया थ्व हासं नेपाल भाषा व रञ्जन भाषाया छ्यलाबुला म्हो यायेगु ज्याय्
गुकथं लिच्चः लाकूगु दु ? (सांस्कृतिक क्षरण)

पुनर्जीवन प्रक्रिया

२२) छिं गुज्वःगु तालिम, कार्यशाला वा सत्र प्राप्त यानादीगु दु ? छिं थुकियात छगू हे तालिम,
कार्यशाला वा सत्रय् सयेकादीगु दु लाकि छिं थुकियात तःकःमछि कुतः यानाः
सयेकादीगु खः ला ? छं आःतकं इमित सयेकाच्चनागु ला ?

२३) नेपाल भाषा भाषा र रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेत दकलय् प्रभावकारी विधि गुगु खः ? छं छाया अथे
बिचाः याना ?

२४) पुनर्जीवन प्रक्रिया गथे जुयाच्चंगु दु ? नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपिया संरक्षण व
प्रवर्द्धनय् थुगु पुनर्जीवन प्रक्रिया सन्तोषजनक तायेका ला ?

२५) पुनर्जीवन प्रक्रियाय् छु छु हाथ्यात दु ?

२६) नेपाल भाषा व रञ्जना लिपिया पुनर्जीवनय् मिडिया व प्रविधिं गुकथं ग्वाहालि यानाच्चंगु दु ?

२७) छिं थःत पूर्ण नेवार तायेकादी ला ? सुनानं “नाम को मात्रा नेवार” वा “अर्धनेवार” धाइबलय्
छु थुइकी ?

२८) पूर्ण नेवार जुइत नेपाल भाषा भाय् ल्हाये सयेकेमाः, थुइके फयेकेमाः अले रञ्जना लिपि ब्वने,
च्चये फयेकेमाः धैगु बिचाः दु ला ?

सन्दर्भ हिलाच्चन

२९) थौंकन्हय् नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेगु ज्या गुकथं न्ह्यानाच्चंगु दु ?

३०) झीगु देशय् नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपिया भविष्य गथे खंकादिया ?

३१) नेपाल भाषा भाषा व रञ्जना लिपि सयेकेत आपालं युवातय्त गुकथं प्रोत्साहन बियादी ?

सरोकारवाला (नेवाः देह दबू, गुथि आदि) यात छुं सुझाव दु ?

३२) भाषिक वर्चस्वया निरन्तरता व नेपाल भाषा भाषाया क्षतियात छिं गुकथं धारणा यानादी ?

