

STATUS OF KIRATI LANGUAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF NEPALESE LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the linguistic scenario of multilingual Nepal, and measures the vitality levels of overall languages in general and Kirati languages in particular on the basis of Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) used by Lewis and Simons (2010) derived from Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS 1991). The first part presents the linguistic situation of Nepal, the second part demonstrates the vitality levels of Nepalese languages in general, the third part indicates the status of Kirati languages and the last part provides some suggestions.

Key Words: Linguistic, multilingual, intergenerational, disruption, vitality, moribund, extinct.

LINGUISTIC SITUATION OF NEPAL

CBS (2014) enumerated 123 languages. They have been classified into Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian families of languages. In addition, Kusunda is classified as "language isolate" which can form a separate family. On the basis of the number of languages, Sino-Tibetan family is the largest, Indo-European family is the second largest, Austro-Asiatic family is third largest and Dravidian is the smallest of the families. Sino-Tibetan family comprises 63 languages. They are listed in appendix 1. Indo-European family has 37 languages. They are listed in appendix 2. Austro-Asiatic family consists of Khariya and Santhali, and Dravidian family consists of Uranw/Urau language. Kusunda is the only language, which does not belong to any of these families.

In terms of number of speakers, Indo-European family is the largest, Sino-Tibetan family is the second largest, Austro-Asiatic family is the third largest, Dravidian family is the fourth largest and Kusunda is the smallest of all families of languages. The population of the speakers of Indo-European languages totals 21,748,043, of Sino-Tibetan languages totals 4,583,718, of Austro-Asiatic languages 50,096, of Dravidian language 33,651 and of Kusunda language totals 28.

In addition to the four families and one language isolate, CBS (2014) has listed 18 languages under "foreign/not classified" category. They are Arabi, Assami, Chinese, Dzongkha, French, English, Gadhwali, Hariyanwi, Kuki, Kurmali, Malpande, Mizo, Nagamese, Oriya, Russian,

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Sadhani, Sindhi and Spanish. Under "others/ not reported" category, it has included sign language. Foreign/not classified category of languages have 5,601 speakers and others/not reported have 73,367 speakers.

Nepali, the only official language of Nepal, is dominant in every domain of language use. It is spoken by 11,826,953 populations, which constitutes 44.64 percent of the total population. In population census 2001 (CBS 2002), the present languages namely Achhami, Baitedeli, Bajhang, Bajureli, Dadeldhuri, Dailekhi, Darchuleli, Doteli, Jumli and Khas were included in Nepali. These language-speakers constitute 1,293,539 people. If this number were added to the population of Nepali speakers, it would make up 13,120,492 populations. There are eight languages of Indo-European family which have more than 1 percent of speakers. They are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Indo-European Aryan Languages with More than 1 Percent of Speakers

S.N.	Languages	Number of Speakers	Percent
1.	Nepali	11,826,953	44.64
2.	Maithili	3,092,530	11.67
3.	Bhojpuri	1,584,958	5.98
4.	Tharu	1,529,875	5.77
5.	Bajjika	793,416	2.99
6.	Doteli	787,827	2.97
7.	Urdu	691,546	2.61
8.	Baitadeli	272,524	1.03

Source: CBS, 2012.

Similarly, there are five languages of Sino-Tibetan family, which have more than 1 percent of speakers. They are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Sino-Tibetan Languages with More than 1 percent of Speakers

S.N.	Languages	Number of Speakers	Percent
1.	Tamang	1,353,311	5.11
2.	Newar	846,557	3.2
3.	Magar	788,530	2.98
4.	Limbu	343,603	1.3
5.	Gurung	325,622	1.23

Source: CBS, 2012.

Dadeldhuri of Indo-European family, which was included in Nepali in previous population censuses, is the only languages which have less than 500 speakers. Khariya of Austro-Asiatic family and Kusunda, the language isolate have less than 500 speakers. Table 3 presents Sino-Tibetan languages which have less than 500 speakers.

Table 3: Sino-Tibetan Languages with Less than 500 of Speakers

S.N.	Languages	Number of Speakers
1.	Byangsi	480
2.	Khamchi (Raute)	461
3.	Sam	401
4.	Manange	392
5.	Phangduwali	290
6.	Surel	287
7.	Baram	155
8.	Lingkhim	129
9.	Kagate	99
10.	Bankariya	69
11.	Kaike	50

Source: CBS, 2012.

VITALITY LEVELS OF NEPALESE LANGUAGES IN GENERAL

It has not yet been clear how to identify the vitality level of a language. However, sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists seek to measure language vitality levels on the basis of the number of speakers and the use of the language in certain domains or functions. In addition, the number of bilinguals and their proficiency levels are also considered while measuring language vitality. Generally, speakers of small and less dominant languages abandon their mother tongues in favour of dominant languages, and use the second language with their children. In the course of time, the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language stops and eventually becomes useless with nobody speaking this language. This level of language vitality is called dormant or extinct. Such language exists only in record, and unrecorded languages without any speaker disappear.

Lewis and Simons (2010) adapted and expanded Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS, 1991) as Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) to measure the vitality of languages at different levels. It is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is used internationally for a broad range of functions.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the nationwide level.
2	Provincial	The language is used for local and regional mass media and government services.
3	Wider communication	The language is used for local and regional work by both insiders and outsiders.

4	Educational	The language is being transmitted and standardization promoted through a system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and has effective educational support in parts of the community
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and has effective educational support in parts of the community.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations but only some of the children are learning it.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it among themselves but it is not being transmitted to their children,
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation.
8b	Nearly extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community. No one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	No one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language, even for symbolic purposes.

Source: Ethnologue: Languages of Nepal, 2012.

Eppele *et al.* (2012) have measured vitality levels of languages of different families of Nepal using EGIDS, and worked out the result as described in the following subheadings:

INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY

On the basis of EGIDS, Nepali has vitality level 1, and is labeled as "national language". It is the language used in government offices, education and mass media at the national level. There is no provincial language in Nepal as of now. Hindi is used for wider communication in the Tarai region, but it is not used in government services. It has vitality level 3, and is labeled as "Wider communication". Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Urdu, Dotyali and Tharu Rana are classified as level 4 languages, and labeled as "educational". Maithili, Marwari, Rajbangsi and Tharu languages are classified as level 4 languages, and labeled as "developing". Jumli, Kayort, Kisan and Humla Dangali are classified as level 6a languages, and labeled as "vigorous". Angika, Bote, Darai, Majhi and Musasa are classified as level 6b languages, and labeled as "Threatened". Danuwar, Kumhali and Sonha are classified as level 7 languages, and labeled as "shifting". There are no 8a, 8b and 10 level

languages which are labeled as "moribund", "nearly extinct" and "extinct". Sanskrit is the only level 9 dormant language of this family.

SINO-TIBETAN FAMILY

There is not even a single language which is a level 1, national language, nor is there any level 2 provincial, nor level 3 wider communication languages in this family. Tibetan is the only level 4, educational language. Kham, Koi, Lhomi, Sherpa, Tamang, Wambule and Thulung are level 5 developing languages. Bahing, Byangsi, Dhimal, Dolpo, Ghale, Kagate, Kaike, Khaling and Tamang are classified as level 6a languages and labeled as "vigorous". Athpariya, Bantawa, Belahare, Chamling, Chhantyal, Chepang, Chhintang, Ghale, Jero/Jerung, Jirel, Kham, Kulung, Limbu, Lohorung, Magar, Manange (Managwa), Meche, Mewahang, Puma, Raji, Sampang, Sunuwar, Thangmi (Thami), Waling/Walung, Wambule, Yakkha and Yamphu are level 6b languages and labeled as "threatened". Bhujel, Chhulung/Chhiling, Dumi, Lapcha, Nacchiring, Phangduwali, Thakali and Wayu/Hayu are level 7 languages, and labeled as "shifting". Tilung is a level 8a language, and labeled as "moribund". Baram, Lingkhim and Sam are level 8b languages, and they are labeled as "nearly extinct". Dura is a level 9 language labeled as "dormant", and Waling/Walung is a level 10 language labeled as "extinct".

Austro-Asiatic

Santhali is a level 6a language with the label vigorous. Khariya is a level 6b language, and labeled as "threatened".

Dravidian

Uranw/Uraun also called Jhangad is a level 6b language with the label "threatened".

Status of Kirati Languages

Kirati ethnic group includes Rai, Limbu, Yakkha and Sunuwar. The Rai have their ethnic organization 'Kirat Rai Yayokkha,' the Limbu have 'Kirat Yakthung Chumlung' and the Yakkha have ethnic organization 'Kirat Yakkha Chhumma.' The Sunuwar have ethnic organization 'Sunuwar Samaj' without any mention of Kirat. However, they are regarded as Kirati as they identify themselves with this ethnic name. Though ethnically, the Hayu are not accepted as Kirati, their language is, nevertheless, included in the list of Kirati languages (Wiedert and Subba, 1985; Ebert, 1994). There are many ethnic branches under the Rai subgroup, and each branch has a separate language. The languages have dialects, and some linguists classify the dialects as different languages. In addition, since 2011 population census, the trend to separate from the Rai ethnic subgroup and establish their independent ethnic and linguistic identity has become common among those who previously identified themselves as Rai. It has created a serious problem in

identifying the exact number of Rai ethnic subgroup and their languages. The following subheadings highlight the scenario of Kirati languages:

No Clear Link between Ethnicity and Language

CBS (2002) reported 22 different languages under the ethnic name Rai. They were Bahing, Bantawa, Chamling, Chhiling, Chhintang, Dumi, Dungmali, Jero/Jerong, Khaling, Koyu/Koyee, Kulung, Lingkhim, Lohorung, Mewahang, Nacchiring, Puma, Sam, Sampang, Thulung, Tilung, Wambule and Yamphu . These languages were added to Limbu, Yakha, Sunuwar and Hayu, and given the umbrella term "Kirati languages". Population Census (2011) recorded separate ethnic status of Bahing, Bantawa, Chamling, Khaling, Kulung, Lohorung, Mewahang Bala, Nacchiring, Sampang, Thulung, Walung and Yamphu, and CBS (2012) established their independent language names similar to the ethnic names. The census also recorded Rai as an independent ethnic name and CBS (2012) established Rai as a separate language name. However, the ethnic names of Chhiling, Chhintang, Dumi, Dungmali, Jero/Jerong, Lingkhim, Mewahang, Sam, Tilung and Wambule language-speakers were not recorded. So, questions such as whether they are still Rai or not, and whether their population was included in the Rai subgroup or not are difficult to answer. On the other hand, Athpariya and Belahare have been recorded in this census. Athpariya, previously known by the ethnic name Rai abandoned it and has assumed Athpariya itself as its ethnic name. The ethnicity of Belahare speakers, though not mentioned in the census report, their ethnic name is Athpariya as they call themselves by this ethnic name. The population of traditional Rai ethnic group and their languages are distributed in Table 5.

Table 5: Population Distribution of Traditional Rai Ethnic Groups and their Languages

S.N.	Ethnic name	Population	Language Name	Population
1.	Athpahariya	5,977	Athpariya	5,530
2.	Bahing	3,096	Bahing	11,658
3.	Bantawa	4,604	Bantawa	132,583
4.			Belahare	599
5.	Chamling	6,668	Chamling	76,800
6.			Chhilling	2,046
7.			Chhintang	3,712
8.			Dumi	7,638
9.			Dungmali	6,260
10.			Jero	1763
11.	Khaling	1,571	Khaling	14,467
12.			Koyee	1,271
13.	Kulung	28,613	Kulung	33,170
14.			Limkhim	129

15.	Lohorung	1,153	Lohorung	3,716
16.	Mewahang Bala	3,100	Mewahang	4,650
17.	Nacchiring	7,154	Nacchiring	10,041
18.			Phangduwali	290
19.			Puma	6,686
20.	Rai	620,004	Rai	159,114
21.			Sam	401
22.	Sampang	1,681	Sangpang	18,270
23.	Thulung	3,535	Thulung	20,659
24.			Tilung	1,424
25.	Waling	1,249	Waling	1,169
26.			Wambule	13,470
27.	Yamphu	6,933	Yamphu	9,208

Source: CBS, 2012.

The Kirati languages, which have clear link with ethnicity, are only Hayu, Limbu, Sunuwar and Yakkha. Hayu is not regarded as a member of the Kirati ethnic group, but the language spoken by them is considered as a Kirati language. The ethnic and language population of these ethnic subgroups are given in Table 6.

Table 6: Population of Hayu, Limbu, Sunuwar and Yakkha and of their Languages

S.N.	Ethnic Name	Population	Language Name	Population
1.	Hayu	2925	Hayu	1,520
2.	Limbu	387,300	Limbu	343,603
3.	Sunuwar	95,245	Sunuwar	26,611
4.	Yakkha	17,003	Yakkha	19,558

Source: CBS, 2012.

No Exact Number of Kirati Languages

Grierson (1909) records 13 languages of Kirati Rai group. Wiedert and Subba (1985) record 20 languages of Kirati group. They are Sunuwar, Hayu, Ombule/Jerung, Thulung, Khaling, Kulung, Dumi, Koi, Chamling, Puma, Bantawa, Dungmali, Chhintange, Sampang, Mewahang, Lohorung, Yamphe/Yamphu, Yakkha, Athpariya and Limbu. Hanson (1991) classifies Kirati group of languages into western, central and eastern Kirati languages. Eastern Kirati languages include Limbu, Chhatthare Limbu, Athpare, Belahare, Chhulung, Chhintang, Baiyangsi, Chongkha, Lungoba, Mugali, Phangduwali, Lumba-Yakkha, Yakkha, Southern Lohorung, Yamphu, Yamphe and Northern Lohorung. Central Kirati language group includes Bantawa, Puma, Chamling, eastern Mewahang, western Mewahang, Sambya, Pongyong, Bungla, Chukwa, Sampang, Kulung, Nacchiring, Dungmali, Waling and Khandung. Western Kirati languages include Ombule, Jero, Thulung, Lingkhim,

Bahing, Sunuwar, Khaling, Dumi, Koi, Hayu, Tilung, Choskule and Dorungkecha. He identifies altogether 45 Kirati languages. As a matter of fact, Hanson's report is based on the Linguistic Survey of Nepal conducted jointly by University of Kiel, Germany and Tribhuvan University, Nepal in 1981-84 in Mechi, Koshi and Sagarmatha zones of Nepal. Ebert (1994) lists 21 languages under Kirati group. They are Hayu, Sunuwar, Bahing, Chaurase, Thulung, Khaling, Kulung, Dumi, Sampang, Chamling, Puma, Bantawa, Dungmali, Mewahang, Yamphue, Lohorung, Yakkha, Chhintang, Belahare, Athpare and Limbu. Khambu (2000) includes Jerung, Wambule, Tilung, Chamling, Puma, Khaling, Thulung, Kulung, Bahing, Nacchiring, Sotang, Koyu, Dumi, Sampang, Yamphu, Lohorung, Bungla, Bantawa, Dungmali, Mugali, Phangduwali, Chhintange, Chhilinge, Mewahang, Athpare and Belahare. Van Driem (2001) lists 25 languages as Kirati languages. They are Mewahang, Lohorung, Yamphue, Yakkha, Chhiling, Athpare, Limbu, Kulung, Sampang, Nacchiring, Chamling, Puma, Bantawa, Dungmali, Chhintang, Dumi, Koi, Khaling, Thulung, Tilung, Wambule, Jero, Bahing, Hayu and Sunuwar.

Population Census (2001) also reports 25 Kirati languages. CBS (2012) records 31 Kirati languages, whereas Eppille *et al.* (2012) record 35 languages considering Lumba-Yakkha, Mewahang (western), Yamphu (southern) and Mugali as different languages. The above reports prove that the exact number of Kirati languages is yet uncertain.

Vitality Levels of Kirati Languages

Languages of Kirati group have not been used in education, work, mass media and government at the nationwide level. They have not been used for local and regional mass media and government services. They have not been used for local and regional work by insiders and outsiders, nor have they been transmitted, and their standardization been promoted through a system of institutionally supported education. If the vitality level of the languages of Kirati group were measured according to EGIDS, there would be no level 1, 2, 3 and 4 languages which could be labeled "national", "provincial", "wider communication" and "educational". Koi, Wambule and Thulung are level 5 languages with the label "developing". Bahing and Khaling are level 6a languages with the label "vigorous".

Athpariya, Bantawa, Belahariya, Chamling, Chhintang, Dungmali, Jerung/Jero, Kulung, Limbu, Lohorung, Mewahang, Puma, Sampang, Sunuwar, Yakkha and Yamphu are 6b level languages labeled as "threatened". Chhulung, Dumi, Nacchiring, Phangduwali and Wayu/hayu are level 7 languages labeled as "shifting". Tilung and Chukwa are level 8a languages labeled as "moribund". Lingkhim and Sam are level 8b languages labeled as "nearly extinct". Waling is a level 10 language labeled as "extinct".

SUMMARY

Three languages are at vitality level 3 and only 2 languages are at vitality level 6a. Sixteen languages have vitality level 6b and 5 languages have vitality level 7, 2 languages have vitality level 8a, 2 languages have vitality level 8b and 1 language has vitality level 10. Out of 31 Kirati languages recorded in CBS (2012) only 5 languages, namely, Koi, Wambule, Thulung, Bahing and Khaling have vitality to survive. Rest of the Kirati languages are below 6b level and are following downward endangerment trend such as threatening, shifting, moribund, nearly extinct and extinct.

SUGGESTIONS

- Linguistic Survey conducted in the Kosi, Mechi and Sagarmatha zones jointly by University of Kiel, Germany and Tribhuvan University, Nepal in the first half of the 1980s have not been followed up so far. The report prepared by Hanson (1991) on the basis of the field linguistic survey has been ignored and the number of Kirati languages has been recorded in different censuses (2001, 2011) on the basis of the report of the informants. Therefore, there is no fixed number of Kirati languages. If sociolinguistic survey is carried out systematically, the exact number of Kirati languages can be ascertained.
- Vitality of a language can be increased by raising the number of the speakers of that language through intergenerational transmission and expanding the domains of the use of that language. To achieve this goal, government mother tongue education schools should be run.
- Unwritten languages should be documented and their scripts and orthographies should be developed.
- Multilingual dictionary, descriptive grammar, reference and pedagogical grammars should be published.
- These languages should have access to F.M., radio and TV to air different programmes.
- Autonomous national language academy should be established.
- Suggestions submitted by National Language Policy and Recommendation Commission (2050 B.S.) should be implemented.

ANNEXES

ANNEX-1
Sino-Tibetan Languages

S. N.	Language	S. N.	Language	S. N.	Language	S. N.	Language
1.	Athpariya	17.	Dungmali	33.	Lhomi	49.	Sam
2.	Bahing	18.	Dura	34.	Lhopa	50.	Sampang
3.	Bankariya	19.	Ghale	35.	Limbu	51.	Sherpa
4.	Bantawa	20.	Gurung	36.	Lingkhim	52.	Sunuwar
5.	Baram	21.	Hayu/Vayu	37.	Lohorung	53.	Surel
6.	Belahare	22.	H yolmo/Yholmo	38.	Magar	54.	Tamang
7.	Bhujel	23.	Jero/Jerung	39.	Manange	55.	Thakali
8.	Byangsi	24.	Jirel	40.	Meche	56.	Thami
9.	Chamling	25.	Kagate	41.	Mewahang	57.	Thulung
10.	Chepang	26.	Kaike	42.	Nacchering	58.	Tibetan
11.	Chhantyal	27.	Khaling	43.	Newar	59.	Tilung
12.	Chhiling	28.	Kham	44.	Pahari	60.	Waling/ Walung
13.	Chhintang	29.	Khamchi (Raute)	45.	Phangduwali	61.	Wambule
14.	Dhimal	30.	Koyee	46.	Puma	62.	Yakkha
15.	Dolpali	31.	Kulung	47.	Rai	63.	Yamphu/ Yamphe
16.	Dumi	32.	Lapcha	48.	Raji		

ANNEX-2
Indo-European languages

S.N.	Language	S.N.	Language	S.N.	Language
1.	Acchami	14.	Darai	27.	Majhi
2.	Angika	15.	Darchuleli	28.	Musalman
3.	Avadhi	16.	Dhuleli	29.	Nepali
4.	Baitadeli	17.	Doteli	30.	Panjabi
5.	Bajhangi	18.	Gangai	31.	Rajbangsi
6.	Bajjika	19.	Hindi	32.	Rajasthani
7.	Bajureli	20.	Jumli	33.	Sanskrit
8.	Bangla	21.	Khas	34.	Sonaha
9.	Bhojpuri	22.	Kisan	35.	Tajpuriya
10.	Bote	23.	Koce	36.	Tharu
11.	Dadeldhuri	24.	Kumal	37.	Urdu
12.	Dailekhi	25.	Magahi		
13	Danuwar	26.	Maithili		

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