Impact of Super-diversity on the Use of Nepali Language

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Abstract

This paper deals with the influence of diverse cultures and languages in the use of Nepali language in the context of Dhankuta. The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of super-diversity on the use of the Nepali language and to identify potential factors contributing to linguistic super-diversity. This paper could be a reference for those interested in learning more about linguistic super-diversity. The study was conducted with college students in Dhankuta bazaar. It was primarily guided by a qualitative research design to examine the students' utterances. The results show that many participants from various linguistic backgrounds reproduced Nepali in a somewhat distinctive ways which contribute to the development of new language varieties. Linguistic super-diversity mainly stems from factors like migration, political changes, globalization, religion, education, technology, culture, economics, multilingual societies, and inter-caste marriages. Understanding the impact of super-diversity on language use is crucial for all involved in language education to promote successful language teaching and learning.

Keywords: causes, impact, language teaching/learning, linguistic diversity, super-diversity

Introduction

Although super-diversity was once paid less attention in sociolinguistics, it has recently become a central focus for applied linguists, researchers, and educators. The concept of super-diversity in multilingual settings has been a key topic of interest for many applied linguists and sociolinguists. Recognizing the importance of super-diversity in multilingual environments, the researcher conducted a study to examine its effects on the use of the Nepali language. This study explores the impact of super-diversity on the use of Nepali language in the context of Dhankuta municipality. Nowadays, the impact of diversity can be seen in nearly every part of Nepal. This

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occurs primarily because Nepal is a country with diverse geographical landscapes and a wide range of linguistic variations. Nepal is commonly known as a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-ethnic country. Even as a small country, Nepal has proven to be a fertile ground for various languages (Rai, 2010). According to the National Population and Housing Census 2021, there are 124 mother tongues in Nepal. It simply indicates Nepal is the most fascinating lands for investigating diverse cultures and languages. In such a case, it is contextual to examine the influence of super-diversity on the use of Nepali language in Dhankuta bazaar.

The terms diversity, linguistic diversity and super-diversity have been frequently used in the field of sociolinguistics. The term diversity refers to the attributes that people use to confirm themselves with respect to others, 'that person is different from me'. These attributes include demographic factors (such as race, gender, and age) as well as values and cultural norms (Ferris, Frink, & Galang, 1993, P. 42). Diversity is also concerned with a group of people who have distinct differences while being in the same location. It does exist when individuals in a community have a variety of viewpoints and characteristics. In this sense, there are so many diversities in the society such as linguistic diversity, cultural diversity, religious diversity and so on.

The concept of linguistic diversity includes different traits, including language families, grammatical rules, and vocabulary. Linguistic traits that may be compared among language groups include vocabulary and grammar. A culturally and linguistically diverse person is typically used to identity a person who differs from the mainstream culture in terms of ethnicity, social class, and or language (perez, 1988). In this sense, linguistic diversity is a subset of cultural diversity (Parla, 1994). The term 'super-diversity' is more than that of diversity as there is no singularity in super-diversity. The mix up of several identities can be seen in single person. Super-diversity signifies a significant increase in the categories of migrants, encompassing not just their backgrounds and beliefs, but also their motivations for migrating, their journeys, and how they integrate into the social and economic frameworks of their host countries (Vertovec, 2010). Thus, the term super-diversity means diversity within diversity (Lu, 2014). It primarily results from complex migration flows, both external and internal.

Many researchers have focused on understanding how diversity, particularly linguistic diversity and super-diversity, influences language use in multilingual settings. Blommaert and Rampton, (2011) explore the scope for research on language and super-diversity. They are of the opinion that the concept of language within the super-diversity framework has entered the discourse on the linguistic texture of societies. They state that the traditional focus on language homogeneity, stability and, fixed boundaries is being challenged by a new approach that considers factors such as migration, cultural blending, political power, and historical context as crucial to understanding languages, language groups and communication. According to Tremlett (2014) super-diversity is a recent idea that offers a more accurate way to describe the various kinds of diversity commonly found in modern societies. She opines that the usefulness of super-diversity lies in its ability to shift the discussion from homogenizing views to the more rapid

social transformations that contemporary societies experience due to factors like inequality, social mobility, intermarriage, migration, and transnationalism, as well as the access to resources and tools provided by the internet and communication technologies.

Although the topic of super-diversity in language use is not explicitly addressed in the context of Nepal, a few research studies have been carried out on the spirit of super-diversity on the use language. Gurung, (2018) studies on the mixing of English elements at various levels in the conversation of the Nepalese people irrespective of their age groups, gender, education level, professions and geographical locations. The study reveals that English elements from lexical level, clausal and phrasal level to sentence level are mixed in the conversation of the Nepalese people. The Nepali-English code-switching data are dominated more at lexical levels specifically by English nouns. Similarly, Chhetri (2012) examines the English code mixing in Nepali film songs. The study concluded that the popularity of English language as the major reason of English code mixing in Nepali film songs. Both studies concluded that Nepali-English mixed language is developing into a distinct dialect within the Nepali speech community, primarily due to the frequent incorporation of English elements into Nepali conversations. Thus the research works have focused on limited representation of diversity on the use of language in the context of Nepal. This research issue encourages the researcher to explore the effects of super-diversity on language use in a more thorough and detailed manner.

It is rare to find individuals who speak only one language nowadays. There is no single culture within one community mainly due to the presence of migrants from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. It is not unusual in the context of Dhankuta where people are from different cultural and linguistic background. People from various speech communities often speak Nepali with unique accents and dialects which can be heard in their everyday conversation in Dhankuta bazaar. It does happen mainly because of the amazing cultural and linguistic diversity in Dhankuta. Though such linguistic diversity is appearing in the Nepali language, no one has paid attention on this matter. To date, there has been no empirical research concerning the impact of super-diversity on the use of Nepali language in the context of Nepal which is the main gap in the present study. So, the researcher observed the different social and cultural elements resided behind the way of speaking Nepali language in this study. The main objective of the study was to seek as to how Nepali language is used in such super diverse communities and what are the potential causes of super-diversity in the use of Nepali language in the context of Dhankuta bazaar. This research study can offer insights into how super-diversity influences the use of the Nepali language and the underlying factors that contribute to linguistic super-diversity. It will be also significant for linguists, curriculum developers, material developers, textbook authors, and educators to promote successful language teaching and learning.

Methods and Materials

The researcher has outlined the research methods for exploring the impact of superdiversity on the use of Nepali language in the context of Dhankuta bazaar. Dhankuta bazaar is a small but linguistically diversified hilly town and located in Dhankuta district of

Eastern Nepal. As per 2021 population census, it has population of 35,983. There are many caste/tribal groups living in Dhankuta such as Newar, Athpariya, Chhetri, Tamang, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Gurung, Rajasthani, Brahmin - Hill, Limbu, Kami, Damai/Dholi, Gharti/Bhujel, Thakuri, Sarki, Yakkha, Sherpa, Muslim, Tharu, Bantaba, Majhi, Teli, Haluwai, Terai Others, Yadav, Sanyasi/Dashnami, Brahmin – Tarai etc. Main religions practiced in this small area are: Hindu, Buddha, Kirant, Christian, Islam, and Muslim. Despite its small size, this multilingual setting confers Dhankuta bazaar as one of the most fascinating areas for investigating the impact of super-diversity on the use of language. This is the reason why the researcher decided to choose Dhankuta bazaar as his research field.

The ontological consideration in this research was grounded in the understanding of multiple realities. The researcher focused on the utterances produced by the participants more. The researcher believes that the nature of reality of producing the utterances is not objective reality rather it is subjective that may be guided by an individual's beliefs, attitudes, background and dedication. The researcher had produced knowledge through observation, questions and interactions with informants. The sources of knowledge for this study were his research participants, their conversation and his critical self-reflection.

This research study is highly informed by qualitative research design to investigate the impact of super-diversity on the use of Nepali language. A qualitative research design had enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of how the students from different speech community speak Nepali language in the study. The observation, recording, note diary and the interview were the tools to collect required data for this research study. After the observation, a brief semi-structured interview was held with each student who produced unique Nepali language during observations and recorded on audio tape. The emphasis was based purely on the students' socio-linguistic and family background and their experiences on the use of Nepali language. The informants (nine males and three females) for this study were only twelve college students in Dhankuta bazaar. The informants were sampled randomly. They were from Nepali, Newari, Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Sherpa, Magar, and Maithali speech communities. The researcher visited cafeterias, playgrounds, and public places in Dhankuta bazaar to observe the impact of super-diversity on the use of the Nepali language.

The linguistic events concerned with the researched topic were observed, recorded, and interviewed with participants during their natural conversation. The researcher also collected key documentary evidence, and took photographs. The researcher employed concept of code meshing, pronunciation, lexical choice, honorific words, sexiest practice and syntax order to analyze collected data. He analyzed audio recorded interactional data, field notes, audio recorded language excerpts to identify the impact of super-diversity on the use of language and the factors contributing in linguistic diversity. A manual analysis method was used, where each language excerpt was recorded and transcribed exactly into a word-processed document. The present paper analyzed and interpreted the data with specific reference to the emergent notions of super-diversity and translanguaging. The researcher explained the impact of super-diversity being

based only on the code meshing, pronunciation, lexical choice, honorific words, sexiest practice and syntax mainly because these are useful to observe diversity in languages, language groups and communication.

Results and Discussion

The various data gathered in the study enabled the researcher to identify various themes related to the impact of super-diversity on language use. In the present study, many participants blended words from different languages and pronounced them distinctively while conversing with their friends in Nepali. Based on the analysis of the transcribed data, the researcher has identified and grouped them different themes such as use of code meshing, influence on pronunciation, effect on lexical choice, impact on honorific words, influence on sexiest practice and impact on syntax. In addition, the researcher has explored the factors contributing to linguistic diversity and its implications for language teaching in the present study. All of them are detailed in the following subheadings.

Use of Code-meshing

Code-meshing is a common phenomenon in multilingual settings. People often freely mix words or sentences from different languages in multilingual contexts. It has been observed that many students incorporate words from various languages while speaking Nepali. Students in the study predominantly used words and phrases from English and Hindi into their Nepali conversations with friends. The use of a variety of words from different languages made students feel more comfortable in speaking Nepali but such mixed language reproduced a unique style of Nepali that differed from both standard Nepali and the Nepali spoken by their parents. If such mixed language continues to be used in Nepali conversations, it could give rise to a new dialect within the Nepali speech community (Gurung, 2018). It can be viewed as the effect of diversification within diversity (Lu, 2014).

The use of code-meshing was observed mostly in the informal communication situations. Regarding this, one of my informants said, '*timi kina late gareko hami timro intajarma kati dherai samaya bitayaun.*' In this sentence the speaker has used English word '*late*' and Hindi word '*intajarma*' when speaking Nepali language. Another informant said '*Aase Aase ma chandai aai hale don't be upset la guys.*' Here speaker, in these utterances mixes Newari word 'Aase' and English sentence '*don't be upset guys*' in the Nepali conversation to convey the meaning of I will come soon wait for a while. It is neither more like to Nepali language spoken by Newari people nor Nepali speaking people. Such types of mixed sentences contribute to a unique speaking style that makes speech distinct from the standard Nepali language. This is supposed to be the impact of super-diversity on the use of langue.

Technology-related terms were highly observed in the instances of code-meshing uttered by the informants. The informants predominantly used English words such as busy, add, mute, upload, react, unfriend, send, delete, message, block, recharge, copy, paste, share, and vibes while speaking Nepali. For instance one participant said, '*kavi kavi yastai hunchha hamile*

messege lastai share garepani yasle positive vibes diena jasto chha.' In another context one participant said '*gaana upload gareko dui minute nabhai kina delete gareko*?' These indicate that informants mix predominantly words related to technology in the Nepali conversation.

Based on the examples provided, it can be inferred that simply listening to the language does not easily reveal individuals' identities in today's context. Pure language is no longer common; instead, code-meshing has become a prevalent phenomenon among the younger generation. Super-diversity might be the underlying factor behind this phenomenon in language use. It can be stated that most of the younger generation has incorporated words from different languages while speaking Nepali, which represents a somewhat new way of using the language. This essentially indicates that linguistic diversity can be found everywhere nowadays. The main reason for mixing the elements from different languages is to facilitate conversation (Gurung, 2018). Mostly the words they borrowed from different languages were noun words (Chhetri, 2012). Such type of mixed language can develop a new dialect within the Nepali language community. It can be viewed as the effect of super-diversity on the use of language.

Influence on Pronunciation

It has been observed that participants' native languages affect their pronunciation of Nepali language. The informants from different speech communities pronounced the Nepali language with varying accents. More specifically speaking, the way of speaking Nepali language by Tamang people and the Nepali language spoken by Limbu were not heard in same accent. For instance, one of Tamang informants said, '*Aare ni ho Aaja ta ma tyam ma nai college aaeko thiye ni.*' Here the pronunciation of the English word 'time' as /tjɑːm/ could be attributed to the influence of Tamang language background." In the same way, one Limbu student said, '*how maile eso bichar garda unarko kura ta thikkai po dekhchhu ta'*. Here, the Limbu student pronounced the Nepali word *'uniharuko'*as '*unarko,*' probably due to the influence of the Limbu language background. In the same way one Rai student pronounced the words '*assi*' (i.e. eighty) as '*aassi'* and '''' pakako (i.e. cooked) as '*paakako*'. This indicates that Rai and Limbu speakers pronounce the Nepali 'a' sound as 'aa,' likely due to the influence of their native languages (Kaila, 2005).

Nowadays, pure Nepali is rarely heard among the younger generation. It is noticed that students rarely use pure Nepali pronunciation, particularly when discussing informal topics in the Nepali language. It was difficult to recognize which words were from which language because of the fluidity in their language. Their Nepali language appears to be a unique blend that is neither purely Nepali nor distinctly distorted. It seems like an emergence of new variation of the Nepali language. Such variations in the pronunciation of the Nepali language might be taken as the influence of super-diversity on language use. The frequent use of mixed words and distinctive pronunciation in Nepali has led to the development of a new dialect within the Nepali speech community (Gurung, 2018).

Effect on Lexical Choice

The effects of super-diversity on the word choice in spoken Nepali have also been noted in the study. Regarding this one of the participants said, '*maile timilai hijo bazaar ma hereko thiye.*' This was the utterance spoken by a student from Maithili speech community. In this instance, the informant chose the Nepali word '*hereko*' instead of '*dekheko*' it might be taken as the influence of his native language. In the same way, one of the informants from Athapahariya Rai speech community said, '*yo pharsi ko bota kati sarho phailieko ho.*' In this utterance, the speaker chose the word '*bota*' instead of '*lahara*'. The effect of his native language could be seen in his word choice in that there are no two different words to represent '*bota*' and '*lahara*' in the language of Athpahariya Rai. The illustrations clearly demonstrate the differences in the choice of lexical items due to the different language background.

From observation, it was noticed that most of the students were careless about their word choice in informal conversations. They all accepted such type of lexical choice as a natural part of language, as no one remarked on the incorrect use of words in their conversations. It appears to be a new variation of the Nepali language, likely influenced by super-diversity in language use. In this regard, the Nepali language seems to be affected by the framework established by the native languages of the informants (Whorf, 1956). The frequent use of such type of lexical choice in Nepali is likely to result in the emergence of a new dialect within the Nepali-speaking community (Gurung, 2018). Thus the impact of super-diversity can be observed in the choice of words used in the Nepali language.

Impact on Honorific Words

In the Nepali utterances of different ethnic groups, there is a noticeable influence of their mother tongues on the use of honorific terms. Most of the indigenous speakers failed to use the honorific words properly while speaking Nepali language. For instance one of the Limbu informants uttered, '*Sir aaunu bhaeko thiyo tara class chahi liyena. Bholi chahi padhaune hare.*' In this utterances, there is not appropriate use of honorific words such as he should have said '*linubhaena*' in the place of '*liyena*' and '*padhaunuhene*' in the place of '*padhaune are*'. In the same way, one Sherpa student uttered '*Dai harule karayo ho.*' From this utterance it can be concluded that the speaker had no idea about the proper use of honorific and non-honorific language while speaking Nepali language. It is supposed to be due to the cross linguistic influence. Such type of utterances makes Nepali language slightly different than standard Nepali that is viewed as the impact of super-diversity.

In the observations, it is noticed that there seemed to be a lack of proficiency in using honorific terms among students when speaking Nepali. Particularly most of the indigenous students failed to incorporate honorific terms accurately into their Nepali conversations. The influence of their mother tongues could be contributing to the difficulty indigenous students face in using honorific terms in Nepali. Although there was incorrect use of honorific terms, students did not seem to realize it in their communication and instead accept it as a natural part of the language. It simply implies that it is the influence of super-diversity in the use of Nepali

language. It shows that super-diversity can have a profound impact on language use, even among the younger generation.

Influence on Sexiest Practice

The term sexiest practice is used to refer to representation of gender in the use of languages. The sexiest practice was also observed in the way of speaking Nepali language by the speakers of different cultural groups. Mostly students from indigenous community failed to use sexiest practice appropriately while speaking Nepali. One of the Limbu students uttered, '*Sitale chaumin khayo.*' Here, the speaker used the verb '*khayo*' for feminine gender in the place of '*khain*'. He should have said '*Sitale chaumin khain'* for the appropriate use of Nepali language. In the same way, one Mager students said, '*malai aaja class hudaina bhanera Ramale malai bhaneko thiyo.*' This statement also indicates that there is not the appropriate use of gender while speaking Nepali Language. It could be attributed to the influence of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Different languages may have different conventions for the various aspects of language use. It has been observed that most of the students from diverse linguistic backgrounds spoke Nepali with unique styles in terms of the sexiest practice. They did not pay attention to using verbs according to gender. This often occurs primarily due to the influence of their mother tongues. Most of the indigenous languages do not have different verbs to realize the gender. As a result, indigenous students might use the same verb for both males and females when speaking Nepali. What is more interesting was that nobody noticed about incorrect use of verbs for female while speaking Nepali language. They all accept them as a natural part of language. It simply implies that there is the influence of super-diversity on the use of Nepali language regarding sexiest practice.

Impact on Syntax

The study found that participants' native languages influenced the grammatical structure of Nepali language. The informants from different speech communities uttered the Nepali language with different syntax. For instance, one of the Sherpa informants uttered, '*maile jun kura socheko thyo tyasalai garne.* ' Here the verb '*thyo*' has not been influenced as per subject in the sentence. He should have said /θiːe/ instead of '/ðjoʊ/' in that sentence. In the same way, another said '*so ahile uniharulai dekhdai dekhdaina'*. Here, the speaker used the verb *'dekhdai dekhdaina'* in the place of '*dekhindaina*' in the sentence. Likewise one informant from Limbu speech community uttered the sentence '*ekaichhin pakhana sathiharu audaichha'*. This sentence is grammatically incorrect because the subject and verb are not in concordance in this sentence. Such types of errors in the syntax of the Nepali language might be taken as the influence of their different language backgrounds. What was even more interesting is that none of the students commented on this type of grammatical error while speaking Nepali. These types of sentences contribute to a distinctive speaking style that sets their speech apart from standard Nepali. This is likely the impact of super-diversity on the use of Nepali language.

Causes of Linguistic Super-diversity

In the present study, several causes of linguistic super-diversity were observed. Based on various studies on linguistic super-diversity and the researcher's observations in the field study, it can be said that multilingual environment is the primary cause of linguistic super-diversity. In this study, the multilingual setting of Dhankuta bazaar is a significant factor contributing to linguistic super-diversity. Dhankuta bazaar is home to a diverse array of languages, including Athpariya, Tamang, Magar, Newar, Rai, Limbu, Bantawa, Maithili, Yakkha, Sherpa, Chamling, Sampang, Urdu, Gurung, Maithali, Hindi, Bhujel, Tharu, Chhiling, Bhojpuri, Kulung, Majhi, Khaling, Chhintang, Yamphu/Yamphe, Thulung, Rajasthani, Nachhiring, Bangla, and others. More specifically, factors such as migration from different socio-cultural groups, rapid technological advancements, globalization, political changes, and inter-caste marriages are considered potential causes of diversities in the use of Nepali language (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011; Tremlett, 2014). These factors play vital role to reshape, renegotiate, and reanalyze the Nepali language in such diverse forms. Super-diversity arises from rapid social transformations driven by factors such as inequality or social mobility, inter-caste marriage, migration, transnationalism, and the availability of resources and repertoires through the internet and communication technologies (Tremlett, 2014). Regardless of the reasons for its occurrence, multilingualism is a natural part of life for a large number of people globally (crystal, 2000).

Implication of Linguistic Super-diversity in Language Teaching

Based on various studies on linguistic super-diversity and my own experience as an English language teacher, understanding linguistic super-diversity has several educational implications for language instruction. Understanding linguistic super-diversity offers essential principles for effectively grasping language, helping learners acquire accurate knowledge and dispel misconceptions about language learning. Knowledge of linguistic super-diversity gives guidelines to researchers, linguists, textbook writers, methodologists, students, and teachers to explore, analyze, and interpret the way of speaking language. So, it serves as an additional backbone for setting goals, designing materials, conducting classroom activities, evaluating students, and providing remedial feedback in language teaching.

Teaching language with the association of linguistic super-diversity can equip students with a more comprehensive grasp of the language variations which allows them to experience their knowledge in authentic communication. For instance, Nepali and English are being learnt by the students of different linguistic background as a second or foreign language in Nepal. In such a case, teachers with a strong understanding of linguistic super-diversity can foster their language classes much better way by creating a more supportive and welcoming teaching and learning atmosphere in the classrooms. Therefore, all the concern authorities regarding foreign language teaching such as curriculum designers, textbook writers, teacher trainers, teachers and students should pay much attention to the concept of linguistic super-diversity in order to make successful language teaching and learning in Nepal.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the impact of super-diversity on the use of the Nepali language and investigated the potential causes of linguistic super-diversity in the context of Dhankuta Bazaar. This study has focused on how super-diversity influences the way of speaking Nepali language by the students from different cultural groups residing in Dhankuta. Research indicated that the traditional pure Nepali language is not as prevalent anymore; instead, code-meshing is widely practiced among the youth in the context of Dhankuta bazaar area. The manner of speaking Nepali varied among students based on their different linguistic backgrounds. The impact of super-diversity was particularly experienced on the code-meshing, pronunciation, lexical choice, honorific words, syntax and sexiest practice. Most students' way of speaking Nepali was somewhat different from both standard Nepali and the Nepali spoken by their parents. The repeated use of these utterances could contribute to the development of a new dialect within the Nepali-speaking community.

Nowadays, speaking at least two languages is increasingly popular globally. Furthermore, code-mixing in speech can be observed nearly everywhere due to the complexities of immigration, migration flows, globalization, and acculturation. In today's multilingual society, people's languages are being reshaped, renegotiated, and reanalyzed that lead diversification within diversity (Lu, 2014). The possible causes of linguistic super-diversity are supposed to be migration, politics globalization, religion, education, technology, culture, economics, multilingual societies, , inter-caste marriage and so on. Knowledge of linguistic super-diversity can contribute to enhance the effectiveness of language education.

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