A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Languages of Manang, Nepal: Co-existence & Endangerment

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**Introduction**

- With ± 100 languages from four major families (and at least one isolate), and close to as many caste-clan groupings, Nepal is a country of great diversity (CBS 2012; Kansakar 2006; Gurung 1998)

- Although it has a low population density in relation to its geographic area, the **Manang District** is also multi-lingual & multi-ethnic

- The rapid growth of a motor road has also precipitated population movements & introduced new contexts of language contact & viability

![Diagram of language family tree](image.png)
• Map designed by Shunfu Hu, with assistance from Prita Malla & Kanchan Karki


• [http://www.siue.edu/~shu/nepal7.html](http://www.siue.edu/~shu/nepal7.html)
THE MOTOR ROAD
Background

- Sociolinguistic survey: An assessment of speaker practices, attitudes & factors behind variation & mutual intelligibility across codes (Mallinson et al, eds 2013)

- Sociolinguistic surveys include investigations of lexico-grammatical similarity & differences, but they also include investigations of speaker attitudes, feelings & community ideologies about language

- Adjusted to Nepal: An assessment of language promotion or vulnerability in private & public contexts like schools, in written form and in advertising & official environments
In Nepal: There have been many surveys on individual languages

For example: Balami Newar (Pradhan 2012), Kinnauri (Negi 2012), Tamang (Thokar 2008), Baram (Kansakar et al 2009, 2011), Raji (Sah 2011), Byansi (Nawa 2004), Bantawa (Eppele 2011), Gurung outside Manang (Glover & Landon 1980)

Far fewer surveys on multilingual practices/attitudes in larger regional settings

Goals of This Survey

• Original plan: establish a ratio of interviewees across the languages based on village household counts (Quota sample)
• However: census household counts are unreliable, and many houses in certain villages are empty/abandoned, or else sub-let to recent arrivals (e.g. Lhomi, Gorkha, Thakali, etc.)
• Therefore our approach is a mixture of “Snowball” (interviewees help point us to additional interviewees) and “Sample of Convenience” (anyone who is available)
## Distribution of Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VDC</th>
<th>Gurung</th>
<th>Gyalsumdo</th>
<th>Manange</th>
<th>Nar-Phu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gyerang</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kotro~Karte</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dharapani</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thonce</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tilce</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nace</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tace</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bagarchhap~Danakju</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Temang~Thancowk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chame~Koto</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Pisang</td>
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<td>Humde</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braagaa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manang~Tengki</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Khangsar</td>
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<td>Ngawal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghyaaru</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gurung Villages

Thancowk
(Chongue ‘pine bridge-water’)

Oṭar
(U-nasa ‘cave village’)

9
Gurung Villages

Nace
(NA-SA ‘NOSE PLACE’)

Tace
(TO-KHA ‘RETURN PLACE’)

10
Gurung Villages

TEMANG
(temju ‘mushroom’)

GYERANG
(kyorang ‘place’)

11
Gyalsumdo Villages

Thonce
(tʰõ-ce ‘pine tree place’)

Bagarchap~Danakju
(tsap ‘??’; ‘hill-water’)
GYALSUMDO VILLAGES

CHAME (DISTRICT HQ)
(CE-ME ‘BRIDGE-LOCATION’)

13
Mixed Gurung/Gyalsumdo Villages

Dharapani
(‘catch/tap-water’)

Tilce
(‘mustard tree-place’)

14
Mixed Gurung/Gyalsumdo Villages

KOTO (‘Walnut’)

TAAL
(NAM-KYU ‘Sky-Water’)

KHOTRO
Nyeshangte/Manange Villages

Manang Village

Tengki Manang

Khangsar
Nyeshangte/Manange Villages

Ngawal (Pompa)

Ghyaaru (ya-Ru ‘yak horn’)

Ngawal (Pompa)
Nar and Phu Villages

Nar (Tshyprung)

Phu (Nartwe)
Interviews

Gurung

Gyalsumdo
Interviews

Manange

Nar

Phu
### Sample By Gender & Average Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>Gurung</th>
<th>Gyalsumdo</th>
<th>Manange</th>
<th>Nar-Phu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>Gurung</th>
<th>Gyalsumdo</th>
<th>Manange</th>
<th>Nar-Phu</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Sample By Degree of Formal Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Gurung</th>
<th>Gyalsumdo</th>
<th>Manange</th>
<th>Nar-Phu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1-9 years</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to SLC</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+2</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Sample By Reported Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Gurung</th>
<th>Gyalsumdo</th>
<th>Manange</th>
<th>Nar-Phu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/Tourism</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching/Student</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of Above</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired/None</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic Summary

- More males than females
- Gyalsumdo speakers are older on average (it’s difficult to locate adults between 18-35 years)
- Most interviewees have between “none and some” for formal education, but we also found Gurungs who had completed 10+2 level
- Occupations are largely of a mixed variety: agriculture & local business (hotels), although we did locate some teachers and government representatives
Methods

• Five sections: General & personal information; Family background & practices; Current family situation & practices; Work & education practices; Subjective contemporary [e.g. opinions on language/variety locations & mutual intelligibility, language prospects in different domains] and a question devised part-way in 2012: “In your opinion, is there only one language spoken throughout Manang, or several languages?”
• Interviews conducted in person, in Nepali, and audio-recorded
I. Self-Perceptions


- Manange: ISO NMM; endonyms ŋjeʃɑŋ, ŋjeʃɑŋte; exonyms Manangpa, Manangba, Manangbhot

- Nar-Phu: ISO NPA, endonyms tjʰypruŋ and nɑɾtœ; Phu evidences more phonological & lexico-grammatical affiliation with Tibetan but exogamy traditions and long-term contact gives Phu a “Tamangic air”
What Do You Call Your Language?

- **Mother Tongue Endonym**
  - **Gurung**
    - 94%
  - **Tamu**
    - 6%

- **Mother Tongue Endonym**
  - **Gyalsumdo**
    - 47%
    - 40%
    - 13%

- **Mother Tongue Endonym**
  - **Manange**
    - 39%
    - 39%
    - 22%

- **Mother Tongue Endonym**
  - **Nar-Phu**
    - 100%
**Gyalsumdo~Gurung Identifications**

**How Do Gurungs Refer to "Gyalsumdo" Language?**

- Gyalsumdo
- Lama (Bhaasa)
- Tibetan
- Bhoti (Bhaasa)
- No fixed idea
- Pweme

**How Do Gyalsumdos Refer to "Gurung" Language?**

- Gurung
**Lg Use in Private/Family/Local Contexts: Childhood**

**Manange**

- **What Language Did You Use With Your Parents When Growing Up?**
  - 100%

**Nar-Phu**

- **What Language Did You Use With Your Parents When Growing Up?**
  - 100%

**Gyalsumdo**

- **What Language Did You Use With Your Parents When Growing Up?**
  - 87%

- **Gyalsumdo Only**: 6%

- **Gyalsumdo With One Parent, Other T-B With Other**: 7%

- **Parents Died When Young**: 7%
Lg Use in Private/Family/Local Contexts: Spouse

**What Language Do You Use With Your Spouse? Gurung**
- Gurung: 74%
- Not Married: 12%
- Gurung & Nepali: 9%
- Nepali Only: 6%

**What Language Do You Use With Your Spouse? Gyalsumdo**
- Gyalsumdo: 94%
- N/A: 6%

**What Language Do You Use with Your Spouse? Manange**
- Manange only: 58%
- N/A: 21%
- Manange and some Nepali: 16%
- Nepali: 5%

**What Language Do You Use With Your Spouse? Nar-Phu**
- Nar-Phu: 38%
- Some Nepali: 31%
- N/A: 31%
**Lg Use in Private/Family/Local Contexts: Children**

**Gurung**
- 30% Gurung
- 30% Gurung & Nepali
- 21% Nepali Only
- 19% No Children/Contact

**Gyalsumdo**
- 44% Nepali
- 21% Gyalsumdo
- 21% No Contact
- 7% Gyalsumdo & Nepali
- 7% I speak Gyalsumdo, they respond Nepali

**Manange**
- 17% N/A
- 30% Manange
- 26% Manange & Nepali
- 9% Nepali
- 9% Manange but children answer in Nepali
- 4% Tibetan & Nepal
- 4% Nepali & English (child’s school medium)

**Nar-Phu**
- 23% Nar-Phu
- 23% Nepali
- 23% Nar-Phu & Nepali
- 21% N/A
Language Use in Public: Work

What Language(s) Do You Use At Work?

Gurung
- Gurung & Nepali: 44%
- Gurung: 24%
- Nepali: 12%
- Nepali, Gurung, English: 6%
- Hindi: 5%
- Nepali, Gyalsumdo, Gurung: 3%
- Nepali & English: 3%
- Nepali & Gyalsumdo: 3%

Gyalsumdo
- Gyalsumdo: 33%
- Nepali: 27%
- Not Working: 20%
- Gyalsumdo & Nepali: 13%
- Nepali & English: 7%

Manange
- Manange & Nepali: 65%
- Manange Nepali & English: 9%
- English & Manange: 9%
- Nepali: 9%
- Nepali & English: 4%
- Multiple: 4%

Nar-Phu
- Nar-Phu: 91%
- Nar-Phu & Nepali: 8%
Perceptions of Use Summary

• Interviewees seem to be accepting of Indic-originating language names
• Some interviewees refer to Gyalsumdo and Manange as “Gurung”
• Some interviewees refer to Gyalsumdo as “Tibetan”, but others see it as different (Gyalsumdos certainly do)
• Daily language use is largely M-T combined with Nepali
• In childhood, the language was almost exclusively M-T
• Language with spouse: Gurung & Gyalsumdo report M-T use exclusively, while Manange and Nar-Phu report mixed language use
• Language use with children leans more towards Nepali, or else the parents use the M-T and children respond in Nepali
• Language use in schools is overwhelmingly Nepali and at work the M-T is used if work is agriculture-based and local
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Nace is a ‘typical’ Gurung Village)

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Nace Village? Gyalsumdo

- Understand Most: 53%
- Understand Some: 27%
- Complete Comprehension: 13%
- No Comprehension: 7%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Nace Village? Manange

- Understand Some: 52%
- Understand All: 35%
- No Comprehension: 9%
- Understand Most: 4%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Nace Village? Nar-Phu

- Understand All: 85%
- Understand A Bit: 15%
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District
(Thonce is a ‘typical’ Gyalsumdo Village)

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Thonce Village?
Gurung

- Understand Some: 36%
- Complete Comprehension: 30%
- Understand Most: 15%
- No Comprehension: 12%
- No Idea About Thonce: 6%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Thonce Village?
Manange

- Understand Some: 43%
- No Comprehension: 22%
- Understand All: 26%
- Understand Most: 4%
- No Idea About Thonce: 4%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Thonce Village?
Nar-Phu

- Understand All: 69%
- Understand Some: 31%
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Nar is ‘the’ Nar-Speaking Village)

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Nar Village?
- Gurung:
  - Understand Some: 68%
  - Understand Most: 15%
  - Complete Comprehension: 8%
  - No Comprehension: 6%
  - No Idea About Nar: 3%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Nar Village?
- Gyalsumdo:
  - Understand Some: 67%
  - No Comprehension: 26%
  - Understand Most: 7%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Nar Village?
- Manange:
  - Understand Some: 48%
  - Understand All: 30%
  - No Comprehension: 22%
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Phu is ‘the’ Phu-Speaking Village)

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Phu Village?
Gurung

- Understand Some: 68%
- Understand Most: 23%
- Complete Comprehension: 3%
- No Comprehension: 3%
- No Idea About Phu: 3%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Phu Village?
Gyalsumdo

- Understand Some: 60%
- No Comprehension: 33%
- Understand Most: 7%

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Phu Village?
Manange

- Understand Some: 52%
- No Comprehension: 26%
- Understand All: 22%
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Manang is a ‘Typical’ Manange Village)

How Well Do You Understand Someone From Manang Village?
- Gurung:
  - Understand Some: 44%
  - Understand Most: 32%
  - Complete Comprehension: 15%
  - No Comprehension: 9%

- Gyalsumdo:
  - Understand Some: 86%

- Nar-Phu:
  - Understand All: 85%
  - Understand Some: 15%
One or Several Languages in Manang?

- In Gurung, 47% believe there is one language, 29% have no idea/opinion, and 24% believe there are different languages.
- In Gyalsumdo, 33% believe there is one language, 33% have no idea/opinion, and 33% believe there are different languages.
- In Manang, 26% believe there is one language, 26% have no idea/opinion, 22% believe there are different languages, 13% say Manang & Gurung are the same, 9% have no idea, and 4% believe only Gurung is different.
- In Nar-Phu, 77% believe there is one language, 23% have no idea/opinion.
Intelligibility Summary

- High intelligibility of Gurung language across groups
- Gyalsumdo report intelligibility of Gurung, but not the other way around
- Gyalsumdo report medium intelligibility of Manange and Nar-Phu
- Nar report high intelligibility of Manange, then Gurung, but they generally do not report intelligibility of Gyalsumdo
- Phu report higher intelligibility of Nar, and less so of other languages
- Mananges generally report intelligibility of Gurung and of Nar, less so of Phu and Gyalsumdo
Attitudes About Language: One National (Nepali) Language?

Should Nepal Have Only One Language for Formal Use?

- Gurung:
  - Disagree: 48%
  - Agree: 41%
  - Nice Idea, But No One Will Use It: 5%
  - Nice Idea, But Interpreter Needed: 3%
  - No Fixed Idea/No Opinion: 3%

- Gyalsumdo:
  - Disagree: 67%
  - Agree: 27%
  - No Opinion: 6%

- Manage:
  - Agree: 39%
  - Disagree: 52%
  - Agree, But There Are Practical Problems: 9%

- Nar-Phu:
  - Agree: 69%
  - Disagree: 31%
Attitudes About Language: Getting Ahead Financially

How Useful is Your Mother Tongue In Business Contexts?
Gurung

- Useful Generally: 50%
- Useful Locally Only: 29%
- Not Useful: 21%

How Useful is Your Mother Tongue In Business Contexts?
Gyalumdo

- Useful: 73%
- Not Useful: 13%
- No Opinion: 14%

How Useful is Your Mother Tongue In Business Contexts?
Manange

- Useful locally Only: 30%
- Not Useful: 26%
- Somewhat Useful: 21%
- Useful: 22%

How Useful is Your Mother Tongue In Business Contexts?
Nar-Phu

- Not Useful: 8%
Attitudes About Language: Importance to Cultural Identity

Is Your Mother Tongue Important To Your Culture?
Gurung

97% Agree
3% Disagree

Is Your Mother Tongue Important To Your Culture?
Gyalumdo

100% Agree
0% Disagree

Is Your Mother Tongue Important To Your Culture?
Manange

96% Strongly Agree
4% Only Tibetan is Important

Is Your Mother Tongue Important To You Culture?
Nar-Phu

100% Strongly Agree
Attitudes About Language: The Place of Local Languages in Local Schools

Would the Use of Your Language in Local Schools be Helpful or Hurtful?

Gurung

- Helpful: 76%
- No Opinion: 12%
- Hurtful: 6%
- It Would Be Difficult To Establish: 3%
- Could Be Optional In All Villages Except Chame: 3%

Gyalsumdo

- Will Help: 93%
- Other Response: 7%

Would the Use of Your Local Language in Local Schools be Helpful or Hurtful?

Manage

- Helpful: 43%
- Not Helpful/Hurtful: 26%
- No Strong Opinion: 17%
- Helpful if Materials Are Available: 13%

Nar-Phu

- Helpful: 54%
- Hurtful: 38%
- Helpful if Taught as L2: 8%
• Most interviewees disagree that Nepal should have only one official language—they would like to see their M-T used in contexts like banks, government offices, etc.

• But many of these are doubtful of the practicality of implementing this (no writing system, difficult to produce materials, etc.)

• Most interviewees see a value in their M-T in cultural contexts, but they don’t see it as economically beneficial, except for those whose occupations are solely placed in local domains and with fellow group members

• Mananges and Nar-Phu are doubtful of the usefulness of M-T in schools, or else they don’t see it being practical to implement
Attitudes Regarding Future Prospects: Future Users

**Will Children Continue To Learn Gurung?**

- Yes: 32%
- They Will Become Passive Users: 15%
- Yes, If They Remain in the Villages: 12%
- No: 12%
- Survival Depends on Role of Schools: 8%
- No Opinion/Idea: 6%
- Gurung Will Die Slowly (> 10 Years): 3%

**Will Children Continue To Learn Gyalsumdo?**

- Yes, If Children Stay in Villages: 40%
- No: 27%
- No Prediction: 20%
- They Will Be Passive Users: 14%

**Will Children Continue to Learn Manango?**

- Yes: 39%
- No: 26%
- Only if They Remain Local: 35%

**Will Children Continue To Learn Nar-Phu?**

- Yes, They Will Learn: 49%
- They Will Learn If They Remain in Nar-Phu Villages: 49%
- The Future of Nar-Phu is Uncertain: 2%
Attitudes Regarding Future Prospects: Advice For Promotion

**What Can Be Done To Promote Your Mother Tongue For Future Generations?**

**Gurung**
- Introduce M-T To Schools: 44%
- Promote/Force Use At Home: 26%
- Nothing Can Be Effective: 18%
- Document M-T With Materials For School: 9%
- No Extra Steps Necessary: 3%

**Gyalsumdo**
- Promote Language as Compulsory Subject at School: 27%
- Encourage/Require Children to Use at Home: 27%
- Develop Teaching Materials: 27%
- Promote Language as Optional Subject at School: 19%

**What Can Be Done To Promote Your Mother Tongue For Future Generations?**

**Manange**
- Parents Must Play The Main Role: 43%
- No Fixed Idea: 22%
- Introduce Language To Local Schools: 13%
- Parents and Local Schools Should Play a Combined Role: 13%
- Involve Children in Local Culture: 9%

**Nar-Phu**
- Introduce Language in Schools: 46%
- Parents Must Play a Role: 31%
- No Fixed Idea: 23%
• One hope is that this survey can rectify some mis-information about types & population numbers of languages in Manang

• Nepal CBS (2012) reports: Gurung with 226,000 speakers across the Western Development Region (where Manang is located); Manange has 392 speakers (but in the Central Development Region, where Manang is not located), “Tibetan” has 151 speakers in WDR, and Nar-Phu not counted; but Nar-Phu is noted by Tumbahang (2012) as “seriously endangered (83)” CBS reports of Manange populations appear to be low (< 400?)

• Our survey reports ca. 350 Gurung & 200 Gyalsumdo households in lower Manang, but counts are complicated by the influx of other groups into Chame, the exodus of local children to boarding schools outside of Manang, of adults to other parts of Nepal or overseas jobs; the houses are either abandoned or sub-let to families from western Nepal
Closing Observations

• At this point, most indicators point to Gyalsumdo & Nar-Phu as more threatened; Gurung population remains more stable, but it has undergone significant contact-induced language change
• Manange appears to be potentially endangered/endangered
• Landweer (2000): A language spoken within urban confines is more affected by those confines & thus is weaker than than a language whose speakers are in more remote areas
• But what counts as “urban” vs. “rural” in Manang? If Landweer is speaking of émigré speech communities in large metropolitan areas who are cut off from their larger/heritage speech network, then this is not the case for either community
• Manang is characterized by a continuous chain of semi-to-fully populated small to medium-sized villages, many of which are a patchwork of traditional & introduced languages
Also Landweer (2000): Home is the foundational social domain, followed by cultural events, then social events, so a vernacular vitality level is high if it is used in all domains; likewise, a strong ethnic identity facilitates survival

This is difficult to test in Manang; all languages show high levels of ethnic pride & identity; M-T is also favored in private/domestic environments

What might be happening here (particularly for Gyalsumdo & Nar-Phu)-- “boarding school/work emigration phenomenon”: children & adults leave Manang (& Nepal) to seek educational & employment opportunities. This is particularly significant for children, as it disrupts the acquisition-transmission cycle

Social-spatial factors should be considered as carefully as the “traditional/usual suspects” (exogamy, Nepali in schools, negative attitudes/oppression, majority language dominance) in language endangerment situations (cf. Angdembe 2012)
Our Project Team (2012-2014)

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