

A Sociolinguistic Study of the Nepali Language (As spoken in Sikkim)

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**By:
Krishna Maya Manger
2nd year, Exam Roll No: 280129
T.U. Reg. No: 6-3-28-103-2008**

**Central Department of Linguistics
Kathmandu, Nepal, 2012.**

Letter of Recommendation

Date:

This is to certify that Mrs. Krishna Maya Manger has completed the thesis on the topic **A Sociolinguistic Study of the Nepali Language (As Spoken in Sikkim)** under my guidance and supervision. I recommend this thesis for evaluation.

Bhim Lal Gautam
Teaching Assistant
Central Department of Linguistics
Tribhuvan University
Kathmandu, Nepal

Letter of Approval

This is to certify that **A Sociolinguistic Study of the Nepali Language (As Spoken in Sikkim)**, a thesis submitted by Mrs. Krishna Maya Manger, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Linguistics has been duly approved for acceptance.

Bhim Lal Gautam
Thesis Supervisor

External Examiner

Prof. Dr. Dan Raj Regmi
Head of the Department
Central Department of Linguistics
Tribhuvan University

Date:

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to present a sociolinguistic analysis of the Nepali language spoken in Sikkim. The goal of this study is to assess the sociolinguistic situation of the Nepali language in Sikkim, one of the Indian states. The tools utilized in this study are sociolinguistic questionnaires (A) and 210 wordlist prepared by Linguistic Survey of Nepal.

The study is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the general introduction, the objectives, the methodology, the significance and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 presents background information regarding the Nepali language and people of Sikkim. Chapter 3 analyzes the multilingualism and domains of language use. Chapter 4 deals with the dialect mapping, attitudes of the speakers, language endangerment and language loyalty. Chapter 5 analyzes the language variation, transmission and maintenance. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings of the study.

There are 11 indigenous languages (Bhutia, Lepcha, Limbu, Rai, Magar, Tamang, Newar, Gurung, Sherpa and Sunuwar) in Sikkim which have status of official languages. The Nepali language is *Lingua franca* or language for wider communication and is spoken by nearly 60% population of Sikkim as their first language. Most of the Sikkimese people are bilingual or multilingual as they speak more than one or two languages. They are bi/multilingual mostly in their respective ethnic languages, Hindi and English. The Nepali language in Sikkim is used in almost every domain like in household activities, in communication with other linguistic communities, in educational institutions, at local markets, in religious and official purposes etc. Most of the Nepali language speakers in Sikkim often code mix and switch to different languages in different situations. The languages in which they mix and switch code frequently are Hindi and English. The Nepali language speakers in Sikkim have positive attitude and high loyalty towards the Nepali language. There is no possibility of language loss or endangerment of Nepali language in Sikkim and the language is well maintained and transmitted to the younger generation.

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