

A Sociolinguistic Survey of Humla Tibetan in Northwest Nepal



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Abstract

The Humla Tibetan language [hut], spoken in the far northwest of Nepal, has received little scholarly attention. This report presents the results of sociolinguistic research conducted among the Tibetan-speaking communities in Humla District. The main goal of this research is to describe the primary dialect areas and investigate the relationships between them. Other goals are investigation of the ethnolinguistic identity, assessment of language vitality and understanding of the desires for development of the communities. In 2012 and 2013 three fieldwork trips were undertaken for data collection. During these trips seven sociolinguistic tools were used. These were word lists, informal interviews, knowledgeable insider questionnaires, Recorded Story Questions, observation schedule and two participatory method tools, namely Dialect Mapping and Appreciative Inquiry. This research found that the different speech varieties among the Tibetan-speaking villages of Humla District should be seen as dialects of the same language. Four dialects are identified, namely: the Limi dialect (Til, Halji and Jang), the Upper Humla dialect (from Yari to Yalbang), the Lower Humla dialect (from Kermi to Kholsi to Tanggin), and the Eastern Humla dialect (from Burangse to Dojam). Attitudes towards the Limi dialect are the most positive. The intelligibility of the Limi dialect has the widest reach geographically. Most indicators show some cohesiveness among all the Tibetan speakers in Humla, but not strong. The language proficiency and vitality is high and the EGIDS level is correctly documented in the Ethnologue as being 6a (Vigorous). People seem interested in the possibility of learning to read and write their own language. The data suggests that it would be especially important to develop two products when creating oral materials. The two dialects that would be most helpful for this are the Limi dialect and the Eastern Humla dialect. However, it may be possible to develop one written standard that most people will be able to understand well. More research and discussion is needed.

नेपालको सुदूर उत्तर-पश्चिममा बोलिने हुम्ली तिब्बती भाषा(हट)मा कमै मात्रामा शैक्षिक ध्यान पुगेको छ । यस प्रतिवेदनमा हुम्ला जिल्लाको तिब्बती भाषा बोलिने समुदायमा संचालित भाषिक-सामाजिक अनुसन्धानबाट प्राप्त परिणामहरू प्रस्तुत गरिएका छन् । यस अनुसन्धानको प्रमुख लक्ष्य विशेष भाषिक क्षेत्रहरूको प्रारम्भिक स्थानको बारेमा बयान गर्नु तथा तिनीहरू बीचको सम्बन्धहरूबारे खोजी गर्नु हो । अन्य लक्ष्यहरू जनजातीय भाषिक पहिचानको अन्वेषण गर्ने, भाषिक सजीवता जाँच्ने र तथा समुदायहरूको बिकासका आकांक्षाहरूबारे जानकारी लिने हुन् । सन् २०१२ र २०१३ मा तथ्याङ्क संकलनका लागि तीनवटा फिल्ड-भ्रमणहरू(ट्रिप) सम्पन्न गरिएका थिए । यी ट्रिपहरूका अवसरहरूमा सातवटा सामाजिक-भाषिक औजारहरू प्रयोगमा ल्याइएका थिए । यी औजारहरू, शब्दसूचीहरू, अनौपचारिक अन्तर्वार्ताहरू, ज्ञानवर्धक भित्रका प्रश्नावलीहरू, टेपमा भरिएका कथाका प्रश्नहरू, पर्यवेक्षण तालिका तथा दुइटा सहभागीमूलक तरिकाका औजारहरू अर्थात स्थानविशेषको भाषाको नक्शाङ्कन तथा स्वीकारजन्य सोधपुछहरू थिए । यस अनुसन्धानमा यस्तो पाइयो कि हुम्ला जिल्लाका तिब्बती भाषा बोल्ने गाउँहरूका फरक फरक बोलीहरूका किसिमहरूलाई एउटै भाषाका स्थानविशेषको बोलीको रूपमा हेरिनुपर्छ । पहिचान गरिएका स्थान विशेषका बोलीहरू, अर्थात लिमीको बोली (तिल्, हाल्जी र जाङ्ग), उपल्लो हुम्लाको बोली (यारीदेखि यालबाङ्गसम्म), तल्लो हुम्लाको बोली (केर्मीबाट खोल्सी र ताङ्गगीनसम्म), तथा पूर्वी हुम्लाको बोली (बुराङ्गसेबाट दोजामसम्म) हुन् । लिमी बोली तर्फको भुकाव (मनोबृत्ति) सबभन्दा सकारात्मक छ । लिमी बोलीको बोधगम्यताको भौगोलिक पहुँच सबभन्दा फराकिलो छ अर्थात यसको पहुँचले धेरै ठाउँ ओगटेको छ । धेरै परिसूचकहरूले हुम्लाका सबै तिब्बती बोल्नेहरू बीचमा कुनै किसिमको सम्बन्ध भएको तर त्यति बलियो नभएको देखाउँछ । भाषिक प्रवीणता तथा सजीवता उच्च छ र मानवशास्त्रमा EGIDS तह ६क (भीषण) भएको कुरा यथार्थरूपमा उल्लेख गरिएको छ । त्यहाँका मानिसहरूको आफ्नो भाषामा लेख्न र पढ्न सिक्ने अभिरुची भएको देखिन्छ । अत्याधिक संख्याका मानिसहरूलाई दुइवटा विकास परियोजनाहरूद्वारा सेवा पुऱ्याउनु सकिन्छ । भाषा बिकास कार्यक्रम लिखित सामग्रीहरू र साक्षरताद्वारा शुरू गर्ने प्रयास गर्न सकिन्छ । त्यस अवस्थासम्म पुग्नका लागि समुदायहरूद्वारा विकासको मौखिक रूपलाई ग्रहण गर्नेछन् । यी कुराहरूले समुदायहरूको हिज्जे लेखन कार्यको विकास गर्ने आकांक्षाहरूलाई सशक्त पार्न र साक्षरता कार्यक्रम तथा बहुभाषिक शिक्षा प्रयास शुरू गर्न सक्छ ।

Preface

When I arrived in Nepal for the first time in March 2008, I could not have imagined the journey that was ahead of me. As a cultural anthropology student I had experience in rural Guatemala and rainforest West-Papua, Indonesia. Nepal offered a totally different experience again. I decided to try to come back to live and work here. Now, six years later, I have had the opportunity to conduct research among the Humla Tibetan communities in western Nepal.

This sociolinguistic survey of the Humla Tibetan varieties of western Nepal was conducted in close partnership with the language documentation research that is being done by David Greninger. The data collection portion of this survey was carried out in June and October of 2012 and in June 2013 in Humla District of Nepal. The purpose of the survey is to provide more detailed information regarding the linguistic and sociolinguistic relationships among the Humla Tibetan communities, in order to support the language development and cultural preservation efforts of Humla Tibetans and provide information to the broader academic community. I trust that this report accurately reflects the data we collected. However, any comments and suggestions are welcomed.

I greatly appreciate the many people who contributed to the completion of this language survey. With encouragement and direction from David Greninger, we were able to prepare well for fieldwork, and during fieldwork David's participation was invaluable. John Eppele has been the key consultant in thinking through the research methodology and planning for the fieldwork. He also joined the team on the second trip and helped out with administering most of the tools. My colleague Stephanie Eichtopf was a great mentor during our first trip, showing me how to handle the many different situations encountered during fieldwork and encouraging me through eliciting my first word list and doing my first informal interview. My other colleagues, Holly Hilty and Jessi Mitchell, also helped in preparing me for fieldwork, editing my report writing and cheering me on along the way.

Special thanks goes to Nurpu Bhote, who was with us during two field trips and whose contacts and experience in Humla were key to a successful completion of our data collection. He not only knew the right persons to contact in all the villages, he also led most of the Participatory Methods tools and helped out with translation and communication when that was needed. Similarly, Than Bahadur Rawat from Simikot has been an amazing guide during the field trips; he administered some Participatory Methods tools and also helped out with translation and communication. Pasang Dolker Lama played a key role as language helper during the third field trip.

Of course, the most thanks go to the Humla Tibetan people whom we met during our visits. I thank you for your hospitality, your willingness to sit through long interviews or word lists, and your positive attitude towards us people from the outside, who asked strange questions. I hope this report will contribute greatly to your efforts for language development and that it may help you to be even more proud of your language and culture. Ultimately, that is why I wrote this report.

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जब म सन् २००८ मा नेपालमा पहिलो पटक आएको थिएँ, त्यस बखत मैले मेरो आगामी यात्रा कस्तो हुन्छ होला भनेर कल्पनासम्म पनि गर्न सकेको थिइन । एउटा सांस्कृतिक मानवशास्त्री विद्यार्थीको रूपमा मसँग ग्वाटेमाला, पश्चिमी पपुवा र इण्डोनेशियाको अनुभव थियो । नेपालमा मैले पूर्णरूपले फरक किसिमको अनुभव पाएँ । मैले यहाँ फर्केर आएर बस्ने र काम गर्न कोशिस गर्ने निर्णय गरेँ । अहिले ६ वर्ष पछि पश्चिम नेपालको हुम्ला तिब्बती समुदायहरूको अनुसन्धान संचालन गर्ने अवसर पाएको छु ।

पश्चिम नेपालको हुम्ला तिब्बती समुदायको यस सामाजिक—भाषिक सर्वेक्षण डेविड ग्रेनिङ्गरद्वारा गरिएको भाषिक अनुसन्धानको दस्तावेजको निकटतम सम्पर्कमा रहेर संचालन गरिएको थियो । यस सर्वेक्षणको तथ्याङ्क संकलन अंश चाहिँ सन् २०१२ को जून र अक्टोबरमा र जून २०१३ मा नेपालको हुम्ला जिल्लामा संचालन गरिएको थियो । यस सर्वेक्षणको उद्देश्य हुम्ला तिब्बतीहरूको भाषिक विकास तथा सांस्कृतिक संरक्षणलाई टेवा दिन तथा शैक्षिक समुदायलाई व्यापक जानकारी दिनका लागि हुम्ला तिब्बती समुदायहरूको भाषिक तथा सामाजिक—भाषिक सम्बन्धहरूबारे अरु बिस्तृत जानकारी दिनु हो । मलाई विश्वास छ कि यस प्रतिवेदनले हामीले संकलन गरेको तथ्याङ्कको यथार्थ प्रतिविम्ब गर्छ । जे होस्, कुनै पनि टिका—टिप्पणी र सुझावहरूलाई स्वागत गरिन्छ ।

म यस भाषिक सर्वेक्षण सम्पन्न गर्न योगदान दिनुहुने समस्त महानुभावहरूमा आभार व्यक्त गर्न चाहन्छु । डेविड ग्रेनिङ्गरको हौसला तथा निर्देशनले हाम्रो फिल्डको कामको तयारी गर्न हामी सक्षम भयौँ र फिल्डवर्कको समयमा डेविडको सहभागिता अमूल्य थियो । सारा अनुसन्धान पद्धतिको बिचार गर्ने फिल्डवर्कको योजना निर्माण सम्बन्धमा जोन एप्पिली प्रमुख परामर्शदाता हुनुभएकोछ । दोश्रो यात्रामा उहाँ पनि सहभागी हुनु भयो र अधिकतम औजारहरूको प्रशासनिक काममा उहाँले सहयोग पुऱ्याउनुभयो । पहिलो यात्राको लागि मेरी सहकर्मी स्टेफेनी आइकानतोफ अनुभवशील सल्लाहकार भएर काम गरिदिनुभयो र उहाँले मलाई फिल्डवर्कमा हुँदा कैयौँ फरक फरक परिस्थितिहरूको कसरी सामना गर्ने त्यो देखाइदिनुभयो र मेरो पहिलो शब्दसूची तयार पार्न र मेरो पहिलो अनौपचारिक अन्तर्वार्ता तयार पार्न प्रोत्साहन पनि दिनु भयो । मेरा अन्य सहकर्मीहरू हली हिल्ली र जेसी मिचेलले पनि मलाई मेरो फिल्डवर्कको तयारी गर्ने, प्रतिवेदन लेख्दा सम्पादन गरिदिने तथा कामको शिलशिलामा प्रोत्साहन गरिदिएर सहयोग दिनुभयो ।

नुर्पू भोटे जो हाम्रो दुइवटै फिल्ड यात्रामा सँगै हुनुहुन्थ्यो र जसको हुम्लामा सम्पर्क र अनुभव हाम्रो तथ्याङ्क संकलन सफलतापूर्वक सम्पन्न गर्न प्रमुख थियो, उहाँलाई बिशेष धन्यवाद दिन चाहन्छु । उहाँले सम्पूर्ण गाउँको उपयोगी मान्छे चिनेको मात्र होइन कि सहभागीमूलक पद्धतिको औजारहरूमध्ये धेरैजसोको नेतृत्व पनि गरिदिनुभयो र आवश्यक पर्दा उल्था र संचारको काममा पनि सहयोग गरिदिनुभयो । त्यसै गरी सिमीकोटका थान बहादुर राउतले फिल्डको यात्रामा हुँदा एकदम राम्रो गाइडको काम गरिदिनुभयो र उहाँले केही सहभागीमूलक पद्धतिको औजारहरूको प्रशासनिक कार्य गरिदिनुभयो साथै संचार र उल्थाको काममा पनि सहयोग गरिदिनुभयो । तेस्रो फिल्ड यात्राको समयमा पासाङ् डोल्कर लामाले भाषाको सहयोगीको रूपमा प्रमुख भूमिका खेलिदिनुभयो ।

निश्चयनै हाम्रो विशेष धन्यवाद, हाम्रो भ्रमणको बेलामा हामीले भेटेका हुम्ला तिब्बती मानिसहरूलाई छ । तपाईंहरूको आतिथ्य, लामा लामा अन्तर्वार्ताभरि र शब्दसूची बनाउँदा बसिदिने इच्छा, र बाहिरबाट आएका मानिस हामीहरू जसले एकदम अनौठा प्रश्नहरू सोध्छन् उनीहरूप्रतिको सकारात्मक मनोबृत्तिको लागि म धन्यवाद दिन चाहन्छु । मलाई आशा छ कि यस प्रतिवेदनले तपाईंको भाषा विकासको प्रयासलाई ठूलो योगदान दिनेछ र तपाईंलाई तपाईंको आफ्नो भाषा र संस्कृति प्रति गौरवान्वित हुन मद्दत गर्नेछ । अन्ततोगत्वा, यही कारणले मैले यो प्रतिवेदन लेखेको हुँ ।

मार्च २०१४,
क्लास एच डि ब्रिस
काठमाडौँ, नेपाल

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1 Introduction¹

The Tibetan peoples of Humla District are Nepalese citizens, but culturally are Tibetan. They share many characteristics, both cultural and linguistic, with the nearby Tibetan populations in Nepal and the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China. However, the Humla Tibetans have developed their own unique cultures and linguistic varieties. Previous anthropological research has established that the Humla Tibetan community is comprised of a set of interrelated communities that are distinct from yet related to each other and to the neighboring Tibetan communities in the TAR to the west and north and in Mugu District to the south and east. It is believed that Humla Tibetan is a Central Tibetan language similar to other Tibetan languages spoken in Nepal (Lewis 2009). However, up to this point, the Humla Tibetan language has received little scholarly attention. The only available linguistic analysis of Humla Tibetan is Chris Wilde's phonology of the Limi variety (2001). Based on interviews conducted in Kathmandu and a review of the available anthropological literature, Wilde (2001:5-7) posits five varieties of Tibetan spoken as mother-tongues by Humla Tibetans: Nyinba, La Yakba, Upper Humla, Limi and Humli Khyampa (a nomadic group). But no studies are available which focus on the sociolinguistic situation of the Humla Tibetans.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to provide more detailed information regarding the linguistic and sociolinguistic relationships among the Humla Tibetan communities, in order to support the language development and cultural preservation efforts of the Humla Tibetans and provide information to the broader academic community. We hope that with this report we will contribute to the objective of the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LinSuN) of Tribhuvan University of producing “a sociolinguistic profile for each of the languages of Nepal” (LinSuN Proposal 2008).

1.2 Overview of the report

The remainder of chapter 1 reviews the available literature on Humla Tibetan varieties. Chapter 2 covers the goals for this research and the methodology used. Chapter 3 is about dialect variation. In this latter chapter we will look at dialect and language identification, dialect attitudes and dialect intelligibility. Chapter four is on ethnolinguistic identity. Chapter five is about language vitality and EGIDS level and Chapter six is about desires for development. The report finishes with a chapter summarizing the findings and recommendations.

1.3 Terminology

There does not seem to be a widely accepted cover term for all the Tibetan peoples and language varieties of Humla. For the Tibetan peoples of Humla, Fürer-Haimendorf

¹ This sociolinguistic research has been done in conjunction with language documentation research on the Humla Tibetan varieties by David Greninger. His research is being done in collaboration with the Central Department of Linguistics of Tribhuvan University and is, at the time of writing, still ongoing.

(1988:269) uses the Nepali term *bhotia* 'Tibetan' in the phrases "Bhotias of Humla" and "Humla Bhotias". Levine (1988) employs the cover term "Humla Tibetan" to refer to both the culturally Tibetan peoples of Humla and the language they speak. Van Driem (2001) says that the Tibetan people of Humla are called "Limirong Tibetans" and he calls the language "Limirong". In addition, he states that, in the Nepali language, Limirong Tibetans are known as *humli tamang* (Van Driem 2001:856). "Humli Tamang" is also the term that Bradley (1997:5) uses. Wilde (2001:4) comments:

Though the term Humla Bhotia is in itself derogatory, my language informant ... referred to her own language using this name ... Humla Bhotia could be regarded as an acceptable cover-term for the whole language in that it reflects both the location of the language area and the genetic affiliation of the language.

However, a few lines later, Wilde states that the same informant who used *Humla Bhotia* also utilized the term *phoke* (a standard term meaning 'Tibetan language') because she was "unaware of any other term which would cover the language as a whole" (ibid.). In the Ethnologue, the Tibetan language spoken in Humla is simply labeled as "Humla" (Lewis 2009).

Tshewang Lama, a Humla Tibetan speaker from the Nyinba area, mentions three terms that have commonly been utilized in Humla to refer to all Humla Tibetans: *jad*, *thapalya*, and *bhod*. The Nepali word "Jad" is a derogatory term used to describe "people who come from the higher cold regions". A more polite Nepali term is Thapalya, which means "those who don't follow the caste system". Finally, Thapalya people refer to themselves in their own language as Bhod (Lama 2012:34-35).

Although outsiders have employed a number of different terms to refer to the Tibetan people and the language of Humla, it is unclear if there is a widely accepted insider term that covers all the Tibetan varieties of Humla. Based on the available research, it seems that mother-tongue speakers call their language 'Tibetan' using some variation of the Nepali term *bhotia* or the Tibetan term *phoke*.

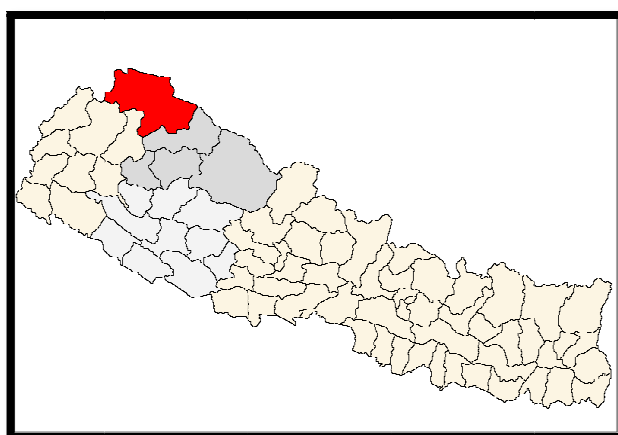
In this report, the term *Humla Tibetan* will be utilized as a cover term for the Tibetan people and language of Humla. In this chapter, we will use the term *variety* rather than *dialect* or *language*, thus maintaining a neutral position on the question of whether these varieties are dialects of the same language or a cluster of closely related languages. Later we will come to some conclusions based on our research.

1.4 Geography

The Humla Tibetan varieties are spoken in the far northwest of Nepal in the Humla District of the Karnali Zone. The Karnali Zone forms the northern part of the Mid-Western Region.

The districts of Nepal are shown in Figure 1.

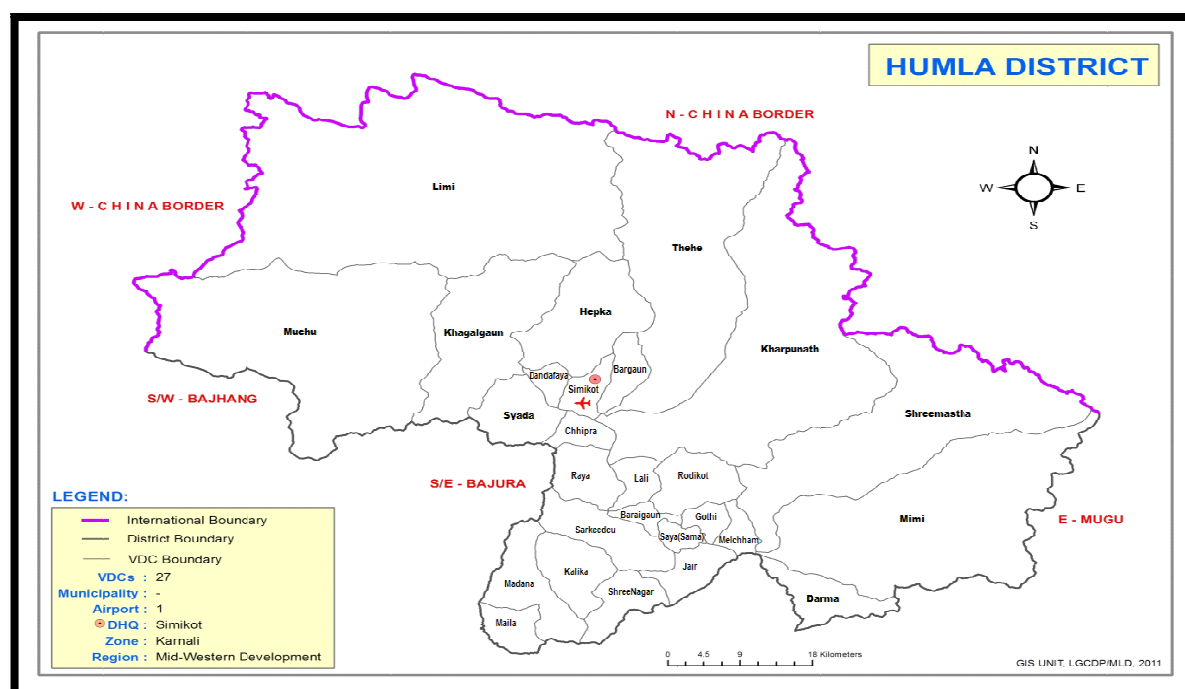
Figure 1: Map of Nepal²



Humla District is in the far top left of the map highlighted in red. The neighboring districts of the Karnali Zone are shaded in grey while the southern part of the Mid-Western Region is in light grey. Humla borders the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China to the west and north. Bajhang, Bajura, and Mugu Districts of Nepal border Humla to the south. Mugu District also borders Humla to the east.

A map of Humla District is shown in Figure 2 with the boundaries and names of all the Village Development Committees (a VDC is the smallest administrative unit in Nepal).

Figure 2: Map of Humla District and VDCs³

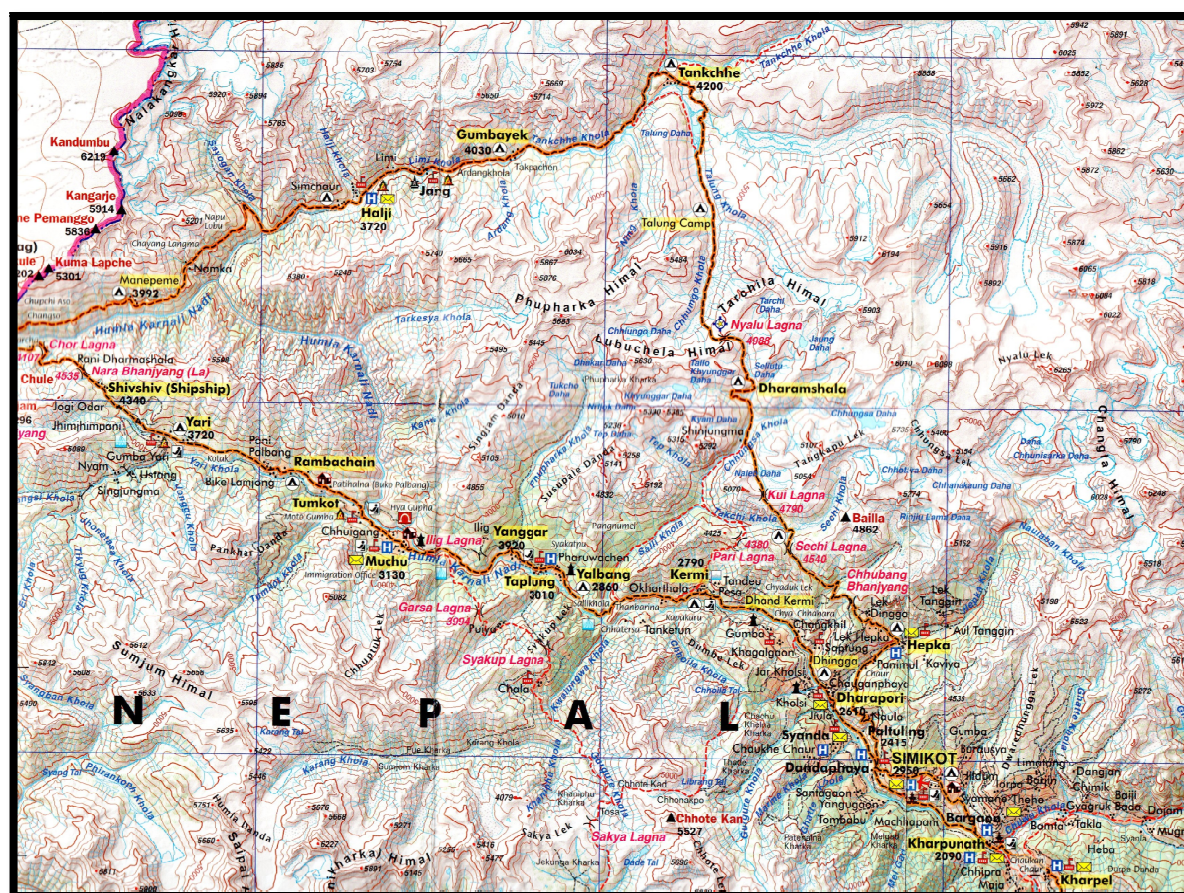


² District map of Nepal highlighting Humla District, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ao/Humla_district_location.png (Accessed 29 November 2013)

³ Map of Humla District, <http://www.wupap.gov.np/Districts/4> (Accessed 10 February 2014). Edited, so the VDC names are legible.

The areas of Humla District inhabited by ethnic Tibetans are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Map of Humla Tibetan Area⁴



The main river in the region is the Humla Karnali, which crosses into Nepal at the western China-Nepal border at the town of Hilsa and flows southeast toward Simikot. From Simikot, the river runs south towards Mugu District. The Humla Tibetan communities are located to the east, north, and northwest of Simikot primarily along the trails leading to the China border.

1.4.1 East of Simikot

Two Humla Tibetan communities live in the VDCs just to the east of Simikot town. Traveling east from Simikot, the first group is the Nyinba. The Nyinba live in Simikot VDC and Bargaun VDC. They are known as *nyin yul tshan zhi* 'the four Nyin villages' by other Humla Tibetans. The term *nyin* "refers both to daytime and the warm valleys on the south face of mountain slopes" (Levine 1988:21). In Nepali, the Nyinba cluster of villages is also known as *bara-thapalya* (Lama 2012:35) or *barthapale* (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270).

⁴ Map of Humla Tibetan area extracted from the trekking map, Simikot to Kailash/Manasarovara published by Nepal Maps Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Kathmandu, Nepal. Later in this report we use variations on this map.

Nyinba inhabit villages between 9,500 feet (2896m) and 11,000 feet (3353m). This cluster begins about two kilometers east of Simikot and includes the villages of Trangshod (Buraungshe), Todpa (Turpa), Nyimatang (Limatang) and Barkhang (Baragaon). The hamlets of Madangkogpo, Langlo, and Wutig are also inhabited by Nyinba (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270; Levine 1988:21-23).

Then going east from the Nyinba area, following along to the north of the Chuwa Khola, one enters Thehe VDC. Then after passing through a few villages inhabited by non-Tibetan-speaking peoples, one arrives in the Tsang Valley, also known as Dojam. The inhabitants of Dojam are a separate group of Humla Tibetans called Tsangba or Dojami (Lama 2012:35).

1.4.2 Tugchulungba

Traveling northwest from Simikot the main trail follows the Humla Karnali Nadi (river) and passes through a number of villages inhabited by non-Tibetan-speaking peoples. The next group of Humla Tibetan villages north of Simikot is located near the Hepka Khola in Hepka VDC. Some of the villages are also located near the Humla Karnali as it turns west into Khagalgaun VDC. This cluster of villages is called *tugchulungba* in Tibetan, meaning 'the land of 60 rivers', and *sathikhole* in Nepali (Lama 2012:35,78-80). Wilde (2001:6) labels the language variety spoken in this area as La Yakpa. The Tugchulungba area includes seven main villages: Hepka (Yakpa), Tangin (Tangen), Dhinga, Chyaduk (Chyaduki), Jar Kholsi (Jadkholchi), Khangalgaon and Kermi⁵ (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270). The main trail from Simikot northwest to the Chinese border at Hilsa does not pass through any of the Tugchulungba villages except for Kermi. On the main trail from Kermi northwest to Hilsa, the villages are inhabited almost exclusively by ethnic Tibetans (Pritchard-Jones and Gibbons 2007:82-86).

1.4.3 Yultsodunba

Following the Humli Karnali river northwest past Kermi, one reaches another group of Humla Tibetans known in Nepali as *saththapale* (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270) or *sat thapalya* and in Tibetan as *yultshodunba*, meaning 'people from the cluster of seven villages' (Lama 2012:35,80). The variety of Tibetan they speak has been named "Upper Humla" by Gurung (1979:103) and Wilde (2001:6). From southeast to northwest, the villages of Yalbang, Yanggar, and Muchu are situated along the Humli Karnali. After Muchu, the Humli Karnali turns north as the Yari Khola continues northwest past the villages of Tumkot (Tumo/Tumbo), Yari (East) and Yari (West). The seventh village, Chala, is located south of Yalbang along the Kwalungwa Khola. The trail to Chala climbs southeast from Muchu and crosses the Garsa and Syakup passes (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270, Wilde 2001:5-7).

The main trail from Simikot northwest to Hilsa follows the Humli Karnali until Muchu. Then it continues along the Yari Khola until just after Yari (West). At that point, the trail climbs up to the Nara Pass (4535m) and back down to the border town of Hilsa (3600m).

⁵ In contrast, Wilde (2001) includes Kermi in the Upper Humla dialect area.

1.4.4 Limi

At the border town of Hilsa, the main trail once again meets up with the Humla Karnali river. To reach the Limi-speaking villages from Hilsa, one must follow the Humla Karnali northeast until the Namka Pass (4300m). After Namka, the Humla Karnali turns southeast towards Muchu while the main trail to the Limi valley continues northeast following the Limi Khola. According to Lama (2012:35), the Limi area is also known as *limya* or *limyal*. The three main Limi villages west to east are Til, Halji (Waltse), and Jang (Zang). All three villages are situated along the Limi Khola. Following the main trail from Hilsa, it takes approximately 12-15 hours⁶ to reach Halji, the largest Limi village (Limi Youth Club:1,4; Nurpu Bhote, p.c. April 2011).

The shortest route from Limi to Simikot starts at Jang and goes northeast along the Limi Khola and Tankchhe Khola until reaching the Tankchhe camp site (4200m). From there the trail continues south and crosses a series of high passes: Nyalu (4988m), Kui (4790m), Sechi (4540m) until entering the Tugchlungba area (Hepka VDC). This trail meets up with the main Humla Karnali trail at Tuling and then turns south into Simikot (Pritchard-Jones and Gibbons 2007:87-88). The short route from Jang to Simikot takes three to five days depending on the weather and the load, but it is impassable between mid-November and mid-April. In fact, all the routes from Limi to the rest of Nepal are impassable during the winter. However, there is access from Limi to the Purang region of Tibet all year round (Limi Youth Club:4-5).

1.4.5 Humli Khyampa areas

The nomadic Humli Khyampa reportedly maintain temporary winter settlements in districts south of the Karnali Zone (e.g., Surkhet and Achham). During the summer months, they take their animals to Humla and Purang to graze, at which time men engage in regional trading activities (Wilde 2001:6, Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:285). The Humli Khyampa areas were not a focus of the research. However, some questions were asked about the migration patterns and cultural practices of the Humli Khyampa when they were in Humla.

1.5 People and Language

A few anthropological studies were conducted among Humla Tibetans in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these focus on either Limi (Goldstein 1975) or Nyinba (Levine 1982 and 1988). A study of the Humli-Khyampas (called Dangali Khambas by Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:284-285) was conducted by Rauber (1980). More general cultural descriptions are found in Fürer-Haimendorf (1988:236-285), who provides a brief ethnographic survey of the Humla region with a focus on trade, and in Ross (1983), who discusses the changes in the cross-Himalayan salt trade. More recently Tshewang Lama (2012) has written about Humla Tibetans with a focus on his own ethnic group, the Nyinba. The Limi Youth Club published a non-academic magazine (*Limi, The Hidden Valley*) with cultural information on the Limi valley and Limi people. Although not officially dated, based on dates in the magazine and when the copy was presented, the guess is it was published around 2010. Astrid Hovden is conducting her PhD research on the Limi valley. Her focus is on the relationship between the

⁶ It seems that this estimate is for those not accustomed to high-altitude trekking. I have heard various shorter estimates for those who engage in high-altitude trekking on a regular basis.

village and the monastery. The project is named *Rituals of Rinchenling: A study of reciprocal relations between monastery and village in Limi, north western Nepal*⁷. Martin Saxer (2013) published an article, *Between China and Nepal: Trans-Himalayan Trade and the Second Life of Development in Upper Humla*, that discusses the problems of benevolent development initiatives that do not produce the desired outcome. One problem he mentions is the use of Nepali instead of the local language for engaging communities. We hope this current research is a step towards figuring out in what ways development efforts can be more effective and relevant.

The only linguistic analysis of Humla Tibetan language varieties has been Chris Wilde's phonology of the Limi variety (2001). He distinguishes five varieties, namely Limi, Upper Humla, La Yakba, Nyinba and possibly Humli Khyampa (Wilde 2001:5-7). No sociolinguistic studies are available. This section provides a brief introduction to the Humla Tibetan peoples and language varieties based on the available literature and informal interviews.

1.5.1 Demographics

Wilde (2001:5) estimates that there are approximately 4000-5000 Humla Tibetan speakers. Figure 4 shows the population count according the 2011 census data plus an estimate of the Dojam population based on the interview with the leader in Dojam.

Figure 4: Population count for Humla Tibetan⁸

Geographic area/VDC	Population in Census 2011
East of Simikot	738 (Bargaun VDC)
	232 (Dojam – estimate based on interview with leader in Dojam – 58 houses times 4 people)
Tugchulungba	2080 (Hepka and Khagalgaun VDCs)
Yultsodunba	916 (Muchu VDC)
Limi	904 (Limi VDC)
Total:	4870

Recent demographic information on Humli Khyampa is currently not available. In the table we might have missed some Humla Tibetans living in Simikot VDC. A rough estimate of the total Humla Tibetan population is then 5000.

1.5.2 Social Structure

Fürer-Haimendorf (1988:270) remarks that the feature that most clearly distinguished the Humla Tibetans from other Tibetan communities in Nepal is "their division into named

⁷ For more detail about her research project, see the following webpage: <http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/doctoral-degree-and-career/phd-projects/hovden-astrid/index.html> (Accessed on 4 March 2014)

⁸ National Population and Housing Census, 2011, <http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/National%20Report.pdf> (Accessed on 10 February 2014)

clusters of villages of unequal status which affects the rules of intermarriage." These clusters of villages roughly correspond to the varieties posited by Wilde (2001:8) and the sub-ethnic groups that Lama (2012:35) lists. (See section 1.4 for the names and locations of the main villages of each group). Figure 5 shows the names of these clusters and their corresponding language variety and groups.

Figure 5: Humla Tibetan clusters

Fürer-Haimendorf's clusters	Wilde's language varieties	Lama's Groups
Satthapale	Upper Humla	Yultsodunba
Syandephale	La Yakpa	Tugchulungba
Panchsati		
Barthapale	Nyinba	Bara-Thapalya
Limi	Limi	Limya(l)

There are two main differences between Fürer-Haimendorf (1988) and Lama (2012): 1) Fürer-Haimendorf does not mention the Tsangba (Dojam) group and 2) the La Yakpa speaking area is divided into two groups by Fürer-Haimendorf (Syandephale and Panchsati) while Lama lists just one ethnic group for that area (Tugchulungba).

The Humli Khyampa are not part of this structure, and are described as "a nomadic community of indeterminate status" (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270). In addition, Lama does not mention the Humli Khyampa as a sub-ethnic group of Humla Tibetans (2012:35).

It is possible that the Limi community, in general, is not familiar with the system of "named clusters of villages" described by Fürer-Haimendorf (1988:270). None of the Limi informants interviewed in Kathmandu were familiar with these "named clusters of villages". We also asked about these cluster names in the interviews with village leaders during our field trips. We talk about this in chapter five (Ethnolinguistic Identity).

Regarding the rules of intermarriage, Fürer-Haimendorf states that there is a trend for people to marry within their own cluster. However, the Syandephale and Panchsati commonly intermarry. Another exception is that in the Satthapale group, inhabitants of some villages intermarry but others typically do not. Also, the Satthapale villages of Muchu and Tumkot intermarry with Humli Khyampas and the people of Limi traditionally intermarried with Purangba from just over the border in Tibet (although it seems this no longer happens) (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270).

Although Fürer-Haimendorf (1988:270) states that these are "clusters of villages of unequal status" he does not clearly state which clusters have higher status and which have lower status. But he does say that the Syandephale and the Panchsati (La Yakpa/Tugchulungba) view themselves as superior to the other groups. In contrast, Wilde (2001:9) states that Limi people consider other varieties of the Humla Tibetan language as "'colloquial variations', 'slang forms' or 'dialects' of Limi".

Status distinctions not only relate to clusters of villages, they also pertain to clan or *rhuba* (literally 'bone people'). While in the Panchsati and Barthapale villages clans are an important part of the identity of each person, in Yari (of Satthapale) and the villages of Limi,

which are closer to Tibet, named clans are not important. The rules of intermarriage in those northern areas are not based on clan, but rather approximate the conventions in Tibet (i.e., they are based on one's male descent line; it is not possible to marry someone with a common male ancestor within three generations). (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:271, Levine 1988:37)

A further distinction in status can be found among Humla Tibetans in the form of a hierarchy of three classes: Takbu, Yokbu and Gara. Most Humla Tibetans belong to the highest class, the Takbu. The Gara, who are traditionally blacksmiths, are the lowest class. Together, the Gara and Yokbu are labeled as *lam-yok* 'those below the path' while the higher class Takbu are called *lam-bong*, 'those above the path'. This distinction comes from the traditional practice of the lower classes standing below the path to allow members of the Takbu to pass by above. The practical implication of this class hierarchy varies from village to village. (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:271-272)

Lama (2012:40-45) describes a 10-level social hierarchy among the Nyinba. From highest rank to lowest rank the levels are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: The 10-level social hierarchy of the Nyinba

Name of social rank	English translation of social rank
<i>tsabi lama</i>	root spiritual teacher
<i>gansum</i>	senior village people
<i>drangri</i>	shaman priest
<i>dhami</i>	shaman or medium
<i>gadpo</i>	traditional political chief
<i>tso or nai</i>	ritual village chief
<i>dolga</i>	the lord of the theatre
<i>mikya</i>	commoners or lay people
<i>ama yondagmo</i>	patron mothers group
<i>rigngan or lohar</i>	blacksmiths

The majority of Nyinba people, however, are Mikya. There are two groups of Mikya: *dagpo* (master class) and *yogpo* (slave class), which are respectfully called *khangjya* (small householders).

1.5.3 Family Structure and Economics

The Tibetans of Humla have a strong preference for polyandrous households in which all the brothers of one family marry the same woman. This system interrelates with the economic system and division of labor between men and women. All Humla Tibetan communities depend on agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade for subsistence. While one or more men of a household travel for long periods of time to engage in long-distance trade and to move

animals between summer and winter pastures, women are in charge of agricultural activities in the village (Limi Youth Club:13-14, 37, Levine 1988:3, Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:243-267).

1.5.4 Religion

Almost all Humla Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism in some form. The Limi follow the Drikung Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The monasteries in Limi are connected to the Drikung Gongphur monastery in Purang county, Tibet (Purang is approximately a two-hour drive from the Tibetan village of Sher, located near the Nepal border) (Limi Youth Club:2, Pritchard-Jones and Gibbons 2007:86). In contrast, the Nyinba follow the Nyingmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism (Levine 1988:22). During our trip to Humla in June 2012, we heard about a Nyingmapa monastery (Taglung Gompa) in Yalbang and a Sakyapa monastery in Tumkot. (Both of these villages are in Wilde's Upper Humla language variety area or Lama's Yultsodunba group.) This is in accordance with Lama's (2012:84) statement: "(...) except for Tumkot Gompa and three villages of Limi of the Drigung Kagyu sect, Humla is under the influence of the Nyingmapa sect."

1.5.5 Linguistic Affiliation

Bradley (1997:5), van Driem (2001:856) and Lewis (2009) agree that Humla Tibetan is a Central Tibetan language. Denwood states:

Most of [the Tibetan dialects of Nepal] do fall within Biemeier's 'southeastern transitional dialects' and all appear to be non-cluster and at least partly tonal, though most of them also seem to be very similar to their immediate neighbours over the border in Tibet. (Denwood 1999:34)

Bradley subdivides Central Tibetan into a number of smaller groups. He puts Humla Tibetan into the Central mNgahris group of Central Tibetan along with Karmarong (Mugu District) and a number of Tibetan varieties spoken in western Tibet. The rest of the Tibetan languages of Nepal are classified as Central Tibetan, Central gTsang languages (Bradley 1997:5). It is unclear if this classification is based primarily on geography or on linguistic data.

1.5.6 Mutual Intelligibility between Varieties

According to Wilde's (2001:7) seven informants, the five varieties of Humla Tibetan are mutually intelligible. However, Levine (1988:269) comments that the Nyinba variety is "...nearly unintelligible to other Humla Tibetans". One Limi informant has stated that *rongke* (the varieties spoken between Yari and Kermi) is more similar to Limi than to the language of the Nyinba. Up to this point, no in-depth study of the degree of mutual intelligibility between Humla Tibetan varieties has been conducted. This research, however, hopes to clarify some of the questions.

1.5.7 Other Languages

In addition to Humla Tibetan, a number of other languages are used in Humla. Humla Tibetans use Nepali, some form of Standard Spoken Tibetan, and Chinese for trade. Those who are literate are normally literate in Nepali or in written Tibetan (which is in a diglossic

relationship with spoken Tibetan varieties in Tibet and northern Nepal). There are schools up to class five in all three major Limi villages. Oral teaching is in Limi by Limi people. Students learn to read and write in Tibetan⁹, Nepali, and English. Standard Nepali is being taught in all villages where we did our research (see the leader interviews). Humli Khasa (also called "village Nepali", "the Humla dialect of Jumli", and "Karnali"), and Byansi are also spoken in Humla (Fürrer-Haimendorf 1988:284 and Nurpu Bhote, p.c., Limi Youth Club:5). However, Lama states that the language and caste system of the Byansi people (also called *byangpa*) "is very kin to the Khasa" (Lama 2012:36).

Photo 1: Kermi village June 2012 (Klaas de Vries)



⁹ One Limi informant has estimated that about 60% of Limi men can read and write Tibetan while only about 2-3% of Limi woman can read and write Tibetan.

2 Goals and Methodology

In this chapter, we will cover the five goals and the research questions that go with them. The goal of this research project is to provide more detailed information about the Humla Tibetan situation in regard to: 1) language and dialect variation, 2) ethnolinguistic identity, 3) language vitality, 4) desires for development, and 5) seasonal migration. Then we will describe the methodology used for the research. First, we will look at the various research tools that we used: Word Lists, Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire, Informal Interviews, Recorded Story Questions, Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping and Appreciative Inquiry. Finally, we describe the site selection and subject selection.

2.1 Goals and Research Questions

2.1.1 Goal 1: Language and Dialect Variation

Since there has not previously been any sociolinguistic research conducted among the Humla Tibetan communities, the first goal of this survey is to describe the primary dialect areas and investigate the relationships between them. To reach this goal we formulated three research questions. Research questions are questions we try to have answered by using a variety of tools (described later in this chapter). The following research questions were used to reach this first goal (the tools used are listed in parentheses):

- What are the major varieties of Humla Tibetan? (word list, KIQ, informal interview, RSQ, Dialect Mapping)
- What attitudes do the Humla Tibetans have towards each language variety in their region? (KIQ, informal interview, RSQ)
- Which language variety is likely to be best understood by most Humla Tibetan speakers? (word list, informal interview, RSQ, Dialect Mapping)

2.1.2 Goal 2: Ethnolinguistic Identity

In order to support the first goal, we looked at the ethnolinguistic identity of the Humla Tibetans. Ethnolinguistic identity can be a decisive force when it comes to acceptance of a certain variety as the basis for language development. This is why our second goal is to investigate whether Humla Tibetans see themselves as a cohesive language community or as being more broadly related. The following research questions supported this goal:

- Do Humla Tibetans see themselves as a *cohesive language community*? (KIQ, informal interview, RSQ)
- Do Humla Tibetans see themselves as a *cohesive people group*? (KIQ, informal interview, RSQ)

2.1.3 Goal 3: Language Vitality

Another goal was to assess the language vitality of all the Humla Tibetan varieties. In relation to language vitality, we wanted to determine the EGIDS¹⁰ level of Humla Tibetan. We used the following research questions:

- What languages are used in various domains of life? (informal interview, observation schedule)
- What attitudes do Humla Tibetans have towards their own language and other languages in their region (Nepali and Tibetan)? (informal interview, observation schedule)
- To what degree is the mother tongue being passed on to the next generation? (informal interview, observation schedule)
- What are the population and group dynamics? (observation schedule)
- Is there a network of social relations supportive of the targeted vernacular? (observation schedule)
- What is the relative prestige of the language within the speech community? (informal interview)
- Is there an acceptable economic base supportive of continuing use of the target language? (observation schedule)
- Is there an internal or external recognition of the language community as separate and unique within the broader society? Is there material or non-material evidence for such a distinction? (KIQ, observation schedule)

2.1.4 Goal 4: Desires for Development

The fourth goal is to understand each language community's desires for their own language development and other types of development. For this we used these two research questions:

- What goals do the Humla Tibetan communities express for future language-based development? (KIQ, informal interview, Appreciative Inquiry)
- What goals do the Humla Tibetan communities express for other kinds of community-based development? (KIQ, informal interview, Appreciative Inquiry)

2.1.5 Goal 5: Seasonal Migration

The final goal is to describe the seasonal migration patterns of people from each Humla Tibetan dialect area. We used the following research questions:

- In what seasons do Humla Tibetans leave their home areas?
- Where do Humla Tibetans, from each language variety, go when they leave the area and how long do they stay in each location?

2.2 Methodology

The research for this report was conducted during three trips to Humla District. The first trip was in June 2012. The team consisted of Nurpu Bhote, David Greninger, Stephanie Eichentopf and Klaas de Vries, all from Kathmandu. In Simikot, a local guide and language helper, Than Bahadur Rawat, joined us. The research was mostly done in Nepali. When

¹⁰ See chapter six for more on EGIDS.

necessary, Than and Nurpu translated. Only in Til village did we use English with two men that helped with translation to and from the Til variety. In Til, we did not find many people who could speak Nepali well enough to communicate with us.

The second trip was in October 2012 with the same team, except that John Eppele joined us this time instead of Stephanie Eichentopf. The third trip was undertaken in June 2013 by David Greninger and his family, together with Pasang Dolker Lama and Than Bahadur Rawat. The bulk of this chapter describes the various tools we used during the first two trips. On the third trip only a couple of the tools were used to gather additional data.

2.2.1 Tools

Word Lists

Purpose: The word lists obtained are compared to estimate the degree of lexical similarity between the speech varieties the word lists represent.

Procedure: The word lists were elicited in Nepali from mother tongue speakers and were transcribed by the researchers using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). A lexical similarity analysis was carried out on each pair of word lists. (See Appendix C for more on this procedure, the data and the analysis regarding this tool.)

Advantages: Data collection is relatively efficient. Word lists can provide some broad insights into possible dialect groupings.

Disadvantages: Above certain levels of lexical similarity, word lists cannot give conclusive evidence of intelligibility between the speech varieties compared. If the lexical similarity is below 60%, this means that the varieties are probably not mutually intelligible. But if the lexical similarity is above 60%, this does not automatically mean that the varieties are mutually intelligible. There are other characteristics of the language that could influence intelligibility. In the latter case, a more extensive tool for intelligibility testing is needed, such as the Recorded Text Test.

Knowledgeable Insider Questionnaire (KIQ)

Purpose: This is an interview outline specifically designed for someone the community views as the most knowledgeable regarding information about their language and community. This tool provides information from a reliable and knowledgeable source about the language. A secondary purpose for using a KIQ is to establish a relationship with an authority figure at the site. Ideally, this will lead to their assistance in finding subjects for the use of the other tools, or at least, ensure the cooperation of others.

Procedure: It is administered to one person at a time and sometimes to a group. Questions should range from specific population estimates and locations to general information about language vitality and other languages spoken by the community. Because this tool can be used as a form of public relations, whenever possible, it should be administered the day of arrival at a new site. (See Appendix B for the questions and the data regarding this tool.)

Advantages: The interviewee is seen by the community as most knowledgeable, therefore, providing the most accurate information the community has available. Good for obtaining village-level facts.

Disadvantages: Because this questionnaire is sometimes only administered to one individual, if the person best suited for the interview is unavailable, it will not be possible to administer it. Information is from only one person and therefore may be skewed to their particular view.

Informal Interviews

Purpose: An interview schedule (based on the “Sociolinguistic Questionnaire A”, used by the Linguistic Survey of Nepal) will guide interaction in order to gather information regarding specific sociolinguistic issues, while allowing some freedom to wander from the schedule if it provides additional information relevant to the research questions of the survey, as long as the main questions were asked the same way, so that the answers of all respondents can be compared.

Procedure: An example of this procedure would be asking, “What language do you usually speak with your children?” as on the interview schedule. If the interviewee responds with two or more languages, follow-up questions such as “Do you speak one of these languages more often than the other?” might be asked. This allows the interviews to place focus more on patterns of language use (and their impact on language vitality and shift) than on other topics, such as generalized trends of multilingualism. (See Appendix A for the questions and the data regarding this tool.)

Advantages: Depending on the length of the questionnaire, the time for administration can be minimal, allowing for a relatively large numbers of people to be interviewed. The somewhat informal nature of the interviews could help subjects feel comfortable and share openly, while allowing greater depth and providing context for their responses.

Disadvantages: Informal interviews are limited in that subjects may only report what they want the researcher to hear, or what they believe the researcher would like to hear.

Recorded Story Questions (RSQ)¹¹

Purpose: Subjects listen to recorded stories, then answer questions about the stories. This helps in the assessment of the subject’s understanding of and attitudes toward actual samples of the language from various areas.

Procedure: A narrative story is recorded from one place and played for subjects in other locations of the same dialect area to see if those subjects perceive it as representing their own style of speech. It is also played for people in other areas who are not told the story’s place of origin. After listening to each story, subjects answer questions about their understanding of and opinions toward the speech variety used by the story-teller. (See Appendix D for the questions and the data regarding this tool.)

Advantages: Evaluates perceived understanding of and opinions toward actual samples of the language.

¹¹ Information taken from “Bantawa: A Sociolinguistic Survey.” Eppele, John. July 2003.

Disadvantages: Decisions about dialect areas should not be based solely upon these responses. The responses are best used in conjunction with more complete intelligibility testing. Sometimes respondents have difficulty separating between their attitudes towards the speech variety in the story and their attitudes towards the content of the story.

Observation Schedule

Purpose: A list of specific questions on the behavior of people and on certain man-made objects (material culture) are to be observed and written in a journal at each site. These observations form the basis for a fuller description of the context of the research and could point to important sociolinguistic factors not covered by other tools.

Procedure: Researchers intentionally observe each factor on the schedule, taking notes each day in each village visited. These observations are discussed and recorded in the log book, for further analysis and comparison following their field work. Two examples are: ‘*What languages are used in various domains of life?*’ and ‘*What evidence of communication technology is found in the village?*’. (See Appendix F for the questions and the data regarding this tool.)

Advantages: Provides a clear way to consistently record information on relevant sociolinguistic factors, corroborating or questioning the findings of other methods used during the survey.

Disadvantages: Observations may be limited by the researchers’ level of language proficiency and degree of cultural understanding. Other limitations are the relatively short time at each site and the time of year we visit.

Participatory Methods (PM)

We used two different PM tools: Dialect Mapping and Appreciative Inquiry (see Appendix E for the steps and the data regarding these tools). The purpose of using PM tools is to facilitate an interactive discovery process among community members so that insiders and outsiders will gain a better understanding of what the community's views are about their language situation. It attempts to look at the emic (insiders’) view of the community, to use their language and categories to form a more complete picture. The PM tools in this survey were administered by two trained language helpers (Than Bahadur Rawat and Nurpu Bhote). Instead of having *bideshi* (foreign) researchers do all the facilitating, these language helpers are better equipped to overcome language and cultural barriers. David Greninger also administered the tools. When paired with more traditional tools, PM tools can give valuable information for triangulation of data.

Dialect Mapping

Purpose: This tool creates space for discussion of existing dialects, their geographic location, and perceived levels of comprehension between varieties.

Procedure: Participants are invited to describe their linguistic landscape by identifying other locations where their language is spoken. They then identify how great they perceive the differences to be between their variety and other varieties as well as their perceived level of understanding between speakers of their variety and speakers of other varieties, which

variety they use in conversation with people from other areas, and which variety they believe to be the standard or most broadly understood.

Advantages: Provides a visual representation of other communities; participants interact with how well they understand them, how their language may or may not be altered in these circumstances, and their attitudes toward other varieties.

Disadvantages: May seem complicated or redundant.

Appreciative Inquiry

Purpose: This tool helps community members dream of and discuss the possibilities for their language and other development issues for their village. It shows what the community sees as most important for their language and village.

Procedure: Participants discuss aspects of their language situation, culture, or village that have made them happy or proud. They are then invited to think about how they might build upon these good things they have identified, or identify dreams they have for their language or village. Next they discuss what dreams might be accomplished relatively soon and which ones will take longer. Then, they identify which dreams are most important to them.

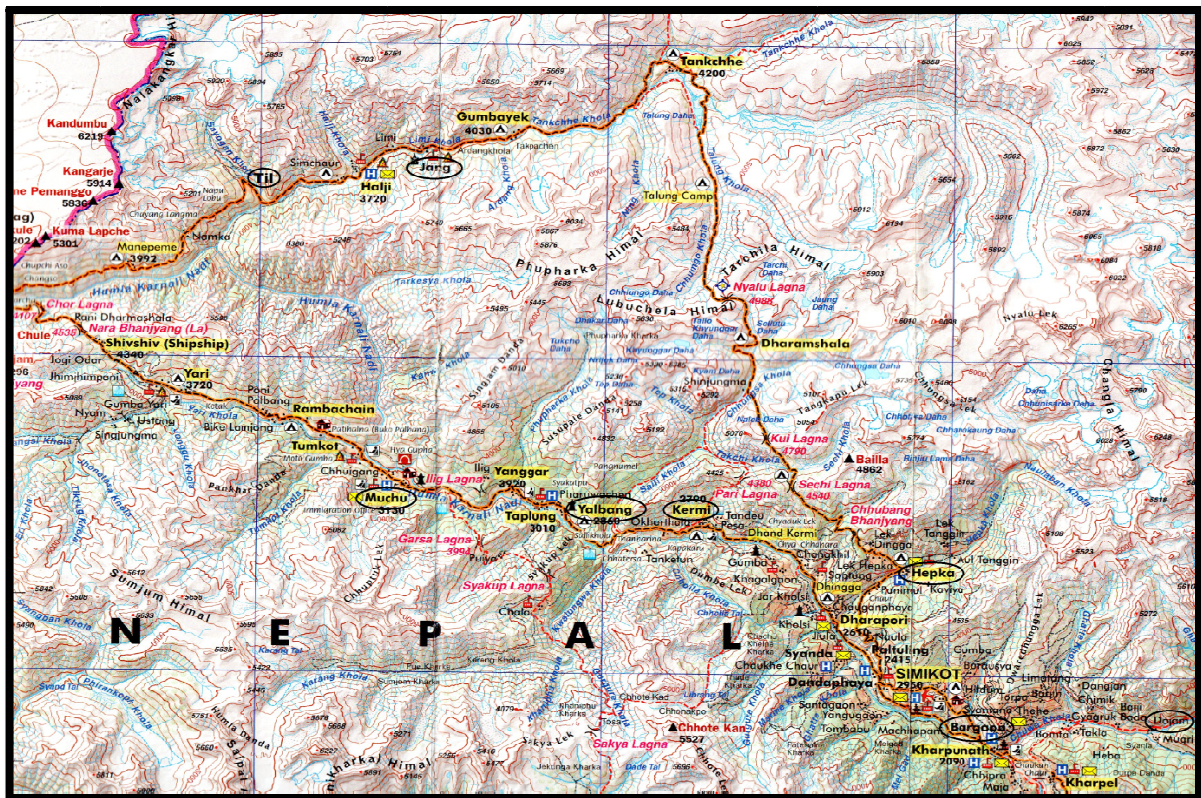
Advantages: Creates space and opportunity for community discussion of good things that are currently taking place, their goals and dreams. It is very adaptable.

Disadvantages: As with all participatory methods, this tool may be difficult to implement in contexts where there is formal and/or informal consolidation of power and authority within a community. It requires facilitators to have a strong command of the language and culture to provide effective group facilitation.

2.2.2 Site Selection

The villages circled on the map in Figure 7 are the ones where we conducted research throughout the course of the three field trips.

Figure 7: Humla District and research sites



The informal interview and Appreciative Inquiry were done in six villages and the rest of the tools in seven villages. In the eighth village, Jang, only Appreciative Inquiry and the RSQ were administered. The eight villages were chosen on the basis of two villages for each probable dialect area. On the first trip, our main focus was on the Limi valley, because of its isolated location. Arriving in the first village, Til, from the west, we found out that there were two local men that spoke English very well and were willing to translate for us over a span of three full days. On our way to the Limi valley and back the same way, we conducted research in the villages of Kermi, Yalbang and Muchu. Kermi is part of the Lower Humla variety (see chapter four for details on dialect identification), and Yalbang and Muchu are part of the Upper Humla variety. In all these villages except Til, Nurpu Bhote had already established good relationships with people.

On the second trip, our main focus was on the area east of Simikot. We conducted research in Bargaun, because it is a major village belonging to the Nyinba or Eastern Humla variety. We then stayed in Dojam, the most eastern Tibetan-speaking village in Humla District, to be able to conclude if all the Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla belong to the same language. After this, we again went west from Simikot to Hepka VDC. There we conducted research in Hepka village (also known as Yakpa). This is the main village for this area and from here a trail goes northwest to Limi. After Hepka, our team split into two groups. Than Bahadur Rawat, John Epple and Klaas de Vries continued to Kermi village, to finish our research there from the first trip. Nurpu Bhote and David Greninger went back to Simikot, after completing the remaining research tools in Hepka.

The third trip again focused on the Limi valley, but this time coming from the east side. Because of snowfall, the team was not able to go to the middle village, Halji, but stayed in

Jang where they conducted research. On their way back, they also visited Yalbang village again to collect additional data for the research. Through these three trips we acquired a large body of data which we then analyzed.

In Figure 8, we have listed the villages, the different tools we used in each village and the date of the trip(s) we used them.

Figure 8: Villages, Tools and Time

Village	Tools Used	June 2012	October 2012	June 2013
Til	Word list, informal interview, KIQ, RSQ (elicitation only), Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping	X		
Jang	RSQ, Appreciative Inquiry			X
Muchu	Word list, informal interview, KIQ, RSQ, Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping	X		
Yalbang	Word list, KIQ, RSQ, Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping, Appreciative Inquiry	X		X
Kermi	Word list, informal interview, KIQ, RSQ, Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping, Appreciative Inquiry	X	X	
Hepka	Word list, informal interview, KIQ, RSQ, Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping, Appreciative Inquiry		X	
Bargaun	Word list, informal interview, KIQ, RSQ, Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping, Appreciative Inquiry		X	
Dojam	Word list, informal interview, KIQ, RSQ, Observation Schedule, Dialect Mapping, Appreciative Inquiry		X	

2.2.3 Subject Selection

Subject sampling for this survey was based on a convenience sample with quotas for different demographic groups. Our sampling focused on two demographic factors (gender and age) in each village, as these factors are known to influence language use and attitudes. People in these demographic groups often have varying levels of exposure to other languages. We also

tried to have a quota of about six people who are educated and six who are not (class 5 and up being educated). Figure 9 displays the quotas for each demographic factor.

Figure 9: Sample Size by Age and Gender

		Age		Total
		15-34	35-up	
Gender	Female	3	3	6
	Male	3	3	6
Total:		6	6	12

This sampling method was used for the informal interviews and RSQ data collection¹². The sampling methods for word lists, knowledgeable insider questionnaires and participatory methods were different and will be described below.

Word Lists and RSQ Elicitation Subject Selection

There are four requirements for subjects chosen for the word lists and the recorded story testing: These criteria are as follows:

1. The subject has grown up in the village under study¹³, lives there now, and, if he/she has lived elsewhere, it was not for a significant amount of recent time.¹⁴
2. The subject has at least one parent from the target mother tongue (L1).
3. The subject has at least one parent from the village under study and that parent spoke L1 with them.
4. The subject speaks L1 first and best.

The sampling for the wordlists was conducted as follows: We elicited a wordlist from one person or a group of people who met these four criteria and were also a good representation of the village or community.

If the subjects did not meet these criteria, we thanked them and looked for another person or group who fitted the criteria as well as our demographic factors for sampling.

¹² The ideal sampling was not reached in some sites. In Muchu and Yalbang, the size and distribution were both a bit off. In Til, there was only one educated respondent and we had two younger women instead of three, but the size was 13 instead of 12. In Hepka, we had 11 instead of 12 respondents. In Dojam, we had only three educated respondents, but the size was correct. In Jang, the distribution was a bit off.

¹³ The person for the Yalbang story did not officially grow up in Yalbang, but in Yari, a two-hour walk from Yalbang. But the last 40 years he lived in Yalbang and the Home Town Testing went perfectly.

¹⁴ It is difficult to define a time period (e.g. for more than the last five years). Therefore, this criterion is intentionally subjective as it depends on how long the subject lived elsewhere and how long they have been back in the village relative to their age.

Informal Interview Subject Selection

The informal interview schedule (or sociolinguistic questionnaire) requires that only criteria numbers one and two (above) need to be met in order for a subject to be eligible for responding to the questionnaire. See Appendix A for the questions on the informal interview that evaluate these criteria. In each village, we used convenience sampling and the two screening criteria to interview at least 12 people.

RSQ Subject Selection

The subjects chosen for listening to and responding to the RSQ should meet the first three criteria. In each site, we administered the RSQ to at least 12 people.

KIQ Subject Selection

For each site, a knowledgeable insider was chosen for this questionnaire. This person was viewed by the community as the group leader or person of importance. The community was best equipped to direct us to the correct person for this questionnaire. In all cases, this person was male, elderly, and more educated in comparison to others in the village.

Participatory Method Subject Selection

Appreciative Inquiry and Dialect Mapping are participatory methods tools which provide data from an emic perspective within a community. The tools are administered to community groups; there was no limit on how many people could be involved. A mixture of the same three demographic groups (gender, age and education) provides the best results. There is no screening process for those involved in Participatory Methods; however, notes were taken regarding who was present in order to account for possible biases. In many places it was not possible to reach an ideal group with all the demographic groups represented in a somewhat even way. See Appendix E for the notes taken during the facilitations.

3 Dialect Variation

In this chapter, we will focus on dialect variation, attitudes toward other dialects and the identification of a possible central dialect. The chapter is presented from the broad perspective to the more specific. First we will look at the language and dialect situation as we find it through the different methods mentioned in chapter two. (We have not used the observation schedule and the Appreciative Inquiry tool for this chapter, because they are not intended, or that useful, for the research questions we try to answer in this chapter.) We then look at what kind of dialect groupings emerge out of the analysis (answering Research Question 1). Following this, we will analyze the attitudes people in the different villages have toward the proposed dialect groups we identified in the first section (answering Research Question 2). The chapter concludes with discussing dialect intelligibility. This will help in decision-making for future language development (answering Research Question 3).

3.1 Dialect and Language Identification

3.1.1 Interview Results

During the informal interviews and the interviews done with the leaders of the villages, we asked the name of their language. We also asked the leaders about the names of the languages spoken in other villages. The respondents were clear about the language spoken in the three villages in the Limi valley: Til, Jang and Halji. They call it 'Limi' or *limi khalu* or *limi lap* 'Limi language'. Four out of six leaders call the language spoken in Bargaun 'Nyinba'. For the rest of the villages, the name of the language spoken there, according to the respondents, is mostly one of the following broader terms: Phot, Phoka, Phoket, Bhote, Lama, Kham, Orde lap, or Tibetan. For Muchu we also find these terms: *Sakyako bhasa* and *Tukchu bhasa*. The leader of Dojam also mentioned *Tsangkat* as a name for their language variety. The Kermi leader called his own language *Sarak Khalu*. The varieties spoken by Tibetan villagers in Humla do not have one distinctive name that comprises all varieties. In this chapter, I will refer to the different varieties spoken in Humla as follows: 'the X variety' or 'the variety spoken in X' with X being a village name. Later on the dialect names, as stated in section 4.1.3 (Dialect Mapping Results), will also be used.

We asked the leaders if they think the language spoken in other villages is the same as theirs. A general tendency in the answers is that the farther villages are removed geographically from each other, the less similar the varieties are said to be. Another conclusion from the answers given by the people through informal interviews was that people mostly say they speak the same language as the other Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla. They call it the same language, but they say it is spoken a bit differently in every village. The exception to this was the village of Til. In Til, people saw their variety as much more distinct. Also, their perceived linguistic connection with the variety spoken across the border in Purang county, China, is quite strong. For example, the majority of the respondents in Til would not change their language to accommodate talking with people from Purang and would understand the language spoken in Purang, even when two people of Purang spoke quickly with each other.

In general, the respondents use their own variety in talking to people from other villages, though sometimes they will change it a bit. This shows that subjects perceive that there is a fairly high degree of comprehension between the different Tibetan varieties within Humla.

This again underlines the statement that the varieties could be seen as one language, even though it is spoken a bit differently in every village.

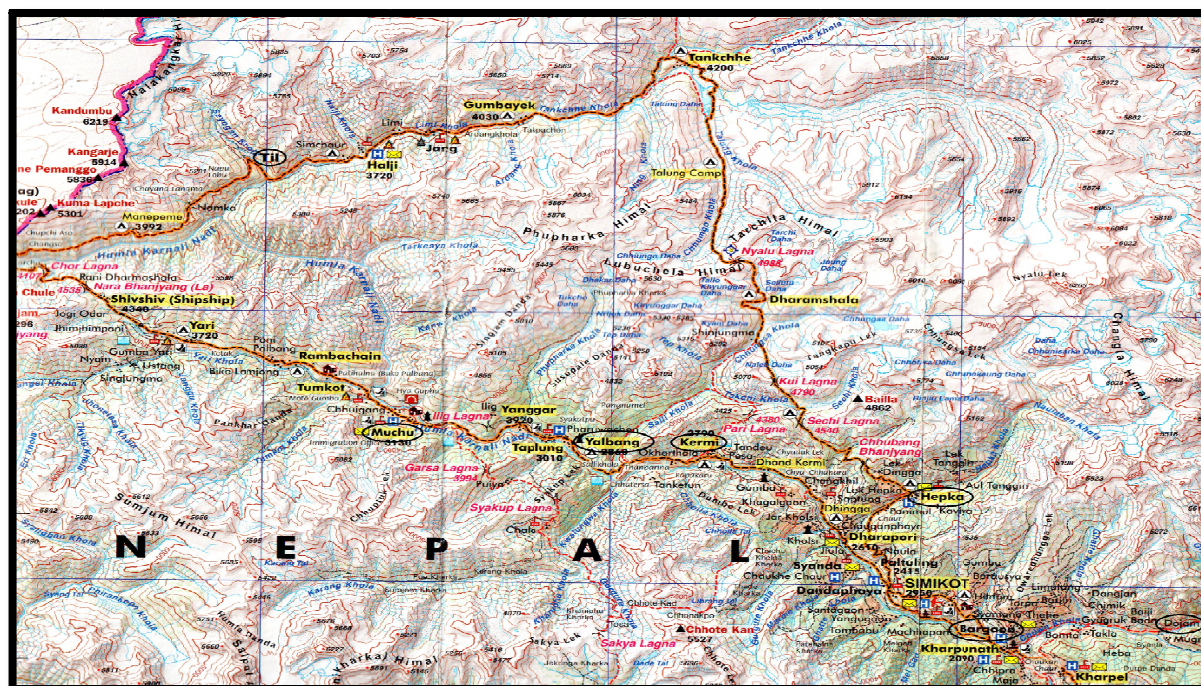
We asked the leaders if the cluster names¹⁵, described by Furer-Haimendorf (1988: 270), are still in use. In Bargaun, they seem to be familiar with the names, though they said the cluster names are not in use anymore. In Kermi, they mentioned the cluster name for the villages in their own area that sounded like what Lama (2012) uses, namely *Tugchulungba* (*Kholi*) and they had heard of other cluster names like *Barthapale* and *Satthapale*. Now the clustering is described more often through VDC (Village Development Committee) names. For example, people would say Muchu cluster (Muchu being both a village name and a VDC name) instead of 'Satthapale'.

3.1.2 Lexical Similarity Results

Word lists can be analyzed to measure lexical similarity. Lexical similarity is a measure of the relative similarity of a sample of words from two speech varieties. Similarity percentages are determined by calculating the percentage of words in one speech variety that are pronounced the same way or in a very similar way to the words in another speech variety. This survey used the comparison method outlined in Blair (1990:31-32) which is further explained in Appendix C. It is generally accepted that lexical similarity percentages below 60% indicate that the compared lists represent different languages (Blair 1990:23). Lexical similarity above 60% requires intelligibility testing to confirm if the varieties are dialects of the same language or if they are different languages. This survey compares seven 212-item word lists.

In Figure 10, the seven villages where word lists were collected are circled.

Figure 10: Word List Elicitation Sites



15 See section 1.5.2 Social Structure for a description of cluster names.

Bargaun is written as Bargaon. The map was missing the village of Til, so that has been added to the map.

The lexical similarity percentages among the seven Humla word lists are displayed in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Lexical similarity percentages matrix

Til						
79%	Muchu					
79%	87%	Yalbang				
82%	83%	85%	Kermi			
82%	82%	79%	88%	Hepka		
77%	75%	77%	79%	82%	Bargaun	
74%	75%	73%	76%	77%	79%	Dojam

Figure 11 shows that lexical similarity percentages vary from the most similar (88%) between Kermi and Hepka to the least similar (73%) between Yalbang and Dojam. No comparison falls below the cutoff of 60% where they would be considered separate languages. Kermi has the highest average lexical similarity with all varieties, and Dojam the lowest.

The lexical similarity percentages between the word lists from Til, Muchu, Yalbang, Kermi and Hepka range from 79% to 88% similar. The differences in similarity between the word lists from these sites are slight. We can note that the similarity between both Til and Muchu and Til and Yalbang is 79%. The similarity between both Til and Kermi and Til and Hepka is 82%. Travel patterns may play some part in the slight variation in lexical similarity between these geographic areas. People from the Limi valley travel either to Purang directly, without travelling through other Humla villages, or to Simikot, going the shortest route, that is, going east and south from Jang, crossing the Nyalu pass, and thereby travelling through Hepka or Kermi to Simikot. Also, we have met people from Kermi and Hepka who let their animals graze higher up towards the Limi valley. This could indicate that they have more contact with people from Limi.

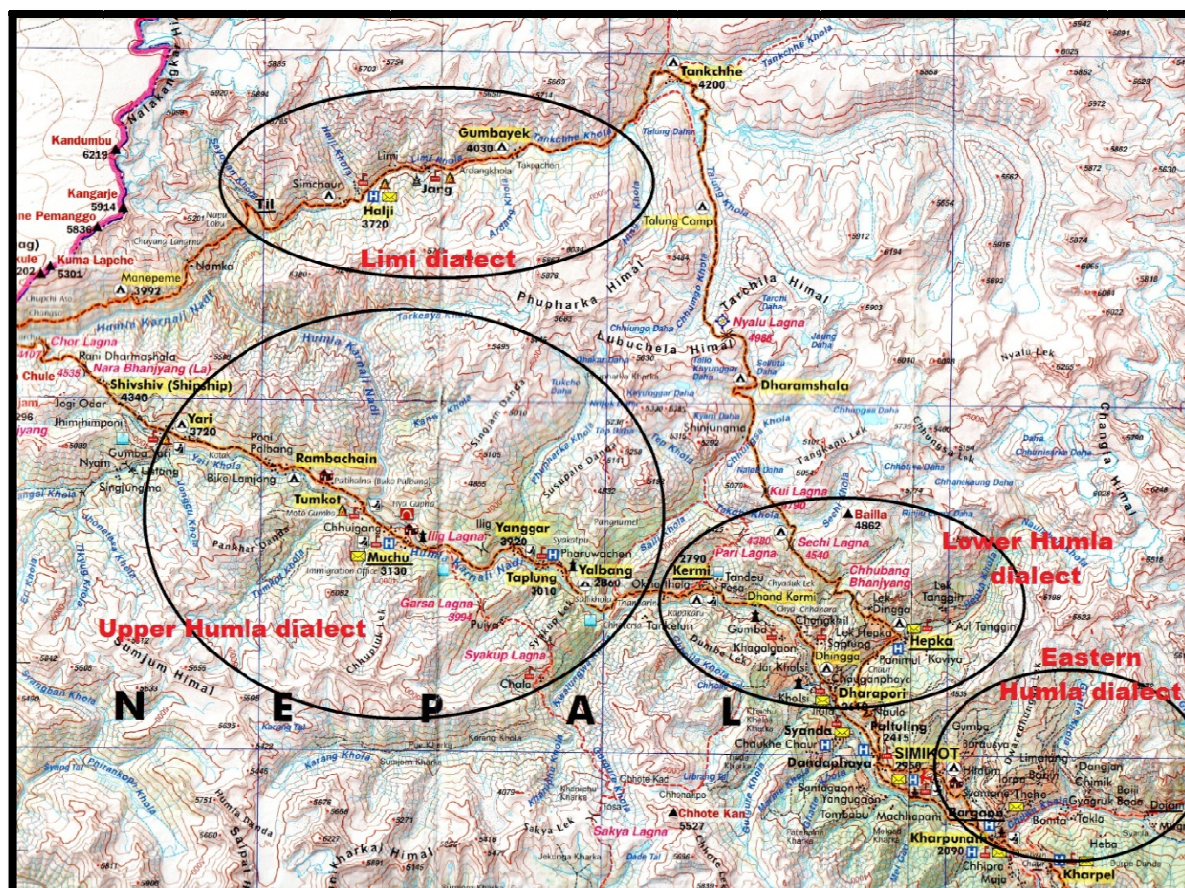
The lower lexical similarity percentages between Dojam and all other villages, and to a slightly lesser degree Bargaun and all other villages, mean that the speech varieties in Dojam and Bargaun are the most lexically variant. This could have something to do with the history of migration and the stronger influence of neighboring villages where some sort of Nepali is spoken. Also, geographically Dojam is at the far east side of the Humla Tibetan-speaking area. This form of isolation could be a major reason for the variance in percentages. With 79% lexical similarity, the Dojam variety is most similar with the Bargaun variety. Dialect Mapping Results

Dialect Mapping was conducted in seven villages throughout the Humla Tibetan-speaking area. Only in Til did people not name the Eastern Humla area as part of the same language Tibetan people speak in Humla District. In all the other villages, people usually identify the same areas, VDCs and villages as comprising the Tibetan-speaking areas of Humla (see Appendix E). Geographically this makes sense. People from Til live a long way from the

Eastern Humla area. Additionally, the seasonal migration patterns of people from Til shed light on their views. Their business is mostly with Tibetan people on the other side of the border with China and when they do come east, they just go to Simikot to catch a plane to Kathmandu. For this reason, they rarely interact with people from the Eastern Humla dialect area.

In studying all the information obtained using the Dialect Mapping tool we used in seven villages, we can identify roughly four dialect areas within the Humla Tibetan-speaking area. See Appendix E for the summary of the data that we collected through using this tool. In Figure 12 the dialect groups have been circled.

Figure 12: Dialect Grouping



The names of the dialect groups are printed red. (See notes on the map in section 3.1.2.) The Dialect Mapping research sites are underlined. The following are the different dialect groups:

- Limi dialect (to the north, including Til, Halji and Jang)
- Upper Humla dialect (from Yari to Yalbang)
- Lower Humla dialect (from Kermi to Kholsi to Tanggin)
- Eastern Humla dialect (from Burangse to Dojam).

We use the name 'Upper Humla' as used by Gurung (1979:103) and Wilde (2001:6). Instead of using 'La Yakpa dialect', I have chosen 'Lower Humla dialect', because there are slight differences in what people mean when they use the term Yakpa and that influences their

attitudes significantly. Although other people have chosen 'Nyinba' as the dialect name for the most Eastern dialect (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988:270; Levine 1988:21-23; Wilde 2001:6), I chose 'Eastern Humla dialect' as the name. I did this because the ethnic Tibetan village of Dojam doesn't fit into the 'Nyinba' group and neither does the partially ethnic Tibetan village of Baji Bada. Both villages are referred to as Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla by people in Bargaun and Dojam. According to the leader of Dojam, only the variety spoken in Bargaun is the same as theirs and only when talking to people from Bargaun would they use their own variety, instead of trying to change to the other variety.

We chose these dialect names purely for sociolinguistic purposes. The communities may not necessarily agree with the names we have chosen. But these names provide a way to talk about the language relationships among Tibetan varieties in Humla.

3.1.3 Recorded Story Questions (RSQ) Results

In using the RSQ (see Appendix D for the questions), we found out what people think about certain speech varieties. While listening to the stories, they are not told which variety they are listening to. After listening to a story, we asked whether the language spoken in the story is 'the same' as their variety, 'a little different' or 'very different'. This primarily measures perceived comprehension. We used stories from the following villages:

- Til (representing the Limi dialect)
- Yalbang (representing the Upper Humla dialect)
- Bargaun (representing the Eastern Humla dialect)
- (On an extra trip that was done in 2013, a story from Kermi was used, representing Lower Humla dialect. We let people in Jang [Limi dialect] listen to it.)

Looking at the answers to the RSQ, we can conclude that the more geographically distant the villages are from each other, the more different they find each other's varieties to be. The responses, however, were never completely 'very different' or 'the same'. So, although there is considerable variety in the ways of speaking, they don't seem different enough to call them separate languages.

Figure 13 shows the responses after listening to the story from Til on question 5 on the RSQ: *Is the language in this story the same, a little different, or very different from the language spoken here?*

Figure 13: How similar is your language to that in the Til story?

	N=	Same	A little different	Very different
Dojam	12	8%	42%	50%
Bargaun	12	-	58%	42%
Hepka	12	8%	92%	-
Kermi	22	14%	82%	4%
Yalbang	10	20%	80%	-
Muchu	10	10%	90%	-
Jang	12	100%	-	-

Listening to the story from Til , half of the respondents in Dojam (the farthest from Til) say it is ‘very different’ and 42% in Bargaun said the same thing. The majority of respondents say it is ‘a little different’. Twenty percent of respondents in Hepka say the language spoken in the Til story is ‘the same’ language as theirs. The conclusion is that the nearer the village, the greater the perceived comprehension.

Figure 14 shows the responses after the story from Yalbang to the same question.

Figure 14: How similar is your language to that in the Yalbang story?

	N=	Same	A little different	Very different
Kermi	22	23%	77%	-
Hepka	12	8%	92%	-
Jang	12	-	92% (one respondent did not answer)	-
Bargaun	12	-	83%	17%
Dojam	10	-	50%	50%

Listening to the story from Yalbang, the same picture appears; the farther away, the lower the perceived comprehension. In Kermi, the nearest village to Yalbang, 25% of the people say the language of the Yalbang story is ‘the same’. People from Kermi, Hepka and Jang never answered ‘very different’. A couple of people in Bargaun said the language was ‘very different’ (17%), but Dojam (the village farthest away), stands out with half of the people answering ‘very different’.

Figure 15 shows the responses after the story from Bargaun on the same question.

Figure 15: How similar is your language to that in the Bargaun story?

	N=	Same	A little different	Very different
Jang	12	-	83%	17%
Hepka	12	-	100%	-
Dojam	12	33%	42%	25%
Kermi	12	25%	42%	33%

Listening to the story from Bargaun, two respondents in Jang answered 'very different' and the rest answered 'a little different'. All the respondents in Hepka answered 'a little different', while people in Dojam and Kermi answered almost the same; five said 'a little different'. This adds support to the conclusion that the varieties are different, but still partly comprehensible throughout all Tibetan villages in Humla.

On the third trip to Humla, in 2013, a story from Kermi was played for people in Jang, Limi District. Most respondents (75%) answered that the language used in the story was 'a little different'. Additionally, 17% answered 'very different', while only 8% said 'the same'. This data also supports the overall image of slight differences between the varieties, but still comprehensible.

We also asked what the difference might be between the language they speak and the language of the story. The most common answer was 'style', with 'words' not far behind.

3.1.4 Summary of Dialect and Language Identification

To summarize this section on dialect and language identification, it seems there is enough reason and supporting data to say that the different speech varieties among the Tibetan-speaking villages of Humla District could be seen as dialects of the same language. People call the speech varieties the same language, spoken a bit differently in each village.

Through Dialect Mapping, we can conclude that there are roughly four dialect groupings that can be distinguished. From northwest to southeast: the Limi dialect (Til, Halji and Jang), the Upper Humla dialect (from Yari to Yalbang), the Lower Humla dialect (from Kermi to Kholsi to Tanggin), and the Eastern Humla dialect (from Burangse to Dojam). The Humla Tibetan varieties form a dialect chain, with the villages farthest apart having more trouble understanding each other (Dojam and Til).

Using the RSQ data the same picture emerges: the more geographically distant the villages are from each other, the more different they find each other's varieties. The varieties seem to be different but are still partly comprehensible throughout all the Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla.

The dialect groupings that were identified through Dialect Mapping are in agreement with the lexical similarity data. The two highest similarity percentages are between villages that also come up in the Dialect Mapping as the same dialect groupings: 87% between Yalbang and Muchu (Upper Humla dialect) and 88% between Hepka and Kermi (Lower Humla dialect). Additionally, Dojam had the highest similarity percentage with Bargaun, representing the Eastern Humla dialect. Til stands apart, representing the Limi dialect. The lexical similarity results underline the fact that there is considerable variance between

speech varieties in Humla, but the lexical similarity is close enough to consider the varieties the same language. On its own, the lexical similarity data do not make a real strong case for these specific dialect groupings, but together with the other data collected, the lexical similarity data supports the dialect groupings identified.

We distinguished different dialects among the Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla District and concluded that they should be seen as part of the same language. The next section of this chapter will focus on the attitudes people have toward the different dialects.

3.2 Dialect Attitudes

In this section, we will look at the attitudes people have toward their own and other dialects. We use the data from interviews and RSQs to arrive at our conclusions. We will start with some general conclusions on a district level. After that we will focus on the attitudes people have toward the different dialects we described in the section above.

We asked several questions in the informal interviews that show something about the attitude people have toward people who do not speak the same variety. One of these questions related to how they would feel if their son or daughter married someone that did not speak their variety. With more than half of the respondents answering that it would be bad, and only 21% saying that would be good, there seems to be an overall negative attitude toward marrying someone who does not speak the same variety.

We asked about what people think about the varieties spoken in these seven villages: Til (Limi dialect), Muchu (Upper Humla dialect), Khangalgaun (Lower Humla dialect), Hepka (Lower Humla dialect), Bargaun (Eastern Humla dialect) and Dojam (Eastern Humla dialect). In general, the varieties spoken in Muchu and Khangalgaun are most liked by others. And the variety spoken in Hepka is least liked (with almost a third of the people saying it is 'not good'). The other questions in the interview that looked at attitudes were: 'Where is your mother tongue spoken best and most badly?' and 'In the whole of Humla, in your opinion, where do people speak the best and most badly?' Most respondents named their own village as where their mother tongue is spoken best. When they didn't name their own village, they named a village not far away. Most often they named a village higher up, closer to the border with China. Looking at the whole of Tibetan-speaking Humla, they most frequently named their own village as where people speak the best.

In Bargaun, the respondents named the language spoken in Dojam as the most badly spoken variety. People from Dojam and Hepka named different villages all over Humla as where the language is spoken worst. The respondents in the other four villages named the language spoken in Hepka as the worst. If they did not mention Hepka, they named a village farther to the east.

In summary, generally people's attitudes toward their own language variety are most positive, while their attitudes toward other varieties are more negative when the distance is greater and the villages are more to the east. One exception to this is the overall negative attitude toward Hepka.

3.2.1 Attitudes toward the Limi Dialect

Now we will look specifically at the attitudes shown toward the Limi dialect. In general, attitudes toward the Limi dialect are very positive. The people from Bargaun and Dojam

show some negative attitudes. People from other villages seem to marry people from Limi. People from Kermi marry people from Limi, but do not marry their neighbors from Hepka and Muchu. This shows a positive attitude toward Limi only.

Figure 16 shows the responses after the story from Til on question 2 on the RSQ: *How did you like his/her speech?*

Figure 16: How did you like the speech in the Til story?

	N=	Good	Fine	Bad
Dojam	12	25%	67%	8%
Bargaun	12	42%	42%	16%
Hepka	12	92%	8%	-
Kermi	22	64%	36%	-
Yalbang	10	70%	30%	-
Muchu	10	80%	20%	-
Jang	12	92%	-	8%
Total/Average	90	65%	30%	5%

Listening to the story from Til only 5% of the respondents answered negatively. Only people from Bargaun, Dojam and Jang answered negatively. Among people tested in Kermi, 64% were positive, in Yalbang 70% were positive, in Muchu 80% were positive and both in Hepka and Jang 92% were positive.

When asked how they would like it if their son or daughter married someone that spoke like the person spoke in the story from Til, people from Yalbang, Muchu and Hepka answered very positively. Half the people in Kermi answered negatively. In Dojam 38% responded negatively and in Bargaun the majority (75%) expressed negative attitudes.

3.2.2 Attitudes toward the Upper Humla Dialect

We turn now to examining the attitudes toward the Upper Humla dialect. Overall, the attitudes toward the Upper Humla variety are mixed. The attitudes of people from the Limi and Eastern Humla dialects are generally more negative, while attitudes from Lower Humla are mixed, leaning more toward positive attitudes. Leaders from Limi and Bargaun responded negatively toward marrying people outside their VDC, and also toward marrying people from the Upper Humla dialect. People from Kermi do not marry people from Muchu. People from Dojam do not hold positive attitudes toward the Upper Humla variety while people from Hepka do.

Figure 17 shows the responses after the story from Yalbang on the same question (#2 on the RSQ).

Figure 17: How did you like the speech in the Yalbang story?

	N=	Good	Fine	Bad
Kermi	22	86%	14%	-
Hepka	12	83%	17%	-
Jang	12	67%	25%	8%
Bargaun	12	42%	42%	16%
Dojam	12	17%	83%	-
Total/Average	70	63%	33%	4%

When listening to the Yalbang story, people from Kermi (86% of respondents) and Hepka (83% of respondents) answered very positively, people from Jang (67% of respondents) relatively positively, while people from Bargaun (42% of respondents) and Dojam (17% of respondents) answered considerably less positively. When asked how they would like it if their son or daughter married someone that spoke like the person in the Yalbang story, a majority of people in Kermi (over 80%) and Hepka (67%) were positive. In Jang 42% responded negatively. In Bargaun 66% responded negatively, while 33% of the respondents in Dojam were positive.

3.2.3 Attitudes toward the Lower Humla Dialect

The attitudes toward Lower Humla seem positive overall. However, including the specific attitudes shown toward Hepka (a village of the Lower Humla dialect) attitudes seem mixed at best. Leaders from Limi and Bargaun responded negatively toward marrying people outside their VDC, and also toward marrying people from the Lower Humla dialect. People we interviewed from Muchu and Yalbang have positive attitudes toward the Lower Humla dialect. People we interviewed in Dojam were positive toward the Hepka variety. Looking at the answers given to the question 'How do you like the way people from Khagalgaun speak?', over half of the respondents (52%) was positive, and the rest was indifferent. One sentiment (from Kermi) is that Tibetans call their language *Rongba Bhasa*, which means 'lowlander language'. This label has a negative connotation.

Figure 18 shows the responses after the story from Kermi on the same question (#2 on the RSQ).

Figure 18: How did you like the speech in the Kermi story?

	N=	Good	Fine	Bad
Jang	12	83%	17%	-

When listening to the Kermi story, 83% of the respondents in Jang said they think the language is 'good'.

When asked how they would like it if their son or daughter married someone that spoke like the person in the Kermi story, half of the people responded negatively. Looking at the answers to both questions, this negative attitude seems to have to do more with marriage rules than with accepting the dialect. Further research into the attitudes towards the Lower Humla dialect (through, for example, the story from Kermi) would be helpful to give a more complete picture.

3.2.4 Attitudes toward the Eastern Humla Dialect

Lastly we look at attitudes toward the Eastern Humla dialect. Although the data is less extensive, the attitudes toward the Eastern Humla dialect seem to be mixed. The closer the respondents are to the dialect geographically, the more positive their attitudes were. People from other villages seem to marry people from Bargaun. People in Dojam are positive toward the Bargaun variety. However, people from Hepka had negative attitudes toward the Bargaun variety, but positive attitudes toward all the others.

Figure 19 shows the responses after the story from Bargaun on the same question (#2 on the RSQ).

Figure 19: How did you like the speech in the Bargaun story?

	N=	Good	Fine	Bad
Jang	12	75%	25%	-
Hepka	12	92%	8%	-
Dojam	12	83%	17%	-
Kermi	12	42%	58%	-
Total/Average	48	73%	27%	-

People from four other villages listened to the story from Bargaun. People from Hepka (92% of respondents) and Dojam (83% of respondents) answered very positively, and the majority (75% of respondents) from Jang also answered positively. In Kermi the majority of respondents (58%) answered neutrally.

When asked how they would like it if their son or daughter married someone that spoke like the person in the story from Bargaun, respondents in Dojam were the most positive (83%), and the majority (66%) in Hepka were also positive. In Kermi 33% of the respondents reacted negatively and 42% reacted positively.

3.2.5 Summary of Dialect Attitudes

To summarize this section on dialect attitudes we see that attitudes vary toward the different dialects. Attitudes toward the Limi dialect are mostly positive, while attitudes toward the variety spoken in Hepka (part of the Lower Humla dialect) are mostly negative. The attitudes toward the Upper Humla and Lower Humla dialects, as well as toward the Eastern Humla

dialect are very mixed. When we looked only at Kermi and not Hepka for the attitudes toward the Lower Humla dialect, a much more positive image appears.

The last section on intelligibility completes the picture of dialect variation and gives input into which dialect or dialects would most widely serve future language development.

3.3 Dialect Intelligibility

This section discusses dialect intelligibility. The data presented here will provide insight into which dialects could be used as central dialects on which to base future language development. We have used the Recorded Story Question¹⁶ (RSQ) method which measures perceived intelligibility. To have a more precise and detailed picture of intelligibility among the Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla District, RTT (Recorded Text Test) testing is needed. However, the RSQs, interview questions and Dialect Mapping, are sufficient methods for the goals of this survey.

In the interviews we asked people if they had met people from the other villages in Humla. The majority of people have met people from all other villages, except for a majority in Til, who have not met people from Khangalgaun and Bargaun. To respondents who did meet people from other villages, we asked how much they understand when people from a particular village speak to each other using fast speech. We also asked people, after listening to one of the three stories from Til, Yalbang and Bargaun, how much they understood of the story. And, during Dialect Mapping, we asked two questions that measure intelligibility: 'If books were written in your village variety, which villages would be able to use those books?' and 'Out of all these you have grouped together, which variety should be used as the one for writing so that all the others will understand it well? If that one could not be used, then which one?' The data gathered from using these tools will be presented below by dialect.

3.3.1 Intelligibility of Limi Dialect

The perceived intelligibility of the Limi dialect is relatively high. For some people from the other villages, the Limi dialect is one of the best options to use for writing books. Even when people from Kermi named the Limi dialect as the least best option for writing books, they seemed to understand the Limi dialect very well. This means that the Limi dialect seems to have the potential to be used and accepted by a relatively large portion of the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla.

Figure 20 shows the answers given to question 43 on the informal interview: *When people from Limi speak with each other fast how much do you understand?*

¹⁶ The RSQ is a derivative of the post-RTT questions. Post-RTT questions are part of the RTT method. See Carla F. Radloff (1993) 'POST-RTT QUESTIONS FOR INTERPRETING RTT SCORES' for more details. The RSQ has been used in sociolinguistic research in India (Eppele, Maggard and Waugh 2000) and Nepal (Eppele 2003).

Figure 20: How much do you understand the Limi variety?

	N=	All	Most	Half	Only a little	None
Dojam	9	22%	-	44%	22%	11%
Bargaun	8	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	25%
Hepka	12	67%	-	33%	-	-
Kermi	11	18%	36%	9%	27%	9%
Muchu	8	87.5%	12.5%	-	-	-
Total/Average	48	42%	16.5%	21%	12.5%	8%

The majority of respondents from the interviews (58.5%) said they understand 'all' or 'most' of the Limi variety of speech.

After listening to the story from Til, 77% or higher of respondents said they understood all of the story. The exceptions to this were people from Bargaun and Dojam. In those two locations, less than half of the respondents understood all (42% in Bargaun and 33% in Dojam). According to the people from Til, all villages that were mentioned (not including the Eastern Humla dialect area) could profit from books written in their dialect.

People from Muchu mention the Limi dialect as a third best option (after the Upper and Lower Humla dialects) for use in writing books for Humla. In Kermi, the Limi dialect is seen as the least best option. In Bargaun, they choose the Limi dialect as the best dialect to base book writing on. In Dojam, they put the Limi dialect as the last option, and in Hepka, people chose the Limi dialect after their first choice of Upper Humla.

3.3.2 *Intelligibility of Upper Humla Dialect*

The perceived intelligibility of the Upper Humla dialect is, generally speaking, somewhat low. The trend seems to be that the closer geographically, the higher the intelligibility. This makes using the Upper Humla dialect for language development only desirable for a smaller segment of the Tibetan-speaking villages of Humla.

When asked how much they understand people from Muchu talking quickly with each other, the majority said they understand 'half' or 'less than half', except for people from Hepka and Dojam, who said they would understand much more. Listening to the story from Yalbang, the majority understand all or most of the story. In general, the more distance between the villages, the less people understand each other. According to the people from Muchu, all Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla would understand books written in their dialect.

People from Kermi chose the Upper Humla dialect as the second best option for writing books, after their own dialect. In Til, they named the Upper Humla dialect after Purang (on the other side of the Chinese border) and Limi dialect. In Bargaun, the Upper Humla dialect was mentioned as the least best option. In Dojam, people named the Upper Humla dialect after their own dialect and the Lower Humla dialect. And, in Hepka, the Upper Humla dialect was only mentioned as the last option.

3.3.3 Intelligibility of Lower Humla Dialect

The perceived intelligibility of the Lower Humla dialect is mixed. One village (Kermi) in this dialect area got the highest percentage of perceived intelligibility by all the others, while the other (Hepka) got the lowest percentage. This is probably caused by strong negative attitudes toward the Hepka village in particular. When the percentage for that village is not considered, the intelligibility of the Lower Humla dialect seems to be rather high, almost as high as the Limi dialect. This suggests that language development based on the Kermi or Khangalgaun variety could possibly have the most widely spread reach among the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla.

The variety spoken in the village of Khangalgaun got the highest percentage on the question of whether or not people would understand two people speaking quickly with each other. The general outcome was that 80% of the people said they understand all or most. This data is a bit skewed, because we asked relatively more people in Kermi this question than in other places, and Kermi is close to Khangalgaun. At the same time, the village of Hepka generally got the lowest percentage, with only 56% of people saying they understand all or most. Adding to this, listening to the story from Kermi, only half of the respondents in Jang said they understood 'all'. According to people from Kermi and Hepka, all Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla would understand books written in their variety.

People in Muchu named the Lower Humla dialect as the best option after their own dialect for writing books. For people in Til the Lower Humla dialect is their worst option. In Bargaun people chose the Lower Humla dialect only after the Limi dialect and their own dialect. People from Dojam named the Lower Humla dialect after their own dialect. People from Hepka named villages close to them as the first option, next the Limi dialect and only then other villages that seem to be part of their own dialect.

3.3.4 Intelligibility of Eastern Humla Dialect

The perceived intelligibility of the Eastern Humla dialect is mixed. It seems only some of the Humla villages would be able to use books written in this dialect.

When asked, the majority of people say they understand all or most of the speech variety in Bargaun. Only people from three villages listened to the story from Bargaun. Almost all people from Dojam and Hepka said they understood all of the story. Among respondents in Kermi, 33% understand only half or less. According to people from Bargaun, all Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla would understand books written in their variety.

People from Muchu did not mention the Eastern Humla dialect at all when asked to name the varieties that could be used for writing books. In Kermi, the Eastern Humla dialect was mentioned last. In Til, the Eastern Humla dialect was not even on the dialect map they created. In Bargaun, they named the Limi dialect first before they named their own. In Dojam, they named the Eastern Humla dialect first and, in Hepka, the Eastern Humla dialect was chosen last.

3.3.5 Summary of Dialect Intelligibility

To summarize this section on dialect intelligibility we see that the perceived intelligibility of the different dialects varies quite a bit. We measured perceived intelligibility which we think is sufficient for one of the goals of this survey, to be able to make an informed decision regarding where to base future language development.

In choosing the best variety or dialect for language development purposes, we tried to discover which variety could be used to cover all the varieties. If there is such a variety, it would mean more effective language development work. In sociolinguistics, this variety is called a central dialect.

The perceived intelligibility of the Limi dialect has the widest geographic reach. It is understood by most of the people in the villages of the Upper and Lower Humla dialects. It is less understood by people from Bargaun and Dojam, but people from Bargaun would still choose the Limi dialect before their own when asked which dialect would be best for written material development.

The intelligibility of the Upper Humla dialect is a bit low and the intelligibility of the Lower Humla dialect is mixed. Especially considering the overall negative attitude toward some villages in the Lower Humla dialect group, neither dialect seems to be best in terms of future language development, although one of the village varieties in the Lower Humla dialect that is perceived quite positively could be considered to base future language development on.

The intelligibility of the Eastern Humla dialect is high for people from Dojam and Hepka, but much less so for other dialects and villages in Humla.

3.4 Summary of Dialect Variation

This chapter had three main focuses: dialect and language identification, dialect attitudes and dialect intelligibility. In the first section we concluded that the different speech varieties among the Tibetan-speaking villages of Humla District should be seen as dialects of the same language. Four dialects were identified, namely: the Limi dialect (Til, Halji and Jang), the Upper Humla dialect (from Yari to Yalbang), the Lower Humla dialect (from Kermi to Kholsi to Tanggin), and the Eastern Humla dialect (from Burangse to Dojam). Another conclusion was that the more geographically distant villages are from each other, the more different they find each other's speech variety. The varieties seem to be different but are still partly comprehensible throughout all Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla.

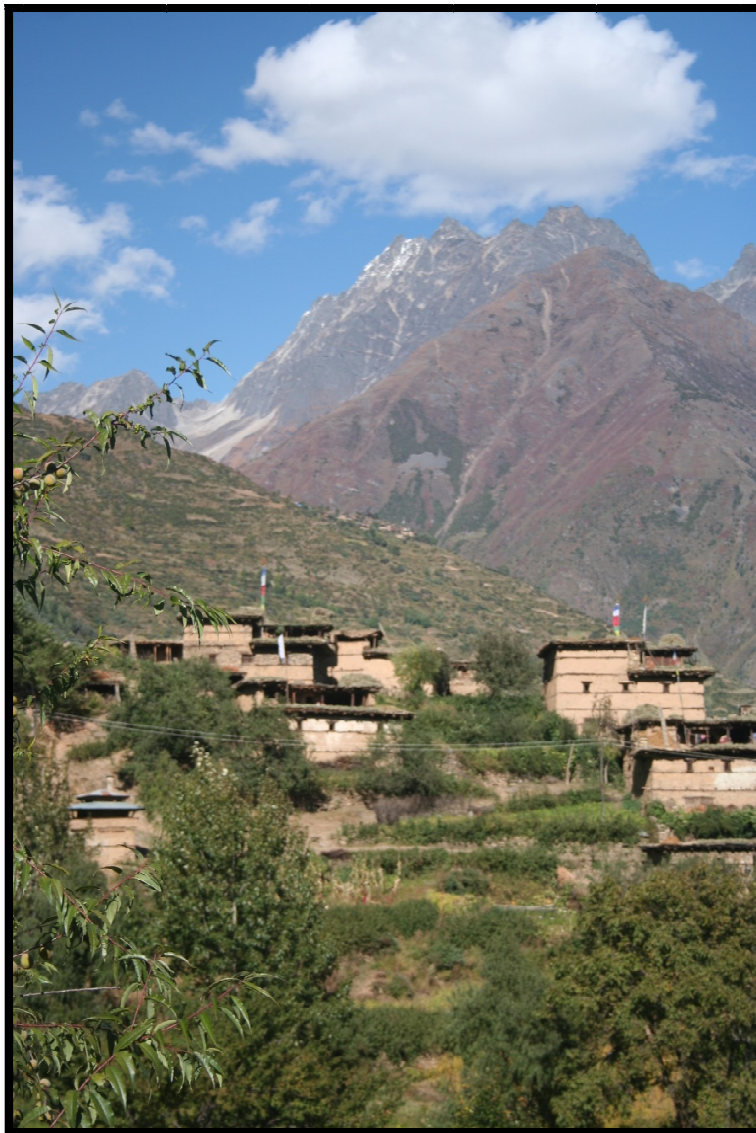
In the second section, we saw that the attitudes toward the Limi dialect are mostly very positive, while attitudes toward the variety spoken in Hepka (part of the Lower Humla dialect) are mostly negative. The attitudes toward the Upper Humla and Lower Humla dialects, as well as toward the Eastern Humla dialect, are very mixed. When we only look at Kermi and not Hepka for the attitudes toward the Lower Humla dialect, a much more positive picture appears.

The last section looked at perceived intelligibility. The intelligibility of the Limi dialect has the widest geographic reach. It is understood by most of the people in the villages of the Upper and Lower Humla dialects. The intelligibility of the Upper Humla dialect is a bit low and the intelligibility of the Lower Humla dialect is mixed. Considering the overall negative attitude toward some villages in the Lower Humla dialect group, neither dialect seems to be best for future language development. Although, one of the village varieties in the Lower

Humla dialect that are perceived quite positively could be considered to base future language development on. The intelligibility of the Eastern Humla dialect is high for people from Dojam and Hepka, but much less so for other dialects and villages in Humla.

When language development starts among the Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla, the conclusion is that to serve all of the people, at least two development projects are needed. One should focus on the Eastern Humla dialect and the other one should focus on the Limi dialect. Probably almost all Humla Tibetan-speaking people would accept and understand at least one of these two dialects. If there is a focus on only one dialect, chances are high that a segment of the Tibetan-speaking Humla population would not understand or accept it.

Photo 2: Bargaun village October 2012 (Klaas de Vries)



4 Ethnolinguistic Identity

This chapter investigates whether Tibetan-speaking people in Humla see themselves as a cohesive language and ethnic community or more broadly related to (Nepali) society. In other words, we will discuss the ethnolinguistic identity of the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla. We will answer the following two research questions:

- Do Humla Tibetans see themselves as a cohesive language community?
- Do Humla Tibetans see themselves as a cohesive people group?

Ethnolinguistic identity can be an indicator for considering varieties to be dialects of the same language or to be different languages. We have seen in chapter four that between some varieties there is (relatively) marginal intelligibility (for example between Dojam and most other varieties, especially Yalbang). Also, between other varieties there seems to be sufficient intelligibility, but there is the question of whether or not they consider themselves as part of the same ethnolinguistic community (for example between Limi and the rest). This chapter will explore ethnolinguistic identity and help to determine how we should look at the sociolinguistic situation among the Tibetan speakers in Humla.

The *Ethnologue: Languages of Nepal* (Eppele et al. 2012:6-7) uses the criteria set by the ISO 639-3 inventory¹⁷ for defining a language in relation to varieties which may be considered dialects:

- Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if speakers of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety at a functional level (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety).
- Where spoken intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language.
- Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of well-established distinct ethnolinguistic identities can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages.

In the research questions, we separated the idea of ethnolinguistic identity into two different questions; one on cohesive language community and the other on cohesive people group. In reality it is difficult (if not impossible) to disconnect language from culture. These are closely interrelated and intertwined. For this reason, this chapter is organized by themes which will include both the linguistic and cultural realities. Each of these themes will provide data to

¹⁷ ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 639-3 is a code that aims to assign three-letter identifiers to all known human languages.

help answer both of the ethnolinguistic identity research questions. We start with marriage patterns.

4.1 Marriage Patterns

4.1.1 Marriage Patterns Ascertained in Literature

Fürer-Haimendorf describes to some extent the “named clusters of villages of unequal status which affects the rules of intermarriage” and the “named clans (*rhuba*) which exist in some village communities, but seem to be absent in others” (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988: 270-1). He also writes about ranked classes, or 'status-groups' (1988:271-2). But he says that different villages have different rules and uses for these categories. He states, for example, that the individual groups or villages “are neither strictly endogamous nor exogamous”¹⁸ (1988:270). Levine (1988), in her book, focuses on polyandry among the Nyinba (*The Dynamics of Polyandry*). During our two trips to Humla we encountered several cases of polyandry, but also at least one case of polygamy. Both studies (Fürer-Haimendorf 1988 and Levine 1988) were written more than 25 years ago. Since then, a lot may have changed and, indeed, seems to have changed. This study is not extensive enough to go into detail on the social structures and marriage patterns among the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla. We did, however, have the chance to ask a couple of questions in seven different villages that help to give a rough picture of what people think and do in regards to marriage patterns and social structures.

4.1.2 Marriage Patterns Ascertained through Interviews

Only two out of seventy respondents answered that people from their village did not marry outside their own village or VDC. And the majority (83%) thought marriage to people outside their village or VDC was a good thing. The exception to this is people from Bargaun and Til. With 27% and 40% respectively saying this is not a good thing, they were less positive about marrying outside their area than the rest. If there are marriage patterns that focus more on marrying inside the area, they are not held very strictly and people do not seem to see marriage with people of other communities as something negative. This could indicate a weaker emphasis on the smaller area, and a stronger and positive focus on the broader group of Tibetan speakers in Humla.

We also asked the leaders of the seven villages if people marry outside their village or VDC and what they think about it. The answers roughly matched the answers from the seventy respondents of the informal interview. The leaders were a bit less positive, in some cases, regarding the reality of marrying outside their own area. The leader of Til said they only marry within the Limi area. And if someone would marry outside, that is not good, especially with people from Bargaun. The leader in Kermi said, although he does not like it, people from Kermi marry people from Limi. In Hepka, the leader said they marry anyone, except for people from the Bargaun area, but he does not like it. He only likes it when villagers marry people from the Hepka and Kermi area (Lower Humla dialect area). According to the leader

¹⁸ These are kinship terms. Endogamous, in this context, means marrying only people that are part of your village or group of villages (maybe dialect group). And exogamous means the opposite, only marrying people outside of your village or group of villages (maybe dialect group).

in Muchu, they marry anyone, except for people from the Bargaun area, and it is a good thing. The other leaders are all positive about the reality or possibility of marrying outside their own village or VDC. It seems the marriage patterns of the Bargaun area are still quite separate from the rest of Tibetan-speaking Humla, but the attitude towards branching out is positive.

We asked if the practice of polyandry (one wife married to several husbands, in this case mostly brothers) is still practiced. Most leaders said it is, but only by some people. In Dojam it seems to be the most normal marriage pattern. Young people marry like this, except for those in the villages of Hepka and Yalbang. These interview responses, in combination with the general picture of marrying more and more outside their own village or VDC, signals strong ties among the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla. These ties are not only on a local or VDC level, but also indicate a growing move towards a district-wide strengthening of ties.

Only in Dojam are people marrying outside the Tibetan-speaking population. In their case, they are also married Chhetri, Gurung and Bahun people. In the other six villages where we conducted interviews, they reported only marrying Tibetan-speaking people.

4.1.3 *Marriage Patterns Ascertained through Attitude Questions*

During the informal interview, we asked, “How would you feel if your son or daughter married someone who did not speak your mother tongue?” Generally this was understood as a person who does not speak a Humla Tibetan variety. The majority of respondents, 56%, felt this would be “bad”. The rest answered that they were “indifferent” (23%) or they felt this is “good”. Again, the respondents in Til are the exception to this. The majority (54%) of them are “indifferent”, while the rest (46%) felt this would be “bad”.

In section 3.2, we discussed dialect attitudes. We looked at how people would feel if their son or daughter would marry someone like the person speaking in the different stories. The only indication of possible lower cohesiveness is the negative attitudes expressed towards the Hepka variety. The rest of the attitudes were at least mixed, and for the Limi variety, specifically positive.

4.2 Language Patterns

4.2.1 *Love for the Languages*

We asked, “Among the languages that you speak which one do you love the most?” Looking at the whole picture (see Figure 21), a small majority (56%) chose a broader term (e.g., phot, bhote, orde, lap, kham, lama), comprising most, if not all, of the Tibetan varieties in Humla.

Figure 21: Which language do you love the most?

	N=	Village/area-specific term	Broader term ¹⁹	Tibetan	Foreign language (Nepali, English, Chinese, Hindi)
Til	7	29%	-	14%	57%
Muchu	11	45%	45%	-	9%
Kermi	12	-	58%	-	42%
Hepka	12	8%	83%	8%	-
Bargaun	12	8%	58%	8%	25%
Dojam	12	17%	67%	8%	8%
All six villages	66	17%	56%	6%	21%

The rest of the answers were divided between choosing a 'foreign' language (Nepali, Tibetan, Chinese, Hindi or English) (27%) or the village/area's specific variety (17%). The answers from people in Til formed the big exception to this picture. Not one person named a broader term. 36% named a foreign language and the rest (64%) named their own variety or only spoke their own variety. People in Dojam and Hepka seem to be most drawn to the idea of one language community among Tibetan speakers in Humla, with respectively 67% and 83% saying they love a language using a broader term. People from Kermi seem to be the least focused on their own variety, with no respondents answering a local language variety name.

4.2.2 Other Languages Spoken

Five out of seven leaders said there are no other ethnic groups residing in their area, making their villages mono-ethnic and mono-cultural. Only in the Bargaun and Dojam area do Nepali speaking Dalit people live near them, and near Dojam there is mention of Gurung and Tamang²⁰ people, speaking a Tibetan variety.

4.2.3 Feelings When Speaking One's Mother Tongue

The majority, four out of seven leaders, feel prestigious when they speak their own language in the presence of Nepali-speaking people. The other three gave a neutral answer. So, towards their Nepali neighbors there is a tendency to feel pride in their own language, and not embarrassment. Their feelings are a bit more varied when they speak their own language in the presence of people from Tibet. Still, three out of seven (from Hepka, Yalbang and Bargaun) feel prestigious. The leaders from Til and Muchu gave a neutral answer, but from Dojam and Kermi they reported that they feel embarrassed.

¹⁹ The broader terms (most of them meaning Tibetan) could refer to the Tibetan language more generally and not just to Humla Tibetan. But, based on the context, it probably usually meant the Tibetan of Humla.

²⁰ There are no known communities of Tamang or Gurung speakers in Humla. So it is unclear who these people are. They may be individuals who have married into the Dojam community.

The leader from Kermi commented that Tibetan people call the Kermi language 'rongba bhasa', meaning 'lowlander language'. This is clearly used as a derogatory term. This shows that the opinions of Tibetan people count more than those of Nepali people. They have a stronger connection with the Tibetan language and culture, than with the language and culture of Nepal. This speaks to the cohesiveness of the group both in language and in culture. They feel their language is very different from the Nepali language and they are more focused on the 'higher living' (in elevation) Tibetans (in Humla but also across the border into Tibet).

4.3 Social Patterns

4.3.1 *Habits and Customs*

Not many respondents (6%) think the habits and customs of people in other villages are “very good”. But, on the other hand, only a small percentage of respondents (11%) answered “not good”. Overall, attitudes are neither positive nor negative. The exception, as described in section 3.2 Dialect Attitudes, is the more negative attitude towards the village of Hepka. The overall conclusion in chapter three is that there is not just one strong cohesive language group among the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla. But, on the other hand, there are also no clearly separate smaller groups that do not want to be affiliated with Humla Tibetan as a whole. The Limi area is one exception to this statement. They see themselves as being somewhat separate from the other Tibetan-speaking people in Humla, both linguistically and ethnically.

4.3.2 *Social Structure*

All villages have various clans within the village. There is some overlap between the villages in terms of clan names, but also some distinctive names. How these clans function could be a focus for further research. For our purpose here, the fact that there are clans in every village indicates a common trait between all the Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla. While this could indicate some cohesiveness between these villages, we also see that there are still differences between the Tibetan-speaking areas in Humla. The seemingly different social structures between the Limi area and the Bargaun area are cause for reluctance in saying all Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla together form one cohesive people group.

We also asked the village leaders about dividing the areas in Humla into clusters, as described by Fürer-Haimendorf (1988:269-70). We discussed this before in section 4.1.1 Interview Results. The fact that this clustering is rarely used or almost forgotten could mean there is a weaker affiliation within the smaller, local area groupings. But at the same time, the clustering has not completely disappeared, but has just moved more towards the use of VDC names instead.

4.4 Other Related Topics

4.4.1 Attitudes regarding Language in Purang County (China)

It is also good to look at what Tibetan speakers from Humla say about the language spoken across the border into China (Tibet). Many Tibetan speakers in Humla regularly cross the border to Purang for trade and religious activities. Almost half (46%) of the respondents said that the Purang language is the same as their own language. The majority (57%) use their own variety when speaking to people from Purang, but of those that do, 63% changed their language somewhat to accommodate the Purang speaker. This data suggests substantive linguistic ties between the Tibetan varieties spoken on either side of the border. Further study would be helpful to understand the relationship between the Tibetan speakers in Humla and those across the border in Purang.

4.4.2 Migration Patterns

Humla Tibetan speakers have a history of trade. This means that many people do not stay all year round in the same place. Another reason for leaving the village and staying somewhere outside Humla is for religious purposes. In Appendix B data regarding migration patterns can be found (see questions 33 and 34 on the KIQ). Questions were asked separately about the migration patterns of men and women.

4.4.3 Additional Observations

In every village in which we stayed during our fieldwork, we sat around with the whole team to talk about what we observed in the village, as well as to record our observations. We used the same observation schedule every time. The information gathered using this tool adds to the general background information. It will give a more complete picture of the context of the research sites. In Appendix F, you can look at the observations we made in the seven villages where we stayed for our research: Kermi, Yalbang, Muchu, Til, Bargaun, Dojam and Hepka.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, we investigated the ethnolinguistic identity of the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla. Through the three bigger themes of marriage patterns, language patterns and social patterns, we looked at the sociolinguistic situation. The marriage patterns indicate weaker ties to the traditional focus on the village and its area, and a growing acceptance and focus on the broader area of the Humla District. This focus is strongly on the Tibetan-speaking people and villages in Humla, not with people speaking other languages. The attitudes concerning marriage patterns indicate a certain cohesiveness (not extremely strong, but certainly not weak) among the Tibetan speakers in Humla.

Looking at the language patterns, we see the same picture emerging. The majority of respondents use a term for the language they love that signifies all the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla (although these terms could refer to the Tibetan language more generally, but, based on the context, they are probably meant the Tibetan of Humla). And the opinions of Tibetan people count more than those of the Nepali speakers around them. They have a

stronger connection with the Tibetan language and culture, than with the language and culture of Nepal. This again shows a certain cohesiveness of the group in both language and culture. They feel their language is very different from the Nepali language and they are more focused on the 'higher living' (in elevation) Tibetans (in Humla but also across the border into Tibet).

The social patterns show us that there is not a strong social homogeneity among all the Tibetan speakers in Humla. There are considerable differences, especially between the Limi area and the Bargaun area. So, although most indicators show some kind of cohesiveness among all the Tibetan speakers, there are still enough unknowns and differences to be reluctant to say that there is strong cohesiveness, linguistically and ethnically.

There is a certain degree of cohesive ethnolinguistic identity among the Tibetan speakers in Humla, strong enough to set them apart from non-Tibetan speakers, but not strong enough to see them as a homogenous group. In working with Humla Tibetans it will be important to acknowledge that there will be differences in ethnic attitude and dialect between certain areas.

5 Language Vitality and EGIDS

In this chapter, we investigate the language vitality of the Tibetan varieties in Humla. This is important because it shows us the strength of the vitality, whether there is a possible decline in the use of the mother-tongue and what kind of actions might be needed for future language development. One current measurement for language vitality is the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) (Lewis and Simons 2010). EGIDS is based on an elaboration of Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (Fishman 1991) and measures vitality on a scale from zero (strongest vitality: International) to ten (weakest vitality: Extinct). Lewis and Simons propose a series of questions (Appendix G) to be asked concerning any language in order to determine where it measures on the scale. The answers to these questions lead us to the conclusion that, on the EGIDS scale, the Humla Tibetan varieties fall into category 6a (Vigorous). This is the same EGIDS level that the *Ethnologue* has documented for Humla Tibetan.

We start by looking at language proficiency and domains of language use, then at intergenerational transfer of the mother tongue. These issues were primarily investigated through the use of the informal interview. We continue by looking at other factors that play a part in language vitality and the EGIDS level for the Humla Tibetan varieties.

5.1 Language Proficiency

On the question “What language do you speak?”, all 92 respondents named their local Tibetan variety. We asked 71 respondents what language they spoke first and what other languages they speak. All of them said they spoke their own Tibetan variety first. Ninety percent of respondents also speak Nepali, 32% also speak (Lhasa) Tibetan and 14% also speak English.

We also asked questions about their perception of their own language ability. When we asked, among the languages they speak, which they speak best, 93% named their own local variety and 6% named Nepali (of which three of the four respondents were 34 years or younger). Out of the 68 respondents, 66 named a second best language: 79% said Nepali, 11% said (Lhasa) Tibetan and 8% named their own local variety. Only half named a third best language, and only ten (15%) named a fourth best language. This situation suggests some level of bilingualism, especially with Nepali, but a much lower level of multilingualism. Low levels of multilingualism may be an indicator of strong mother-tongue language vitality.

5.2 Domains of Language Use

In this section, we will look at the interview data on language use in different contexts and social situations, known as 'domains'. An important indicator of language vitality is which languages are used in various domains of life.

Language use in the home is viewed as one of the primary domains related to language vitality, because the language of the home is generally a child's first language. All the people we interviewed responded that they speak their local Tibetan variety at home. This suggests high vitality for the mother-tongue among the Tibetan varieties in Humla.

We also asked which language people use in the following seven domains: singing, at the market, storytelling, praying, telling stories to children, singing at home and in village

meetings. Figure 22 displays the percentage of respondents who reported primarily using their local variety, Nepali, or both their local variety and Nepali roughly as often as the other.

Figure 22: Overall language use

What language do you usually speak...	N =	Local	Both	Nepali
while singing?	69	61%	7%	28%
while at the market?	70	24%	3%	71%
while telling stories?	67	75%	4%	21%
while praying?	72	88%	4%	3%
while telling stories to children?	69	88%	6%	6%
while singing at home?	68	87%	4%	9%
during village meetings?	71	83%	6%	11%

In a couple of cases, the percentages do not add up to 100%. This is because we did not include the instances when people said they use Tibetan or Hindi. Looking at the table we see that the local variety is used the most in six of the seven domains. Only in the case of going to the market do people use more Nepali. The reason for this is that there are many non-Tibetan speakers at the market. This table suggests high vitality for the Humla Tibetan varieties. The high percentage (88%) for telling stories to children is especially important, because it is a strong indicator that the local variety is being transmitted to the next generation. The next section goes more deeply into this topic of intergenerational transfer.

5.3 Intergenerational Transfer

An important aspect of language vitality is the extent to which the mother-tongue is being passed on to the younger generation, known as intergenerational transfer. If children are using their Humla Tibetan variety, it is a good indicator of strong language vitality.

We asked what language speakers parents used to speak to them when they were young. All of the respondents said that their parents spoke to them in their local Tibetan variety as children. Also, all married people speak a local variety to their spouses.

We asked what language people use to talk to their parents, siblings and children. Figure 23 displays the percentage of respondents who reported primarily using their local variety, Nepali, or both their local variety and Nepali roughly as often as the other.

Figure 23: What language is spoken with family members?

What language do you usually speak...	N =	Local	Both	Nepali
with your parents?	72	100%	-	-
with your siblings?	71	97%	-	1%
with your children?	59	97%	2%	2%

In two cases the percentages do not add up, because we rounded the numbers. When talking to their parents, all people replied that they use their own local variety. In talking with siblings one person responded ‘Nepali’ and one person responded ‘both Hindi and local variety’, out of 71 respondents. In response to “What language do you use to talk with your children?”, only one respondent reported that he/she uses Nepali and one that he/she uses both Nepali and the local variety.

When playing with each other, children in the village mostly speak the local variety. Only 17% of the respondents said they heard children speak Nepali with each other while playing. People reported that when children talk with neighbors they usually speak their own variety. Only 7% of the respondents said they hear children use Nepali while speaking to neighbors. When asked if the young people in the village speak their mother-tongue well, 94% answered “yes”. In addition 75% of respondents said the language of young people was not different from their grandparents' language.

This data strongly suggests that the mother-tongue is being actively passed on to the younger generation. This is an indicator of strong vitality.

5.4 Other Factors

The interview schedule we used contained several other questions that relate to language vitality but don't fit into domains of language use or intergenerational transfer. Some of the data presented here is also based on observation. We will now consider the results of several interview questions.

One question we asked was “Which language should children learn first?” A majority (82%) said children should learn the local variety first. The other answers were Nepali (10%), English (7%) and Tibetan (1%). This value of learning your own local variety first as a child is again an indicator of strong vitality.

Another question on language use we asked was: “Are there any situations where you do not speak your mother-tongue with other Tibetan people in Humla?” The majority (79%) said they always speak their mother-tongue with other Tibetan people in Humla. When people did change their language, it was mostly to accommodate the other person’s variety as much as possible. The main reasons for changing their language were: because the other people did not understand their variety, because the other people only speak Nepali, or because the respondent had never met the person before and didn’t want to shame them if they did not understand the local variety. The fact that most people would not consider changing their language in contact with other Tibetans in Humla indicates a high value of using their own variety and a certain pride in their language. These are indicators of strong language vitality.

There are two cases where they do change their language, i.e., where there are low levels of intelligibility or no intelligibility and cases where they do not want to shame one another. These two cases are based on practical considerations that have little to do with language vitality.

During our fieldwork in Humla, we wrote down our observations in every village. One of the things we observed was the fact that, wherever we went, children seemed to talk mostly in their own local variety among each other and only a handful were able to converse just a little bit in Nepali with us. Another observation was that many people in the older generation are monolingual. We needed local interpreters in many villages to help with translating our Nepali into their variety. In one case, in the village of Bargaun, there was mention of people from Thehe village (non-Tibetans) that come up to work for people in Bargaun and learn some of the local variety for communication. And someone commented that the 'low caste' in Bargaun do not speak the Bargaun variety very well. This assumes that they should do better. These observations support a categorization of strong language vitality for the Humla varieties.

5.5 EGIDS

Coming back to the conclusion presented at the beginning of this chapter, all the data supports the conclusion that the Humla Tibetan varieties fall into category 6a (Vigorous) on the EGIDS scale. The description of 6a (Vigorous), used in the paper on EGIDS by Lewis and Simons (2010a:13), is as follows:

This is the level of ongoing oral use that constitutes sustainable orality. Intergenerational transmission of the language is intact and widespread in the community. The language use and transmission situation is stable or gaining strength.

The EGIDS categories refer to levels of sustainability. Category 6a (Vigorous) falls into the level of 'Sustainable Orality'. The description for sustainable orality is as follows:

A language is at the level of sustainable orality when the entire language community is using the language orally. This does not assume monolingualism, but that in a multilingual community, the language has its place and all members of the community use it according to those social norms. Also transmission to children is occurring in the entire community. All FAMED conditions must be at a level 6a or higher. (Lewis and Simons 2010b)

Lewis and Simons (2010b) explain the idea of the Sustainable Use Model (SUM): "The idea is that a language is in a transitory state if it resides between these sustainable levels. It will either move up the scale toward a higher level of sustainability if active language development is occurring, or it will slide down the scale to a lower level of sustainability if there is no language development occurring." In the case of Humla Tibetan, it seems the varieties are on a solid 6a level.

When we look at the so-called FAMED conditions (see Appendix G) that help to decide where a language is on the EGIDS scale, we find descriptions that are relevant to the Tibetan varieties in Humla. These conditions for the 6a level reflect, for the most part, the context in Humla. However, there is an important comment that needs to be made. Among the listed 'FAMED conditions' one (External Environment) says that government policy hinders language development, and another (Motivation) says the people themselves do not have a

positive attitude towards a future of reading and writing their own language. It seems that this is not the case in Humla. In reality, there is no an active government policy that hinders people from developing their own language. In the current political sphere, there seems to be at least a neutral or even positive attitude towards a mother-tongue development policy. See point 17 on the Final Interim Constitution: “Each community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civility and heritage.”²¹ We will look at people's attitude towards future development of their language and other desires they have for their community in the following chapter.

5.6 Summary and Conclusions

We ascertained that the EGIDS category for the Humla Tibetan varieties is correctly documented in the *Ethnologue* as being 6a (Vigorous). We saw that the language proficiency and vitality is high among the Tibetan villages in Humla. They most frequently use their own variety in all domains, except for when they go to the market and interact with non-Tibetan-speaking people, using Nepali. The degree of intergenerational transfer of Humla Tibetan is very high, indicating strong language vitality. People want their children to learn their own variety first and they themselves only change their language when other people do not speak their language or sometimes when other people would not understand their variety well. We also saw that the Humla Tibetan varieties seem to be on a solid 6a EGIDS level. This is equivalent to being on a level of sustainable orality. The next chapter will begin to look at what kind of language development would be needed to maintain the EGIDS level 6a or move up on the EGIDS scale.

Photo 3: Hepka village October 2012 (Klaas de Vries)



²¹ http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Nepal_Interim_Constitution2007.pdf, accessed on November 25th 2013.

6 Desires for Development

In this chapter we will focus on the desires of the community for development of their own language as well as other types of development. To understand these desires, we used informal interview questions and participatory methods (Appreciative Inquiry) facilitations. The responses show that Humla Tibetan speakers have a desire for language-based development as well as other types of development.

6.1 Interview Results on Language Development Desires

6.1.1 *Learning to Read and Write*

Of the 72 respondents, about half are able to read and write. We then asked: “Which language would you like to be able to read?” Fifteen percent of the respondents named their own, unwritten variety as the language they would like to be able to read. This is remarkable, because it shows that there is a sense among some people that it would be possible to read their own language and that they would even want to take the time to learn it. At the moment, there is, with possibly one exception, no mother-tongue language development among the Tibetan-speaking varieties in Humla.

There seem to be positive attitudes towards language development in their mother-tongue, because 89% of the respondents say that they would want to read their own mother-tongue if it would become possible/available. We also asked which language they think would be easiest to read and write in. Of all the respondents who are able to read and write in Tibetan, 64% choose Tibetan as the easiest language to read and write in. In comparison, of all the respondents who are able to read and write in Nepali, 53% choose Nepali as the easiest language to read and write in. Most Humla Tibetans living in Humla who are able to read and write Tibetan are lamas (Buddhist priests) or monks. In Limi, we witnessed the use of written Tibetan in non-religious contexts by people who had learned how to read or write outside of Humla. Nepali is primarily used in the public domain, at the market, while traveling, outside the Humla area (for example, in Kathmandu) and at school.

In the primary schools in the Limi villages, mother-tongue-based education is taking place. Teachers teach orally in the mother-tongue, but use text-books written in other languages. Children learn to read and write in English, Nepali, and standard, written Tibetan.

6.1.2 *Use of the Tibetan or Devanagari Script*

When we asked the leaders in the villages if there is written material in their own language, only in Muchu did the leader respond that there are some songs in the Sambhota (Tibetan) script. We also asked if the people in the village use written marriage invitations. Some do not use written invitations; others use Nepali and only in the villages of Til and Yalbang do they use written invitations in Sambhota script. Another question was related to which language people use for the village meeting minutes. Most villages use Nepali. In Dojam they use Devanagari script to write their mother-tongue. In Yalbang, in addition to Nepali, they use Sambhota script to write in their own language during village meetings.

When we talked with the leader in Muchu, he explained that half of the villagers are able to read Sambhota script. They read at home or in the *Gumpa* (monastery). He comments that in the primary school the children are not being taught the Sambhota script. He would want the *lamas* to teach the Sambhota script to the children. This conversation shows the importance of the Sambhota script and that the leader is thinking about solutions for the problem that children are not learning the script. During the second and third trips, we met with Kanjok Lama (originally from Kermi village), who is working for the ISIS Foundation²². He is working on a dictionary of the Humla Tibetan language using the Sambhota script. As yet it has not been published.

6.2 Appreciative Inquiry Results

We used the participatory method called Appreciative Inquiry with groups of people from the villages to facilitate discussion about hopes and desires for their community. See Appendix E for the steps of this method and the results of facilitations in six villages.

In every village, there was some desire for developing their local language. The villages that noted more than one desire in this area were Hepka, Bargaun and Dojam. These desires range from books or booklets written in their local variety, songs and news in their own language, teachers that teach in their local language, to preserving religious language. An exception is Jang, where no desires for literacy were mentioned. In Jang, they do not think it is possible to write in their own variety. Writing seems to be only possible in Tibetan. Desires for recording of songs, and a book about the Limi culture were mentioned, but they wanted the book written in Standard Tibetan rather than the local Limi variety.

Besides desires for language development, people also expressed desires for development in the areas of healthcare, business opportunities, basic infrastructure (such as good roads, water facilities and electricity), and religion-focused development.

6.3 Summary

Although, at the moment, there is almost no mother-tongue language development among the Tibetan-speaking varieties in Humla, people seem interested in the possibility of learning to read and write their own language, the exception being people in Limi. Different people have different levels of experience with writing Devanagari or Sambhota (Tibetan) script. Which script to base possible future language development on needs consideration at a later stage.

Through the Appreciative Inquiry method, we had people discuss their hopes and desires for development, language or other kinds of development. Overall there seem to be desires to develop their own language and people stated a lot of other areas where they would like to see changes.

²² <http://www.isisgroup.org/foundation-projects/nepal/>, accessed on March 6th 2014.

7 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

7.1 Dialect Variation

7.1.1 Summary of Findings

The chapter on dialect variation had three main focuses: dialect and language identification, dialect attitudes and dialect intelligibility. In the first section, we concluded that the different speech varieties among the Tibetan-speaking villages of Humla District should be seen as dialects of the same language. Four dialects were identified, namely, the Limi dialect (Til, Halji and Jang), the Upper Humla dialect (from Yari to Yalbang), the Lower Humla dialect (from Kermi to Kholsi to Tanggin), and the Eastern Humla dialect (from Burangse to Dojam). Another conclusion was that the more geographically distant villages are from each other, the more different they find each other's speech variety. The varieties seem to be different but are still comprehensible in varying degrees throughout all Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla.

In the second section, we saw that the attitudes toward the Limi dialect are mainly very positive; while attitudes toward the variety spoken in Hepka (part of the Lower Humla dialect) are mostly negative. The attitudes toward the Upper Humla and Lower Humla dialects, as well as toward the Eastern Humla dialect, are very mixed. When we only look at Kermi and not Hepka for the attitudes toward the Lower Humla dialect, a much more positive picture appears.

The last section looked at perceived intelligibility. The intelligibility of the Limi dialect has the widest geographic reach. It is understood by most of the people in the villages of the Upper and Lower Humla dialects. The intelligibility of the Upper Humla dialect is a bit low and the intelligibility of the Lower Humla dialect is mixed. Especially considering the overall negative attitude toward some villages in the Lower Humla dialect group, neither dialect seems to be best for future language development. The intelligibility of the Eastern Humla dialect is high for people from Hepka, but much less so for other dialects and villages in Humla.

7.1.2 Recommendations

When language development efforts start among the Tibetan-speaking villages in Humla, the greatest number of people would be served through having two oral development projects. One should focus on the Eastern Humla dialect, and the other one should focus on the Limi dialect. Most likely all Tibetan-speaking people would accept and understand at least one of these two dialects. If there is a focus on only one dialect, chances are high that a segment of the Tibetan-speaking Humla population would not understand or accept it. For written products, a variety that would serve most Tibetan-speaking people in Humla could be that of Kermi or Khagalgaun village, since speakers of the most well-understood and liked variety, that of Limi, are not all that interested in mother-tongue literacy.

A focus for further research would be to check if the variety spoken in Kermi village or Khagalgaun village could be used as a central dialect for all of the Humla Tibetan varieties. The story from Kermi could be used for this.

There are reports of people speaking a Tibetan dialect in Shreemastha VDC in the east of Humla District. The ethnically Tibetan people in Shreemastha reportedly intermarry with people from Dojam. In terms of needs for future research, more investigation should be made into the relationship of the Dojam variety to the Tibetan varieties spoken toward the east in Shreemastha VDC and Mugu District.

There is also the need for more research on the Humli Khyampa and other nomadic and semi-nomadic Tibetan-speakers in northwest Nepal. Several reports mention Tibetan varieties in Bajura District, south of Humla, that might be closely related to Humla Tibetan.

Also, more research is needed on the relationship between the Tibetan variety spoken in Purang county in China and Humla Tibetan.

7.2 Ethno-linguistic identity

7.2.1 *Summary of Findings*

In this chapter, we investigated the ethno-linguistic identity of the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla. Through the three themes of marriage patterns, language patterns and social patterns, we looked at the sociolinguistic situation. The marriage patterns indicate that the marriage restrictions are being followed less than before, and there is a growing acceptance and focus on marrying people from within the broader area of the Humla District, focusing strongly toward the Tibetan-speaking people and villages in Humla, not toward people speaking other languages. The attitudes on the marriage patterns indicate a certain cohesiveness (not extremely strong, but certainly not weak) among the Tibetan speakers in Humla.

Looking at the language attitude patterns, we saw the same picture appearing. The majority of respondents use a term for the language they love that signifies all the Tibetan-speaking people in Humla. Also, the opinions of Tibetan people count more than those of Nepali speakers around them. They have a stronger connection with the Tibetan language and culture, than with the language and culture of Nepali speakers. This again shows a certain cohesiveness of the group in language and culture. They feel their language is very different from the Nepali language and they are focused more on the 'higher living' (in elevation) Tibetans (in Humla but also across the border into Tibet). This focus suggests a stronger pull towards the Tibetan language and culture, both in Nepal and China.

The social patterns show us that there is not a strong social homogeneity among all Tibetan speakers in Humla. There are considerable differences, especially between the Limi area and the Bargaun area. So, although most indicators show some kind of cohesiveness among all the Tibetan speakers, there are still enough unknowns and differences to make us reluctant to say that there is strong cohesiveness both linguistically and ethnically.

7.2.2 *Recommendations*

There is a certain level of ethno-linguistic identity among the Tibetan speakers in Humla, strong enough to set them apart from non-Tibetan speakers, but not strong enough to see them as a homogenous group. In working with Humla Tibetans, it will be important to acknowledge that there will be significant differences between certain areas and that dialect

and ethnic attitudes vary quite a bit. All future language development efforts should take these differences into consideration.

7.3 Language Vitality and EGIDS

7.3.1 Summary of Findings

We ascertained that the EGIDS category for the Humla Tibetan varieties is correctly documented in the *Ethnologue* as being 6a (Vigorous). We saw that the language proficiency and vitality is high among the Tibetan villages in Humla. They almost exclusively use their own variety in all domains, except for using Nepali when they go to the market and interact with non-Tibetan-speaking people. The degree of intergenerational transfer of Humla Tibetan is very high, indicating strong language vitality. People want their children to learn their own variety first and they themselves only change their language when other people do not speak their language or sometimes when other people would not understand their variety well. We saw that the Humla Tibetan varieties seem to be on a solid 6a EGIDS level, equivalent to ‘Sustainable Orality’.

7.3.2 Recommendations

The language vitality (EGIDS) level of a community should be considered in any language development efforts. The language vitality level of a community will determine what next steps would best benefit the community. In this case, where the Humla Tibetan community has a vigorous, vital language, language development efforts could easily begin with written materials and literacy.

7.4 Desires for Development

7.4.1 Summary of Findings

Although, at the moment, there is almost no mother-tongue language development among the Tibetan-speaking varieties in Humla, people seem interested in the possibility of learning to read and write their own language. Different people have different levels of experience with writing Devanagari or Sambhota (Tibetan) script.

Through the Appreciative Inquiry method, we had people discuss their hopes and desires for development, language or otherwise. Overall there seem to be desires to develop their own language and people stated a lot of other areas they would want to see changes.

7.4.2 Recommendations

Because of a strong language vitality, combined with desires for language development from the communities themselves, a next step for the Tibetan-speaking communities in Humla could be literacy work and written materials. But to get to that stage, oral forms of development would be much appreciated by the communities such as teaching in the mother-tongue as is being done in the primary schools in the Limi villages. These steps could

strengthen the desires of the communities to develop an orthography and start literacy work and multi-lingual education (MLE) efforts.

Photo 4: Til village June 2012 (Klaas de Vries)



७ प्राप्त कुराहरू तथा सिफारिशहरूको सारांश (Nepali Translation of Chapter 7 by Krishna Rana of CAS Nepal)

७.१ स्थानीय बोलीका विविधताहरू

७.१.१ प्राप्त कुराहरूको सारांश

स्थानीय बोलीका विविधताहरू भन्ने परिच्छेदमा तीनटा कुराहरूमा ध्यान केन्द्रित गरिएका छन् स्थान विशेषको भाषा तथा भाषिक पहिचान, स्थान विशेषको भाषाप्रतिको मनोबृत्ति र उक्त भाषाहरूको बोधगम्यता । पहिलो भागमा हामीले निष्कर्ष निकालेका छौं कि हुम्ला जिल्लाको तिब्बती बोल्ने गाउँहरूको फरक फरक किसिमका बोलीहरूलाई उही भाषाका स्थान विशेषको बोलीको रूपमा हेरिनुपर्छ । चारवटा स्थानमा विशेष भाषाहरू पहिचान गरिएका छन्, अर्थात्, लिमी बोली (तील, हाल्जी अनि जाङ्), उपल्लो हुम्लाको बोली (यारीबाट याङवाङ्सम्म), तल्लो हुम्ला बोली (केर्मीबाट खोल्सीसम्म र ताङ्गीनसम्म) र पूर्वी हुम्ला बोली(बुराङ्सेबाट दोजामसम्म) । अर्को निष्कर्ष यो छ कि गाउँहरू एक अर्कामा जति टाढा छन् उनीहरूको बोलीहरूको फरक पनि त्यति नै धेरै हुन्छन् । बोलीका किसिमहरू फरक त देखिन आउँछन् तर पनि हुम्लाका सबै तिब्बती बोल्ने गाउँहरूमा उनीहरूले अरुको बोली आंशिक रूपमा बुझ्दछन् ।

दोस्रो खण्डमा हामीले यो देख्यौं कि लिमी बोली तर्फको मनोबृत्ति धेरैजसो अति सकारात्मक छन् जब कि हेप्का(तल्लो हुम्ला बोलीको अंश) बोल्ने तर्फ मान्छेहरूको मनोबृत्ति धेरैजसो नकारात्मक छ । उपल्लो हुम्ला र तल्लो हुम्लाका बोलीहरूका साथसाथै पूर्वी हुम्ला का बोली तर्फका मनोबृत्तिहरू मिश्रित छन् । यदि हामीले हेप्कालाई नहेरीकन तल्लो हुम्लाको बोलीलाई लिएर केर्मीतर्फमात्र हेर्न भन्ने बढी सकारात्मक मनोबृत्ति देखिन्छ ।

अन्तिम खण्डमा बोधगम्यता (बुझाइ)को दृष्टिकोणले हेरिन्छ । लिमी बोलीको बोधगम्यताले भौगोलिक पहुँच बढी फराकिलो क्षेत्र ओगटेको छ । यो बोली उपल्लो र तल्लो हुम्ला बोली बोल्ने गाउँहरूका धेरैजसो मानिसहरूले बुझ्दछन् । उपल्लो हुम्ला बोलीको बोधगम्यता अलि न्यून छ र तल्लो हुम्ला बोलीको बोधगम्यता मिश्रित छ । विशेष गरी तल्लो हुम्ला बोली समुहका केही गाउँहरू तर्फको समस्त नकारात्मक मनोबृत्तिलाई ध्यानमा राख्दा, भविष्यको भाषा विकासका लागि कुनै पनि बोली एकदम राम्रो देखिंदैन । हेप्काका मानिसहरूले पूर्वी हुम्लाको बोली बढी मात्रामा बुझ्दछन् तर हुम्लाकै अरु बोली बोल्नेहरू र गाउँहरूका लागि बोधगम्यता धेरै न्यून छ ।

७.१.२ सिफारिशहरू

हुम्लाका तिब्बती भाषा बोल्ने गाउँहरूमा भाषा विकासका प्रयासहरू शुरु गर्दा, बहुसंख्यक मानिसहरूमा दुइटा मौखिक परियोजनाहरूद्वारा सेवा पुर्‍याइनेछ । एउटाले पूर्वी हुम्ला बोलीमा अर्कोले लिमी बोलीमा ध्यान केन्द्रित गर्नुपर्छ । धेरैजसो तिब्बती बोल्ने मानिसहरूले दुइटामध्ये कम्तीमा पनि एउटा बुझ्ने र स्वीकार्ने जस्तो देखिन्छ । यदि एउटै मात्र बोलीमा ध्यान केन्द्रित भयो भने, तिब्बती बोल्ने हुम्लाका जनसंख्याका कुनै समूहले नबुझ्ने र नस्वीकार्ने सम्भावना उच्च हुन्छ । लिखित सामग्रीहरूका लागि, हुम्लाका तिब्बती भाषा बोल्ने मानिसहरूमध्ये अधिकतमलाई सेवा पुर्‍याउने किसिम, खागलगाउँ र केर्मी गाउँको किसिम हुन सक्छ किनकि सबभन्दा बढीले मनपराउने र बुझ्ने किसिमको बोलीहरू बोल्ने मानिसहरू लिमीबासीहरू मध्ये सबै मातृभाषामा साक्षरता कक्षा चलाउने कुरामा त्यति चासो दिंदैनन् ।

अनुसन्धान अगाडि ध्यान केन्द्रित गर्नुपर्ने कुरा, खगेल्गाउँ वा केर्मी गाउँमा बोलिने किसिमलाई पूरा हुम्ला तिब्बतीको लागि केन्द्रीय बोलीको रूपमा चलाउन सकिन्छ कि भनेर जाँचन सकिनेछ । यसका लागि केर्मीबाटको कथा प्रयोग गर्न सकिन्छ ।

हुम्ला जिल्लाको पूर्वमा अवस्थित श्रीमस्था गा.वि.स.का मानिसहरूले तिब्बती बोली बोलेको प्रतिवेदनहरू छन् । श्रीमस्थाका तिब्बती जातिका मानिसहरू र डोजामका मानिसहरू बीच बैवाहिक सम्बन्ध भएको पाइन्छ । भविष्यमा अनुसन्धान गर्नुपरेको खण्डमा, श्रीमस्था गा.वि.स.को पूर्वतर्फ र मुगु जिल्लामा बोलिने तिब्बती किसिमसँग दोजामको किसिमको सम्बन्ध बारेमा अरु अनुसन्धान गर्न राम्रो हुन्छ ।

हुम्ली ख्याम्पा र उत्तर—पश्चिम नेपालको अन्य घुमन्ते र अर्ध—घुमन्ते तिब्बती भाषी बारेमा अरु अनुसन्धान गर्नु आवश्यक छ । बाजुरा जिल्ला र दक्षिण हुम्लाको किसिमको तिब्बती, हुम्लाको तिब्बतीसँग निकटको सम्बन्ध हुन सक्ने कुरा केही प्रतिवेदनहरूमा उल्लेखित भएको पाइन्छ ।

चीनको पुराङ्ग गाउँमा बोलिने तिब्बती किसिम र हुम्ली तिब्बती किसिम बीचको सम्बन्ध बारे पनि अरु अनुसन्धान गर्नु आवश्यक छ ।

७.२ जातीय-भाषिक समानता

७.२.१ प्राप्त कुराहरूको सारांश

यस अध्यायमा, हामीले हुम्लामा तिब्बती बोल्ने मानिसहरूको जातीय—भाषिक समानताबारे अन्वेषण गर्छौं । हामीले बैवाहिक ढाँचा, सामाजिक ढाँचा र भाषिक ढाँचा गरी तीनटा बिषयहरूद्वारा सामाजिक भाषिक परिस्थितितर्फ हेर्छौं । बैवाहिक ढाँचाले यो देखाउँछ कि बैवाहिक अवरोधहरू पहिलेभन्दा कम अनुशरण गरिंदैछन् र हुम्लाको व्यापक क्षेत्रभित्रका मानिसहरूसँग बिहावारी गर्ने कुरामा जोड दिने सम्बन्धमा बढ्दो स्वीकृति छ । यो कुरामा हुम्लाको तिब्बती बोल्ने मानिसहरू र गाउँहरूतर्फ बढी केन्द्रित छ न कि अन्य भाषा बोल्नेहरूमा । बैवाहिक ढाँचाले हुम्लाका तिब्बती भाषा बोल्नेहरू बीच कुनै किसिमको सम्बन्ध देखाउँछ जुन अत्यन्त बलियो पनि छैन र त्यति कमजोर पनि छैन ।

भाषिक मनोबृत्तिको ढाँचातर्फ हेर्दा हामीले उस्तै चित्र भएको देख्यौं । बहुसंख्यक जवाफदाताहरूले उनीहरूले मनपराउने भाषाको लागि प्रयोग गर्ने शब्दले हुम्लाको तिब्बती भाषा बोल्ने सम्पूर्ण मानिसहरूतिर संकेत गर्दछ । फेरि उनीहरूको वरिपरिका नेपाली भाषी मानिसहरूको भन्दा तिब्बतीहरूको रायलाई उनीहरू बढी मान्यता दिन्छन् । उनीहरूको सम्बन्ध नेपाली भाषा बोल्नेको भाषा र संस्कृतिसँग भन्दा तिब्बती भाषा र संस्कृतिसँग बढी बलियो छ । यसले पनि भाषा र संस्कृतिमा त्यस समुहको कुनै किसिमको सामिप्य देखाउँछ । उनीहरूलाई लाग्छ कि उनीहरूको भाषा नेपाली भाषाभन्दा धेरै फरक छ र उनीहरू अग्लाईमा बस्ने कुरा (उचाईलाई) तिब्बतीहरू (हुम्लामा तर सीमापारि तिब्बतमा पनि) बढी ध्यान केन्द्रित गर्दछन् । यसरी ध्यान केन्द्रित कार्यले नेपाल र चीन दुबै देशमा तिब्बती भाषा र संस्कृतितर्फ बलियोसँग तानेको देखाउँछ ।

यस सामाजिक ढाँचाहरूले हामीलाई हुम्लामा सबै तिब्बतीभाषीहरू बीच बलियो सामाजिक एकरूपता छैन भन्ने कुरा देखाउँछ । विशेषगरी लिमी क्षेत्र र बारगाउँ क्षेत्र बीच बिचारणीय किसिमको भिन्नताहरू छन् । अतः धेरै परिसूचकहरूले सबै तिब्बती भाषीहरू बीच कुनै किसिमको सामिप्य देखाउँछ, तर पनि भाषिक तथा जातीय दुवै दृष्टिकोणले बलियो सामिप्यता छ भन्न हिचकिचाउनुपर्ने प्रशस्त अनभिज्ञता तथा भिन्नताहरू विद्यमान छन् ।

७.२.२ सिफारिशहरू

हुम्लामा तिब्बतीभाषीहरू बीच एउटा कुनै तहसम्मको जातीय-भाषिक एकरूपता विद्यमान छ, जुन गैह-तिब्बती भाषीहरूलाई उनीहरूलाई अलग्याउन प्रशस्त बलियो छ तर उनीहरूलाई एउटै रूपमा हेर्न पर्याप्त बलियो भने छैन । हुम्लाका तिब्बतीहरूसँग काम गर्दा यो बुझ्न महत्वपूर्ण हुन्छ कि कुनै क्षेत्रमा विशेष किसिमको भिन्नताहरू रहनेछन् र स्थानविशेषको बोली र मनोबृत्तिहरूकेही मात्रामा भिन्न हुन्छ । भविष्यका सबै भाषा बिकासका प्रयासहरूले यी भिन्नताहरूलाई ध्यानमा राख्नुपर्छ ।

७.३ भाषाको सजीवता तथा EGIDS

७.३.१ प्राप्त कुराहरूको सिफारिश

हामी यो निश्चित गर्छौं कि हुम्ला तिब्बती किसिमको लागि EGIDS बर्ग, मानवशास्त्रमा तह ६क (भीषण) भएको कुरा यथार्थरूपमा उल्लेख गरिएको छ । हामीले हुम्लाको तिब्बतभाषी गाउँहरूमा भाषाको प्रवीणता तथा सजीवता उच्च भएको देख्यौं । उनीहरू धेरैजसो समय हरेक क्षेत्रमा आफ्नै किसिमको बोली प्रयोग गर्छन्, हाट-बजारमा जाँदा तथा गैह-तिब्बतीभाषीहरूसँग अन्तर्क्रिया गर्दा मात्र उनीहरू नेपाली भाषा प्रयोग गर्छन् । हुम्ला तिब्बतीको अन्तरपुस्तिय संक्रमण (एक पुस्ताबाट अर्को पुस्तामा सर्ने)को मात्रा उच्च छ, जसले बलियो भाषिक सजीवताको संकेत गर्दछ । मानिसहरू आफ्ना बालबालिकाहरूले पहिले आफ्नै बोली सिकेको चाहन्छन्, र तिनीहरू आफ्नो भाषा आफैले परिवर्तन गर्दछन् जब अरू मानिसहरूले उनीहरूको भाषा बोल्दैनन् वा कहिलेकाहीं उनीहरूको किसिमको बोली राम्रोसँग बुझ्दैनन् । हामीले यो पनि देख्यौं कि हुम्लाको तिब्बती किसिमको बोली EGIDS तहको पूरै ६क तहमा देखिन्छ । यो दीगो मौखिक स्तर समान हो ।

७.३.२ सिफारिशहरू

समुदायको भाषिक सजीवता (EGIDS) तह कुनै पनि भाषा बिकासको प्रयासमा ध्यानमा राखिनु पर्ने कुरा हो । समुदायको भाषिक सजीवता स्तरले कुन आगामी कदम समुदायको लागि सबभन्दा बढी फाइदाजनक हुन्छ भन्ने कुरा निर्धारण गर्दछ । यस मामिलामा, जहाँ हुम्ला तिब्बती समुदायसँग भीषण सजीव भाषा छ, त्यहाँ भाषा बिकासका प्रयासहरू सजिलैसँग लिखित सामग्री तथा साक्षरताद्वारा प्रारम्भ गर्न सकिन्छ ।

७.४ विकासका आकाङ्क्षाहरू

७.४.१ प्राप्त कुराहरूका सारांशहरू

यद्यपि हालसालै हुम्लाको तिब्बतभाषी समुदायहरूमा मातृभाषा बिकास प्रायः छैन जस्तै छ, तर उनीहरूको आफ्नो भाषामा लेख्न र पढ्न सिक्नलाई सम्भाव्यताप्रति मानिसहरूको अभिरुचि देखिन्छ । देवनागरी वा सम्भोता (तिब्बती) लिपि लेखनमा

फरक मानिसको फरक स्तरको अनुभव छ । स्वीकारजन्य सोधपुछ तरिका (Appreciative Inquiry method) द्वारा हामीले मानिसहरूलाई भाषा वा अन्य कुराको विकासको लागि उनीहरूको आशा र आकांक्षाहरूबारेमा छलफल गराएका थियौं ।

समग्रमा मानिसहरूले आफ्नो भाषा विकास गर्ने आकांक्षा राखेको देखियो, र मानिसहरूले अन्य धेरै कुराहरू बताए जसमा उनीहरू परिवर्तन भएको हेर्न चाहन्थे ।

७.४.२ सिफारिशहरू

बलियो भाषिक सजीवता का साथै समुदायहरू आफैंबाट भाषा बिकासको आकांक्षा देखाएकोले हुम्लाको तिब्बती भाषी समुदायहरूको लागि आगामी कदम साक्षरता कार्य तथा लिखित सामग्रीहरू हुन सक्छ । तर त्यस अवस्थामम्म पुग्नका लागि समुदायहरूद्वारा विकासका मौखिक रूपहरू बढी स्वीकार गरिनेछन् । (जस्तै:- मातृभाषामा सिकाउने जुन लिमी गाउँको प्राथमिक विद्यालयहरूमा भइरहेको छ) । यी कुराहरूले समुदायहरूको हिज्जे लेखन विकास गर्ने आकांक्षा र साक्षरता कार्य शुरु गरेर बहुभाषिक शिक्षा प्रयासहरूलाई सशक्त पार्न सक्छ ।

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