

## Chapter 4

### Discussion of findings

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter details the sociolinguistic data gathered in Chiang Mai, during the research period. Each of four objectives for this research guided the researcher to create key research questions. The research questions helped determine the final questions for the sociolinguistic questionnaire. Therefore, the data in this chapter is organized by each objective and its corresponding research questions (RQ).

Because the objectives create the structure of chapter 4, they are detailed again below:

**Objective 1: Investigate the language use patterns of Nepalis in Chiang Mai.**

- RQ1: What languages are being used in key domains by Nepalis in Chiang Mai?
- RQ2: What is the dominant language used by each generation of Nepalis in Chiang Mai?

**Objective 2: Determine the attitudes of Nepalis in Chiang Mai towards their language and towards the languages of wider communication.**

- RQ3: What are the attitudes of Nepalis towards the Nepali language?
- RQ4: What are the attitudes of Nepalis towards the languages of wider communication?

**Objective 3: Assess if Nepalis in Chiang Mai are maintaining their ability to speak Nepali.**

- RQ5: How do Nepalis in Chiang Mai perceive their language ability?
- RQ6: Do Nepali parents teach their children Nepali in Chiang Mai?

**Objective 4: Draw conclusions about the future of Nepali spoken in Chiang Mai.**

The chapter begins with a discussion of Nepali language use patterns. By analyzing the languages used in key domains, one can note an indication of language shift or language maintenance.

Following the discussion of language use, chapter 4 examines the language attitudes of Nepali people. A positive language attitude about the mother tongue can be another indicator of language maintenance and language vitality.

#### 4.1 Language demographics

The sociolinguistic questionnaire began with several questions focusing on background information for each of the 50 subjects. The subject's mother tongue, the language of a subject's mother and father, or their spouse's language, for example, can all influence language choice. Therefore, the demographic information is summarized in the following table:

**Table 3. Language demographics**

Q#	Question	n=	Nepali %		Burm %		Thai %		N+B %		N+T %		Other %	
25	Mother tongue	50	48	96%	1	2%							1	2%
27	Best language	50	31	62%	7	14%	2	4%	7	14%	2	4%	1	2%
30	Father's MT	50	48	96%					1	2%			1	2%
34	Mother's MT	50	48	96%	1	2%			1	2%				
41	Spouse's MT	30	26	87%	2	7%			1	3%	1	3%		

Almost every Nepali interviewed claimed Nepali as their mother tongue. The 48 out of fifty which stated their mother tongue was Nepali were the same who reported that their parents' mother tongue was also Nepali. However, only 62% of the subjects believed that Nepali was their best language. Yet if one includes the response "Nepali and Burmese" (N + B), the total who claim Nepali as their best language is a large majority (76%).

#### 4.2 Language use data

**Objective 1: Investigate the language use patterns of Nepalis in Chiang Mai.**

**4.2.1 Research Question 1: What languages are being used in key domains by Nepalis in Chiang Mai?**

**Table 4. Education domain**

Question	n=	N %	B %	N,B %	B,E %	T %	H %
16. Language used by teacher?	48	3 6%	36 76%	1 2%	4 8%	3 6%	1 2%

N=Nepali, B=Burmese, T=Thai, H=Hindi, E=English

*16. What language did your teacher speak while teaching?*

Out of 48 people, only three (6%) reported that their teacher spoke just Nepali in the class. Two people did not respond. When asked about Nepali in the class room, it was reported that there are some schools using Nepali for education in Myanmar, but this practice was started in the last five years. Therefore, most of the participants

were instructed in Burmese. Three went to school in Thailand and were taught in Thai.

Whether Nepalis are going to school in Myanmar or Thailand, their education is predominantly in an LWC (language of wider communication).

**Table 5. Childhood language used by parents with interlocutor**

Question	n=	N	%	B	%	N,B	%
31. As a child, what language by father with you?	46	41	89%	1	2%	4	9%
35. As a child, what language by mother with you?	50	48	96%	1	2%	1	2%
36. What language did parents use with each other	46	45	98%	0	0%	1	2%
MEAN	142	134	94%	2	1%	6	5%

N=Nepali, B=Burmese

*31. What language did he (your father) usually speak to you when you were a child?*

Only one participant (2%) reported that his father used just Burmese with him as a child. There were 41 people (89%) who reported that their fathers used only Nepali, and 4 people (9%) did not remember or were separated from their fathers at a young age. The remaining 4 participants (8%) said their father spoke both Burmese and Nepali with them.

*35. What language did she (your mother) usually speak to you when you were a child?*

Out of 50 people (96%), 48 said that their mothers only spoke Nepali with them. A subject reported that her mom spoke both Nepali and Burmese with her, and another person said his mother spoke only Burmese with him.

*36. When you were a child, what language did your parents speak to each other?*

Because some participants had not lived with their fathers, four people did not answer. Out of the remaining 46 people, 45 (98%) remember their parents speaking only Nepali with each other. Lastly, one person claimed that her parents spoke both Nepali and Burmese with each other.

In the past, Nepali people spoke Nepali with their children and with their spouses in the home domain.

**Table 6. Language use by interlocutor with family members**

What language do you...	n=	N	%	B	%	T	%	N,B	%	N,T	%	N,B,T	%	N,B,E	%
42. ...use w/parents?	49	46	94%	1	2%			2	4%						
43. ...use w/grandparents?	33	32	97%					1	3%						
44. ...use w/siblings?	49	28	57%	5	10%	3	6%	10	27%			2	4%	1	2%
45. ...use w/spouse?	30	21	70%	1	5%	1	5%	3	3%	2	10%	1	5%		
46. ...use w/children?	23	12	52%	2	8%	2	8%	2	8%	4	16%	1	4%		
MEAN	187	142	76%	7	4%	6	3%	19	10%	7	4%	4	2%	1	1%

N=Nepali, B=Burmese, T=Thai, E=English

*42. What languages do you speak with your parents?*

Out of 50 participants, 46 (92%) reported that they still speak just Nepali with their parents. A participant did not answer because her parents were not alive. Another person said he speaks Burmese with his parents, and two people reported that they speak both Nepali and Burmese with their parents.

*43. What languages do you speak with your grandparents?*

There were 17 non-responses to this question either because they had never met their grandparents, or the grandparents were no longer living. The remaining 32 out of 33 (97%) people reported that they speak Nepali with their grandparents, and one person said she speaks Nepali and Burmese with her grandparents.

Currently, Nepali people seem to be speaking Nepali with the generations older than themselves, i.e. parents and grandparents.

*44. What languages do you speak with your siblings?*

This language use domain was more varied than those previously discussed. Out of 50 people, 28 (56%) stated that they speak just Nepali with their siblings. Another 13 people (26%) reported that Nepali, plus other languages, were spoken with their siblings (Burmese, English or Thai). Finally, five people (10%) said they speak just Burmese with their siblings, and three (6%) reported that they speak only Thai with theirs. A participant did not respond because he has no brothers or sisters.

Nepali is being spoken with siblings, but other LWCs are being spoken as well. Interestingly, eight people (16%) stated that they do not speak Nepali with their siblings.

*45. What languages do you speak (if married) with your spouse?*

Just 30 people answered this question because 20 participants were unmarried. Out of 30 subjects, 21 (70%) stated they only speak Nepali with their spouse. Only three (10%) responded that they speak Nepali and Burmese. Another two people said they speak Nepali and Thai. A participant said she speaks Nepali, Burmese and Thai with her husband. Of the remaining subjects, two people said they only speak Thai, and one person said he speaks Burmese with his wife.

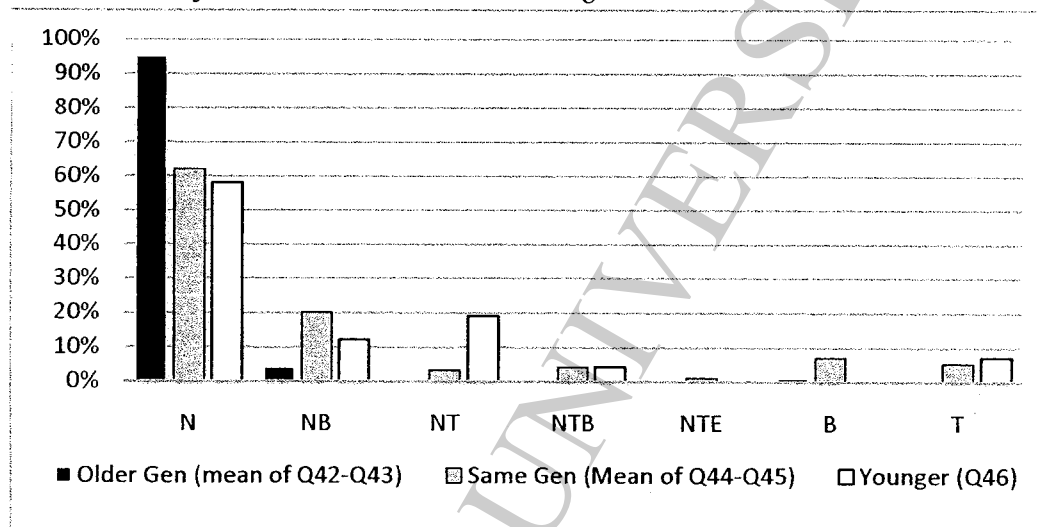
Nepali is still the main language between spouses (all the married participants were married to Nepalis). Yet, just as with siblings, other LWCs are being spoken as well. Only three people (10%) said they do not speak Nepali with their spouses.

Nepali people are using just Nepali with older generations. However, they are using Nepali plus other languages when they talk to family members of their own generation.

46. What languages do you speak (if have children) with your children?

Out of 23 subjects, 12 (52%) reported that they speak just Nepali with their children. Both Nepali and Thai were spoken by four people (17%). Only two (8%) claimed that they speak Nepali and Burmese with their children. A participant mentioned that she speaks Nepali, Burmese, and Thai, and two subjects said they speak just Thai with their children. Burmese is spoken by two of the parents with their children. The remaining twenty-four subjects did not have children.

The majority of the Nepali parents speak Nepali with their children, but they also speak the LWCs with them. Only four people said they do not speak Nepali with their children, but have shifted to an LWC. Another way of viewing language use within the subjects' families is detailed in Figure 5 below:



N=Nepali, B=Burmese, T=Thai, E=English  
 Older Gen = Mean of interlocutor language use with parents and grandparents  
 Same Gen = Mean of interlocutor language use with spouse and siblings  
 Younger = interlocutor language use with children

Figure 5. Interlocutor language use with three generations

Although the subjects' generation and the younger generation speak more than one language, it is reported that the Nepali subjects speak Nepali more than any other language, with all three generations.

Table 7. The subjects' children

	n=	N only %	other %
65. Do your children speak languages other than Nepali at home?	23	8 35%	15 65%

N only="only Nepali", other = "Not only Nepali"

	n=	B %	T %	B,T %	None %
66. What other lg does your child speak?	23	2 8%	11 48%	2 8%	8 35%

B=Burmese, T=Thai, None="Only Nepali is spoken"

65. *Do your children ever speak anything other than Nepali at home?*

There were 23 people who reported that they do not have children, and four subjects who had children too young to speak. Out of the remaining 23 participants, 15 people (65%) claimed that their children speak other languages in the home. Almost one third of the parents (8 people, 35%) stated that their children only spoke Nepali in the home.

66. *What else do they speak?*

Thai was reportedly spoken by the children of 11 participants (48%). The remaining four (16%) claimed their children speak Burmese, or Burmese and Thai in the home. Currently, the home domain is linguistically mixed, with some children using just Nepali, and others using Nepali with the LWCs. A father told the researcher that he gave his son a small swat every time he used the LWC in the home. He declared that this was how his own father made certain he did not forget Nepali when they lived in Myanmar. Now he is repeating that system, hoping his son will not forget Nepali in Thailand.

**Table 8. Cultural domains**

What lg do you use for...	n=	N %	B %	T %	O %	N,O %
48. ...religious discussions?	47	32 68%	1 2%	0 0%	5 11%	10 21%
50. ...prayer?	46	36 78%	3 7%	0 0%	6 13%	4 9%
49. ...singing songs?	44	15 34%	3 7%	1 2%	8 18%	18 41%
MEAN	137	83 61%	7 5%	1 1%	19 14%	32 23%

N=Nepali, B=Burmese, T=Thai, O=other (includes Hindi, Sanskrit, Pali, English)

48. *What languages do you speak for religious discussions at the temple?*

This question had a wide variety of answers. Out of 47 responses, only 32 (68%) said they just speak Nepali at the temple. However, the only Hindu temple in Chiang Mai is an Indian temple. It seems a lot of code switching occurs there. Several subjects named more than one language, for example, five participants (11%) said they speak Nepali and Hindi at the temple, another three people (6%) said they speak Nepali and Burmese, and one subject claimed he speaks Nepali and Thai. Just two people reportedly speak Hindi and Thai, and three people claimed that they only speak Hindi at the temple. One participant said she only speaks Burmese while at the temple.

The temple domain is linguistically mixed, but most people reported that Nepali was, at least, one of the languages spoken at the temple. Just six people out of 47 claimed to speak no Nepali at the temple.

*50. What languages do you speak to pray?*

Out of 46 subjects, 36 (78%) responded that they only speak Nepali to pray or recite mantras. However, four people (9%) stated that Nepali was one of the various languages they use to pray. Just three (6%) stated that they pray in Burmese, and one person claimed to pray in Hindi. Interestingly, two people said they pray in Sanskrit. There were four people who chose not to answer.

The prayer domain is much the same as the temple, linguistically mixed. However, the majority of the subjects speak Nepali as one of the languages they use for prayer.

*49. What languages do you speak to sing songs?*

Claiming that they do not sing, six people just laughed at this question. Out of the remaining 44 participants, only 15 (34%) stated that they just sing in Nepali. Yet 21 participants (48%) said that Nepali is one of the languages they use for singing songs. When one adds the two categories, those who sing songs only in Nepali, and those who chose Nepali as one of the languages they sing in, it is shown that 36 out of 44 people sing songs in Nepali (though not exclusively). Hindi songs were chosen by four people (9%), and one person claimed that he only sings in Thai.

Most Nepalis sing songs in Nepali, among other languages. Nepali music and Hindi music are very similar. The researcher noticed Nepali families listening to Hindi film music in one home, and two other homes were listening to Nepali music. A few businesses where the researcher conducted interviews were playing Nepali videos on the television.

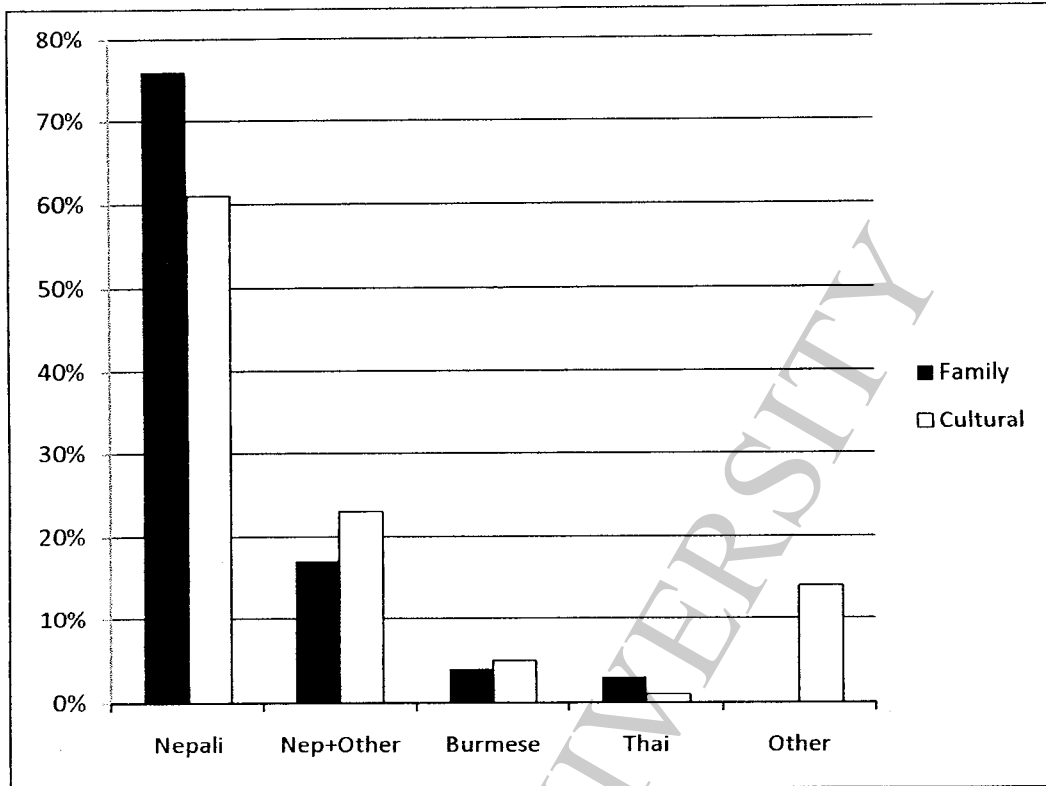
#### **4.2.2 Summary of data corresponding to Research Question 1**

Nepali is just one of the languages being used in key domains by Nepali people living in Chiang Mai. For example, the LWC (Burmese or Thai) is used for education, but Nepali is spoken with the majority of the subjects' parents and grandparents. The subjects recall that their parents only spoke Nepali with them and with each other.

In some domains, both Nepali and the LWCs are being spoken. For example, many Nepalis choose to speak Nepali and the LWC with their siblings. A smaller number even speak Nepali and the LWC with their spouses.

The cultural domains are also areas where both Nepali and the LWCs are used. Although Nepali is being used by the majority of the respondents in the temple, at prayer, or for song, they use the LWCs as well. In addition to Burmese, Hindi and Thai, the religious languages of Sanskrit and Pali were mentioned for prayer. In

Figure 6, it is apparent that though other languages are spoken, Nepali is still used the most in the family and cultural domains.



Family domain: mean of the responses to Q42-Q46 (see table 5)  
 Cultural domain: mean of the responses to Q48-Q50 (see table 7)

Figure 6. Comparison of family and cultural domains

#### 4.2.3 Research Question 2: What is the dominant language used by each generation of Nepalis in Chiang Mai?

Table 9. Frequency of Nepali language use

	n=	Daily %	Sometimes %	Seldom %
52. How often do you speak Nepali?	50	48 96%	1 2%	1 2%

52. How often do you speak Nepali? (Daily, weekly, seldom, never)

Out of 50 people, 48 (96%) said they speak Nepali daily. One man said he only speaks it “sometimes” and another said he speaks Nepali seldom.

The majority of people interviewed, regardless of age, generation, or education report themselves as speaking Nepali every day.

Table 10. Children's perceived language use

	n=	N %	B %	T %	N,B %	N,T %
53. What is child's 1st lg?	49	21 43%	2 4%	15 31%	1 2%	10 20%



	n=	B %	T %	N,B %	N,T %	N,T,E %
56. What do children speak after starting school?	47	1 2%	35 74%	8 17%	1 2%	2 4%

What lg do children use...	n=	N %	B %	T %	N,T %	N,T,E %
57. ....with other children	48	8 17%	-	35 73%	4 8%	1 2%
76. ...with grandparents	49	24 49%	1 2%	9 18%	15 31%	-
MEAN	97	32 33%	1 1%	44 45%	19 20%	1 1%

*53. What languages do Nepali children in Chiang Mai speak first?*

Out of 49 subjects, 21(43%) stated that Nepali is the first language Nepali children speak. On the other hand, 15 people (31%) reported that Nepali children speak Thai first. Eleven participants (22%) claimed that Nepali was just one of the languages children speak first, and two people said the children speak Burmese. One participant chose not to answer, claiming no experience with children.

Less than half of the participants reported that Nepali was the first language of Nepali children. It is interesting that many people refused to limit themselves to answering with just one language.

This is a domain where one can see the LWC has a strong influence. However, many of the subjects did not have children and expressed uncertainty when answering this question. It is likely that some subjects did not have a lot of interaction with Nepali children in Chiang Mai.

*56. What languages do Nepali children speak after they start school?*

Most of the subjects (35 out of 47 people, 74%) stated that Nepali children speak Thai after they start school. An additional eleven participants (23%) claimed that Nepali and Thai, among other languages, were spoken by Nepali children. A participant stated that Nepali children speak Burmese after they start school. He had come to Thailand recently, so it is likely that he was referring to the children who had arrived recently too. Finally, three people did not respond.

After school begins, Thai is spoken by most Nepali children. If Thai is not their first language, the children seem to be speaking it when they are school-aged.

*57. What language do Nepali children in Chiang Mai speak when they play with other Nepali children?*

This is where a trend towards language shift can be seen. Out of 48 people, 35 (73%) claimed that Nepali children speak Thai when they play with other Nepalis. Furthermore, five people (10%) said that the Nepali children speak Nepali and an LWC when they play. Just seven people (15%) reported that Nepali children speak only Nepali when they play with each other. There were two non-responses.

Thai is the language most Nepali children use with each other. The researcher noticed, through personal observation, Nepali children speaking Thai to each other in a Nepali neighborhood. She asked a participant if both the children were Nepali, and he confirmed it.

*76. What language do Nepali children in Chiang Mai generally use with their grandparents?*

There were 24 out of 49 people (49%) who claimed that Nepali children speak Nepali with their grandparents. Yet 15 (31%) claimed that the children speak both Nepali and Thai, whereas nine people (18%) stated that Nepali children only speak Thai with grandparents. Just one person claimed that children speak Burmese with grandparents. Lastly, one person did not answer, claiming no knowledge of what children do.

**Table 11. Perceived language use among the elderly**

	n=	N %	N,B %	N,T %	N,T,E %
73. What lgs are spoken by elders?	49	42 90%	2 4%	5 10%	1 2%
75. What lg do old people speak most?	49	44 90%	2 4%	1 2%	1 2%
MEAN	98	86 88%	4 4%	6 6%	2 2%

*73. What languages can Nepali old people in Chiang Mai speak?*

Almost all the subjects (42 out of 49, 86%) said that old people only speak Nepali. The remaining seven people (14%) listed Nepali as one of the languages that old people speak, and one person did not answer.

*75. Which language do they speak most often?*

A majority of the participants, 44 out of 49 (90%), claimed that old people speak Nepali the most often. The remaining five people (10%) listed Nepali among the languages spoken most often by old people. A participant chose not to answer.

The majority of the subjects stated that the older generation tended to speak Nepali as their only language. When old people know more than one language, they still speak Nepali more often than any other language.

**4.2.4 Summary of data corresponding to Research Question 2**

The dominant language used by the participants for this research is Nepali. Almost every subject said they speak Nepali daily. The main language spoken by old people (considered the age of a grandparent) is Nepali.

There is one domain which shows a tendency towards the LWC. This domain is the language chosen by children. Children are shifting to the LWC more than their

parents did. The subjects reported that children's language choice is often Thai, even while playing with other Nepalis, or when they are at home.

#### **4.2.5 Data analysis for Objective 1**

The language use patterns in Nepali indicate that Nepali is still being spoken by each generation, in every domain, but not all the time. However, the domain of education reveals that the LWC is spoken by teachers, and children seem to be shifting to the LWC after they start school. Nepali is still spoken by children, but when they are playing, they often choose Thai. In the home, many children choose to speak both Nepali and the LWC. The cultural domains also indicate that Nepali is being spoken alongside the LWCs. Yet, overall, Nepali language use in Chiang Mai is quite high.

#### **4.3 Language attitudes data**

This section seeks to fulfill the second objective of the research, "Determine the attitudes of Nepalis in Chiang Mai towards their language and towards the languages of wider communication." It examines the self-reported language attitudes which Nepalis have. Language attitudes are often an indicator of language vitality, particularly with the mother tongue. Language attitudes towards the languages of wider communication are also explored in this section, as this indicator often reveals reasons for language shift.

The following results include many sociolinguistic questions about a subject's opinion with regard to different languages. These follow up questions are usually framed, "In your opinion, how is that?" This is a literal translation of the original question in Nepali. A free interpretation is "How do you feel about that?" Although the primary questions may have been discussed in the previous section, the follow-up questions will be examined here.

##### **4.3.1 Research Question 3: What are the attitudes of Nepalis towards the Nepali language?**

*57. What language do Nepali children in Chiang Mai speak when they play with other Nepali children?*

Out of 48 people, 35 (73%) claimed that Nepali children speak Thai when they play with other Nepalis. Furthermore, five people (10%) said that the Nepali children speak Nepali and an LWC when they play.

For those who responded that children at play speak a language other than Nepali, a follow-up question was asked.

58. *(If not only Nepali) In your opinion, how is that?*

The majority of the people indicated that Nepali children spoke an LWC while playing with other children (35 out of 48, 73%). Within that group of 35, only four people had a positive response (11%). There were 28 negative responses (80%), meaning that those subjects disliked seeing Nepali children speak other languages when they were playing. Just two participants were ambivalent, and one person did not answer.

There were five people (10%) who stated that children speak Nepali and an LWC while playing. Again the results were mixed, with two people viewing that as a positive, and three people who responded negatively.

**Table 12. Perceived language attitudes towards children's language**

58. How is that...	n=	POS %	NEG %	Amb %	n/a %
a. ... if perceived language use is LWC	35	4 11%	28 80%	2 6%	1 3%
b. ... if perceived language use is Nepali+LWC	5	2 40%	3 60%	0 0%	0 0%

POS=Positive, NEG=Negative, Amb=Ambivalent

65. *Do your children ever speak anything other than Nepali at home?*

There were twenty-three people who reported that they do not have children. Out of the remaining 27 participants, four people mentioned that their children were too young to speak yet, leaving a sample size of 23 subjects who could answer this question.

Out of 23 parents, 15 people (65%) claimed that their children speak other languages in the home. Almost one third of the parents (eight people, 35%) stated that their children only spoke Nepali at home. The latter group of parents agreed that Nepali is the best language for the home.

66. *What else do they speak?*

Thai was reportedly spoken by the children of 11 participants (73%). The remaining four (27%) claimed their children speak Burmese or a combination of Burmese and Thai in the home.

67. *In your opinion, how is that?*

The fifteen parents who were asked this question were divided in their attitudes regarding children speaking other languages in the home. Surprisingly, seven people (47%) were positive about their children's language use, and eight parents (53%) felt negative about it.

**Table 13. Attitudes towards LWC in the home**

67. In your opinion, how is that?	n=	Positive %	Negative %
... (when children use other languages at home)	15	7 47%	8 53%

68. *Have you met any Nepali people who do not speak Nepali anymore?*

The answers to this question were divided, almost in half. Out of 50 people, 23 said no. The remaining 27 (54%) participants replied that they had encountered Nepalis who no longer spoke the language.

69. *(If yes) In your opinion, is that good or bad?*

Those 27 participants, who had met Nepalis that no longer spoke the language, were asked #69 as a follow-up question. Out of 27, 20 people (74%) felt it was bad for a person to forget Nepali. However, five participants (19%) said it was fine. The remaining two people were ambivalent, claiming that it did not matter either way.

**Table 14. Attitudes towards language loss**

69. In your opinion, is that good or bad?	n=	POS %	NEG %	Amb %
... (when Nepali people do not speak Nepali anymore)	27	5 19%	20 74%	2 7%

POS=Positive, NEG=Negative, Amb=Ambivalent

79. *When Nepali children here grow up and have children, do you think their children will speak Nepali?*

Although fifty people were asked this question, two did not respond because they said they “do not know the future.” Out of 48 people, 26 (54%) claimed that future generations would continue speaking Nepali in Chiang Mai. The remaining 22 participants (46%) responded that future generations will shift to other languages. This question will be analyzed further in the language vitality section.

80. *In your opinion, how is that?*

Unlike some of the previous follow-up questions, this was asked of all participants, no matter how they answered Q79. Therefore, the possible answers to Q80 are varied. Also, there were 7 non-responses to this question, which might be because the question asked their opinion about a hypothetical situation. Several people simply shrugged their shoulders or looked bewildered.

Just over half of the participants, 26 out of 48 (54%) subjects claimed that future generations will still speak Nepali. When asked the follow up question, 22 out of those 26 subjects stated that it was good, because their language would continue into the future. There were four non-responses.

Slightly less people, 22 out of 48 (46%) responded that future generations will stop speaking Nepali. Out of those 22 subjects, 16 claimed that it was bad because they wanted their language to continue but felt hopeless about the future for Nepali in Chiang Mai. Only three people claimed that it was good if Nepali was no longer spoken by future generations, and there were three non-responses.

**Table 15. Attitudes towards future for Nepali**

80. In your opinion how is that?	n=	POS %	NEG %	n/a %
a. (if Q79=NO they will not speak Nepali)	22	3 14%	16 73%	3 14%
b. (if Q79=Yes they will still speak Nepali)	26	22 85%	0 0%	4 15%

POS=Positive, NEG=Negative

#### 4.3.2 Summary of data corresponding to Research Question 3

The Nepali participants had a variety of attitudes towards the Nepali language. Among the subjects who indicated that Nepali children spoke Thai while playing with other Nepalis, 80% disliked it. They expressed a desire for Nepali children to stick with their own mother tongue. However, Nepali parents were more divided in their attitudes. Only fifteen parents reported that their children speak other languages in the home, and almost half of them (47%) were glad about it. Slightly more parents (53%) were unhappy with their children for speaking other languages while at home.

**Table 16. Attitudes towards Nepali language**

Attitudes towards...	Positive	Negative
...Q58. Nepali kids speaking other LWC's with other kids.	11%	80%
...Q67. Children of Nepali subjects speaking LWC's in the home.	47%	53%
...Q68. Nepali people who don't speak Nepali anymore.	19%	74%
...Q80.a Future generations no longer speaking Nepali.	14%	73%
...Q80.b Future generations continuing to speak Nepali.	85%	0%

When asked about the future of Nepali spoken in Chiang Mai, the attitudes varied. Just over half the subjects believed that Nepali would be spoken by future generations, and the majority of them thought that was a good thing. Some subjects indicated that Nepali would not continue to be spoken in the future, and most of them were disappointed at that prospect. See the summary of language attitudes in

Figure 7 below.

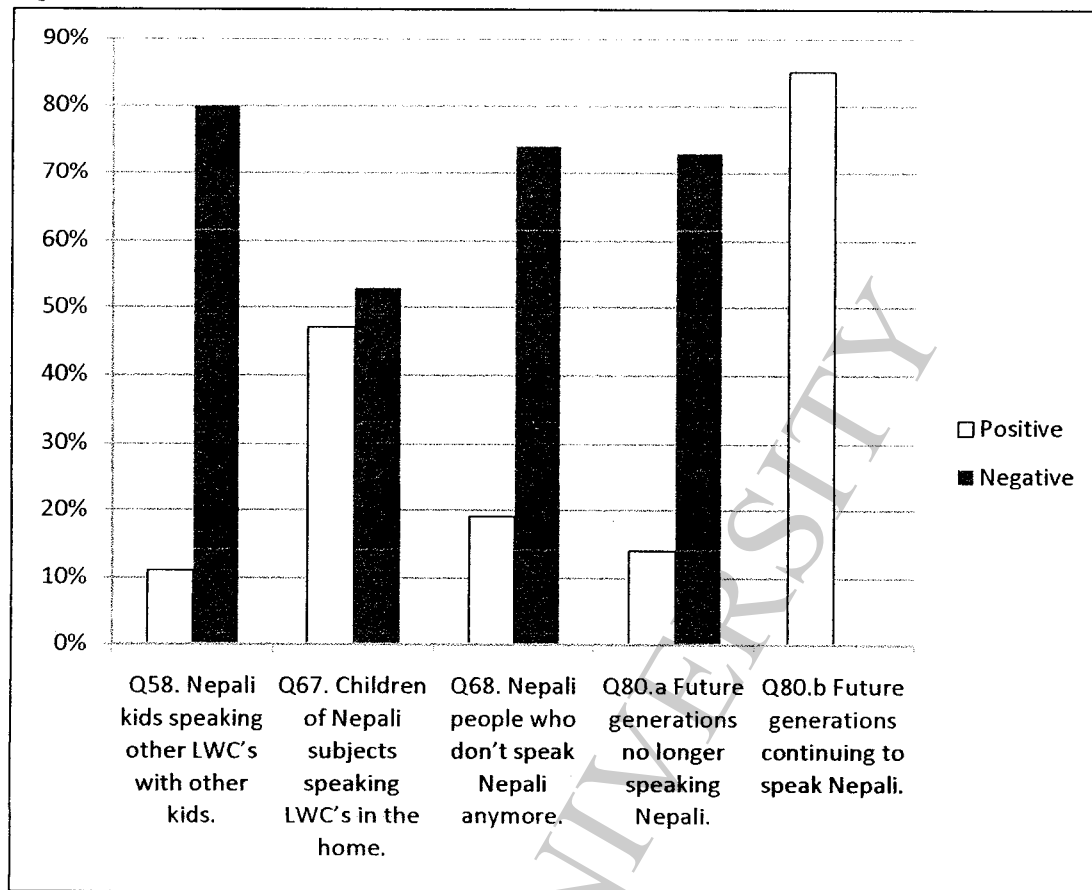


Figure 7. Summary of language attitudes data

#### 4.3.3 Research Question 4: What are the attitudes of Nepalis towards the languages of wider communication?

Because Nepalis speak several different LWCs (Burmese, Thai, English and Hindi) questions regarding intermarriage will be used to assess their attitudes towards outsiders, as culture and language is intertwined.

Often, marriage outside of one's language group can indicate the beginning of language shift. David Bradley claimed that extensive marriage with outside groups was a major factor in the villages where the Ugong language was in decline (1989:33).

Table 17. Attitudes towards cross-cultural marriage for interlocutor

	n=	Nepali %	Non-Nepali %	Ambivalent %
37. Which is better to marry?	49	45 92%	1 2%	3 5%

37. *In your opinion, which is better: A foreign spouse or a Nepali spouse?*

The majority of the subjects, 45 out of 49 (92%) claimed that a Nepali spouse was better than a foreign spouse. Many subjects were quite adamant about it! Only one subject (2%) declared that a foreign spouse was the best. The remaining three (6%) who answered the question said that either way was fine with them, and one person said he did not know. One woman reported that a foreign spouse would not understand their language, their culture, or (most importantly) Nepali food!

**Table 18. Attitudes of cross-cultural marriage for interlocutors' child**

	n=	NEG %	POS %
70. How would it be if your child married a non-Nepali	48	36 75%	12 25%

70. *If your son or daughter married a foreign person, how would that be for you?*

Out of 48 people, 36 (75%) stated that they do not want their children to marry a non-Nepali. On the other hand, 12 subjects (25%) indicated that it would be fine with them, and two people did not answer and seemed embarrassed.

71. *Do Nepalis and foreigners get married sometimes?*

Although the researcher never interviewed any Nepalis who were married to a non-Nepali, 40 out of 48 people (83%) claimed that mixed marriages do happen. However, eight people (17%) insisted that mixed marriages never happen, and the same two people from Q70 did not answer.

#### 4.3.4 Summary of data corresponding to Research Question 4

Because the Nepalis interviewed in this study speak a range of LWCs (Thai, Burmese or English), and at varied levels of ability, questions regarding their attitudes about each LWC became overly complex, and confused them. Therefore, the researcher chose to examine marriage patterns as one possible indicator of the attitudes Nepalis hold towards non-Nepali people.

Nepalis prefer to be endogamous, that is, marrying within their language and culture group. This has an accompanying negative attitude towards the use of the LWC in home and family domains. Salam (2003:7) claims,

The reproduction of religion and language is extremely important to South Asian immigrants (Lessinger and Forer 1995) and the importance of maintaining arranged marriage, however hybridized it may become in the immigrant context, stems from a desire to transmit the religion and language to the third generation.



The majority of the subjects in this study claimed that they prefer a Nepali spouse, and that they prefer their children to marry Nepalis. However, most participants had heard of mixed marriages in the Nepali community.

#### **4.3.5 Data analysis for Objective 2**

The attitudes among Nepalis in Chiang Mai towards their language and towards the languages of wider communication seem to indicate that Nepalis prefer Nepali to be spoken by children and adults alike. They recognize children speak the LWCs when they play, and sometimes at home, but the majority of the subjects do not view such language use favorably. This scenario played out differently in Papua New Guinea, according to Kulick ,

People do not seem to care very much if their language is dying out. In Gapun, for example, although villagers are aware that children no longer speak the vernacular, the salience of this awareness is not high, and for the most part, no one is overly concerned with the children's lack of Taiap (Kulick 1992:26).

Most Nepali subjects hope that Nepali will be spoken by future generations in Chiang Mai. It is worth noting however, that language shift can happen despite a positive attitude. According to Bradley (2002:6),

Recognition of language loss is often delayed; that is, speakers feel that their language is healthy enough within the in-group network until the remaining fluent speakers are all old, even if younger people are all semispeakers, passive understanders or have no knowledge of the traditional language, and normal transmission stopped long ago. By the time a community becomes aware of impending language loss, it may be very difficult to reverse.

Overall, Nepali language attitudes weigh in favor of their mother tongue. They reinforce this view by preferring to keep marriage within their own culture, and most subjects do not want their children to have exogamous marriages. However, in informal interviews, Nepali participants expressed the belief that the LWCs are useful tools for education or the workplace.

#### **4.4 Implications for language maintenance**

Objective 3: Assess if Nepalis in Chiang Mai are maintaining their ability to speak Nepali

This section discusses the sociolinguistic data on language maintenance. The data is mostly comprised of self-reported Nepali language ability by each participant.

#### 4.4.1 Research Question 5: How do Nepalis in Chiang Mai perceive their language ability?

**Table 19. Nepali language ability**

Can you...	n=	Yes %	No %
...Q59. Explain the relationships in your family in Nepali?	49	47 96%	2 4%
...Q60. Explain how to do your job in Nepali?	49	49 100%	0 0%
...Q61. Speak Nepali as well as a Nepali person who just moved here?	49	42 86%	7 14%
...Q63. Read or write Nepali?	50	33 66%	17 34%

##### 59. Can you explain the relationships in your family in Nepali?

Almost every subject (47 out of 49, 96%) claimed that they could explain their family relationships in Nepali. Only two people said they could not, and one person did not answer. The subject who did not respond expressed the feeling that he thought Q59 and Q60 were too invasive, and claimed that he did not want to discuss his family or business with anybody.

##### 60. Could you use Nepali to explain to a Nepali speaker how to do your job?

Every participant who answered this question (49 out of 49, 100%) stated that they could explain their job in Nepali. The same subject mentioned in Q59 refused to answer.

##### 61. Can you speak Nepali as well as a Nepali person who just moved here?

Out of 49 subjects, 42 (86%) claimed that they spoke Nepali just as well as someone who just moved to Chiang Mai. There were seven participants (14%) who said that they do not speak it as well as those who just arrived, and one person did not answer. The subject, who did not answer, had actually just arrived from Myanmar the night before, and seemed baffled by the question.

##### 62. Can you read or write Nepali?

Out of 50 people, 33 (66%) said that they could read or write Nepali. The remaining 17 subjects (34%) could not.

**Table 20. Perceived Nepali proficiency table**

Which language...	n=	LWC %	LWC+Nep %	Nepali %
...Q74. do old people in CM speak best?	48	0 0%	1 2%	47 98%
...Q54. do Nepali children in CM speak best?	48	28 58%	11 23%	9 19%
...Q27. do you speak best?	50	10 20%	9 18%	31 62%

**74. Which language do old people generally speak best?**

All the participants, except for one (47 out of 48, 98%) stated that old people speak Nepali the best. Only one person claimed old people spoke Nepali and the LWC the best, and two people did not answer the question, implying that they did not know any old Nepalis in Chiang Mai because they were new to the area.

**54. What language do children speak best?**

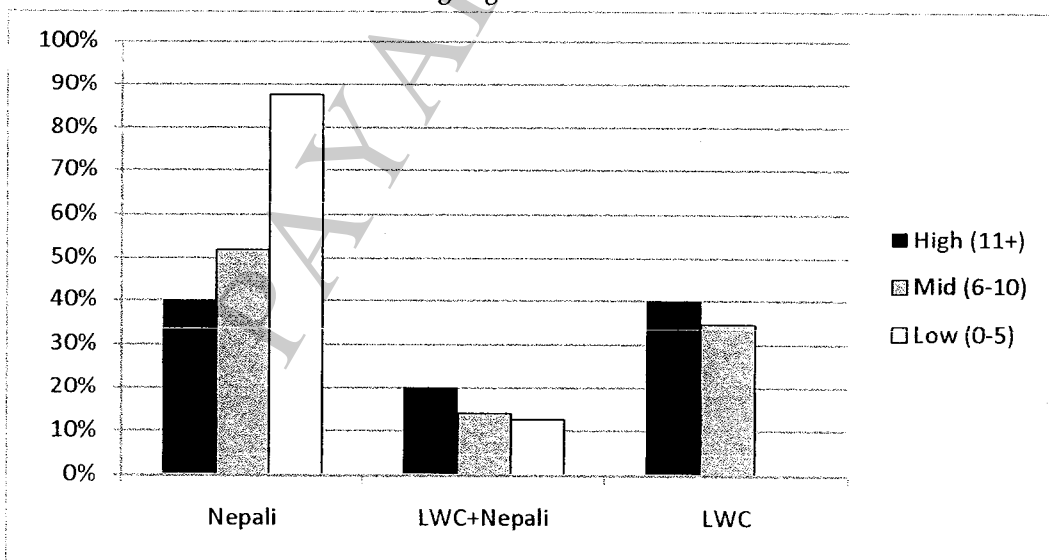
As with previous questions about children, two people did not respond, acknowledging their inexperience with children. Therefore, the sample for this question is 48. Out of 48 subjects, 28 (58%) claimed that an LWC was the language children speak best (Thai was the answer 26 people chose). A minority of 11 participants (23%) stated that children speak Nepali and an LWC best. Finally, nine out of 48 (16%) said that Nepali is the best language spoken by children.

**27. Nowadays, which language do you speak best?**

Only 62% (31 out of 50) of the subjects believed that Nepali was their best language. Yet if one includes those who responded with Nepali and an LWC, the total who claimed Nepali as their best language is a larger majority (40 out of 50, 80%).

Education appears to be a factor in which language each subject reportedly speaks best. The data was examined after dividing the subjects' education levels into three groups (See Figure 8).

All of the subjects with low education claimed that they speak Nepali or Nepali and an LWC as their best language. Those with higher education levels were more likely to claim an LWC as their best language.



**Figure 8. Best language according to education level**

#### **4.4.2 Summary of data corresponding to Research Question 5**

Most Nepalis appear confident in their ability to do general tasks in Nepali, such as explaining their family relationships or teaching somebody how to do their job. Almost all subjects agreed that they could speak Nepali just as well as anyone coming from a Nepali village in Myanmar. Finally, many participants claimed they could read or write the Nepali language.

The data indicates that some of the subjects believe they speak an LWC better than they speak Nepali. Yet the majority claim Nepali, or Nepali and an LWC, are their best languages.

Just as previous data in this study has revealed, children are perceived to be speaking an LWC more than any other age group. Over half of the subjects believe that Nepali children speak an LWC better than they speak Nepali. On the other hand, old people are believed to speak Nepali as their best language. There were no subjects who claimed that the elderly speak an LWC as their best language.

The Nepali subjects perceive their own language ability in Nepali as sufficient, and old people's ability as excellent. Yet they are uncertain about the ability of children to speak Nepali, and have indicated that children are shifting to the LWC. The Nepali community would be wise to begin making changes in the home language use. Yamamoto (2001) writes of a connection between bilingual ability and a speaker's age. Many issues are involved in families with high rates of bilingualism. In Yamamoto's research, bilingual families that spoke only the minority language in their home were able to raise bicultural, bilingual children with total success.

#### 4.4.3 Research Question 6: Do Nepali parents teach their children Nepali in Chiang Mai?

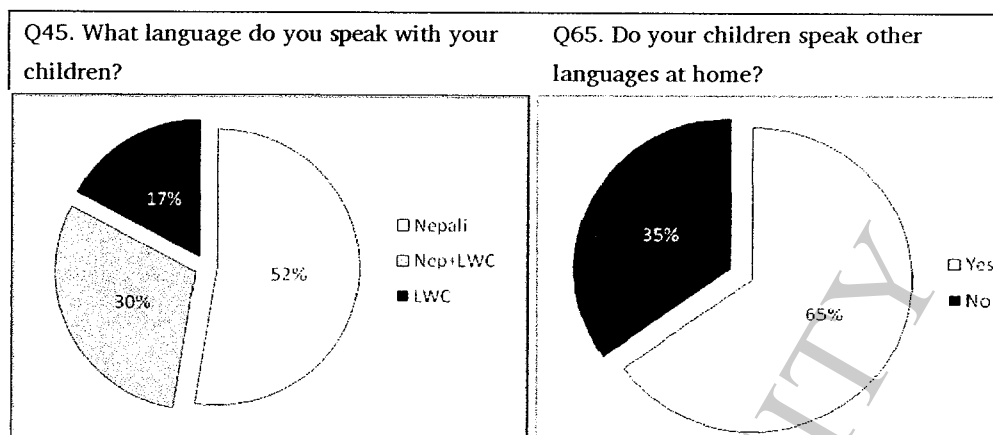


Figure 9. Interlocutors' children and language use

#### 46. What languages do you speak (if have children) with your children?

Over half the Nepali parents (12 out of 23, 52%) speak Nepali with their children. Yet others (7 out of 23, 30%) speak Nepali and the LWCs with their kids. Only four people (17%) said they do not speak Nepali with their children, but have shifted to an LWC. There are four parents of children too young to speak, and the remaining 23 subjects did not have children.

#### 65. Do your children ever speak anything other than Nepali at home?

There were 27 people who reported that they do not have children, or their kids are too young to speak. Out of the remaining 23 participants, 15 people (65%) claimed that their children speak other languages in the home. Only eight parents (35%) stated that their children just spoke Nepali in the home.

#### 66. What else do they speak?

Thai was reportedly spoken by the children of 11 participants. The remaining four claimed their children speak Burmese, or Burmese and Thai in the home.

#### 4.4.4 Summary of data corresponding to Research Question 6

It appears as if the majority of the parents are teaching their children Nepali. Although the data indicates that only 52% of the subjects speak Nepali with their children, that total is 82% when one includes the parents who speak both Nepali and an LWC with their children. However, in the home, many children are reportedly choosing to speak the LWCs. Therefore, although many parents are teaching their children Nepali, most children still feel more comfortable speaking an LWC in the home.

#### 4.4.5 Research Question 7: What are the differences in language use between first, second and third generation Nepalis in Chiang Mai?

In order to address this research question, the data was compared by generation of the interlocutor as classified in three groups (Table 21).

**Table 21. Subjects by generation**

Generation	n=50	%
Younger (18-25)	14	28%
Middle (26-39)	28	56%
Older (40+)	8	16%

For each language use question, the three generations show surprisingly little variation. For example, almost every subject claimed to speak Nepali every day, and the two people who did not, were from different generations.

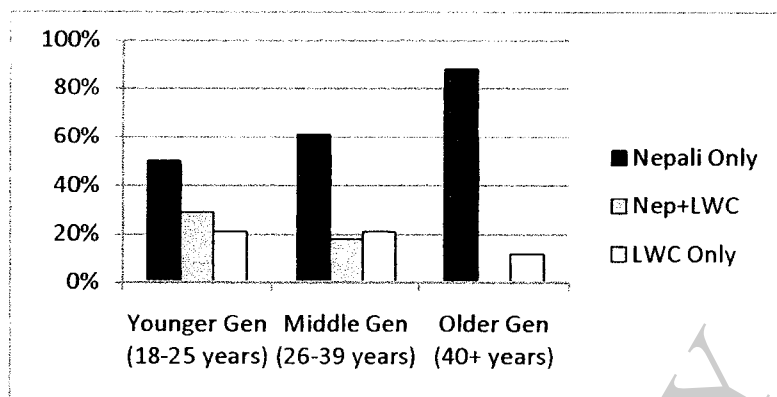
However, one exception to this trend is indicated in Q44: What language do you use with siblings? Note Table 22 below.

**Table 22. Language use with siblings by generation**

	n=	LWC Only	%	Nep+LWC	%	Nepali Only	%
Younger Gen (18-25 yrs)	14	5	36%	2	14%	7	50%
Middle Gen (26-39 yrs)	27	3	11%	8	30%	16	59%
Older Gen (40+ yrs)	8	0	0%	3	38%	5	63%

More subjects from the younger generation use the LWC with their siblings than the middle or older generations do. The middle generation uses the LWC on its own less than the younger generation, yet more subjects from the middle generation use a combination of Nepali and the LWC with their siblings. The older generation is the most likely to speak just Nepali with their siblings. One subject had no brothers or sisters, so the sample size is 49.

After comparing data by generation, a difference in self-reported language ability was noted. A higher percentage of the participants from the younger generation and the middle generation claimed to speak an LWC the best (21% each). Those generations were also more likely to say that they speak Nepali plus an LWC the best. However, there was just one subject from the older generation who claimed she spoke the LWC the best. Nobody from the older generation said they spoke Nepali plus the LWC the best. Almost all the subjects from the older generation stated that Nepali was their best language. See Figure 10 below.



**Figure 10. Best language by generation**

#### 4.4.6 Summary of data corresponding to Research Question 7

There are few differences in language use between first, second and third generation Nepalis in Chiang Mai. The only significant difference in language use patterns is that of the language a subject uses with his or her siblings. More people from the younger generation use the LWC with their siblings and more subjects from the older generation use Nepali with theirs. All three generations use Nepali with their parents, grandparents, and children to the same degree.

Another difference between generations is in language ability. Subjects from the older generation are more likely than the younger generation to claim Nepali as their best language.

#### 4.4.7 Data analysis for Objective 3

Nepalis do appear to be maintaining their ability to speak Nepali in Chiang Mai, although in the future language shift is possible. The majority of the subjects report that they can do general tasks using Nepali, and claim Nepali or Nepali plus the LWC as their best languages. Most parents speak Nepali or Nepali plus the LWC to their children, but report that many children choose to speak the LWC at home or at play.

There is not much difference in language use between the three generations living in Chiang Mai. However, most of the older generation claims Nepali as their best language, but some of the younger generation claims the LWC or Nepali and the LWC as theirs.

### 4.5 Summary and implications for language vitality

Objective 4: Draw conclusions about the future of Nepali spoken in Chiang Mai

Nepali is a vibrant language, very much in use by Nepalis from each generation. Overall, Nepali language use in Chiang Mai is quite high. Nepali people use Nepali for in-group communication. Wardaugh, writing about the Guarani of Paraguay claims, “Outside Paraguay, Paraguayans may deliberately choose to communicate in Guarani (the ethnic language) to show solidarity, particularly when among other South American Spanish-speaking people” (2006:99).

The attitudes among Nepalis towards their language and toward the LWCs seem to indicate that Nepalis prefer Nepali to be spoken by children and adults alike. Most subjects hope that Nepali will be spoken by future generations in Chiang Mai. The majority of the subjects prefer to keep marriage within their own Nepali culture, thus preserving their language.

The current generation of Nepali adults appears to be maintaining the ability to speak Nepali, even if they have lived in Thailand for many years. However, although most parents speak Nepali to their children, children are reportedly speaking the LWCs in their home, or while playing with friends.

The future of Nepali in Chiang Mai is uncertain because of the previously mentioned children’s domain, and the way the LWCs are surfacing in the home domain. However, it is important to recognize that Nepali is not an endangered language. It is the national language of Nepal, with a successful orthography and mother-tongue education program. In Chiang Mai, the Nepali people from Myanmar comprise a threatened language community. Yet it is a community where the population is continuing to be refreshed by new immigrants seeking employment in Chiang Mai. The Mpi of Thailand (Tehan and Nahhas 2009:87-104) on the other hand, represent an endangered language. In the Mpi, there is no orthography, literacy materials or access to electronic technology in the language. Mpi is not a national language, and there is very little documentation about it. However, in both Mpi and Nepali, there is a decrease in the domains where the language is used.

If Nepali children are encouraged by adults to speak Nepali, as well as the LWCs, then the future of Nepali spoken in Chiang Mai could be secure.