

Chapter 4

Language Ideologies of Nepali People in YouTube Interactions

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates how Nepali people demonstrate colonized thinking in their responses to a speech by a former Minister of State for Health and Population. Nepali people seem to be influenced by standard language ideology. Therefore, this chapter argues that Nepali people should come out of their colonized thinking, which adheres to standard language ideology. They should rather embrace translanguaging in order to appreciate their own cultural and linguistic heritage when communicating in English.

INTRODUCTION

YouTube is a discursive website through which individuals can upload the content of a video as a topic of discussion and analysis through “super chats” and comment sections. For example, YouTube is a “dwelling place” in which many Nepalese people use a variety of language styles to discuss many national and international issues to develop their understanding of a topic. However, rather than examining YouTube as a dwelling place in order to analyze the effects of YouTube on people, I am looking at how Nepali people are responding to a speech delivered by one of the ministers of Nepal at a UN meeting through new kinds of interactions in YouTube. The comments made about the minister on YouTube show that the Nepalese are influenced by the idea that political leaders or people occupying important positions are a different social class, and that they should maintain their class by strictly following the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-3339-0.ch004

rules and regulations set up by the dominant discourse of the western world. I will analyze these comments made regarding a speech about HIV/Aids in a high-level meeting of the UN. Mainly this chapter will try to explain how Nepalis use YouTube technology to express their language ideology along with their acceptance of and resistance against the dominant discourse. I argue that, rather than being influenced by colonial thinking in regards to the use of English language, Nepalese people can champion their own linguistic and cultural resources to communicate through English semiotics. In other words, Nepali people should embrace and appreciate their own styles of English, which integrate signs, symbols and accents from Nepali language.

STANDARD LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Standard English Language Ideology is often associated with Standard English that is spoken by Whites and middle class people. This ideology perceives all other varieties of English to be substandard or nonstandard or non-academic. Standard Language Ideology (SLI) emboldens oppressive practices by relegating linguistic varieties. SLI originates from the myth of linguistic homogeneity, which posits that “the boundaries drawn around idealized languages need to be protected from the contamination of other language varieties” (Mangelsdorf, 2010, p. 120).

Though Nepal is an independent country and was never colonized in its history, many common people of Nepal have been linguistically and ideologically colonized as they have adopted thinking which believes that they need to write and speak the way native speakers of English do. The people of Nepal think political leaders or other people who occupy important positions in the country should be able to speak Standard English. In this chapter, I show an example of Nepali people’s perceptions about English language and how these perceptions exhibit colonized thinking.

“STUPID” ENGLISH OF THE MINISTER

This study focuses on Nepalese people’s YouTube comments on a speech made by Dharma Shila Chapagai, former Minister of State for Health and Population of Nepal, in a high level meeting of the UN General Assembly on HIV/AIDS on June 10, 2011. The speech of the minister shown on the video receives many judgments and evaluations from Nepalese people who comment about her “stupid” English. That speech became very important for many Nepalese people because of the fact that many high-profile people attended that assembly from all over the world. Dharmashila Chapagain was a member of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-Maoist), who was elected in the first CA in 2008. Since

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