A Sociolinguistic Study of Walungge and Related Varieties Dhokpya and Thudam

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Abstract

This report presents the findings of a sociolinguistic survey of Walungge and related varieties Thudam and Dhokpya. The purposes of the survey were to understand the general sociolinguistic situation, to determine which variety is most suitable for the development of materials in the mother tongue, and to aid in the goals of the LinSuN project (which ended in January 2018). These purposes were pursued by investigating different sociolinguistic aspects such as: language attitudes, lexical similarity, perceived intelligibility, perceived ethnolinguistic groupings and desires for development.

The results indicated the studied varieties are dialects of a single language spoken by people who are loosely connected under the term Bhote or Sherpa. There are local names used in some villages and known in the broader community, but no one term is used by people of every village to encompass the people and the language. Even so, there is high intelligibility between the dialects, with only Thudam Bhote showing any noticeable difficulty in understanding any other variety. Additionally, attitudes among the community are generally positive or neutral concerning the other dialects researched.

Though attitudes toward the language are generally positive and use of the mother tongue is quite strong, there are signs indicating language shift. The use of Nepali among the younger generation is growing and will lead to language shift if the language community does not create a stable environment for the use of both Nepali and the mother tongue. Moreover, despite generally high language vitality, there was minimal desire for language development expressed in most villages visited.

साराँश

यस प्रतिवेदनमा वालङ्गे तथा त्यसैसँग सम्बन्धित थुदाम तथा ढोकप्या समाजभाषाविज्ञान सर्वेक्षणबाट पत्ता लागेका कुराहरू समावेश गरिएको छ । तसर्थ, यसको उद्देश्य भनेको भाषा सर्वेक्षण नेपाल परियोजनाको लक्ष्यहरूलाई टेवा दिनको लागि के कस्ता उपयुक्त सामग्रीहरू उत्पादन गर्नु उचित हुन्छ भनी निर्धारण गर्नु रहेको थियो (जनवरी २०१८मा उक्त कार्य सामाप्त भएको थियो) । यी उद्देश्यहरूलाई भाषा समाजका विभिन्न पक्षहरू जस्तै कि भाषाको स्वभावहरू, शाब्दिक समानता, बौद्धिकस्तर, जातिभाषिक समूहहरू तथा विकाससम्बन्धी रुचिजस्ता कुराहरूमा गरिएको अनुसन्धानले पछ्च्याएको थियो ।

परिणामस्वरुप, यसले भोटे वा शेर्पा जातिको वर्गीकरणमा फितलो प्रकारले गाँसिएका मानिसहरूद्वारा बोलिने एकल भाषाका विविध शैलीहरूका विभिन्न पक्षहरूमा गरिएको अध्ययनलाई देखाएको छ । अन्य स्थानीय नाउँहरूको स्वीकार्यतासँग जोडिएका विचाराधीन मुद्दाहरूले मानिसहरू तथा भाषालाई समायोजन गर्ने कुनै एकल शब्दको प्रयोगलाई बदर गरेको छ । त्यस्तो अवस्थामा पनि थुडाम भोटे भाषाले मात्र फरक किसिमको शैलीलाई बुझ्नमा स्पष्ट कठिनाइलाई झल्काएको छ भने, अन्य विविध शैलीहरूबीच उच्च बौद्धिकता रहेको देखाएको छ । यसको साथ भाषिकअन्तरसम्बन्धी गरिएका अनुसन्धानहरूप्रति सामान्यतौरमा समुदायका सकारात्मक वा तटस्थ प्रतिक्रिया रहेको छ ।

उक्त भाषा विकाससम्बन्धी सामान्यतौरमा सकारात्मक मनोभाव राखिएको तथा मातृभाषा जगेर्नाप्रति सबल सचेतना देखाए तापनि, भाषाप्रतिको रुचि क्रमिक परिवर्तन भएर गइरहेको छ । जवान पुस्ताहरूका माझमा नेपाली भाषाको प्रयोग क्रमिक बढ्दै गइरहेको हुनाले यदि भाषा जगेर्ना समुदायले समयमा नै मातृभाषा तथा नेपाली भाषा प्रयोगबीचको स्थिर सन्तुलनमय वातावरणलाई सृजना नगर्ने हो भने, भाषा परिवर्तन छोटो समयमा नै देखिनेछ । यसको अतिरिक्त, भेटघाट गरिएका अधिकाँश गाउँहरूका मानिसहरूले भाषा विकाससम्बन्धी थोरै मात्र रुचि देखाएका छन् ।

Acknowledgements

कृतज्ञता

नेपालको उत्तरी ताप्लेजुङ्ग तथा सङ्खुवासभा जिल्लाहरूमा रहेका वालुङ्गे, ढोक्प्या तथा थुदाम भोटे भाषिहरूका माझमा गरिएको समाजभाषाविज्ञान सर्वेक्षणको नतिजालाई यस प्रतिवेदनले प्रस्तुत गरेको छ। यस सर्वेक्षणको उद्देश्य भनेको यी भाषाहरूमा पठनपाठनका सामग्रीहरू विकास गर्न कुनचाहिँ भाषिका अति नै उपयुक्त हुन्छ भनि निर्धारण गर्नु रहेको छ र यसको लागि यी समुदायहरूमा समाजभाषाविज्ञानको फराकिलो परिस्थिति बुझ्ने चेष्टा गरिएको छ। त्यसरी नै सङ्कलित यसमा आँकडाले भाषा सर्वेक्षण नेपाल परियोजना (यो जनवरी २०१८ मा सकिएको छ) लाई समेत टेवा दिने अपेक्षा गरिएको छ।

यस प्रतिवेदनलाई तयार पार्ने क्रममा, सर्वेक्षणको योजना तथा कार्यन्वयनतादेखि लिएर प्रतिवेदन लेखन, विश्लेषण तथा मुद्रणमा समेत मेरा सहकर्मी मित्रहरूहरूले ठूलो सहायता गर्नुभएको छ। मेरो सहकर्मी साथी जनेल स्वेन्सनले दिनुभएको मार्गनिर्देशन, सुझावहरू र सर्वेक्षण तथा त्यसको कार्यन्वयनताबारेका महत्वपूर्ण विस्तृत जानकारीहरूका लागि म अति नै आभारी छु।

ढोक्प्या समाजको अगुवाको रुपमा डाण्डु ढोक्प्याले अति नै अमूल्यको सहयोग प्रदान गर्नुभएको छ। लोसरको समयमा जनेल स्वेन्सन र मलाई वहाँले आफ्नो समुदायमा न्यानो स्वागत गर्नुभयो। त्यतिमात्र होइन, आफ्नो घरको ढोका हाम्रो लागि खोलिदिनुभयो जसको लागि म अति नै धन्यवादी छु। हाम्रो सर्वेक्षण कार्यमा, सही क्षेत्र पत्ता लगाउन तथा हाम्रो कुनै एउटा माध्यमको लागि मितव्ययी कथा वाचकहरू जुटाउन उत्तम मार्गनिर्देशनलगायत वहाँले हामीलाई विभिन्न तरिकाले सहयोग गर्नुभएको छ। त्यसैले वहाँप्रति म कृतज्ञ तथा आभारी छु।

वालुङ्ग समुदायबाट कथावाचकको लागि हाम्रो खोजमा, व्यस्तताको बावजुद पनि निमा दोर्जे भुटिया तयार हुनुभयो र अति नै आवश्यकीय सहायता प्रदान गर्नुभयो। वहाँ र वहाँको परिवारले हामीलाई स्वागत गर्नुभयो र एकसाथ बसेर चिया पिउँदै मातृभाषामा वाचन गरेको कथाहरू सुनेको ती क्षणहरू अविस्मरणीय छन्।

पथप्रदर्शकको रुपमा रहेका सोनमले आफ्नो जिम्मेवारीभन्दा परसम्म पुगेर हामीलाई सहायता गर्नुभयो। आवश्यकता खड्किएको समयमा, वहाँले अनुवादकको पनि भूमिका निभाउनुभयो र भवितव्य र सम्भाव्य जोखिमपूर्ण मार्गहरूमा पुग्नबाट बचाउनुभयो। साथै, विभिन्न समुदायहरूसँग घूलमिल गर्न तथा सहज वातावरण सृजना गर्न, त्यो सारा समयावधिभरि नै वहाँले हामीलाई धेरै मद्दत गर्नुभयो र एक राम्रो साथीको भूमिका निभाउनुभयो।

अन्तमा, हामी पुग्न सकेका वालुङ्गे, ढोक्प्या तथा थुदाम समुदायहरूप्रति म कृतज्ञ छु। हामीले साँच्चिनै यस्ता न्यानो, शिष्टाचारी तथा कोमल व्यक्तिहरूलाई भेट गर्ने मौका पायौं। तपाईको भाषा तथा समुदायमा अनुसन्धान गर्ने मौका मलाई दिनुभयो। त्यसैले सारा समुदायप्रति म कृतज्ञतासाथ ठूलो धन्यवाद टक्रयाउँछु। यस अनुसन्धानको क्रममा, सोधिएका प्रश्नहरूका उत्तरहरू दिएर, शब्दहरू घरीघरी दोहर्याएर, तपाईहरूले ठूलो योगदान पुर्याउनुभएको छ र म यो आशा राख्छु कि यस प्रतिवेदनको नतिजाले तपाईका समुदायहरूमा तथा भावी भाषा विकासमा राहत दिनेछ। तपाई तथा तपाईका समुदायहरूका भलाइको निम्ति नै यो सर्वेक्षण पूरा गरिएको छ।

फागुन २०७५
मैका ब्लर्क
काठमाडौं, नेपाल[1]

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1 Introduction

Walungge, Thudam, and Dhokpya are some of the names used to refer to a language spoken in the northern region of Taplejung and Sankhuwasabha districts in eastern Nepal that has previously received minimal focused research. The speakers of this language, termed WDT[2] Bhote[3] in this report (a full explanation of these terms is covered in section 1.2), affiliate with Tibetan culture but their ethnic identity is complex and not entirely unified. There are three valleys within the two districts where WDT Bhote speakers have traditionally lived. Until now, the ethnolinguistic relationships between the people of these areas has not been explored in detail. More specifically, the degree of intelligibility between each variety has been addressed by little more than anecdotal evidence. The perceptions of the different communities towards each other has also not been made clear. Complicating the matter further is the difficulty of reaching the isolated areas in which many speakers reside, and the varying use of terminology for the different villages, regions, language varieties and ethnic names. In the following section the purposes of the research will be expanded on.

The country of Nepal is comprised of 7 provinces that are further subdivided into 77 districts, and the region of focus for this report will be the Northeast region of the country. Map 1 displays the districts of Nepal and those highlighted in green represent the region of central focus for this report. This region borders a province of China known as the Tibet Autonomous Region (in this report referred to as Tibet) and the state of Sikkim in India.

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[2] An acronym including the first letter of the three varieties: Walungge, Dhokpya, and Thudam. (For additional information refer to section 1.2.1 on language terms.)

[3] Bhote is a commonly used term for Tibetan related languages and ethnicities. This term and its variant Bhotia are often seen in the literature.

Map 1: Nepal with the highlighted districts: Taplejung and Sankhuwasabha
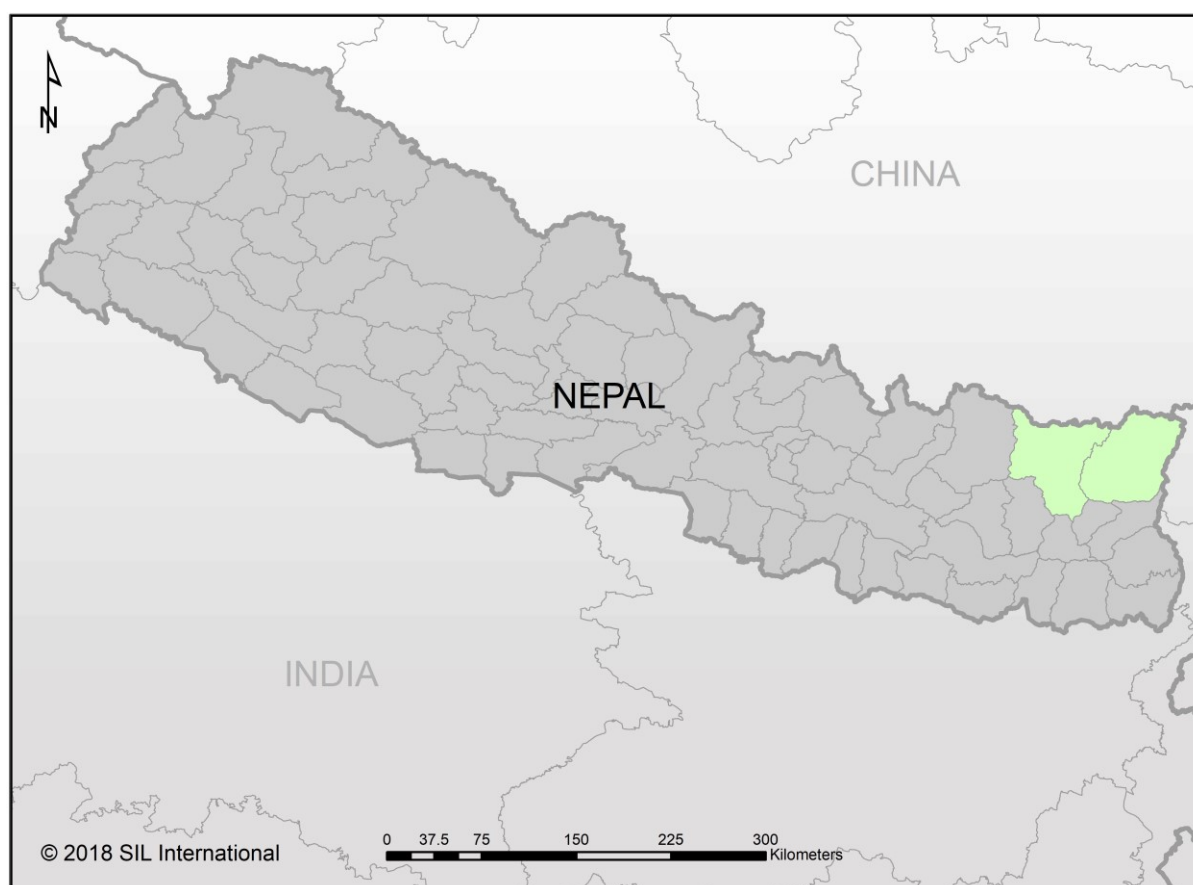
1.1 Purposes & Report Overview

The purposes of this survey were to better illuminate the sociolinguistic situation of the WDT Bhote speaking people in the northern Taplejung and Sankhuwasabha districts of Nepal and to determine the suitability of materials developed in one variety for use in the other varieties studied. There was also the wider purpose of assisting the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LinSun).[4]

With those purposes in mind, the structure of this paper is described here. The remainder of chapter 1 will cover the relevant background information detailing the history, geography, people, and previous linguistic research. Chapter 2 will follow with a description of the methodology used to carry out the research. Chapter 3 will present

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[4] Though LinSuN had officially ended before this report was printed, the research was planned in cooperation with the project and contributes to its goals to develop "a sociolinguistic profile of all the languages of Nepal" (LinSuN Proposal 2008).

the specific goals and research questions used to narrow the focus of the research. After chapter 3, the paper will present the results of the research. Ethnolinguistic identity, chapter 4, will include a subsection on language attitudes and will be followed by chapter 5, Language and Dialect Groupings. Chapter 6, Language Vitality, with a subsection on the community's development desires will end the data related chapters. The paper will conclude with a summary of the findings and recommendations for future language development in chapter 7.

1.2   Terminology and Clarifications

Some of the challenges related to carrying out the research have related to nomenclature, so they will be given some consideration here. A name conveys something of one's identity, and often people carry more than one identity. Multilingual and multinational environments can add to the complexity of conveying one's identity. A suitable name familiar to speakers of a language may not exist or may not be adequate for the task, and a term originating from outside the community may seem foreign to the community and hence might not be adopted. Regarding the WDT Bhote, the literature frequently uses three words to identify this group: Sherpa, Bhote/Bhotia, or Tibetan.[5] The following maps will serve as a reference for how certain terms have been used in the literature and how they will be used throughout this report.

1.2.1   Language terms

The neutral term WDT Bhote is used throughout this report to refer to the language and the language community. The language terms shown in Map 2, as they have been used in the literature up to this point, allow for too much ambiguity. Walungge has been a term used to reference the WDT Bhote language in the literature, but the term's application has often been limited to a section of the language community to the south and east of the village of Walung. The term is also not broadly recognized in the community; apart from some residents in Walung and Lungthung, WDT Bhote do not recognize Walungge as a term for their language.

Until the community decides on an appropriate term that encompasses all the different dialects, it would be presumptuous to apply the name of any one variety to the whole.

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[5] This includes autoglottonyms.

Furthermore, the term "variety" will be used instead of dialect until the relationship between the different WDT Bhote speech varieties is determined. Further discussion of these topics can be found in chapters 4 and 5.

Map 2: Use of terms in the literature

Map 2[6] presents language and ethnic terms as they have been used in the literature. This map is only to illustrate broad usages of the terms, and not to denote exact locations where each term is used. The area in the pink shaded region represents some areas where the terms Sherpa, Bhote, and Tibetan have been used ambiguously for both language and ethnicity for a variety of distinct people groups (e.g. the Sherpa people and other Tibetan people along the border with China). In these areas, one term may be used for many different groups of people or their language, or many terms may be applied to one group of people or its language. The WDT Bhote are outlined in red and green. The red outline denotes the area where "Tokpegola Tibetan" has been applied in the literature. The green outline and the specific accompanying villages denote where "Walungge" has been applied. Walungge will be used throughout the report to denote the variety spoken in Walung until the boundaries of the variety are determined. Some terms are not frequently seen in the literature. The term "Thudam" is sometimes used as

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[6] The highlighted region's northern, eastern, and western boundaries follow geopolitical borders, but the southern boundary has been arbitrarily delineated.

a language name but only appears to be connected to one village. In this report Thudam will denote the variety spoken in the village of Thudam. Dhokpya will be used in this report to denote the variety spoken in the red outline in Map 2. It is used in this report instead of Tokpegola Tibetan since "Dhokpya" is used as a term in the community for their language and because "Tokpegola" has a few different meanings.

1.2.2   Ethnic terms

The confusion regarding language terms also extends to the discussion of ethnic terminology. Bhote and Sherpa are some of the most common ways for the speakers to refer to their own ethnicity, but the research presented in this report has revealed many others as well. The 2011 Nepal census confirms other main terms. It lists people of the "Topkegola"[7] and the "Walung/Waling" ethnicity, both of which refer to the WDT Bhote. Thudam is also an officially recognized ethnicity but there were none of that ethnicity recorded in the 2011 census (Central Bureau of Statistics 2014).[8]

Map 2 specifically illustrates the usage of language terms, and many of the same outlines apply to ethnic terms as well. The red outline is the area of the "Topkegola" people but Dhokpya will be used in this report for both the language and the ethnic name. The green area outlines the "Walung" area as it has been understood in the literature. Those from the village of Walung are sometimes called Walung, Halung, Bhote, or Sherpa, but in this report Halung will consistently be used to refer to the people. When referring to ethnicity in a specific village where no specific term exists, "Bhote" will be affixed to the village (i.e. Thudam Bhote or Ghunsa Bhote). A full discussion of these matters can be found in chapter 5 on Ethnolinguistic Identity.

1.2.3   Terms as used in this report

Map 3 below presents the different areas and the terms that will be used in this report to represent them. The pink area represents the primary reference area for the term Sherpa [xsr], both the language and the ethnic term. Though Sherpa is widely used apart from these areas, for the purposes of this report it will be constrained in this manner. However, 'Sherpa' will always denote a broader definition loosely defined as a

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[7] The spelling "Topkegola" is taken from the Nepal census. In this report, the term will be realized as "Tokpegola" as this is the more commonly accepted spelling.

[8] see http://www.nfdin.gov.np/uploads/ck/58f74a709bdb1.pdf for more information.

Tibetan related language or people within Nepal, and it will not be constrained to a specific area. In this report, 'Sherpa', will be used to refer to the way interview subjects understand the term Sherpa. Bhote will always be a broad term used to identify an individual or a group as part of the broader historically Tibetan peoples that reside inside Nepal and abroad. WDT Bhote refers to the area in green for both the people and the language. The orange outline refers to the Dhokpya people and variety, and the dark red outline refers to the Walungge variety. Thudam as seen in the blue outline refers to the Thudam variety spoken only in Thudam village. The three varieties named here will be collectively referred to by the term WDT Bhote.

Map 3: Terms as used in this report
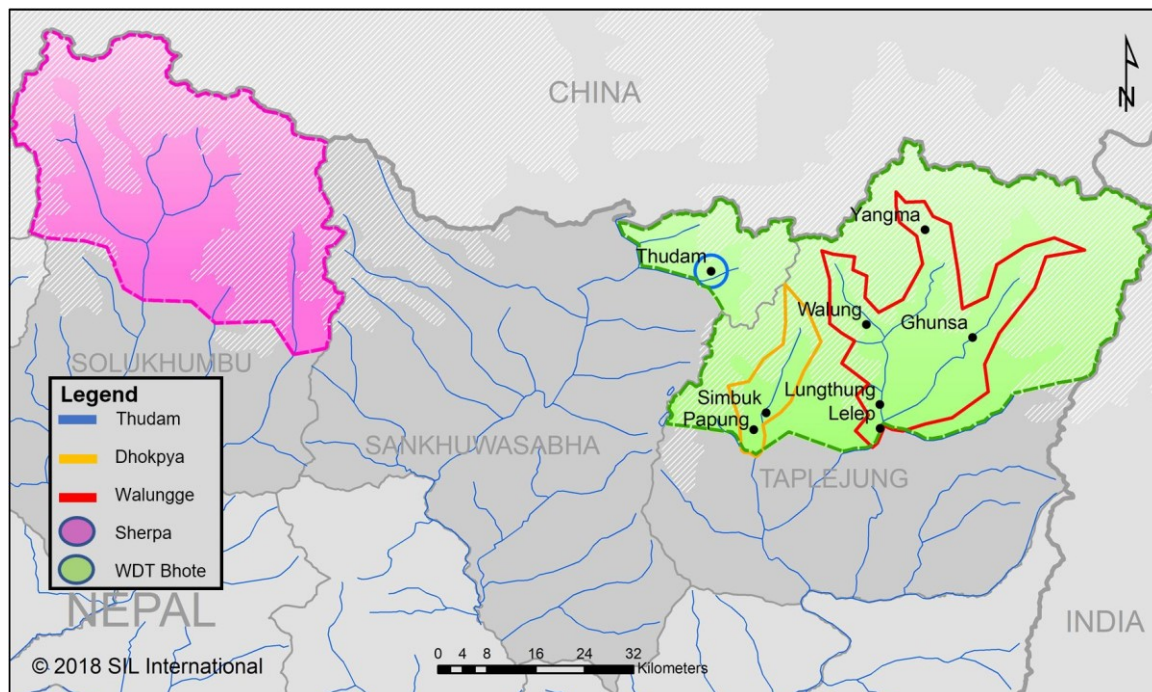
Throughout the report, WDT Bhote will be used as an overall term for both the language and the people where a more precise term does not exist. Where "Tibetan" is used without qualification, it will always refer to spoken Standard Tibetan [bod][9] (Lewis, Simons and Fennig eds. 2017). All other uses will be defined by the context. The three varieties named here will be collectively referred to by the term WDT Bhote. For a detailed chart defining each term see Appendix B.

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[9] This is an ISO code. Each language in the Ethnologue receives one of these codes to distinguish it from other languages.

1.3 Geography

The speakers of WDT Bhote have traditionally resided along three valleys in the districts of Taplejung and Sankhuwasabha within Province 1 of eastern Nepal. The most well-known of the communities, Walung, is in a valley along the upper Tamor River on a plateau overlooking the river. Lungthung and some smaller villages lie downriver from Walung. Further up this valley to the east is the small village of Yangma. The easternmost valley follows the Ghunsa River and contains the villages Amjilesa, Phole, Gyabala, and Ghunsa. The westernmost valley follows the Mewa River and holds a handful of villages as well. They are Papung, Simbuk, Tartong, Dungin, Tokpegola village, Mikladin and Kiling. North of this valley, over a pass and over the border into the district of Sankhuwasabha, is the village of Thudam situated in an east-west valley along the Medokchheje River. During the administration of the different research tools, some respondents mentioned WDT Bhote-speaking places in Tibet and outside these three valleys. Those places are worthy of further investigation, but with the current evidence, it is difficult to discuss them in this report in much detail.

Map 4: WDT Bhote villages classified by habitational patterns of use
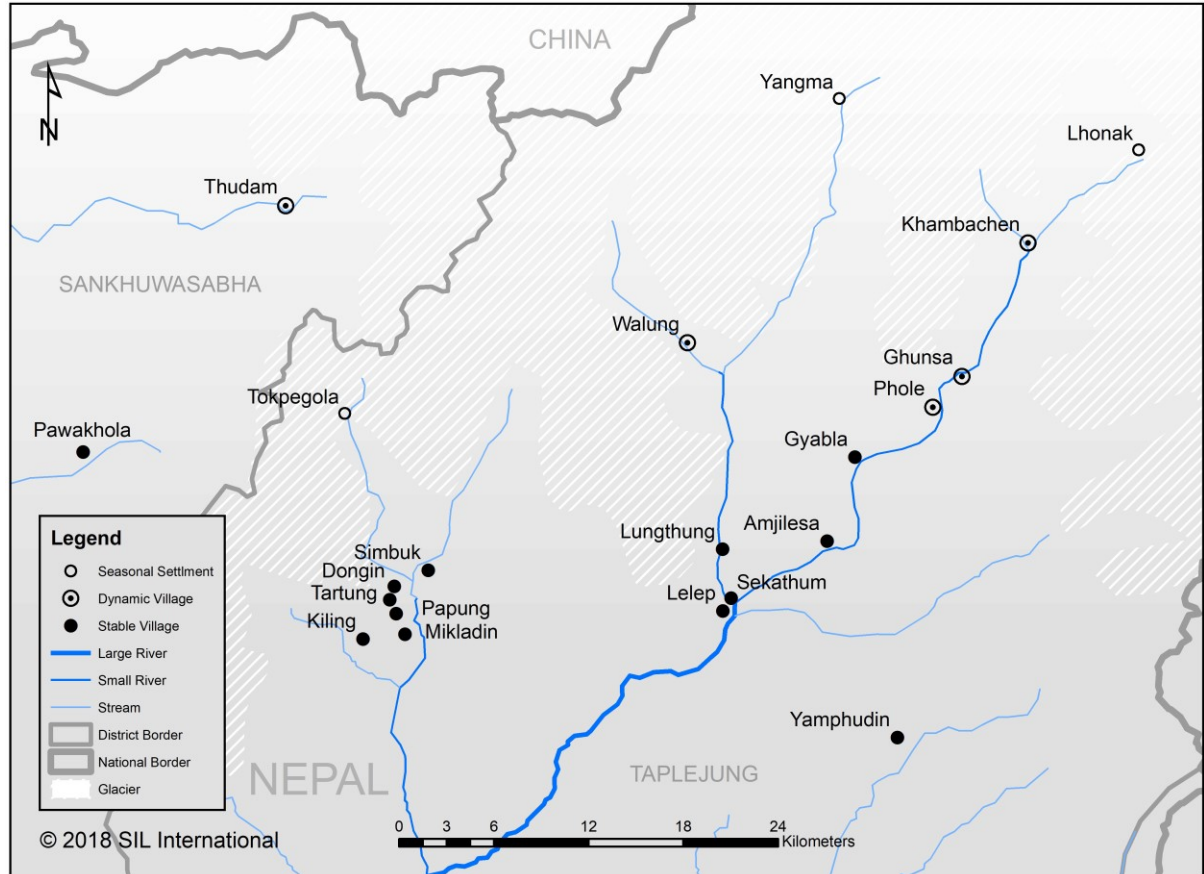
Map 4 gives the location of many of the villages that are part of the WDT Bhote area.[10] They are also defined by how the village is utilized. Some villages are seasonal settlements: only inhabited a few months of the year. Some villages are dynamic: inhabited most of the year but during particular seasons; at least some of the houses are left unoccupied. Others have stable populations that remain for all or most of the year.

There are a few distinctions worth mentioning about the use of place names in this report. The village Ghunsa, as it is referred to in this report, will always be a cover term inclusive of the settlements[11] Ghunsa, Lhonak, and Khambachen (see chapter 4 for more information). Tokpegola will refer broadly to the people and area of the Mewa River Valley (described below). "Tokpegola village" will be used if specifically referring to the village, but "Tokpegola" will be used as a general term to refer to the area where Dhokpya speakers reside. "Thudam" refers to the language variety, but when referring to the village, Thudam will appear in the context of village (e.g. Thudam village, village of Thudam, etc.). For additional information on place names and their common alternate names, or for places referred to but not shown on the map, see Appendix B.

1.3.1 Human Geography & Economy

The geography of the WDT Bhote's homeland has influenced their chosen occupation, social and cultural connections, and economic resources. Some of these features of geography include major religious and cultural sites, and the border with Tibet which lies near many WDT Bhote villages. Elevation also plays a key geographic role with several villages like Walung, Ghunsa, Thudam, and Simbuk sitting at elevations above 2,500 meters. The high elevations and proximity to the Tibet border allow WDT Bhote the ability to carry out a culturally more traditional Tibetan life. This includes animal husbandry, especially raising yaks which are more well-suited to high altitudes (Li and Wiener 2003), subsistence farming, and some trading (Section 1.5 will explore Tibetan identity in more detail). It also gives the WDT Bhote near the border access to business opportunities and supplies that may be hard to acquire otherwise. These Tibetan economic activities connect some of the villages more closely to the culture of their Tibetan neighbors. The high elevation villages follow the pattern of subsistence farming

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[10] Not all villages mentioned during Dialect Mapping sessions could be located on the map.

[11] "Settlement" is used here as a subcategory of "village". See section 1.2.4, 4.1 and Appendix B for more information.

and animal husbandry. In Ghunsa and Walung, economic livelihood is supplemented with tourism, selling handicrafts, and some trade. Some of the handicrafts are sold in Tibet. The residents of Lungthung, Simbuk and the surrounding area rely mainly on farming and, only to a small degree, on yak herding, which in turn affects their lifestyle. People in these areas do not have to move with their yak herds and are less dependent on trade to supplement what they cannot grow.

1.3.2 Religious, Cultural, and Touristic Sites

Apart from the centuries-old gompa, Walung is also known for the Futuk Festival. This annual festival is celebrated around late November and according to the website of the Halung community based in New York City (2012), "… relives the scenes of the battle between the Gyabo[12] of Maksum and the Gyabo of Thudam". This festival, according to one observer, draws in Halung from India, Kathmandu and abroad (Kulenbekov 2016).

Tokpegola village in the Mewa River Valley north of Simbuk is an important religious and cultural site for many in that valley. There is a lake above the village that has a shrine beside it and the lake is considered a special area (Dandu Dhokpya p.c. 2017).

Some of the villages also lie on well-traveled trekking routes. Since Ghunsa is on the way to the third highest mountain in the world, there are a fair number of trekkers that stay in Ghunsa during peak trekking season in the fall. Olangchung Gola and Thudam village lie on the Great Himalayan Trail (GHT) which spans the length of the country tracing a route along the Himalayas. Because of the location on the trail, the villages receive trekkers during certain seasons.

1.3.3 Sketch of Key Villages

Some general details on the WDT Bhote villages have been covered, but certain distinctive aspects of some key villages are best described within their immediate context. The villages described below were sites where fieldwork was carried out. They represent many of the main villages for this language community in Nepal in terms of prestige, population, vitality, or other related aspects.

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[12] *Gyabo* equates to a ruler or king according to Brian Houghton Hodgson from *Essays on the Languages, Literature, and Religion of Nepal and Tibet* (1972: 67).

Walung

Walung is a popular, well known destination in the region due to its history, its *gompa,*[13] and its location on the GHT. The village is close to 3,200 meters in elevation sitting on a plateau above the Tamor River. It is centrally located in the WDT Bhote language area, positioned between Tibet, Lungthung, Ghunsa, and Thudam village. In the past, Walung has served as a major trading post but only a few residents work as traders now. Walung is inhabited year-round, but many residents temporarily move to Kathmandu in the winter.

Simbuk

Simbuk is a farming village set on a hillside not far from Fung Funge Waterfall, one of the most famous waterfalls in Taplejung. It is a large village of 50 houses, 15 of which are unoccupied. Of the three valleys, Simbuk is in the valley with the highest concentration of WDT Bhote speaking villages, all of which are less than a day's walk away from each other.

Thudam Village

Thudam village lies over a high pass north of Simbuk, at least a day's walk from any other substantial settlement, making it the most difficult and most remote of the research sites to reach. The settlement sits at an elevation of around 3,500 meters, close to the bottom of a hillside beside the Medokchheje River, but many of the houses remain empty most of the year. The many consistent vacancies are due to the number of families involved in raising yaks and the migration patterns associated with that life. Also, because of time spent raising yaks and the lack of arable land, only a few small plots of land are cultivated.

Ghunsa

Ghunsa lies on the northeastern edge of Nepal in a valley leading to Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world. Ghunsa and Walung are less than a day's walk

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[13] A *gompa* is a Tibetan monastery where religious rites are observed, important texts and religious accoutrements are stored, and idols are worshipped. Larger gompas may also have dormitories.

apart, and are also connected socially through marriage and education, with some having sent children to Walung for school.

There are three settlements in Ghunsa village and people move between the settlements seasonally. The highest settlement is Lhonak, inhabited only part of the year, and used mainly for grazing yaks and lodging tourists. Khambachen is a permanent settlement located between the settlements of Lhonak and Ghunsa. It is an important cultural heritage site for residents of the Ghunsa settlement, and it is mainly used as a lodging area for tourists and a grazing area for yaks. Ghunsa is the lowest and most populated of the three settlements. In addition to these settlements, there is a nearby village, Phole. Though it was often spoken of as separate from Ghunsa by residents, a leader of this village said that during harsh winters Ghunsa residents will sometimes move to Phole.

Lungthung

Lungthung is a farming village in the valley leading to Walung. Of all the villages described in this section, Lungthung is the lowest at approximately 1,750 meters. It is an ethnically mixed community of almost a hundred houses, about half of which belong to members of the WDT Bhote community. Unlike the other village sites visited during the fieldwork, the dominant language of this village is Nepali. Even so, many in the village view WDT Bhote as their mother tongue and some still speak it. For a full discussion on the language vitality of WDT Bhote see chapter 6.

Facilities

Each village site differs in terms of accessibility to facilities. Except for Thudam village, each site has a functioning school hosting classes up to at least class 5. Thudam village has a school building, but the villagers have difficulty securing long term teachers to run it. Ghunsa's school, however, is notable in that it has one class in each grade dedicated to teaching Tibetan writing using their mother tongue. The school also sets itself apart in the way it was started. The community took the initiative and secured help from an INGO (the Himalayan Development Foundation Australia) to start and fund the school, and additional funders have since come to support the school. There are several students of different castes and ethnic groups that come from other villages to attend this school. Other villages have also seen development in their education situation. At the time of the fieldwork in April of 2017, Simbuk and Lungthung were in the process of building new school buildings.

Other facilities and infrastructure are not so developed or easily accessible, except for Ghunsa, which has recently secured a hydro-electric plant. Access to healthcare services is also quite difficult. In order to access a health post, WDT Bhote have to walk as much as four days (depending on location) from their village to Lelep or Taplejung since the nearest drivable road ends around Lelep. Other infrastructure in the area includes a road from Tibet to Taplejung through Walung which was planned to be finished in 2018.

1.4   The People

The WDT Bhote have much in common with other Tibetan peoples. Though they have their own history and village-specific cultural and religious practices, they often choose to identify closely with the common Tibetan culture and religion shared by most Tibetan peoples.

Most written work on the WDT Bhote specifically investigates the people of Walung, though there have been brief references to Thudam village, the residents of the Mewa River Valley, Ghunsa, Lungthung, and Yangma.

There has been some confusion over the historical identity of the people of Walung. According to Sinjali of the Nepali Times (2012) the Halung are refugees from Tibet who became Nepali citizens. However, that is not accurate. The influx of refugees in the 1950s and 1960s was a tumultuous time when there was confusion over who was a local Nepali of Tibetan origin and who was a fleeing refugee from Tibet. Uprety, in his paper on cultural ecology in highland communities (2006), points out that during the influx in the mid-20th century, the local administrators of the districts had difficulty distinguishing Tibetan refugees from the native born WDT Bhote people because of the similarities. For the purpose of recognition in the eyes of the government many of the WDT Bhote settled on identifying as 'Sherpa' though they still use Bhote as an ethnic designation as well. Others have confused them for the nearby Naaba people to the east, and still other outsiders have been confused because of their self-designation as "Sherpa".

The use of "Sherpa" by the WDT Bhote might best be framed by Anne Parker's article "The Meanings of 'Sherpa': An Evolving Social Category" (1989). According to Parker, 'Sherpa' has several common uses. It can be used as a job title referring to someone who does porter work. It can refer to the Tibetan origin people who settled in the region of

Solu-Khumbu. The term is also used for those with Tibetan origins who have moved to a lower elevation and are living in a more Hinduized environment. She also states that the term is "evolving" in its use and can now be used to assign status and acceptability in the eyes of others. Parker says, "Bhotias of eastern Nepal use the term Sherpa to designate themselves in public settings in order to be treated as cultural 'insiders' by other Nepali groups" (1989: 12-13). The term has gained status because of the economic success of the Solu-Khumbu Sherpas.

1.4.1 Population

Though significant populations of WDT Bhote reside in India, Tibet and the U.S.A., the focus here will be on the population in Nepal. Using Nepal's 2011 national census, a reasonable minimum estimate for the population can be established. The 2011 census records two specific ethnicities that are solely linked to the WDT Bhote. For the "Walung" ethnicity it records a national population of 1,249, and for Dhokpya[14] it reports 1,523 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2014). Thudam is also a recognized ethnicity, but the census does not have any current numbers on those residing in Nepal. By combining those official ethnicities, a minimum national population of 2,772 can be estimated, the majority of whom reside in Taplejung district. This estimate, however, overlooks those who are part of the WDT Bhote but choose to identify their ethnicity under a different term. A comparison of the census in different local government administrative regions known as Village Development Committees (VDCs)[15] reveals a more thorough estimate. Since the WDT Bhote use the term Bhote to refer to themselves, it is likely many have used that term as an answer on the census as well. This raises the estimate to around 3,000. There may be more WDT Bhote, but they would likely be identified as "Sherpa" on the census, so the numbers of "Sherpa" cannot be taken at face value. The census does not distinguish between the Sherpa of Solu Khumbu and other kinds of Sherpa, but it does provide a means of obtaining a more reliable estimate which will be explored in the section below.

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[14] Dhokpya is known as "Topkegola" in the 2011 census.

[15] The 2011 Nepal census included VDCs as a major geopolitical administrative unit. In 2016, VDCs were replaced by the term rural municipalities and in many places new boundaries were drawn.

The recorded population of speakers for WDT Bhote mostly overlaps with their recognized ethnicities, but there are some inconsistencies between the recorded numbers for language and those for ethnicity. In Taplejung, mother tongue Walungge speakers number 1,078 (Central Bureau of Statistics 2014). However, the Dhokpya ethnicity has no corresponding language listed in the census. By seeing a breakdown of all the mother tongues in Papung VDC where the majority of Dhokpya reside, it is possible to see the answers they likely selected. Sherpa is the only answer they would reasonably have chosen since the other terms mentioned have not been applied to the WDT Bhote language. This information illustrates one example of the incongruity between the WDT Bhote's ethnic designation and their linguistic designation. Another example of this is seen with those who claim Bhote as their ethnicity but Sherpa as their language. Cathryn Bartram mentioned that it is hard to find the exact number of speakers because the WDT Bhote's ethnicity and language has such close ties to that of Tibetan languages, so that when asked to identify their mother tongue they state "Sherpa" (2011: 25). By analyzing these patterns in the census data where WDT Bhote reside, it is possible to more accurately assess the WDT Bhote population. With this information in hand, it is not unreasonable to conservatively estimate a population of 3,000-3,500 WDT Bhote speakers within Nepal. For more information see Appendix A.

1.4.2 Language

Current information on the language situation of WDT Bhote can be found in the Ethnologue. In the Ethnologue, WDT Bhote has been divided into two ISO codes, [ola] and [thw] even though they have been reported as similar in a few different sources (Haimendorf 1975 and Bartram 2011). According to the Ethnologue, The Halung and Dhokpya communities are the two indigenous nationalities that speak Walungge [ola]. Dialects of Walungge are spoken in Walung, Tokpegola, and Ghunsa River. Apart from these dialects, Walungge shares the highest lexical similarity with Tibetan [bod] (71%), and five other Tibetan languages show similar percentages. The vitality of the Walungge variety is said to be decreasing as it loses speakers in the youngest generation and due to migration out of the area. The other ISO code for WDT Bhote, [thw], denotes the Thudam language spoken by the Thudam Bhote (Lewis, Simons and Fennig eds. 2017). Thudam is said to be identical to the language spoken in Walung, Topkegola, and the villages of Kudo and Sar in Tibet (Haimendorf 1975: 121). The Ethnologue also claims that all generations of Thudam Bhote are using Thudam. In terms of language

development, both Walungge and Thudam are unwritten but the Ethnologue claims that Walungge speakers have used Tibetan writing to write their language (Lewis, Simons and Fennig eds. 2017).

On the webpage created by the diaspora community residing in New York, five main villages are referenced when describing the area of language use. They are Walung, Yangma, Ghunsa, Lungthung, and Lelep (Walung Community of North America 2012). Cathy Bartram in her thesis also mentions these villages with the exclusion of Lelep. In addition, she demarcates a region on a map that she defines as a "closely related language area". This region includes the Mewa River Valley (includes Simbuk, Tokpegola, and Papung), Thudam, and a small area just across the border in Tibet (2011: 26-28).

As has been previously mentioned, Bhote and Sherpa are common names applied to the WDT Bhote language but there are others used as well. According to Cathy Bartram's fieldwork, what is presented in the literature as Walungge has been known under several different names—Walunggi Keccya, Walongchung Gola, Walunggi, and Halungge (Cathryn Bartram p.c. 2010). The language name often cited in the literature, "Walungge", comes from the name of one of the main villages in the language area and the ending *-ge* is from the Tibetan word for 'language' (Bartram 2011).

Classification of Tibetan languages in general has been a contested topic with some using mainly a system based on geographical location and others opting to show genetic relationships via certain changes in varieties' phonemic inventory. Classification of WDT Bhote has received little attention, but under a recent classification by Nicolas Tournadre, the languages "Walungge" and "Tokpe Gola" are placed in South-Western Tibetic under the larger Tibetic branch (Tournadre 2014).

In terms of detailed linguistic documentation of Walungge, there are only two sources. Cathy Bartram wrote her doctoral thesis on tone in Walungge and a paper named "Tone and voicing perception in Walungge" (2011). In her dissertation she describes the phonemic inventory and tonal system of Walungge that includes a detailed acoustic analysis. She also touches on the tonal system of Tibetan and a diachronic analysis of Walungge using written Tibetan as a reference (2011).

The Tokpegola variety, which lies to the south west of Walung, was the subject of Nancy Caplow's paper on "Directionals in Tokpe Gola Tibetan discourse" (2007).

1.4.3 Culture

Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, writing in the mid-19th century, provided what is perhaps the first account of the people of Walung. He wrote about their society, "in all respects of appearance, religion, manners, customs, and language, they are Tibetans and Lama Booddhists…" (Hooker 1855: 215). He also briefly mentioned the king of Nepal giving a certain level of political autonomy to Walung (which at the time represented the locus of power for that region). About a century later, another visitor to the area, Christopher von-Furer Haimendorf referenced Hooker's writings saying, "… some 120 years ago the position of the Bhotias of the upper Tamur valley was much the same as I found it in the 1950s" (1975: 123). Haimendorf writes in some detail about many aspects of society, including the trading activities of the residents of Olangchung Gola and their level of wealth and regional power. He also describes some of their Buddhist activities and material culture, and the lamas' apparently marginal degree of spiritual authority. He then goes on to describe some of the societal hierarchy within "Walongchung" and mentions its similarity to stratification in Tibetan society. He asserts that the caste divisions: "Shiva", Pheza and Longme extend to Walung and some surrounding villages (126-128). The Walung Community of North America also gives a short description of these classes, "There are three kinds of people in Walung society: the earliest inhabitants; Shiwa[16] who came first followed by the Phedajma, and finally the low class Longme.[17] The Shiwa have traditionally wielded the highest authority among Walung" (2012).

More recent cultural observations have come from the more conceptual anthropological work of Martin Saxer. His article "Pathways: A Concept, Field Site and Methodological Approach to study Remoteness and Connectivity" provides a perspective on the socioeconomic history of Walung. Saxer investigates this history from the standpoint of the pathway through Walung and how that joins this one remote village to the broader world.

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[16] "Shiva" and "Shiwa" appear to be variant names of the same caste.

[17] The Walung Community of North America website makes this reference, "(Sharma, BS2045:)", but the full reference is not mentioned and whether it refers to the castes or not, is not clear.

1.5   History and Tibetan Identity

The WDT Bhote historically originated from Tibet and settled in Nepal perhaps as early as the 7th century (as cited in Wangyal 2009). They brought with them their Tibetan culture, religion, and language. In fact, many still have regular contact with Tibet, further tying them back to that land. Section 1.5 will discuss some of the influences of these Tibetan origins and how that affects the WDT Bhote today. A description of their local history will then follow.

1.5.1   Tibetan Identity

The WDT Bhote lifestyle reflects many influences from traditional Tibetan agricultural and pastoral practices. Matthew Kapstein writes in his book *The Tibetans*, "In the popular imagination, including not least the Tibetan imagination, nomads are generally regarded as the archetypical Tibetans." They developed a way of life that incorporated agriculture and animal husbandry termed *samadrok*[18] that is still prevalent in much of the Tibetan world (2006: 11-12). This lifestyle can still be seen in the villages of Ghunsa, Thudam and Walung. The land is naturally limited in what it can support, and the people's husbandry and agricultural practices reflect that reality.

Besides farming and animal husbandry there have been other occupations taken up by the WDT Bhote that have typically thrived in the Tibetan cultural sphere. Trade is one of these occupations, as Kapstein writes, "Trade, in particular, played a vital role in the Tibetan economy, promoting circulation of domestic production and bringing some foreign goods such as Chinese tea and silk, Indian cotton and utensils, to market, though in remote places mercantile activity remained meager or nonexistent" (2006: 16).

Another prolific marker of the WDT Bhote's Tibetan identity is related to the use of written Tibetan. Tibet's ruler in the 7th century, Songtsen Gampo, is widely credited with the introduction of the Tibetan writing system and Buddhism. The ruler established a standard law, and with the help of his queens introduced Buddhism to the people. Buddhism, as an international religion, brought well-developed systems of knowledge that allowed Tibet to develop culturally and eventually find a place on the international stage. Written Tibetan slowly began to develop to the point of encapsulating the tenets

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[18] *Samadrok* is a term that means literally "neither earth or pasture" and refers to a people who are not entirely bound to either farming or raising livestock (Kapstein 2006: 10).

of Buddhism in Tibetan forms of thought and expression (Kapstein 2006: 56-72). The deep connection between Tibetan writing and Tibetan Buddhism can still be seen today.

Elements of Buddhism, especially Tibetan Buddhism, are evident in the Bhote communities in this region. There are many Tibetan Buddhist schools of thought, and according to leaders in Walung and Ghunsa, Ningma is the school followed in the villages of Walung and Ghunsa. It focuses on specific teachers and gompas that are part of that sect. Reverence for the Dalai Lama is one of the most visible elements of the WDT Bhote religious practice.

1.5.2 History of Walung

While there is little info on the history of other WDT Bhote areas, some sources describe the history of the village of Walung. There are some legends retelling the founding of Walung and Yangma (Wangyal 2009) in addition to the historical details.

As was mentioned previously, Joseph Hooker provides the oldest written source about Walung. His writings mainly address the history of Walung with only basic sketches of a few surrounding villages. In Volume 1, Joseph Hooker writes of the "Wallanchoon", describing "…two very different tribes, but all are alike called Bhoteeas (from Bhote, the proper name of Tibet), and have for many centuries been located in what is…a neutral ground between dry Tibet Proper, and the wet Himalayan gorges" (Hooker 1855: 215). Whereas the first tribe he mentions is quite clearly the Halung, the identity of the second tribe is not clear.[19] It might be a reference to the Lhomi, Sherpa, or even the Dhokpya, though that is questionable since he says they are "very different". He goes on to write about the Halung's manner of life and culture, and briefly mentions the village of Lungthung.

Exactly how long the Halung have resided in Nepal is not clear, some claim it has been over 1,300 years and others say it has only been a few centuries. The information from Hooker's account is over 150 years old, but even then, he suggests that the people have been there for centuries or longer. Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung in his book *Vignettes of*

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[19] Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf in his book *Himalayan Traders* incorrectly suggests that the tribes may have been Lhomi and "Nawa" (Naaba). It appears he thought that "Nawa" was a common name for the people who spoke the language of Walung, Thudam, Tokpegola, and Ritak (1975:122).

Nepal claims that the Halung settled in the area around the 7th century A.D. when a chief named Mao Rong Hang gained control of the Kirat land of eastern Nepal via an army of Tibetans. Dr. Gurung suggests that the soldiers who stayed behind became the Halung (as cited in Wangyal 2009). Whatever the case, they have been settled in their current territory for at least 200 years.

The local history of the area shows that Walung played a significant role in trade activities between India and Tibet. Residents of Thudam also benefitted significantly from trade. Caravans of yak passed through Thudam to purchase juniper pulp, a major ingredient in incense, to take to Tibet (Haimendorf: 1975: 120).

More recent history has led to significant changes for Walung. Changes in the economy of the salt trade along with the political changes in Tibet in the 1950s and 1960s caused the lucrative trade business to dry up. These changes and the closing of the Tibetan border encouraged many of the richer residents in Walung to move to Kathmandu. Then in the 1960s a landslide occurred, destroying much of Walung. The residents rebuilt (Haimendorf 1975), but these events have had a lasting impact on the social dynamics of the village, specifically as it relates to social status and migration. Those of poorer social status have moved into Walung and those of higher status have moved to Kathmandu (Martin Saxer 2012).

Having introduced the WDT Bhote and briefly described their history, language, and culture, the discussion will turn to the specific goals and research questions that guided the survey.

2 Goals & Research Questions

The purposes of this report are to better understand the sociolinguistic situation of Walungge and related varieties Thudam and Dhokpya and to determine the variety most suitable for the development of materials in the mother tongue. In order to direct the research, goals were created to investigate different aspects such as: ethnolinguistic identity, dialect areas, language attitudes, language vitality, and desires for development. Research questions were then created to further guide the research and analysis.

2.1 Goal 1: Ethnolinguistic Identity

Investigate whether the WDT Bhote see themselves as a cohesive ethnolinguistic group. The research questions related to this goal are outlined below:

- Do the WDT Bhote see themselves as a cohesive language community?

  Tools used: Dialect Mapping (DM), Individual Interviews (II), Knowledgeable Insider Interviews (KII), Observation, and Recorded Story Playing (RSP)

- Do those referred to in this report as WDT Bhote see themselves as a cohesive people group? Tools used: DM, II, KII, and Observation.

2.2 Goal 2: Dialect Areas

Identify the varieties of WDT Bhote and determine the level of intelligibility between the related varieties. The research questions related to this goal are outlined below:

- What are the varieties related to WDT Bhote and where are they located? Tools used: DM, II, KII, and RSP

- What is the lexical similarity between all the varieties of WDT Bhote? Tool used: Wordlist comparisons

- Which variety is reported to be best understood throughout the WDT Bhote area? Tools used: II and RSP

2.3 Goal 3: Language Attitude Assessment

Assess the language attitudes of people from the different WDT Bhote varieties toward each other to better understand their willingness to share oral and written materials. The research questions related to this goal are outlined below:

- What are the patterns of contact between speakers of the different dialects of WDT Bhote? Tools used: II and KII

- What are the attitudes held by each dialect toward one another?
  Tools used: DM, II, KII and RSP

2.4 Goal 4: Language Vitality

Evaluate the vitality of the language in each speech community[20]. The research questions related to this goal are outlined below:

- What language(s) are used in the home and other domains?
  Tool used: II, KII, Observation

- What is the extent of intergenerational transfer?
  Tools used: II, KII, and Observation

- To what extent do WDT Bhote read and write in the mother tongue?
  Tools used: II and KII

- Are there any contextual factors that may influence the vitality of the mother tongue?
  Tools used: II, KII, and Observation

2.5 Goal 5: Desires for Development

Understand each speech community's desire for language-based development in WDT Bhote. The research questions related to this goal are outlined below:

- What desires are the communities expressing for language-based development?
  Tools used: II and KII

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[20] Speech community is defined in this report as a village or group of villages that know the same languages and uses them for the same or similar purposes.

3 Methodology

This chapter provides the specifics on the research methods used, describing site selection, subject selection, and tools implemented. The research was carried out in 2017 on two separate fieldwork trips.

3.1 Site Selection

The first research trip took place in April 2017 and covered the following 4 villages: Lungthung, Walung, Simbuk, and Thudam. The first three villages were partly chosen due to their reportedly sizeable populations. Other factors also had some influence such as historic and cultural importance, and reports of dialect variation.

The second fieldwork focused on the village of Ghunsa. During initial planning, it was excluded because of suspected low vitality from the effect of tourism. Information uncovered later suggested that that was not the case, so additional fieldwork was carried out in October 2017.

3.2 Subject and Language Help Selection

The subjects chosen for interviews, to tell stories for the RSP, to listen to RSP stories, or for wordlist elicitation were required to meet the four subject selection criteria outlined below. Where there were exceptions, they will be mentioned in the appropriate sections below.

1. The subject has grown up in the village under study, lives there now and if they have lived elsewhere, it was not for a significant amount of time.

2. The subject has at least one parent from the target mother tongue.

3. The subject has at least one parent from the village under study and that parent spoke the target mother tongue with them.

4. The subject speaks the mother tongue first and best.

3.2.1 Wordlist and Recorded Story Playing (RSP) Speaker Selection

In addition to the aforementioned criteria, some other considerations were taken into account including the speaker's availability, clarity of speech, and ability in the language. Since suitable subjects who met all the criteria were not always readily available, some criteria or some of the other considerations were applied less strictly.

One of the three RSP storytellers, and one of the six speakers for wordlist elicitation did not strictly meet the four criteria. The RSP storyteller for the Thudam variety had been living away from his village for 10 or more years. Of the speakers for the wordlist, the speaker for the Lungthung wordlist did not grow up in that village. However, she has lived in Lungthung for over half of her life and was also deemed a suitable choice because of her ability in the language.

3.2.2 Interview Subject Selection

The selection of suitable individual interview subjects was based on a convenience sampling method. Using this method, in each village, 12 individual interview subjects were selected from the age of 15 and up. The following chart shows the breakdown of how many of each subject is required according to their age and gender.

Table 1: Sample size for each site stratified by age and gender

Sample size by strata		Age		Total
		Young (15-34)	Old (35 +)	
Gender	Male	3	3	6
	Female	3	3	6
Total		6	6	12

For sampling purposes, those aged 15 to 34 were considered young, and anyone aged 35 and older was considered old. Their level of education was also noted. For each demographic category a quota of at least 3 people was filled in order to have a statistically valid number for each gender and age group. When possible, the researchers tried to spread out the subjects within their respective age groups so that there would be multiple data points within an age group to draw data from. Filling a sample based on each of the demographics mentioned can be a helpful means of identifying patterns of language use and attitudes within different segments of the population.

The four subject selection criteria provided a standard means of selecting the most suitable subjects, but there were situations where exceptions were allowed for the sake of accurate representation of the sociolinguistic situation. For instance, many in Lungthung have ceased to use WDT Bhote for daily communication or did not grow up speaking the language, and thus many of the interviewees reflect that reality. In other places, residents were sending their children elsewhere for schooling, so in those

situations the young subjects interviewed did not always meet criteria 1 and 4. All the case by case exceptions help to better illustrate the sociolinguistic situation of different segments of society.

In Thudam the quota for the different age groups was not reached because of the lack of available young subjects. Only one young male and one young female were interviewed. The lack of young subjects will limit the amount of comparison between generations shown in the data chapters of this report (chapters 4-6). In sections where there is generational comparison Thudam data will be excluded.

3.2.3 RSP Interview Subject Selection

The six RSP interview questions were usually administered to those who had passed all the selection criteria and completed the individual interview questionnaire. Especially in instances where the subjects did not meet criterion 4, in which case the RSP and post RSP questions were not administered. However, a few subjects were accepted who spoke Nepali best or who spoke Nepali and WDT Bhote equally well. If the subject appeared to have difficulty selecting one language as best, or if they said both were best, then they were given the RSP and post RSP questions. If the subject named Nepali as their best language but still professed a confidence in their own language, they were also given the RSP and post RSP questions.

3.3 Tools

The following tools were chosen in accordance with the goals and research questions under investigation.

3.3.1 Wordlist Comparison

Description and Purpose

A comparison of wordlists yields an estimate of the lexical similarity between the varieties represented by each.

Procedures

One suitable member from each research site is selected with the help of the community to be a language helper. One member of the research team elicits each word of the 325-

word wordlist[21] using Nepali[22] and the language helper responds in their own variety. Their response is written down using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and later digitally recorded. A lexical similarity analysis is then carried out on each pair of wordlists. A more thorough description of the procedures can be found in Appendix C.

Advantages

Data collection is relatively efficient. The data can be useful for identifying possible dialect groupings and areas where intelligibility may be low. Also, the data from this tool is quantifiable, making it fairly easy to analyze.

Disadvantages

Lexical similarity based on wordlists can use low lexical similarity results to indicate that certain varieties are not mutually intelligible. However, it cannot accurately confirm levels of mutual intelligibility between varieties.

3.3.2 Individual Interviews

Description and Purpose

The Individual Interview (II) is a means of eliciting data related to the goals of the survey using a prepared list of questions. These questions help guide the interaction while allowing some degree of freedom to explore sociolinguistic topics related to the research questions.

The Knowledgeable Insider Interview (KII) is a similar tool, administered with one person in each site who is knowledgeable about the village and able to answer questions at that level. The questionnaires can be found in Appendices D and E.

Procedures

The interview schedule is written in English with a Nepali translation for each question. The interview is administered one on one with suitable individual subjects, conducted

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[21] Not all words in this list are applicable to all languages. The words are in Nepali and elicited in Nepali, so when a word is not appropriate for their language and culture, it is omitted.

[22] During the elicitation of some of the wordlists, some necessary information was not conveyable using Nepali, and the help of an interpreter was required.

orally in Nepali.[23] Each question is asked unless it is deemed inappropriate or not applicable. In certain circumstances the subject is asked a follow up question. Each answer is then written down in a notebook by the researcher.

Advantages

Interviews obtain a substantial amount of information in a relatively short period of time. Many participants can be interviewed, and the interviews can take place anywhere in the village. If the interview is administered so as to make the interviewee comfortable with the process and questions, the interviewee may give useful supplementary information as well.

The KII can provide useful information on the village level that would be redundant to ask multiple times or that might not be known by the average person in the village. It may also be useful for providing the official answer to some questions, whereas the average village interviewee would give the commonly known or accepted answer.

Disadvantages

Poor administration of the interview can lead to invalid answers. The interviewee may think of it as a test of their knowledge potentially leading to embarrassment, or they may give untrue answers that are meant to give the researcher what they would like to hear. It is also possible the questions themselves are confusing.

3.3.3 Dialect Mapping Participatory Method

Description & Purpose

The Dialect Mapping Participatory Method (DM) is used to understand how different communities understand their language boundaries. With twine, markers, and papers, communities can list out villages, where they are located and the relationships between them, the result being a visual representation of their language and dialect area. It also helps the community to have a visual that gives them an understanding of how their communities use their language.

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[23] Under some circumstances a translator was needed to help explain some of the questions in the local language.

Because of seasonal migration patterns associated with animal husbandry, Thudam village was sparsely populated during the time of the researchers' stay so the DM tool was not conducted there.

Procedures

A group is required for this tool to be effective, so everyone of that village is invited to participate. When the community gathers, they are given a brief description of the tool before starting. The tool is facilitated by a member of the research team guided by specific questions with the goal of creating a visual representation of the perceived linguistic landscape of their language area. For a detailed explanation of the procedure see Appendix F.

Advantages

DM provides dialect area information from the perspective of the language speakers. This information includes perceptions on intelligibility, attitudes towards other varieties, and the participants choice of language in interactions with related varieties. Because this tool creates a visual with strings, paper, and other natural materials, it is easily manipulated and changed as needed by any of the participants. Since the results form a visual, it is also easy to collect the data in the form of a picture.

Disadvantages

The results of DM do not necessarily represent the reality of the linguistic situation since it relies on community perceptions. Those perceptions may be influenced more by attitudes held by participants toward speakers of certain varieties, than by the actual relatedness of the languages. Some of the concepts may be easily misunderstood so the results may not be what was asked for, and mistakes may not be easy to correct since the information is from within the community.

3.3.4 Recorded Story Playing

Description & Purpose

RSP utilizes recorded stories and post story questions to compare the different varieties in question. This tool helps to uncover speakers' underlying attitudes towards other varieties, perceptions of similarity between varieties, and possible difficulties in intelligibility between varieties.

Procedures

For each variety under investigation, the researchers acquired a story of no more than 2 minutes. Each story was then played for each suitable subject after they completed an individual interview. After each story, questions were asked about the storyteller's language and place of origin, and how the listener felt about the story.

Advantages

In using actual samples of speech, RSP allows for a more direct assessment of reported understanding. This instrument can help uncover a speaker's attitudes towards certain varieties and gain a rough measure of intelligibility between varieties. It can also aid in the dialect and language grouping process.

Disadvantages

RSP cannot measure actual intelligibility, only reported intelligibility. It is not possible to determine the reasons for any difficulties in intelligibility that arise from listening to the story.

3.3.5 Observation

Description & Purpose

Observation works to corroborate the data collected from the other instruments. It also aids in documenting cultural and linguistic practices, and important infrastructure present in the village.

Procedures

In every site, the team of researchers document their findings guided by an observation schedule. The observations cover what was seen or talked about relating to language use trends, contact with different groups outside the village, general cultural observations, and major facilities in the area.

Advantages

Observation can be used to substantiate or question the data gathered from the other instruments as part of the triangulation process. Observations can also identify cultural or linguistic trends that subjects are not aware of.

Disadvantages

Whatever is being observed may not be the same as it would be if the observer were not there, often called the observer's paradox. Observations are also subject to an observer's interpretation, so the tool is limited in terms of the observer's understanding of the culture and language. There may also be time constraints associated with the fieldwork that could inherently limit observations.

Having explained the tools and methods used to carry out the research, the data and results will now be addressed according to the goals and research questions presented in Chapter 2.

4   Ethnolinguistic Identity

Ethnolinguistic identity is an important factor in determining whether to connect different language varieties under a single linguistic grouping or separate them into multiple groups. This section will discuss the ethnolinguistic identities of the WDT Bhote communities addressed in this research, with a focus on the cohesiveness of their language and identity. Data related to the perceived cultural and linguistic differences have been drawn from each of the tools and presented with an analysis.

The WDT Bhote have a complex identity composed of layers of historic, social, ethnic and linguistic fabric that are mostly shared among the communities, forming a strong base layer to show a common identity. However, some communities' have separate, local ethnic identities that are distinct enough to distinguish them from other WDT Bhote communities.

The findings from Dialect Mapping (DM) and Individual Interview (II) data illustrate a weak ethnolinguistic identity under a unified WDT Bhote identity except for their commonly held identity as 'Sherpa'. However, DM data shows that WDT Bhote have a relatively strong association with the people of Walung and to their variety as well, according to Recorded Story Playing (RSP) results. Based on Observation and data from the Knowledgeable Insider Interviews (KII) and II, there are many ethnic and cultural similarities between WDT Bhote and no perceived distinctions that strongly divide them.

4.1   Dialect Mapping

DM revealed the community-level understanding of ethnolinguistic identity. It also illustrated both the overlap in perceptions about the WDT Bhote speaking area and which area seems to speak most acceptably. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4, of the DM tool[24] will be the focus of this section. The first two questions ask for the names of the language and community, and questions 3 and 4 ask for the names of villages that speak alike and languages similar to their own.

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[24] See Appendix F for a full description of DM procedures and questions.

Figure 1 details the village sites where the DM tool was facilitated and the answers to question 1, "What are the names for your language and people group" and question 4, "What are languages that are just a little different from yours?"

Figure 1: Ethnic and language names for each DM site and any similar languages

Village name	Ethnic name	Language name	Similar languages
Lungthung	Walung *jaat*[25]	Walung language	Sherpa
Walung	Sherpa and Bhote	Halung language	Sherpa, "Lhasa language" (Tibetan)
Simbuk	*Kiduk*	Thokpya[26]	Khamge, Tibetan, Sherpa
Ghunsa	Faktaanglung cha Ghunsa	Khambaachhenda	N/A

Ethnic and language terms varied according to the different communities. Lungthung identifies closely with the Halung ethnically and linguistically. However, the Halung named the broader ethnic identities Sherpa and Bhote rather than their own nationally recognized ethnicity. This indicates a weak connection to their official ethnic name. However, the Halung did recognize they are unique linguistically and so did Simbuk and Ghunsa. Simbuk chose *kiduk*[27] for their ethnic term which is a general term for a community welfare association. "Thokpya"[28] is a local term and a variant of their official ethnic identity. Ghunsa's answer referred to their rural municipality, Faktanglung, and their village to identify their ethnicity. Their language name appears

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[25]*Jaat* (जात) is a term denoting genus or caste (Uprety et al 2013).

[26] "Thokpya" is used here since it represents the closest Romanized transcription, but elsewhere in this report the spelling is "Dhokpya." Phonetically these are different, but phonologically they are the same. Either is acceptable, but for consistency Dhokpya is used throughout the report.

[27] Laya Prasad Uprety in his anthropological paper researching cultural ecology in highland communities gives some examples of the work of a *kiduk* in reference to the community it serves. There can be more than one in a community depending on its purpose and who it serves (Uprety, 2006).

[28] According to the Indigenous Media Foundation Dhokpya is derived from a word meaning a shelter for a cow herd (as cited by the United Nations Human Rights division n.d.).

to be derived from the name of their historic village, Khambachen. The variation in names demonstrates the lack of a broader connection between the various villages and only a weak affiliation with officially recognized ethnic and language names.

Many WDT Bhote often use 'Sherpa' to identify themselves and their language, as is the case with the Halung. However, they see themselves as linguistically and ethnically distinct from Sherpa. Only Walung participants mentioned "Sherpa" for their ethnicity and it was mentioned alongside of "Bhote". In the DM session, it was mentioned that they use "Bhote" among themselves and "Sherpa" on official documents (see section 1.4 for further explanation).

The aggregate responses of four DM sessions reveal that the languages of Sherpa, Tibetan, and Khamge[29] are perceived as similar to the WDT Bhote language. Even so, the perceived relationship between these languages and WDT Bhote varies. Participants in the Lungthung sessions only mentioned the Sherpa language as similar, and in the Ghunsa session no other language was mentioned as similar. In every site where Sherpa or Khamge were named, participants indicated that both parties needed to switch to another language (e.g. Nepali or Tibetan) in order to communicate. Their own languages were not sufficiently similar to communicate using only them. Participants in different sites reported differing levels of comprehension of Tibetan. When asked what WDT Bhote speakers use when meeting a Tibetan speaker, the participants in Simbuk said WDT Bhote and Tibetan speakers each use their own language to communicate. On the other hand, Walung participants said that they need to change to the Tibetan speaker's way of speaking. The results indicate Tibetan is more closely related to WDT Bhote than Sherpa or Khamge, but all are distinct languages.

Other questions asked in the DM tool include "Where is your language spoken?", "Could you place the different locations to show which ones are next to each other?", "do any groups of villages speak in the same way?" Based on these questions, Map 5 illustrates the four DM sites and the villages that are perceived to speak most like each site. The lines representing Walungge and Dhokpya extend into Tibet without a clear endpoint since the specific locations of the villages are unknown. The map also contains villages

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[29] May be a reference to Khams Tibetan [khg] (Lewis, Simons and Fennig eds. 2017).

that were not mentioned[30] specifically in the sessions but are included because of their implicit association with the related DM research sites. These locations appear in faded grey.

Map 5: Closest perceived ethnolinguistic ties by DM site
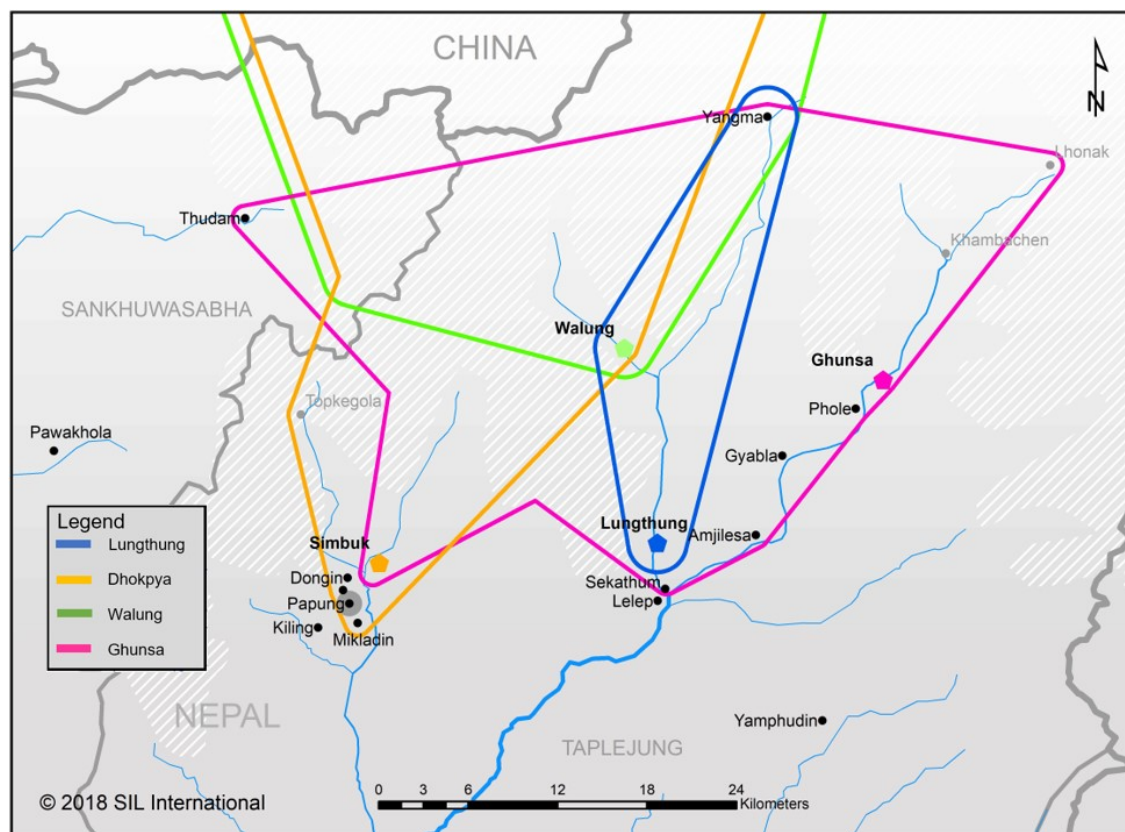
The results demonstrate that only the village of Walung is perceived as sharing very close ties to every DM site. In response to the question, "Are there any villages that speak exactly like you do?", each village community that participated in a DM session placed Walung in the main circle alongside their own village. It is also notable that the participants in Ghunsa included every research site. In contrast, the participants in Walung only included their village, the village of Yangma, and Tibet. The results from the different sites indicate very different perceptions on the boundaries of their varieties. Though Map 5 represents people's perceptions of which areas speak most like them, when questioned further during DM about language use in the different areas, there appeared to be no communication difficulties between different WDT Bhote communities. All DM

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[30] Papung, though confirmed to be a WDT Bhote speaking village in II data, appears in a grey circle as a major reference point only, and it is not a part of the DM results.

groups indicated that they each use their own variety with people from other WDT Bhote communities. The WDT Bhote recognize they all speak the same language, but they demonstrate a weak ethnic and linguistic affiliation with each other.

4.2   Individual Interviews

The Individual Interview (II) schedule includes questions focused on ethnicity and perceived cultural similarity between the subjects' village and three of the research sites. Data gathered from II subjects has revealed the WDT Bhote utilize a variety of different but related terms[31] to identify themselves and their language. As seen in the DM data, communities have chosen more locally distinct terms. In contrast, data from the II tool demonstrates that individuals favor terms that highlight their association with Tibetan background peoples (e.g. Bhote, Sherpa) more often than terms that directly connect them with the WDT Bhote community (e.g. Dhokpya, Halung).

4.2.1   Ethnicity

In section 1.4.1, the 2011 census data was shown to contain population numbers for the WDT Bhote within two separate, officially recognized ethnicities. These official ethnic designations, "Walung" and "Topkegola", were used to record the ethnicity of around 2,000 people (Central Bureau of Statistics 2014). However, when asked "What is your ethnicity", relatively few II respondents used these designations. This highlights a key point in the discussion on ethnic identity, namely, most WDT Bhote individuals do not have a strong affiliation to a local ethnic identity.

The data gathered from the question "What is your ethnicity?" is presented in Figure 2[32]. It displays the wide range of ethnic designations divided according to age. Like DM, the data from II revealed a wide range of names. The category *"Thar*, caste, other"[33] refers to responses where a caste, clan or similar term was indicated. "Sherpa + " is a category that includes subjects who answered "Sherpa" and subjects who chose "Sherpa" and added their *thar*[34] or some other qualifier as well (e.g. "Sherpa, Thoma").

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[31] A full list of ethnic terms used in this report can be found in the Appendix B.

[32] The number of subjects is represented by 'n = ' and the maximum number is 63.

[33] "Thar, Caste, and other" refers to designations unfamiliar to the researcher or groupings that clearly refer to an entity larger than family but smaller than community.

[34] *Thar* (थर) refers to a caste, sub-caste, clan, tribe, or class (Uprety et al 2013).

The category "location" refers to names based on locations such as Walung and Dhokpya. "Bhote & Sherpa" includes responses where both terms were used without a strong preference for one over the other.

Figure 2: Ethnic name according to age
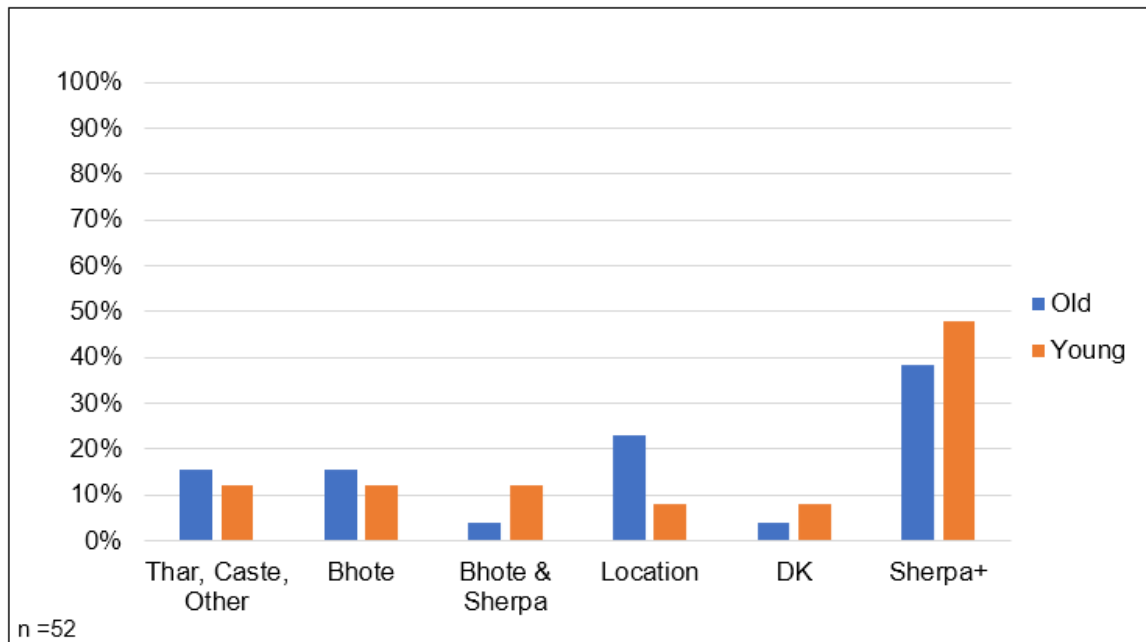
There are a few noticeable trends when looking at generational differences. In the younger generation, there is a 15% difference in using names derived from location compared to the older generation. Also, although Sherpa+ is the single most chosen category by both young and old, the young favor it over the old by 10 percentage points. These differences indicate a possible generational shift towards the more broadly prestigious term, 'Sherpa'. Other than a growing affinity towards the term 'Sherpa' over names derived from location, caste, or *thar*, it is difficult to see any other patterns until the data is grouped by village.

When the data is sorted by village, patterns emerge that suggest a connection between the language WDT Bhote use, their village location, and their ethnic identity. Figure 3 illustrates the data for the question "What is your ethnicity?" grouped by which village the subjects are from.

Figure 3: Ethnic name according to village
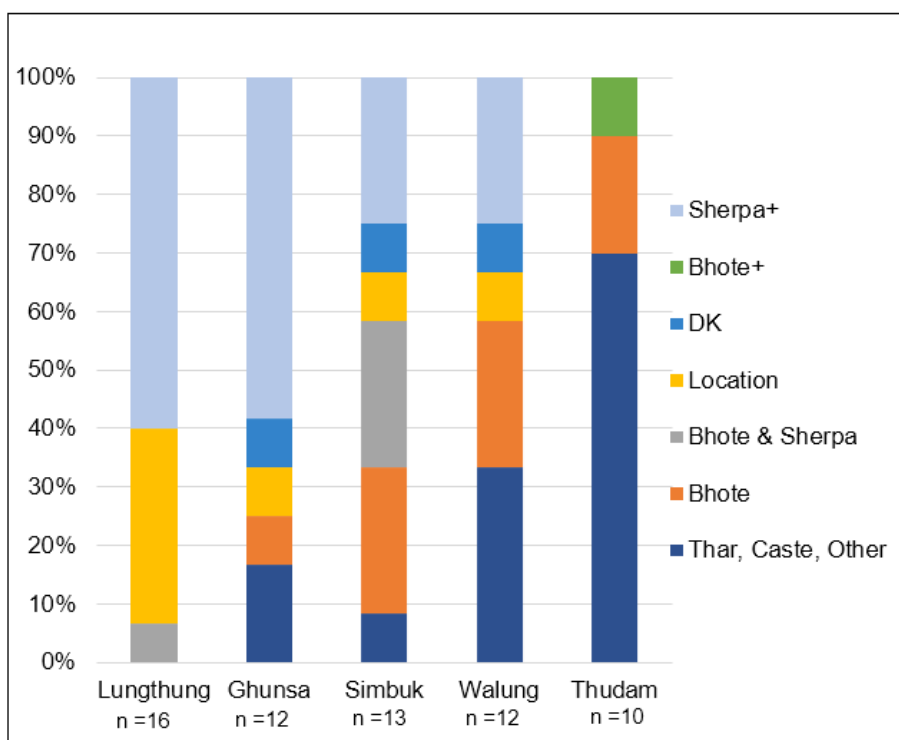
'Sherpa' was the most commonly used term, but it varied significantly by village. Lungthung Bhote responded almost exclusively with 'Sherpa' or "location", in this case, "Walung". Answers from Thudam Bhote are notable because no one identified as 'Sherpa'. Though there are likely other contributing factors distinguishing these two villages, language use is one of the most noticeable factors. Lungthung Bhote are shifting from WDT Bhote to Nepali (see section 6 for more details on vitality) and Thudam Bhote are predominantly monolingual in WDT Bhote. The strong connection with Tibet may also be a factor for Thudam Bhote; they have strong patterns of intermarriage with Tibetan women (see section 4.2.2). Overall, this indicates a possible correlation between contact with Nepali culture and language and the desire to affiliate with the 'Sherpa' ethnicity.

4.2.2 Perceptions of Cultural Similarity

Some questions in the Individual Interview schedule were included to explore cultural perceptions between WDT Bhote in different villages. This is used as a means of better understanding whether the WDT Bhote share a unified ethnic identity. Subjects were asked how different they felt the culture of other WDT Bhote villages is from their own. Intermarriage between villages and other groups was also a topic of investigation. If

WDT Bhote lack negative attitudes to intermarriage with WDT Bhote from other villages then it could indicate the perceived distinctions between different WDT Bhote is not great enough to separate them as a group. Before discussing those topics, it is helpful to see the levels of contact between villages, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Contact[35] between WDT Bhote by village
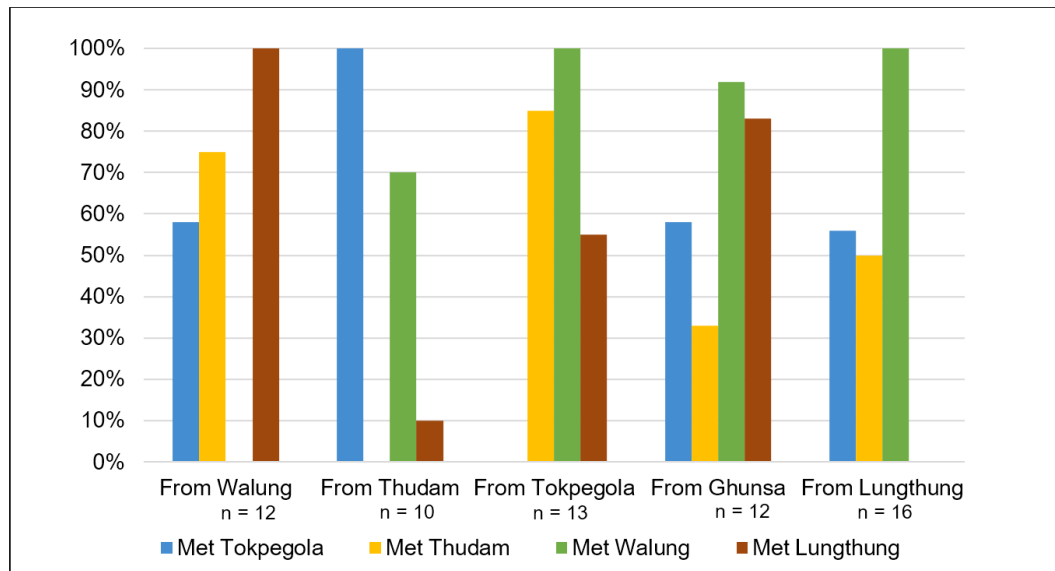
Figure 4[36] shows the levels of contact between WDT Bhote of Tokpegola[37] (Simbuk), Thudam, Walung, and Lungthung.

Understanding the levels of contact between the WDT Bhote research sites helps to show the relationships between villages and indicates the reliability of information given about each village. Data from Lungthung, Walung, and Simbuk (Tokpegola area) show that 50% or more of respondents in those villages have met residents of each research site. Ghunsa and Thudam are most geographically distanced from each other, but even so, over 30% of respondents from Ghunsa have met Thudam Bhote.

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[35] The amount of contact between WDT Bhote and other ethnic groups or locations was not investigated.

[36] "Met Ghunsa" is not used in this figure since the interview schedule was developed before Ghunsa was one of the planned research sites.

[37] "Tokpegola" was the term used during interviews and refers to a broader area than Simbuk. See section 1.3 and Appendix B for more information

Another question in the II was used to understand perceived cultural distance based on perceptions of similarity between one's own village customs and those of the other research sites. Respondents were asked how different they felt each research site's customs were from their own. Figure 5 illustrates the attitudes shown by WDT Bhote towards the WDT Bhote research sites.

Figure 5: WDT Bhote perceptions of other villages' customs
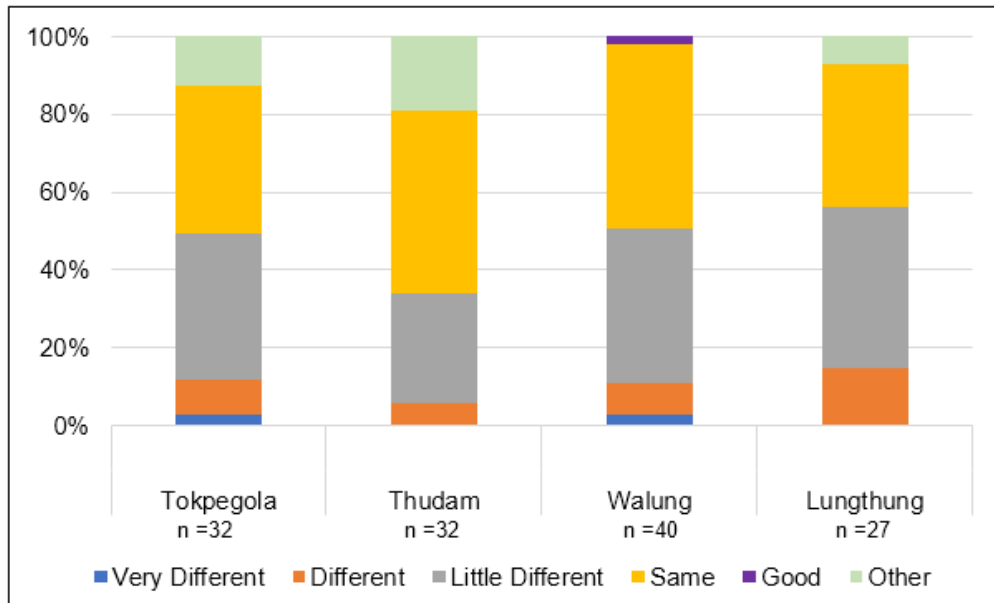
Overall, results showed little perceived cultural distance between each village. Most respondents saw the culture of other areas as the "same" or "a little different" from their own.

In terms of individual interview responses to intermarriage, most WDT Bhote expressed positive or neutral attitudes towards the idea of their child marrying someone from the other WDT Bhote areas. In fact, it was only a small portion from the village of Walung that held any negative attitudes. A few Halung expressed negative feelings towards the idea of their child marrying someone from Lungthung, Thudam, and Tokpegola. Of those who expressed negative feelings, none of them were young. In general, the young showed the most indifference. In a follow up question, a few respondents from Ghunsa and Simbuk specifically mentioned that the WDT Bhote from Walung, the Tokpegola area, Thudam, and Lungthung are all one people or of similar caste. Others indicated that one or more of the villages spoke a similar language to their own or practiced a similar religion. One respondent from Walung expressed that if their child married someone from Thudam or Tokpegola, the person should be of a similar caste as their

own (but not a lower caste). This suggests that caste distinctions are important to some Halung and that some WDT Bhote are not always considered to be as high a caste as those in Walung. Overall, the attitudes expressed in the II data indicate mildly positive or neutral feelings towards each research site, and they support a single language identity for all WDT Bhote. However, there are indications that Halung understand themselves to be slightly separate from other WDT Bhote.

The Knowledgeable Insider Interview (KII) also had questions about intermarriage but rather than looking at attitudes, the focus was on the amount of intermarriage in each village. Only residents of Lungthung and Walung appear to intermarry with people outside their ethnicity, and only in Lungthung does it happen to a significant degree. Lungthung is a mixed community with only about half of the homes being WDT Bhote. Except for Thudam, all other communities surveyed are exclusively or almost exclusively WDT Bhote. The Thudam KII respondent spoke of what appears to be Tibetan *thars*[38] though it is not clear if the *thar*s mentioned indicate different castes within their community or if they are denoting different Tibetan ethnicities.

The biographical data gathered from II corroborates other data presented from II and the KII. Though marriage within their community is most prominent, WDT Bhote also take spouses from other places, most notably Tibet. This trend was shown in responses to the II questions, "Where is your spouse from?" and "Where is your mother from?" but is most visible with the question on the spouse's origin.[39] Half of respondents from Thudam and one respondent from Walung said their spouse is from Tibet. Most respondents with Tibetan spouses indicated that their spouse's language is the same or similar to WDT Bhote. However, it is not clear if they view the ethnicity as the same. Out of all the WDT Bhote sites, Lungthung Bhote have the most ethnically mixed marriages, but the majority of WDT Bhote marry from villages and areas that have a majority WDT Bhote population. The data given here demonstrates an overall trend of marrying within their own people group. This indicates that the WDT Bhote view themselves as a distinct ethnicity from the groups around them and that any perceived

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[38] The three terms used: Phempa, Jawa, and Thomat do not appear elsewhere in the data and are not familiar to the research team.

[39] The question, "Where is your father from?" also indicated migration from Tibet, but marriage is likely not the main reason for this movement.

distinctions between the different WDT Bhote are not substantial enough to divide them.

4.3   Recorded Story Playing

The Recorded Story Playing (RSP) tool and the post story questions corroborate much of the data discussed so far both in terms of linguistic identity and WDT Bhote people's attitudes towards other varieties.

Respondents listened to stories from three different WDT Bhote varieties. After each story, subjects were asked "What language did the storyteller use?". Respondents answered by identifying their own language, an area (e.g. near Ghunsa), a variety name (e.g. Dhokpya, Walung's language, etc.), or by using a broader reference to indicate that it is WDT Bhote (i.e. Bhote, Sherpa, Tibetan).

Except for Thudam, 43%-75% of respondents from each village closely identified with the Walungge variety (i.e. "ours", "just like ours", or they named their own variety). Though 43% of respondents closely identified with the Walungge variety, 50% indicated that it was WDT Bhote but did not identify which variety. Respondents in Thudam identified the language more broadly as "Bhote" or as the language from Walung or Tibet[40] rather than "ours" or "Thudam".

In response to the story that represents Dhokpya, the majority of WDT Bhote in Simbuk, Thudam, and Walung indicated the storyteller was using Dhokpya. About Half of respondents in Thudam and Walung thought the language was Dhokpya, but all of respondents in Simbuk identified it as such. Some (28%) in Walung also stated that it is WDT Bhote but "a little different", but none of the Halung expressed that it is their own variety. Most Lungthung and Ghunsa respondents (64% and 70% respectively) indicated that the language is WDT Bhote but did not mention which variety.

The Thudam variety was perceived to be most similar to the Dhokpya variety by the many WDT Bhote (43%). Most Simbuk respondents (86%) almost exclusively identified the storyteller' language as Dhokpya. Around half of respondents in Thudam and Walung also indicated it was Dhokpya. Some Thudam respondents (30%) however, did indicate "Thudam". Ghunsa respondents (79%) indicated the language is WDT Bhote

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[40] Some answered more generally with "China".

but did not mention a variety. Lungthung Bhote were somewhat divided in their responses between a general term for WDT Bhote (40% of respondents) and their own variety (30%).

The RSP results demonstrate distinctions between the Dhokpya and Walungge varieties and considerable perceived similarity between Dhokpya and Thudam. Furthermore, all varieties are viewed positively by WDT Bhote. Out of the three varieties tested, the Walungge variety is perceived by WDT Bhote from each research site as the most similar to their own.

4.4 Language Attitudes

Language attitudes are important for helping to determine prestigious and less prestigious varieties. These attitudes were assessed in terms of the three known varieties: Dhokpya, Walungge, and Thudam. The data from II and RSP most effectively illustrate the language attitudes displayed within the WDT Bhote community towards each variety.

Results from II demonstrated positive views with 73% - 83% of all respondents expressing that each WDT Bhote variety was "good" or "very good". One question on the II asked, "How do you like the speech from…" for each language variety. WDT Bhote expressed the fewest positive responses towards the Thudam and Dhokpya varieties, though the difference is marginal. Taken as a whole the data indicates the WDT Bhote have positive views of the Dhokpya, Walungge, and Thudam varieties. This demonstrates a general acceptance of each variety as being within their own language.

Data from the RSP has also demonstrated positive attitudes towards each variety. For all three stories, when asked, "How did you like their speech?", almost all respondents answered with "good". Only one person responded negatively to any of the stories and it was due to the content of the story in the Thudam variety. In comments about the stories, one Lungthung respondent said, "These stories are three versions of our language". A respondent in Walung about the Dhokpya story said, "It's like ours and we understand it all". Language attitudes towards each variety are positive and corroborate the evidence for a single ethnolinguistic identity for WDT Bhote.

4.5   Observation

Observation regarding linguistic and ethnic identity reveals many similarities between villages. The WDT Bhote culture shares much with a broad Tibetan culture. WDT Bhote are fond of drinking *tongba* and Tibetan tea, observing Lhosar and other culturally Tibetan activities. The WDT Bhote build two-storied houses that resemble each other in many design elements, such as building material, location of the kitchen, and the use of porches as well as other features. Regarding differences in linguistic identity, the research team recorded that "they [Thudam Bhote] seem to distinguish their language from Walung and TPK [Tokpegola]." However, their porter's comment about a Thudam resident seems to suggest the opposite when he says, "His [the guide's] and my language are *milcha* [similar] with hers (an elderly woman in the house where we stayed)."

During a Lhosar event organized by the Tokpegola community in Kathmandu, a question was asked to one of the leaders about including Halung in the event, but apparently, they do not come to these events. Many Dhokpya come to Kathmandu for this event (Dandu Dhokpya p.c. 2017). The Halung's absence at a major event indicates that the Halung see some distinction between themselves and the Dhokpya. It is not clear whether there were any Thudam Bhote in attendance either.

4.6   Conclusions

Evidence shows the WDT Bhote communities share a common ethnolinguistic identity despite differing terms for ethnicity and language. This identity is most centrally unified in Walung, and at its margins are the Thudam speaking Bhote. The DM tool demonstrated distinct ethnolinguistic identities on a community level within separate WDT Bhote speaking areas, but it also illustrated where they come together, in Walung. Interviews, on the other hand, highlighted the lack of consensus on a preferred name for their ethnic identity. Many preferred to identify as 'Sherpa', but this appears to be a more prominent feature of communities more connected with Nepali culture and language. Those communities under more influence from Tibet, however, tend to identify more as Bhote and in some instances only refer to a specific Tibetan clan or caste. There is not one explicit, exclusive ethnic identity for the whole WDT Bhote community.

Even though they lack a unifying ethnic name, the WDT Bhote share a Tibetan culture and have high levels of contact with one another, especially with residents of Walung, as evidenced by observations and interviews. The presence of positive attitudes towards intermarriage with WDT Bhote of other research sites, similarity between their cultures, and generally favorable cultural perceptions of each research site indicate broad support of a common ethnolinguistic identity.

RSP results demonstrated that on a broad level the WDT Bhote share a cohesive linguistic identity. Attitudes towards each variety were positive, but there were indications when subjects were asked about the storyteller's language, that they see distinctions in their varieties. The distinctions appear most clearly when comparing Thudam and Walung, and Walung and Simbuk.

Considering the evidence presented here, it is appropriate to view the WDT Bhote as one ethnolinguistic group, even though the ties between them are not strong and are often implicit due to the lack of a unifying term used exclusively for their ethnolinguistic group.

5 Language & Dialect groupings

The varieties that comprise WDT Bhote are mainly spread out over 3 valleys, and though some research has been conducted in two of the three varieties, each community's perception of their language and its varieties has not been previously studied. WDT Bhote villages have had connections through shared histories, intermarriage or trade, but they tend to think of each variety as distinct in identity.

The ethnolinguistic data covered in the previous chapter demonstrated no unifying terms among the WDT Bhote, but the data did demonstrate enough evidence to consider the WDT Bhote as one ethnolinguistic group. This chapter will present the results from the different tools, showing the varieties under study should be considered one language with three possible dialects. The following sections will further explore the data, the analysis and the conclusions.

5.1 Lexical Similarity

Lexical similarity is measured by comparing words from different language varieties. In this survey a wordlist comprised of 325 different words was elicited from a WDT Bhote speaker in each village. One Tibetan wordlist with 197 words was also compared with the WDT Bhote wordlists. The words from each wordlist were analyzed using the comparative method described in Frank Blair's *Survey on a Shoestring* (1990: 31-33). The words in each wordlist were compared and categorized according to the differences between each segment (phone) of each word. Each segment was assigned one of three categories according to phonetic similarity. If fewer than half of the segments were similar, then the words were not considered similar (cognate). A full explanation of procedures and exceptions is given in Appendix C. Lexical similarity percentages of 60% and below indicate that two varieties should be considered separate languages. For any varieties with lexical similarity percentages above 60%, further intelligibility testing is needed to confirm whether to group the varieties under a single language.

The lexical similarity percentages for the five WDT Bhote wordlists and Tibetan are represented in Figure 6. The results reveal a range of lexical similarity between 53% at the lowest end and 85% at the highest.

Figure 6: Lexical similarity percentages

Walung					
82	Ghunsa				
83	85	Lungthung			
76	80	82	Thudam		
75	79	80	82	Simbuk	
59	63	53	56	55	Tibetan

The lexical similarity results indicate one language with clear, close ties between the varieties spoken in the villages of Walung, Ghunsa, Lungthung, Thudam and Simbuk. With a range of 75%-85% between the different varieties, no assertions can be made based on lexical similarity alone regarding dialect groupings within WDT Bhote. However, since all the WDT Bhote varieties are well above the 60% lexical similarity threshold, they should not be considered distinct languages.

The WDT Bhote varieties demonstrate a similarity to Tibetan, especially the varieties in Ghunsa and Walung that have lexical similarity percentages near the 60% threshold. However, there is a difference of at least 16% between the lexical similarity percentages of any of the WDT Bhote varieties and Tibetan. Based on these results, Tibetan should be considered a separate language from WDT Bhote. However, further intelligibility testing would be beneficial in better understanding intelligibility between Tibetan and the WDT Bhote varieties.

5.2   Perceived Intelligibility

Perceived intelligibility is investigated to help show which varieties the speaker considers to be within his or her language community. When speakers from two different communities think the other variety is understandable, then the correlation can be a useful means of determining dialect groupings. This section will examine the data related to perceived intelligibility and the implications.

Before looking at the data, there are a few preliminary considerations on dialect groupings that would be helpful to review. On the webpage created by the diaspora community residing in New York, five main villages are referenced when describing the

area of language use. They are Walung, Yangma, Ghunsa, Lungthung, and Lelep (Walung Community of North America 2012). Cathy Bartram in her thesis also mentions these villages with the exclusion of Lelep. In addition, she says people of the Mewa river valley (includes Simbuk, Tokpegola, and Papung), Thudam, and a small area just across the border in Tibet speak a similar language (2011: 26-28). It was not the goal of the authors of those sources to give detailed accounts of dialect groupings, but it provides a rough sketch of the dialect situation to start from.

In the research presented in the following sections, three important points are illustrated. First, there are at least 2 distinct WDT Bhote dialects. Second, the WDT Bhote from each research site can reportedly understand WDT Bhote from every other research site. Finally, the most prestigious variety is Walungge, but it may not be the most widely accepted or understood.

5.2.1 Dialect Mapping

Map 5 of section 4.1 presents a useful starting point for understanding the language and dialect groupings of WDT Bhote. By incorporating additional Dialect Mapping (DM) data, a clearer and more reliable picture of the dialect and language areas can be seen. In this section, the data on what constitutes the core WDT Bhote speaking area will be presented first, followed by data on the dialect boundaries.

Each village community differed in its understanding of which villages speak which WDT Bhote variety and how understandable each of those varieties are. There were, however, some villages that were generally accepted as WDT Bhote villages (named in three out of four DM sessions). These villages and areas are recorded in Figure 7 by the number of times mentioned (those mentioned in all four DM sessions are in bold) and how understandable the variety spoken in those villages is perceived to be (completely, most, half).

Figure 7: WDT Bhote areas and their reported intelligibility

Village/Area Mentioned	Understand Completely [41]	Understand Most	Understand Half
Walung	4		
Tokpegola[42]	3	1	
Yangma	3		1
Thudam	2	2	
Lungthung	2	1	
Tibet	2	1	
Ghunsa	2	1	1
Yamphuden		2	1

According to results from all the DM sessions, the Walung variety is overall the most understandable variety. Based on all four DM sessions, there are eight villages that form the core WDT Bhote area. Out of all the villages mentioned, Walung was the only one indicated in every DM session to be the same variety as the participants. By placing Walung with their own village, the participants of each DM session are showing that the Walung variety is regarded as a "completely" understandable variety.

Walung was marked as most understandable but other data contradicts that assertion. During the Simbuk DM session,[43] Simbuk was originally placed in a separate circle from Walung but then later they were put together. In viewing the other DM data, the Simbuk session was the only DM session to separate Walung and Yangma. Walung and Yangma are said to speak the same variety according to three DM sessions including the one in Walung. Therefore, either Yangma or Walung was put in a different circle than Simbuk's for reasons other than understanding. During fieldwork, some notes were made on conversations between the research team and the guide (from the Tokpegola

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[41] Levels of understanding were represented by four different emoticons and participants placed them accordingly. See appendix F for more DM information.

[42] "Tokpegola" was mentioned in one site. Most mentioned Simbuk but since "Tokpegola" can be a broader term, it was kept and any answers that mentioned "Simbuk" are subsumed under this term.

[43] Results from the Simbuk DM session presented some inconsistencies. The overall results are in line with the rest of the data, but uncorroborated details are excluded. See Appendix F for more information on the inconsistencies.

area). The research team noted that he thought that Walung "is supposed to be 'standard' but they mix some with [Lhasa] Tibetan" and, as recorded in a related note, that "Simbuk is actually the most pure even though Olangchunggola [Walung] is prestigious." Based on this information and other data that will be presented in the remaining sections of this chapter, the Walung variety will be considered the most prestigious, but not most understandable. More evidence for this conclusion is detailed in the remaining sections of chapter 5.

Perceived understanding among all varieties was consistently marked quite highly. However, only in the Ghunsa and Lungthung sessions was there agreement that speakers of those varieties completely understand each other. The rest of the sites, when compared to each other, revealed varying levels of understanding. When looking at the eight core villages, five were marked as "mostly" or "completely" understandable in every session. The remaining three villages were marked as "half" understandable. People in Ghunsa reported that they comprehend "half" of speech from Yamphuden, and according to notes taken during the Ghunsa DM session, the WDT Bhote in Yamphuden are seen as speaking an impure WDT Bhote. Additionally, language vitality in Yamphuden is reportedly low. In the Simbuk session, Yangma and Ghunsa were marked as "half" understandable, but it is not due to language change or language shift like Yamphuden. The stated low level of understanding with Yangma and Ghunsa may be related more to differences in language attitudes and perceptions of prestige rather than understanding. In a similar situation, Thudam and Simbuk are marked as speaking the same variety in three of the four DM sessions. In the Simbuk session however, Thudam is placed in a separate variety. These results illustrate an inconsistent understanding of each variety's constituent villages, though that is likely due to different levels of contact between people of each variety.

Figure 8 shows the villages within each DM site variety. The Lungthung, Ghunsa, and Walung communities all claimed Yangma and Walung in their own variety, indicating a possible dialect boundary for Walungge.

Figure 8: Villages included in each DM site's own variety

DM Sites:	Lungthung	Walung	Simbuk	Ghunsa
	Walung	Walung	Walung	Walung
	Yangma	Yangma	-----	Yangma
	Lungthung			Lungthung
			Simbuk	Simbuk
Villages Referenced	-----	Tibet	Rhitu, Tibet	Sekethum
	-----	-----	Gufa	Ghunsa
	-----	-----	Tartong	Gyabala
	-----	-----	Lamsang	Phole
	-----	-----	Dungin	Amjilesa
	-----	-----	Mikladin	Lungthung
	-----	-----	-----	Thudam

Results from each session showed sharp differences in how each community grouped different varieties with the only consistency being the inclusion of Walung. Ghunsa participants included every research site in their own variety's circle, thus claiming all varieties are equally similar with their own variety. In every other DM site, the research sites were put in different varieties from the village where the DM was taking place. Other results were mixed, but in 3 out of 4 sessions, Tokpegola was placed with Thudam and Yangma was placed with Walung. In the Simbuk session, Lungthung was left out entirely even though a few in Simbuk said that it is where their language is spoken best. Even with these different perceptions of the varieties, 3 out of 4 research sites were understood to be part of the same language.

The data outlined in this section did not reveal clear dialect boundaries, but it does show some affiliation between certain villages. Participants in every DM site perceive Walung as part of their own variety. Also, Yangma and Walung appear to have a close connection as does Thudam and Tokpegola. These results demonstrate distinctions between WDT Bhote varieties but also that the WDT Bhote share a common prestigious variety. Additionally, the inclusion of the villages of Yangma and Walung in the Lungthung, Walung and Ghunsa DM sessions could be indicating a single dialect for those villages.

5.2.2 Individual Interviews

The data from the Individual Interviews (II) and Knowledgeable Insider Interviews (KII) revealed information on grouping WDT Bhote varieties, perceived distinctions between varieties, and possible difficulties in understanding between certain varieties. Walungge

appears to be the most prestigious variety according to data from DM, but data from II indicates it may not be the most widely understood variety. Results from the II and KII also highlight some potential differences in intelligibility between speakers of Thudam and Walungge.

II subjects who have met speakers from areas associated with a different variety were asked how much they understood the speech of the people they met. The results from subjects of four different areas who have met a Halung are represented in Figure 9. The amount the subjects reported understanding the Halung's speech ranges from little to all.

Figure 9: Perceived understanding of Halung's speech
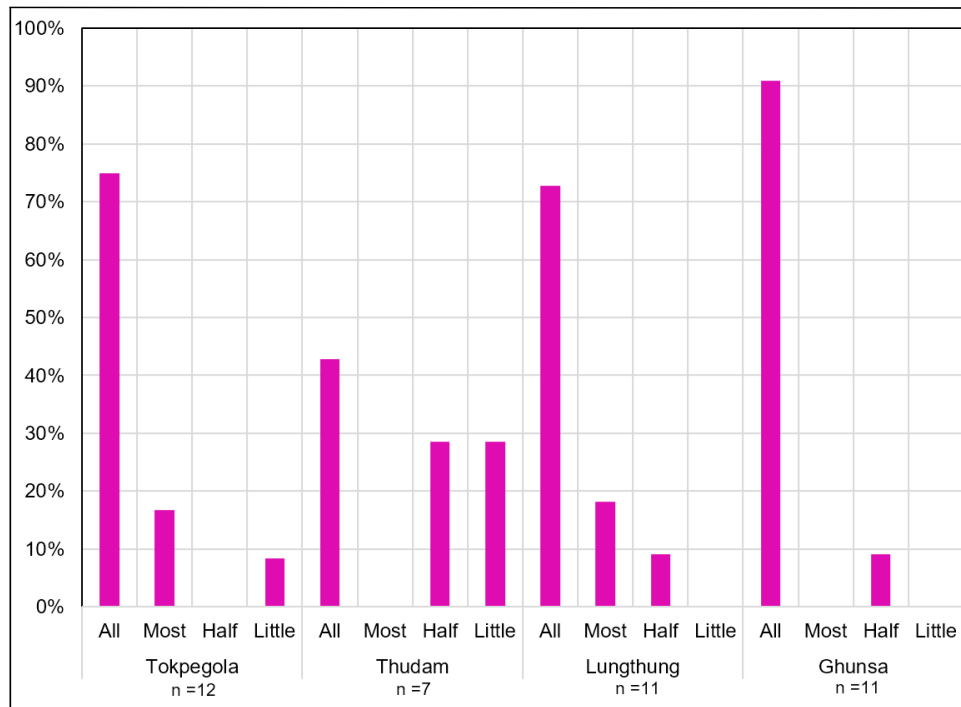
The WDT Bhote reportedly understand Halung quite highly with 91% of WDT Bhote respondents reportedly understanding "most" or "all" of their language. Thudam Bhote was the exception with over 50% of respondents who reported understanding "half" or "less". This indicates possible difficulties in understanding Halung speech for Thudam Bhote, and no perceived difficulties for WDT Bhote of other villages.

According to the data displayed in Figure 10, Thudam speech is reportedly well understood by most WDT Bhote.

Figure 10: Perceived understanding of Thudam speech
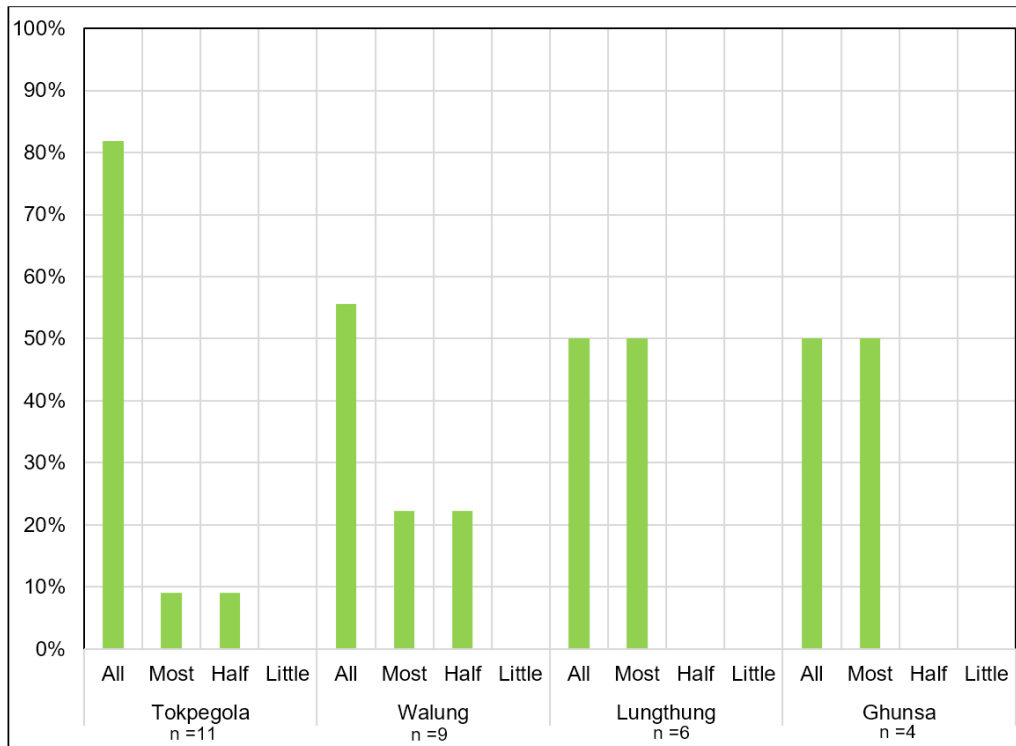
The Dhokpya show the highest number who understand "all" of Thudam speech. This could indicate similar varieties or more contact with Thudam Bhote. Thudam speech is understood well by WDT Bhote from Lungthung, Ghunsa, and Tokpegola with 91-100% of respondents from those areas saying they understand "most" or "all" of Thudam speech. In comparison the Halung demonstrate somewhat low reported understanding with 78% of respondents saying the same. Thudam had similar difficulties with Halung speech as seen in Figure 9. When Thudam respondents were asked about the differences, they mentioned that the "way of speaking"[44] and the "words" were different from their own. RSP data (section 5.2.3) corroborates this slight disparity in reported intelligibility. Reported intelligibility can highlight where perceived differences are sharpest but further testing is needed to better assess intelligibility between varieties.

Of the WDT Bhote who have met Lungthung Bhote, the highest percentage of subjects said that they could understand "most" or "all" of their variety. However, because of the

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[44] Some mentioned that people in Walung speak more "respectfully". *Lawaj* is understood in the data as speaking style and was a word often used by respondents in many areas to convey differences in speech.

current situation of language shift in Lungthung (see Chapter 6 for more details) many respondents use Nepali with Lungthung Bhote, so data on the Lungthung variety's reported intelligibility is too skewed to draw any firm conclusions.

The data regarding the Dhokpya variety presents a more reliable picture of a variety that is reportedly very intelligible. The perceived intelligibility data on this variety is presented in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Perceived understanding of Dhokpya speech
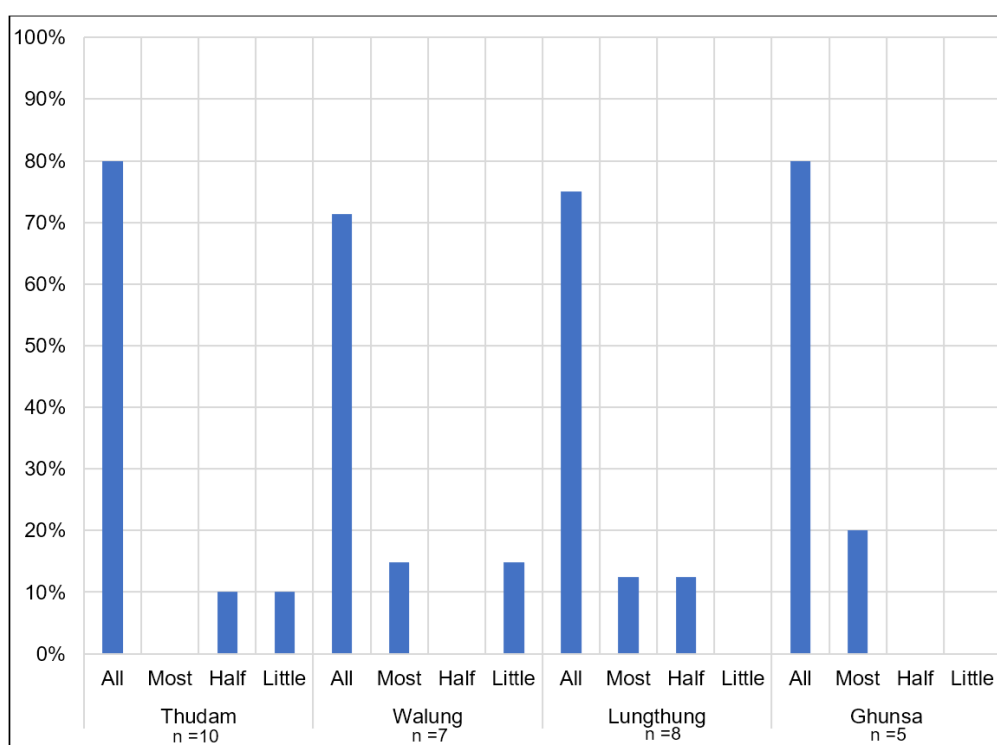
The results for Dhokpya speech show the highest percentage of those who understand "all" at 76% of respondents. When looking at the level of understanding across sites, similar percentages of people reported understanding "all" (71%-80% of respondents) meaning that people in all sites comprehend Dhokpya equally well.

The data in this section has so far demonstrated that all WDT Bhote reportedly understand Dhokpya speech quite well. Thudam and Halung speech is also reportedly well understood. However, Thudam Bhote, based on reported understanding, show some difficulties with Halung speech. Which villages are included in each of the WDT Bhote varieties will now be explored.

The interview questions "Where is your language spoken best?" and "Where is it spoken second best" point to a preliminary understanding of dialect groupings in the

community. Respondents in Lungthung consistently listed the Walung variety as best and the Lungthung variety as second best. Their ranking of Lungthung reflects the understanding that their community does not speak their language anymore. People in Ghunsa, Walung, and Simbuk all named their own village as the place where their language is spoken best. A third of Ghunsa respondents recognized Walung as second best, but almost all the answers mentioned areas that are near Walung (i.e. Yangma, Lungthung, Ghunsa) as opposed areas near the Tokpegola area (i.e. Simbuk, Thudam, Papung). Respondents in Walung almost exclusively named Ghunsa or Yangma (some mentioned both villages) as second best. The results from Thudam and Simbuk were not as clear. Most Thudam respondents did not have a strong opinion. Those who did expressed that they thought their language was spoken most purely in "Thudam". Other Thudam respondents named the Tokpegola area or Tibet. When asked the second question, "Where is your language spoken second best?" Thudam respondents chose Walung, the Tokpegola area, or Pibu. Furthermore, when both questions were totaled by number of responses, the Tokpegola area was mentioned most. Responses from Simbuk were more uniform; most answered second best by naming another village in the Mewa River Valley or didn't give a specific answer. Figure 12 summarizes the responses for where the WDT Bhote language is perceived to be spoken "best" and "second best".

Figure 12: Best and second-best varieties

Village:	Best				Second Best		
Lungthung	Walung				Lungthung		
Thudam	Other[45]	Thudam[46]	Tokpegola	Tibet	Walung	Pibu	Tokpegola
Walung	Walung				Ghunsa	Yangma	
Simbuk	Simbuk				Walung	Tokpegola	Other
Ghunsa	Ghunsa				Walung		

Walung was one of the top two answers in Lungthung, Walung, and Ghunsa, and it was the only answer mentioned by at least one respondent in every research site. These three WDT Bhote villages recognize Walungge as one of the best varieties, but respondents from Simbuk indicated they perceive the Dhokpya variety as best. Thudam Bhote have a less clear opinion of what variety is best, but they do recognize their own

[45] "Other" includes answers such as "don't know" (DK), "everywhere", and "all the same".

[46] "Thudam" received the second most responses.

variety, Dhokpya, and the variety spoken in Tibet as some of the better varieties. The data demonstrates that Walungge is broadly held to be one of the more prestigious varieties. Even so, the fact that the Tokpegola area (including Simbuk) is mentioned by Thudam and Simbuk respondents in the "best" and "second best" categories demonstrates a strong connection to the variety spoken in that area.

Though Thudam Bhote have indicated some difficult in understanding Halung speech there is a strong perception among the WDT Bhote that each variety is different but quite understandable

5.2.3   Recorded Story Playing

The data from RSP indicates Walungge, Dhokpya, and Thudam are distinguishable from one another. This is indicated by lower reported intelligibility between the Thudam and Walungge varieties as corroborated in the II data. Furthermore, most respondents can confidently distinguish between all three varieties. The RSP stories represent the Walungge, Dhokpya, and Thudam varieties, and they were used to gather information on reported intelligibility, not actual comprehension.

The RSP data corroborates much of the data gathered from the II on perceived intelligibility. The average percentage of WDT Bhote who reported understanding "all" is around 90% for all three stories. There were a few instances where the results were a little lower than the average. For instance, in response to the Walungge story, only 75% of respondents in Walung reported understanding all of it. Of the quarter of respondents who reportedly had some difficulty with the story, all were young, so differences in intergenerational transfer may be the most prominent reason for not understanding "all" (see chapter 6 on vitality). The data from Thudam respondents presents another instance where the level of reported understanding of the Walungge variety was significantly below the average. Most (70%) of Thudam respondents reportedly understood all, but the rest reportedly understood "half" or less. The II data has given similar results and indicates noticeable differences between the Thudam and Walungge varieties. WDT Bhote from Dhokpya, Walungge, and Thudam reportedly understood all other stories without any apparent difficulty.

One question in the RSP asked "Where do you think the storyteller is from?" and most respondents could accurately identify the storyteller's variety. For the Walungge variety,

at least[47] 62% of all respondents indicated Walung as the storyteller's home. Of the other respondents, 8% were divided in their opinions between Thudam, Walung and Tokpegola. Only 12% of respondents mentioned a location outside the Walungge speaking region.

The Dhokpya variety was also distinguishable with 68% of respondents accurately identifying the home of the storyteller. Another 4% of respondents had thought the story was either from Tokpegola or Walung. The rest of respondents (27%) were divided in their opinions.

When asked to identify where the speaker of the Thudam story was from, respondents were divided in their responses between "don't know", "near Walung", and "Tokpegola". The most chosen answer was "near Tokpegola", which was said by 21% of all respondents and accounted for 58% of Halung responses. In comparison to the other two stories, results from the Thudam story are not clear. If Thudam and Simbuk were very similar varieties then the results of the Thudam story would likely look comparable to the Dhokpya story, but most responses, except from Halung, were quite varied. Low levels of contact with Thudam Bhote might be contributing to the uncertainty expressed. The confusion over the third storyteller's origin combined with the reportedly low intelligibility between Thudam speakers and Walungge speakers suggest that Thudam is distinct from Dhokpya and Walungge. However, the story representing the Thudam variety was not recognized by most Thudam village respondents. The reason for this is not clear. The RSP data is showing evidence for considering Dhokpya and Walungge as distinct dialects. Thudam is also likely a dialect though the conclusion is not as clear as the other two varieties.

5.3 Conclusion

There has been little previous data available to understand the different WDT Bhote varieties' sociolinguistic relationships to one another. The Ethnologue indicates there are two languages in the area, Thudam [thw] and Walungge [ola] (Lewis, Simons and Fennig eds. 2017). However, due to high reported intelligibility between each variety,

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[47] Some responses were too vague to be identified as a specific area (i.e. "over there", "the hills", etc.) and others combined two different areas. Most responses identified a general area (i.e. towards Simbuk, towards Walung, etc.).

high lexical similarity, and the willingness to claim many of the same villages as their own, the evidence demonstrates that Dhokpya, Thudam, and Walungge are one language. With data from DM, II, and RSP, it is possible to see clear distinctions between each variety. Throughout this report, the term variety has been used to indicate neutrality and uncertainty about linguistic relationships. However, since the evidence has established these varieties to be dialects of the same language, they will be referred to as dialects of WDT Bhote from this point on.

The Walungge dialect is the most prestigious dialect of the three, but data from II, DM, and RSP indicate it may not be the most understandable variety. The II and RSP tools demonstrate lower intelligibility for Thudam speakers in interactions with Walungge speakers. Though not the most prestigious dialect, evidence indicates Dhokpya may be a more widely understood dialect.

According to the data from DM, II, and RSP, the following dialect areas[48] can be established as they are shown in Map 6.

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[48] Some villages, due to language mixing and low vitality, should be considered as on the margins of the WDT Bhote language and dialect area they are placed in. These villages were excluded in some DM sessions or not ranked well for understanding. They include: Pawakhola, Kiling, Yamphudin, Sekethum and Lelep. Papung was not referred to during any DM session, but it is included because it was mentioned in Individual Interviews.

Map 6: WDT Bhote language area: the three dialects
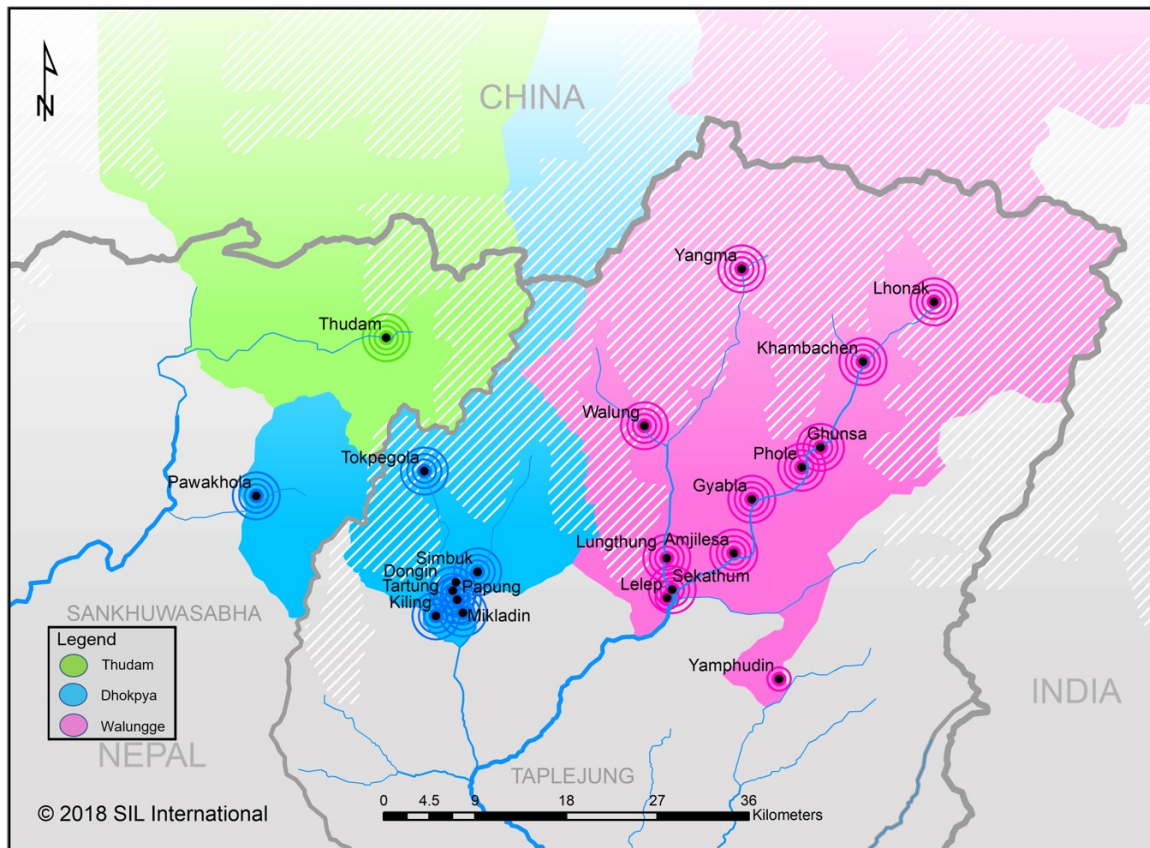
Walungge includes the specific villages: Lungthung, Walung, and Ghunsa. There is also consistent evidence to include Yangma and villages closely related to Ghunsa in this dialect area as well. Dhokpya includes the village of Simbuk and the villages closely associated with it in the Mewa river valley as revealed in the Simbuk DM session. The Thudam dialect consists only of Thudam village. Map 6[49] defines the language and possible dialect areas based on DM, RSP, WL, II, and the KII. Because many of the DM sessions included a reference to Tibet[50], the area for all three possible dialects extends beyond the border. The villages that comprise the three dialects of WDT Bhote are geographically diverse, but they all speak one language.

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[49] Three additional villages from the Dhokpya variety could be added to this map: Lamsang, Gufa, and Rhitu. They are not included because their exact locations are unknown. Their general locations are as follows: Rhitu lies across the border in Tibet, Gufa is likely in Sankhuwasabha, and Lamsang is likely somewhere on the Nepal side of the Chinese border.

[50] Exact locations of WDT Bhote speaking villages in Tibet are also not known and should be a subject for further investigation.

6 Language Vitality

Before introducing the data associated with language vitality, there are three pertinent resources for understanding, describing, and evaluating language vitality that should be introduced. These three resources are the Sustainable Use Model (SUM), the FAMED conditions (that are detailed in the SUM), and the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS).

The SUM is a model that incorporates a more comprehensive understanding of language dynamics within the community. Paul Lewis and Gary Simons in *Sustaining Language Use,* explain SUM saying, "[It] helps reflective practitioners of language development think about the larger issues and then work down to the more detailed concerns of what to do, when, and how." (2016: 6) The SUM follows three major sets of activities that focus on observing language use, assessing the sustainability of the language, and achieving sustainable use of the language.

EGIDS is a 13-level scale that classifies languages according to the extent of their use in the oral and written domains (vitality). Within the scale there are levels at which a language can function sustainably, and more transitory levels that a language moves through on the way to a more sustainable level. The levels that are most pertinent for this report are 6a (sustainable orality), 6b (threatened) and 7 (shifting) (see appendix H for a detailed explanation of all the levels). Level 6a specifies a language that is being used by all generations and is being passed onto children sustainably. At the 6b level some domains of a language are being overtaken by another language and some in the child-bearing generation are not transmitting the language to their children. A 6b language will tend to move toward level 7, in which it is no longer passed on to the children and it is only used by the child bearing generation and older.

The FAMED conditions help to describe specific areas where the language is eroding. The acronym stands for *Function, Acquisition, Motivation, Environment* and *Differentiation*. Each condition describes a different factor that can be improved to create a more sustainable language situation. The FAMED conditions help to evaluate the contributing factors to a language's maintenance at a specific EGIDS level, or conversely, factors encouraging a decline in use towards a lower level. *Function* relates to the domains in which the language is used within the society. *Acquisition* is the means of acquiring the necessary proficiency in the different functions of the language. The *Motivation*

condition relates to social, economic, and other factors motivating continued use of the language within the community. The *Environment* condition considers the effect that government laws and organizational policies have upon language use in the community. The final condition, *Differentiation,* focuses on the degree to which the society separates each language such that everyone in the society knows the time and place to use each language and for what purpose.

Language vitality in WDT Bhote varies from 6a to 7 on the EGIDS depending on the speech community. The WDT Bhote language in Lungthung is EGIDS 7 and approaching EGIDS 8 which means that for most residents, daily communication is conducted in Nepali rather than WDT Bhote. Because of this, much of the discussion in Chapter 6 will focus on the higher vitality villages, and explicitly include Lungthung only where helpful.

The language vitality of WDT Bhote is presented in this section by focusing on three main aspects of vitality that relate to four of the five FAMED conditions. The Intergenerational Transfer section touches on aspects of *Acquisition* and *Motivation.* The Domains (*Function*) section depicts the vitality of the language in certain functions. Finally, the Contact and Language Use section relates to the topics of *Motivation* and *Differentiation.* The last section presents the WDT Bhote community's desires for development. Each of these sections draws data from Individual Interviews (II) Knowledgeable Insider Interviews (KII), and Observation.

6.1 Intergenerational Transfer (Acquisition)

In much of the WDT Bhote language community, the language is being transmitted to the younger generations, but there are signs that this process is deteriorating. A substantial percentage of parents in the WDT Bhote community reported that their children speak WDT Bhote, as Figure 13 illustrates. Lungthung is the most obvious exception with 40% who reported that their children do not speak the mother tongue. In Simbuk and Thudam most children speak the language but generational transfer is not universal with 11%-22% of parents, respectively, reporting that their children do not speak the mother tongue. Most parents in Walung reported that their children do speak the mother tongue, but even so, there are indications that some children are not adequately learning the language.

Figure 13: "Do all your children speak your mother tongue?"
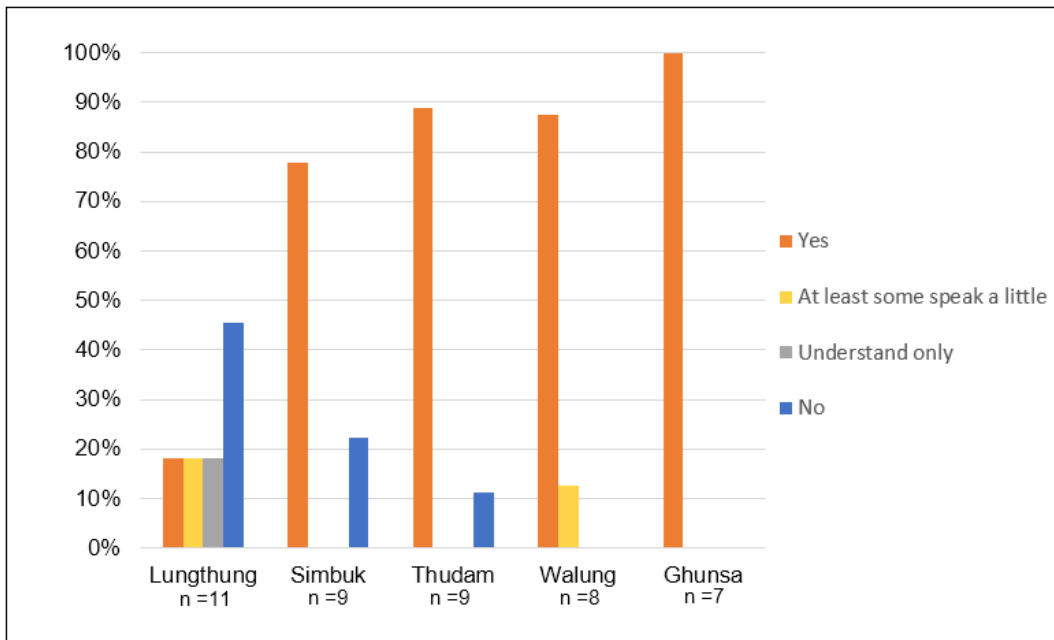
Further investigation reveals that many WDT Bhote parents do not think that their children's best language is the mother tongue. Figure 14 illustrates responses from parents in each village who were asked "What language do your children speak best?" Of all the villages, Simbuk had the highest percentage of parents who think their children's best language is the mother tongue (66%). The data illustrates that the WDT Bhote community have a strong, broad perception that children use their mother tongue, but it may not be the language the children are most proficient in.

Figure 14: Children's "best language"[51]
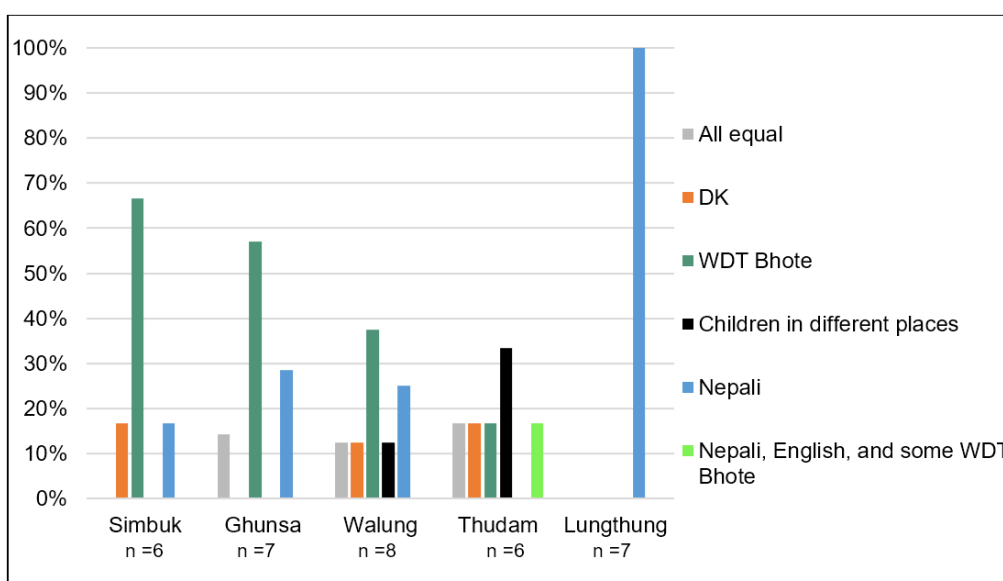
In three of the villages, 10-33% of respondents said that they didn't know what their child's best language was, or they answered with different responses for different children. These responses reflect a pattern of migration related to education, which will be discussed in the following section.

WDT Bhote speak their own language when talking to children. Data from each of the villages (except Lungthung) demonstrate a majority of WDT Bhote (88%) report using exclusively WDT Bhote in talking to children, and another 10% use both WDT Bhote and Nepali. In view of the high rates of WDT Bhote use with children, there are likely other reasons for the apparently greater proficiency in a non-mother tongue language.

6.1.1 Education (Acquisition & Motivation)

The different educational decisions made by families in WDT Bhote communities have had varying outcomes for their children's ability to acquire the mother tongue. Consequences from these decisions often include extended times away from the mother

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[51] "Children in different places" refers to respondents' children who have siblings elsewhere. Some children in the same family may learn certain languages better than others because of the languages used at school or in the area where they live. These are all the languages spoken "best" by the children represented in that category: WDT Bhote, Tibetan, English, English and Tibetan, and Nepali.

tongue speaking area and living in environments where English, Nepali, or Tibetan is the dominant language.

Data from II reveals respondents most frequently cited schooling and living elsewhere as reasons for why their children do not speak the mother tongue. According to II responses regarding respondents' children, only about 36% of their children go to school locally.[52] Most children attend a non-local school and around a quarter go to a school outside of Nepal. The three most common destinations for education are Kathmandu, the town of Taplejung, and India. In all, there were at least 22 distinct locations named. Depending on which location students go to, they might come back with varying ability in multiple languages such as Hindi, English, Tibetan, or Nepali.

Overall, Nepali is the language most commonly taught in, but some interview respondents mentioned Tibetan, "Lama language"[53], and English. Most Ghunsa respondents said WDT Bhote and Nepali, English, and Tibetan are all used in the schools. Simbuk, Thudam, and Walung respondents stated that only Nepali is used. According to the KII for each village, children use WDT Bhote most frequently before attending school. When asked what language students use after finishing school, most answers included Nepali. However, the respondent for Simbuk did not explicitly mention Nepali, but rather emphasized that a few students go to India and that those who stay nearby use the mother tongue. The Walung respondent on the other hand said that students use Nepali more often but use WDT Bhote at home with parents. Overall, the language of instruction for most WDT Bhote students is Nepali, but some also receive regular instruction in English and WDT Bhote.

The length of time away from and proximity to one's mother tongue speaking area are both factors affecting how well a WDT Bhote student acquires their mother tongue, but it is not clear to what degree. Interviews in Walung showed almost all respondents' (90%) have at least one child that attends a non-local school. Some data was gathered from three young subjects who went to school outside of Walung. They lived away from Walung for 2 to 12 years. In contrast, Simbuk interview data shows a tendency among

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[52] Locally is defined here as within the WDT Bhote speaking area or less than a day's walk away from one's village.

[53] This is an ambiguous term that may refer to Tibetan or a variety of Tibetan that is used in the religious domain.

parents to send children to school nearby in Simbuk and Papung. The Simbuk village leader commented that those who stay close by continue speaking their language, and comments from the KII and II for Simbuk demonstrate students frequently return to the village.

There is evidence to support the link between being close to the home area and speaking the mother tongue more proficiently. About half of young interview subjects in Simbuk responded with both WDT Bhote and Nepali as their "best language," with the next most stated being WDT Bhote (about one-third of respondents). Half of young Halung interviewees responded with WDT Bhote, but a third said only Nepali. This indicates either a lack of motivation among young Halung to continue using the language or actual diminishing proficiency in the language. The data implies a link between access to local schools and continued use of the mother tongue by younger generations (see Figure 14 at the beginning of section 6.1 also).

Observation and comments noted during interviews corroborate many of the previously mentioned effects of education on the WDT Bhote community. Many of the villages had few school age children around, so it was difficult to observe their language use. What was observed indicates regular usage of WDT Bhote and to a lesser extent Nepali. WDT Bhote is the language most often used for those too young for school. However, in Lungthung, there was no observed use of the mother tongue with children. While administering interviews, there were some instances of children who had returned from boarding school and were selected for an interview, but they could not meet the criteria either because of their prolonged time away or their decreased ability in the language. One comment by a respondent in Thudam illustrates the effects of migration and schooling. She said one of her sons speaks Nepali (the one living in Kathmandu), one speaks only Bhote (the one living close by), and one speaks both (the one in class 4 in Pikal, Jhapa). She said the one in Kathmandu learned Nepali in the village, but she did not comment on the son who speaks only WDT Bhote. There is not an operational school in Thudam so many parents have to send their children to Simbuk, Chyamtang or elsewhere. Mother tongue acquisition is being negatively affected by these decisions. Children who go to boarding schools are not spending as much time hearing and using their mother tongue, and they are often spending more time hearing and learning other languages.

The choice of schooling is an important factor in intergenerational transfer because it influences patterns of life during key years that the mother tongue is being absorbed and used. Migration for education is only one factor that contributes to the erosion of the mother tongue.

6.2   Domains (Functions)

Four specific domains were investigated as part of assessing WDT Bhote language vitality: praying, singing, storytelling, and meetings. Language use in these domains was asked about in Individual Interviews, and the responses can point to broader trends of language use in these communities.

Thudam Bhote are strongly monolingual in WDT Bhote, making questions based on domain largely irrelevant; therefore, discussion on language use for different functions in Thudam will be largely omitted from this section. Data from Thudam will also be omitted from generational comparisons due to the low number of young subjects interviewed.

Figure 15 presents the perceived predominant language(s) used in each domain across all respondents. Some did not clearly specify one language as dominant, so they were included in "WDT Bhote & Nepali" where appropriate. Other answers were not clearly identifiable (i.e. "Chinese" or "lama") and were placed in the "other" column.

Figure 15: Reported language use by domain

	WDT Bhote	WDT Bhote & Nepali	Nepali	Other[54]
Prayer	83%	8%	3%	5%
Singing	44%	27%	23%	5%
Storytelling	55%	18%	27%	----
Meetings	33%	16%	51%	----

In the domain of praying, WDT Bhote is highly used, but in meetings, storytelling, and singing, use is moderate with many using both WDT Bhote and Nepali, or just Nepali. When praying, 83% of WDT Bhote use their own language, showing a clear preference for the mother tongue in the domain of prayer. Meetings are seen as being

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[54] "Other" represents answers that could not be clearly categorized in the first three categories such as: "Lama", "Chinese", "all", and "a little Bhote". See Appendix I for a full list of abbreviations.

predominantly conducted in Nepali with about half responding in that way. When singing many reported using WDT Bhote (44%), but Nepali was used often as well.

Many of the villages displayed similar patterns in terms of the language(s) used in the different domains, but there were a few distinctions.

Praying is mainly done in the WDT Bhote language, even in Lungthung where the language is mainly spoken only by the child bearing generation and older. Only 13% of Lungthung respondents use Nepali exclusively for praying and all of these are in the younger generation. The high WDT Bhote usage among even those WDT Bhote who are losing their language indicates a strong desire to use their language in the religious domain (Tibetan Buddhism).

According to the data, meetings are generally conducted to some extent in Nepali in every village, except for Thudam where all but 10% said WDT Bhote. The two villages where Nepali is most clearly the dominant language in meetings are Lungthung and Simbuk with 100% and 62% of respondents, respectively, who indicated people favor[55] Nepali. Reported language use in meetings in Ghunsa and Walung was split among Nepali (36%), WDT Bhote and Nepali (36%), and WDT Bhote (33% in Walung) with slightly less in Ghunsa (27%).

Figure 16 displays languages reportedly used by respondents for storytelling. The figure is grouped according to the age of the respondent and his or her village.

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[55] "Favors" is used since some respondents mentioned that sometimes they use WDT Bhote in certain instances but mostly used Nepali. Others said they used WDT Bhote mostly but sometimes used Nepali.

Figure 16: Language of storytelling by age and village

	WDT Bhote			WDT Bhote & Nepali			Nepali		
	Old	Young	**Total[56]**	Old	Young	**Total**	Old	Young	**Total**
Lungthung	13%	29%	**20%**	13%	14%	**13%**	75%	57%	**67%**
Walung	100%	80%	**90%**	----	----	**----**	----	20%	**10%**
Simbuk	80%	29%	**50%**	----	43%	**25%**	20%	29%	**25%**
Ghunsa	60%	20%	**40%**	40%	60%	**50%**	----	20%	**10%**
Thudam	----	----	**100%**	---	----	**----**	----	----	**----**

Except for Lungthung and Ghunsa, storytelling is predominantly done in WDT Bhote. Ghunsa respondents were most comfortable in both languages, with the most of any village (50% of respondents) answering with WDT Bhote and Nepali. Lungthung respondents use mainly Nepali. The Thudam and Walung respondents almost unanimously reported using only WDT Bhote (only 10% of the young said they use Nepali).

Comparing the old and young within villages indicates a shift in the younger generation towards a preference for storytelling in Nepali. However, apart from Lungthung, the portion that prefers Nepali alone is only 17-30% of young respondents from each village (Thudam data not included). Overall, storytelling seems to be one of the stronger domains for the WDT Bhote language, even in Lungthung where the language is shifting.

Figure 17 presents the data on reported language use in the singing domain. The data is grouped by age of the respondent and village.

Figure 17: Singing by age, language, and village

	WDT Bhote			WDT Bhote & Nepali			Nepali			Other		
	Old	Young	**Total**	Old	Young	**Total**	Old	Young	**Total**	Old	Young	**Total**
Lungthung	13%	29%	**20%**	38%	29%	**33%**	50%	43%	**47%**	----	----	**----**
Walung	83%	----	**42%**	17%	50%	**33%**	----	33%	**17%**	----	17%	**8%**
Simbuk	100%	43%	**69%**	----	14%	**8%**	----	43%	**23%**	----	----	**----**
Ghunsa	33%	20%	**27%**	33%	40%	**36%**	17%	20%	**18%**	17%	20%	**18%**
Thudam	----	----	**78%**	----	----	**11%**	----	----		----	----	**21%**

WDT Bhote is the language used most for singing, followed closely by Nepali. Out of all the villages, Simbuk and Thudam have the highest percentage of respondents who use

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[56] Due to rounding the total may equal more or less than 100%.

exclusively WDT Bhote (both about 70%). About a third of respondents in both Walung and Ghunsa report using exclusively WDT Bhote, and another third use both WDT Bhote and Nepali. Lungthung respondents use more Nepali when singing, although some also sing in WDT Bhote.

In general, the old use WDT Bhote or both WDT Bhote and Nepali for signing. The young tend to use Nepali more, with one-third reporting exclusively singing in Nepali, and another third saying that they sing in both languages. As much as 20% of the young in every village (except Thudam) uses WDT Bhote exclusively for singing. Even in Lungthung where the language was least vital among the young, 29% favored WDT Bhote. Young people in Ghunsa sing in many languages, with no clear preference for any one. Overall, singing Nepali songs is becoming more common as seen by the percentage of young who use Nepali. However, WDT Bhote use is still strong in this domain.

In these communities, the use of Nepali in these representative domains is growing or already dominant, but WDT Bhote still remains widely used for many functions. Prayer is the most strongly tied to the WDT Bhote language, but storytelling and singing in WDT Bhote is still quite common in most villages. However, Nepali is the dominant language used in meetings.

6.3   Contact and Language Use Patterns (*Motivation* & *Differentiation*)

Assessing patterns of use for each language spoken in the community can provide indicators about whether the community is shifting away from the mother tongue or maintaining a stable bilingualism. Bilingualism in Nepali and WDT Bhote is increasing in some cases and language shift to Nepali is occurring in others. On this subject Lewis and Simons point out, "If the local language and the dominant language are competing head-to-head in a given set of Functions, without any concerted intervention, the more powerful and prestigious language will inevitably gain ground since it is generally perceived to provide more rewards and benefits" (2016: 160).

Figure 18 displays the results of the individual interview question "What is your best language?" divided by age.

Figure 18: "Best language" grouped by age and village
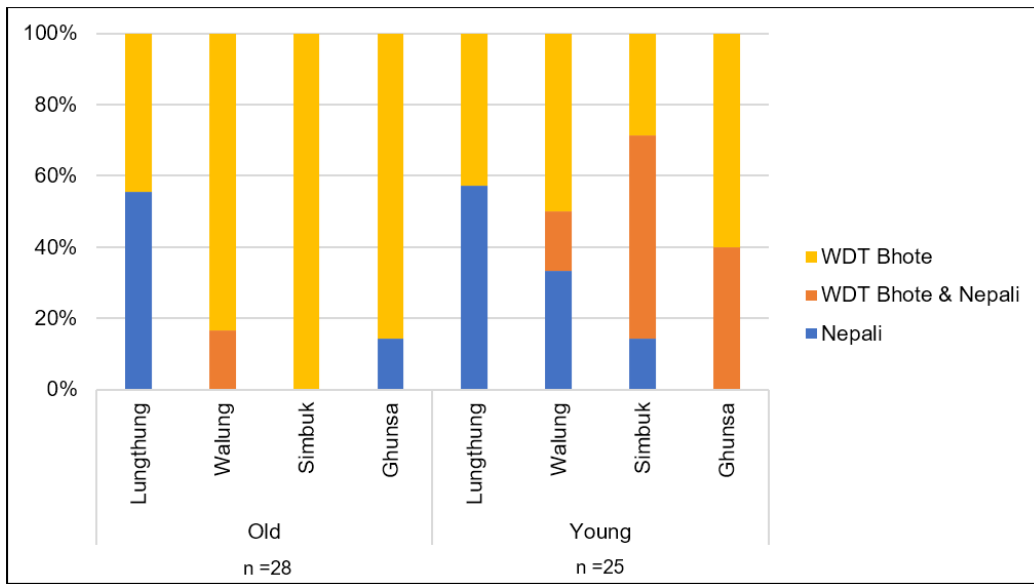
Data from Figure 18 demonstrates clear differences between the old and young generations in terms of which language they feel is their "best". There are also some distinct differences on a village level. Figure 18 illustrates some signs of language shift among the young in some villages. The young are displaying more proficiency in using WDT Bhote and Nepali, whereas almost all of the older generation speaks WDT Bhote best. Data from Ghunsa and Walung follow this trend, but in comparison to Ghunsa and Simbuk, more young in Walung feel Nepali is their "best" language.

Assessing language use between WDT Bhote within villages can give insight into norms of language use within the WDT Bhote community. It can help in determining if the languages they use are being sufficiently differentiated in their use to maintain stable vitality. In the II, respondents were asked if they use a non-mother tongue language with other WDT Bhote and, if so, what language. Figures 19 and 20 illustrate the responses to these questions. Figure 19 demonstrates the generational differences and Figure 20 depicts differences between villages.

Figure 19: Do you use languages other than your MT with other WDT Bhote?"
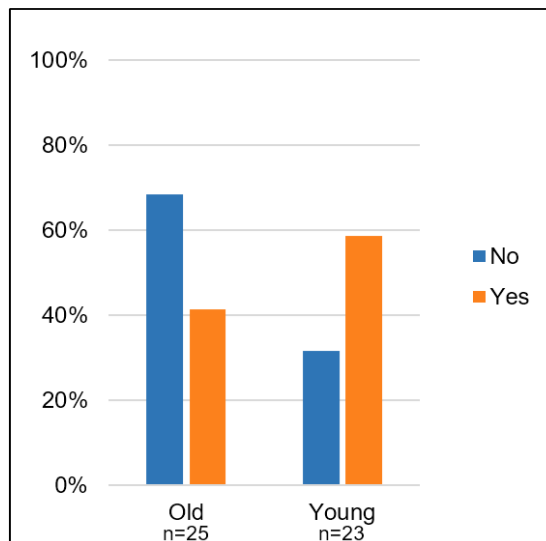
As previous data shows, young WDT Bhote are becoming increasingly capable in Nepali. Having at least two languages in their repertoire means they are making a decision each time they speak with someone in their speech community. The question then is, how have they been managing the two or more languages in their repertoire? Figure 20 shows an overall increase in Nepali usage from the older generation to the younger generation. When the young interviewees were asked about their reasons for use of another language with other WDT Bhote, some said that "it is easy" and others elaborated that they learned the language in school and continued using it.

**Figure 20: "Do you use languages other than your MT with other WDT Bhote?"**
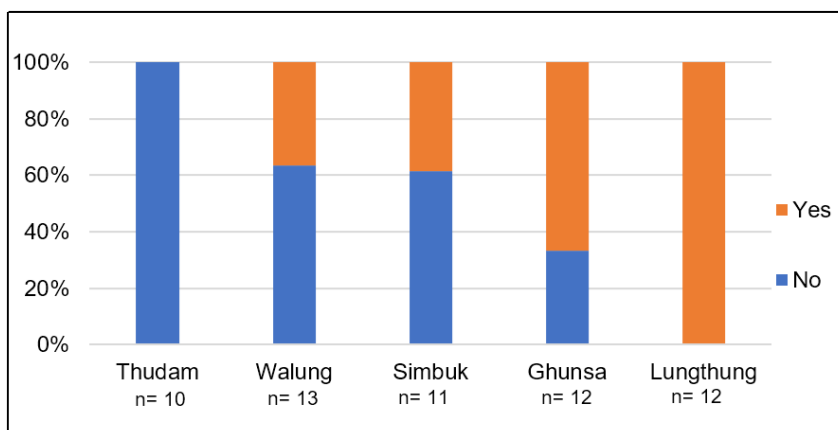
In terms of village to village differences, there is significantly more use of Nepali among Ghunsa Bhote than among Halung or Simbuk Dhokpya. This demonstrates that many WDT Bhote in these villages are comfortable using Nepali with each other. The village

linguistic environment now has two languages that are widely used. Without an established socially understood differentiation in environments, where only one language is seen as suitable in certain situations to the exclusion of the other, the WDT Bhote community will likely shift to Nepali.

The attitudes that WDT Bhote have towards their own language has a direct effect on their motivation for maintaining their language. These attitudes can be glimpsed through a few questions from the II schedule. Figure 21 presents the data from the question "Which language should children learn first?" grouped according to village.

**Figure 21: Which language should be learned first?**
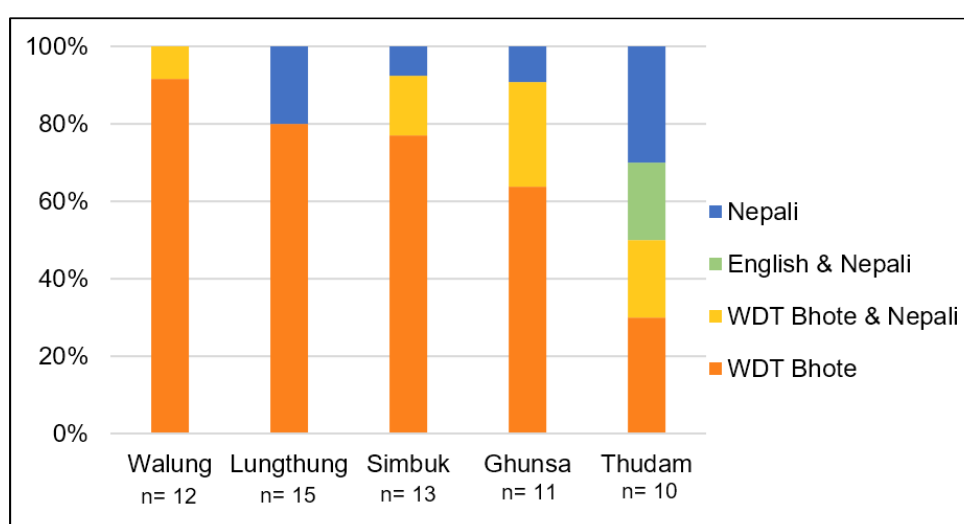
When WDT Bhote respondents were asked which language their children should learn first, they generally showed preference towards their own language. The Walung and Thudam villages represent two ends of the spectrum, with Halung parents showing greatest preference for their own language and Thudam Bhote prioritizing a variety of languages. Half of Thudam respondents desire their children to learn WDT Bhote first, with some of them wanting their children to learn Nepali as well. The majority of Thudam respondents wanted Nepali to be one of the first languages their children learn. When asked why they would like their children to learn Nepali or another language first, many in Thudam mentioned a desire to communicate with outsiders. The Thudam Bhote are limited in economic[57] and educational opportunities because of their

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[57] Raising animals (mostly yak) is the most common occupation in Thudam. Other occupations included collecting wood, transporting goods, and making carpets and other kinds of handicrafts.

geographic isolation and lack of fluency in Nepali. These are likely strong motivational factors for Thudam Bhote in wanting their children to learn Nepali first.

Another question in the II asked "Which language do you love the most?" and the results are shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22: "Which language do you love the most?"
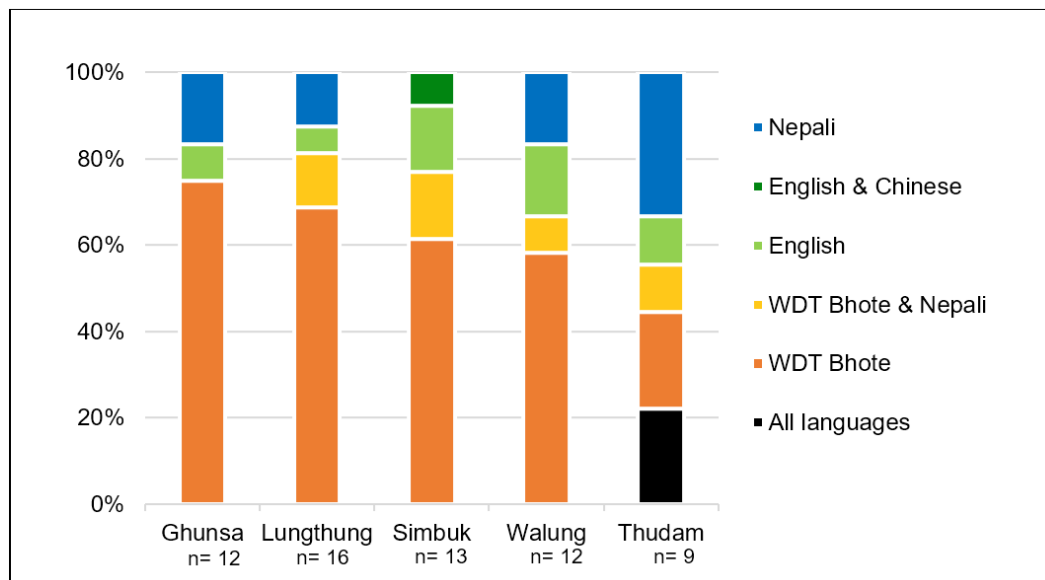
Over half of respondents from every village, except Thudam, named WDT Bhote as the language they love the most. The results confirm a strong attachment among WDT Bhote toward their own language. However, Thudam Bhote show a love for a variety of languages. The love for other languages is likely due to their previously mentioned desire to communicate with non-WDT Bhote speaking people.

In summary, despite valuing other languages, most notably Nepali, the WDT Bhote still view their own language quite highly, indicating a fairly strong internal motivation to continue using it. The main exception is Thudam, where monolingualism has created difficulties in communicating with non-WDT Bhote speakers. WDT Bhote overall favor using their own language in most domains but the data demonstrates a growing use of Nepali among the younger generation. This is most visible in the data regarding language use with other WDT Bhote.

6.4 Development Desires

Exploring the community's desires for development was a major goal of this research. While the data hints at some desires, most of the information on the topic was learned through informal conversations and observations.

A few questions from the II were aimed at investigating the WDT Bhote people's desire and ability to write their language. Some respondents said they have written in WDT Bhote using either Nepali script or Tibetan. A slight majority thought Tibetan script would be most suitable. Some had also indicated that either script could be acceptable. Almost half of respondents shared no opinion on writing in their own language or did not feel qualified to answer the question. However, most said they would like to listen to something in their language, whether song, news, history or some other topic.

Though the desires for language development varied among WDT Bhote, the common desire was for their children to obtain a good education. Most desires for development centered around education. For instance, Lungthung and Ghunsa residents expressed a desire to improve educational capabilities either by helping to fund the school or pay for teachers' salaries. Some Lungthung residents also mentioned the need for someone to teach them their own language again.

In Ghunsa, a village leader was seeing the children lose their language and culture and wanted to stop it, so along with the help of the Himalayan Development Foundation Australia, the Wild Yak trekking agency, and the Ghunsa community he was able to start a school. One class in the Ghunsa school is already teaching Tibetan writing using the mother tongue for students starting in class 1. The Ghunsa respondent for the KII also mentioned a desire for making books and other materials in their language. It is clear that Ghunsa Bhote value their language and their children's education. For Simbuk and Walung, respondents did not seem interested in language development, but there were a few who expressed some interest. One young person even stated a desire to teach in his language. Community members in Thudam village made no mention of any desires for development. Based on observations made in the villages visited on fieldwork and limited data from other tools, the community as a whole does not have strong desires for the development of their language.

6.5 Summary

Each research site presented different situations with regards to language vitality. A summary of each site follows below.

Lungthung had the lowest levels of vitality of all five research sites. On the EGIDS scale the language is at level 7, on its way to 8a, meaning those of the child bearing generation and older are the only ones using the language. There are a few factors contributing to its current status. Their village has become very heterogenous, with some WDT Bhote having intermarried with people from other ethnic groups. Though this does not guarantee language loss, a lack of motivation to use the language within the family has created a more difficult environment for acquisition. Decisions to send children away for schooling have also played a role in language acquisition related difficulties, but it is difficult to determine if this is a cause or a result of language loss. Though language use is in the later stages of shifting to Nepali, Lungthung respondents have positive attitudes towards their language and some even desire to begin using it again.

In Walung, WDT Bhote is still used in every generation (EGIDS 6b), but some in the youngest generation are not learning the language. All the Walung respondents have strongly positive attitudes towards using their language. Based on observations in Walung and discussions with Halung, most people think their language is not threatened. Halung children in the village use the language every day, but many children are studying in places outside the language area which is negatively affecting acquisition of the language. The Halungs' diminishing use of the language is noticeable in the decreasing number of young who view WDT Bhote as their "best" language. Preference among the young to use Nepali in the domain of singing also illustrates language loss. The Halung value their language, but language loss among the young will continue if there is not a suitable environment for acquisition of the language.

Ghunsa should be rated at a vitality of 6a on the EGIDS scale, which means every generation is using it, but the community is also strongly bilingual in Nepali. Their school has allowed many of the young to stay and acquire WDT Bhote at home. WDT Bhote is also used in a Tibetan writing class starting in class 1, allowing for the language to be used in the written domain, and possibly increasing residents' motivation to use the language. Many interviewees expressed positive attitudes towards their

language, but many also see the usefulness of Nepali. There are signs that language use may shift to Nepali if the community does not create a village environment that enforces use of each language in distinct situations.

Language vitality of Simbuk should be considered at 6b on the EGIDS scale. Simbuk, like Ghunsa, is strongly bilingual, though mostly in the younger generation. Similar to Ghunsa, Simbuk students who attend primary or secondary school have more contact with WDT Bhote than children from other sites. There is a school in Papung, where children can go and come back home easily. Papung also represents a more favorable environment for language acquisition since it has a WDT Bhote speaking population. Attitudes of Simbuk respondents towards their language are positive, but they also value being bilingual in Nepali. Because young Simbuk Bhote are very capable in both WDT Bhote and Nepali, they would also benefit from a focus on differentiation to prevent shifting away from mother tongue use.

Of the villages visited, the Thudam Bhote exhibit the lowest Nepali fluency and the language in this village is clearly 6a on the EGIDS scale. As many Thudam Bhote mentioned, not having Nepali in their repertoire has put them at a disadvantage. Their attitudes demonstrate a high view of Nepali and English, and they are more divided in their views of WDT Bhote. Half of interviewees expressed a desire to see their children learn Nepali or both Nepali and English first rather than their own language. Thudam village does not have an active teacher for the school, and thus many send their children to nearby schools in Simbuk and Chyamtang, with some going even further. The lack of nearby education facilities and limited economic opportunities in Thudam present a difficult living situation. This situation coupled with the inability to communicate to non-WDT Bhote speakers results in little motivation to maintain their language. If these motivating factors are not addressed, they will contribute to a language shift to Nepali.

7 Summary of Findings & Recommendations

7.1 Summary of Findings

This report presents the results of this research on the language community known by the names Walungge, Dhokpya, or Thudam, referred to in this report as WDT Bhote. The research was carried out in the WDT Bhote community with the aim of understanding the sociolinguistic situation and the relationship between the three WDT Bhote language varieties. The purposes of the research were pursued by identifying dialect areas, investigating ethnolinguistic identity, assessing language vitality, understanding language attitudes and exploring each community's desires for development.

The research regarding the relationship between the three WDT Bhote varieties in Nepal revealed one language with three dialects: Walungge, Dhokpya, and Thudam. Even though the three dialects were reported as mutually intelligible by the speakers, Thudam speakers expressed difficulties in understanding speech from the Walungge variety. Of the three dialects, Walungge is the most widely accepted, and Dhokpya is the most widely understandable. There are also WDT Bhote varieties spoken in Tibet and they should be a topic for further investigation.

The WDT Bhote are ethnolinguistically associated with each other through contact, culture, and implicit ethnic and linguistic connections. No one term exclusively encompasses the ethnolinguistic identity of the whole WDT Bhote community. The two most commonly used terms for the community, 'Bhote' and 'Sherpa', are not exclusive to the WDT Bhote community and are sometimes used interchangeably. WDT Bhote communities that have greater contact with Nepali language and culture tend to use the term 'Sherpa'. Conversely, those WDT Bhote communities that have less contact with Nepali language and culture tend to use 'Bhote'. Both terms connect the WDT Bhote people to a Tibetan heritage, and by using the term 'Sherpa' they are associating themselves with a prestigious and more well recognized ethnicity of Nepal. The WDT Bhote people do have terms native to some segments of their community; the terms "Tokpegola" and "Walung" are such, but they are seldom used despite being officially recognized by the government of Nepal. While the WDT Bhote do not have one term for their people or language, widespread social and cultural connections within the larger

community demonstrate affiliation under one ethnolinguistic identity. The most focused ethnolinguistic link between the WDT Bhote communities is their strong affiliation with the village of Walung.

Ethnolinguistic unity is also evident in language attitudes; interview respondents expressed mostly favorable attitudes towards each dialect. In terms of linguistic identity, the WDT Bhote people have a broad connection to each other and a strong sense of unity under a single language.

The current overall level of vitality for WDT Bhote is 6b on the EGIDS, indicating some WDT Bhote are shifting from their mother tongue and towards another language, in this case, Nepali. The main factors in the deterioration of language vitality are: weakening motivations to use WDT Bhote, the young attending school outside the WDT Bhote language area, and not creating spaces in society for mother tongue use to thrive.

Most WDT Bhote would enjoy hearing recordings of their language, and some even occasionally write in their own language, but overall, the WDT Bhote community indicated a lack of interest in language development. There were some exceptions: a few people expressed interest in using the mother tongue in education and for preserving the language and culture. As for which script would be best for developing written materials, opinions were slightly more favorable towards Tibetan over Devanagari. WDT Bhote largely value their language, but they do not have strong desires to develop it.

7.2   Recommendations

Based on the conclusions presented in section 7.1, the following recommendations are given concerning future language development in the WDT Bhote language community.

First, the two current ISO codes used for this language, [thw] and [ola], should be merged to create one ISO code that encompasses the whole WDT Bhote language. It is recommended that a language name be chosen by the community to reflect the opinions of people from each dialect.

Second, it is recommended that the Walungge dialect be used for materials development since it is the most prestigious dialect. However, it is not the most widely intelligible dialect, especially for Thudam speakers, so it is recommended that any materials developed in the Walungge dialect be tested around the region for understanding.

Depending on the results from testing the materials, some adaptation may be needed into the Dhokpya dialect.

Third, the WDT Bhote community would benefit from language awareness activities, especially as it relates to the current vitality of their language. Three important aspects related to WDT Bhote language vitality should be discussed with the community: their motivations for using the language, their children's ability to acquire the language, and how to create an environment where both Nepali and WDT Bhote can thrive. If the WDT Bhote are to maintain their language in a multilingual environment, they must develop social rules to manage the use of each language.

Fourth, there are indications education-based language development would be beneficial: the community generally has positive attitudes towards their language, members of the community desire good education for their children, and language vitality is strong in many locations. Ghunsa represents the best starting point for raising awareness about mother tongue education since the school teaches a class using the mother tongue starting in class 1. Many expressed interest in listening to their language, so efforts to develop oral materials should come before developing written materials.

Lastly, opinions in the WDT Bhote community about which script would be best were almost evenly divided between Devanagari and Tibetan script. A slight majority in Ghunsa preferred Tibetan script so this choice represents one good option. However, the community may not accept significant modifications to the traditional Tibetan writing system in which case it may be beneficial to develop WDT Bhote in Devanagari as well. Given these reasons and the connection to their Tibetan heritage, it is not advised to develop their language using Devanagari script alone.

8 सर्वेक्षणका सारांश तथा सिफारिसहरू

8.1 सर्वेक्षणका सारांश

यस प्रतिवेदनमा भोटे भनेर सङ्केत गरिएको वालुङ्गे, ढोक्प्या वा थुदाम भाषा समुदायमा गरिएको अनुसन्धानबाट निक्लिएको निचोडहरूलाई प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । समग्रमा 'भोटे' भनेर चिनिने यी तीन समुदायहरूका समाजभाषाविज्ञानको अवस्था तथा भाषिक विविधताबीचको आपसी सम्बन्धलाई बुझ्ने लक्ष्य लिएर यो सर्वेक्षण गरिएको थियो । यसरी सर्वेक्षणको उद्देश्यलाई डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे जातिभाषिक पहिचान, भाषा बोलिने क्षेत्रहरू पहिचान, भाषाको स्वभाव बुझाइ, भाषिक जीवन्तताको मूल्याङ्कन तथा विकाससम्बन्धी प्रत्येक समुदायको चाहना खोज गरी पछ्याएको थियो। तसर्थ, अनुसन्धानको परिणामहरूले नै भाषा विकाससम्बन्धी भावी निर्णयहरू जानकार गराउनेछ ।

नेपालमा भएको तीन डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे विविधतामा रहेको सम्बन्धको अनुसन्धानले भोटे भाषा; वालुङ्गे, ढोक्प्या तथा थुदाम मिलेर बनेको एउटै भाषा हो भनी देखाएको छ । यी तिनैवटा भाषाहरू पारस्परिक रूपमा बुझ्न सकिन्छ भन्ने प्रतिवेदन वक्ताहरूले दिए तापनि, थुदामी बोल्नेहरूले वालुङ्गेहरूलाई बुझ्न कठिन भएको देखाए। यी तीनमध्ये वालुङ्गेलाई व्यापक प्रकार स्वीकार गरिएको छ र ढोक्प्याचाहिँ अधिकाँशले बुझ्छन् । त्यसरी नै डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटेकै वर्गमा पर्ने फरक भाषाहरू तिब्बती क्षेत्रमा बोलिन्छ र तीबारे धेरैजसो कुराहरू थाहा नभएको हुनाले ती अनुसन्धान गर्नुपर्छ ।

कुनै एउटा शब्दले पूर्ण रुपले समग्र डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायको जातिभाषिक पहिचानलाई समेट्न सक्दैन । 'भोटे' तथा 'शेर्पा' दुई मुख्य शब्दहरू नै यो समुदायको लागि सामान्य रुपले प्रयोग हुने भए तापनि, केवल डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायको लागि यी विशिष्ट शब्दहरू होइनन् र कहिलेकहीँ ती एकआपसको सट्टामा पनि प्रयोग गरिन्छ । नेपाली भाषा तथा सँस्कृतिप्रति प्रचुर मात्रामा सम्पर्कमा रहेका डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायहरूले आफुलाई 'शेर्पा' जाति भन्न रुचाउँछन् । त्यसरी नै नेपाली भाषा तथा सँस्कृतिसँग थोरै मात्र सम्पर्कमा रहेका डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायहरूले आफुलाई 'भोटे' भन्न रुचाउँछन् । यी दुवै शब्दहरूले डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे जातिहरूलाई तिब्बती परम्परासँग लगेर जोड्दछन्, तर 'शेर्पा' भन्ने शब्दलाई प्रयोग गरेर उनीहरूले आफुलाई नेपालको प्रतिष्ठित तथा परिचित जातिसँग जोडिरहेका छन् । डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे जातिका निश्चित समुदायमा परिचित स्थानीय शब्दहरू पनि छन् । जस्तै: "टोकपेगोला" तथा "वालुङ" जुन नेपाल सरकारले औपचारिक रुपले पहिचान गरे तापनि, ती विरलै प्रयोग गरिएका छन् । समुदायमा गरिएको कतिपय छलफलहरूबाट निस्केको प्रमाणको साथमा जातिभाषिक यस जानकारीको निष्कर्षले कुनै एउटै मात्र जातिभाषिक पहिचाहनसँग लगेर भोटेहरूलाई जोड्नु भनेको फितलो हुने सङ्केत गर्दछ ।

यसको विपरीत, विशेषगरी व्यक्तिगत अन्तरवार्ताहरूबाट सङ्कलन गरेको जानकारीहरूले डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायको एकता एउटै जातिभाषिक समूहको रुपमा रहेको जोड दिन्छ । अनि यो एकता ठूलो समुदायभित्र व्यापक रुपले फैलिएको सामाजिक तथा साँस्कृतिक सम्बन्धहरूमा स्पष्टसँग देख्न सकिन्छ । जातिभाषिक एकतालाई भाषाप्रतिको स्वभावहरूमा स्पष्टसँग देखिएको थियो किनकि प्रत्येक भाषाप्रति अन्तरवार्ता लिइएका मानिसहरूले अति नै सकारात्मक अभिव्यक्ति प्रकट गरेका थिए । यी तीन भाषाहरूमा केवल थुदामले मात्र न्यून सकारात्मक प्रतिउत्तर पाएको थियो र विशेष गरी हालुङ र घुन्सा भोटे भाषा बोल्ने समुदायबाट । भाषिक पहिचानको सम्बन्धमा, डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे जातिहरूले आफुलाई एउटै भाषा बोल्ने मानिसहरूका रुपमा एक-अर्कासँग व्यापक सम्पर्क रहेको मानिस भनी पहिचान गर्छन् । डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायहरूबीच रहेको

जातिभाषिक सम्पर्कको अति नै सबल तथा केन्द्रित पक्ष भनेको वालिङ्ग गाउँसँगको उनीहरूको बलियो सम्बन्ध हो ।

जातिभाषिकविज्ञानको एकतालाई हामी भाषाको स्वभावहरूमा पनि छर्लङ्गै देख्न सक्छौं र अन्तरवार्ता लिइएका मानिसहरूले दिएको प्रतिउत्तरहरूअनुसार अधिकाँशले प्रत्येक भाषिकाप्रति सकारात्मक भाव प्रकट गरेका छन् । भाषिक पहिचानको सन्दर्भमा भन्नुपर्दा, डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे मानिसहरूबीचको आपसी सम्बन्ध फराकिलो रहेको छ र एउटै मात्र भाषा बोलिने हो भने मजबुत एकता हुने मान्यता राख्छन् ।

डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे भाषाको तत्कालीन समग्र जीवन्तताको मान EGIDS मा ६ख (सङ्कटग्रापन्न) लागू गर्न सकिन्छ र यसले कतिपय यस जातिका मानिसहरू मातृभाषाबाट अन्य भाषातिर र विशेष गरी नेपालीतिर अनुपसरण भइरहेको देखाउँछ । भाषिक जीवन्तता ह्रास हुँदै जानुको मुख्य तत्वहरू भनेको डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे भाषा प्रयोगको कमजोर अभिप्रेरणा, नयाँ पुस्ताहरू मातृभाषा बोलिने क्षेत्रभन्दा बाहिरितिर अध्ययन गर्न जानु तथा मातृभाषा प्रयोगलाई प्रबर्धन गर्ने किसिमका सृजनशील क्रियाकलापहरू समुदायमा नगरिनु रहेको छ ।

डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटेका अधिकाँश मानिसहरूले उनीहरूका भाषा सुन्न मनपराउँछन् र बेला बेलामा ती लेख्ने समेत गरेका छन्, तर समग्रमा हेर्ने हो भने, भाषा विकाससम्बन्धी खासै उनीहरूमा रुचि रहेको देखिँदैन । विशेष गरी शिक्षा तथा भाषा र सँस्कृतिलाई जोगाउने सन्दर्भमा मातृभाषा प्रयोगलाई प्राथमिकता दिने केही अपवादीय कुराहरू पनि समुदायमा अभिव्यक्त गरिएका थिए । लेखन प्रणाली विकास गर्नको लागि कुनचाहिँ लिपिलाई प्रयोग गर्ने हो त भन्ने सम्बन्धमा देवनागरी तथा तिब्बतीबीच बराबरीको मतान्तर देखियो । तिब्बती लिपि उनीहरूका भाषाको लागि उत्तम रहने राय प्रकट गर्नेहरू केही हदसम्म बढी थिए ।

8.2   सिफारिसहरू

खण्ड ७:१मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको निष्कर्षहरूका आधारमा, डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे भाषा समुदायमा भविष्यमा भाषा विकासको लागि निम्न सिफारिसहरू गरिएको छ ।

सर्वप्रथम त, यस भाषामा तत्काल प्रयोग गरिएको [thw] र [ola], दुईवटा आइएसओ कोडलाई एउटैमा समन्वयन गरी समग्र डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायलाई समेट्ने एउटा आइएसओ कोड सृजना गर्नुपर्नेछ । प्रत्येक भाषाका मानिसहरूको रायलाई प्रतिबिम्ब गर्न, समुदायद्वारा नै भाषाको नाउँ चयन गर्न सिफारिस गरिन्छ ।

दोस्रो, अधिकाँश मानिसहरूले वालुङ्गे भाषालाई स्वीकार गरेका हुनाले भाषिक सामग्रीहरू विकास गर्ने क्रममा यही भाषालाई नै प्रयोग गर्नु राम्रो हुन्छ । तर व्यापक फैलिएको सजिलै बुभ्रन सकिने भाषाचाहिँ यो अवश्य नै होइन र विशेष गरी थुदाम भाषीहरूका लागि । त्यसैले वालुङ्गे भाषामा विकास भएका कुनै पनि सामग्रीहरूलाई उक्त क्षेत्रमा नै जाँच गर्नुपर्छ । यसरी जाँचको परिणामअनुसार, कतिपयलाई ढोक्प्या भाषामा विकास गर्नु आवश्यक पर्न सक्छ ।

तेस्रो, डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे समुदायले भाषासम्बन्धी जनचेतनाका कार्यक्रमहरूबाट लाभ प्राप्त गर्न सक्नेछन् किनकि ती उनीहरूका भाषाको जीवन्ततासँग सम्बन्धित छ । डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे भाषाको जीवन्ततासँग सम्बन्धित तीन महत्वपूर्ण पक्षहरूलाई समुदायमा छलफल गर्नुपर्छ: भाषा प्रयोगसम्बन्धी उनीहरूका अभिप्रेरणा, बच्चाहरूमा भएको भाषा सिक्न सक्ने क्षमता तथा डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे तथा नेपाली एकसाथ सफल हुन सक्ने सुमधुर वातावरणको सृजना । यदि बहुभाषिक वातावरणमा डब्ल्यूडिटी भोटे भाषाले आफ्नो स्थानलाई सुरक्षित राख्नु छ भने, उनीहरूले प्रत्येक भाषा प्रयोग व्यवस्थापनसम्बन्धी सामाजिक नियमहरूको विकास गर्नुपर्छ ।

चौथो, शिक्षाप्रद भाषा विकास गर्नु लाभदायिक हुने सङ्केतहरू देखिन्छन् किनकि आफ्ना भाषाप्रति समुदायको सामान्यतौरमा सकारात्मक स्वभाव रहेको छ र आफ्ना बच्चाहरूले राम्रो शिक्षा पाऊन् भन्ने मानिसहरूले चाहन्छन् । त्यसरी नै धेरै ठाउँहरूमा भाषिक जीवन्तता सबल रहेको छ । घुन्सा समुदायका स्कूलहरूमा मातृभाषामा नै कक्षा १ का बच्चाहरूलाई सिकाइने हुनाले मातृभाषामा शिक्षा दिनुको महत्वबारे जनचेतना जगाउने काम पनि यही भाषाबाट गर्नु, सायद उत्तम हुन्छ । धेरैले आफ्नो भाषा सुन्न रुचि देखाएका छन् र लिखित सामग्रीहरूलाई विकास गर्नुभन्दा पहिले मौखिक सामग्रीहरू विकासमा

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