

# HONORIFICATION IN NEPALI: A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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*This research article explores the psycholinguistic processes of honorification manipulation in Nepali language. Honorification is not static but dynamic process and is affected by many factors including psychological. Data is drawn from published narratives, mostly in the Nepali media, and analyzed from psycholinguistic perspective. The range of data include politics, royalese, language of marital discord and media. Significant influencers in choice of honorifics are fluctuation in state of mind and proximity. The canonical three-level honorific system is discussed as a reference point for psychologically motivated honorification fluctuation. Three types of honorific operators are identified and discussed: psychological, royalese and neutralization. The article attempts to bring forth the complex mechanisms that work on the honorification system in Nepali language.*

Keywords: honorification, psycholinguistic perspective, royalese, neutralization, distal/proximal, Nepali language

## 1. Introduction

Honorification is the process of expressing and exhibiting honour which exists in any language of the world. Every language makes use of its own mechanisms to show regard (or disregard, for that matter) and exhibit and establish relationship among interlocutors. Honorific used by one person to another exhibits the relative status, emotional state of the people in question. “Honorific phenomena is...intersubjectively shared codes of behavior...susceptible to strategic manipulation” (Agha 1994). Honorification operates at both spoken and written level. Evaluating the historical development of two way T – V (French *tu* and *vous*) pronominal contrast in European languages, Brown and Gilman (1960) have proposed power-and-solidarity model in usage of pronominal honorification.

Several linguists have discussed and categorized types of honorificity in Nepali in their own convenient and reasonable ways (Schmidt 1976; Schmidt and Dahal, 1993; Angdambe 1999; Dahal 1974; Regmi 2003, 2006). For example, Schmidt and Dahal (1993) outline four levels of honorific: low, middle, honorific and high honorific. Based on the individual whose status is being expressed, Comerie (1976) categorizes honorifics into three main types: (i) addressee (or speaker/hearer), (ii) referent (or speaker/referent) and (iii) bystander (or speaker and bystander). So, it will be quite convenient to classify them in three levels of hierarchy and further sub –classify each level, where required. Factors like relative age, sex, rank, role, etc. and contextual factors such as the formality or informality of the situation, whether the person is addressed (second person) or referred to (third person), and whether the third person is present or not, modify and affect the honorification process.

This paper will consider some recent phenomena and practices in the use of honorifics in Nepali to add to the existing body of the work already done. It will focus on how

honorification operates in Nepali. It will observe mainly three process at work and will try to show that: (i) honorification is not constant even if the subject being addressed or referred to is constant which could result from factors like presence/absence (proximal/distal) of the subject or emotional state of the addressor toward the subject; (ii) highest order honorification or 'royalese' is in vogue and is becoming popular and conventionalized especially, among the urbanites; and, (iii) neutralization is the strategy used when one particular honorific cannot be established because of similar status of the interlocutors. Honorification is not merely canonical stratification of hierarchical relationship among interlocutors as evinced on the surface; it cuts much deeper into the human psyche and reflects the addresser's deeper perceptive judgement of the addressee in the given context. It is argued, with evidence, that under certain emotional and psychological state, the expected honorification undergoes change.

## 2. Method

The method for data collection is based on the observation of honorific use in conversation and published source of narrative account where the addressor undergoes change in the use of expected honorific under intense psychological state. Conclusion is drawn from the observed use of the honorific. For the major sources of the data, personal narratives published in Nepal National Fortnightly, 16-31 Bhadau 2058BS/1-16 September, 2001, Volume 2(3) and Annapurna Post National Daily, published by Capt. Rameswor Thapa: Kathmandu, dated May 4, 2019 have been used as the main corpus of the data. The psychologically charged honorific patterns used by the narrators form the main basis of this psycholinguistic study that indexes the fluidity of this linguistic phenomena.

## 3. Honorific operation in Nepali

Honorification operates mainly in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person (except by the king who uses the royal form 1<sup>st</sup> person plural हामी *hāmi* 'we' and the corresponding honorific verbal forms). Let us look at the honorific levels in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person and collocation with the verb गर *gar* 'do'.

Table 1: Honorific levels

Honorific level	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
Low	ते तौ 'you' (intimate) Collocation गरछस्: <i>gar-tʰəs</i>	ऊ u, (jo-present; tjo-absent) Collocation: गरछ <i>gar-tʰə</i>
Middle	तिमी <i>timi</i> 'you' (familiar) Collocation: गरछौ <i>gar-tʰəu</i>	उनि <i>uni</i> , ( <i>jini</i> -present; <i>tini</i> -absent) Collocation: गरछिन् <i>gar-tʰən</i> (also, formal & respectful)
	तपाईं <i>təpāi</i> 'you' Collocation: गरनुहुन्छ <i>gar-nu-hun-tʰə</i>	

High	हजुर <i>fiəɕʰur</i> 'you' (more formal than तपाईं <i>təpɑĩ</i> ) Collocation: गर्नुहन्छ <i>gər-nu-fiun-tʃʰə</i>	
	यहाँ <i>jəɦɑ̃</i> 'you' (more polite and impersonal than तपाईं <i>təpɑĩ</i> ) Collocation: गर्नुहन्छ <i>gər-nu-fiun-tʃʰə</i>	वहाँ <i>wəɦɑ̃</i> 's/he' Collocation: गर्नुहन्छ <i>gər-nu-fiun-tʃʰə</i>
	सरकार <i>sərkār</i> 'Your Highness' Collocation: गरिबकिसन्छ <i>gar-i-baks-in- tʃʰə</i>	सरकार <i>sərkār</i> 'His/Her Highness' Collocation: गरिबकिसन्छ <i>gar-i-baks-in- tʃʰə</i>
	मौसुफ <i>məusuph</i> 'Your Majesty' Collocation: गरिबकिसन्छ <i>gar-i-baks-in- tʃʰə</i>	<i>məusuph</i> 'His/Her Majesty' Collocation: गरिबकिसन्छ <i>gar-i-baks-in- tʃʰə</i>

Honorific collocation: From the above table, it is clear the subject verb collocation varies in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person in low and middle honorific but the collocation remains same in high honorific and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Let us see some of the situations how honorification works in Nepali.

### 3.1 Honorification governed by psychological state: constant subject versus inconstant honorification

In this section, we will discuss some of the situations in which honorification use is influenced by the perception the speaker holds toward the person mentioned. This situation is noticeable both in written as well as spoken variety. The fluctuation of honorification for the same subject is a result of fluctuating emotional state of the speaker/writer towards the subject.

In spoken variety, in the presence of the subject the honorific remains more or less constant, unless the addressor is annoyed and does not care much about offending the subject, in which case the use of honorific falls to low from higher one. For example, instead of तपाईं *təpɑĩ* 'you', the speaker may use lower तिमी *timi* 'you' or even lowest तँ *tə̃* 'you' (which rarely happens, but when it happens, there is lot of heat between both the parties).

Whereas, in absence of the subject depending on the degree of respect that the speaker has, the honorifics may change. To some one, whom the speaker would have used हजुर *fiəɕʰur* or तपाईं *təpɑĩ* in direct address may use वहाँ *wəɦɑ̃* 's/he' as the corresponding absential honorific if the respect for the subject is constant and is of the same degree, but may use उनी *uni* or *u* if the person does not have high degree of respect for the subject or the speaker feels that the person does not deserve that honour. One assumption in such a case is that the subject will not know the kind of honorific that the speaker used for him/her.

In this section, we will consider the use of honorific in academic, political and personal accounts drawing the evidences mainly from the published sources in the media.

### 3.1.1 Academics

Here, it might be pertinent to note that in recent years the teachers have been using high honorific *तपाईं tapāi* to college or university students to whom they would use low honorific some years ago unless it was highly formal occasion. This can be explained in the light of student movements which have become quite powerful especially after the restoration of democracy in Nepal, which at times even pose strong threat to the teachers. Also, the Nepali society is becoming more and more egalitarian, with class differences gradually dissipating which gets reflected in the use of honorifics. The use of such honorific is prevalent in both spoken and written forms. The practice can be contrasted with the Nepali teacher-student relationship in Nepal and in India. In India also there are places where they run schools and colleges where Nepali students are in majority and where Nepali as subject is also taught (Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam and Meghalaya). While setting question paper and giving instructions to the students about answering the questions the practice in Nepal is to use high honorific like *कुनै दुईवटा प्रश्नको उत्तर दिनुहोस् kunai dui wāṭā prāśnā ko uttar dinuhoṣ* ('answer any two questions' ) whereas in India the same instruction would be *कुनै दुईवटा प्रश्नको उत्तर देउ kunai dui wāṭā prāśnā ko uttar deu* ('answer any two questions' ).

### 3.1.2 Politics and media

Not just in academia as indicated above, in media also the phenomena is observed. To illustrate, examples from published source in journalistic media is cited. Following are the examples in which for a person holding a very high public office lower honorific has been used, to whom otherwise high honorific had to be used, because they fell in the eyes of the writer / narrator. With due regard and apology to the persons concerned, the examples are cited to show the language used by the editor *Nepal National Fortnightly* volume 2 No.1 Bijaya Kumar and colleagues (2001) while referring to the then prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala who had become rather unpopular around the time and there was consistent demand for his resignation which he finally did and subsequently Sher Bahadur Deuba from the same party become the prime minister. Expressions like the following have used, tweaking the honorific:

- (1) a. *यस्तो अवस्थामा पनि राजिनामा नगरेका कोइराला साउन ४ गते बिहिवार किन राजिनामा गरे*  
*esto əwəsthā mā pəni rāḍināmā nəgərekā koirālāle sāun 4 gāte bihibārā kinā rāḍināmā*  
*gare ?*  
'why did koirala resign on Thursday, the fourth of Shrawan who had not resigned under such situation also?'
- b. *कोइराला 'गुड फर नथिङ' अवस्थामामा पुग्न थालेका थिए*  
*Koirālā 'good for nothing' əwəsthā mā pugnā t<sup>h</sup>ālekā t<sup>h</sup>ije*  
'koirālā had reached the stage of good for nothing '

In these examples middle order honorific (*नगरेका, थालेका थिए nāgarekā, t<sup>h</sup>ālekā t<sup>h</sup>ije*) and corresponding verb conjugation is used, where as for the same subject (Koirala), the writer uses higher honorific elsewhere in different situation.

### 3.1.3 Personal reminiscence narrative: royal massacre

Another example is from Volume 2(3) (16-31 Bhadau, 2058BS) issue of the same magazine where Kumar Gorakh Shamsar, son-in-law of King Birendra and one of the survivors of the incident of royal massacre of 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2001, in which he describes the shootings by the then Crown Prince Dipendra. Gorakh Shamsar uses the highest honorific used for the royal family *बक्सियो bāksijo* in almost all the occasions but descends down to the use of low honorific when he describes about Dipendra pointing his gun and shooting him and his wife Princess Shruti. Let us look at some of the statements.

- (2) *मौसुफले ड्याम्म गोली मेरो छातिमा हानी बक्सियो*  
*māusup<sup>h</sup>-le djammā goli mero t<sup>h</sup>ātīmā hānibāksjo*  
 'His Highness shot a fire in my chest'.

Till here, he uses the highest royal honourific *हानिबक्सियो hānibāksjo* 'shot'. But hence forth he starts to use lowest honorific as he sees his wife and other in-laws being shot.

- (3) *उसका आँखाहरु एकदम फोकस्ड थिए*  
*uskā ākhāhāru ekdam p<sup>h</sup>okāsed thije*  
 'his eyes were very focused'.

This is immediate next utterance after the above utterance where he uses lowest third person *उसका uskā* 'his'. It is at this point in narrative that the honorific drops to low while recollecting the most painful experience on the loss of life of the dearest ones and loss of all respect for the perpetrator.

- (4) *यत्तिकैमा युवराजधिराज फेरी आयो*  
*jāttikāimā jubārāḍḍ<sup>h</sup>irāḍḍ p<sup>h</sup>eri ājo*  
 'Crown Prince came again in the mean while'.

Here, conventionally, the use of *युवराजधिराज jubārāḍḍ<sup>h</sup>irāḍḍ* entails the use of highest honorific and the use of corresponding verb conjugation *यत्तिकैमा युवराजधिराज फेरी आई बक्सियो jāttikāimā jubārāḍḍ<sup>h</sup>irāḍḍ p<sup>h</sup>eri āibāksjo*. The descent from highest to lowest honorific can be explained when we imagine the emotional and mental state of the narrator who sees the dead bodies of his dear ones around him and the perpetrator of their death entering in. In such a situation the narrator does not see the person referred to as someone holding highest public office but as a perpetrator of crime for whom he does not see the need for the use of highest honour. This is significant considering the fact that the incidence is being narrated three months after the actual event. Even the mental recollection of the event in a distant time has powerful effect on the use of honorific.

- (5) एकछिन हेरेर कुन्नि के सोचेर यवराजधिराज गोली नचलाई फनक्क फकीं बक्स्यो

*ekts<sup>h</sup>in fiererə kunni ke sotserə jubārāḍd<sup>h</sup>irāḍ goli natsālāi p<sup>h</sup>ənəkka p<sup>h</sup>ərki bəksijo*

'Looking there for a while, god knows what he thought, he turned back without firing'.

Here, the narrator reverts back to the conventional highest honorific used for royal family, because the intensity of emotion felt while describing the incidence of being shot on himself and seeing his wife shot and falling is lessened when the narration of the intensely emotional recollected event was over and the description turns to the leaving of the perpetrator.

Here, it is important to note that the entire experience of the past is narrated some three months after the incidence took place. When the narrator reaches the part concerned with himself and his dear ones and the pain that he suffered thereof is relived he feels intensively, the language used is charged with emotion and is expressed in corresponding syntax.

### 3.1.3 Personal narrative: marital discord

Following data taken from published source in Annapurna National Daily 21 Baishakh 2076 (May 4, 2019) by Kunta Sharma on her husband Manjul that narrates their marital discord. In conventional norms, in a Nepali Hindu marriage the wife accords higher honour to her husband indicated by the use of higher honorific. But when the relationship becomes sour, the honorification turns upside down in distal mode and there is use of low honorific by the wife for her husband. However, the honorification stays in conventional norm in a proximal mode. In the following examples, the statements in both distal and proximal mode are placed side by side to show how when the context changes immediately from one mode to the other, the honorification changes accordingly.

- (6) a. घरबाट राम्रैसँग बिदा भएर गएको उसले कुनै चिठी-पत्र या खबर पठाएको थिएन। (distal)

*g<sup>h</sup>ər bāṭṭ rāmraī sāṅg bidā b<sup>h</sup>əerə gæeko usle kunai tsi<sup>h</sup>i - pətrə ja k<sup>h</sup>əbər pəṭ<sup>h</sup>æeko t<sup>h</sup>ienə*  
'Even though he had left home in good faith, he had not sent any letter or news'

- b. उसलाई परिवारको कुनै वास्ता नभएको कुरा त मैले पहिले नै थाहा पाइसकेकी थिएँ (distal)

*uslai pəriwārko kunai wāstā nāb<sup>h</sup>æeko kurā t māile pəṭ<sup>h</sup>ile t<sup>h</sup>āhā pāi sākeki t<sup>h</sup>iē*  
'I had already figured out much before that he didn't care about his family'

- c. अकस्मात् बिनासूचना ऊ चैतको अन्तिम साता तीन महिनापछि घर आयो (distal)

*akasmāt binā sutsānā u tsait ko antim sātā tin māḥinā pəts<sup>h</sup>i ghərə ājo*  
'Suddenly, he appeared at home after three months in the last week of Chait'

- d. भान्सा छेउको कोठाबाट मञ्जुलले चुलामा चियायो (distal)

*b<sup>h</sup>ānsā ts<sup>h</sup>eu ko koṭṭābāt mənḍul-le tsulā-mā tsijājo*  
'Manjul peeped into the kitchen from the adjoining room'

- e. ऊसँगै एउटा विदेशीले पनि चियायो (distal)

*u sāṅgā euṭā bidesi-le pəni tsijājo*  
'A foreigner also peeped in along with him.'

- f. मैले मञ्जुलाई देखेपछि खुसी हुँदै भनें, 'खाना खान आउनुस्।' (proximal)  
*māile māṅṅul-lai dekhe-pāts<sup>h</sup>i k<sup>h</sup>usi fiūdāi bhānē – khānā khānā āunos*  
 'When I saw Manjul, I became happy and said, "Please come in to eat"'
- g. 'मैले खारै आएँ, उसले भन्यो।' (distal)  
*māile khāerāi ājē – usle bhānjo*  
 "'I have already eaten" he said'
- h. उसको अनुहार तमतमाउँदो थियो (distal)  
*usko ānufiār tāmtāmaūdo t<sup>h</sup>ijo*  
 'His face looked flushing'
- i. मैले निकै बेर उसको गतिविधि हेरिरे र भनें, 'के चहार्नुहुन्छ?' (proximal)  
*māile nikāi ber usko gātibid<sup>h</sup>i hēri-rāfiē rā b<sup>h</sup>ānē – ke tsāfiārnu fiunt<sup>h</sup>ā*  
 'I observed his activity for a long time and asked, "What are you sneaking around for?"'
- j. चाहिएको कुरा भन्नु नि, म दिन्छु (proximal)  
*tsāfiēko kurā bhānnu ni mā dint<sup>h</sup>u*  
 'Tell me what you want, I'll give you'
- k. तपाईं लोग्ने हो कि खानतलासी लिन आएको हवल्दार?' (proximal)  
*tāpāi logne fiō ki k<sup>h</sup>āntālāsi linā āeko hāwāldār*  
 'Are you a husband or a sergeant who came to do a house search?'
- l. तपाईं के भन्न चाहनुहुन्छ? प्रस्ट भन्नुोस्। (proximal)  
*tāpāi ke bhānnā tsāfiānu fiunt<sup>h</sup>ā prastā bhānnus*  
 'Tell me clearly, what you want to say?'
- m. ऊ मलाई भरे भोली आउँछ भनेर फुस्ल्याउँदै मसँगै बजार झन्यो। (distal)  
*u mālai bhāre bhōli āunt<sup>h</sup>u b<sup>h</sup>ānerā p<sup>h</sup>usljiāūdāi mā sāṅgāi bāḍār ḍ<sup>h</sup>ājjo*  
 'He descended to bazar with me reassuring me that he will come soon'
- n. तालिँदै आमाले भन्नुभयो, 'होइन के भएको तेरो पौइलाई? यहाँ बिहानै आएर मलाई जथाभावी बोलेर गयो।' (reported distal)  
*tāliḍāi āmāle bhānnu bhāyo, 'hōinā ke bhāeko tero poi-lāi – jāhā bihānāi āera mālai jā<sup>h</sup>āb<sup>h</sup>āwi bolerā gājjo*  
 'Agitated, my mother said, "What's wrong with your husband? He came here early in the morning, spoke all rubbish with me and left"
- o. आमा रुन्चे स्वरमा भुतभुताइरहनुभएको थियो (distal)  
*āma runtse swār-mā b<sup>h</sup>ut<sup>h</sup>ut<sup>h</sup>utāi rāfiānu b<sup>h</sup>āeko t<sup>h</sup>ijo*  
 'My mother was muttering to herself in a pitiable voice'
- p. उसले बेलुका आउँछ भनेको थियो (distal)  
*usle belukā āūt<sup>h</sup>u b<sup>h</sup>āneko thijo*  
 'He had said he would come in the evening'

In the examples above, the fluctuation in the use of honorification is clearly evident in the distal and proximal mode. There are only two cases: examples (e) and (n) where the narrator is referring to the third person. In (e) third person is a ‘foreigner’ who doesn’t evoke respect so low honorific is used, in (n), the person referred to is the narrator’s mother who is accorded high regard, so high honorific is used. The rest of the examples are the cases where narrator is referring or addressing her husband. Whenever she is addressing her husband, in proximal mode, she is using high honorific *təpāĩ*, whereas when she is referring to him, in distal mode, she is using the low honorific *u*. The use of honorification in the examples can be summarized in the following table:

Table 2: Honorification summary

Mode	Honorificity conjugation	Honorificity level	Example reference
Proximal	<i>k<sup>h</sup>ānā k<sup>h</sup>ānə āunu-fios</i> “Please come in to eat”	High	f
Proximal	<i>ke tsəfārnū fūnts<sup>h</sup>ə</i> “What are you sneaking around for?”	High	i
Proximal	<i>tsāfiēko kurā b<sup>h</sup>ānnu</i> “Please tell me what you want?”	High	j
Proximal	<i>təpāĩ logne fiō</i> “You are a husband”	High	k
Proximal	<i>təpāĩ ke bhānnə tsāfānu fūnts<sup>h</sup>ə</i> “What are you trying to say?”	High	l
Proximal	<i>prəsṭə b<sup>h</sup>ānnu fiōs</i> “Please say clearly”	High	l
Distal	<i>usle pət<sup>h</sup>āeko t<sup>h</sup>enə</i> “He had not sent”	Low	a
Distal	<i>uslai wāstā nəb<sup>h</sup>āeko</i> “Him didn’t care”	Low	b
Distal	<i>u ājo</i> “He came”	Low	c
Distal	<i>məndūlle tsijājo</i> “Manjul peeped”	Low	d
Distal	<i>bidesile tsijājo</i> “Foreigner peeped”	Low	e
Distal	<i>usle b<sup>h</sup>ānjo</i> “He said”	Low	g
Distal	<i>usko t<sup>h</sup>ijo</i> “His was”	Low	h
Distal	<i>usko gətibid<sup>h</sup>i</i> “His - activity”	Low	i
Distal	<i>u ɔ<sup>h</sup>ərjo</i> “He –came down”	Low	m
Distal	<i>āma b<sup>h</sup>utb<sup>h</sup>utāi rəfānu b<sup>h</sup>āeko t<sup>h</sup>ijo</i> “mother was muttering to herself”	High	n
Distal	<i>usle b<sup>h</sup>āneko t<sup>h</sup>ijo</i> “He had said”	Low	o

#### 4. Use of ‘royalese’

‘Royalese’ is the honorific form adapted from the language used by the royal families of Nepal (in the present Federal Democratic Republic Nepal, the royal families live a private life). This type of honorification is becoming popular among urbanite Nepalese. The honorification is restricted to high order as it has been modeled after the honorifics used by the royal family and to large extent aristocratic families. The different inflectional

forms of the verb बक्स् *baks-* ('give or grant') is rapidly spreading among the urbanites and is slowly penetrating into the rural areas as well. Some of such forms are:

- (7) a. 2<sup>nd</sup> person respect / imperative  
 खाना खाई बक्सियोस्  $k^h\bar{a}n\bar{a} k^h\bar{a}i b\bar{a}ksijos$  'Please eat your meal.'
- b. 3<sup>rd</sup> person present / future  
 खाना खाई बक्सिन्छ  $k^h\bar{a}n\bar{a} k^h\bar{a}i b\bar{a}ksints^h\bar{a}$  'eats/will eat.'
- c. 2<sup>nd</sup> person interrogative  
 खाना खाई बक्सियो  $k^h\bar{a}n\bar{a} k^h\bar{a}i b\bar{a}ksijo?$  'Have you eaten your meal?'
- d. 3<sup>rd</sup> person past  
 खाना खाई बक्सियो  $k^h\bar{a}n\bar{a} k^h\bar{a}i b\bar{a}ksijo$  'has eaten (his/her) meal'

However, in colloquial form बक्स् *baks* - becomes contracted to -स् *sa* as in खाईसियोस्  $k^h\bar{a}i sijos$  for खाईबक्सियोस्  $k^h\bar{a}i b\bar{a}ksijos$ , खाईसिन्छ  $k^h\bar{a}i sints^h\bar{a}$  for खाई बक्सिन्छ  $k^h\bar{a}i b\bar{a}ksints^h\bar{a}$ . Here, it is to be remembered that the more royal form of ज्युनार *đjunar* is replaced with more common form खाना  $k^h\bar{a}n\bar{a}$  'food'

Initially, the use was limited to Kathmanduites, that is, especially among the elites and the educated, with educated women using it the most (women are very often the forbearers of higher variety of language use). Language happens to be one of the major tools and indicators of a particular social class. Since the tendency and desire among people is to climb higher in the social ladder, the highest variety started to get spread over the privileged cross-section of the society. Kathmandu being the center of all socio-cultural-political-economic center, the people from outside the valley assimilated the style with them and spread it in other parts, so much so that now even in villages the variety can be heard to some extent.

Another reason could be, after the restoration of democracy, the power which was concentrated in the king got diffused, and thus with this the language form used especially by the royalty diffused to commoners as well.

## 5. Neutralization

When the role relation cannot be clearly defined or if both addressor and the addressee are of the same level this process is noticed through the conjugational use of *fiāmi* 'we', to neutralize the supposedly negative effect caused by the direct address. *fiāmi* in normal use refers to first person plural, but in this case, it refers to second person. The use can be seen in following two ways:

### 5.1 Interrogation

- (8) a. *fiāmro g<sup>h</sup>ər kəfiā pərjo?*  
 'Where do you live?' (lit. Where does our house fall?)

- b. *hāmro pesā ke fiolā?*  
'What is your profession?' (lit. What could be our profession?)
- c. *hāmi Kat<sup>h</sup>mandu kəfiile p<sup>h</sup>ərkinē?*  
'When are you returning to Kathmandu?' (lit. When are we to return to Kathmandu?)

Such use is limited to certain situations, when the speaker is asking rather personal questions and does not want to offend the listener or does not want him/her to feel uncomfortable about it. It is rather indirect way of asking questions, which is more formal than the usual second person honorific *təpaĩ* or *fiədur* 'you'. It is also a way of showing solidarity with the subject in a politer and formal way. Though in Sociolinguistics 'solidarity' and 'politeness' are diametrically opposite concepts: expression of solidarity, especially among men, calls for non-polite forms.

### 5.2 Impersonal/ non-committal imperative:

When the addressor does not want to sound rude and wants to show politeness then also the form is used but without *hāmi* and with its corresponding verb conjugation. For example,

- (9) a. *əlikəti pərə sərəũ* ( 'move a little bit', lit. 'let's move aside' )  
b. *t<sup>h</sup>iʈə gərəũ* ( 'do it fast', lit. 'let's do it fast' )

These expressions are almost like commands, but are polite and are intended to avoid being rude, which is achieved by neutralizing the pinch by the use of verb conjugation of inclusive first person plural *hāmi* in an indirect way.

## 6. Conclusion

Honorification is a mix-bag of number of factors and forces at work. It's a complex psycholinguistic phenomena. As the society keeps on evolving and changing, the social and psychological use of language also emerges in the same way. Language processing and language representation keeps adapting (Green and Abutalebi 2013; Bialystok 2017) itself in the human mind, be it monolingual or bilingual mode. A linguistic phenomena like honorification that serves as the basis for interpersonal relation among the interlocutors and the nature of interpersonal relations that defines the choice of honorifics needs to be studied from multiple perspectives.

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#### Declaration

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