

DYNAMICS OF MEANING-MAKING IN NEPALI-ENGLISH BILINGUAL INTERACTIONS

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A growing proportion of Nepali speakers settled in urban areas who were educated through English-medium boarding schools present a tendency to use numerous English expressions along with Nepali in their daily interactions. This is also the case in some specific socio-professional environments such as TV and radio entertainment broadcasts made for the latest generations. The speakers make use of a variety of discursive resources for expressive purposes. The combinatory properties of such mixed language practices allow them to construct meaning in order to fit the requirements of particularly demanding social interactions, where most speakers exhibit the knowledge of a complex linguistic repertoire. The purpose of this article is to introduce the sociolinguistic context of contemporary urban Nepalese society, based on the most recent studies which have attempted to apprehend the role of English in Nepal today. A brief analysis of several examples of interactions extracted from a media corpus is also presented to make visible the mechanisms of meaning-making in a conversation where the two participants alternate Nepali and English.

Key words: Nepali, English, urban settings, meaning-making, daily speech

1. Introduction

Understanding situations in which different linguistic communities come into contact means bringing together different realities based on different points of view. It may be, first of all, from the point of view of the socially, historically and politically constructed notion of named languages (García and Li 2014: 17) such as “English”, “Hindi”, “Mandarin” etc. This implies that we consider such "linguistic objects" as systems and that we seek to understand the effects produced by the influence of one system on another (borrowings, code-switching phenomena). This point of view remains very structural in its nature and does not focus on the perspective of speakers. Another point of view would be one which lays more emphasis on the language practices, the representations and the resources which form the repertoire of the speakers and the social groups where they belong. It is then a linguistics of speech, of interaction, and of the effect produced by speech. It allows us to gain a better insight of the social and community construction of the individuals in and by their discursive choices. The study of multilingual interactions invites us to focus our attention on complex communicative dynamics in which the possibilities for construction of social meaning are particularly diverse. The latest generations of Nepali language speakers – speakers of an Indo-European language which is the official language of Nepal and the one most used in intercommunity contact situations in Nepalese society - seem interesting to us in many ways. Although Nepal is not a postcolonial society, its institutions were nevertheless marked by the influence of the British Raj (1858-1947). The increasing place of English in the Nepalese education

system has made it a language that does not appear as completely foreign for many speakers, particularly in urban environments. A growing proportion of speakers integrate English resources in a continuous way, in combination with Nepali, in their daily communicative practices. The purpose of the present article is to provide a general overview of language practices and the place of English in contemporary Nepalese urban society. We will also recall the importance of some major works which have focused on the Nepali-English language mixed practices, before looking at a few specific examples from conversations in media contexts.

2. Language practices and the place of English in Nepalese society

The last national census conducted in 2011 provides us a global overview of linguistic diversity in Nepal. A short half (44.6%) of Nepalese people consider Nepali as their first language, a denomination that needs to be critically examined in the Nepalese context, considering that Nepali is often spoken with more ease than other “mother tongues” by minority language speakers. The number of languages recorded in Nepal, according to the 2011 census, amounts to 123. In terms of number of speakers, the most represented languages are the languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European group. (Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi etc.) and, in second position, the many Tibeto-Burman languages (Newar, Tamang, Magar, Limbu, Gurung, Sherpa, Tibetan, etc.). A few Austro-Asiatic languages (Santhali, Munda languages) can also be found, as well as one Dravidian language (Kurukh Nepali).

For linguistic communities that do not speak Nepali as a first language, the official and national language is often considered as the language of the “outside”, spoken at school, in the shops, at the bank, at government institutions and in intercommunity interactions. It is also the language most represented in the media in general (radio, television, printed newspapers). The first language (Newar, Gurung, Sherpa, Maithili, etc.) would perhaps qualify as the language of the “inside”, being spoken at home with the family or the closest members of the local community. In front of the prestige usually associated with the acquisition of the dominant language, which is implicitly and explicitly required to accomplish most tasks of everyday life, speakers of other languages in Nepal often see the use of their languages stigmatized (Dahal 2000: 174). It is also perhaps one of the reasons that may lead them to adopt the use of a mixed conversation mode, by integrating Nepali segments into their daily interactions in their first language.

The first language is sometimes difficult to determine since bilingualism is common and concerns a very large majority of the Nepalese population, as recalled by the authors of a UNESCO report on linguistic diversity in Nepal, issued in 2005 after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity: “*Bilingualism is prevailing all over the country. In schools and places where there is access to schools, bilingualism is prevalent among young people of all ethnic groups.*” (Toba, Toba and Rai 2005: 14). The first language in the Nepalese context often refers to the language to which a speaker chooses to identify. The named language thus serves a function of identity designation and is often

combined with the idea of ethnic identity. However, due to the omnipresence of Nepali in the education and administrative system, as well as in daily intercommunity interactions, the official and national language remains the preferred language of communication for the last generations of urbanized and educated Nepalese citizens. A significant number of minority language communities in Nepal have already undergone language shift and the use of the first language is decreasing considerably (Toba, Toba and Rai 2005: 15).

Bilingualism in the Nepalese context generally implies the use of Nepali in addition to the first language (Newar, Tamang, Maithili etc.). But the linguistic repertoire of many individuals is often more extensive since it incorporates languages of international diffusion, such as English or Hindi. In the case of Hindi, intercomprehension with several Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the Tarai lowlands, bordering on the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, means that many speakers may consider it nearly as a first language. As far as the rest of the population is concerned, a rather extensive passive knowledge of Hindi is frequently observed, especially in urbanized areas where daily access to the products of the Indian film and music industry guarantees significant exposure to Hindi. The place occupied by English in Nepalese society seems more complex to evaluate today. It has no official status in Nepal but its growing presence in Nepalese society, its use in large areas of the education system and its strong presence in the media industry contribute to the general feeling that it must be mastered to face the modern world.

English was introduced quite recently as a school subject in the Nepalese educational system, which is in 1951 according to Bista (2011: 1). Along with public schools teaching in Nepali, an expanding number of private boarding schools use English as the main language for knowledge transmission. Full instruction in English was primarily reserved to well-off social classes but students from more economically modest backgrounds tend to gain access to that system through the obtention of scholarships. However, the growing importance of English in the educational system alone cannot explain the evolution of language practices towards the use of a mixed Nepali-English language. The English taught and used in the education system is still a “*library language*” (Bista 2011: 3) and it would be an overstatement to describe it in many parts of Nepal as a *second language* in the traditional sense of the term.

Speakers who have acquired strong English skills may, however, represent one of the possible starting points for the spread of the language outside the educational environment, such as in the print media or contemporary Nepalese literature written in English (Toba, Toba and Rai 2005: 19). Literature written by non-native English speakers is characterized by a particularly creative use of the language, and the tendency to contextualize the language with elements from local languages is commonly found in the works of contemporary South Asian writers in English. Nepali-English mixed bilingual creativity is also perceived as a natural tendency (“*neither nativization nor Englishization is weird today*”, Karn 2012: 26), and is not limited to the written language.

In an article entitled "The Many Faces of English in Nepal", Giri (2015: 110) goes so far as to assume that the model of a proficient English speaker in Nepal today is not necessarily the native English speaker, but rather the competent Nepalese speaker who has acquired a strong mastery of the language. His view is therefore in opposition to Bista (2011), especially when he suggests to redefine, not without a certain radicality, the categories of foreign language and second language in the Nepalese context: "*A foreign language is used for the purpose of absorbing the culture of another nation, whereas a second language is used as an alternative way of expressing the culture of one's own environment.*" (Giri, 2015:96). It is perhaps after proficient English speakers in Nepal leave the education system (where English may still be perceived as a foreign language) that they find a field of experimentation for language use without the normative constraints of the institution. They would then increase their proficiency in English in more dynamic and interactive social patterns, and adjust their speech to their daily environment, to the point that English may take the shape of a second language.

English in Nepal is spoken differently from the English spoken in other South Asian countries (Giri 2015:107) even though it contains phonological and morphosyntactic features found in the speech of speakers of other Indo-Aryan languages. It is especially in the vocabulary that the mark of great inventiveness and forms not attested in standard English can be found. English as it is spoken in Nepal is more and more often referred to by its own speakers as "*Nenglish*" (Duwadi 2010: 43), a portmanteau word which combines "Nepal" and "English". This may reinforce the idea that an endogenous standard of the English language is gradually establishing itself in Nepal.

As in any modern society, the implicit norms of language are often spreading to the general population from the productions of the radio and television media industries. Apart from a few programs with international political content, television broadcasts are not recorded entirely in English in Nepal. Most programs can be divided into two broad categories: (1) those which are entirely in Nepali (television news, comedy series about daily life in rural areas, debates on socio-political issues); (2) those which are presented in a mixed speech combining expressive resources from Nepali and English in varying proportions (interviews with celebrities from the world of show business, films or television series where the main characters belong to a middle-class urban environment such as *Singh Durbar* in 2013, etc.). Language usage in the media context may then have repercussions on usage for speakers who adopt this mixed speech in their everyday life, especially since such language alternation phenomena between Nepali and the other vernacular languages are also commonly found. This integrated language behavior serves as a rather remarkable power for expressiveness.

3. Mixed Nepali-English linguistic practices: a brief state of the art

Numerous case studies of mixed language practices involving the use of English in South Asian contexts have flourished since the beginning of the 21st century. They describe the use of English along with, for example, Urdu (Anwar 2009) , Bengali (Battacharja 2010,

Hosain 2014), Hindi (Si 2010, Ganti 2016), Tamil (Sanmuganathan 2018), Singhala (Ranasuriya 2015, Jayawardena 2018) or Telugu (Bandi-Rao & Den Dikken 2014). A great deal of works have also addressed this phenomenon in a Nepali-speaking context relying on ethnographic observation. This is the case for example in popular music (Greene 2001, Chhetri 2012). Greene is particularly interested in the links between the intertwining of languages and cultures and postmodern musical aesthetics in Nepal. Based on interviews with urban Nepalese youth, he highlights the introspective aspects of the relationship between the latest generations of Nepali speakers and a Westernized pop culture that penetrates progressively the social structures in Nepal. Chhetri's study explores 120 Nepali film songs broadcasted on radio stations from Kathmandu and Butwal. The analysis of mixed language practices in the song lyrics serves the purpose of revealing socio-discursive implications associated with recurrent stylistic processes. The use of expressive resources from English is very often associated with youth and urbanity. Several other contexts involving Nepali-English mixed language practices have also been investigated, such as advertising (Acharya 2009) or contemporary literature (Karn 2012, Shrestha 2014).

Acharya (2009) conducted a survey to evaluate the proportion and integration of English segments in Nepalese television commercials, using a four-hour corpus of advertisements recorded from Avenues Television and Kantipur Television (between 7 am and 9 am and from 7 pm to 9 pm) during the months of July and October 2009. He pinpoints the deliberate association of English with certain marketing strategies aimed at promoting cosmetics or related to the leisure industry. In the case of contemporary Nepali literature, Karn (2012) examines how the *nepālipan* ("nepalinity") appears as carefully enshrined inside the writings of Nepalese writers who use English as their language of literary expression. He considers that the mixture of resources from both Nepali and English is perceived as a quite natural practice in the contemporary literature (2012: 26), whether it is written in Nepali or in English as a matrix language (Myers-Scotton 1993). In her analysis of Nepali-English code-switching occurrences in Narayan Wagle's novel *Palpasa Café* (2001), Shrestha (2014) also finds that the intricacies of Nepali and English allow the author to form complex symbolic associations in order to express the complexity of the Nepalese social context within the fictional discourse.

The education environment also represents an interesting context for the observation of linguistic practices involving mixed Nepali-English communicative competence. Bista (2011) rejects the idea that English is a "second language" in Nepal and considers that it is still taught by means of obsolete teaching methods (grammar-translation). The assessment of English proficiency at the SLC exam (*School Leaving Certificate*, now remodeled as *Secondary Education Examination* or SEE since 2017) relies a lot on memorizing and reciting information without including enough creative writing. Phyak (2011, 2015, 2016) argues that teaching English in Nepal should be better contextualized and reflect the socio-cultural realities of the country. He also emphasizes the importance of providing education both in English and local languages for speakers who do not consider Nepali as their first language. Nepali, like English, should only, according to

him, be introduced into class practices from secondary education for those populations, as part of a multilingual education system with dominant presence of local languages (mother tongue based multilingual education, 2015: 135). Knee (2016), in her doctoral research on translanguaging pedagogy in literacy classes for Nepalese children in the UK, insists on the benefits of "hybrid" practices (a term used by an interviewed Nepalese teacher, 2016: 66) which may provide a cognitive advantage to convey complex knowledge. Some authors (Ranabhat 2018, Duwadi 2018) seek to evaluate the quality of English instruction in boarding schools in Nepal and to study representations of these education practices among teachers and parents. The inclination of many schools to adopt a full English language education despite the lack of well-trained staff for this also tends to favor the use of mixed language practices in the school environment outside the classroom (Duwadi 2018: 98). English alone is rarely used as a language of communication and appears to be rather some sort of tacit agreement in teacher to teacher interactions (2018: 181). The ease and fluidity of this mixed Nepali-English conversation mode would later be reinforced in other everyday life settings outside the education environment.

Other authors raise the question of the status of English (Giri 2014, 2015, Poudel 2016, Shrestha 2016) as well as the progressive normalization of certain characteristics of what becomes a Nepalese variety of English (Kamali 2010, Duwadi 2010). Giri (2014, 2015) considers that English has become a required language in many interaction contexts in Nepal, going so far as to say that its importance in Nepalese society would eventually be equivalent to Nepali. He also notes that Nepali-English mixed language practices are starting to spread in rural areas (2015: 102). Poudel (2016) focuses on the power relations between languages and their status in the academic field in Nepal. He draws attention to the persistence of an equation between the practice of English and access to higher posts in higher education and research. Shrestha (2016) analyzes the role and status of English in Nepal, as well as the attitudes of the main actors in the education, media and business spheres in relation with the use of English. He believes that English sometimes occupies the central place in some sociolinguistic spaces that could - or should? - be reinvested by local languages (2016: 107). The emergence of a Nepalese variety of English is also being investigated and considered as deserving attention, as evidenced by the results of Kamali's 2010 survey of 88 students and teachers in the secondary education system. It appears that most of the interviewed speakers do not necessarily aim at developing so-called "native" skills in English. On the contrary, they express their intention to cultivate a locally marked pronunciation, as well as lexical and syntactic expression associated with what can now be seen as a Nepalese English (2010: 4) model, which Kamali calls Nepanglish. The term Nenglish, more frequently in use, is preferred by Duwadi (2010) who discusses the need to contribute to the development of a standardized variety of English in the Nepalese context.

Several authors have opted for another approach which focus on the identification processes associated with mixed language practices. Liechty (2006) studies the

relationship between the media, the English language and its evocative power among Nepalese youth in urban areas (in the Kathmandu Valley). The main objective is to determine some of the contours of a contemporary urban Nepalese identity which, as it incorporates close ties with a Westernized conception of modernity, retains nevertheless a mighty Nepalese socio-cultural foothold. A detailed analysis of some recurring English borrowings in the mixed conversations of speakers belonging to the younger generations allows him to reveal the semiotic potential which can be associated with those words. Many of them, such as *body*, *face* or *love*, are frequently substituted in place of their counterparts in Nepali *jiu*, *anuhār* and *māyā* in everyday conversation. These terms are associated with identity construction dynamics that are part of a modern lifestyle and their original meaning is expanded (2006: 25): *body* does not simply refer to the human body in its morphological aspects, but rather refers to the idea of a male body that is pleasant to look at, such as the one of some public figures cherished by the Nepalese youth. The same goes for *face*, but this time in association with femininity (2006: 18-19). The example of *love* can be understood through a similar logic since it is no longer related to a traditional love relationship, but to an image of love conveyed by stereotyped commercial and consumerist values, such as the "romantic" environment of restaurants with an intimate setting (2006: 21). The study of Khatri (2013) goes beyond the urban context to explore the perception of English in rural communities in Nepal. The increasing presence of English in many socio-professional fields, combined with representations of Nepali as a language of national cohesion and unity, influences heavily the identification processes of rural dwellers. A feeling of humiliation related to local languages is linked to a strong attraction towards Nepali and English (2013: 83), even though there are growing concerns about the weakening of linguistic and cultural identity for those population groups.

Finally, the recent doctoral dissertation of Gurung (2019) represents the most in-depth study that has been carried out on Nepali-English code-switching. This exhaustive study describes the social and historical factors leading to the emergence of mixed Nepali-English language practices. The approach is connected to variationist sociolinguistics and uses a methodology that lays great emphasis on quantitative aspects (313 participants, 200 questionnaires, 45 individual semi-directive interviews, 64 speakers interviewed in sessions groups, 4 interviews with key informants, recordings of spontaneous interactions in various communication contexts). The author chooses to focus his research around five major goals (2019: 22). The first is to study the frequency of English segments for different levels of linguistic analysis, through a description based on the contributions of theories that address the issue of code-switching in a structural way, such as the linear model of Sankoff & Poplack (1981) and the cognitive-syntactic model of Myers-Scotton (1993). The second objective of Gurung's thesis is to determine the reasons and motivations that justify conversational habits involving the alternation of Nepali and English. The third objective is to assess which social groups are most likely to alternate languages in their daily interactions. This has led the author to isolate the urban context as more conducive to the observation of mixed Nepali-English practices (2019: 218). The fourth objective is to understand the role of the media, tourism and commercial industry

in spreading mixed Nepali-English conversational habits. The fifth objective is to expose a few conclusions regarding the linguistic change that Nepali undergoes under the influence of English.

To meet these objectives, the theoretical and methodological framework of Gurung's study borrows both from traditional variationist sociolinguistic approaches and a more ethnographic methodology. The main purpose is to establish correlations between linguistic variation (phonetic traits, syntactic structures, etc.) and social variables (age, sex, place of residence, socio-professional class, etc.). The ethnographic description of situated interactions (restaurants, hospitals, markets, government sites) in both urban and rural contexts also allowed the author to focus on examples of spontaneous conversations. Among the most significant findings of this study, Gurung concludes that Nepali-English alternation is more frequently represented at lexical than syntactic level (2019: 368) and that the use of English segments appears as linked to a need for communication ease due to a lack of lexical competence in Nepali (2019: 370). The various contexts of interaction studied by Gurung also allow him to claim that Nepali-English mixed language practices can be found with a significant degree of variation at all levels of Nepalese society, regardless of the level of education, the place of residence, sex and age (2019: 373), although urbanity seems to have a special connection with Nepali-English bilingualism (2019: 381). It also draws attention to the fact that the use of mixed Nepali-English conversational habits has already become embedded in language behavior (2019: 375), so much that the prestige initially attached to this conversational register can no longer be considered the overriding factor which motivates code-switching (2019: 377). As for the effects of such practices on the Nepali apprehended as a linguistic system, Gurung does not report any significant changes because the alternation phenomena take place largely at a lexical level (spontaneous borrowings and idioms). At the morphosyntactic level, hybridization remains infrequent (2019: 387). The author, however, has reservations about these concluding remarks, for the study does not focus on diachronic factors (2019: 387).

Gurung's in-depth study represents, because of its breadth and exhaustivity, a pioneering work on Nepali-English mixed language practices throughout Nepalese society. It is thus a major contribution. However, the author acknowledges in his conclusions that his main objective is to provide an overview of Nepali-English bilingualism and code-switching at the general level in Nepal from predominantly quantitative aspects (2019: 395). The articulation of sociolinguistic representations with actual practices, as well as a dynamic analysis in interactionist terms, did not constitute the focal point of the discussion. That is why, while owing a substantial debt to this work which lays down all the essential milestones to guide our judgment, while serving as a reference work for the Nepalese context as a whole, we wish to keep on studying the Nepali-English mixed language practices through another approach. This approach, prominently qualitative and focusing on the urban context - for which Gurung showed the utmost relevance for the study of mixed language practices -, concentrates on the circulation of language resources, in the

framework of what Eckert (2012: 93) called the "third wave" of sociolinguistics. This means to focus on the making of social meaning at both the social and the individual levels. We thus associate ourselves with the idea that sociolinguistic variation is not only the "reflection of social identities" (Eckert 2012: 94) but that it also contributes to a stylized production of these identities. It takes shape in a continuous tension between, on one hand, the meaning-making potential of mixed linguistic resources and the speakers' environment and, on the other hand, the role of sociolinguistic ideologies and the importance of representations in the fabric of social meaning. It means that we need to go beyond the idea of contact between named languages, and to look at mixed language practices from the holistic point of view of the speakers and their language repertoire, through a linguistics of speech and discourse.

4. The speaker as a language resource mediator: analysis of conversational extracts

We built a short corpus of bilingual interactions extracted from media programs arranged into transcripts consisting of 5 hours and 15 minutes of recordings. These are mainly talk-show entertainment programs that have been broadcast on television and shared afterwards on online hosting platforms (apart from one radio podcast). The broadcasting of these programs took place between 2016 and 2019. The number of speakers amounts to 23. Examining the surnames of the participants allows, in the Nepalese context, to make certain assumptions about their ethnolinguistic background, but it does not necessarily guarantee a very reliable detection of the language repertoire of the speakers. Although all observed participants speak Nepali, it is difficult to assume how proficient they are in other vernacular languages of Nepal. We estimated, from their surnames traditionally associated with Nepali-speaking communities - with all the limitations that this categorization entails in a modern society - that about half of the participants were likely to be native speakers of Nepali. In terms of gender distribution, the corpus comprises of 12 women and 11 men, aged between 20 and 35, apart from two participants aged above 40.

The conversation extracts analyzed hereunder are presented with a simplified notation to facilitate reading. The English segments were transcribed in an orthographical manner and the Nepali segments in the official IPA notation for Nepali (Khatiwada 2009), with a few minor simplifications. The abbreviations for the morphemic description used for the Nepali segments are borrowed from the Leipzig Glossing Rules (2015 revision), to which we made three additions: we used the abbreviation ASP to describe *assertive particles* (such as *hai*, *ni* or *po*), the abbreviation OPT to refer to the *optative mood*, and the abbreviation IFR for the *inferential past* (Michailovsky 1996). The slashes (/) represent micro-pauses in the speech of the participants. Overlaps are indicated by means of an opening square bracket and an equal sign ([=).

The first extract is composed of four speech turns from an interview of a singer (speaker 1 or S1) by a radio host (speaker 2 or S2). The latter, expressing her enthusiasm when looking at the hair of her guest, asks him to give a few pieces of advice in terms of hair

care to the audience of the show. The singer then mentions heredity as a potentially important factor to explain why he has such nice-looking hairlocks:

S1: *heredity* पनि हुँदो रहेछ / *dadmom*को नै राम्रै छ / *silky* छ वहारुको
heredity pani hūdo rahets^ha *dad mom*-ko nai rāmrāi ts^ha *silky* ts^ha wahā-haru-ko
 too be-PTCP be-IFR.3SG -GEN FOC good COP COP 2PL-GEN
 'It can also be heredity / my dad and my mom's hair are very beautiful / they have silky hair [...]'

S2: *so good genes* त छ हैन ?
so good genes ta ts^ha haina ?
 FOC COP N-ASP
 'So you have good genes, haven't you ?)

S1: अँ
 ँ
 'Yeah.'

S2: *बन्सानुगत* त भन्दै हुनुहुन्छ त
bansānugat ta b^handai hunuhunts^ha ta
heredity FOC say-PTCP be-PRS.2SG FOC
 (you're talking about heredity then)

In reaction to the English *heredity*, the host of the show expands its meaning through the periphrastic expression *good genes*. The emergence of the Nepali term for this notion at the end (*bansānugat*) needs to be discussed. It could imply that the interviewee's use of English in this conversation context (on a national radio broadcast, here on Radio Kantipur) is indirectly questioned by the host. It could for example be connected to a will to combine the two lexical units (*bansānugat* and *heredity*) to make the topic less ambiguous to a wider audience. A heavily sanskritized vocabulary item such as *bansānugat* belongs to a highly formal register and would be less likely to appear in an informal conversation. Its use here is therefore not insignificant and refers to a certain language representation: the use of English is neutralized by the choice of a vocabulary item belonging to an acrolectal form of Nepali. The speakers, in and through their discursive choices, appear to be positioning themselves in relation to different representations attached to the linguistic forms they use in their daily speech. In order to obtain a better insight into the matter, we have also submitted this short extract, albeit informally, to the opinion of three native speakers of Nepali (age range between 22 and 30 years old) who shared with us that a feeling of extraneity emanates from the use of *bansānugat* in daily informal communication, which may indicate that the use of particular Nepali lexical items could be related to the intention to display more prestige than their English counterparts and perceived as a token of learnedness.

The second example is an extract from the interview of a young female volleyball athlete (speaker 4 or S4) by an older female host (speaker 3 or S3) in a television talk-show:

S3: *OK/so volleyball र खेलकुदलाई लिएर तपाईंको आगामी दिनमा चाहिँ*

OK so volleyball ra k^helk^hud-lāi liera tapāi-ko āgāmi din-mā tsāi
 CONJ sport-DAT take-CONJ 2SG-GEN coming day-LOC FOC

के के plans हरु छ ?

ke ke plans-haru ts^ha
 Q Q -PL COP

'OK, so with volleyball and sports what plans do you have for the future?'

S4: *o:m / interesting question रे के volleyball चाहिँ continue गर्छु/ अहिले चाहिँ*

hmm interesting question re ke volleyball tsāi continue garts^hu ahile tsāi
 QUOT Q FOC do-PRS.1SG now FOC

बिचमा अलिकति break भइरहेको थियो/ त्यसैले/ आफ्नै अब मेरो

bits-mā alikati break b^hai-raheko t^hiyo tesaile āp^hnai aba mero
 middle-LOC a little be-PROG be-IPFV.3SG so POSS REFL now POSS.1SG

half मा/ अब personal professional / सबै issues को कारणले गर्दा/ so I'm / going

half-mā aba personal professional sabai issues-ko kāran-le gardā so I'm going
 -LOC now all -GEN reason-INS do-PTCP

back to volleyball again / अब futuring गर्छु/ भर्खर उमेर भयो जस्तो

back to volleyball again aba futuring garts^hu b^hark^har umer b^hayo jasto
 now do-PRS.1SG just now age be-PST.3SG like

लाग्छ यो खेल खेल्न है

lāgts^ha yo k^hel k^helna hai
 attach-PRS.3SG DEM game play.INF ASP

'Hmm that's an interesting question, I will continue with volleyball. As for now, I was taking a little break. So... for my own, er... due to both personal and professional issues. So I'm going back to volleyball again, now I'm planning for the future, I feel it has just become the right age for that now, to play this game'.

The host adopts more formal vocabulary choices to refer to the idea of future such as *āgāmi din*, where the adjective *āgāmi* belongs to the *tatsam* lexical category (Avasthi and Sharma 1997: 138-139). Such lexical items have not undergone phonetic changes from their Sanskrit counterparts (*āgāmi* is the masculine nominative singular form of the stem *āgāmin*) and would appear less frequently in daily casual speech. The use of an integrated loanword from English, *plans*, is more likely to be related to the conversational habits of the younger interviewee, whose speech is sprinkled with English items and phrases throughout the whole duration of the interview. Segments such as *continue garts^hu* or *futureing garts^hu* reveal how the speaker makes use of some intuitive knowledge of morphosyntactic features of both Nepali and English, in order to combine them into a very distinct speech register. The conjunct use of the Nepali supporting verb *garnu* and of the English internal object (*continue*, *futureing*) appears like a way to connect two different cultural spheres by means of language. The neologism *futureing* (*garnu*) also displays how bilingual creativity can produce and adjust meaning in order to fulfill

expressive needs. This conversational behavior has been described as *code meshing* or *translingual practices* by Canagarajah (2013) who distinguishes it from language alternation or *code switching*.

The next extract is part of a casual interview of a well-known Nepalese blogger (speaker 6 or S6) and is conducted by another blogger (speaker 5 or S5). Both are young men in their twenties and the interaction was broadcast on a personal channel hosted on the YouTube® platform:

S5: *celebrities* ते यो *blog* मा मेरो पनि *story* आओस् भन्ने /
celebrities-le yo *blog*-mā mero pani *story* āos b^hanne
 -ERG DEM -LOC POSS.1SG too come-OPT.3SG say-PTCP

कतिको चाहना राख्थे ?

kati-ko tsāhanā rāk^hthe
 how much-GEN wish keep-IPFV.3PL

'How many celebrities requested to have their story published on this blog?'

S6: धेरै/ अँ धेरै राख्थ्यो त्यही बेला/ हैन ? / मैले/ अहिले पनि कहिले
 d^herai ā d^herai rāk^hthyo tehi belā haina mai-le ahile pani kahile
 a lot yeah a lot put-IPFV.3SG that time N-ASP 1SG-ERG now too when

कहीं *continue* गरिरहेको छु/ एक छिन् *meet* भन्ने *interview*

kahī *continue*gari-raheko ts^hu ek ts^hin *meet* b^hanne *interview*
 somewhere do-PROG be-PRS.1SG 1.NUM moment say-PTCP

segment मैले चलाउँछु भनेर

segment mai-le tsalāūts^hu b^hanera
 1SG-ERG operate-PRS.1SG say-CONJ (QUOT)

'A lot, yeah a lot were published at that time, right? Even now sometimes I continue to do it, I run a short segment of the interview when we met.'

The communicative resources borrowed from English in this short extract possess an expressive power of their own. *Celebrities*, *story*, or *interview* are direct references to the professional environment of the media industry. The substitution of Nepali language equivalent terms (e.g. *prasidd^ha mānts^he*, *ka^hā*, *antarvārtā*) would not necessarily be associated to the exact same connotations. *Celebrities* and *story* refer to successful individuals who specifically belong to the media industry. Their Nepali counterparts would be likely to produce a different effect on a young audience in the present context of Nepal. In the case of *story*, the meaning of the original English lexical item has also undergone a semantic restriction since it does not refer to a narrative in the general sense of the term, but rather to a *success story* of a person working in the media industry. The combination of Nepali and English resources may not only be compelled by a simple need for synonyms or lexical variation: it also allows the speakers to divide the reality around them into thinner layers of meaning. The use of the word *interview* is also very widespread in daily conversation to refer to interactions with celebrities in the media industry, as well as interviews in other professional contexts meant to provide access to a

job position. The English *interview* has now been completely integrated in the daily speech of contemporary Nepali speakers. The Nepali *antarvārtā* would suggest a more formal type of interview and would not adequately describe informal interactions which take place in the media entertainment industry destined to a young audience.

5. Conclusion

The Nepalese urban context could benefit from an exploratory approach which adopts an interactional perspective. It may be fruitful to shed more light on speech and to focus on communicative *resources* rather than only named *languages* – seen as socio-historical constructs –, to analyze and understand the complexity of identification processes from both a social and an individual point of view. The language practices of Nepali speakers in urban contexts, or in socio-professional environments where communication is highly anglicized, invite us to take more into account the ongoing tension between the appropriation of exogenous language resources and the need to adjust daily speech to local social contexts. Deciphering and questioning such bilingual meaning-making activity must be done through an ethnographic approach that involves, in a systematical manner, the point of view of speakers whose daily existence is deeply involved in the targeted cultural sphere.

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