Language, Education, and Empowerment: Voices of Kumauni Young Women in Multilingual India

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Abstract
My research explores the language and education situation in the Kumaun region of North India from the perspectives of rural Kumauni young women and in light of their views on empowerment and their aims for the future. My questions address language and education issues in the Kumaun 1) in relation to national policies and local ideologies, 2) as experienced and negotiated by young women, and 3) as applied in a unique Gandhian educational context. Based at Lakshmi Ashram, a Gandhian boarding school serving disadvantaged girls, I used ethnographic methods, focusing on a group of Kumauni young women. National-level language planning through the Indian Census, Constitution, and educational policies minimize some diversity. Locally, discourses about language and dialect, or bhasha and boli, and mother tongue allow for flexible categories and identities. Medium of instruction also takes new meaning through informal multilingual classroom practices. Each language – English, Hindi, Kumauni, and Sanskrit – is valued in its place or environment and in relationship with the other languages. Meanwhile educational opportunities vary in quality and reputation, including a push for English education. While constrained by social and economic realities, Kumauni young women look for ways to improve their lives. Alternative values advocated at the Ashram, and negotiated by the young women, point to empowerment as involving high thinking, self-confidence, and progress within community. I conclude using the ecology of language and continua of biliteracy to highlight significant themes and exploring the issues of collaboration, community, and ecology in relation to language and education.

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ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, AND EMPOWERMENT:
VOICES OF KUMAUNI YOUNG WOMEN IN MULTILINGUAL INDIA

Cynthia Groff

Nancy H. Hornberger

Local and minority means of producing, knowing, and communicating are often undervalued in the face of modern development schemes, universal systems of education, and languages of wider communication. Through this research, I attempt to understand a local situation from local perspectives – specifically the language and education situation in the Kumaun region of North India from the perspectives of rural Kumauni young women and in light of their views on empowerment and their aims for the future. My questions address language and education issues in the Kumaun 1) in relation to national policies and local ideologies, 2) as experienced and negotiated by young women, and 3) as applied in a unique Gandhian educational context. The Kumauni people of the Himalayan foothills, numbering over two million, are one of several linguistic minority groups in the Hindi-speaking state of Uttarakhand. My research was based at Lakshmi Ashram, a Gandhian boarding school serving disadvantaged girls from throughout the Kumaun. I used ethnographic methods during nine months of primary fieldwork, observing interactions around language and education, starting conversations on these themes, and conducting interviews, focusing on a group of Kumauni young women. National-level language planning through the
Indian Census, Constitution, and educational policies minimize some diversity. Locally, discourses about language and dialect, or *bhasha* and *boli*, and mother tongue allow for flexible categories and identities. Medium of instruction also takes new meaning through informal multilingual classroom practices. Each language – English, Hindi, Kumauni, and Sanskrit – is valued in its place or environment and in relationship with the other languages. Meanwhile educational opportunities vary in quality and reputation, including a push for English education and influenced, sometimes unexpectedly, by government policies. While constrained by social and economic realities, Kumauni young women look for ways to improve their lives. Alternative values advocated at the Ashram, and negotiated by the young women, point to empowerment as involving high thinking, self-confidence, and progress within community. I conclude using the ecology of language and continua of biliteracy to highlight significant themes and exploring the issues of collaboration and empowerment, community and ecology in relation to language and education.
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Minority Voices, and Language and Education Choices

From a distance the temptation to generalize about a group of people is strong, even to generalize about their thoughts and feelings, whether they have motivation for education and how they feel about their own language and culture.

The Kumauni people don’t even want to know about the rest of the world... They don’t respect their own language. For example, we Punjabis are here and we keep our own language and culture, but they don’t want to talk to you in Kumauni. They would rather talk to you in Hindi... (E; PQ:07Oct12)

These comments came from two young English teachers in Almora. Although they had grown up in the Kumaun, they had attended urban English-medium schools and, being of Punjabi heritage, distanced themselves from the stereotypical Kumauni. As stereotypes are formed and policy implications are drawn based on assumptions about what others think or want, minority voices are often neglected – the voices of rural and “backwards” people, of minority language speakers, of women, of the young. Through my research, I attempt to understand a local situation from local perspectives – specifically the language and education situation in the Kumaun from the perspectives of rural Kumauni young women and in light of their dreams or aims for the future.

The Kumauni people of the Himalayan foothills, numbering over two million, are one of several linguistic minority groups in the Hindi-speaking state of Uttarakhand in North India. While incorporated peacefully into the Indian political system for years,
Kumaunis are often considered to be a “backwards” mountain people in the eyes of their neighbors in the plains, even in the eyes of some of the Kumaunis who have migrated out spatially and moved up socio-economically, and sometimes in the eyes of Kumauni young people themselves.

Unfortunately schools have often been the transmitters of such messages of backwardness particularly for linguistic minorities for whom the language and literacy of the school are different from those of the home and community. Meanwhile the education provided by schools is seen as a vehicle for upward socio-economic mobility, for escape from poverty and the “backwards” life. Schools also provide, to various degrees, access to the languages perceived as powerful and necessary for advancement, in this case standard Hindi and English. Issues of language and education in the Kumaun thus include both language acquisition, with concern for learning English in particular, and language shift, with questions about the use, value, and long-term prospects for the Kumauni language. Kumauni is the language of the home and the village in rural Kumaun. Hindi is the language of wider communication in the region and the language of government schools and administration. English and Sanskrit are taught as school subjects.

Research in the Indian context, as elsewhere, has shown that linguistic minorities are often disadvantaged in education systems that do not use their mother tongue as medium of instruction (Daswani, 2001; Jhingran, 2005; Mohanty, 2005). Jhingran describes various levels of disadvantage faced by linguistic minorities in India:

Based on Census data, some socio-linguistic surveys and interaction with education planners all over the country, it is felt that almost 25 per cent of all primary school going children face a moderate to severe learning disadvantage owing to their language background. (2005, p. 3)

While Jhingran and others see mother-tongue education as an important tool for
educational equity, problems include lack of effectively implemented models and apparent lack of community support. According to Jhingran, there is a need for “more in-depth information on language usage, proficiency and preferences” to inform decisions regarding educational interventions, as well as more research on second language acquisition in the Indian context (p. 27). Appropriate language teaching techniques should help in bridging between languages in school settings.

Although the literacy rate in Uttarakhand is higher than the national average, the literacy rate in Hindi among the Kumauni people is lower than the state average, with rural rates lower than urban rates and women still lagging behind men in measures of literacy. Mother-tongue literacy programs have been developed in Kumauni using the Devanagari script, but motivation is low for gaining literacy in Kumauni (Gordon, 2005). Jhingran (2005) mentions Kumauni speakers among the language groups that he describes as follows, with Kumauni being the local language and Hindi the regional:

In areas where the local language is considered a variant of the standard version of the regional language, the literacy levels are high and adults are largely bilingual, there is much higher motivation and parental pressure on children to quickly acquire the standard language. Even though the intelligibility of the standard dialect is quite low for children when they first come to school and they face serious problems of comprehension, they pick up the language quickly. (p. 53, emphasis original)

Even when the language variety is similar to the medium of instruction, however, children may face language disadvantage, especially because of poor language teaching strategies (p. 40). Jhingran emphasizes the need to respect the opinions and choices of the community regarding language and education decisions. Both use of and attitudes towards Kumauni and effective language instruction for Hindi, English, and Sanskrit are important in exploring the language and education situation in the Kumaun.

Medium of instruction and the role of English in education have been debated in India since before independence. Some argue that, despite concerns raised by Indian
experts in recent decades, in the drive towards English India is “throwing away its language resources” (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996b):

The consequence of current language policy is that many among the younger generations of Indians are being deprived of familiarity with their cultural heritage, and quite probably of an education that would enable them to contribute to the solution of Indian problems in the future. (p. 25)

Others emphasize instead the role of English as a tool in decolonization and as “an empowering vocational skill in a globalizing economy.” This requires attention to the policy and pedagogy decisions that will “sustain the empowering role of English in today’s India” (Vaish, 2008, p. 1). In these debates, however, it is the urban and elite voices that are most often heard.

English and English-medium education are in demand. At the same time, awareness of the educational needs of linguistic minorities has been growing in India. For this reason and for the sake of language maintenance, some NGO and government initiatives are seeking to provide education using the mother tongue of linguistic minorities. In multilingual societies, schools are responsible to provide access both to languages of wider communication and to educational content. Research and policy worldwide address how these can be provided most effectively – and in the most empowering ways. Often such research points to the need to be responsive to local contexts, providing education relevant to and effective for a particular population.

The importance of community involvement in decisions not only on education but also on language teaching and maintenance necessitates an understanding of local views. To educators and linguists, mother-tongue education may seem like the most localized and empowering alternative, but, when given a choice, minorities often prefer the powerful languages, the means for access to better economic opportunities, as media of instruction in schools. Thus, initiatives that are intended to empower are sometimes
considered to be barriers to empowerment, resisted by the groups they were intended to serve. Similar examples could be given regarding decisions to continue or withdraw from education altogether as well as which languages to learn and how. Broader development initiatives also, though intended for the common good, may look quite different from a local perspective.

The Kumaun region, making up the eastern portion of the Indian state of Uttarakhand which was formed in 2000 from the mountainous region of Uttar Pradesh, is in a time of transition. According to Ramachandran (2005), “[o]urs is a newly created state. It has been our endeavor to set new examples and to be different from the traditional system. We all keep our ears and eyes open and draw upon whatever is best and most appropriate.” Motivation to provide a positive example in educational initiatives is particularly strong in this state, being a region known since antiquity as a center for education.

While my focus is on the implications of language and education issues for Kumauni young women, this research also has implications for understanding the relationship among the languages in this multilingual setting. In describing the ecological relationships among languages, Blackledge (2008) suggests that:

further studies are required which critically analyse the complexity and diversity of the multilingual practices of children, young people and teachers in and out of educational settings, and of their attitudes, values and beliefs about language. Through such studies, we can come to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship of languages to each other, to the speakers of those languages, and to the social structures in the society in which the languages are spoken. (p. 37)

**Research Questions and Methods**

In order to understand local perspectives on language and education issues, I chose ethnographic methods, using as a starting point a Gandhian girls' boarding school in the rural Kumaun, a setting where young women learn to deal with multiple
influences and assumptions about empowerment, education, and language. Providing a radical alternative to government schools for the past sixty years, Lakshmi Ashram follows Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophies of holistic education and village-level production. Lakshmi Ashram, officially named after Gandhi’s wife Kasturba Mahilaa Utthaan Mandal (Kasturba Women’s Uplift Association), was founded in 1946 with the explicit goal of promoting utthaan [uplift] or empowerment, especially for Kumauni women. The school primarily serves disadvantaged girls from throughout the Kumaun, using Hindi medium. The philosophies of Lakshmi Ashram contrast with mainstream views and provide an alternative source of influences on the young women educated there. From Lakshmi Ashram, the research broadens to include students, teachers, and community members in the town of Kausani and nearby villages, as well as educators, administrators, and other Kumaunis in the region.

My research focuses on issues of multilingualism and literacy and draws upon literature in educational anthropology and sociolinguistics, first, that highlights the need for involving the community and local views and, second, that recognizes critically the power dynamics influencing and constraining these views as well as the attempts to raise awareness and contest dominant discourses towards the goal of informed, empowered decision-making. This research seeks to address the following questions:

1) How are national language policies and local ideologies about language and education reflected in the Kumauni context?

2) How do Kumauni young women at Lakshmi Ashram experience and negotiate issues of language, education, and empowerment within the Kumauni context?

3) How does Lakshmi Ashram’s unique philosophy of education and empowerment relate to the language and education values and practices of educators at the school?
Nine months of fieldwork in 2007-2008 provided the primary sources of data for this research, along with my other experiences in the Kumaun, including visits to Lakshmi Ashram in 2000 and 2004, and five weeks of preliminary research in 2006. Participant observation and interviews focused on young women and educators at Lakshmi Ashram as well as at the Kausani Government Intermediate College. Besides formal interviews, informal interaction often became interviews, as I asked about the local language and education situation and the life experiences and dreams of participants. Visits to villages, to Kumaun University, and to district and state education offices were also important for exploring local understandings.

From Kumauni people there is a lot to learn relevant to multilingual situations around the world. My goal was to highlight the voices of those seldom heard, specifically Kumauni young women for whom decisions are often made without consultation, to understand the language and education situation from local perspectives, to investigate what influences or constrains views and choices regarding language and education, and to explore the potentially empowering alternative offered at Lakshmi Ashram.

**Overview of the Chapters**

Chapter 2 introduces the conceptual framework that guides my research, with an emphasis on valuing local perspectives and dealing with inequalities particularly given the multiple perspectives related to development, education, and language. Chapter 3 describes the primary participants and the setting of my research, from Lakshmi Ashram to the town of Kausani and the high school there to the nearby village of Dholara, as well as the Kumaun region in which these are situated and the Kumauni people and language. Chapter 4 describes my research methods, including theoretical and experiential influences on the methods as well as the details of what the methods looked like on the
field and during analysis. Chapters 5 through 9 present findings from the research, starting with three chapters focused on language issues, followed by two focused on education and empowerment in the lives of Kumauni young women.

Chapter 5, “National-level Language and Education Planning in India: Kumaunis as Linguistic Minorities,” focuses on language policies revealed in the Indian Census and Constitution as well as language-related education policies relevant to linguistic minorities, such as the Three Language Formula and national recommendations related to medium-of-instruction. Another layer of language planning involves the implementation of these policies and the actual use of language in the classroom. This chapter relies primarily on literature sources with some glimpses of the situation that I observed in the Kumaun as it is influenced by macro-level language planning.

Chapter 6, “Language Use and Language Labels in Community and in Education: Bhasha-Boli, Mother Tongue, and Medium of Instruction,” begins with a description of language use in various domains in the Kumaun. This provides context for an analysis of local understandings about language and dialect, or bhasha versus boli, and about mother tongue. The final section explores ambiguities surrounding medium of instruction and how language is used in school, with Kumauni often used to facilitate understanding, Hindi used similarly in English-medium schools and in English classes, and a natural switching between languages. This chapter, in some ways, provides a local response to the national-level issues raised in Chapter 5.

Chapter 7, “Language Ecology in the Kumaun: The Value of Each and Relationships among Them,” addresses the value of multilingualism and the value of each of the relevant languages in the Kumaun, as expressed by the Kumauni people with whom I interacted. English is valued as the international language, and reasons for the demand for learning English are explored. Hindi is valued as the national language,
Sanskrit as root language, and Kumauni as “our” language. The association of language with particular locations or environments is discussed, as well as the relationships among languages and some implications for language acquisition, language maintenance, and language status.

Chapters 8 and 9 highlight the stories and aims of five young women, while describing the social context, educational opportunities, limitations, and views of empowerment that influence their lives. Chapter 8, “Young Women, Aims, and Education in the Kumaun,” focuses first on the role of women in Kumauni society and the importance of marriage in the future prospects of the young women. It then describes the educational situation and opportunities in and around Kausani, and the perceived hierarchy among them in terms of quality and prestige. Finally, I describe the impact of an educational policy change on Lakshmi Ashram and on the future aims of Ashram students. In Chapter 9, “Empowerment, Moving Forward, and Alternative Values in Education,” I explore local views about what constitutes a good life by describing key terms related to development and empowerment as they are locally used and explained. The concepts of “moving forward” rather than “being backwards” are understood and described differently in mainstream society than at Lakshmi Ashram. Alternative values promoted and lived out at Lakshmi Ashram are discussed, including high thinking, confidence, and community. The stories and aims of the young women frame these two chapters, demonstrating their negotiation of the various discourses and their action, despite limitations, to take hold of future opportunities.

In Chapter 10, titled “Conclusions: Collaborative Relationships and Ecology in Language and Education,” I use the continua of biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989, 2003) as a frame to highlight some of the most significant themes from the findings and their connection with various strands of literature. I also explore the issues of collaboration
and empowerment, community and ecology and propose implications for policy, pedagogy, and future research.
Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework: Valuing the Local and Dealing with Inequalities in Language and Education

The literature providing grounding for my research is drawn primarily from sociolinguistics and educational anthropology, with some parallels drawn to development literature as well. The first section emphasizes the importance of recognizing community and local views in the areas of development, education, and language. The second section brings in specific strands of literature related to language and education decisions. The final section focuses on literature that highlights power dynamics and ways to address inequalities in language and education situations.

Valuing the Local: Minority Voices on Development, Education, and Language

Modern development schemes often ignore time-tested local technologies and means of production. Universal education assumptions, as well, tend to undervalue local ways of knowing and learning. Similarly local languages seem to lose their significance beside languages of wider communication. Often local ways of producing and learning and communicating are undervalued relative to more powerful ways, leading to a shift away from the traditional and the local. Certainly some change brings improvement. The problems arise when ideas about what brings improvement are assumed to be relevant for all people in any context. Decisions about what is best for a group of people are more likely to contribute to empowerment when they reflect the voices of the people.

In this section, I briefly review literature pointing to the importance of valuing the local in development, education, and language, respectively. I begin each section with a vignette from my preliminary fieldwork in the Kumaun, highlighting unique aspects of
the practices at Lakshmi Ashram that demonstrate the valuing of local ways.

**Sustainable Development and the Lakshmi Ashram Development Context**

I first became acquainted with Lakshmi Ashram and the Kumauni people in 2000 during my semester in India through Minnesota Studies in International Development (MSID). This program emphasizes grassroots, sustainable approaches to development. I was immersed in the life at Lakshmi Ashram and learned about the education and development initiatives of this Gandhian organization. For them, what is development? This was a question explored by Klenk (1995, 1999, 2004) who used Lakshmi Ashram as the focal point for her dissertation research on gender, modernity and development. She explored the unique perspectives of these activists regarding development. Graduates viewed development as a quality demonstrated in one who had gained self-reliance and self-confidence. In this perspective, development is tied less to economic advance than to personal uplift or empowerment (FN:04June).

Mahatma Gandhi provided a strong voice in favor of local economies and means of production (see Gandhi, 1938). This perspective advocated by Lakshmi Ashram is joined by multiple international scholarly voices challenging the assumptions of globalization and modern so-called development. Gandhi saw how the Indian nation was being exploited as raw materials such as cotton were taken to the UK and returned as finished products such as fabrics for the Indian people to buy. One form of revolt against this exploitation was to refuse to purchase those foreign items but rather to produce them at the most local level, in the villages. The philosophy of *swadeshi*, in which it is the duty of citizens to sacrifice their own pleasures and to buy local goods for the sake of their country, was thus spread. Gandhi also lived and advocated a simple lifestyle. Those who still live by Gandhian principles today wear simple hand-woven *khadi* clothing,
often resisting outside, Western influences. Such a choice for simple lifestyle reminds me of choices made by the Amish and the conservative Mennonites of my own heritage to remain somewhat separate from modern society. Such choices are counter-cultural in an age when the push towards economic gain and progress motivates many lives. Even at the individual level motivations to resist current economic trends vary, but even greater complexity comes from perspectives on these issues at national and global levels. I here attempt to summarize some of the main theories of development, particularly those challenging dominant discourses.

Modernization theory, with all its variations, presents a train of thought into which most Americans are socialized. This theory is exemplified by Rostow (1990), who provides a categorization scheme for all societies based on the dimensions of their current economic system. Underlying this is the assumption that there is a linear progression from traditional societies towards modern high consumption societies, with America beginning to exemplify a society moving into a new stage beyond consumption.

In contrast, dependency theorists view development and underdevelopment as two sides of the same coin. Developed countries, they say, have progressed at the expense of and through exploitation of underdeveloped countries. In fact, being underdeveloped is not an initial state but a process brought about through exploitation. Exemplifying this view, Blaut (1973) says: “Perhaps we do not need a theory of development. Development is, after all, the natural human condition. Oppression is not” (p. 24). Springing from dependency theory, world-systems theory takes the global historical system rather than the nation-state as unit of analysis, allowing explanation for intermediate or semi-periphery countries while abandoning “the deterministic point of view on the direction of development” (So, 1990, p. 199).

Demonstrating another challenge to development, Lummis (1996) defines
economic development as a “historically specific phenomenon,” meaning “a particular way of organizing power in society and of simultaneously concealing this power arrangement – more accurately, of concealing that it is a power arrangement” (p. 46). This myth, he claims, is perpetuated by both capitalist and Marxist regimes, inspiring people to seek economic rather than political goals. Development has also been described as a discourse that disguises economic exploitation – as a new form of colonialism, with similar goals and similar consequences for the nations being “developed.” (Goldsmith, 1996; see also Goldsmith & Mander, 2001)

Another strand of development literature questions whether so-called developed countries are in fact developed, raising questions about values and priorities. Mies (1993) represents this strand and raises also the question: “Does catching-up development liberate women?” and concludes that “the myth of catching-up development, based on the belief of the miraculous workings of the market, particularly the world market, in fact leads to antagonistic interests...” (p. 68). A classic work in this strand is Shumacher’s (1973) *Small is Beautiful*, which draws on some of Gandhi’s philosophies and explores “economics as if people mattered.”

Global economic policy is still hotly debated. According to Stiglitz (2002, p. 214), “[g]lobalization today is not working for many of the world’s poor. It is not working for much of the environment. It is not working for the stability of the global economy.” Gill (1996) raises the question: “Globalization for whom and for what purposes?” regarding the “form of globalization that tends to expand social inequality and strengthens the strong at the expense of the weak” (p. 205). His vision of development involves “the enlargement of human autonomy and the capacity for social choice for more and more people on the planet” (p. 226; see also Gill, 1997, 2002). Similarly, Amartya Sen (1999) analyzes the global economy highlighting the centrality of individual freedom. His view
of development describes freedom as both the goal and the most effective means towards overcoming poverty and sustaining the economy.

What most of these challenges to dominant discourses on development and globalization have in common is a call to empower the local and pursue sustainable forms of development that improve the lives of all people, not only those in power. Sometimes it is the development workers themselves who are a part of the problem. Dialogue-generating activities (Freire, 1970) and other unique ways of involving the poor in discussions about poverty and development (Chambers, 1983, 1997; Narayan, Chambers, Shah, & Petesch, 2000) provide means for counteracting the tendency to undervalue the priorities of the less powerful in matters of economic development. In research, rather than focusing on the market as the actor in addressing poverty, some scholars have begun to explore instead actions by the poor, pointing to the importance of opening up political spaces for the poor to act against marginalization (Webster & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002)

Development initiatives in the Kumaun, as in other parts of India, have come from various sources. Unfortunately projects depending on outside funding have often been conceived and implemented in a top-down way by outsiders, neglecting the views of local people and the long-term implications of their short-term projects. In addition large-scale “development” projects in the region, including the building of dams for hydroelectric power, have been a source of contention, with local organizations including Lakshmi Ashram protesting such projects that value national economic advance over the needs of local people.

When Lakshmi Ashram staff set out in the late 1970s to be involved in community development work in another region, based near the town of Danya, they went with a respect for the village way of life, not seeking to spread western notions of
modernization but to bring together the local people for collective action. According to staff members, they began their work in the area with literacy classes, especially for women, feeling that the ability to read and write was an important step in improving life for villagers. After encountering low attendance at the literacy classes, they set out to discover what the people themselves felt they needed. They began by gathering together a group of people from a village to start a discussion on the circumstances of the village, inviting the village people into dialogue and encouraging them to work together, analyze their situation, and identify areas for possible improvement. Guarding their community forests, pooling money for wedding expenses, and setting up pre-schools for their children were all part of their sustainable vision for the development of their communities (Groff, 2000).

*Emancipatory Education and the Lakshmi Ashram Education Context*

The Lakshmi Ashram director described for me the type of education promoted by the school using the Hindi word *gyan*. She explained that *gyan* is more than knowledge. It is wisdom, consciousness and self-knowledge, or “awareness of all that is going on around you, including yourself” (personal communication, June 2005). The boarding school provides a unique holistic education for village girls, in the Gandhian Basic Education tradition. Gandhi’s views on education reflect his views on development. Education should be practical to the lives of every person and should not result in making young people feel that they are too good for manual labor. Education involves much more than book knowledge and includes freedom both from external domination and from internal artificial needs. In a Gandhian school such as Lakshmi Ashram, students are expected to be involved in helping to run the school, learning practical and academic skills through their work in the garden, dairy, and kitchen. They also learn spinning,
weaving, and other crafts, and take leadership roles in the school (FN:04June).

Just as some individuals choose simple lifestyles or a rejection of mainstream economic assumptions, so some individuals and families choose alternative forms of education as in, for example, my own education, which included five years of home schooling. At the individual level motivations to resist current educational trends vary, but even greater complexity comes from perspectives on these issues at national and global levels. Gandhi’s voice is joined by other voices challenging modern assumptions about the universal nature of education and literacy. These voices critique types of education and literacy in which local and minority ways of knowing and communicating are undervalued and in which inequality is advanced. While much has been said about hegemonic forces in education, I focus here on literature on minority education as well as the multiple literacies of the New Literacy Studies, the multi-literacies of the New London Group, and Funds of Knowledge.

Studies on cultural diversity in educational settings have highlighted the significance of the mismatch between home and school, particularly for cultural and linguistic minorities. Rampton, Harris, and Leung (1997) describe four different approaches that have characterized this research: deficit, difference, domination, and discourse. The “deficit” approach accounts for minority failure in school through some deficiency in the upbringing of the child, an assumption that is not uncommon in popular discourses today. Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) used Bernstein’s (1964) elaborated and restricted codes to develop the Headstart program on the assumption that there was no deliberate teaching in the homes of the poor and that the children’s communication skills were therefore not developed enough for school learning.

In contrast, the “difference” approach looks at diversity in a neutral way, noting the cultural differences that create communication problems between students and
teachers. The different communication and social patterns brought to light by Heath (1982, 1983) and Philips (1983) had implications for children’s success in school, not because the children’s communication skills were poorly developed, but because the patterns and expectations in the home were significantly different from that of the school. Educational initiatives that are prepared to accommodate the cultural styles of the students have been effective in raising student achievement as well as their self-confidence and motivation (Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993).

The “domination” approach to research on minorities in education highlights critically the power dynamics involved in the valuing of certain cultural norms over others in educational settings. Taking a view of minority education that includes analysis of broader societal factors, for example, Ogbu (1993) described how involuntary minorities in particular tend to resist educational institutions that are perceived as a threat to their cultural identity and not as an avenue for success.

Similarly, the “discourse” approach emphasizes the construction of reality through interaction. For example, Watson Gegeo (1992) highlights social processes that lead to lower success for Kwara’ae children in school, despite the fact that they have no lack of educational socialization at home. This construction of reality reveals itself also in the connection between teacher expectations and student success. Social realities are reflected and in turn perpetuated in the classroom. Hornberger and Chick’s (2001) striking demonstration of the construction of safetime in the classroom as a cover for lack of learning highlights the significance of, and the rigidity of, the social and policy context:

We believe that the lessons we have analyzed show that safetalk language and literacy practices and participation structures are somewhat hidden and self-sustaining, anchored in larger social and policy structures and relationships. It requires more than a new method or medium of instruction to dislodge such practices. (p. 52)
Moving on to discourses surrounding literacy, we find further hidden and self-sustaining assumptions, as well as voices calling attention to and countering normalized uniformity. Literacy, it has been said, has significant cognitive consequences, creating a “great divide” between those who are literate and those who are not (Goody, 1968). There are common assumptions as well about the economic implications of gaining literacy, not just at the individual level but also at the national level, providing motivation for national literacy campaigns. Often these assumptions rest on an autonomous view of literacy as a finite set of skills to be mastered as opposed to an ideological view of literacy as being made up of practices specific to its social context (Street, 1984).

This latter social view of literacy is characteristic of the New Literacy Studies, whose scholars use the term “multiple literacies” to highlight the differences in literacy practices in different social contexts. As Street (1995) explains, “literacy in itself does not promote cognitive advance, social mobility or progress: literacy practices are specific to the political and ideological context and their consequences vary situationally” (p. 24). Thus, literacy looks different in different cultural contexts around the world, and its situatedness can best be studied through ethnographic research (Street, 1993, 1998, 2005; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic, 2000). Scholars have continued to refine and build on the New Literacy Studies concepts. For example, Collins and Blot (2002), who consider more closely the historical influences on literacy practices, are not satisfied with either the “consequences of literacy” or the “New Literacy” streams. They want the New Literacy Studies to be able to go beyond description of local literacies and have relevance for more general issues, captured in concepts such as text, power, and identity.

Meanwhile, members of the New London Group have proposed “multiliteracies”
as an alternative approach to literacy that includes “negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, Gee, et al., 1996, p. 61). As educational needs change, students need to be equipped to function in a world that requires both interaction in culturally and linguistically diverse situations, and manipulation of diverse text forms in information and multimedia technology. Thus, they advocate a “transformed pedagogy of access – access to symbolic capital with a real valence in the emergent realities of our time” (p. 72). Street (2000) cautions against using either of these terms – multiple literacies or multi-literacies – in a deterministic way. Rather scholars must be careful to “take into account the social practices that go into the construction, uses and meanings of literacy in context” (p. 20).

Understanding the home and community contexts of students and the knowledge that they bring to school is central to the Funds of Knowledge, an initiative that has worked towards bridging the home-school divide and valuing local, minority ways. Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, et al. (1995) record what they have learned from ethnographic research in student’s homes, as well as reflexive teacher study groups, finding application for their research in the classroom. For example, teacher Michael Craig involved his fifth grade students in ethnographic projects in their own homes, making them aware of the potential of their own agency.

One of the recent goals of the teachers at Lakshmi Ashram was to encourage their students to gather information about and respect the local culture (Vaishnava, 2002). The value of local ways remains a discourse in the school. Networking with other alternative education programs and participating in trainings, the Ashram also continues to explore ways to improve child-centered and holistic learning. Although participation in the government school exam system has become important, Lakshmi Ashram educators try to prioritize the full development of the child and not simply the
completion of the government curriculum and preparation for exams.

Language Resources and the Lakshmi Ashram Linguistic Context

The demand for English and for English-medium education continues to grow in the Kumaun. However, at Lakshmi Ashram this push for English dominance is resisted, and Hindi is used for instruction. Along with Gandhi, the directors are advocates of mother-tongue education, although Hindi rather than Kumauni is considered to be mother tongue in educational settings. “Now everyone is speaking Hindi. We don’t read or write Kumauni. We don’t even think in Kumauni,” the Lakshmi Ashram director told me in English during my second visit to the school in 2004. Later she told me about her niece who could not communicate with her Kumauni-speaking grandmother. Although I heard frequent use of Kumauni at the Ashram, the director's words point to evidence of language shift as Hindi and English gradually take the place of Kumauni, especially for those moving away from the villages (FN:04June).

Gandhi had strong views not only about economic development and education but also about language. In relation to the debate about whether an Indian language would be adequate for the national language of a future independent India, he was a strong advocate for Hindustani over English. In educational situations Gandhi advocated instruction through Indian languages: the mother tongue or regional language as opposed to English. Decisions about which language(s) to use at the national level, in education and other institutions, and in the home carry clear social implications. While living in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala as a child and later as a young adult, I observed the social and economic inequalities between groups of people – inequalities manifested, perpetuated, and contested in part through use of Q'eqchi-Maya, Spanish, and English.

Differing ideologies about languages and multilingualism are reflected in
discourses about the global spread of English and widespread language loss, about
languages to be learned and languages to be preserved. The theme of valuing the local
can be found in many strands of literature related to language, from different language
ideologies and challenges to the construct of language itself discussed in this section to
bottom-up language planning and the importance of community involvement in
language maintenance and decisions about language instruction discussed in the
following section.

Language ideologies have been defined as “[r]epresentations, whether explicit or
implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world”
(Woolard, 1998, p. 3). Ideas about language, Woolard says, can vary as much as the form
of languages. A more specific definition of language ideology is: “the ideas with which
participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map
those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them”
(Irvine & Gal, 2000). The category of language ideology studies concerning “contact
between languages or language varieties” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56) is of most
relevance to my research. Similar to language ideologies, Schiffman’s (1996) “linguistic
culture,” encompasses the beliefs, attitudes and myths of a group of people regarding
language.

The dominant “one nation–one language” ideology carries assumptions about the
normality of monolingualism within nation-states, an ideology spread around the world
in part through colonization. Similarly, the “diffusion of English” paradigm assumes the
spread of English as the reasonable consequence and tool of modernization. This stands
in contrast to the “ecology of language” paradigm which emphasizes the valuable
resource of multilingualism and the influence of languages on each other in their social
contexts (Haugen, 1972; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996a). Current challenges to
the one nation–one language ideology have come through the influences both of globalization and ethnic fragmentation, opening up new opportunities for multilingualism (Hornberger, 2002).

In countries such as India where multilingualism is the norm, assumptions springing from such a nationalist ideology of language have been criticized as inappropriate – assumptions about, for example, mother tongue, linguistic purism, what counts as a real language, and the association of language change and mixing with grammarlessness and decay (Woolard, 1998). Yet, as Woolard points out, advocates for minority languages often embrace the same assumptions “in order to demonstrate the reality, validity, and integrity of their languages” (p. 18). Thus, “the struggle against the nationalist ideological complex has been difficult to win” (1998, p. 18). In discussing language ideologies and the power of majority languages, Blackledge (2008) asserts that:

Very often, multilingual societies that apparently tolerate or promote heterogeneity in fact undervalue or appear to ignore the linguistic diversity of their populace. An apparently liberal orientation to equality of opportunity for all may mask an ideological drive towards homogeneity, a drive which potentially marginalises or excludes those who either refuse, or are unwilling, to conform. (p. 36)

In the Indian context, multilingualism has long been common, with children frequently learning and using multiple languages at an early age. However, changes caused by globalization and the spread of English may be a threat to traditional linguistic systems. According to Mohanty, the spread of English “has obliterated the traditional complementary relationship between languages and strong maintenance norms” (2005). Whether or not the spread of English constitutes linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), the fact that languages have an influence upon one another is clear. Bhatt (2005) is referring to non-standard varieties of English when he discusses India’s present-day "socio-linguistic apartheid" and the "ideology of standardization." He points out that we
too often forget that the standard variety has its value only because of its market, and is without any intrinsic value greater than other varieties. This relates to the literature on World Englishes, acknowledging the growing number of native, non-native, and nativized varieties of English internationally (See, for example, Kachru, 1982).

Although he focuses on varieties of English, I believe that Bhatt's (2005) discussion is equally relevant for linguistic varieties within India, such as Kumauni, which are usually considered to be non-standard. Bhatt provides examples of language shift in minority language communities towards regional Indian languages, rather than towards English, to support his claim that English bilingualism is not promoting language shift. However, I observe that this process also represents an “ideology of standardization” on a more local scale as minority Indian varieties are replaced by regional varieties.

Calling into question assumptions about language in general, Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue that “the concept of language, and indeed the ‘metadiscursive regimes’ used to describe languages are firmly located in Western linguistic and cultural suppositions” (p. 27). While languages and the metalanguages used to talk about them are inventions, they say, the consequences of these inventions are real and material, with implications for language policies, education, and the labels with which people identify themselves. The authors tie the imagining of language to its broader context in colonial invention of, for example, a concept like “Africa” and of linear development, pointing out that “tradition, history or ethnicity, which are often thought of as natural parts of society, are inventions of a very specific ideological apparatus” (p. 9). Even language planning that advocates multilingualism, they suggest, is based on the assumption of language as 'objects' and would benefit from an alternative understanding.

“From the perspective of linguistic anthropology,” Makoni and Pennycook (2007)
say, “the question becomes one of asking how it is that languages are understood locally” (p. 19). They also turn to earlier concepts of language and note that “plurality was the pervasive state of affairs in most pre-colonial communities and it was not regarded as problematic” (p. 30). In his conclusion to their volume, Canagarajah (2007) similarly points out that the colonization and nationalism movements “considered the fluidity and hybridity in precolonial forms of communication a problem and strove to move toward codification, classification and categorization that mark the field of linguistics today” (p. 233). On a similar strand, Jorgensen (2008) argues that language as a phenomenon is not separable into “packages which can be counted.” He describes “polylingual languaging,” especially common among urban young people, in which various language features not normally used together are combined, carrying educational implications as discussed later.

Related to the invention of languages as distinct entities, according to some scholars, is the construction of the concept of “mother tongue.” As Ramaswamy (1997) says:

> The globalization of the nation form and its cultures of modernity enabled the universalization of the concept of language as 'mother tongue,' the site where culture becomes nature. The mother tongue is a construct that emerged at a particular historical moment in the complex transformation of Europe's linguistic landscape from the middle of the second millennium... (p. 15)

This concept was then exported to the colonies. Mitchell (2005) describes the changing views of language in the 19th century in India:

> By the end of the nineteenth-century, practices relating to literacy, pedagogy, administration and bureaucracy, religion, economic exchange, and personal interaction -- practices that once moved across multiple languages -- began to be governed by the logic of parallel 'mother tongues.'” (p. 445)

While previously different languages were used by the same educated individual to accomplish different tasks, languages began to be seen “as more separable, distinct, and
most of all, parallel mediums” (p. 447). With this shift towards having all skills in one language rather than separately in several, there was more emphasis on grammar and new recognition for linguistically defined communities emerged (2005).

Still the concept of mother tongue is not always an alien construct, although certainly it has various meanings. It has been used for describing the attachment to one's own language, as in Fishman's (1996) ethnolinguistic consciousness. In McCarty's (2008) description: “Mother tongue denotes a deep, abiding, even cord-like connection between language and identity. Native American discourses make frequent reference to these connections between language, community, place, and time” (p. 202). In this sense mother tongue is not necessarily the language spoken by the mother, but could be the “heritage mother tongue” (2008) or, as used in current Sanskrit revitalization efforts, “the language which is the mother of all languages of India” (Hastings, 2008, p. 40).

The use and meaning of “mother tongue” and “language” became an important part of my discussions and analysis of the language and education situation in the Kumaun. Equally, much of the language use at Lakshmi Ashram and at government schools in the Kumaun reflects a value for multilingualism and acceptance of diversity, as explored in subsequent chapters.

The consequences of language ideology for social and linguistic processes are many (Woolard, 1998), including issues of language shift and maintenance, and language learning and teaching, as discussed in the following section. Schiffman (1996) describes the influence, both overt and covert, of linguistic culture on language policy. In educational contexts, language ideologies influence which languages to teach and which to use for teaching, as well as classroom-level practices and decisions about how language is taught and used. In planning for language use in schools, language is sometimes considered, in a “language as problem” orientation, to be a barrier needing to
be overcome; sometimes it is considered a “right” to be defended; alternatively it may be considered a “resource” to be utilized (Ruiz, 1984). A language as resource orientation acknowledges the potential for enhanced learning if the resources of the home languages of all students are used to facilitate learning.

**Language and Education Decisions and Implications**

Several other strands of literature are worth mentioning in relation to valuing the local, the consequences of ideologies, and language and education decisions. These include issues of language planning, language shift, medium of instruction, and the connection between language and poverty.

**Bottom-up Language Planning**

The importance of valuing local decisions in language planning is a theme that has emerged from the language planning literature. Tollefson (1981, 1991) describes centralized versus decentralized language planning, differentiated according to local initiative in planning and implementation and the scope of intended outcomes. Kaplan (1989) uses the term “top-down” to refer to planning that is government-defined for government purposes: the government decides what is best for everyone. On the other hand “bottom-up” planning springs from needs identified in the population with the real needs of the population respected and minorities consulted, even though such policies may be implemented by the government. Hornberger (1996) describes indigenous literacies as language planning from the bottom up, as a door of opportunity for the marginalized and means of empowerment, and as cultural expression and enrichment, noting however that “the task of valuing and incorporating a diversity of identities, languages, and cultures, whether in an individual, a program, a school, a community or a society, is a supremely challenging one” (p. 364). Ricento and Hornberger (1996) describe the layers of language planning and policy from national to institutional to
individual where the grassroots beginnings of change occur. Here participatory action research and critical evaluation of practices can influence language use and learning from the micro level. Seeing actions at the micro level as language planning positions teachers and students as agents of language planning.

Attention to local voices in the area of language teaching, for example, involves the use of empowering, emancipatory teaching methods. Auerbach (1995) describes participatory approaches to language teaching that stand in opposition to traditional externally driven approaches. This involves using and validating what students know and bring to the language classroom as well as focusing on the real, lived experiences of students (see also Cummins, 2000, Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Attention to local needs in language instruction takes us back to the issue of the spread of English – a language that itself has many varieties. For English language teachers, this means acknowledging the validity of different varieties of English and the need for their students to navigate that diverse world (Bhatt, 2005, Canagarajah, 1999).

**Language Shift and Language Maintenance**

Local involvement in language planning is particularly relevant in situations of language shift. Scholars have raised increasing concern about the loss of languages (Krauss, 1991) and continue efforts for their maintenance and for the reverse of language shift (Fishman, 1991, 2001). Motivations include not only the preservation of linguistic diversity, but also the protection of the cultures and identities of linguistic minorities. Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) demonstrates the eight stages through which a language might go either towards language loss, or through effort towards reversing language shift. Important for this process, he says, is that the threatened language be used for powerful functions, with constant vigilance required for keeping the non-threatened language from taking over those functions. Giles, Bourhis,
and Taylor (1977) define ethnolinguistic vitality as that which makes a particular ethnolinguistic group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective, influenced by status, demographic, and institutional support factors.

Fishman (1996) discusses ethnolinguistic consciousness as not always salient in people's lives. The sentiments of attachment to one's language have been used by nationalist movements, and although they can be put to negative use, they are not in themselves negative and do not exclude respect for other languages. Thus, he focuses on “the positive content of ethnolinguistic consciousness” (p. 4). This involves the recognition that one's language is no different or no worse than other languages, although it may be different in function. Fishman emphasizes the need to “redress current functional grievances” and aspire to modern functions for minority languages, stating that “positive ethnolinguistic consciousness is basically a modernizing phenomenon” (p. 63). These modernizing steps are important in Fishman's (1991, 2001) GIDS stages and suggestions on reversing language shift.

As they used the eight GIDS stages to analyze the case of Quechua, Hornberger and King (2001) realized that stage six – intergenerational oral communication – serves as a significant overarching category, vital to language maintenance efforts. Thus, it is clear that the involvement of the community is crucial for language maintenance as is societal reinforcement for the use of minority languages, these influenced by language ideologies in society and in the community itself (Hornberger, 1988). Communities may not be aware of the ways that their own actions are promoting language shift. In his ethnography on Gapun villagers, Kulick (1992) describes the shift away from speaking Taiap to the national Tok Pisin. While the adults blame the children for language shift, the caregivers are providing children with less Taiap language input and fewer opportunities to use Taiap. The language shift literature points to the fact that a gradual
process takes place before the community actually starts producing monolinguals in the
new language.

**Mother Tongue and Medium of Instruction**

As mentioned in the introduction, research has shown that education is most
effective when the language with which a child is most comfortable is used for
instruction, and linguistic minorities are disadvantaged in education systems that do not
use their mother tongue as medium of instruction (Daswani, 2001, Jhingran, 2005,
Mohanty 2005). In India, the multilingual complexity of education situations sparks
innumerable discussions regarding language use in education. Multilingualism is
expected and promoted from the national level through the Three Language Formula for
languages to be taught in schools, yet minority languages are often considered to be
dialects of one of the official languages and minorities face difficult linguistic and
cultural challenges as demonstrated in typically low educational achievements (Ager,
planning at the national level in India are explored further in Chapter 5.

The question of medium of instruction in India is complicated by the fact that
most high quality schools provide education in English, and many families assume that
access to English-medium education, being equivalent to high-quality education, leads to
success (Khubchandani, 2005). Koul (2001) conducted a survey exploring the language
preferences of students, parents and employers for educational settings in India. His
findings indicate a general preference for study of both the mother tongue and English in
primary school, with preference for English as medium of instruction increasing as the
level of education increases. His conclusions point to the need for revision in state
language policies:

The states have to be realistic and consider the needs of the people and their
aspirations. It is the market forces which lead the students and parents in taking the decisions on all matters of education including the use of language in education. (p. 382)

In urban settings in particular, Gupta (1997) argues, mother tongue education is not practical or desired. He concludes that empowering education can be through the medium of the powerful languages: “...in my view, the empowerment of individuals should have primacy over the development of an individual’s mother tongue, and even over the preservation of a language” (p. 497).

Hornberger and Vaish (2009) also acknowledge the demand for English as medium of instruction in various locations throughout the world while recognizing the need to make space for the mother tongue in the classroom. Multilingual classroom practices or translanguaging practices, they argue “...offer the possibility for teachers and learners to access academic content through the linguistic resources they bring to the classroom while simultaneously acquiring new ones” (p. 316). Thus, while there is no “one-size-fits-all concrete solution to the ecological paradox of English as tool of decolonization for multilingual populations seeking equitable access to a globalizing economy,” the “use of mother tongue in the classroom... can be a resource through which children can access Standard English while also continuing and indeed cultivating multilingual practices inclusive of their own local languages” (p. 317).

The studies in Creese and Martin’s (2003) edited volume provide examples of such practices taking place especially among young people and in multilingual classrooms. The use of multiple language resources has also been explored under the labels translanguaging, transliteracy and polylingual languaging (Baker, 2003; García, 2007a, 2007b; Jorgensen, 2008), reflecting practices more common than we may realize that can be used as educational resources in the classroom.
**Language and Poverty**

As mentioned above, market forces often influence language choices (Koul, 2001), particularly for those struggling to improve their socio-economic circumstances. The issue of poverty cannot be ignored in discussions of minority language and education, particularly for speakers of “economically irrelevant languages” (Hinton 2005; see also Batibo, Brenzinger & Zepeda, 2005; Harbert et al., 2009; Wagner, 1993). As Mohanty (2005) explains:

> When language becomes the basis of power, control and discrimination, socio-economic inequality is perpetuated; the language(s) that people speak or do not speak determine their access to resources. Education is a critical factor in this relationship between language and power. Exclusion and non-accommodation of languages in education deny equality of opportunity to learn, violate linguistic human rights, lead to loss of linguistic diversity and trigger a vicious cycle of disadvantage perpetuating inequality, capacity deprivation and poverty. (n.p.; see also Haugen, 1973)

Imagining an outcome that does not perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage may be difficult. Economic factors play an important role in the linguistic environment that determines the endangerment or survival of particular languages. Macro level power dynamics and globalization influence language policies and practices at all levels (Canagarajah, 2005).

However, language policies can either perpetuate hierarchies or promote empowerment. Hornberger (1988, 1997) has explored the use of the mother tongue of linguistic minorities in education, finding that literacy in the mother tongue led to increased empowerment for individual Quechua speakers. Similarly, Gustafsson (1991) observed changes in economic opportunity brought to a tribal community in India through literacy in the local language. Research has pointed to a need to explore the complexity of these issues from a local perspective as they are embedded in the lives and experiences of community members. Romaine (2005) points out that few have asked the local poor for culturally relevant and sustainable ways to address poverty and language barriers. Local realities
should be explored and taken into account in constructing effective policies and practices for language and education (see Lin & Martin 2005).

**Understanding and Dealing with Inequalities: Power Dynamics in Language and Education**

The previous sections emphasized the importance of valuing local or minority voices and ways, as well as some implications for language and education decisions. Views and decisions about language, education, and development are complicated by issues of power and unequal access to resources. In this section I first describe the ecology of language metaphor and the continua of biliteracy model as foundational for synthesizing my understanding of the literature and my research. This is followed by discussion of the need to value the local in light of unequal power relations through opening up ideological and implementational spaces and through exposing and contesting dominant discourses. This leads to the topic of awareness or consciousness-raising and the agency of local people in taking ownership and transforming uses of new development initiatives, literacies, and languages.

**The Ecology of Language and the Continua of Biliteracy**

The metaphor of the ecology of language helps in conceptualizing influences on languages by highlighting the fact “that languages, like living species, evolve, grow, change, live, and die in relation to other languages and also in relation to their environment” (Hornberger, 2003, p. 320). Thus when one language gains dominance, its dominance has an influence on the languages around it. A further implication of this metaphor is that just as some species and environments are endangered, so some languages are threatened with extinction due to their contact with other languages (2003). Haugen (1972), according to Blackledge’s (2008) summary, “defined language ecology as the study of interactions between any given language and its environment,
and considered that what was necessary was an analysis of the effect of the social and psychological situation of each language” (p. 27). Within the ecology of language metaphor is the desirability of preserving the balance of linguistic ecologies. As Skutnab-Kangas and Phillipson (2008) state:

We envisage a balanced ecology of languages as a linguascape where interaction between users of languages does not allow one or a few to spread at the cost of others and where diversity is maintained for the long-term survival of humankind. (p. 4)

These assumptions of the ecology of language metaphor are foundational for the continua of biliteracy model.

The continua of biliteracy provides a tool with which to explore the development of biliteracy in various contexts through various media and using various content, also suggesting which of these biliteracy “ways” tend to be valued over others. In most instances or contexts of language and literacy learning, local perspectives are not valued, macro-level having superiority over micro-level contexts, discourses, and ideologies. Typically monolingualism is valued over multilingualism and literacy over orality. As individuals develop biliteracy, their second language is often valued over their first, while written and productive skills tend to be valued over oral and receptive skills. These factors regarding biliteracy contexts and development have been plotted on intersecting continua, along with factors related to the content and media of biliteracy (Hornberger, 1989, Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000), as shown in Table 1. Ideally for gaining literacy in multiple languages, learners should be able to draw on each end of the continua. This continua of biliteracy model recognizes that ideologies at the macro level tend to dominate over and have permeated to the micro level, yet it also emphasizes the need to pay more attention to what is happening at the micro level. The micro level, though undervalued, is not devoid of influence. Existing power structures can be
transformed when traditionally less valued ends of the continua are given value (2000).

Table 1: Power Relations in the Continua of Biliteracy Model
(from Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000)

<table>
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<th>Traditionally less powerful</th>
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<td>Literate</td>
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<td>Bi(multi)lingual</td>
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<td>Development of biliteracy</td>
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<td>Reception</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content of biliteracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernacular</td>
<td>Literary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualized</td>
<td>Decontextualized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media of biliteracy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simultaneous exposure</td>
<td>Successive exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissimilar structures</td>
<td>Similar structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divergent scripts</td>
<td>Convergent scripts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In discussing the power implication in the continua of biliteracy model,
Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2000) cite a variety of scholars around the theme of
valuing the traditionally less valued in order to contest existing power relations. They
state that:

...our purpose in pointing to the privileged, powerful ends of the continua is not
to reify that power but rather to emphasize that the privileging can be
transformed through critical reflection by the various actors involved –
educators, researchers, community members, and policy makers – on how their
own everyday biliteracy practices do or do not exercise and maintain power.
(2000, p. 100)

The continua of biliteracy have been used to explore the complexity of multilingual
educational situations as well as the power dynamics involved. For example, Vaish
(2004; see also Basu, 2003) used the continua of biliteracy to compare two bilingual
Although her urban primary school setting is quite different from my research site, she demonstrates the use of the continua in analyzing both Hindi-English and Hindi-minority dialect contact situations in education.

**Language, Education, and Dominant Discourses**

The calls to value the local in the areas of development, education, and language are made necessary because of the tendency to undervalue the local in favor of the global — in favor of the ways that appear to be universally best. What sometimes goes unrecognized is the fact that this “global” is often actually the “local” of some other group, namely those with the power to make their own ways appear to be the only natural, universal ways. A concern for this unequal valuing of ways of producing, learning, and communicating leads to concern regarding social injustice and unequal power relations — inequalities and social orders that may be justified through discourses and ideologies that disguise them. I refer to power as socially constructed, and often unintentionally perpetuated, implying privilege and access to resources. However, my purpose here is not to embrace or elaborate a particular theory of power or to perpetuate a particular ideology about empowerment. Rather, I hope to provide opportunities for the voices of Kumauni people to be heard — to open up ideological spaces (Hornberger 2002) for them to contribute to the discussion about how things are and ought to be.

Hornberger (2002) discusses how “implementational space” was opened up for the empowerment of parents in Bolivia and South Africa, providing them with opportunities to influence the language policies of the local schools. However, there was also the need for “popular participation in the ideological space” in order for multilingual language policy to succeed: “what is needed is to find as many ways as possible to open up ‘ideological spaces’ for multiple languages and literacies in classroom, community, and society” (p. 329). Alongside this goal is the need “to find as many ways as possible
open up implementational spaces for multiple languages, literacies, and identities in
classroom, community, and society” (p. 332).

The concern for revaluing the local by giving specific attention to that which has
been traditionally undervalued is echoed by Canagarajah (2005), who advocates viewing
global-local relationships from a consciously local point of view, with local and global
here used in relative terms. As he explores the influences of globalization, and
globalization discourse, he observes two responses in the field of applied linguistics: 1)
adoption of a “McCommunication pedagogy” that assumes that one pedagogical method
is good for all situations, or 2) exaggeration of the equalizing force of globalization with
the assumption that all voices can contribute equally. Rather than embrace one of these
two responses, Canagarajah argues, applied linguists should be aware that: "The place of
the local is... not guaranteed in globalization; it has to be achieved through socially
informed struggle and strategic negotiation" (p. xvi.).

In his distinction between coercive and collaborative relations of power, Jim
Cummins points to collaborative means to resist traditional power dynamics. Cummins
(2001) defines coercive relations of power as:

the exercise of power by a dominant group (or individual or country) to the
detriment of a subordinated group (or individual or country). Coercive relations
of power are reflected in and shaped through the use of language or discourse and
usually involve a definitional process that legitimises the inferior or deviant
status accorded to the subordinated group (or individual or country). (p. 317)

Although classrooms are influenced by societal power structures, the interactions
between students and teachers carry potential as they provide a space where knowledge
is generated and identities are negotiated. “These micro-interactions between educators,
pupils and communities are never neutral; in varying degrees, they either reinforce
coercive relations of power or promote collaborative relations of power” (p. 321).

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, more powerful ways often come to
be seen as the most natural ones, disguised by discourses and ideologies that perpetuate them. While space needs to be made for local, minority views, local ways and views are often influenced by the powerful discourses around them. Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) use Bourdieu’s terminology to discuss the symbolic domination involved in language choices, especially in education settings. There is not a simple connection between language on one hand and economic and political advance on the other. Rather, particular languages come to be viewed as “legitimate languages” with implications for access to resources and for the perceived naturalness of social order. Education is a site for the building of such assumptions, social identities and power inequalities. Thus educational research, particularly in multilingual settings, can put a spotlight on these issues:

Our position is that examining education through the lens of language, and particularly of linguistic difference, allows us to see ways in which local boundaries in local community contexts intersect with institutional categorization processes and ways in which social structure is articulated with agency. (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001, p. 5)

A contribution to the field of education of such research comes through problematizing language in educational contexts. For language policy and planning (LPP), educational research in multilingual settings adds a critical examination of social interests and their consequences in LPP, in contrast to much LPP work that fails to “engage with the relations of power represented by state intervention or with the complexities and ambiguities of life on the ground” (p. 8).

The ways that people make language choices and thus manage language resources can become ritualized, with the consequence of “permitting the construction of dominant discourses that reproduce relations of power... and hence to the unequal distribution of resources (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001, p. 11). Code selection and code-switching is a particularly salient example of management of language resources in
multilingual settings. Decisions to switch between Kumauni, Hindi, and English either perpetuates accepted rituals or contests them. For example, some of the development activists in the region specifically avoid the use of English in order to contest its dominance. While schools tend to perpetuate inequalities, they are not trapped in this role, as Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) point out, as there is room for contestation of current patterns within schools. The ethnographer’s role is in uncovering why certain actions “make sense” to people as well as the consequences of those actions (2001).

Since some of this contestation is already being practiced and/or promoted at Lakshmi Ashram, local people may be more aware of competing discourses through the contrast between this Gandhian school and the local government high school. A close look at this context may also help to answer Heller and Martin-Jones’ question about “what conditions tend to facilitate either the construction or the contestation of legitimate language practices and the social order they contribute to building” (p. 11).

**Contestation, Awakening, and Agency**

The consciousness-raising strategies of Paulo Freire (1970) come to mind along with the critical thinking that he sought to inspire through generating dialogue and breaking down the student-teacher hierarchy. While he valued the knowledge brought by all participants, he recognized that the “oppressed” have often been influenced by the “oppressors” and that learners must be challenged to look at issues in new ways. “While having on one hand to respect the expectations and choices of the students, the educator also has the duty of not being neutral,” Freire emphasizes (Norton & Freire, 1990: 180). In other words the educator must not settle for the status quo or give in to the dominant discourses. “The role of leadership is also to lead the masses while learning with them and never imposing on them.” As Freire says: “How difficult is the task of an educator!” (p. 170).
“Reading the world,” for advocates of the critical perspective on literacy, means not only becoming aware of but also challenging situations and systems that marginalize some people while promoting others.

A critical approach presumes that people are not poor because they’re illiterate: they’re illiterate because they are poor…. Critical literacy, then, is learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one’s experience as historically constructed within specific power relations. (Anderson & Irvine, 1993, p. 82)

Critical perspectives on development and literacy have shown how different definitions of development have led to different definitions of literacy and different strategies for educational reform (Fagerlind & Saha, 1983). The interrelationship between these factors and language ideologies, policies, and practices deserves investigation at the micro level. As far as the politics of language, Freire initially advocated a resistance to domination focusing on language preservation. Later he emphasized the need not only to respect one’s own language, but also to learn the dominant language as a tool for promoting change (Freire, 1996; see also Fairclough, 1989).

Paulo Freire’s concept of consciousness raising has been challenged for its underlying assumption of a lack of awareness among the people to be educated. According to Street (1995), although Freire’s work comes in opposition to authoritarian, government literacy campaigns, “it often rests on similar assumptions about the ignorance and lack of self-awareness or critical consciousness of ‘non-literate’ people” (p. 20). Along with assumptions about this lack of awareness come assumptions about the passive nature of these people’s role, not emphasizing the active ways in which they have taken ownership of and transformed new literacies for their own purposes. Street points out that some research “has attempted to shift the focus from the ‘impact’ of literacy to the ways in which people ‘take hold’ of a particular literacy” (p. 20). He says:

It is not... a simple choice between ‘freezing’ traditional values on the one hand or
of crude ‘modernism’ on the other. Rather the issue is that of sensitivity to indigenous cultures and recognition of the dynamic process of their interaction with dominant cultures and literacies. The reality, in such situations, is of pragmatic adaptation, particularly on the part of the less powerful party, to the new skills, conventions and ideologies being introduced. (1995, p. 44)

This pragmatic adaptation must apply not only to literacies, but also to adaptation of technologies, to economic development, and to the learning and use of languages.

For example, Klenk (2004) focuses on the much-ignored issue of how recipients of development initiatives appropriate the development discourses for their own purposes. Her dissertation work conducted in the Kumaun with a focus on Lakshmi Ashram emphasized how these rural women viewed their own development rather than how an outside concept of development impacted them. Another ethnographic study across the border in Nepal also challenged dominant assumptions about women and development, as well as literacy, showing how women took ownership of and transformed the purposes of their literacy skills (Robinson-Pant, 2001). In her edited volume, Robinson-Pant (2004) pulls together recent work on this theme that questions the purposes offered for education for women and, among other things, brings new meanings to words like “empowerment.” She calls for a change in the way we do research, asking different questions in different ways to allow those who usually don’t have a voice to answer. For example, when in the past we might have asked: “How can women’s contribution to development be enhanced through literacy?” we instead ask: “What does ‘empowerment’ mean to women in this literacy class?” (p. 11). In a similar way, drawing in my primary concern with language issues, I move away from questions such as: How can attention to language improve educational opportunities?, asking instead: What do language, literacy/education, and empowerment mean to Kumauni young women and educators?

These various understandings of power, especially in relation to education and
language issues provide some tools for understanding and analyzing local discourses. Because of the potential of minority voices and the complexity highlighted in previous research, I hesitate to forefront a critical perspective in my research, not wanting to imply a deterministic view of power relations or a paternalistic mission to “empower.” I search for local understandings of the ways in which language and education interrelate, especially in relation to the empowerment of Kumauni young women. In most general terms, I set out to look at the issues that emerge as most salient regarding the language and education situation in the Kumaun through the lenses of educational linguistics and related literature described above. The following chapter describes my research setting, with a focus on Kumauni young women and the Lakshmi Ashram context within the Kumaun.
Chapter 3

Setting: Lakshmi Ashram and the Kumaun

As Govindi walked up the long, cemented trail that leads from the shops of Kausani to the Lakshmi Ashram boarding school, she knew that the year ahead in the Sadhana program would bring her many new experiences. Near the top of the hill, the path turned to the right and followed the hillside through a thin oak forest. If the clouds of the rainy season had cleared, she would have been able to spot the snow-capped Himalayan peaks to the north at one point along the trail. She could see the green rice fields on the terraces far below and the hills beyond that hid the town of Someshwar. The villages dotting the hillsides reminded her of her home village. Inside the gate of the Ashram, she got her first glimpse of the large, stone Ashram building. It is a two-story building built along the hillside facing south, with porches and a long, stone courtyard running its length across the front. In the weeks and months to come, she would become very familiar with the Ashram's 60 girls and 20 teachers and workers, and the many activities carried out in this building and its surroundings.

The first room on the ground floor of the main Ashram building is a large cafeteria with a small kitchen behind, soon to be expanded. Above the cafeteria is a large meeting room, carpeted with mats, where the members of the Ashram gather several times a day for prayer and meetings. Beside this is the Ashram office. The second part of the building has nine large rooms that are used both for classrooms and dormitory by the Ashram workers and girls, who are arranged according to class/grade level. A separate room on the upper floor is used as the sick room. Beyond the Ashram building are the terraced gardens maintained by the girls and workers during work duty time. One stone

1 Names of persons have been changed, while real names are used for the schools and cities.
2 The Gandhian studies program, described below.
trail leads down, past the water tank where the girls wash their metal trays after each meal, past the covered spring that provides clean drinking water for the Ashram, doubling back and continuing down to the building where Govindi and her fellow Sadhana students would live – and where long-term foreign guests usually live. Another stone trail leaving the main Ashram building leads out to a large workshop with old spinning and weaving equipment, sewing machines, a small mill for grinding wheat, a room used for growing mushrooms, and the home of the Ashram’s milk cows. A smaller building nearby houses a large oven, a classroom, and a library. From there the Ashram land, which totals 11 acres, extends up the hillside, covered with thin forest and grass. The original “Lakshmi Ashram” building sits near the top of the ridge at the western end of the Ashram land. It was recently rebuilt and serves as guest house and home to several of the Ashram workers.

Life at Lakshmi Ashram follows a much more rigid schedule than what would have been common for Govindi and the other village girls who came to live there, but the daily routine includes many familiar village activities, varying according to the season. The girls get up around 4:30 am, having time for homework and personal study before 6 am prayer. The older girls usually have yoga class after group prayer. Then all of the girls clean around the Ashram, divided into their age-diverse work-groups. At 7:30 am the bell rings again and the girls gather for group inspection before breakfast. Work duties run from 8-10 am, and the girls scatter in groups to work in the gardens, cut grass for the cows, collect firewood in the forest, clean the rice or lentils for subsequent meals, chop vegetables, etc. One girl is usually assigned to keep the monkeys out of the gardens. From 10 to 11 am, the girls bathe and wash clothes, and at 11 am, they gather again in the meeting room for spinning class. Using drop spindles, the Ashram members, young and old alike, spin wool into thread as Gandhi-ji himself spent many hours doing, chatting
and singing as they work.

After lunch at noon, the girls have some time to rest or read, and to soak in the warm afternoon sun during the cold winter months. At 1:30 pm, the bell rings again, and the Ashram members gather for their afternoon assembly. After prayer and roll call, one of the teachers will often read highlights from the local newspaper or discuss recent travels or current events. Academic study time runs from 2 to 4:30 pm. This time is divided into class periods, and the teachers take their turns in the various classrooms. From 4:30 to 5:30 pm the students work in groups, tending their class gardens. There is a scheduled recreation time several evenings a week when the girls go down to a nearby meadow to play. At 7 pm, the bell rings and the meeting room is again silently filled, as the Ashram members enter for evening prayer. As in the morning and afternoon prayers, the girls sing and recite together Hindu and other religious prayers and Gandhian vows. The meeting that follows evening prayer often includes reports by the girls on their work or academic self-evaluation reports. On certain evenings, they read together from the Ramayana. In these meetings, the Ashram members also elect a new “chief minister” each month and “ministers” to hold various responsibilities at the Ashram. This is also the time to raise issues of concern to the Ashram and discuss problems as a group. After the evening meeting, the girls scatter to their rooms to get their metal plates for dinner. Meal time at Lakshmi Ashram is a special time of being together. Four long mats are rolled out on the cement floor, and students and teachers sit together on the mats facing each other in the two sets of rows. Girls on kitchen duty serve the meal into each person's plate, set on the floor in front of them. The meal includes rice and/or chapatis, or sometimes wheat porridge; lentils; vegetables; and yogurt.

One of the first things that Govindi missed as she got used to the Ashram routines was the tea. Back in the village, they drank sweet tea with milk first thing in the morning.
and frequently throughout the day. The food at the Ashram was also served more bland, in the Gandhian tradition, not having the amount of spices and salt common in Kumauni cooking. Govindi shared these adjustments to Ashram life with four other girls who joined the Sadhana program from outside of the Ashram. They lived, worked, and studied with five others who had been educated at the Ashram.

After lunch on her second day at the Ashram, Govindi came over to get a drink at the pot and dipper that is filled from the spring and kept in front of the Ashram building. There she met one of the two foreigners whom she had been seeing from a distance ever since she arrived. She was surprised when the girl addressed her in Hindi. The foreigner was, of course, me. During the first five months of my fieldwork, I stayed in one of Lakshmi Ashram’s guest rooms, just next to the one where Govindi and her classmates lived. We ate, peeled vegetables, washed clothes, and often sat and talked together. I asked lots of questions and took lots of notes, as described in the methods in the next chapter. I wanted to be able to understand through the eyes of these young women – and present to others – the language and education situation in the Kumaun.

**Setting and Participants**

In this section, I describe the setting at Lakshmi Ashram, introducing Govindi and her classmates and the other students and teachers with whom I interacted at Lakshmi Ashram. Then I move outwards and describe Kausani, the government high school there, and the neighborhood where I lived during the second half of my fieldwork. Next, I describe the villages beyond Kausani where I spent some time. I then zoom further out to the Kumaun region and Kumauni people, and their situation within the young state of Uttarakhand. In the following chapter I describe the theoretical and experiential influences on my choice of research methods, and the progression and
adaptation of the research.

**Lakshmi Ashram**

Lakshmi Ashram was founded in 1946 by a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, a woman from London named Katherine Mary Heilman, who came to be known as Sarala Devi or Sarala-Behen.³ She was active in the independence movement, along with others of the original Ashram members, and had a concern for the needs of the women in the Kumaun. The organization is officially named the *Kasturba Mahilaa Utthaan Mandal* (Kasturba Women’s Uplift Association/Collective).⁴ It is commonly referred to as Lakshmi Ashram, after a woman named Lakshmi whose husband donated the original Ashram building. Since the 1960's, the Ashram has received financial support from external sources, especially from a Danish organization called Lakshmi Ashram Venner (Friends of Lakshmi Ashram)⁵.

The objectives of the Kasturba Mahilaa Utthaan Mandal, as stated in the Founding Memorandum of Association in the English original, are as follows:

The revitalisation of village life in general, through the removal of ill-health, poverty, ignorance and other social evils which impede the enlightenment and progress of village life in Kumaun, but whereas it is felt that the root cause of the present unhealthy state of village life in Kumaun is the conditions of ignorance and neglect in which the women and children live, the activities of the Society shall be directed more specifically to encourage the women of Kumaun ... to realise their dignity, their personal and social duties, the nature of the contribution they shall make to public life, and thus to assist them in every way to make their fullest contribution to the growth of a new society with a fuller life based on the improving economic, social and cultural conditions of the rural people.

The work of Lakshmi Ashram has continued until today under the leadership of Kumauni women and has a positive reputation throughout the region. While their primary work is devoted to the Gandhian boarding school for girls, Lakshmi Ashram

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³ As is customary at Gandhian Ashrams, Ashram members are referred to as Behen [sister] or Bhai [brother]. This leaves off reference to their caste identity which would be evident in their surname.
⁴ Kasturba is the name of Mahatma Gandhi's wife.
⁵ See [http://lakshmiashram.dk](http://lakshmiashram.dk)
workers are also involved in social work and activism in the region. A humanitarian project was set up in the region around Danya, about four hours' drive from Kausani. Workers have organized women's groups in villages, led women in anti-liquor protests, started preschools, and organized water conservation and reforestation efforts. One project underway while my fieldwork was in progress involves a collaboration across the region to save the local rivers. This includes raising awareness in local villages about the need for reforestation and careful water usage, as well as protests against the construction of dams and inappropriate water use on a larger scale. Some of the students joined Ashram leaders in a two-week foot trek along the Kosi river, stopping at villages along the way to spread this message. Another project, also underway through collaboration with other organizations, is promoting the involvement of women in the local gram panchayat [village assembly] governing bodies, encouraging and equipping women to run in local elections even when there are not specific seats reserved for women.

Regarding the work of the Ashram, the director once told me that spreading Mahatma Gandhi's ideas is, they feel, accomplished best not simply by preaching it in the villages, but rather by demonstrating it over the long-term and influencing the lives of the girls trained at the Lakshmi Ashram boarding school. Gandhi-ji's views on education were consistent with his vision for village-level production and self-sufficiency. His Basic Education or Naii Taaliim [lit. new education] was to include training in a craft, training that would incorporate holistically all other areas of learning, including physical, mental, and spiritual. A senior Ashram member described Basic Education at the Ashram to me in this way: “With Basic Education we can stand on our own legs. We learn the Art of Living. We spin our own clothes, grow our own food. For health, we use herbs, home

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6 Naii Taaliim, spelled phonetically here, is also written as Nai Talim or Nayi Taleem.
remedies, and natural cures – not just the hospital. And also we live with nature. Also we develop our heart. That [modern] education does not develop the heart, there is not sympathy; there is competition. We believe that competition is not good for children’s education (E; PQ:06:Jul5). The motto often quoted to me by the Gandhian educators was: “Simple living – High thinking.”

The educational philosophy at Lakshmi Ashram is influenced by its interactions with other Gandhian institutions and alternative education streams. The curriculum is somewhat flexible, particularly for the grades that are not preparing for government board exams. Originally the Ashram did not participate in the regular government curriculum and exam system. When graduates began to complain that the lack of an official certificate was hindering them from getting jobs, the Ashram workers made the difficult decision to adopt the government curriculum and textbooks, somewhat of a compromise of the Ashram’s original educational vision. The focus now had to include preparing the girls for government exams and sending them for examination to certified schools. During the final months of my fieldwork, these difficulties came to a climax because of a new government ruling. The subsequent change in curriculum and the reaction to it from the Ashram girls will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Current leaders at Lakshmi Ashram have talked about the need for reform. The following are steps decided upon by the Ashram members to “enliven the education and ensure that it is more rooted in the immediate surroundings”:

1) The primary base for teaching will remain the daily activities, eg. kitchen, garden, dairy.

2) The ashram will seek the guidance of those individuals who are actively involved in alternative education. Collection of study material, and study tours to places where experiments in alternative education are being made, will deepen understanding amongst ashram workers.

3) Each and every activity in Lakshmi Ashram has education as its core purpose. There is a need to make this connection more alive and emphasise imparting
education through these activities e.g. nutritional values through the kitchen, mathematics through the accounting for production of fruit, milk and vegetables.

4) Students will gather and collate knowledge on local history, geography and culture, thus increasing respect for their surroundings. (Vaishnava, 2002)

These goals are reflected in the daily operations of the school as girls follow a strict daily schedule that includes kitchen and garden chores as well as collaborative study times.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I saw milk production charts written on the blackboard at the front of the meeting room, showing the milk produced from each cow by month. This was being used in math activities for the girls. Although I had hoped to work with the Ashram teachers and students on the fourth goal of collecting local knowledge, this research was not done at the Ashram this year due to time constraints, as described in Chapter 4.

Ashram students. The 50-60 girls who live and study at the Ashram come from villages throughout the Kumaun. Most of them are Kumauni and native speakers of Kumauni. A few did not learn Kumauni at home and one is from Nepal. Students at Lakshmi Ashram generally come from families with difficult economic situations. In their home villages, they would have had limited opportunities to go to school either for economic reasons or because of the distance of the school from their home. Most of them come to the Ashram through contact with one of the Ashram social workers or graduates. The numbers of girls in each grade in 2007-2008 are listed in Table 2. The youngest girls come to the Ashram as early as age six with little if any formal education. They study together towards the Class 3 exam. During the 2007-2008 school year, there were no Class 10 students. After completing “high school,” (Class 10), the students have usually taken the Sadhana program in their 11th year and proceeded to study independently for their “intermediate” (Class 12) exams the following year while taking up more responsibilities at the Ashram.
Table 2: Students at Lakshmi Ashram in 2007-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Grade</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd - 4th (The “little girls”)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadhana (from the Ashram)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadhana (from outside the Ashram)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the students (82%) are from higher or “general” castes. Of the fifty-six Ashram students in 2007-2008, four were from scheduled castes, two from scheduled tribes, and two from backwards castes. Caste is not often discussed at the Ashram, and these categories seem irrelevant where all are treated equally and are referred to with the surname Behen [sister] rather than their own caste-affiliated surnames. Two of the Ashram girls are mildly handicapped. The students go home once a year for winter break from the end of December to the beginning of February. The Ashram members become in many ways like family to each other.

Ashram workers/teachers. There were nineteen workers living at the Ashram in 2007-2008, not counting myself and a German guest. This included sixteen women and three men, some teachers and some fulfilling other responsibilities at the Ashram. All were Kumauni except for one young teacher from the neighboring region, Garhwal, and one long-term Ashram worker from England. The female Ashram workers are called Didi [elder sister], or another respectful nick-name, by all of the girls, as are the foreign guests (Ex: “Cindy-Didi” or “Cindy-Di”). Each of the adults works alongside the girls in
serving the community and is in charge of some aspect of Ashram life: kitchen duty, cultural programs, agriculture, health, workshop/spinning class, office work, etc. Workers are also assigned to teach courses according to their skills and one teacher is assigned to live with and take responsibility for each class/grade group. Most of the Didis have themselves been educated at the Ashram. In fact, as the students get older, they transition naturally into more leadership roles at the Ashram. They are expected to stay for a few years working at the Ashram after they finish Class 10 and while they study privately for their Class 12 exams. Several of the older Didis are women who, widowed at a young age, have spent most of their lives at the Ashram. Others have chosen not to marry and have taken up permanent roles at the Ashram.

The Didis with whom I spent the most time and with whom I most frequently discussed research-related themes are three of the senior members, leaders at the Ashram. I will refer to them here as Meena-Didi, Saroj-Didi, and Kaml-Didi. We took early-morning walks together, spent time together in the office where I often sat to read or type notes, chopped vegetables together, and occasionally traveled together within the Kumaun. I interacted with the other Ashram workers on a daily basis although I had fewer opportunities to talk with them about my research. In my findings, I refer in particular to Shobha-Didi, another senior Ashram member, and young teachers Ganga, Narayana, and Rekha\(^7\), who are almost in the same peer group as the older Ashram students. (See Appendix A for a complete list of primary participants.)

Besides the workers and students, Lakshmi Ashram sometimes hosts foreign guests who come to experience Ashram life and for voluntary service. Thus, my presence at the Ashram was not particularly remarkable, and the girls were more comfortable relating to foreigners than were their village peers. During my first five months of

\(^7\) Names have been changed.
fieldwork, I shared a room and foreigner status with a girl from Germany who had come for part of her gap year between high school and college.

**The Sadhana Program**

After completing Class 10, most of the students remain at the Ashram to participate in a special Gandhian studies program. Young women from surrounding villages who have completed at least Class 10 also come to the Ashram to participate in this program in which they not only learn about Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophies but also are challenged to think about themselves and the world in new ways. The year-long program, initially called the Gandhian Studies or Gandhian Thought [*Gandhi vichaar*] program, was started in order to provide more explicit training in the Gandhian philosophies that are lived out in the Ashram education and way of life. Recently the name of the program has been changed to *Sadhana*, a Sanskrit term with a deep meaning associated with spiritual practice or discipline, perhaps best summarized as “mental training.” This name change reflects a broader aim of the program that is not confined to Gandhian thought alone.

Throughout most of the course, the Sadhana girls participate in and experience Ashram community life along with all of the other students, including the work duties, prayers, and spinning class. Their afternoon classes are taught by various Ashram members, covering themes from Gandhian thought and history to current events; engaging them in discussions and shedding new insights on issues like education and marriage; and guiding them through the reading of texts such as Gandhi’s autobiography and *Hind Swaraj [Indian Home Rule]*. And since there happened to be an interested American researcher living at the Ashram, the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 Sadhana groups also studied some conversational English. As part of the Sadhana program, the girls also travel to the state of Gujarat to participate in a Gandhian training there, also
taking in a ten-day silent meditation retreat and tours in Jaipur and Delhi. The final months of their program, back at Lakshmi Ashram, include an intensive sewing and knitting course.

The young women participating in this course, as well as some of their peers outside of the Ashram, received particular attention in this research. Govindi was among the five girls who came to Lakshmi Ashram for the first time in 2007 to participate in the Sadhana program. She and three others (Nirmala, Basanti, and Himani\(^8\)) had completed Class 12 at government schools. The fifth girl (Pushba) had completed Class 12 at a government school and a BA and MA through independent study. Two of the five (Nirmala and Basanti) had been working together at an NGO near their home villages before coming for the program. I chose to focus on Govindi and Himani since they had both joined the Sadhana program immediately after completing Class 12 at a government intermediate college and since they were easy for me to connect with.

The five Lakshmi Ashram girls who participated in the Sadhana program in 2007-2008 had all completed Class 10 together the previous year. Most of them had been educated at the Ashram since early childhood and remembered me from my previous trips to the Ashram. One (Gaitri) is from Nepal. Since Hira and Mahima seemed more reserved as I was first getting to know the girls, I focused my interviews with this group on Sunita and Manju. I became quite close to all of the Sadhana girls throughout my nine months of fieldwork and spent as much time with them as possible. I taught them English during the time that I lived at the Ashram and visited them often after they had returned from their study tour, when I was living in Kausani.

Three of the girls from the previous year's Sadhana group were still living at the Ashram and studying for their Class 12 exams. I had gotten to know them well during my

\(^8\) Names have been changed.
preliminary research at the Ashram the previous year and enjoyed informal discussions
with them, especially with one whom I call Kanti here. I also spent more extensive time
with one of the Class 9 students, whom I call Asha. She was one of the youngest girls at
the Ashram when I first visited in 2000. During my research year, I got to know her well,
interviewed her, and had the opportunity to visit her home.

Kausani

Down the hill from Lakshmi Ashram, yet spread high along a ridge between the
Garur and Someshwar valleys to the north and south, sits the small town / large village
of Kausani. At the Ashram, Kausani is referred to as the paRau, or roadside rest-stop.
The older girls are sometimes sent down the hill to carry up supplies such as rice, lentils,
potatoes or fruit. The strip of small shops known as the bazaar, or market, has not
expanded much over the years, according to long-term residents; however, many new
hotels and restaurants have been built along the ridge to the west. Tourists enjoy
Kausani for its spectacular view of the snow-capped Himalayan peaks to the north.
Kausani is also proud home of the Anashakti Ashram where Mahatma Gandhi himself
spent a few weeks and where guests can visit a museum about Gandhi’s life and
participate in Gandhian prayers and simple Ashram life. A small museum/library in
Kausani commemorates the birthplace of the famous Hindi poet Sumitra Nandan Pant.
The government primary school in Kausani holds an annual children's program in his
honor.

When I moved for the second half of my fieldwork to a home along the north side
of the ridge west of the market, I began to see Kausani less as a strip of shops and hotels
and more as a cluster of small villages spread across several kilometers between terraced
fields and thin pine forests. From my second home, the market area was referred to as
Harchina. In their daily routines, there is rarely reason for the women to walk the two
kilometers from where I lived to the shops at *Harchina*. Just as in the villages, the women of Kausani are busy in their homes and fields. They cut and carry grass for the cows and pause together for tea in their homes. Usually I saw only men sitting and drinking tea at the shops in the market area.

Since Kausani rests on the ridge dividing the Almora and Bageshwar districts of Uttarakhand, there are two government primary schools and two post offices (one in the Kausani market area and one in the “Kausani Estate” near the tea gardens and the government intermediate college to the west). For Census purposes, Kausani appears to be counted only under Bageshwar District. The 2001 Census lists Kausani Estate as having 486 households and 2,626 persons (1,545 males and 1,081 females). Perhaps the inclusion of males who are working at the military base near Kausani or at the hotels helps to account for the surplus of males. In other Census figures, rural Uttarakhand has slightly more females while urban Uttarakhand has more males.

Besides the two government primary schools in Kausani, there are also two private primary schools, a Central Government School (Kendriya Vidyalaya) serving up to Class 8, a Government Girls’ Junior High School serving Class 6 through 8 girls, and the Government Intermediate College (GIC), serving Class 6 through 12. I visited each of these schools and spoke with the teachers, most frequently at the government schools. I got to know well the principal of the Girls’ Junior High School, and she took me to teacher trainings and to the district education offices. Here I refer to her as Ms. Pushba Sharma.

**Government Intermediate College, Kausani**

The Kausani GIC is situated along the northern side of the ridge about two

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9 Classes 9 and 10 are called high school. Classes 11 and 12 are called intermediate college, commonly referred to as “inter-college” or “inter.” Schools are usually labeled according to the highest grades offered there; thus, the “Government Intermediate College” includes not only Classes 11 and 12, but also junior high and high school.
kilometers west of the market. Most of the classrooms face the schoolyard, with a magnificent view of the Himalayan peaks. Some of the classrooms have desks and benches while in others the students sit on mats on the floor. During my visits at the GIC, I would usually stop first at the school office where the principal sits behind a large desk. Sometimes I joined the teachers sitting in plastic chairs under a large shade tree in the school yard. I observed several English classes and school assemblies, taught some English classes, and talked with the students, teachers, and principal, as described in Chapter 4.

There is a shortage of teachers assigned by the government to teach in Kausani, so currently there are only thirteen teachers at the school, serving junior high, high school, and inter-college. The previous year when I was doing preliminary research, there were only sixteen. When I made initial contact at the school, a principal had not been appointed and the biology teacher was serving as interim principal. Later I was able to get to know the new principal, Mr. Pant, who had been transferred from a high school in a more remote area.

Of the thirteen teachers in 2007-2008, only one was female. She was the English teacher for grades 6 through 10. Her assignment to the school in Kausani kept her away from her husband and young child, so she spent most holidays and weekends traveling to them. I got to know some of the other teachers better, in particular the English teacher for Classes 11 and 12, Mr. Ramesh Prasad. He was interested in my research and open to interviews and to having me observe his classes. He was also helping to teach English to the Class 9 girls at Lakshmi Ashram on his free days, so I observed his classes there at the Ashram as well.

There were 341 students enrolled at the Kausani GIC in 2007-2008. Table 3

10 Names have been changed.
11 Names have been changed.
shows the breakdown of students by grade level. The GIC is the only school available in Kausani for grades nine through twelve, which explains the higher number of students in the higher grades. In ninth and tenth grade, Group A and B classes are divided by gender. In eleventh and twelfth grade, Group A and B classes are divided according to whether or not students are studying in the science track.

Table 3: Students at the Government Intermediate College in 2007-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Grade</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of girls</th>
<th>Number of boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17 (2 in science)</td>
<td>39 (12 in science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19 (2 in science)</td>
<td>34 (14 in science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The young women that I got to talk with the most were from Class 9 and Class 11, since the Class 10 and 12 students were preoccupied with studying for, taking, and waiting for the results of their board exams throughout the first three and a half months of 2008. I taught some English classes and spent time with groups of girls inside and outside of the classroom. Three of these girls were my neighbors, living just up the hill from my home in Kausani Estate. I will refer to them as Vimla and Hema, sisters who were in Class 11 and 12, respectively, and Poonam, their cousin who was in Class 9.

Life in Kausani Estate

The home that I rented from January through April 2008 was about a five minute walk downhill from the GIC and about two kilometers west of the Kausani market. I lived as a paying guest in an apartment attached to the home of the Bhandari family. Although
they had built a cement block extension to their home in order to rent out space, their own house is made of the more traditional rock and clay, with a roof of large stone slabs. It is surrounded by terraced fields, fruit trees, and tea gardens so that, while neighbor's homes are not far, few other buildings are visible from the house. The house is built along the north side of the ridge, facing the Garur valley and layers of foothills leading up to the snow-capped Himalayan peaks. Mr. Bhandari is the principal of one of the private schools in Kausani, the Shishu Mandir. Mrs. Bhandari manages workers in the tea gardens below their home, besides her responsibilities in the home and gardens. Their son and daughter are studying in Class 5 and Class 8 at the Central Government School, which is closer to their home than the Shishu Mandir where their father teaches. Mr. Bhandari's mother also lives in the home.

Although their houses are spread between terraced fields and forest, the neighbors interact with one another regularly and especially enjoy time together during weddings and festivals. I was invited into these gatherings, and the women were eager to talk with me. I received daily invitations to stop for tea as I passed my neighbors' homes on my way to visit the GIC or Lakshmi Ashram. Neighbors would come and chat with my hosts while filling their jugs of drinking water at the covered spring beside our house. Other foreigners have lived in this area as paying guests, so my presence did not require much explanation.

**The Village of Dholara**

Besides my life and interactions in Kausani, I made frequent visits to the village of Dholara, a forty-minute walk from Kausani. My initial contact with the village was through Mr. Simon, who works on night shift at one of the largest hotels in Kausani. The Simon household currently includes his wife, parents, brother, and two youngest sons. The oldest son is working in a city in the plains and the daughter is away at nursing
school. I made day and overnight trips to visit them and got to know some of their neighbors as well. In particular, I got to know one talkative neighbor, whom I will call Devki, and her two young daughters-in-law, Nalini and Bhavani\textsuperscript{12}.

The women were often busy in the fields when I visited Dholara, doing work according to the season. When I visited in June 2006, they were transplanting rice, working from dawn to dusk in the flooded fields. In August 2007, they were collecting walnuts that had fallen from two large trees. In October, they were cutting grass and arranging it in hay stacks for the winter. In December, they were planting potatoes. And always there was food to prepare and clothing to wash. The women from several households often work together, swapping labor in their respective fields.

While men help with the plowing, the women do most of the agricultural work in the Kumaun. They also cut grass for fodder and search nearby forests for firewood. Water has been channeled from the hills above the village to the fields below, and the Kosi River runs through the valley below Dholara, so water shortage is not as much of a concern here as it is in other parts of the Kumaun. Some of the men and women of Dholara were working as day laborers in the construction of a new cement waterway. The men worked for 100 rupees a day and the women for 50 rupees a day.\textsuperscript{13}

Most of the young men of Dholara have left the village to find work. As in most Kumauni villages, the men are away in the army or working in the plains. They return on vacation leave and when they retire, or in between jobs if they haven't found permanent work. This male labor migration has been common in the Kumaun for generations, and sometimes the region is categorized as having a 'mail-order economy.'

\textsuperscript{12} Names have been changed.
\textsuperscript{13} The exchange rate at that time averaged about 40 rupees per US dollar.
The Kumaun and the Kumauni People

Village meets village on the hillsides around Dholara, sometimes indistinguishable to the visitor. Although the eye may see wooded hilltops and terraced fields, the villages that dot the hillsides are not deserted. From the village, I zoom out to describe the region and the people-group of which Kumauni villagers feel a part.

Kausani is located on the border between the Almora and Bageshwar districts in the Kumaun region of Uttarakhand. The district capital, Almora, can be reached by bus or shared jeep/taxi in about two hours. A three or four hour ride further south will take you to Kathgodam, the beginning of the railway line, and to Haldwani, the largest city in the region. Almost everyone in the Kumaun, it seems, has a relative who is working or going to school in Haldwani. Many entire families have migrated to its suburbs. From there an overnight train or bus will get you to Delhi in about eight hours. West of the Kumaun is Garhwal, the other region of the state of Uttarakhand and home of the Garhwali people. To the north is Tibet, to the west Nepal, and to the south the state of Uttar Pradesh (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Uttarakhand within India

Source: WikiProject Maps
Kumaun in Uttarakhand

Previously part of the large Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand gained statehood in 2000. The statehood movement involved concern that the specific needs of the people in the mountains were being neglected. The state was originally named Uttaranchal, but in 2007 the name was changed to Uttarakhand, the name commonly used for the region up through the struggle for statehood. The region of Uttarakhand, which has been called the Land of the Gods, is 80% mountainous, with ridge after ridge of foothills stretching up to snow-capped Himalyan peaks. From the outsider’s perspective, the area has been a place of pilgrimage and spiritual retreat for centuries. Hill stations and summer capitals were built there, providing relief from the heat of the plains. Some famous educational institutions make their home in the state capital of Dehradun.

The state of Uttarakhand had in 2001 a population of almost 8 ½ million. About three-quarters of this population is rural (Census of India, 2001). Because of the mountainous landscape, Uttarakhand is not as densely populated as many of the other Indian states, however, much of the rugged terrain in the north cannot be cultivated. The 2001 Census indicates that over 83% of households have drinking water within or near their premises (65.9% of them getting it from a tap) and just over 60% have electricity. The villages that I visited were equipped with electricity and many homes had televisions. Indeed, the Census indicates that 42.9% of households in Uttarakhand have televisions, while 49.7% have a radio. The Census also reports that 54.6% of households use fire-wood for cooking, while another 33.5% use gas burners. Most households that I

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14 Had Uttar Pradesh been a country on its own, it would have been the eighth largest country in the world in terms of population. A related factor leading to the push for statehood in Uttarakhand was an increase in the reservations, or reserved seats in government jobs/institutions, for members of certain constitutionally identified “Backward Castes” (BC). Since there is a high proportion of non-BC's in this region, the new law would have flooded the coveted positions with low-caste applicants from the plains.
observed used some combination of the two. Collecting firewood remains an important
task for many women. The Census report that 9.9% of households have a telephone will
likely be quite different in the next census as the popularity of mobile phones is
increasing rapidly. The emphasis on all of the above issues in the Census points to the
importance that states are giving to household welfare and amenities.

Uttarakhand statistics on areas of human welfare have tended to be high
compared with the rest of India, and particularly compared to the state of Uttar Pradesh
of which it was not too long ago a part. The literacy rate\textsuperscript{15} in Uttarakhand in 2001 was
calculated to be 71.6% (83.3% for males and 59.6% for females), compared with the
Indian average of 64.8% literacy (75.3% for males and 53.7% for females). Also, from the
information on secondary school and higher education completion (Census of India,
2001), I calculated that in Uttarakhand, about 18% of the population had completed high
school or beyond, while, in India as a whole, 15% have completed the equivalent
education. Yet the mountainous region is often considered to be a “backwards” place,
home of simple village people.

The Himalayan region of Uttarakhand has been called “a land of mass exodus”
(Vidyarthi & Jha, 1986, p.86). As mentioned above, out-migration particularly of males
to find work has been common for generations. Those of higher economic status have
tended to remain in the plains, some losing “their language, rituals and social customs”
(p. 90). According to Vidyarthi and Jya (1986), the situation was better in the Kumaun as
there were two or three “developed towns” and less out-migration of the wealthy.

\textsuperscript{15} According to the Census of India (2001): "A person aged 7 years and above who can both read and
write with understanding in any language has been taken as literate. It is not necessary for a person to
have received any formal education or passed any minimum educational standard for being treated as
literate. People who were blind and could read in Braille are treated to be literates."
“A person, who can neither read nor write or can only read but cannot write in any language, is treated
as illiterate. All children of age 6 years or less, even if going to school and have picked up reading and
writing, are treated as illiterate.”
The Kumaun makes up the eastern half of Uttarakhand and is divided administratively into six districts: Pithoragarh, Bageshwar, Almora, Nainital, Champawat, and Udham Singh Nagar. The latter district is in the plains and tends to have more Hindi speakers even though it has historically been considered part of the Kumaun.

**Kumauni People**

The Kumauni people are made up of a variety of groups who have migrated to the area throughout ancient history. The various castes among Kumaunis each claim descent from different immigrant populations. Caste identity remains strong, and most texts describing the people of the area begin immediately to describe the various castes. I observed that marrying someone from outside of the Kumaun is much more common than an almost unthinkable marriage with someone from another caste. Yet, the caste system as practiced in the Kumaun is said to be more simple and less rigid than that in the plains (Ramesh & Ramesh, 2001). Kumauni society has been called a “melting pot of ethnic groups” by historian Shekhar Pathak (1988), who describes the “process of struggle and assimilation in a time span of about five thousand years” (p.97).

Kumaunis are named for the location where they make their home, and not vice versa. The term Kumaun may have originated from the name 'Kurmanchal' or the 'mountain of the tortoise' associated with Lord Vishnu (Ramesh & Ramesh, 2001), or from the expansion of the territory of the rulers of 'Kumu' (Sharma, 1988). In recorded history, the Kumaun has been ruled by several dynasties, followed by the Gorkhas of Nepal (from 1790 to 1815), who were then driven out by the British East India Company (ruling from 1815 to 1857), after which the region was ruled by the British Empire (1857-1947). There was also a history of conflict with neighboring Garhwal, sealing the distinct identities of the two regions.
Indian tourists visiting the Kumaun often refer to Kumauni people as being 'simple' or 'honest' or 'polite.' They will also refer to the region and the people as being 'backwards' – a term that I also heard Kumaunis using of their region. Yet I also heard Didis at Lakshmi Ashram contesting this discourse of backwardness as it is applied in the Kumaun and as it is sometimes applied to India in general.

In a 1977 dissertation, Dhapola conducted a survey of Kumaunis' stereotypes about themselves. He says: "Ethnically the Kumaonis represent an intermixture of races, including mainly the Indo-Aryan, Mongolian, and Aboriginal segments. Geographically and socio-culturally, the Kumaonis have till recently suffered relative isolation from the rest of the country" (Dhapola, 1977, p.78). They are seen as and see themselves as different from the people in the plains. He lists the positive perceived qualities of Kumaunis as: honesty, simplicity, truthfulness, industriousness, religiousness, kindness, courage, helpfulness, and peace-mindedness; and negative perceived qualities as: jealousy, illiteracy, addiction, traditionalism, idleness, class-mindedness, lack of unity, ignorance, and superstition. The people that they admire the most are Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Through a study of Kumauni character in proverbs and folktales, Dhapola does not find a unified picture. However, deference, abasement, and harm avoidance are seen as important. Thus, he generalizes that Kumaunis tend to have a non-assertive personality, as well as blame avoidance. They are known to be good soldiers, but not so much for aggression, dominance, and counteraction, as, more likely, for obedience and devotion to duty (1977).

**Kumauni Women**

Kumauni women have been referred to as the backbone of the Himalayas. In reference to Kumauni women, Ramesh and Ramesh (2001) say: "Hill women are probably the hardest worked anywhere in the world" (p. 115). They describe the money-
order economy which sends men to the plains and leaves women with the bulk of the agricultural labor in the hills. Much has been written by activists about the women’s hard situation, with little change foreseeable for them. "This, however, is not to say that the *pahari* woman is weak, servile or miserable. Most of them are proud, independent and aggressive," as Ramesh and Ramesh (2001, p. 116) describe.16 "Also *pahari* women of all castes enjoy a degree of freedom unknown anywhere in the plains. They go wherever they please, alone if need be, and are confident and free of speech" (p. 116),

Writer Namita Gokhale (1998) collected the life stories of four Kumauni women who were born in the early 1900s, women who had lived during the times of the princes of the Kumaun, the British administrators, and the freedom fighters. I describe some of the themes in their stories, as I feel that it gives a glimpse of what it means to be Kumauni and to be a Kumauni woman in changing times. Many aspects of these women’s stories are familiar to me and comparable to the themes that I picked up during my fieldwork, reflecting the continuity of life in the Kumaun: an economy based on the land and on government jobs; men leaving to earn money in the plains and returning when they retire; women moving to their mother-in-law’s home when they marry; the joint family household shared by grandfather, father, and brothers and their families; the importance of the many festivals; and the struggle and investment of educating children, especially sons.

Each of these women talked about the traditions of the orthodox Brahmin kitchen, a theme that had come up almost immediately when I talked with the Sadhana girls about Kumauni traditions. A single cloth was to be worn for cooking and serving food, as well as for eating. Men would not eat grains prepared by unmarried women, and menstruating women were to stay out of the kitchen. This was the same for rich and poor

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16 *Pahari* means “of the mountains” and is often used to refer to the Kumauni people and language.
Brahmin families. These women generally spoke proudly about the maintenance of orthodox eating habits. Jeeya talked about the variety in traditional values since Brahmin castes have come from various places over the centuries: “It is only in the salubrious climate of our hills that all these contradictions could be so harmoniously balanced. And, of course, it is in its way a very egalitarian society - although everyone has their place in the hierarchy, yet everybody, high or low, has their independence and pride, which nobody can destroy” (p. 107)

About Kumauni people in general, they say: “Our Kumauni community is still very conscious about honour, and it closes the door upon anybody who deliberately dishonours a promise” (p. 102); and, regarding the freedom movement: “An average Kumauni was generally a peaceful law-abiding person so all this nationalistic support was necessarily within the legal framework” (p. 120).

These women praised the joint family system, as I have heard other Kumaunis do. Some of them lamented the current generation’s nuclear families, with lack of discipline and demand for personal space (although joint families are still the norm in the villages). In the joint family, they learned community living, responsibility for one another, and how to care for and share with others. The words of the “senior members of the household, whether men or women, were gospel and absolutely adhered to” (p. 67). Jeeya remembers her mother and four aunts working together, with the men often absent: “This little band of women all pooled their different talents and skills and built up a home together. And of course they also passed on all that they had learned to the next generation, to the thirteen of us sisters and girl-cousins” (p. 89)

Other aspects of their stories showed evidence of change over time, and of the economic status of the four women whose stories are told. These women lived in large homes and had servants. Travelers from out of town were free to stay in the large homes
in town. As in a traditional Kumauni home, Jeeya said, the door was always kept unlocked for “unceasing hospitality.” They see both good and bad in the changes that have come. They regret the loss of moral values and the devaluing of honesty and integrity. “But I am perturbed,” says Shivani, “about the rapid speed at which we are losing our independence of mind and thought to the new culture, the new thoughts, the new society which is totally borrowed from the West... Then just the way we have forgotten to nurture and sustain our mother-tongue, we may similarly soon forget our own mothers! The haste with which we are abandoning our heritage alarms me” (p. 30).

In those days the poor were better off than they are today, Shivani said. And yet Jeeya says: “There is no doubt in my mind that modern India provides more and fairer choices for everybody. There are more career opportunities for both men and women... There is certainly more prosperity, especially in small villages” (p. 114).

They praise the improvement in gender relationships. They talk about the high mortality rate among women, and the many restrictions. At that time, married women should not wear any footwear, even in the coldest weather. They avoided the bazaars and took back trails, always accompanied by someone else. Tara said that nowadays women are no longer closed in, the clothing pattern has changed: now they are wearing saris and footwear. Women are now shopping in the bazaar and even running shops in the absence of their husbands. “This is progress” (p. 73), she says. She talked about how her husband saw to the education of both her sons and her daughters in the best schools: “Times and attitudes had changed from my childhood in Almora” (p. 72). Jeeya chose to have two children rather than the eight or ten common in the previous generation.

17 Interestingly, the only other references in the book to language have to do with the focus of education at that time on languages and particularly on Sanskrit, and the learning of languages through travel to other parts of India: “We learnt above all to tolerate and appreciate the manners and customs of different people in different parts of India. As children we were quick to pick up dialects and languages wherever we went” (p. 47).
Another theme that emerged from these four women's stories is the strength of Kumauni women: “But we are all strong women of the hills, our lives get meaning and our ideas get impetus in adversity” (p. 53). They talked about women being treated better in the Kumaun than in the plains where purdah, preventing women from being seen by men, was then common. “In retrospect I can realise what a liberal atmosphere we grew up in, and how much respect the women in the family were given. Perhaps it was because we outnumbered the men!” (p. 94).

Finally, regarding education, these women talked about the improvement in access to education in the Kumaun and particularly for girls. They, themselves, got involved in social work projects for the uplift of fellow Kumaunis. Yet Tara complains about the expectation that people have built up about being spoon-fed: “Our people are incapable of taking advantage of the given situation, of using a helping hand to lift themselves up... There are so many schools, Inter-colleges, Degree Colleges and Post-Graduate institutes, they are accessible to the public, but there has been no improvement in the lot of the people in general and women in particular. So just making people literate has not made them more competitive or enterprising - it has only added to the list of the educated unemployed” (p. 79). Shakuntala shifts the blame to the lack of jobs: “But, ironically, these colleges and higher institutions of learning are still unable to provide jobs so the problem is once again one of earning enough to survive and the vicious circle of poverty remains undefeated” (p. 125).

Another group of Kumauni women whose stories have been recorded are alumni of Lakshmi Ashram who were interviewed by Rebecca Klenk (1999) for her dissertation. From their stories also interesting themes can be drawn, including the difficulty for girls in access to education and the pressure to get married. However, their economic backgrounds are different from those women of the previous generation described above,
and their lives are very influenced by their experiences at Lakshmi Ashram.

**Kumauni Language**

The Kumauni language is classified as an Indo-Aryan language among the Pahari languages spoken on the southern Himalayan slopes. Kumauni and Garhwali together make up the Central Pahari group, differentiated structurally from the Western Pahari languages of Himachal Pradesh and the Eastern Pahari of Nepal. There are various theories about the origins of Kumauni, reflecting the variety of groups that have made up the history of the Kumaun, as discussed by Sharma (1988), who also cites scholars who have drawn attention to Kumauni from the time of Grierson's (1916) *Linguistic Survey of India* and onwards. The first literary works in Kumauni are attributed to scholar-poet Gumani Pant, writing in the early 1800's. Poets and prose writers have been producing works in Kumauni ever since, including the popular Kumauni folk songs.

Some of the current experts on the Kumauni language are scholars at Kumaun University: D.S. Pokhariya, S.S. Bisht, and Diva Bhatt. Since they have done much of their writing and publishing in Hindi, I learned most from them by discussions in person. In addition, retired professor K.D. Ruwali was instrumental in establishing a standard variety of Kumauni accepted by the academic community and in initiating the teaching of Kumauni at the university level since 1990. Among others, S.S. Bisht has published a trilingual Hindi-Kumauni-English dictionary and a detailed Dialect Survey of Kumauni. He has distinguished ten dialects of Kumauni, four eastern and six western.

Currently, the government of India considers Kumauni to be a dialect of Hindi, and it has become known as such in broader discourse, although it is said that at one time Kumauni was used by the rulers of the region. Language does not appear to be an important issue in many recent books describing the region. The situation of Kumauni within broader language policy in India will be described in Chapter 5. Local discourses
surrounding Kumauni and its categorization as either a language or a dialect will be discussed in Chapter 6.

A survey of the sociolinguistic and educational situation in the Kumaun that was conducted in 1999 (Bailey, van Riezen, & van Riezen) sheds light on linguistic vitality and local attitudes towards Kumauni. The team, which included Kumauni translators and American and Dutch linguists, collected and analyzed primarily quantitative data, while recognizing the limitations of this type of research and of the scope of their survey. They collected data from six sites in four districts, representing both eastern and western dialects of Kumauni and both urban/semi-urban and rural locations. Their general findings point to the vitality of the Kumauni language for the estimated 2,360,000 Kumauni-speaking people. “From the data gathered, we draw the conclusion that Kumauni is the dominant language in use among the Kumauni people, although in town settings, subjects reported lower use of Kumauni. In general, Kumauni shows many signs of being a living, vital language, highly used in almost all domains of life, and having a very good chance to survive into future generations.” More details of their findings follow.

To explore the dialectal variation in Kumauni, they used lexical similarity comparison, intelligibility testing, and questionnaires, generating the following conclusions: While there is recognition among Kumaunis of the variation, Kumauni is considered to be one language and mutual understanding is strong. Standardization has not taken place to the degree that one dialect has “significantly greater lexical scope than others.” Subjects were asked whether they have met people from, understood, and liked the language of other districts, with the following results: 1. “Many rural villagers (particularly women) have never met Kumauni people from other areas.” 2. “Those that have interacted with other Kumaunis not only claim to have understood their speech,
they also find it acceptable.” When asked which variety is “the best/sweetest,” Kumaunis in all areas tended to favor their own variety, although for those in the northern areas the Almora variety was a close second. “Taking all of these aspects together, it seems that Kumauni is best seen as a language with a number of slight regional variations which are nevertheless perceived by speakers as part of the same language” (Bailey, van Riezen, & van Riezen, 1999).

To explore linguistic vitality, the team used village mapping and questionnaires with a focus on language use, bilingualism, and language attitude. About 80-90% of those surveyed use Kumauni in most situations. The exception is when communicating with people from town, in which case only 23-24% would use Kumauni. The younger generation (25 and under) reports using Kumauni only a few percentage points less than others in the various domains. Not surprisingly, urban people use less Kumauni, especially young people. In urban areas only 39% say that they use Kumauni with children as compared to 92% in the villages, and none reported that children use Kumauni with their friends in urban areas (compared with 74% in rural areas). “Towns can be prestigious and can often set the trend for other locations to follow. However, the majority (85%) of Kumauni people are living in villages, and have little contact with the towns, especially the women. That makes it more likely that the village children will grow up continuing to speak Kumauni, more than the Hindi that they learn at school” (1999).

Regarding the level of bilingualism, 18% of those surveyed do not speak Hindi. Bilingualism is almost 100% in urban areas. Most men, but only about half of the women are reported to be bilingual. Most of the younger generation, but less than half of the oldest generation is bilingual. Higher caste Kumaunis speak more Hindi than those in Scheduled Castes. Thus, “[t]he general perception of people that ‘everybody speaks Hindi’ is not supported by this research. There are possibly 4.6 lakhs [46,000] of
Kumauni people, 18% of the population, who can not communicate in Hindi. The majority of these are rural women” (1999).

Regarding language attitude, this survey found that Kumauni is preferred by 70-80% of subjects for speaking, being spoken to, listening to stories, telling stories, hearing songs, singing songs and listening to the radio. It is interesting, and not surprising from my observations, that the highest preference for Kumauni (80%) is for hearing songs. Preference for Kumauni is still strong among the younger generation. Regarding attitudes towards written materials in Kumauni, 40-43% would prefer to read and write in Kumauni. More rural, adult females preferred reading and writing in Kumauni, particularly for reading farming books. Bailey et al. (1999) explain that “...an important factor is probably the unfamiliarity of people with Kumauni in print. Many people thought that Kumauni is not a written language, and some others said it was difficult to read.” In conclusion: “Kumauni is the language which is used most for oral communication. It is preferred even among those who can speak Hindi well. It is a vital language whose speakers have a positive attitude towards it. The next generation in the rural areas is likely to continue to speak Kumauni. In the towns, there is a greater possibility of an eventual shift to Hindi, but this cannot be predicted with any certainty” (1999).

Finally, in order to explore the educational situation of Kumaunis, Bailey et al. (1999) used observations, interviews, questionnaires, village mapping, and literacy level tests. They discovered that about half of the women could read and write as compared to 88% of the men. The literacy gap between men and women is greater for adult, working women but much less in the younger generation. Among the elderly, 22% were literate. There was a direct relationship between age and literacy rate and indications of “embarrassment among the people if the younger generation is not going to school.”
Higher castes tended to have higher literacy rates in all generations, although the gap is getting smaller. There seemed to be little impact of the adult education programs, and the team couldn't find adults who had learned to read and write through them. As positives of the education in the Kumaun, the survey found that schools are available and most children are going to them. However, on the negative side, they observed that after five years, the children could not be defined as 'functionally literate.' The children had trouble applying what they learned. Perhaps, Bailey et al. suggest, the gap between home and school language is part of the problem.

An important goal of this dissertation was to explore the educational experiences of Kumauni young women in particular, including potential difficulties associated with this gap between home and school language, as well as their beliefs and practices regarding Kumauni language. In the following chapter, I describe the research methods and processes that I used.
Chapter 4

Methods: Conducting Research in the Kumaun

Ethnographic methods were vital for trying to understand the beliefs and practices of Kumauni young women and educators and for maintaining a value for the local. Agar (1996) boils it down to “the same old problem of one human trying to figure out what some other humans are up to.” In the words of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), ethnographic research "bears a close resemblance to the routine ways in which people make sense of the world in everyday life" (p. 2).

Ethnography involves immersion in the local context, attention to the many interrelated issues in that context, and emphasis on the perspectives of community members. Ethnographic data comes in three types, put simply: "information on what people say, what they do, and what they leave behind" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In order to understand the views of young women and teachers, I used participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions, as well as some documents. Building on participant observation, interviews allow researchers to explore the expressed beliefs and values of participants; while at the same time observations allow the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the views expressed in interviews.

This chapter first describes theoretical and experiential influences on my research methods. I then present the details of my research methods, including general procedures, the process and phases of my fieldwork, and record-keeping and analysis. I conclude with some comments on adaptations to my original research plan.

Theoretical Influences on the Research

In exploring the worlds of others, whether near or far, ethnographic researchers encounter issues that defy their original assumptions and categories, creating what Agar
(1996) calls “rich points” that highlight for them and allow them to explore a world that is different from their own. Even when things are making sense, the researcher can strive for an attitude of “anticoherence” in which “understanding is suspect; you self-consciously try to show that ‘what I think is going on probably isn’t’” (Agar, 1986, p. 50). The resolution of those “rich point” breakdowns is “the process of tinkering with inferences and schemas until coherent understanding is achieved” (p. 36).

Just as “rich points” are situations that “make salient the differences between the ethnographer’s world and the world the ethnographer sets out to describe,” Hornberger (2006) describes “methodological rich points” as “points of research experience that make salient the differences between the researcher’s perspective and mode of research and the world the research sets out to describe” (p. 222). Methodological rich points in applied linguistics research include concern for including collaboratively and representing adequately the participants in the research, awareness that knowledge is “co-constructed in contexts of social interaction” (p. 225), the fact that our research is conducted in increasingly diverse, multilingual settings, as well as the need for humility and respect on the part of the researcher. It is with awareness of this complexity and the “multiple actors, trajectories, and truths” (p. 235) that these methodological rich points imply that I started my research, knowing that it could proceed in several possible directions while drawing from several methodological streams. Along with traditional ethnography, my research methodology is influenced by the ethnography of communication and principles of “empowering research,” including components of action research and participatory research methods.

The ethnography of communication “has its origin in the development of a view in anthropology that culture to a large extent is expressed through language and of the view in linguistics that language is a system of cultural behaviors” (Farah, 1997, p. 125;
Geertz, 1973; see also Hymes, 1968; Hymes, 1974). Important in the ethnography of communication are the concepts of speech communities and domains of language use, along with the analysis of communicative and literacy events. These concepts were useful for me in noticing and analyzing communication patterns in the Lakshmi Ashram speech community and in the Kumaun. In education situations the ethnography of communication has been useful in looking beyond classroom interaction and emphasizing the “multilayered contexts in which it is embedded” (Farah, 1997, p. 131).

While primary concerns of the ethnography of communication are “the questions of what a person knows about appropriate patterns of language use in his or her community and how he or she learns about it” (Farah, 1997, p. 125), my research seeks to go beyond description of language use to explore the implications of that language use and socialization for educational opportunities and empowerment.

While on one hand I am interested in the uses of the various languages—Hindi, English, and Kumauni—in various speech situations, I am also interested in the uses of language in describing those realities, i.e. in the discourses surrounding the uses of languages and literacies. Here discourses are not units of language, but rather “the complexes of signs and practices that organize social existence and social reproduction” (Norton, 1997, p. 209).

As I sort through the multiple influences and labels, I find that my research also bears similarity to sociolinguistic ethnography. Sociolinguistic ethnography acknowledges that interactional order reflects social order and that there is a web of interactions that relate to one another that makes up the social order. These interactions/relations are “about the production and distribution of symbolic and material resources” (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001, p. 12). A sociolinguistic ethnography seeks to find out what those resources are, as well as their sources and processes.
language use is studied not just as a reflection of social order, but also as a “central form of social action itself” (p. 12).

Because of my emphasis on valuing the local realities and the views of local people and since my research is related to the concepts of empowerment, I felt that I should make every attempt to conduct that research in ways that would build up and empower participants. What exactly that entails deserves careful consideration. It should ideally go beyond simply recording the words of locals to involving them in the research. Cameron et al. (1992) define empowering research as “research on, for, and with” participants. The first of their guiding principles for empowering research is the use of interactive methods, methods that acknowledge that subjects of research are people and not objects. Chambers (1997) describes the tendency to value disciplines that deal with “things” (and people treated as things) over “people,” resulting in two alternative paradigms. According to his classification, the paradigm of “things” has pre-set, closed goals while the paradigm of “people” has evolving, open goals. The paradigm of “things” uses standardized, universal methods and rules while the paradigm of “people” uses diverse, local methods and rules. The paradigm of “things,” with centralized decision-making, sees local people as beneficiaries while the paradigm of “people,” with decentralized decision-making, sees local people as partners and actors. Thus my attempt to value and involve people in my research has broader implications for methodological decisions.

Chambers emphasizes the unconventional nature of such a people-centered approach but also demonstrates the risks of an approach that ignores other people’s realities:

For the convenience and control of normal professionals, it is not the local, complex, diverse, dynamic and unpredictable reality of those who are poor, weak and peripheral that counts, but the flat shadows of that reality that they,
prisoners of their professionalism, fashion for themselves. (p. 55)

Issues of validity come to mind. Research traditions that emphasize complete objectivity direct researchers to remove themselves as much as possible from interference in the research setting, lest their influence contaminate the existing reality. However, such researchers run the risk of fashioning “flat shadows of that reality.” This relates to the fact that, just as social realities are influenced by and influence the people within them, all research also is colored by the perspectives brought by the researcher. The importance of investigating a particular social reality in depth, thus, points to the need for involving the researched in the research – an added advantage of empowering research. Interactive methods, according to Cameron et al. (1992) “entail a dialogue between the researcher and informants which itself then becomes a large part of the data base” (1992).

The second and third guiding principles for empowering research that Cameron et al. (1992) propose, after interactive methods, involve valuing the agendas of research subjects and sharing knowledge, both research findings and academic knowledge. I hoped to incorporate these principles in my research methods. First, my original research questions were general enough to allow flexibility in focus according to the needs or agendas expressed by participants.1 Second, through my participant observation and involvement in the Kausani community, I planned to make myself available as a consultant for students and teachers, for example, by offering to teach English and experimenting with methods, and by working with students and teachers on exploring the causes and impact of cultural changes. I also planned to return research findings to the community, using their responses to those findings as opportunity for further data

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1 Some issues that seemed important during my preliminary research in Kausani included the interest of students and teachers in learning how to best learn and teach English. Also, Lakshmi Ashram teachers expressed concern that other local schools were requiring dress code standards that compromised the local cultural patterns, perhaps reflecting deeper prejudices against Kumauni local ways.
These goals of involving participants, acknowledging their agendas, and sharing knowledge are shared by researchers who use action research and participatory methods, traditions that have also influenced my perspective on research. Action research is conducted “by or with insiders to an organization or community” (Herr & Anderson 2005, p. 3) in order to understand situations and work towards improvement. Participatory rural appraisal is an evolving collection of approaches characterized by 1) the outsider as non-dominant facilitator, 2) methods shifted towards open, group, visual and comparative data collection, and 3) cooperation between participants and organizations (Mascarenhas et al. 1991, cited in Cummins 1996). I used participatory activities to generate discussions in focus groups, but found opportunities to cooperate with and involve participants in the research to be limited, as described below. Perhaps my best attempts at prioritizing the local in my research came through remaining flexible both in implementation of methods and in choice of themes to follow up within my broad areas of interest.

**Experiential Influences on the Research**

As an ethnographic researcher, my own background and experiences influenced my choice of methods and also the manner in which I implemented them. Making some of these influences explicit is important as who I am also has implications for the specific points that grabbed my interest and on my analysis and conclusions. Maxwell (2005, p. 108) describes researcher “bias” as an important threat to validity in qualitative research. "Qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating variance between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to the study, but with understanding how a particular researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study (which may be either positive or negative) and
avoiding the negative consequences” (p. 108). Another specific validity threat that Maxwell mentions is reactivity or "the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied." While this can not be eliminated, the influence of the researcher's presence should be understood and used productively (2005). Researchers should reflect on and make explicit factors that influence them as the researcher and ways that they may influence the setting they are researching. This does not keep them from setting aside their assumptions, theories, and categories to try to understand the local context in its own terms.

I was influenced early by home-schooling and a Mennonite upbringing. 'Pennsylvania Dutch' Mennonites have maintained counter-cultural identities and struggled with assimilation issues for generations. Because of religious convictions, conservative Mennonites and their Amish cousins have kept their distinct way of life, and thus their language, in a way that few immigrant populations have. Yet many modern Mennonites, like my parents, have maintained their core convictions while adapting to a modern way of life. Also many, like my grandparents and great-grandparents, did not pass on the Pennsylvania Dutch language to their children. My background helps me to understand and appreciate people like the Gandhians who choose to lead a simple, counter-cultural lifestyle. It also helps me to understand the struggles involved in decisions for or against cultural assimilation.

My awareness of cultural difference was expanded when my family moved to rural Guatemala in 1988. As an eight-year-old, I was all too aware of how different we were and of the importance of learning to fit in. Ethnographic methods build on the skills that are used in daily life to make sense of situations – and those skills are particularly put to the test in new cultural environments. In Guatemala, I observed the sociolinguistic tensions in relationships between Q'eqchi-Maya and Spanish people: inequalities in
access to education, persistence in maintaining Q'eqchi identity, and the appeal of economic progress through Spanish.

My experience in the Kumaun region started during my first trip to India in 2000. During a semester abroad through Minnesota Studies in International Development (MSID), I spent a month studying the local development situation around Kausani and the development initiatives of Lakshmi Ashram. I lived in the guest room at the Ashram and got so immersed in the life there that time seemed to stand still and the outside world seemed to shrink. The capstone project that I wrote for this program includes descriptions of the life and work at Lakshmi Ashram, as well as interviews and descriptions from the village of Dhopani, north-east of Kausani. It is interesting to note that, although I was interested in minority language issues at that time, I was largely unaware of the influence of Kumauni. I don't remember the Kumauni language being a topic of conversation, as I made it to be during my later fieldwork. I simply write that: “The Kumauni language, locally referred to as “Pahaari” (“mountain-ese”), might be considered a dialect of Hindi, but the two languages are for the most part not mutually intelligible” (Groff, 2000).

I returned for a visit to Lakshmi Ashram in 2004 with my sister and became reacquainted with some of the same teachers and students who had been there in 2000. The girls remembered this week-long visit well and often asked about my sister during my later stays at the Ashram. It was also in 2004 that I spent ten weeks in Hyderabad working on a project for the International Literacy Institute. My focus was on interviewing out-of-school youth and also providing an ethnographic description of their educational situation. I spent most of this time at two schools, one a government girls' junior high school and one a residential school for returning drop-outs. Although the primary language in Andhra Pradesh is Telugu, a number of the young people that I
interviewed were native speakers of Lambadi. I interviewed forty young people, using Telugu-speaking interpreters, and also interviewed parents, teachers, and administrators. Some students left me with these words: “Instead of just asking questions and doing research on the drop-outs, you should do something for them!” (Groff, 2004), a challenge that I received at the Ashram also, as described below. Questions that I used for these interviews, designed with the help of Dr. Wagner and the LITE (Literacy, IT and Their Effects on the Lives of Individuals) research team, served as a tool for me as I formed questions related to language, education, and development in the Kumauni context. I was also able to make comparisons of the government and residential school contexts in Hyderabad with those in Kausani, as well as the attitudes towards language and education.

I believe that these life experiences influenced the way I related to research participants and helped to equip me for my research. I should also mention my ongoing study of Hindi that started in 2000, seven years before my fieldwork began, and included ten semesters of university-level Hindi. Although I frequently encountered new words, I was able to converse comfortably and conduct interviews in Hindi during my fieldwork. My status as a foreigner allowed me to ask many questions, which were patiently answered by my Kumauni friends and acquaintances.

I received the following compliment quite frequently throughout my fieldwork: 'You seem Indian!'; 'You seem Pahari!' Certainly my blond hair and blue eyes were not contributing to this impression. Some Ashram Didis explained that it was because of the way I dressed, the way I walked, and also my way of thinking. I wore simple salwar kameez [Punjabi suits] and parted and braided my hair, making every attempt to act and speak in a way that would minimize my differences. I know that I fell short. One day I

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2 Of the mountains, or Kumauni
was chatting briefly with a man at one of the shops in Kausani. As I was leaving, he kindly instructed me to greet with my right hand and not my left. I had been so pleased with myself for adopting the nod and half namaskar common for quick greetings in the market, with one hand rather than two raised at the chest, but I had failed to notice that, if I am raising only one hand in greeting, it should not be the left hand. In the next section, I describe in more detail the methods that I used during my fieldwork.

Research Methods

General Procedures

In order to explore answers to my research questions, I needed to find ways to understand the values and practices of Kumauni young women and their educators on issues related to language, education, and local concepts of empowerment. Towards this end, I gathered data using the three general methods common to ethnographers: participant observation, interviews, and documents. Most of my time was spent in participant observation. I discovered that I was able to collect much of my interview data informally, asking questions and starting discussions while participating with the young women and teachers in their daily activities.

As I lived and interacted with Ashram community members and Kausani residents, my primary strategy was to notice and ask as much as possible about language and education issues, as well as issues of social improvement, change, and injustice. This extended to informal conversations while traveling in the Kumaun, as well. Of the primary research participants, described in Chapter 3, I focused particularly on getting to know the young women, spending time with them individually and in groups and engaging them in discussions regarding language and education. I also spent considerable time with the teachers at Lakshmi Ashram and developed relationships with several of the teachers at the local government schools. As I spent time with them
at their schools, with their students, and in their homes, opportunities for informal interviews were plentiful.

My degree of participation ranged from passive observation while attending large group meetings or overhearing a conversation to active participation and observation while teaching an English class or initiating a discussion. The formality and structure of the interviews also varied. Often I would sit and peel potatoes or clean rice with other Ashram members, and frequently our conversation would turn, or be turned, to issues of relevance to my research. Thus, a casual conversation easily slips into an informal interview. Some of my most interesting conversations with Meena-Didi and Saroj-Didi took place during our early morning walks together. Towards the more formal end of the continuum were the interviews that I recorded and during which I used a list of questions as a guide. See Appendix B for an example of the types of questions used in such interviews. I also used an oral consent script with my primary research participants and before the more formal interviews. While they could be considered semi-structured interviews, even in these cases I did not strictly follow the questions on my guide but rather allowed the interview to evolve based on the participant's interests and responses. The questions that I asked in all situations were influenced by my ongoing analysis, including questions that were raised from previous discussions or issues of interest during particular phases of my research. In the following sections, I describe in a chronological manner my participant observation and interview processes throughout the course of the research.

Even in the more formal recorded interviews, I was often speaking with several girls or teachers at the same time. This came most naturally and seemed to set the girls at ease, even if I was focusing my questions on one participant. I also led discussions in the Sadhana class, in the Ashram assemblies, and in English classes at the GIC, as
described below. Group discussions are important since group identity is more likely to emerge, participants come to a consensus on the answers, and thus group answers may be closer to reality and reflect the way a community would actually respond if a decision were before them (Mohanty, personal communication, July 25, 2006).

The documents that I collected and/or examined came from various sources. While some were not used heavily in the current analysis, they point to future research possibilities. Documents included English textbooks and exam guides used at Uttarakhand government schools and at Lakshmi Ashram, Uttarakhand teacher training and support materials, catalogs and brochures from educational institutions in the Kumaun, and essays written by the Ashram students for their internal newsletter. Some of the recent newsletter articles written by Ashram leaders and students are posted online by the Association of Lakshmi Ashram Friends. The Sadhana girls from the previous school year had conducted research projects in nearby villages; I had translations made of their reports on these projects, as well as the essays that this year’s Sadhana girls wrote about the definition and purpose of education. I also had a translation made of some notes from a seminar on development that I attended at the Ashram in July 2006. Other written documents include those that I generated through activities with the girls and at teacher trainings.

**Preliminary Fieldwork**

I visited Lakshmi Ashram and Kausani for the third time from May 2006 through July 2006. I lived at Lakshmi Ashram for five weeks and participated in daily activities there. During this time, I continued to build relationships with the students and teachers and had opportunities for informal interviews and discussions with the leading Didis at the Ashram. I visited the Government Intermediate College (GIC) in Kausani to discuss
my future research involvement there and to attend a regional Science Fair. I used this
time as well to improve my Hindi and learn some Kumauni phrases.

At the Ashram, I was asked to teach English to the Sadhana students and one-on-
one with some of the younger teachers. I observed Class 3 English and Hindi, Class 5
Science, and Class 6 English, as well as the daily assemblies. I discussed my research
themes with the Ashram's previous director, Radha Behen, who was visiting the Ashram
at that time, learning her views on mother-tongue education. I also had interviews with
Meena-Didi, Saroj-Didi, and Kamla-Didi. I talked about research-related themes with
village women who visited the Ashram, with community members in Kausani, and with
travelers to the Kumaun. I also spoke with two humanitarian workers living in Kausani
and interviewed members of two other organizations working in activism and alternative
education in the region.

Outside of Kausani, I interviewed a leading Kumauni historian, Shekhar Pathak,
who is at Kumaun University in Nainital. I also discussed my research with scholars
outside of the region including Ajit Mohanty, C.J. Daswani, and Peggy Mohan. The field
notes from this preliminary research were included in my analysis, as described below.

Fieldwork

My primary fieldwork in the Kumaun lasted for nine months, from July 2007
through April 2008. This included thirty weeks living in and around the small village-
town of Kausani. For the first eighteen weeks I lived at Lakshmi Ashram boarding
school, and the remainder of the time I lived with the Bhandari family in Kausani Estate
near the Government Intermediate College (GIC). This shift in location divided my
fieldwork into two broad phases, although I had contact with research participants in
each of the two locations throughout the nine months. My visits to villages outside of
Kausani were spread over the nine months, as were my contacts in larger urban centers.
Here I describe my research process through these temporal and contextual divisions.

First Phase: Based at Lakshmi Ashram. During the first month of my fieldwork, in August 2007, there were several other foreign visitors at the Ashram. The different perspectives that they brought to the context helped to raise insights relevant for my research. One was a Korean masters student in the TESOL program at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education who volunteered to teach English and yoga classes at the Ashram and joined me in visits to local schools. Another was a Dutch student of linguistics who was analyzing Kumaoni grammar structures for her masters thesis. The third was a German high school graduate who was experiencing India for the first time as a volunteer at Lakshmi Ashram. She remained as my roommate at the Ashram for the first five months of my research. I also helped to welcome short-term foreign visitors to Lakshmi Ashram throughout my time there.

Short and long-term visitors at Lakshmi Ashram are encouraged to get involved in the daily schedule and work duties with the teachers and girls. As often as possible, I tried to join the three daily prayer and assembly times (at 6 am, 1:30 pm, and 7 pm), meal times (at 7:30 am, 12 pm, and 7:30 pm), and morning work duties (from 8 to 10 am). Most often during work duties I helped with preparing the vegetables for cooking, but sometimes I also helped with cleaning rice, working in the gardens, gathering firewood, or rolling dough for *chapatis* along with those on kitchen duty. Throughout the day, I looked for opportunities to talk with students and teachers. In October the regular schedule at the Ashram is interrupted for grass-cutting season, when all of the girls and teachers work together from dawn until dusk to cut grass for drying and to then make hay stacks for the cows' winter supply.

During afternoon class time, I occasionally observed English classes and served as substitute teacher in English classes. I observed English classes taught by the Korean
guest, by Kamla-Didi, and by Mr. Prasad from the GIC, who came to help with Class 9 English. I taught Class 6 English for several weeks when Kamla-Didi was out of town, and occasionally Class 5, Class 8, and Class 9 English. I usually followed the English textbooks that the girls were using or based activities on a chapter in their textbooks. However, in my English class with the Sadhana girls, I planned my own lessons. Even before the Sadhana program was inaugurated on September 11, the Ashram girls who would be joining the program were asking me to teach them English. I waited until the girls from outside of the Ashram had arrived and then taught their English class consistently in September and October and in between my travels in November and December. I recorded many of these classes and sometimes raised discussions relevant to my research during the class time. We discussed their purposes for learning English, their preferences for how it should be taught, the use of English words by Hindi speakers, the use of Kumauni, and traditions distinct to Kumauni villages. I also sat in on some of the Sadhana classes taught by Ashram teachers. This included a set of classes focused on the theme of education. The teacher in charge of the Sadhana program, Narayana,\(^4\) started this section by asking the girls to write essays on the questions: What is education?, Why education?, Education for what purpose?, and Education how?

Interviews with teachers during this first phase included several recorded interviews with Ashram teachers and a recorded interview with the principal of the government primary school and her husband. Important informal interviews with teachers included conversations with young teacher Narayana, with the former Ashram director, with Mr. Prasad, and ongoing discussions with Meena-Didi, Saroj-Didi and Kamla-Didi. Informal interviews with the girls started naturally from time spent together during work duties. One class 12 student, whom I call Kanti, was particularly helpful. I

\(^4\) Names have been changed.
began more formal interviews with the girls by going through my question guide with
Asha, a Class 9 student. At first I thought of this as a way to test and adapt the questions
and practice asking them in Hindi. However, these interviews are also of interest for the
analysis. Asha told me some of her life story in more informal settings as well, and I was
able to meet her mother and visit her home during the second phase of research, as
described below. It was during the first phase that I chose the Sadhana girls on whom I
wanted to focus my time and interviewed them: Sunita, Manju, Govindi and Himani.
These interviews were conducted during the second half of October in one or two sessions
each and were more formal since I was recording them and roughly following my
question guide. Throughout my time at the Ashram, if I had a choice of activities, I would
try to spend time with one of these four girls, allowing time for informal interviews with
them as well.

During this first phase of research, I made visits to the other schools in Kausani,
including single visits to the Kausani government primary school in Almora district and
the Shishu Mandir, and multiple visits to the Central government school (Kendriya
Vidyalaya), the government girls' junior high school, and the government intermediate
college (GIC). I generally used these visits to connect with and informally interview the
school administrators and, when possible, teachers. I also made plans for my more
frequent involvement at the GIC in the second phase of my research.

Special events during these first five months included the festivals, which are long
anticipated, prepared for, and celebrated at the Ashram with songs, dramas, and special
meals: Ghee Sangranti (a specifically Kumauni festival) and Independence Day in
August, Janmastami and Raki Bandan in September, Diwali in November, and
Christmas in December. On Mahatma Gandhi's birthday in October, the schools in
Kausani gather for a special program and to compete on skits, dances, costumes, and
essay-writing. From September 27 through October 1, I was able to participate, along with the Sadhana students, in a Gandhian Seminar held at Anashakti Ashram in Kausani. On December 5, the Ashram celebrates its founding with *Swavalamban Divas* [Self-sufficiency Day]. For this event, the students and teachers wrote essays about the Ashram, reviewing their experiences there over the past year.

My most intense time of immersion in life at Lakshmi Ashram was from August through October. The Ashram remained my home from November through January in between trips to the Language, Education, and Diversity conference in New Zealand in November, my vacation in the Netherlands in December, and two conferences in north India in January. Altogether, I spent eighteen weeks at Lakshmi Ashram, of the thirty weeks that I spent on site in Kausani.

*Second Phase: Based in Kausani Estate.* On January 17, 2008, I moved to the home of the Bhandari family in the western portion of Kausani known as Kausani Estate. My friends at Lakshmi Ashram put me in contact with this family, knowing that they had space to rent. The family and setting are described in Chapter 3. I had more personal space at my second home and more time to work on reviewing field notes and recordings. My days often included tea time with my hosts and neighbors, allowing time for conversations and informal interviews. This is also when I heard Kumauni in use among the women. My proximity to the GIC made my trips there throughout the week more convenient. I also walked the 3 km to visit Lakshmi Ashram several times a week. I made occasional visits to the other schools in Kausani and to the homes of government school teachers during this phase.

The winter holidays for schools at high altitudes in Uttarakhand, including Kausani, are from the end of December through the beginning of February. The Ashram girls and some of the teachers also take 'holiday' during that time. This year the Class 9
students were an exception, since they needed extra time to prepare for their exams to be held in February. They took their break in March instead. The Sadhana students returned to their villages for a short break, participated for a week in the foot trek for preservation of the Kosi River, and then prepared to leave for their study tour in Gujarat. They returned to Lakshmi Ashram in early March.

My involvement at the Ashram during the second phase of research focused on Class 9, the Sadhana students, and several special events. The Class 9 students were particularly concerned about their upcoming English exams, as was their English teacher, since they were the first cohort from the Ashram to choose English as a subject for their high school exams. Since their Ashram English teacher was joining the Sadhana girls for their study tour in Gujarat, she asked me to help the Class 9 students to prepare for their English exam. After the exams, they were also eager for my help in getting started with Class 10 English. On my visits to the Ashram, I would come in time for lunch and then stay for part of the afternoon study time.

At the GIC, the month of February was largely occupied with internal exams for Classes 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11. These students then had another extended break while the Board Exams for Classes 10 and 12 were held during the month of March. Even in April, the incoming Class 11 students were not present since they had not yet gotten the results for their board exams. There was also little academic activity in April because the textbooks for the new academic year had not yet arrived. I had not expected the exams to take up so much time. I had opportunities to talk with the principal and the teachers during this time, but I had to find other ways to interact with girls from the GIC. I spent some time with my neighbor girls who were in Class 9, 11, and 12. I also got the phone numbers of the Class 9 girls who were taking English and invited them to my home for a conversational English class in March. One session was attended by eight girls and
another by two girls.

In April, when the GIC students returned to classes, I was able to spend time with the Class 9 and Class 11 students by volunteering to teach English classes during free periods. This was not difficult, since the students had many free periods in April because of the (ongoing) teacher shortage and the missing textbooks. I planned simple English lessons and also used the classes to learn about the students' daily activities and language use. I also met with the Class 11 girls several times less formally when they were sitting in the school yard and once when the boys had left school early. I did several parallel activities with the Class 9 GIC and Ashram students, and with the Class 11 GIC students and the Sadhana students at the Ashram.

Special events during the second phase of research included a seminar entitled: “Kumauni Language: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” held on January 24, 2008 at a hotel in Kausani. It was hosted by a group of journalists from the Bageshwar district. None of the Ashram Didis attended, although they had received invitations. On March 23-24, two guests from Denmark led an Appreciative Inquiry seminar at Lakshmi Ashram. All of the Ashram Didis and the girls from Class 12 attended this seminar, which provided an opportunity for me to hear them discussing successes and ideas for improvement related to Ashram education. On March 25, the Ashram held a special meeting for parents of the Ashram students to discuss an important curriculum change. I also celebrated the Hindu Holi festival with my friends in Kausani, in Dhaulara, and at Lakshmi Ashram in March.

Village Visits. I made my first visit to the village of Dhaulara during my preliminary research in 2006, establishing a friendship with the Simon family and some of their neighbors in the village. I re-connected with them upon my return to Kausani in August 2007 and visited them occasionally throughout my fieldwork, sometimes staying
for the night. I stayed with them for three days in January, visited the local preschool and primary school, and interviewed some young women in their village.

In January 2008, I spent some time with Saroj-Didi at her home just outside of Haldwani, getting a glimpse of the lives of Kumaunis who have migrated from their home villages to the cities in the plains. There are always relatives back in the ancestral village and a feeling of attachment to the home village. I later attended a wedding with Saroj-Didi and met more of her family.

In March and April, I made two visits to the small town of Danya where Lakshmi Ashram has a branch that focuses on grass-roots development projects. Danya is also the home of Asha and several other girls from the Ashram. Since Asha was in Class 9 and had her holiday in March after the exams, I was able to spend time with her and her family. She took me to visit an Ashram-run preschool and to the homes of two of the Ashram girls in a village near Danya, where I was welcomed warmly. I also attended the wedding of one of the young Ashram graduates in Danya in April. She had been studying for Class 12 exams and working at the Ashram up until the time of her marriage.

I made several visits to the small town of Baijnath in the valley north of Kausani. I met women there from the surrounding villages, including one Ashram graduate, and was able to observe their language use and interview them informally. I also attended a Block Resource Center training for junior high school teachers and visited the Girls Government Intermediate College in Baijnath, speaking with teachers and administrators there.

City Visits. Almora is the district headquarters and the closest city, a two-hour jeep ride from Kausani. I came through Almora on my way to and from Kausani and sometimes made weekend trips there or day trips with Ashram workers. Almora is home to one of two branches of Kumaun University. I consulted occasionally with academics.
from the Hindi and Education departments there. Dr. S. S. Bisht has written extensively on the Kumauni language and teaches a Master's level course in Kumauni. Dr. Diva Bhatt is also in the Hindi department and is a graduate of Lakshmi Ashram. She, along with the department head, Dr. Pokriyal, has also worked on Kumauni language and culture. In the Education department, I interviewed one senior scholar, as well as a young lecturer who teaches a course for future English teachers. I attended one of her classes and led a discussion with the students on language teaching methods and the situation in the Kumaun, also collecting short essays from them.

In Almora I also met briefly with retired professor, K. D. Rewali, who was instrumental in establishing a standard Kumauni that is accepted in academic circles and in initiation Kumauni courses at the university level. I interviewed Dr. Hayat Singh Rawat who has been working to promote the officialization of Kumauni at the state and national level and to encourage students' writing in Kumauni through essay contests. I met several times with Karsten van Riezen who has worked on Kumauni language and literacy under SIL International. I also visited two English language institutes in Almora, talking with the students and teachers there. These conversations in Almora provided me with exposure to broader, or more urban and academic, discourses surrounding language and education in the Kumaun.

The other branch of Kumaun University is located in the town of Nainital, known for its beautiful lake and multiple private schools. During my fieldwork, I visited Nainital several times. I discussed my research with several academics from the university there, including Dr. Madhu Joshi from the English department, Dr. B. S. Bisht from Sociology, and Dr. Uma Bhatt from Hindi.

Dehradun is the state capital of Uttarakhand, located in the western half of the state. Dehradun can be reached by overnight train from Haldwani, which is six hours
south of Kausani, or by 14-hour bus ride west from Kausani. I visited Dehradun three
times during my research. There I interviewed Prof. P. K. Joshi and Dr. Ravi Chopra,
who have worked on development and activism in the Kumaun for many years, and
spoke with Dr. Jo McGowan, Veena Srivastava, and Saroj Srivastava, who have worked
in education in the region. I visited SIDH (Society for the Integrated Development of
Himalayas) and spoke with the directors and teachers regarding their alternative
education approaches and minority language issues. In Dehradun, I also made two visits
to the Education Directorate and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ['Education for All'
Movement] headquarters. I interviewed the Education Director, N. N. Pandey,
discussing and learning his perspective on language and education issues that I had been
observing throughout my research.

**Record-keeping and Analysis**

*Field notes.* I kept a small notebook with me at all times and frequently jotted
down notes throughout the day as reminders of conversations and observations. When it
seemed appropriate and when I thought it would provide minimal distraction, I pulled
out my notebook and jotted down key words and phrases during conversations and
informal interviews. I always tried to be careful to show attention to what was being said
and not distract with too much note taking. After leaving a conversation, I would find a
private place as soon as possible and jot down a more elaborated version of what I
remembered. Later that day or within a few days, I would type up notes from the
conversation, interview, or event, using my notebook as a guide and elaborating further
on the context and on what I remembered of the event. Sometimes the girls would ask
me what I was writing about. The Sadhana girls began to joke about it, saying: She's
writing about us again! Sometimes Manju would backfire questions on me, playing the
researcher herself.
In writing field notes I attempted to describe the situation as objectively as possible, setting apart my own interpretation of the event as memos. I typed memos as new ideas came to mind, most often while typing up field notes. I kept them chronologically with the field notes, but marked them using asterisks or parentheses. Later memos, or elaborations that I inserted into the notes during a subsequent reading of the notes, I would set apart with curly brackets.

The typed field notes are saved in documents by week, except when weeks were divided for special events or travel. I typed transcripts or translations of interviews also by date into the same documents. Each document is labeled according to the year, month, and days that are covered by that set of field notes. For example, the notes taken on the week of October 2 are in a document titled: 0710_2-7_Week10. For analysis, I loaded these documents into Atlas.ti, including field notes from preliminary research in 2006 and my Capstone Project from 2000, making for a total of 47 primary documents.5

In citing examples from my field notes and interviews, I first identify the language being used as Hindi (H), Kumauni (K), or English (E). I then differentiate between field notes (FN), written in my own voice regarding recent observations on the field; paraphrased quotes (PQ), written in my field notes as I remembered them in the voice of the speaker; and direct quotes (DQ), including recorded interviews and quotes that I had written word-for-word in my field notes. FN, PQ, or DQ are followed by the year, month, and day of the event or interview. (For Example: H; FN_07Oct7 marks a field note that I wrote concerning an event which occurred in Hindi on October 7, 2007). These conventions are listed, for the reader's convenience, in Appendix C.

Although the paraphrased quotes can not be taken as word-for-word quotes, I

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5 Just for fun, I used the content analysis tool in Atlas.ti to count up the most used words in my field notes. Not surprisingly, the most used nouns are “English,” “Hindi,” and “Kumauni,” in that order, closely followed by “girls” and “school.” The most used verbs are “said” and “asked.”
wanted to present the ideas, as I had heard them, in the voices of participants in order to
capture as much of the original expression as possible, rather than to simply summarize
the ideas in my own voice. My maintaining as much as possible the voices of the
participants allows the reader, I believe, to hear the power in the words of the
participants rather than in my own words, even when the paraphrased quotes rely on my
field note summaries of conversations and are thus not verbatim.

Translation. Most of my interactions and interviews took place in Hindi. With
some teachers and administrators, I used English or a combination of Hindi and English.
Towards the end of my fieldwork, I was using Hindi with some of the teachers with
whom I had originally used English. In a few cases, elderly village women would address
me in Kumauni. These were informal contexts and usually the women knew some Hindi
and others were around to explain in Hindi what was being said.

Although most of my interactions were in Hindi, I took notes primarily in English
for the sake of efficiency. If I was uncertain of the meaning of a word, I would ask for
clarification or pull out my Hindi-English pocket dictionary. If I was uncertain of the
pronunciation or spelling of a word (ex: whether a “d” or “t” were retroflex and/or
aspirated), I would ask someone to write the word for me in Devanagari script. If it was
not an appropriate context for verifying the meaning of a word, I would write what I had
heard in my notebook and consult my dictionary or an individual later.

Pronoun reference is not always consistent in my field notes. After both recorded
and unrecorded interactions, I did my best to write my notes in the voice of the person
whose speech I was describing. I provided my best summary of the speaker’s main points
in his or her voice as I understood it. Often English words are used in Hindi and
Kumauni conversations. I found this code-switching interesting and often marked in my
field notes and quotes the exact English words used. Thus, when I here present in
English a translated Hindi or Kumauni conversation, I sometimes include in small caps the English words that were used in the original conversation. Similarly, I incorporate Hindi words that are of particular interest, or are without exact English equivalent, in italics and define them in brackets.

I was sometimes frustrated with the number of unfamiliar words that I would encounter in Hindi, but generally I was confident in my ability to work around miscommunications and understand the meaning being expressed. However, I learned to be cautious about jumping to conclusions, as illustrated in the following excerpt from my field notes, with memos incorporated in parentheses. I had been talking with Sunita about a list of words related to empowerment and *utthaan [uplift]*:

Then I asked Sunita how these things can be gotten - how girls can get these things. “From each other,” she said (!!!). (I thought, this is great! She was the one who had talked about the community and working together being important wisdom to learn from the villages. Now she is confirming it again and talking about the collaborative construction of power!) I asked her what she meant by that, and she went through word by word giving me an example: from “Sarala Behen-ji brought us *utthaan [uplift]*” to “I am *svavalamban [self-sufficient]*.” She went quickly down through the list of words, and I wished I had had the recorder going...

[A few minutes later] I tried to bring the conversation back, asking her what she meant when she said that girls could get all of these things from each other. Again she asked for clarification of my question. She repeated that they learn them *aapas me [among themselves, mutually, reciprocally, in common, in concert (Oxford - McGregor)]*. Then she said that they learned them from their lessons. They write them down. Just like I write English words / wrote the definitions in English, they write them down to learn them.

(Suddenly I realized that she was talking about the acquisition of the words themselves and not the acquisition of the empowerment or independence signified by the words! I laughed as I thought about how I could have had a nice tight example about the collaborative construction of power - and that based on a misunderstanding!... This makes me realize that I need to be even more careful about my translations and about my assumptions when hearing something. Going back to triple-check an assumption is worthwhile!). (FN:07Nov30)

*Recordings and Transcriptions.* I made voice recordings using a small media player on several types of occasions. These included formal interviews, classes with the Sadhana girls, group activities, and special events.
Initially, I was transcribing the interviews that were done in English and doing a full translation of those that were done in Hindi. I found it interesting to note the shifts between Hindi and English and the use of filler words, such as haa [yes], and to [so]. In telling stories, participants would often switch to the language of the person they were quoting, adding spice to the story through direct quotes. However, I realized that a detailed transcription was not necessary for the current purposes of my research. I began to do more loose transcriptions and translations. A research memo written on October 26, 2007, describes some of this process:

**Note on transcription:** I went through an interview with [Asha] and with [Himani and Gaitri], writing out my translation of the full conversation as accurately as possible. However, that was very time-consuming. The advantage is that the train of thought is captured in full – the ways that the previous questions or statement influenced the following statements, etc. I think that for my current purposes I will do best to summarize the conversation as I have been doing from memory when they are not recorded – keeping the train of thought as accurate as possible but summarizing in a way that makes it easier to cite later and that makes it easier to read. Later, especially if I can get translation help, I can go back through and get a more accurate transcription and translation. For now I am not doing detailed discourse analysis. I am exploring the experiences and views of these young women, and this can be captured through a summary of their statements, with selected quotes, rather than an attempt at word-for-word translation throughout. (FN:07Oct22-28)

While I transcribed or summarized all of the recorded interviews, I did not attempt transcription of recorded classes or special events. Rather, the recordings provided me the opportunity to go back and listen to events again, rewinding and listening more closely where noise or language problems interfered. As time allows, these recordings, particularly those of the Sadhana classes, could be useful in further analysis. The typed materials based on all recordings were incorporated chronologically into my field notes and analyzed in the same way as the field notes.

**Ongoing Analysis.** While typing up field notes, I would write memos on themes that drew my interest or patterns that I noticed. The ideas that came to mind would then
influence the things that I noticed and the questions that I would raise in conversations and interviews. When I was noticing and guessing at patterns, I would ask the people around me, getting feedback from various people, especially the students and teachers. Thus, analysis and triangulation were a part of the entire process and helped to guide further research. For example, I began to think that perhaps Kumauni is more of a women's language than a men's language because of what I was observing in language use. However, every Kumauni that I asked about this hypothesis insisted that this is not the case.

I began more formal steps in analysis during my sixth month of research with a systematic reading of the notes that I had compiled up to that point. A research memo from February 15, 2008 describes this process:

In the first to second reading of my typed notes, I began to chunk the text by adding titles in italics to certain sections. My goal initially was to have an efficient way to go back and refer to sections that were relevant to a particular theme. Thus, I chose headings that seemed relevant to me for sections that stuck out to me as being significant. These were general themes, both themes that I had in mind for the goals of my research and themes that had begun to stick out to me during my fieldwork. I also began to pick out emergent themes from key words, phrases, and concepts that were repeated by research participants. This listing of titles or themes was done in context and so, with my train of thought influenced by my surroundings, captured themes that seemed relevant to me there at that time.

I started a list of these... themes, including a check list of the weeks and when the themes were used. I attempted to standardize my titles in that way so as not to repeat themes with different wording. Still the list soon became quite long. (Memo:08Feb15)

The list from this original analysis included 84 themes from my first six months of research. Those themes appearing most frequently were: Ashram education and language, Bhasha vs. Boli [language vs. ~ dialect], Change over time, Development or progress, Exams, Language learning, Language use, Language use at school, Marriage or relationships, Medium of instruction or English-medium, Mother tongue, and Teaching methods.
In thinking through the directions of my research and which themes to pursue further, I made cluster diagrams using the list of themes that had emerged. This was a tool in focusing my further inquiry, helping me to look for leads to follow and holes to fill. I also used the continua of biliteracy, attempting to plot the multilingual situations at Lakshmi Ashram and in Kausani in terms of the various continua.

Upon returning from India, I began further analysis. I described some of this process on June 16, 2008:

I already have a list of themes from my first reading in Kausani – ways that seemed logical to me to chunk the data as I was reading it. Many of them use labels from academia that seemed to serve as good umbrellas. Some were phrases that I picked up locally and wanted to emphasize. All were applied because they existed in the data. Of course, I had a hand in the production of the data, so many of the themes were brought up by me and didn't just come up. But I didn't have a coding or a particular theory in mind as I investigated. I generally followed issues that I felt were relevant to language, education, and empowerment. So, some of the themes that are repeated frequently were not of my making. Some came as a surprise to me. I would be the one to sort out which is which. Counting them up hardly seems relevant. So, the coding is mainly to index the data for my own easy retrieval...

Although I typed the theme headings directly into my field notes in my Jan/Feb review of the 2007 data, I'm thinking of trying to ignore them on my next read-through, almost skimming through to get a feel for all of my data and how it may combine. I already know that I have way too much to include everything. But I don't want to start ignoring anything yet. (Memo:08Jun16)

At this point in the analysis, I began using the Atlas.ti program to chunk or 'code' the data. I read through the notes from the final months of my research and then began to re-read all of the field notes. During the second reading, I started to chunk the data into general codes. In subsequent readings, the coding became more specific. Most of the initial coding was by group or individual, allowing me easy access to the data related to those persons. I also looked for themes that I knew would be of immediate relevance to my analysis, for example: Ashram education, *Bhasha vs. Boli*, Census, Constitution, Ecology of Language, Language Policy, and Mother Tongue. Subsequent readings included coding according to more fine-tuned themes, as well as sub-coding of themes. I
used the Atlas.ti network view to cluster themes and consider their relationships to one another.

In analyzing and preparing to write sections, I would read all of the field note excerpts relevant to a particular theme or group of themes, taking notes and organizing ideas as I read. I then drafted sections based on those notes and selected excerpts. The drafted sections then also needed to be reanalyzed and condensed, and the organization of the sections into chapters went through many revisions. Also as an aid in my analysis, I reformulated and revised my research questions to better reflect the aims and direction of my research.6

Wolcott (1994) warns against analysis that imposes theories upon the data. "The potential of qualitatively oriented inquiry can be lost more easily in the temptation to overpower, rather than surrender to, one's data" (p. 28). I attempt to follow this advice in the context of his explanation of the roles of description, analysis, and interpretation in which he encourages novices to “err on the side of too much description” (p. 36).

**Practical Influences on the Research**

Some adjustments to my methods were necessary throughout the course of my field work and analysis. According to my original plan, I would focus on four groups of young women who had completed Class 10 or are aged 15 to 20. These were 1) students

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6 My original research questions were as follows: 1) What are the beliefs and practices of Kumauni young women regarding language, literacy and *utthaan* [uplift]: their value and use, the acquisition of them, and the ways they interrelate? 2) What are the beliefs and practices of Kumauni educators regarding language, literacy and *utthaan*? How does Lakshmi Ashram’s unique philosophy of education and empowerment relate to the language and literacy values, policies, and practices of educators at the Ashram school? 3) How are these beliefs and practices changed over time? How are the views of Kumauni young women influenced by their educators and educational contexts?

The revised questions include my interest in the regional context and emphasize the agency of the young women at Lakshmi Ashram. As listed in the introduction, they are as follows: 1) How are national language policies and local ideologies about language and education reflected in the Kumauni context? 2) How do Kumauni young women at Lakshmi Ashram experience and negotiate issues of language, education, and empowerment within the Kumauni context? 3) How does Lakshmi Ashram's unique philosophy of education and empowerment relate to the language and education values and practices of educators at the school?
who have been educated at Lakshmi Ashram (and were participating in the Sadhana program), 2) students who have recently joined Lakshmi Ashram to participate in a post-Class 10 Gandhian studies program (the Sadhana program), 3) students at the local government high school, and 4) young women in the same age group who have dropped out of school. The focus, however, was predominantly on the first two groups. The relationships that I built at the Ashram with the Sadhana girls were much closer than those that I was able to develop with young women from outside of the Ashram, and the data collected on the Ashram and Sadhana girls is, thus, richer than that on the GIC and village girls. Also, I found some difficulty with the fourth category of young women -- those who had dropped out of high school, a category that I had imposed. Unlike the previous generation, currently most young women are educated all the way through high school, at least in and around Kausani. Usually the education of young women stops when they are married, or they are married when their education is finished. Thus, young women who have dropped out of school before completing high school (this usually because they failed an exam) and who are not yet married are few. Perhaps the fourth category could be better defined as 'young married women.' I interviewed two young sisters-in-law in the village of Dhoulara who fit into that category. My use of the terms “girl” and “student” to refer to the unmarried young women is reflective of the common use of the Hindi terms by the girls themselves, who would not use the term for woman for someone who is unmarried.

A more significant alternation of my original research plan was in the amount of active participation in my research that I had hoped to have from Kumauni participants. I had hoped to involve Kumauni youth and educators in conducting research in their own villages and classrooms, and to present results to participants, using the research and results to generate further discussion. Although I talked with the teachers and
students at the Ashram about these ideas, the timing and logistics never worked out for this kind of participatory action research to happen. In general, I was more hands-off than I had imagined myself being. I did not find many natural opportunities to be involved in “awareness-raising” on language and education issues, and I did not often push for such opportunities. This can be explained in part by my own style of relating in which I hesitate to impose myself on others and prefer to adapt to social norms. In retrospect, I think I could have explained my research more clearly and sought more practical ways to involve others. But, I believe my less aggressive approach is also reflective of my desire in the research to value the local – in this case through remaining flexible and not imposing my methods and ideas.

Below I describe a conversation with one of the Ashram leaders, Meena-Didi, on the possibility of involving the Sadhana girls in some village research:

The problem with doing the village research is that there is no time. The girls have just started a three-month sewing [and knitting] course. Even when the teacher is gone, they will continue working on their projects. The end of the Sadhana course is always quite busy. It would take more than a day. People won’t want to talk with them just like that. Last year they went for two to three days, coming and going from the Ashram. They had some difficulty because people don’t want to answer. They think: Why are they asking us this? How will this benefit us? There are a lot of people coming and doing research in the villages nowadays and the people start to think, how will this benefit us? They also find the Sadhana girls to be very young. They are not used to talking about these things with young people. (E; PQ:08Mar18)

Through this and other conversations, I became aware that villagers, at least in some areas, have become disillusioned with all of the “research” projects conducted in the villages, likely by humanitarian and development organizations, for which villagers have seen little benefit. This type of research seemed to focus on village circumstances and the availability of modern facilities, and not so much on the local, ancient knowledge. Meena-Didi told me that they have not done village research every year. It was an idea that they had for the Sadhana students last year. She emphasized again that they would
like to be able to do it, but the problem is that there is not enough time.

Of course, it is humbling to realize how difficult it is to accomplish “empowering research” and how much mine falls short. What I could do was share examples from other parts of the world and continue discussing and raising questions on what I was finding interesting or patterns that I saw. In her gentle, matter-of-fact way, previous Sadhana student, Kanti, shed light on how she viewed my research and how it could be more uplifting:

You also came to give utthaan [uplift], she said. You do it by asking questions. Each one does it differently. You might go to a village girl and ask her her name and what she does. “I just sit at home,” she says. “How much have you studied?,” you would ask. “I have just studied up to 8th.” You would ask and you would just write it down. I might go to the same girl and ask her [the same things]. Then I would ask her: “What do you want?...”

Thousands of people come here to do research in the villages. They might ask them what their needs and desire are. But they should also help them to fulfill their desires...

I also did research in the villages. There are different types of research. [The Ashram social worker] is also a researcher. The people like her kind of research. When she sees what they need, she helps them...

Keep doing what you're doing. [The Ashram social worker] also started out just asking questions. Then she started to share knowledge with people. Then when some money came, she was able to start helping them. (H; PQ:08Apr11)

Kanti’s views of research were influenced by her training at the Ashram. Research was associated with social service and with finding out what the local needs were in order to find ways to help meet those needs.

Agar (2005) discusses the irrelevance of global research for the local. “A limit on local discourse is really about the lack of relevance of global analysis to more pressing needs of everyday practice. Global research just isn’t that useful to 'the community,' if I may use that massively ambiguous term. Or is it?” (p. 17). He points out that locals may be interested in hearing a broader analysis of a situation once the researcher has figured it out and that some locals will share a more globally analytical perspective. As LeCompte and Schensul (1999) point out, “much of what researchers do is illuminate the obvious”
The research has some advantages, since “insiders generally do not have the opportunity to read the literature, see similar sites, or compare their situation with others” (p. 214).

Local research is useful not so much for exploring “what is going on and why” but rather “what it means when you have to deal with it” (Agar, 2005, p. 19). What does the multilingual and educational context of India and the world mean for Kumauni young women? How do they deal with it? In discussing the value of the local and the global in research, Agar turns to the iterative and recursive nature of fractals, patterns that keep repeating themselves on larger and smaller scales. “In a nutshell, fractals provide a metaphor to show global/local links. Global data sources explain the origin of the algorithms. Local discourse shows their iteration and their effects on agency at the individual level” (p. 21). Throughout my research, I sought the local perspectives, but I also began to notice local fractals that reflected broader issues in India and in the world.
Introduction: Languages and Linguistic Minorities in India

Known to be a diverse country of multiple cultures and multiple languages, India has faced the challenge of dealing with this resource called diversity. This chapter provides an overview of national-level language policies and language-related education policies relevant to linguistic minorities and thus to Kumaunis, drawing from language planning literature and government documents and organized around several questions. Perhaps more important than the questions of how many languages there are in India, which of those languages get status, which languages are used for teaching and which languages are taught, is to understand how the Indian nation has chosen to answer those questions and how these answers, being instances of language planning, influence the lives of linguistic minorities.

Linguistic minorities here refers broadly to those people whose language or spoken variety is not recognized by the government at the national level. Speakers of minority languages may not be numerical minorities in their region. Some groups considered to be linguistic minorities in India since their language is not one of the 22 nationally recognized languages have populations of over 3 million (King, 1997), exceeding those of some European countries. Other linguistic minorities, referred to as relative minorities, are those whose mother tongue is official in another state but not in the state where they are living (Ekbote, 1984). Urdu speakers scattered across India are

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1 Significant portions of this chapter appeared in the *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 22(1), Spring 2007, in an article entitled “Status and Acquisition Planning and Linguistic Minorities in India” and in the proceedings for the Conference on Language Development, Language Revitalization and Multilingual Education held in Bankok, Thailand, November 6-8, 2003.
often relative minorities, and their position has been given special consideration by the government in issues of language in education. The term “minority” is often used in India to refer to the Muslim population alone, who claim Urdu as their mother tongue. I use the term more broadly, however, as described above.

The language planning decisions bearing the most immediate implications for linguistic minorities are those that affect their educational opportunities. The literacy rates for cultural and linguistic minorities in India have tended to be significantly below average, while drop-out rates tend to be high among these groups. Jhingran (2005, p. 3) estimates that in India “almost 25 percent of all primary-school-going children face a moderate to severe learning disadvantage owing to their language background.” Children who do not fully understand the language of instruction may be learning a dominant language by submersion, but miss out on content learning. Language and cultural differences may also fuel miscommunication between students and teachers.

This chapter explores some of India’s linguistic diversity from a language planning perspective, particularly emphasizing language policies relevant to linguistic minorities and their educational opportunities. First, the complexity of counting and reporting the number of Indian languages reveals the language planning implicit in the compiling of the Indian Census. Next, the more explicit status planning involved in the naming of official and recognized languages is explored through analysis of the Indian Constitution. The Constitution also contains important safeguards protecting the rights of cultural and linguistic minorities, including their educational rights. Finally, India’s national language-in-education policies, both for languages to be taught in school and for languages to be used as media of instruction in schools, provide direction for the states in formulating their own language-related educational policies.
Each of these issues is tied in with the local perspective from the Kumaun, based on my conversations and interviews with Kumaunis during my fieldwork. Kumauni is not listed among the 22 recognized languages in the Indian Constitution, an issue that I found to be of great relevance to views regarding its status.

India’s acceptance and promotion of linguistic diversity contrasts with the policies of many monolingual nations, and concern for the educational needs of linguistic minorities in India has been increasing in recent years. Yet, vigilance is needed in protecting the status of minority languages and insuring justice, in particular just access to education for speakers of all languages. Besides demonstrating the need for caution in language planning in practice, the Indian example informs and stretches the language planning frameworks used to analyze it.

**How Many languages? Status Planning through Legitimization and Minimization**

According to the 2001 Census, within India’s 28 states and 7 union territories, there are 122 languages. Of these languages, 22 are scheduled, or listed in the Constitution. Annamalai (2001) reports that 87 languages are used in the press, 71 on the radio, 13 in the cinema and state administration, and 47 are used as media of instruction. Giving a simple statistic on the number of languages in India is not a simple task, however. Grierson (1966) provided details on Indian languages in a vast 11-volume Survey of Indian Languages. He listed 179 languages and 544 dialects (Sarker, 1964). According to Annamalai (2001) India has about 200 total languages reducible from the various dialects. Meanwhile the *Ethnologue* lists 415 languages still spoken in India and estimates that there could be many more (Gordon, 2005).

The main source of information about numbers of minority language groups in India comes from the Indian Census, which has been conducted every ten years since
While the 2001 census listed 122 languages, it also lists 1635 mother tongues, as well as 1957 unclassified “other” mother tongues. The number of mother tongues returned on census forms in the 1961 and 1971 censuses was around 3000, in 1981 there were around 7000, and in 2001 the census returned 6,661 mother tongues. How is this striking number of “mother tongues” analyzed in the census? The Registrar General of India had said in 1951 about the complexity of defining and differentiating language and dialect:

...In view of these doubts and difficulties, it was decided that the Census of India should not be committed to the resolution of any controversy in such matters and the name given by the citizen to his own mother-tongue should be as such and the returns of identical names totaled. (Census of India, 1954)

The need, however, for some classification of all of the mother tongues returned can be seen not only in the vast numbers returned but also through a closer look at the returns. In 1951, for example, 73 languages and dialects were listed as spoken by only one person and 137 by two to ten persons. Sometimes mother tongue names are spelled differently, different names are used in different areas for the same spoken variety, caste names are listed instead of language or dialect names, and, interestingly, for a few mother tongues returned on the census all of the speakers were male and for others all of the speakers were female (Sarker, 1964). Dua (1986, p. 135) notes also that sometimes “the notion of mother tongue has been mixed up with region, religion, profession, ethnicity, caste names, and the like.” Khubchandani (2001) also mentions the reasons for variations in a person or group’s own claims and the desire by some to avoid association with their mother tongue.

Currently the method for wading through the complexity of census results is described on the Census website as follows:

For assessing the correlation between the mother tongue and designations of the census and for presenting the numerous raw returns in terms of their linguistic
affiliation to actual languages and dialects, 6,661 raw returns were subjected to thorough linguistic scrutiny, edit and rationalization. This resulted in 1635 rationalized mother tongues and 1957 names which were treated as ‘unclassified’ and relegated to ‘other’ mother tongue category. The 1635 rationalized mother tongues were further classified following the usual linguistic methods for rational grouping based on available linguistic information. (Cens

Table 4 provides a visual representation of some of these numbers.

**Table 4: Counting Languages in the Indian Census**
(Compiled from Census of India, 1961, 2008; Dua, 1986; Sarker, 1964; Singh, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Returned Mother Tongues</th>
<th>Rationalized Mother Tongues</th>
<th>Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>~3,000</td>
<td>1,652</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>~3,000</td>
<td>1,576</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>~3,000</td>
<td>1,05</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>~10,000</td>
<td>1,576</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6,661</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question of who speaks what language in India starts with the question of what is considered a language. Adding to the complexity, besides differences in what people claim as their mother tongue, are the different definitions of mother tongue. There are linguistic definitions and social definitions of language, and within the latter we must consider political definitions. Defining the differences between language and mother tongue and dialect is described by Sarker (1964) as comparable to the complexity of defining mountains and hills. Mother tongue can be defined narrowly or broadly according to Khubchandani (2001). The narrow definition of mother tongue as a child’s home language is exemplified in the 1951 Census definition: “The language spoken from the cradle... [and] in the case of infants and deaf mutes... the mother tongue of the mother” (quoted in Khubchandani 2001, p. 4). The broad definition of mother tongue, on the other hand, classifies all minority languages that have no written form or script as “dialects” of the regional language (2001). Shapiro and Schiffman (1981) also discuss the
problems and difficulties of defining language and dialect in India, as well as how certain politically-based definitions, though perhaps no longer valid theoretically, tend to remain in force.

The choice of definitions of mother tongue represents an implicit element of language planning in that census officials are not explicitly responsible for forming language policies and yet their decisions influence languages. In a more informal way, individuals who label a language variety as a dialect versus a language also influence the status of that language. The classification of a spoken form as a language versus a dialect could be considered status policy planning. In addition, the rationalization process named as a census procedure along with classification also serves as language planning as it narrows down and names which dialects are available to be classified as languages. Here, Hornberger’s (1994) integrative framework of language planning goals becomes useful in categorizing these language-planning acts (See Table 5). The framework lists standardization and proscription/prohibition in a range of status policy goals from less to more restrictive. Between these two goals could come a language-planning goal of legitimization or recognition which encompasses the language planning acts of rationalization and classification described above. Allowing a spoken variety to be named as a language makes it legitimate – a language planning act that falls short of the active promotion of the language as through officialization. Similarly not naming a language as legitimate is less restrictive than active proscription of the language.

Political motivations behind the legitimization or recognition of languages can be found in the Indian context as in other countries. Khubchandani (2001) mentions the denial of the rights of linguistic minorities through use of the broad definition of mother tongue. Similar is the highly politicized question of whether Hindi, Urdu, and Hindustani are one, two, or three languages (2001). Daswani (2001) makes reference to
Table 5: Language Planning Goals (based on Hornberger, 1994)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Policy Planning (on form)</th>
<th>Cultivation Planning (on function)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types</td>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Planning</td>
<td>Standardization Status</td>
<td>Revival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Officialization</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nationalization</td>
<td>Interlingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Legitimization</strong> *</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Classification</strong> *</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rationalization</strong> *</td>
<td>Intranational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Protection</strong> *</td>
<td>Spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Minimization</strong> *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition Planning</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td><strong>Reacquisition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education/School</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Foreign Language / Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mass Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corpus Planning</td>
<td>Standardization</td>
<td>Modernization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corpus</td>
<td>Lexical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auxilliary code</td>
<td>Stylistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graphization</td>
<td>Renovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Purification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stylistic simplification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Terminology unification</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The Hornberger 1994 integrative framework was based on Ferguson, 1968; Kloss, 1968; Steward, 1968; Neustupný, 1974; Haugen, 1983; Nahir, 1984; and Cooper, 1989.)

* I have suggested the additional language planning goals marked in the table, as observed in the Indian example and described in this chapter.

the impact of one’s affiliation and purposes on representations of the number of

languages in India. For example, as the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru

had an interest in promoting the unity of the Indian people. He said:

The notion that India has hundreds of languages is, like most other notions about her, entirely based on the lively imagination of some persons and has no basis in fact. India has a dozen languages, one of which – Hindustani – is spoken by about a third of her entire population and is understood by a great part of the rest. (quoted in King 1997, p. 3)
Later he called the notion of many languages “...a fiction of the philologist’s and the census commissioner’s mind” (1997, p. 4). However, Nehru was concerned for the protection of linguistic minorities, promoting Hindustani, with its inclusion of Urdu, over Hindi alone in the composing of the Constitution, and opposing the division of the country along linguistic lines. According to Agnihotri (2007, p. 187),

Nehru strongly believed that the division must take into account not only language but also geography, history and culture. He was also deeply aware of the presence of linguistic minorities in each territorial area and the fact that the presence of one dominant language, which would inevitably receive state support in a consensual democracy framework, would cause minority languages to suffer.

Some of the language-related debates that went on during the composing of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly in 1946 are discussed in Agnihotri (2007), highlighting the complexity and politics in these language planning decisions.

When a group of spoken varieties are classified together under a language, some diversity is minimized or ignored. Mahapatra (1986) points to minimization of minority languages saying that “the government through its language census has also vastly increased the figure of scheduled languages to 95 percent of the total population in India and thus relegated the non-scheduled language speakers to a mere 5 percent” (p. 208), an observation mentioned also by Khubchandani (2001).

The very counting of languages, in itself, is based on a certain understanding of language. Makoni & Pennycook (2007) discuss the invention of language and construction of ways of thinking about language, which have been promoted through colonialism. Of modernism, along with colonization and nationalism, they say: “These movements considered the fluidity and hybridity in precolonial forms of communication a problem and strove to move toward codification, classification and categorization that mark the field of linguistics today” (p. 233). They call for a disinventing of language that questions the need to classify and count languages as if they were unique entities.
Similarly, Agnihotri (2007) points out that for most of the framers of the Indian Constitution, “the existence of 'a language,' as if an autonomous object, was a given. It was difficult for them to appreciate the fact that language is essentially a constantly changing phenomenon, and it is born out of the negotiated dialogue people enter into.” This issue comes up again in Chapter 6 as I explore local understandings of language and dialect.

What about Kumauni in relation to the counting of languages? When census officials record the mother tongue of their fellow Kumaunis, I am told, they list the mother tongue as Hindi. This seems quite natural to the Kumaunis with whom I spoke. Most Kumaunis would themselves report for Census purposes that their mother tongue is Hindi. Thus, Kumauni becomes one of over forty distinct varieties that are classified under Hindi in the Census. This, I have learned, happens at the local level and not just at the national level in the rationalization of languages for listing in the census.

Local census workers in India are government employees, often primary school teachers, who have been temporarily pulled away from their other duties. An American woman married to a Punjabi man and living in Uttarakhand told me about her experience in a Census interview. She reported that Punjabi is her husband's mother tongue, but realized that the man who was conducting the Census interview had already written down Hindi when he found out that her husband was Indian. She said that no, her husband's mother tongue was Punjabi. And he said, “No, your husband is Indian. His mother tongue is Hindi!” Later her mother-in-law hearing that she had reported Punjabi, was very upset, insisting that Hindi is their mother tongue, even though Punjabi is clearly the home language that they speak together (FN:07Jul26). It seems that census workers also in the Kumaun often list the mother tongue of the families they interview as Hindi without even needing to ask.
Many Kumaunis also speak of Hindi as their mother tongue, as described in Chapter 6, including a Hindi professor at Kumaun University who writes in and about Kumauni as a language. He said that this is a technical problem in the Census. Since Kumauni has not found a place in the Indian Constitution, it comes under the area of Hindi. However many Hindi *boli* [*spoken varieties*] there are, they are all considered dialects of Hindi. This professor does not question the situation, but sees a potential for change, saying: “When Kumauni gets a Constitutional position, then it will be counted. In the Census it is a set form. If someone is from the Punjab, they list Punjabi; or if they are Muslim, they list Urdu. Otherwise, they list Hindi” (H/E; PQ:08Feb27).

Beyond the issue of a census worker trying to follow his/her understanding of the rules are the larger issues of identity and of definitions for language and mother tongue. Although for Census purposes, mother tongue is clearly defined as “the language spoken in childhood by the person’s mother to the person” (Census of India, 2008), the term often has social, political, and religious implications that magnify the complexity of enumerating the languages of India.

While Hindi is often listed as the mother tongue of Kumaunis, Kumauni is usually the language spoken in the home, particularly in rural areas, and is known to be quite distinct from Hindi. This ambiguity is often explained thus: Kumauni is not a *bhasha* [*language*]. It is a *boli* [*spoken language*], they say. *Boli* is usually translated as “dialect.” I explore this distinction as it is used among Kumaunis in Chapter 6. For official purposes, and likely following the discourses learned at school, most rural Kumaunis seem willing to accept their spoken variety as not having the status of a

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2 In citing examples from my field notes and interviews, I identify the language being used as Hindi (H), Kumauni (K), or English (E), except when referencing my own memos within field notes. I then differentiate between field notes (FN), paraphrased quotes (PQ) written, as I remembered them, in the voice of the speaker; and direct quotes (DQ), including recorded interviews and quotes written word-for-word in my field notes. The rationale for this maintenance of voice in field notes is explained in Chapter 4. FN, PQ, or DQ are followed by the year, month, and day of the event or interview.
language and maybe not even as mother tongue. The District Education Officer of Bageshwar, in talking about the Census, said that here the language is listed not as Kumauni but as Hindi because Hindi is the reading/studying medium. The fluid linguistic reality of boli is reflected in a popular saying about the variety in spoken language: “Every mile the water changes; every four miles the speech.” More easy to relegate to the Census is the standard, discrete, countable entity of bhasha, a language that is written and used for schooling.

When I raised questions about the status of Kumauni and the difference between bhasha and boli, I was often given an explanation about the fact that Kumauni is not yet recognized as a language by the Indian government – or, more specifically, that Kumauni has not been listed in the nation’s Constitution. One of the proposals raised at a seminar on Kumauni language held in Kausani, was that when giving their language to the Census, everyone should write Kumauni instead of Hindi. This had been, we were told, an important part of the movement for getting the Santhali language recognized in the Constitution. The following section discusses the more explicit status planning recorded in the Indian Constitution.

**Which Languages Get Status? Status Planning through Officialization**

In light of the linguistic diversity in India, the question of which language to use for official purposes in the new nation sparked much discussion during the move for Indian independence. Continuing the use of English for official purposes was one option and many colonized nations have chosen that route at independence. This would avoid the need to cultivate or modernize an Indian language for government and official purposes and, more importantly, would not promote dominance of one Indian language group over another.
Many Indian leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, felt strongly, however, that the use of a foreign language would not be appropriate. His requirements for a national language are listed as follows:

1. It should be easy to learn for government officials.
2. It should be capable of serving as a medium of religious, economic, and political intercourse throughout India.
3. It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.
4. It should be easy to learn for the whole of the country.
5. In choosing this language, considerations of temporary or passing interests should not count. (Das Gupta, 1970, p. 109, quoted in Baldridge, 2002)

The language that Gandhi promoted was Hindustani, encompassing both Hindi and Urdu, significant because of the religious tensions between Hindus and Muslims. After the partition of India and Pakistan, however, Hindi took precedence in India since Urdu was associated with Muslims and Pakistan.

The Constitution of India of January 26, 1950, needing to maintain unity within diversity, addresses the language issue more explicitly than most other national constitutions. The official language of the new nation was declared in Articles 343-344 to be Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, with English as an auxiliary official language whose status was to be reconsidered in fifteen years. Concerning the states, the Constitution allows for choice of official language, an important concession that was demanded particularly in non-Hindi-speaking states. Article 345 states that

the Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State: Provided that, until the Legislature of the State otherwise provides by law, the English language shall continue to be used for those official purposes within the State for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of this Constitution.” (Constitution of India)

Also included in Articles 346-349 are provisions for the language use of the Supreme Court and High Courts and for communication between states and with the central government. The constitution also established the right of the Indian president to
recognize a regional language should s/he observe that this is needed and wanted by a significant portion of a state’s population.

The means used in the Constitution for officializing the regional languages is through their listing in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The Eighth Schedule’s original purpose was stated in Article 351 in relation to the corpus planning of Hindi:

It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages. (Constitution of India)

As Mahapatra says: “It is generally believed that the significance for the Eighth Schedule lies in providing a list of languages from which Hindi is directed to draw the appropriate forms, style and expressions for its enrichment” (1986, p. 206; See also Khubchandani, 2001, p. 14). This provides an example of the same act serving both corpus and status planning purposes.

The fourteen languages first listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution were Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Through the 21st Amendment in 1967, Sindhi was added to the list, and in 1992 the 71st Amendment brought the total to eighteen with the addition of Nepali, Manipuri, and Konkani. In 2003, the 100th Constitutional Amendment added Bodo, Santali, Maithili, and Dogri to the list of scheduled languages, bringing the number of Constitutionally recognized languages in India up to twenty-two. Movements by minority language groups have been and are underway in a push for constitutional recognition, but as one Indian prime minister implied in discussing this issue, if one language is included, then 200 others could be included (cited in Mahapatra 1986: 207).
State Official Language Acts were passed in the various states between 1950 and 1987. Though implementation varies by state, most states have formed advisory committees and organizations for the development of the regional language for use in official domains. Jayaram and Rajyashree (2000, p. 26) observe that "in almost all the states, initial enthusiasm died and indifference prevailed soon which led to amendments in the Official Language Act providing continuance of English for most of the official purposes..." They also mention how provision for minority languages varies from state to state.

Kumauni has not been recognized among the scheduled languages in the Indian Constitution. However, it was recognized by the state of Uttar Pradesh and by India’s University Grant Commission (UGC), and since 1990 has been taught as a subject at Kumaun University (Bailey, van Riezen, & van Riezen, 1999). Some efforts are being made to gain official recognition for the Kumauni language at the national level. However, I find little awareness of these initiatives in the rural context. As mentioned above, one of the reasons mentioned for why Kumauni is only a spoken language or boli as opposed to a language or bhasha, and why it is often deemed unfit for educational purposes, is the fact that it is not recognized by the government. Although it is not a forefront concern for most and seems improbable to many, recognition of Kumauni would be seen in a positive light by those I interviewed.

**What about the Other Languages? Language Rights and Minority Safeguards**

Regarding the minority languages excluded from the twenty-two that are constitutionally recognized or scheduled, the Indian Constitution includes certain safeguards to protect linguistic minorities from the prohibition of their languages and from some discrimination. This explicit acknowledgment of linguistic rights is unique in
comparison with other national Constitutions. Given the great diversity within India, some assurance was needed in its uniting under a democratic government that the rights of all peoples would be protected. Article 29 of the Constitution of India provides explicit guarantees for protecting the interests of minorities:

(1) Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.
(2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. (Constitution of India)

Having stated the right of minority peoples to maintain their own language and culture, the Constitution adds on the explicit protection of the rights of minorities to provide their own education in their own language, certainly an important part of language maintenance. Article 30 details this right along with protection against discrimination in the receiving of government grants for education:

(1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
(1A) ... The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language. (Constitution of India)

While not explicitly planning for the status of particular languages, these Constitutional safeguards provide protection for language maintenance objectives. Giving languages the right to be and the right to be learned through protection of them seems also to be an implicit form of status planning, related inversely with prohibition (See Table 5).

Besides these general safeguards, the Indian Constitution includes a section titled Special Directives where language and education issues beyond simple protection for minorities are explicitly addressed. Article 350 guarantees the right of all people to use a language they understand in “representations for redress of grievances.” In the Seventh
Amendment to the Constitution made by the Constitution Act of 1956, two articles were added that go far beyond most national Constitutions in addressing linguistic minority issues:

350A. Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage.
It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

350B. Special Officer for linguistic minorities.-
(1) There shall be a Special Officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President.
(2) It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament, and sent to the Governments of the States concerned.

(Constitution of India)

While the definition of linguistic minorities was not included in the Constitution, a Supreme Court decision defined minority language as separate spoken language, not restricted to languages using or having a separate or unique script (Dua, 1986).

The framers of the Constitution recognized the importance of addressing “the problem of the minorities,” a universal issue in democracies, and they "had a firm faith that healthy national consciousness would grow if the minorities are guaranteed liberty, equality, fraternity and justice" (Kumar, 1985, p. 9). This protection of minorities by the government stands in contrast to the minimization of languages described in the context of the Indian Census above, While it may have seemed in the government’s interest to smooth over the linguistic diversity in search of unity, the rights of the vocal minorities needed to be addressed. Safeguarding those rights was an important political issue at independence. To ensure protection under the Constitution, being included in the list of Scheduled Languages was an important status for languages, related to the complex question of defining language and mother tongue. Also relevant to minority rights is the
listing of tribes and castes for special protection, which occurs elsewhere in the Indian Constitution, providing the categories of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which are distinct from the list of Scheduled Languages.

Although the Indian Constitution does not promote favoritism for minorities, it remains the state’s obligation to provide for the minorities and for their educational rights (Ekbote 1984). Some groups and organizations use their right to demand protection. This group unification is feared by governments, wishing to avoid formation of rebel groups that might use those demands for the political interests of their group. According to Ekbote, “this compels us to draw distinctions, between diverse linguistic groups, which enrich Indian life and culture, and organized linguistic groups which sometimes press causes that derogate from the national interest” (1984, p. 141).

Whichever group is involved, it remains the responsibility of states to provide for the educational needs of minorities. Although we see no explicit acquisition planning for minority languages in the Constitution, the rights of the minorities safeguarded there at least provide an opening for both status and acquisition planning by giving to certain minority languages the educational function and prohibiting that function to none.

In the Kumauni context, many Kumaunis rose up to join the Indian nation in the struggle for independence. Likewise, Kumaunis joined with their neighboring Garhwalis to demand the separate mountain state of Uttarakhand, established in 2000. However, these have not been the language-related struggles seen in other Indian states. Mother-tongue education in Kumauni has not been demanded and is not generally considered to be an option. Government-school instruction is officially Hindi-medium and, in educational contexts in particular, Hindi is usually considered to be the mother tongue. Yet, I have found that many rural Kumaunis value the Kumauni language within its role as the language of the home and local community, as described in Chapter 7.
Which Languages in Education? Indian Education Policy, Status and Acquisition Planning

According to Cooper (1989, p. 109), choice of media of instruction for school systems “is perhaps the status-planning decision most frequently made, the one most commonly subject to strong political pressures.” Often decisions are based more on political considerations than on concern for facilitating education (1989). India’s complex linguistic situation adds complexity to education decisions regarding languages to use as media of instruction and languages to be taught as subjects. Both are important for acquisition planning, with its emphasis on planning for the teaching and learning of language(s), under which Hornberger (1994) places the educational function of language.

A Brief History of Language-in-Education Planning in India

Prestige languages used in India for educational purposes over the generations included Sanskrit (codified since 500 BC), Persian (under the Mughal dynasty which ruled with varying strength from the 16th to the 19th century), and English (under the British East India Company from the 17th to the 19th century and under the British Raj from the mid-19th to mid-20th century). Throughout India’s recent history the question of medium of education has raised significant debate. During British rule there was debate about whether and when to use the vernacular as opposed to English in education including Orientalist versus Anglicist perspectives. Appendix D outlines the major colonial decisions concerning language, education, and linguistic minorities.

In the infamous Minute of 1835, T. B. Macaulay, Chairman of the General Committee on Public Instruction, proclaimed the superiority of English as medium of instruction: “We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our
own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even amongst the languages of the West” (Sharp, H. Selections from Educational Records, Part I 1781-1839, p.110, In Sharma, 1985, p. 2). Despite this attitude towards local languages, during colonial rule some Indian languages were used in education as a transitional medium to pacify the people’s demands, and national leaders in the drive for independence spoke for universal primary education through Indian languages. The language issue was so powerful, in fact, that questions about content in education were pushed into the background. The strength of Gandhi’s opinion is clear: “The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system. The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars” (Gandhi, M. Education. Ministry of Education pp.15-16, quoted in Sharma, 1985: 13).

Gandhi saw the connection between educational status and the corpus planning of a language, rejecting the idea that languages must first be developed before they can be used in education. Challenging Macaulay’s ideas about the superiority of English, Gandhi expressed his opinion about the use of English as the national language as follows:

Our language is the reflection of ourselves and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence, the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (Cries of 'Never'). (Speech at Banaras Hindu University, Feb. 6, 1916 - from Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol XIII p.2111, Publications Division, Government of India, quoted in Saksena, 1972, p. 28)

After independence in 1947, language-in-education decisions were not simple given the demands of the diverse inhabitants of the states and diverse opinions throughout the new nation. Commissions and committees were appointed to address language and education issues. The second part of Appendix D outlines key national decisions concerning language, education, and linguistic minorities after independence. In principle, many policies promoted the use of minority languages. Provincial
governments were not to force minorities into linguistic conformity; however, at the same time, the voices of minorities often went unheard (Ekbote, 1984). More recently, the 2005 National Curriculum Framework (National Council of Educational Research and Training [NCERT], 2005) makes a clear statement regarding the importance of providing mother tongue education for all.

While many policy advances have been made regarding the use of minority languages in education, most of the national decisions may be seen only as suggestions given the fact that education, for the most part, comes under the jurisdiction of the states. The role of the national government comes in uniting the support of the states, coordinating higher education institutions, persuading the elite of the importance of a particular scheme, and providing financial incentives for specific programs (Khubchandani, 2001). The central government “does not exercise any effective control over the implementation of general education programmes” (Khubchandani, 1981, p. 6). Still, national decisions regarding education do influence the decisions of states, as exemplified in the Three-Language Formula.

**The Three-Language Formula: Acquisition Planning for Recognized Languages**

The Three-Language Formula, first presented in 1956 by the Central Advisory Board of Education, deals with acquisition planning through the selection not of media of instruction but of languages to be taught as school subject. While the minority languages receiving attention in this chapter are not included among languages to be taught, the formula certainly influences the education of linguistic minorities. The Three-Language Formula includes the following (according to the 1966 modifications):

1. the mother tongue or regional language, to be taught for 10 years
2. the official language – Hindi or English, to be taught for 6 years, minimum
3rd another modern Indian or foreign language, to be taught for 3 years, minimum

The language first used depends on the definition of mother tongue. The choice of second and third language is, according to Khubchandani “tied up with the issues of language privileges, cultural prestige, and socio-economic mobility” (1981, p. 14).

While overall a broad consensus exists among states, implementation of the Three-Language Formula varies considerably. According to Ekbote (1984), difficulty in the implementation of the Three-Language Formula comes from the following factors: (a) the “heavy language load in the school curriculum,” (b) northern schools not being motivated to teach south Indian language, (c) southern schools, especially in Tamil Nadu, resisting the teaching of Hindi, and (d) the cost of arranging for instruction. The formula has been adapted by the various states in various forms and in various contexts. Some stick to two languages, some need four, some provide additional optional languages.

The multilingualism promoted in the Three-Language Formula springs in part from a concern for maintaining the status of the official and regional languages. Concern continues in India for the maintenance and spread of the official Indian languages. This includes a concern that some Indians, especially the elite, feel the need only to learn English, minimizing the value of learning Indian languages. Pattanayak (1973, p. 11) noted that most resources for teaching Indian languages are created in and for foreign language learning in the United States: “It is a great pity that very little systematic attention is being given in India to the teaching of Indian languages either as the mother tongue or as a foreign language.”

In the Kumaun, the three languages offered in government schools are Hindi, English, and Sanskrit. Since 2004, the teaching of English has started from Class 1 rather
than Class 3. Both English and Sanskrit are compulsory up until Class 9, when there is a choice between either English or Sanskrit. The third language in the Three-Language Formula was intended to be a “modern Indian language,” but Sanskrit, as one of the 22 scheduled languages, serves as the third language in much of Hindi-speaking North India. While there has been some talk in Uttarakhand of introducing Kumauni as a subject, I am unaware of any concrete plans in that direction. Most Kumaunis have followed what I hear referred to as the “English craze” and place as a high priority the learning of English because of its role as the “international language.” Sanskrit is learned, they say, because it is the root or origin of their language. Hindi also is valued as “our national language,” and criticisms are raised about those south Indians who are reluctant to learn Hindi. I explore more about language instruction and the value placed upon the various languages in the Kumaun in the following chapters.

Medium of Instruction and Minority Rights: Use of Minority Languages in Education

When it comes to medium of instruction, the Indian Constitution and national educational policies tend to favor mother-tongue medium instruction. Proponents of multilingual education have considered a success the recent National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005) with its statements on the importance of providing mother tongue education for all. The pluralistic provisions safeguarding the rights of linguistic minorities in the Indian Constitution and in education policies exceed those of many nations, as, for example, in the United States where the Constitution makes no language official and provides no guarantee of language rights or educational rights related to language. The most recent addition to these policies promoting mother-tongue instruction came in July 2009 with the passing in both Houses of Parliament of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill (Rajya Sabha Bill No. LXV-C,
2009), which includes the provision that: “(f) medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child's mother tongue.”

As Dua (1985, p. 172) points out, however, “it depends on various socio-political and sociolinguistic factors whether or not these provisions are effectively implemented.” Given the complexity of India’s multilingual situation and “the variations in the size and concentration of linguistic minorities,” while some minority languages are being used in education, mass media, and/or administration, “the implementation of constitutional safeguards is a challenging, stupendous task” (Dua, 1986, p. 134-135). In defense of India’s implementation difficulties, Dua (1985) elsewhere states that “it is rarely possible to find necessary consensus and conducive climate for the implementation of educational language policy keeping in view the goals of language education and national development” (p. 189).

The Linguistic Survey of Tribal Dialects and Cultures, focusing on four districts of Orissa, reported that “India has failed to meet the commitment of universalizing Primary Education and ensuring a basic human right because of this problem of language” (Linguistic Survey, 1999, cited in Pattanayak, 2001, p. 52). The Report of the Group on Minorities Education, focused particularly on the Urdu-speaking minorities, also issued a negative report. The right of primary education in the mother tongue was being denied many Urdu speakers. As they report:

the Group strongly felt that the denial of this right to the minorities has contributed largely to their educational backwardness. The orthodox parents would have to truck with a system that deprives their children of access to education in their own language. (Group on Minorities Education, 1991, p. 72)

They note the “alarming drop-out rate” of minority students and point out how the current system causes children to “suffer grievously at an impressionable age” (1991, p. 72).
Their suggested solution mostly reflects a desire to see the current provisions fully implemented:

Nothing short of instruction in the child’s mother tongue at the elementary stage and inclusion of Urdu in the Three-Language-Formula at the secondary stage, can salvage the situation, remove the grievance of the minority and improve the quality of education and prospects of minority students. (1991, p. 72)

Yet in other situations, as for example in the Kumaun, there is little demand for official use of the home language in the school. In 1981, Khubchandani presented what he calls the multiple-choice medium policy as follows:

1. Primary stage:
   a. Dominant regional language
   b. Pan-Indian language – English / Hindi
   c. Other major languages
   d. Newly cultivated languages (as preparatory media)

2. Secondary stage:
   a. Dominant regional language
   b. Pan-Indian language – English / Hindi
   c. Other major languages

3. Higher Education stage:
   a. English as developed medium
   b. Hindi and regional languages as emerging media

At government schools in the Kumaun, Hindi is chosen as medium of instruction at all stages of education as both the dominant regional language and a pan-Indian language. However, most private schools reflect a preference for English-medium instruction.

Reasons for rejecting mother-tongue instruction include demand for higher-status languages for social and economic advance. From a look at educational preferences in India, the medium of instruction preferred by many from the primary stage onward is the one most valued at the higher stages of education: English. Those
who can afford to do so send their children to English-medium schools, and the
government also has begun in some schools to comply with this demand for English
medium despite concerns for promoting India’s official and regional languages --
languages that themselves appear to be “minority” languages beside English.

Reasons for demanding mother tongue education can be both pedagogical and
political. Regardless of the global and political status of a child’s mother tongue,
educational research has clearly shown that children learn best when taught in their own
language, and minority children in particular face multiple disadvantages when they are
required to learn primary literacy skills through the medium of a second language
(Jhingran, 2005). The multilingual contribution from the state comes from its obligation
to provide education and to keep children from dropping out of school (Annamalai,
2001). As Annamalai points out, however, “the state may provide a place for the minority
mother tongue in education not on any principle of pedagogy or human right but to meet
political expediency” (2001, p. 72). Regardless of the motivation behind them, such
policies change the status of a language and contribute to its acquisition and
maintenance.

Currently several states, including Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, and Chatisgarh are
giving attention to mother tongue instruction for tribal minorities. The motivation is
primarily to provide adequate educational support to populations that have experienced
high rates of educational failure and drop-out. Such tribal minorities are considered
quite distinct from the speakers of so-called dialects of Hindi or other regional
languages. In the Kumaun, for example, it remains to be explored what educational
benefits might be gained from introducing or encouraging the home language, Kumauni,
as medium of instruction in place of or alongside Hindi. However, from discussions with
many teachers, I have learned that in rural areas Kumauni is often used informally in
school for explaining concepts, particularly in the lower primary grades when children are learning Hindi, as described in Chapter 6. These multilingual practices represent another layer of informal language planning in India, as discussed below.

**What Actually Happens in Education for Linguistic Minorities?**

**Implementation Issues and Multilingual Classroom Practices**

Reporting the number of languages used as media of instruction in India parallels the complexity addressed earlier of numbering the nation's languages. In 1976 there were reported to be 33 tribal languages in use as media of instruction in schools (Pattanayak, 2001). In 1981, Khubchandani (1981) reported that a total of 80 languages were being used as media of instruction in India. In 2001, Annamalai reported 47 languages used as media of instruction, and Singh (2008) reported that there are 34 languages used in schools in India. Jhingran (2005) states that less than 20 languages are being used for media of instruction in primary education. Several Indian states have implemented the use of minority languages as “preparatory medium” or “partial medium” (Khubchandani 2001, p. 32). Besides state provisions, some tribal schools have been formed by the Education department and some by the Welfare Department. Other mother-tongue education programs have been promoted by NGOs.

Even when mother-tongue education policies and programs are initiated, implementation problems often hinder the use of minority languages in education. Program implementation suffers from inefficiencies due to few inspections, absent teachers, unavailability of texts, and alienation from the home language (Pattanayak, 2001). According to Dua (1985), the use of minority languages in education face implementation problems, not due to lack of student motivation and ability or from the parents’ devaluation of such instruction, but from pedagogic, environmental and curricular problems. The use of minority languages in the first few years of education is
not an automatic solution to educational problems for linguistic minorities. As Pattanayak (2001, p. 54) says: “With inexperienced teachers and insufficient reading materials these programs are apologies for education.” Contributing to the problem in many cases are literacy materials with very little practical village content and little that would be motivational for learners, as well as the lack of planning for transitions from one language to another in the school (2001). Other hindrances to program implementation spring from mistrust, as some administrators fear more demands from minority groups and community members fear loss of access to the languages of power (Annamalai, 1990). Annamalai points out that bilingual education faces more resistance when it is centrally planned than when it is used informally as a part of the multilingualism common in society.

Looking beyond program implementation problems to micro-level decisions about language use in the classroom reveals another layer of language planning in India. The multilingualism that has been observed in educational settings in India outside of official policy deserves some consideration. Khubchandani (1981) notes that “in actual practice one notices a good deal of code-switching and hybridization of two or more contact languages in informal teaching settings” (p. 31). Multilingual teachers can speak in whatever way best helps their students. According to Khubchandani (2001) multilingualism manifests itself in multiple ways in the classroom:

it is not unusual to find in many institutions anomalous patterns of communication where the teacher and the taught interact in one language, classes are conducted in another, textbooks are written in a third, and answers are given in a fourth language or style. (p. 33)

In a multilingual setting, this may be more natural than we think. Referring to the developed world, Pattanayak (2001) says:

Having accepted a single language as a goal, a single language as ideal for state formation, a single language as a point of departure for linguistic enquiry, and a
single language as a convenient launching pad for describing an individual, a social group and a State, they are at a loss to explain variation. The Third and Fourth Worlds cannot afford such luxury. (p. 50)

In discussing the problems of low literacy among tribal people, Khubchandani (2001) points out the need for respect for grassroots ‘folk’ multilingualism, having stated earlier that "in the 'filterdown-approach of the educational elite, grassroots 'folk' multilingualism is devalued" (1992, p. 102). In a different context, Annamalai (2001) refers to the successive use of languages for different stages of education as a successive model of bilingual education. Since no plans are made, however, for the switchover between media, the de facto result is what he terms “unplanned simultaneous bilingual education” (p. 2). In light of the need for planning for the switch between languages in preparation for higher education, noted also by Khubchandani (2001), such informal multilingual instruction may serve an important educational function.

Agnihotri (2007) offers a glimpse of what a more structured use of multilingual instruction that builds on the students' linguistic resources could look like in the classroom – instruction that allows children to use the language they know and work together to formulate rules and build understanding. He says:

Any classroom in India is in general multilingual, and unless we conceptualize the school curriculum, syllabus, textbooks and classroom transaction in terms of multilingualism as a resource, strategy and a goal, where languages are not seen as discrete objects and language boundaries are porous, we may not be able to arrive at a pedagogical breakthrough where an individual child's language and systems of knowledge are respected. (Agnihotri 2007, p. 197)

These pluralistic views of language, of literacy and of classroom instruction requires clearer definition. How does “grassroots ‘folk’ multilingualism” compare with Annamalai’s “unplanned simultaneous bilingual education”? Is it effective for both content and language learning? As mentioned earlier, Annamalai (1990) has observed that bilingual education faces more resistance when it is centrally planned than when it
is used informally, a part of the multilingualism common in society. He also differentiates natural bilingualism and planned bilingualism. Might there also be a distinction between natural bilingual education and planned bilingual education? The questions remains as to whether natural de facto multilingual education can provide an effective bridge between access to education through the mother tongue and access to higher education and economic advancement though the more powerful languages. This question too is not without its controversies, and India's multilingual classroom practices deserve further exploration.

Taking a glimpse, again, at the Kumauni context, the multilingualism in the Kumaun can be seen reflected in unofficial multilingual classroom practices. As described further in Chapter 6, preschool and primary school teachers often admit to using Kumauni to help children bridge to Hindi in rural areas. Similarly, English and Hindi are used and mixed in English-language classrooms. Rather than feeling ashamed of these multilingual practices, teachers could learn to build on the multilingual resources in their classrooms, tapping into the benefits of mother-tongue instruction and encouraging their students in the multilingual competencies needed in a multilingual world.

**Conclusion: Diversity and Flexibility**

Through this analysis of India’s linguistic diversity from a language planning perspective, more questions have been raised than have been answered. How many languages are there in India? This is a question open to debate – a question involving definitions, census practices, and multiple motivations. Which languages get status? What about the other languages? Though addressed in the Constitution, issues of language status too are not without fluctuation, and the reasons behind which languages have received status are rarely linguistic. As a language planning case, the Census
activities of classification and rationalization exemplify a status-planning goal of legitimization or recognition. Similarly, hesitation to acknowledge some linguistic diversity reveals a language-planning goal of minimization. Meanwhile safeguarding the rights of linguistic minorities in the Constitution results in language protection rather than proscription. What happens in education for linguistic minorities? Constitutional rights and national education policies make some provision, but implementation varies. And what actually happens in the classroom adds another level of complexity and an opportunity for informal language planning deserving more exploration.

Throughout India’s history as a nation, the government has in various ways addressed the linguistic diversity in India, with complexity and controversy at each turn. I return to the question of who is served when India is said to have certain numbers of languages and when status is given to certain languages. Which approaches may contribute most to the educational opportunities of linguistic minorities? India continues in its ongoing efforts to answer these questions, taking into account the diversity of situations to be considered. In the words of Khubchandani (2001, p. 43): “When dealing with plural societies, we shall do well to realize the risks involved in uniform solutions.”
Chapter 6

Language Use and Language Labels in Community and in Education:

Bhasha-Boli, Mother Tongue, and Medium of Instruction

The previous chapter focused on issues related to national-level language planning, from the status given to minority languages to the use of minority languages in schools, with glimpses of the relevance of these issues in the Kumaun. This chapter provides a closer look at what is being experienced and expressed locally in relation to the status of languages; to categories like language, dialect, or mother tongue; as well as to media of instruction. First, I place these discussions in context by describing language use in the Kumaun and how language use was described to me. The relevant languages are Kumauni, Hindi, English, and Sanskrit, each used to varying degrees, in various domains, for various purposes, and with frequent overlap, especially between the most frequently used Kumauni and Hindi. Kumauni is often referred to colloquially as Pahari, which literally means “of the mountains.” The term is used by linguists to refer to the set of related languages spoken in the Himalayas.

Language Use

What do the students have to say about language use? As a fun way to provide an initial overview, I start this section with descriptions of two activities and the feedback I got from high school students in Kausani. In one English class with the Class 12 students at the Government Intermediate College (GIC), we compiled a list of their daily activities. When the list was complete, I started to ask some questions about language use, as described in this excerpt from my field notes:

I asked what languages they use while doing these activities. “Hindi. And Pahari,” they said. When do you use Hindi and when Pahari? “Pahari at home and Hindi at school,” one girl said. I heard a boy saying: “Just Hindi.” Then he said: “No, it's
the same.” I asked whether girls speak Pahari and boys speak Hindi, but from their reactions I could see that this didn’t ring true for them. I asked when they use English and one girl seemed to be saying that they don’t. One of the boys said: “For the English PAPER exam.” And you talk with me sometimes, I said, in English. I asked spontaneously when they use Sanskrit, thinking that it would be just in school, but one boy said: “For prayer.” And prayer was one of the things they had listed on their daily schedule. Then one of the boys joked that they also speak Urdu when they are brushing their teeth: “Ammmamam,” he hummed. We all laughed. (H; FN:08Apr10)

This student was making humorous reference here not to how Urdu itself sounds, but to the sound of a Muslim’s prayer. The association between language and religion when it comes to the Urdu language is obvious, even though the Muslim and Christian minorities in the region are Kumauni speakers.

On another occasion, I used an activity to talk with the same students about the use of the various languages, as described in my field notes:

I suggested that we do one more game and made pie charts with them on the board of how much of each language would be used by a child, a student, a married person, and an old person. I listened for the loudest responses and asked for confirmation, checking their faces. Sometimes I walked over closer to the girls to get their answers more fully. Some were saying that little children just speak Hindi, but the consensus seemed to be that it was 50-50, Hindi and Kumauni. A school student would use a small percentage of both English and Sanskrit, with the remainder split between Hindi and Kumauni. The same would be true for a married person. At first the girls said that a married person would just use Pahari. They agreed that a small percentage of English would be used to talk if a foreigner came. And a little Sanskrit would be used for puja [worship; prayer]. When I asked about old people, one of the girls said that it depends upon the atmosphere [mahaul] -- what people around them are speaking. If they are in a village, they will speak Kumauni. If they are in a city, they will speak Hindi. She said the same about the other age groups also. They said that it would be different if they were living in Delhi, so I made pies of each of the age groups for a person in Delhi. The child would be the same: 50-50 Hindi and Kumauni -- or more Hindi. For the student, one of the boys said 40% English and the rest Hindi -- maybe a little Kumauni... (H; FN:08Apr26)

There were differences of opinion among the students as there are likely differences in

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1 In citing examples from my field notes and interviews, I identify the language being used as Hindi (H), Kumauni (K), or English (E), except when referencing my own memos within field notes. I then differentiate between field notes (FN), paraphrased quotes (PQ) written, as I remembered them, in the voice of the speaker; and direct quotes (DQ), including recorded interviews and quotes written word-for-word in my field notes. The rationale for this maintenance of voice in field notes is explained in Chapter 4. FN, PQ, or DQ are followed by the year, month, and day of the event or interview.

2 The fact that Urdu had been at one time taught in schools in the Kumaun and that Sanskrit is now being promoted more is worth noting. Hindu prayers are recited at the start of the school day at government schools in the Kumaun.
language use in their homes. School and home, urban and rural, young and old – all contribute to the mix in the daily use of Kumauni and Hindi, and the less frequent use of English and Sanskrit.

In my analysis of language use, I wanted to compile a tidy chart of how each language is used or how languages are used in various domains. I sorted through the 209 excerpts from my field notes that dealt with either my observations of language use or someone's comments about language use. The resulting chart was anything but tidy. A few patterns emerged. The contexts that were mentioned in relation to language use included the home and the school, the village and the city, Kausani, the Ashram, and conferences or meetings. Usage also varies by person – different with outsiders, among women and with children.

Not surprisingly, language use in the various speech situations is usually more complicated than people say. Some exaggeration is involved in generalizations. A woman in the city tells me that nobody speaks Kumauni anymore, yet I hear it from three-year-olds in a village. A man in the village tells me that nobody here speaks English, and yet an elderly woman offers me “WATER.” I could generalize that more Kumauni is actually used than many Kumaunis claim. But I also see the growing differences in language use between generations, between the urban and the rural, and maybe even between men and women.

The home. In the home, Kumauni is generally spoken. For most of the girls and teachers at the Ashram, Kumauni is associated with the home. Hindi is spoken when outsiders come and sometimes with fathers and grandfathers. Govindi’s Hindi-speaking home was a notable exception, and a few other Ashram girls who know less Kumauni said that Hindi is spoken in their homes. For some Kumauni families in Kausani also,

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3 Small caps indicate that the actual English word was used in a Hindi or Kumauni conversation.
including my host family, Hindi is becoming the dominant language of the home for the younger generation. A family whose members had mostly been educated in Almora speaks Hindi in the home even though they live along the road near their home village. They use Kumauni with Kumauni speakers from the village (H; FN:08Mar14).

The school. At school, Hindi is the preferred language. The textbooks are in Hindi and most instruction is in Hindi. English and Sanskrit are subjects to be studied. In rural schools, I learned, some instruction takes place in Kumauni. Kumauni comes in as the language for informal communication between the teachers, sometimes between the students, and sometimes even for instruction. Yet the language of the school is clearly Hindi, even in English classes where most explanation is done in Hindi. The exception is English-medium schools, where the textbooks are in English. However, in rural areas in particular, much of the instruction even at English-medium schools is in Hindi. The issue of medium of instruction is discussed further later in this chapter.

According to Asha, “English is just needed for one class. And the rest is Hindi. The root language of the school is Hindi... The one to use at the school [USE-vale] is Hindi. Those to use at home are Hindi and Pahari both - according to our desire” (H; DQ:07Oct5). The hold of Hindi over the school domain seems stronger to Asha than that of Kumauni in the home.

At the universities in the Kumaun, Hindi and English are both used, although the language of instruction is usually Hindi. An instructor told me that her students return assignments in either language, or sometimes a combination, depending on whether they had attended an English or Hindi-medium school.

The village. In the villages, almost an extension of the home, Kumauni is the default language. Kumauni is used always or mainly by villagers among each other, I am told. Hindi may be used more by those who have been “outside,” by the men who have
returned to the village after working the plains, and with outsiders. I am also told by
villagers that nobody speaks English there, or that it is only occasionally spoken by
educated people.

I observed the use of the various languages during my visits to the village of
Dholara. A three-year old girl, who spends most of her time with her grandmother while
her mother works in the fields, exclaimed over the little booklet of animal pictures that I
had given her, using Kumauni. At the preschool where she is beginning to attend,
another grandmother sat and chatted with the teacher in Kumauni. The teacher led
songs and recitations in Hindi with the children and began to teach them the Hindi
alphabet. At the primary school, the teachers use Kumauni among each other, as do the
students. The teachers give instruction in Hindi, and teach some songs and poems in
English. Residents of Dholara generally spoke with me in Hindi, but a few of the women
tried helping me and teasing me with Kumauni, and occasionally one of the men used
English with me. A boy who was on break from an English-medium school in town tried
his English on me as well. His cousin who lives and attends school in Dholara knows
much less English.

One of the primary school teachers came to visit the Simon family while I was
staying with them in Dholara. She used Kumauni with the mother, grandmother and a
neighbor. When she turned to the daughter, a young woman on vacation from her
nurse’s training in the plains, she used Hindi, even when the daughter addressed her in
Kumauni. This conversation also included an unusual number of English words, since
the teacher was giving instructions on some paperwork that she needed the daughter to
deliver: COPY... CERTIFICATE... DUPLICATE... ORIGINAL... I asked the daughter later why the
teacher had spoken with her in Hindi rather than Kumauni. “It’s because I usually speak
Hindi. When I am away, I only speak Hindi” (H; PQ:08Jan28).
With outsiders. Hindi is particularly used with outsiders who come to the village. A group of women in Dholara explained: “If someone comes from the outside, we speak with them in Hindi. Like with you we speak Hindi... If we speak in Hindi, you’ll understand us. If in Pahari, then you won’t” (H; DQ:08Mar24). I was, of course, addressed in Hindi, and occasionally in English, but some older women in the villages spoke with me in Kumauni. Even Kumaunis who visit villages other than their own tell me that they have been addressed in Hindi. Kamla-Didi tells me that when she visits the village, the women try to speak Hindi with her, even if not perfectly. When she switches to Kumauni, they follow her lead (E; FN:06Jul5). When Dr. Joshi visits villages, he also is addressed in Hindi. When he asks his fellow Kumaunis why they don’t speak Kumauni with him, they tell him that it is because he is speaking “Almori,” the variety of Kumauni spoken in Almora (E; FN:07Sept15). He is an outsider because of his association with a different location, if not also because of his higher economic and academic status. In contrast, I have observed some newcomers to a village being addressed in Kumauni. A group of older women approaching my hosts’ home from the tea gardens below were addressed in Kumauni. A young woman visiting Dholara with me was addressed in Kumauni but switched the conversation back to Hindi, explaining that she had married into the Kumaun from a different area. It is outsiders who are perceived to be from a different place and/or of a different status, it seems, that are addressed in Hindi rather than Kumauni.

Among women. Another aspect of language use in the village that I notice has to do with gender. When I asked an Ashram social worker who visits the villages frequently what the common people’s view would be about Kumauni language, she said that the women speak in Kumauni: ’We will speak in our language,’ they say. They can not speak Hindi so well. Yes, they can understand it, but sometimes there are words that they don’t
know in Hindi. They can express everything that they want to in Kumauni (H; FN:07Jan26). While visiting a village with Meena-Didi, I noticed that she spoke mainly Kumauni with the women and Hindi with the men. Never did I find a Kumauni man who could not speak with me in Hindi, but I met a few older women who knew only Kumauni.

I started to wonder whether Kumauni could be considered a women's language. I began to ask about it, but everyone with whom I spoke disagreed. In my recorded interview with Manju and Sunita, I said that I had heard in the villages that more women speak Kumauni than men. “It’s not like that,” Sunita said. “That’s empty/meaningless,” Manju said. “Those who had jobs outside, they sometimes speak [Hindi] amongst each other. And those who are just in the village speak Pahari.” They disagreed with the idea that Kumauni is a women’s language. “It's everyone's language,” Sunita said. “Whoever is in the Pahar [Kumaun], it's their language,” Manju said (H; DQ:07Oct26).

*Kausani.* In the village context, use of Kumauni is most common, and Hindi is used with outsiders or those who have been outside of the village. Outside, it seems, means the cities and the plains, but also, more locally, the markets, such as the strip of shops in Kausani.

Kausani is in some ways an urbanized village or a town, somewhere between village and city. What I heard and observed of language use there was somewhat different from that in smaller, more traditional villages like Dholara, even though the distance between them could be bridged in a 35 minute walk or a 10 minute bus ride and 5 minute walk. Children speak less Kumauni in Kausani, and it seemed that residents of Kausani tended to minimize, in their descriptions, the extent of Kumauni use especially by young people and children.

When I first moved into the Kausani Estate neighborhood, I sat for tea with the neighbors and was introduced to the three young cousins: Vimla, Hema, and Poonam.
Poonam's mother pointed out how quickly the three girls speak amongst each other. “They are speaking Hindi, though,” she said. “They don't speak the local language. They always speak Hindi amongst each other. They do understand the local language, but they don’t speak it.” I asked why they don’t speak it, and Poonam's mother said that she doesn't know and that they have been speaking Hindi from childhood. “We speak our local language amongst each other,” she said, referring to herself and the other adults in the household (H; FN:08Feb13). Later in the conversation, we were searching for the word for “corn.” Vimla offered one word, and her aunt pointed out that the word was in their local language. “She does know the local language!” I said. “They all understand it,” Poonam's mother explained, even pointing to a small child who was nearby. “But they don’t speak it properly. They sometimes speak it, but mix in Hindi. Hindi they can speak properly. We all laugh if a little one like that says something in our local language” (H; FN:08Feb13).

During the time I spent visiting in this family's home and neighborhood, I noticed constant switching between Hindi and Kumauni in front of the children. I heard Vimla, who according to the above conversation speaks only Hindi, using Kumauni with a two-year-old cousin. The group of Class 9 students studying English with me, including Poonam, could easily translate a list of words and verb tenses into Kumauni. When it came to interactions in their homes, Kausani seemed more like a village. And yet, with children in some homes, Hindi is the norm. I observed the following incident outside of my host family’s home in Kausani Estate:

Vimla and Hema and a younger cousin were sitting with Grandmother and my host sister. They were waiting for their water jugs to fill from the spout coming out of the spring by our house. They used both Kumauni and Hindi when chatting with each other. I heard Vimla address Grandmother in Kumauni and later my host sister in Hindi, although the conversation included everyone. Grandmother, Vimla, and Hema switched back and forth comfortably, it seemed. I haven't heard my host sister using any Kumauni. (FN:08Mar8)
In my host family's home, the parents and grandparents spoke Kumauni and Hindi among each other, and the children spoke only Hindi. Kumauni was used with elderly visitors, and Hindi was used with me and with the children. If needed, Mr. Bhandari could speak some English with foreign visitors.

*With children*. There are Kumauni children in Kausani who do not speak Kumauni. In Kausani, I observed a trend that I did not see happening, at least among the low-caste families with whom I spent time, in the village of Dholara: that of speaking only Hindi with children. The young daughters-in-law that I interviewed in Dholara talked about children learning Hindi at home, but not to the exclusion of Kumauni (H; FN:08Jan29). However, a friend of mine associated with the Ashram told about speaking Kumauni with some children in his village, just for fun, conducting his own personal experiment. Their parents asked him to speak Hindi for the sake of the children (H; FN:07Jan22).

The group of women with whom I was discussing language issues in Dholara see a future of Hindi and English for their children. “Are there some children who don’t understand Hindi?” I asked. I heard a collection of overlapping voices:

They understand it. All of the children understand Hindi.... As far as the Pahari language, it is lost *chut gayi*. Everyone has started to speak Hindi. Mostly people speak Hindi. Nowadays the children have English. There isn’t so much study of Hindi. English has gone on more -- in school. (H; DQ:08Mar24)

I was about to ask whether the loss of Kumauni was OK, when a woman said: “The Hindi language is finished *khatam*. [Now] English!” (Some of the others started laughing.) “Kumauni is finished,” she said. “It won’t be finished,” Ms. Simon objected. (Comments and laughter.) (H; DQ:08Mar24). These women laughed together at the exaggeration made by one of them that Hindi is finished. She used the word *khatam*, implying that it is over and that something else has begun, or that this chapter has ended. Yet we all
knew that this was an exaggeration even for Kumauni. Ms. Simon may have wanted to set the record straight for me, knowing that the younger women were making light of my questions and that Kumauni was solidly a part of village life. The references to language shift may have been intended as a joke, but they reflect a reality of which these women are well aware.

The Ashram. Lakshmi Ashram was the single place where I had the most opportunities to observe and hear about language use. When I asked about it, I got mixed messages. Some Didis and students told me that Kumauni is not used at the Ashram, but only at home during winter vacation. Yet, when asked for more details, they would agree that Kumauni is sometimes used, and from my observation it is used quite frequently. I frequently heard the Didis and the girls speaking together in Kumauni. In the office, I overhead the Didis discussing Ashram business together, sometimes in Kumauni and sometimes in Hindi. Although Kumauni is more likely to be spoken during the chore time or while working in the garden, and Hindi is more likely to be spoken in the class time, there are many situations in which either could be used.

In the girls’ descriptions of their language use, I learned to listen for the whole story and not just the generalization. I asked Sunita whether they speak Kumauni at the Ashram: “No. All speak Hindi. But they know Kumauni. Everyone knows it. In the garden they do speak Kumauni together. But in class it’s always Hindi. Because the school language is Hindi. That’s why” (H; DQ:07Oct16). Manju started out with an opposite statement, but not a contradictory message: “Everyone speaks Kumauni here... Some people speak it, some people don’t, but everyone knows it... Whoever likes it, [speaks it].” She said that there is not a difference between those who speak Hindi and those who speak Kumauni (H; DQ-07Oct26). One day I heard Saroj-Didi discussing some gardening issue with Manju, using Kumauni. I asked Manju why she sometimes
speaks Kumauni and sometimes Hindi. “That’s how it is,” she said. “When Kumauni is in your mind, you speak Kumauni, when Hindi, then Hindi” (H; FN:07Dec25).

Later that same day, I was asking about language in an interview with Asha. She uses Kumauni “sometimes while cleaning, or at any time, with anyone... Sometimes -- sometimes in the morning, sometimes at night.” Gaitri was listening in and explained: “Everyone speaks Kumauni here at the Ashram.” Gaitri has, in fact, learned Kumauni here even though her home language is Nepali. About when she uses Hindi, Asha said: “I use Hindi with other girls all the time. And with the Didis. In the class time and -- like that -- all the time” (H; DQ:07Dec25). Asha talked about Kumauni being used at any time and Hindi all the time without a distinction in the situations in which either might be used.

I asked Himani when she uses Kumauni. “When I'm living at home I speak Kumauni,” she said. And at the Ashram? “We speak it at the Ashram. Whenever. When we're with our own peers/friends [saathion], then we speak it.” I then asked her when she speaks Hindi.

We always speak Hindi. We mostly speak Hindi -- because at the Ashram a lot of people speak Hindi. Here at the Ashram, they speak Pahari and Hindi both equally. And Hindi we speak when we go somewhere outside, to the city -- and when I go outside of the village, then I speak Hindi. In the village, I just speak Pahari. (H; DQ:07Oct30)

Like the other girls, Himani seems to exaggerate at first in her generalizations, but then modifies her comments and talks about a balance of Kumauni and Hindi usage. Compared to the village, there is more Hindi spoken at the Ashram. When we were hiking together one day, Himani asked me whether I could understand them when they spoke Kumauni. I frequently could not follow the girls' chatter amongst themselves. I asked her when they used it, and she said that all of them use it once in while. Why?
“Sometimes the words just come out,” she said (H; FN:07Oct18).

I observed frequent use of both Hindi and Kumauni among Ashram members. Switching between the two comes naturally. The Ashram's school meetings were held in Hindi. Occasionally Kumauni and English were used in skits. Sanskrit was used in some of the daily prayers, in some group scripture reading, and in Sanskrit class. English was used to communicate with foreign guests and in English class. Kumauni was used with village women who came to have their wheat ground at the Ashram. Rebecca Klenk, who spent much time at Lakshmi Ashram during her fieldwork, also observed that many people use more Kumauni than they admit. She estimated that Kumauni is used about half of the time at the Ashram, especially when Ashram members are talking informally among each other. The fact that many downplay the use of Kumauni may be less of an attempt to hide the use of Kumauni than a reflection of their own perspective on the Ashram as a Hindi-dominant place as compared with their homes and villages as Kumauni places (Klenk, 2007, personal communication). Many of the girls from remote villages who came to the Ashram as young children and even some of the Didis had learned Hindi when they came to the Ashram.

The City. Language use in the cities of the Kumaun, including Almora, Nainital, and the much larger Haldwani, is quite different from that in the villages. Hindi is the language of these cities. Kumauni is still present in the homes, but in the cities the generation gap seems more extreme. The Ashram girls were happy to exaggerate the situation for me, likely influenced by the Gandhian value of simple living and skepticism about modernization. Sunita's response when I asked about language use in the city was animated: “In the city, people's minds-- It's a HI-FI place. It is not Kumaun! Lots of enjoyment-type people. Resting-type people. They don't have any respect for Kumaun. They left. They went outside for work. That's why they just speak Hindi” (H;
Children in the cities are speaking primarily Hindi, and many are not learning Kumauni. Most of Saroj-Didi’s extended family has moved from the family village to new homes in Haldwani. When I visited their homes, they said that they don’t use Kumauni much around here. There are people from outside of the area, so they use Hindi. Saroj-Didi told me that the older people use Kumauni. The children don’t use it much. They speak Hindi because they go to school (H; FN:08Jan10). “They don’t understand Kumauni,” the mother of some young children in Haldwani said. “We know it, but they don’t. That’s because they have grown up here. If they had grown up in a village, they would know it” (H; FN:08Jan11).

Hindi is dominant in the cities, but English is also becoming more popular. The three-year-old daughter of a friend in Almora greeted me warmly in her extroverted way: “Namaste!” Her mother told her to say “HELLO.” As the little girl was saying “HELLO,” she started to put her little hands together into a namaskar again, but then stopped herself and instead stuck out her right hand to shake mine. “HELLO! I’M FINE!” she said (FN:07Oct14). The presence of numerous English-medium schools certainly influences the increased use of English in the cities, and the increased demand for English is also demonstrated by the competitive English language institutes for adults.

The Outside. Whether outside of the home, outside of the village, or outside of the Kumaun, the outside is associated, in discussions of language use, with Hindi and sometimes with English. The outside includes the cities in the plains where many Kumaunis have migrated for work. Kamla-Didi explained to me that people would speak Hindi when they go outside in order to avoid being seen as backwards. The Sadhana girls experienced the outside during their training time in Gujarat. Upon their return, they joked about getting into trouble because of their Kumauni language. This was because
the others couldn’t understand them, they said. Apparently this had become a joke among their new friends, also demonstrating the fact that the Sadhana girls frequently used Kumauni amongst each other. Many others in their training spoke Gujarati. Hindi was, of course, the link language and the language of the training, although some English words were used (H; FN:08Mar6).

Conferences and Meetings. It was interesting to observe language use in the meetings and conferences that I attended in the Kumaun. All were held in Hindi, but English words were dropped in at a rate more frequent than in casual conversation. One young Ashram teacher, Rekha, told me that in some big meetings or seminars they say that the meeting is in Hindi, but they use a lot of English. “The people here don’t know that much English. All of the names or the core words are in English even though the rest is in Hindi. Those who don’t know English aren’t able to understand” (H; PQ:07Dec1). She told me about a meeting in Kausani at which they were using too much English. The Lakshmi Ashram girls decided that they should speak up about it, and they had Narayana speak up for them.

Members of Lakshmi Ashram and its associates make an effort to resist this trend, maintaining the use of Hindi in their meetings and attempting to privilege those who would not understand English. Language became an issue of a lengthy logistical discussion at the conference on Gandhian Hind Swaraj that I attended in Kausani, since some English-speaking attenders could not understand Hindi. The group was divided into English and Hindi tracks, with some joint sessions where Hindi dominated. Yet, even during the Hindi sessions, I listed many English words being used, often abstract nouns, many of which the Sadhana girls could not later define.

In smaller meetings and workshops at the Ashram, I noticed some use of Kumauni, especially before and after the meetings, but also in the meetings themselves.
One of the women leaders involved in a meeting for promoting women's involvement in local politics spoke up confidently in Kumauni in the meeting. At the parents’ meeting held at the Ashram in April, most formal communication was done in Hindi, but the parents and Didis switched frequently between Hindi and Kumauni.

By person. Through the course of my primary and preliminary fieldwork in North India, I found myself adjusting my language use, as I observed others doing, according to the language abilities of those present. With the English teachers at the GIC, I would usually use English, but when other teachers were present, we would use predominantly Hindi. I was surprised to notice, from my 2006 field notes (FN:06May29), that English had dominated in conversations with one of the GIC teachers with whom I mainly spoke Hindi the following year. They too were adjusting their language choices in conversations according to their perception of the linguistic abilities of participants. With some of the Ashram Didis who knew English I also used increasingly more Hindi throughout my fieldwork.

Of course, a careful guessing game is sometimes required. Some teachers and administrators in the Kumaun wanted to be sure that I knew that they could speak some English, inserting a question or phrase in English before proceeding in Hindi. One of the education officers in Bageshwar started our conversation with a simple question in English, after we had been introduced in Hindi. I speculated in my field notes later that this was to show that he did know English. We proceeded with the rest of our conversation in Hindi (FN:08Mar27). Some NGO members associated with Lakshmi Ashram resist this status display and sometimes even minimize their knowledge of English. When I was conducting interviews at various times with members of SIDH (Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas), I was not aware that they were fluent in English until later in the interview, when they accommodated for my
inefficiencies in Hindi. This disguising rather than flaunting of English abilities is partial demonstration of their resistance to the dominant status given to English, as also demonstrated in the more careful preferencing of Hindi in conferences and meetings.

To summarize, language use in the descriptions of Kumaunis and in my observations is somewhat influenced by place, by activity, and by person. And yet there is a flexibility and tolerance for mixing and switching that makes it hard to claim consistent patterns. Multilingualism is the norm. The following sections address the relationship between Hindi and Kumauni, the ways that they are labeled, and the ways this helps to explain their use, especially in education.

**Language, Dialect, and Mother Tongue: Bhasha versus Boli**

A conversation with Shobha-Didi during my preliminary research highlighted for me the ambiguity in the concepts of “mother tongue” and “dialect” and the importance of mother-tongue education at Lakshmi Ashram. We sat together one morning on the thick mat carpeting behind low desks in the Ashram office. I had explained my research briefly to her, regarding the intersection of language and education as well as issues of development and empowerment in the Kumaun. She said that this is a big dilemma now here and a very relevant issue:

> People don’t understand this issue of language in education. English is so popular. Everyone wants English. Everyone wants English-medium education: the nice tie, etc. But this is just outward/external, not inward/internal. They don’t think about the full development of the child. (E; PQ:06Jul26)

The prestige of going to an English-medium school and of wearing the nice uniform attract many people, but according to Shobha-Didi, the full development of the child is neglected. She then went on to tell me that she believes that only through education in the mother tongue can the child be fully developed from the beginning.

> This statement caught my attention because I agreed with it so much and because
of my interest in mother-tongue education and in the Kumauni language. It was clear here, however, that Shobha-Didi was making a contrast with English-medium education and referring to Hindi as mother tongue. “What about Kumauni?,” I asked.

It is not used in schools at all. Hindi is what they call the mother tongue here. If we think about it, Kumauni is our mother tongue, but there are not books in Kumauni -- although there is some poetry and stories written in Kumauni -- but it’s not used in school. Hindi is considered to be the mother tongue. (E; PQ:06Jul26)

In the educational context in the Kumaun, Hindi is regarded by default as the mother tongue. Even though, “if we think about it, Kumauni is our mother tongue,” Hindi is accepted as the appropriate mother tongue for use in education. There are books in Hindi and it is used in school, setting it apart from Kumauni. Shobha-Didi went on to explain the importance of mother-tongue education at the Ashram: “At the Ashram the mother tongue is very much promoted. I don’t know what others believe or say about this, but I believe that education should be in the mother tongue” (E; PQ:06Jul26).

This was a value promoted by the Ashram founder, Sarala Behen, and by Mahatma Gandhi as well. He thought that the primary school years should be all taught in the mother tongue, with other languages introduced after fifth grade. Even in higher grades the medium of instruction should be mother tongue. Shobha-Didi explained that this was the reason that Hindi is used at the Ashram and that English is not emphasized very much. Of course, the girls have to take exams, so they do have to learn from the English books and get ready for the exams in English as a subject. Shobha-Didi also believes that they should learn to speak well and properly in English -- not just from the books, but useful English for communication. But this is not the highest emphasis at the school (E; FN:06Jul26).

The emphasis on Hindi at Lakshmi Ashram is consistent with the beliefs of its founders and leaders about the importance of mother-tongue education. Again, this is
emphasized in contrast with English and with the growing presence of English-medium schools springing up even in the villages. The girls at the Ashram learn the English that they need in order to pass government examinations. Shobha-Didi agreed that, beyond exam results, spoken English skills were also important. However, at Lakshmi Ashram, English is not placed on the same pedestal as at English-medium schools.

I wanted to understand more about the ambiguous situation of Kumauni when it comes to this concept of “mother tongue” and “mother tongue education.” I turned the conversation again in that direction, asking Shobha-Didi: “If Hindi is mother tongue than what is Kumauni?”

Kumauni is a language. I don't know what they have put it as officially, but it should be a language. But mostly it is used as a dialect. It is considered to be a dialect. (E; PQ:06Jul26)

Shobha-Didi recognized the ambiguity coming through in this conversation regarding mother tongue, language, and dialect. She wanted to emphasize the importance of Hindi over English in education, an issue important in Gandhian philosophies about education. And yet she does not wish to undervalue Kumauni. Although she feels that it is certainly a language, she knows that it is mostly used as and considered to be a dialect.

This question of language versus dialect, and the separate question of what is considered to be mother tongue, continued to grab my interest throughout my fieldwork, especially as they relate to issues of medium of instruction and mother-tongue education.

**Bhasha versus Boli**

As I started to have conversations about language and local linguistic varieties in India, and especially in the Kumaun, I picked up on the use of two Hindi words: Bhasha can be translated as “language,” and boli, related to “speech,” is usually translated as “dialect” but also implies “spoken language.” I noticed that the ways in which the term
boli is used to talk about certain language varieties did not parallel my own conceptions of the meaning of “dialect.” Similarly, when I heard the word “dialect” in the Indian context, it often seemed to carry different meanings and connotations than I had usually ascribed to it. My introductory linguistics courses had taught me to avoid the term “dialect” with its connotations of linguistic inferiority, and rather to speak of linguistic “varieties,” including standard and non-standard varieties. While English-speakers in India usually insisted that boli can be translated as “dialect,” I felt that the meanings were not parallel. My understanding of “dialect” in the Indian context was expanded when I began to see it through the concept of boli.

In my subsequent conversations throughout my fieldwork, I put some effort into picking apart the differences between bhasha and boli, and the different beliefs about them as expressed by Kumauni academics, urban elite, teachers, students, Ashram members, and villagers, especially around Kausani. This section attempts to analyze these differences and definitions, towards a better understanding of local concepts about language and speech varieties. Usually discussions of the distinction between bhasha and boli came up through conversations about why Kumauni is not considered to be mother tongue in Census reporting, and why Kumauni is not used in schools, which are both related to Kumauni’s not being recognized in the Indian Constitution. The underlying explanation or justification for this situation as it stands is that Kumauni is only a boli. Hindi, on the other hand, is a bhasha.

Why is Kumauni a boli? Why is it not a bhasha? I frequently asked for the reasons. Sometimes I would gently challenge the reasons given in order to hear more explanation of the contrast. Those introductory linguistics courses taught me that “a language is a dialect with an army.” I wanted to be alert to the power issues involved, but yet to try to understand the distinction as locally perceived and learned. Memos in my
field notes raised questions such as: Is the term “dialect” the educated discourse regarding Kumauni/Pahari -- or do less educated people have the same sort of implication in mind when they talk about their spoken language? What is the implication here? (FN:07Aug20).

Before analyzing the reasons for a variety’s being categorized as bhasha or as boli, as expressed in the Kumaun, I will offer two tentative generalizations: First, that the distinction does not seem to be of great relevance to village life or to be constructed at the village level but rather a learned distinction; and second, that boli does not necessarily imply inferiority or carry negative connotations.

**Socialization into the Distinction**

“They don't know the difference between a dialect and a language,” I was told by a professor at Kumaun University in reference to the Kumaunis in the villages, as he tried to help me understand the different voices I was hearing (H; PQ:08Feb27). Indeed, the distinction rarely came up in my conversation with villagers who were less influenced by school education.

I tried to bring up the question in a group discussion with the village women in Dholara: “Is Kumauni a language?” Their responses reflected the theme we had just talked about as they continued joking about Hindi being used less and mostly English being used, humorous since all involved knew that Kumauni dominated in actual language use in their village. I tried again: “Some say Kumauni isn’t a language.” One of the women replied:

> Your own language will remain your own language, na [right]?
> Like you speak English, that’s how we keep our language... If someone comes from the outside, we speak with them in Hindi. Like with you we speak Hindi... If we speak in Hindi, you’ll understand us. If in Pahari, then you won’t. (H; PQ:08Mar21)

Nalini, the young daughter-in-law whom I had earlier interviewed, asked me to speak a
bit of English, and the group laughed together at my English reply. “Now we don’t understand,” they said. “You don’t understand our language and we don’t understand yours.” Several of the women chorused this thought, overlapping and constructing it together (H; PQ:08Mar21).

The conversation was more about language use, about switching languages to ensure that all can understand, than about abstract categories. There were practical implications: which language was used with insiders and which with outsiders. I decided to ask about it one more time: “Is there a difference between boli and bhasha?” Nalini’s quick reply: “No, why would there be?” [Nahii, to?] (H; PQ:08Mar21). Her mother-in-law, Devki, offered me some more Kumauni phrases, enjoying the exchange of phrases in the three languages, and the chatter continued.

In another discussion with a mixed group of men and women in Dholara, the issue of bhasha versus boli did not come up. They agreed that people may stop speaking Kumauni in the cities, but not in the villages and that language is associated with place. They referred to Kumauni as “our language” (H; FN:08Jan28).

Only in contrast to Hindi or English does Kumauni need to be classified differently, and only in the bhasha-boli discourse. I was more likely, I think, to hear this educated discourse because of my role as an outsider and a researcher. I asked a man in Kausani who was visiting his home area in the Kumaun from his current residence in Delhi about Kumauni. He said that he knows some, and then told me that it is a dialect. I asked him what he meant by that, and he provided the common explanation that it has no script; it uses Devanagari script. “Local people usually say it’s a language, but linguists say that it’s a dialect,” he explained (E; PQ:06Jul9). He articulated my growing suspicion that Kumauni-as-dialect is an educated and outsider's discourse, repeated by those in the plains who have Kumauni categorized as a dialect of Hindi. Linguists at Kumaun
University in Almora, in contrast, consider Kumauni to be a language, as described below. Most young Kumaunis are being taught that Kumauni is a *boli*, in contrast to Hindi, among other languages, as *bhasha*. I caught a glimpse of this socialization process taking place at the Ashram, as described in my field notes. During the daily spinning class, the Ashram members gather in a large circle in the meeting room, each working with their own drop spindle, spinning cotton into thread. They talk and sometimes sing together while they work.

I joined in part of the spinning time and overheard a conversation. I'm not sure how it started. Meena-Didi was telling some of the girls that Kumauni and Garhwali are just *bolie*. Marathi, Gujarati, etc. are *bhashae*. Kanti asked if Oriya was also a *bhasha*, and others said yes. When I asked [Class 12 student] Kanti to explain to me what they were talking about, she said it was about language. Our Kumauni language is considered to be a *boli*... Because of government recognition, she said, some languages are *bhashae*...(H). As we were getting up to go and putting away the spinning materials, I asked Meena-Didi about it. She said that Kumauni is just “our” local dialect -- spoken language. I mentioned that Marathi also was at one time considered to be a dialect. She drew a contrast by saying that Marathi is written / has a script. Maharashtra is such a big state - and also they have some dialects there [within Marathi]...(E). (FN:07Sept26)

It was serendipitous that I overheard this conversation. Meena-Didi mentioned the state languages of Maharashtra and of Gujarat as examples of languages, and Kanti wondered about Oriya, the state language of Orissa. These are clearly languages since they are official state languages and listed among the scheduled languages in the Constitution. Kumauni does not have this recognition and is thus a *boli*, in Kanti’s explanation to me after this informal lesson. Meena-Didi explained further. The fact that Marathi, once considered to be a dialect, has its own writing system and script, that it has a large scope as the primary language of a large state, and that Marathi itself has dialects help to explain its status as a *bhasha*.

I continued to collect examples of socialization into the concept of *bhasha* versus
At the Ashram, Asha had learned well this distinction, and explained the differences thoroughly. At home as a small child, she had only spoken Kumauni, but she came to the Ashram at a very young age. I asked her when she became aware that Kumauni is one thing and that Hindi is another. She said:

That? When I got here to the Ashram... that’s when I learned that Kumauni is a boli and that Hindi is a bhasha. Kumauni isn't written. Hindi has been the national language since old times.... Like Gandhi-ji said, na?, our country's language is Hindi, so he called it the national language. It's the language of the whole country. The whole country should know it. So Hindi is a bhasha and -- Kumauni is a boli -- Because people speak it and they don't write it. And Hindi, people speak it and write it. They use it in both ways. (H; DQ:07Oct5)

Hindi’s status in India and its use in writing put it into a different category from Kumauni, as Asha had learned at the Ashram. This was not something that was learned in class, Asha told me: “We didn't study about it so much, but I heard it from people's speech” (H; DQ:07Oct5). The language awareness that Asha remembers learning at the Ashram is similar to that learned outside of the Kumaun. In my interview with Dr. Joshi, a Kumauni who was raised attending English-medium schools near Dehradun, I asked him how he explains the fact that Hindi is considered to be his mother tongue even though he speaks Kumauni with his mother. “We've always been brought up with this -- that Kumauni is not a language. It's a dialect.” I suggested the Hindi term, boli, and he picked it up. “A boli. That's what we've grown up with... For us Hindi was the language, the mother language...” (E; DQ:07Sept15).

**Valuing of Both Language and Dialect**

Although most school-educated Kumaunis have accepted that Kumauni is a boli, as distinct from a bhasha, they do not necessarily ascribe a lower status or value to the former as compared with the latter. My second generalization, that boli does not have a negative connotation, is a little harder to fully support. I hear conflicting voices in the Kumaun. In addition, I myself wonder how a linguistic variety relegated to a status such
as *boli* can be valued as highly as a *bhasha*, with the many high functions associated with it. On the one hand, I heard Kumauni referred to as “just a spoken language,” “just a *boli*,” “only a dialect.” The implication seemed to me to be that a *boli*, as “just” a *boli*, is in some inferior condition in its progression towards becoming a *bhasha*, something more advanced or more developed than a *boli*. Perhaps this is comparable to linear models of development which portray so-called third-world countries as somehow behind.

But, more often than references to Kumauni being “just” or “only” a *boli*, I heard about the value of *boli*. The value placed upon Kumauni itself is described in the section in Chapter 7 about “Kumauni as 'Our' Language.” In talking about Kumauni, an elderly teacher told me: “It is a *boli*. It is my mother's breast! It is capable. It is capable to express its own feeling. As a Kumauni, I express my thoughts best in Kumauni.” He and his son had fun sharing with me words and expressions that are unique to Kumauni (H; PQ:07Oct14). I do not hear an undervaluing of *boli* in this description. A magazine published in Kumauni is titled *Dudhboli*, literally “milk dialect,” in reference to the language of the mother. Here and in other Kumauni publications, the value of *boli* seems evident. The introduction of a book of Kumauni skits titled *Lok Gathaon ka Manchan* by Dr. S. S. Pangati, for example, talks explicitly about the importance of honoring *boli*.

In a discussion in her office at Kumaun University, I mentioned to Dr. Diva Bhatt the negative connotation of “dialect” in my mind and the possible need for a new term in English such as *boli*. “In Hindi it is *boli* and in English it is dialect,” she said. “Dialect is not negative. English also was gathered from many dialects” (E; PQ:08Feb25).

At the Ashram, after a discussion in which Saroj-Didi insisted that Kumauni is a *boli* and provided a number of reasons, I tried to turn the conversation towards some of the power issues involved. I said that I had the idea that sometimes the powerful people say that only their *boli* is the good one and the others are bad. “It's not like that,” Saroj-
Didi said:

Every boli is good. For each person, their boli is OK. There isn't one boli that is better than another. Like your bhasha-boli is good, and mine also is good. We will think the one is best that we know. If I don't know it, then how can I like it? You like rice, and I don't like rice. So, you can eat rice, and I don't have to. (H; PQ:07Dec8)

Here Saroj-Didi is not comparing bhasha and boli, but she is saying that each boli should be valued for what it is, without being compared with another. Earlier in the conversation I had talked about my boli actually being the same as my bhasha, namely English. I have heard the combined bhasha-boli used, as in this context, to refer to a language when its spoken form is being emphasized or to refer to Kumauni when, as at the seminar on Kumauni language, it is considered to be a bhasha.

**A Lawyer's Defense**

I visited the home of one of the Ashram Didis during her winter vacation and spent a few days there, getting to know her father and grown siblings. One of her younger brothers is a lawyer. One evening when we sat for tea with him and their father, we got into a conversation about bhasha and boli. I decided to explore their reasons for the distinction and felt comfortable enough with them to offer some challenges. The young lawyer had insisted that Kumauni is not a language and that it is just spoken, and his father offered the English word dialect. I asked the young lawyer to give a defense on why Kumauni is not a language. I describe our conversation, which was mostly in Hindi, in my field notes:

His first argument had to do with Kumauni not having a grammar. As I asked for an explanation of what he meant by grammar, he talked about the alphabet, about how the language was written. He seemed to be equating grammar with alphabet, and then with language. It seemed clear to them that if it didn't have its own alphabet, it wasn't a language...

Another argument, suggested first by [the Didi], was that Kumauni is confined to too small of an area. It is just a local language.

Another difference between Kumauni and Hindi is that you need to learn Kumauni by speaking with people who know it. You will learn Kumauni language
if you live among Kumauni people. You can learn Hindi by taking a book or CD and learning Hindi easily. But Kumauni is a boli, so you have to learn it by being immersed in Kumauni society. They suggested that I should go to a village to learn Kumauni. The pure Kumauni is not spoken in this area. Here it is mixed with Hindi and English. Out in a village I would be able to learn a pure form. They thought I still had time to be able to learn it in the next four months.

I talked about how Holland is such a small country and yet it has its own language and asked for a better defense.

He mentioned something about development. And that in Kumauni there is a limit; it is isolated in one particular area.

Then he began talking about the need for English nowadays. This was connected to education and to getting jobs. There is a craze to know English now. It used to be that English was just one subject and the rest were in Hindi. Now in public [non-government] schools, they are having everything in English, including math and science, and only one subject is in Hindi. His wording pointed implicitly to the importance of passing exams in those languages. If you want to get ahead or get a job you need to know English. If you go to some company and have poor English skills, you will have trouble. Your English skills have to be good.

Must you give up Hindi in order to have good English skills?, I asked. He emphasized the fact that English would be needed for reading all books, etc. The only reason you would need to know [how to write] Hindi is if you went to school. If you didn’t go to school, you would learn it from someone else [as a spoken language]. He seemed to be saying that Hindi would become a boli.

What place does Kumauni play in this?, I wondered. It just has a place here in the Kumaun. And among families that have moved from the Kumaun. But most of them will start using Hindi and English instead. His nephews can understand Kumauni, but they don't speak it. Why? Because they are not in the [Kumauni] society.

Do people need to lose Hindi in order to learn English? It would be best if people could speak as many languages as they could. Then they would have no difficulties. But English is vital. If you only had one language, it should be English. (H; FN:07Jan10)

Each of the reasons given for Kumauni as boli will be discussed below. One interesting aspect of hearing the entire argument intact is that the conversation shifted to practical implications. The importance of a discussion about the position of Kumauni as bhasha or boli pales in light of the importance of learning English. If I wanted to learn Kumauni, I could go to a more remote area. But if the nephews wanted to make it through interviews and get jobs, they would need the English skills that would help them get ahead. The hint that I got in this conversation of Hindi becoming boli, while English takes over the literacy load seems futuristic, and yet somehow realistic in a context where
English-medium schools produce students who speak in Hindi and write in English. It also seems to be a reverse of the progression from boli to bhasha that has been followed by languages recently gaining inclusion in the Constitution.

In conversations such as this, it seemed that the implication was not necessarily that the spoken language of the home would be lost, but that it did not qualify to be talked about as a language. A language was something that you learned and used in school and work settings. Also, I began to see, with local academics, that it is more the economic, social and political status of a speech variety that makes it a “dialect.” It is not its linguistic connection or subordination to a particular language historically. In the next section, I attempt to separate and analyze the various components of bhasha and boli, and the reasons for the distinction. What makes a bhasha a bhasha, and a boli a boli?

**Why Bhasha, Why Boli?**

The most common reason given for why a boli is not a bhasha, or why Kumauni is not considered to be a language, is the fact that it does not have its own script, closely related to a lack of its own body of literature. A second popular reason is that, almost by definition, a boli is used for speaking, while a bhasha is [also] used for writing. The third most common reason is that the boli has not been recognized by the government. The reasons that I gleaned from my conversations with Kumaunis fall roughly into three categories, represented by the most common reasons mentioned above: the form of the linguistic variety, the function or roles that it fills, and the recognition by government decision or fiat.

**Having the Form of a Language**

Usually the first reason given for why Kumauni is not a bhasha, across all contexts, was that it does not have a script of its own. Kumauni is written in the
Devanagari script, the script used to write Hindi and Sanskrit. After explaining to me Lakshmi Ashram's policy of using the children's mother tongue first in education, Kamla-Didi explained why Kumauni is not considered to be the mother tongue:

Kumauni... is a dialect -- what we call boli. It is not a language; it is a dialect. Because when we write Kumauni we write it in Hindi. It has no script.... In the South there are so many languages: Tamil, Kannada, etc. They have their own scripts [She demonstrated with her hands the circular script used for the Kannada language.] Marathi, Punjabi, Gujarati. They have their own scripts. Kumauni is not a bhasha. It has no script [lippi]. It uses Hindi script. (E/H; PQ:07Aug30)

Similarly, an education officer in Bageshwar told me that “you can't call Kumauni a language. It is a boli. It needs to have a script. Now Kumauni uses Hindi script.... Kumauni is different from place to place,” he said. “It can't be a language until it has a script” (H; PQ:08Mar27). Here lack of standardization is also mentioned in relation to not having a script.

To be considered a language, it is also important that the linguistic variety be associated with a body of literature. This was often mentioned alongside script as a qualification for being considered a language. The professors in the Hindi Department at Kumaun University are aware of the body of literature written in Kumauni and contribute to it through their own writing. There are also Kumauni poets active in writing in Kumauni. However, this literature is not commonly read by the average Kumauni. As the clerk at a bookstore in Almora informed me, it is Kumaunis visiting from outside of the region who buy the books of Kumauni poetry. There are popular songs in Kumauni, both current and classic, but these are not considered to be part of a body of literature. In a discussion with some of the older girls at the Ashram, I asked about the poems that are written in Kumauni as possible evidence that Kumauni is not just a spoken language. I also told them about the books in Kumauni that I had seen in Almora. “But those aren't school books,” they said. “...There is a lot written in Hindi all
over the nation. Kumauni is like Garhwali. It is just used here” (H; PQ:07Dec1). The Director of Education in Dehradun also told me that Kumauni is considered to be a dialect because it does not have much literature. “There is some literature from the times of Gaurda and Gumakari. There are poems, writings, and papers. From the freedom struggle and prior, Kumauni was written. But now it seems that the intensity of language development hasn’t gained momentum,” he said (E; PQ:08Apr2).

This leads to the issue of a bhasha as a developed language. A bhasha as developed and as having a grammar, is also closely tied with standardization. Dr. Bhatt, Hindi professor at Kumaun University talked about language development in this way:

A language has its own grammar, standardization, literature. It has the capacity for being used in teaching, writing, and administration. It can be used as medium of education and it can be used for administration. Regarding standardization, Kumauni has many sub-divisions. There is standardization for written Kumauni, based here in Almora, but not for spoken Kumauni...

Language is wider than dialect... A dialect is half-developed. It has no systematic grammar. It cannot be used as medium of education or for administration. It has no literature. (E; PQ:08Feb25)

Dr. Bhatt explains that the standardization of Kumauni applies to its written form and not to spoken Kumauni. The question of standardization relates to diversity within the language, to being a dialect and to having sub-dialects. These too I found interesting in my conversations.

Sometimes it seemed that having dialects was evidence that a linguistic variety is itself a language, or that the language is a conglomeration of those dialects. And yet the diversity within Kumauni was often given as a reason for not considering it to be a language. Dr. Bhatt listed as a reason that some people consider Kumauni to be a language that: “There are dialects of Kumauni, just as there are dialects of Hindi” and as a reason that others consider it to be a dialect that: “Kumauni is a dialect of Hindi” (E; PQ:08Feb25). The ambiguity is evident. Professor S.S. Bisht, who wrote the Dialect
Survey of the Kumaun Himalaya, responded to my question about Kumauni itself being called a dialect: “No, Kumauni is called a separate language. There are sub-dialects within Kumauni” (E; PQ:07Aug20). He has delineated ten distinct dialects of Kumauni, four eastern and six western. In a later interview, he suggested that when local people talk about boli, they are referring to their local dialect. “Kumauni is a language overall, but it has dialects” (H; PQ:08Feb27).

No one will argue against the diversity within Kumauni. Rather, I hear the common quote: “Every mile the water changes, every four miles the speech.” After telling me this quote one afternoon, Govindi started giving me examples of different ways to say clothing [kapra] in Kumauni: “jhyunar, kapar, lukuR, hantaar.” I asked a younger student who was sitting with us on the patio, and she added the word from her area: “kataar.” I suggested that if people decided to write in Kumauni, they would have to decide which one to write, as they had done at the university in Almora. Govindi said: “No, any of these words could be written. Every Kumauni person would understand them…. It is just our boli. We all know Hindi” (H; PQ:08Apr21). Standardization of the boli does not seem to be necessary, from this perspective. The standard variety of Kumauni designated by the linguists at Kumaun University does not seem to have much relevance in Kausani. Within this diversity and from this perspective, having dialects and being a dialect are not incompatible. Kumauni may have many dialects, but it may also be a dialect of Hindi.

In my former understanding of dialect, there was always a clear connotation of the variety’s linguistic connection to some other language. “Dialect” has implied to me being a sub-standard form of some more perfect language. However, boli does not necessarily carry this implication. A boli is not necessarily linguistically related to the nearest bhasha. The small languages spoken in more remote mountain areas of the
Kumaun, linguistically unrelated to Hindi, are also referred to as *boli*. While there is a clear linguistic relationship between Hindi and Kumauni, most locals do consider Kumauni to be linguistically unique and not merely a sub-standard form of Hindi. Those outside of the region are more likely to consider Kumauni to be a sub-variety of Hindi, although Hindi-speaking visitors to the region tell me that they can not understand Kumauni. The question of mutual intelligibility, often considered important in making a linguistic distinction between languages and dialects, was not an issue mentioned during my discussions about *bhasha* and *boli* in the Kumaun.

In one conversation with Saroj-Didi at the Ashram, she seemed to be implying that it was because of the uniqueness of Kumauni that it is a *boli*. She gave examples from all the other languages she knew of, including English and German, that used related words for “mama” while Kumauni uses *iza*. She had also been giving some examples of Kumauni phrases, which she considered to be broken or imperfect, to demonstrate that it is a *boli*, saying: “It doesn’t come out in writing.” The concept of *boli* being somehow less perfect is there, and yet my conversations with Saroj-Didi showed a value for Kumauni and regret that it is sometimes undervalued.

I offer Saroj-Didi’s definition of *boli*. To her the distinction was obvious, and she struggled to explain it to me. When asked what a *boli* is, she said: “From birth you are with it. It is what people talk with each other. Like the language you spoke from birth.” For me, I explained, that would be English. “So English is your *boli*, and Kumauni is ours” (H; PQ:07Dec8). I don’t think her example worked as she intended, because she had also been saying that a *boli* cannot be a *bhasha*. And yet it seems that my *boli* is my *bhasha*. She continued: “And like Lisa [a German guest] -- her national language is German, but (asking Lisa) among each other what do you speak?” “German,” Lisa answered (H; PQ:07Dec8). Again her example was coming from a different context and
highlighting the difference between this situation and ours. It seems that she expected us
to have a home variety that was quite distinct from our national language, just as in the
Kumaun. I brought up some of this apparent contradiction, pointing out that my boli is
my bhasha. She explained further: “Our Kumauni is not recognized as a language, she
said. “We just speak it. It is not written. It is not used for teaching” (H; PQ:07Dec8).
Again, her tone seemed to be one of justification of the situation beyond just stating the
facts. In this conversation, and in several others, I noticed an assumption that
multilingualism or diglossia are the norm. Saroj-Didi expected Lisa and me to have a
home language different from our national language. The fact that I, as an English
speaker, did not have a different home language was actually surprising to Saroj-Didi
and to others. They may not hear about dialects in the US or Europe, but they assume
that they exist, just as invisible as Kumauni is in international discourse.4

Later in the conversation quoted above, Saroj-Didi, searching for more proof for
her argument about Kumauni as boli, asked: “What did the professors say? You got to
talk with them in Almora, right?” (H; PQ:07Dec8). We turn again to what the academics
have to say about the situation.

Dr. Bhatt is a professor in the Hindi Department at Kumaun University. She
explained to me her understanding of the ambiguity between bhasha and boli, which she
sees as equivalent to language and dialect. It was I who kept using the Hindi terms. We

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4 One school superintendent who boasted a Masters in English insisted that the village people in England
and America have their own home languages, despite my protests that the differences were mainly in
accent. My memo on this conversation read: “I have previously been given examples, etc. that showed
this assumption that everywhere there are these home languages. I guess if they are ignored here, it
could be assumed that they exist elsewhere also and are ignored. Perhaps there's more truth to that then
I think” (FN:08Mar15).

There is certainly diversity in America's linguistic environment, including multiple languages and
varieties of languages. One implication of a western invisibilization of boli is the attempt to minimize
diversity in our home varieties. Perhaps in a context such as the Kumaun where these home boli are
accepted and not “corrected,” the linguistic association between a bhasha and a boli is more free to drift
in the long term.
started our first conversation in Hindi, but I switched to English to explain more about my research and we proceeded primarily in English.

Some people say Kumauni is a *bhasha* and some that it is a *boli,*” she said, “There is confusion or ambiguity for two reasons: 1) Many people are not clear about the differences between language and dialect, and 2) Kumauni is developed as a language, but it is used as a dialect. (E; PQ:08Feb25)

As was discussed above, for people who are socialized into the concept of language versus dialect, the differences may not be altogether relevant or transparent, and I struggle to understand the distinction. The second reason, I find more interesting. Those, like Dr. Bhatt, who have worked at the standardization and dialect studies of Kumauni and who are aware of its body of literature, can see that Kumauni is developed as a *bhasha.* The criterion related to linguistic form has been met. However, in actual functions, it plays the role of a *boli,* thus, “it is used as a dialect.”

**Having the Function of a Language: Actual Usage is What Matters**

The most obvious distinction between *bhasha* and *boli* in terms of function is that a *boli* is, as its name implies, used for oral communication. A *boli* is a “spoken language,” the translation of *boli* that I prefer over “dialect.” In a description of Kumauni, Dr. Bhatt said: “It is spoken by villagers, old people, and between people. It is not used for education, nor for the state or administration. It is an oral language only” (E; PQ:07Aug10). Similarly, in the conversation described at the beginning of this chapter, Shobha-Didi was trying to explain to me why Hindi is considered to be mother tongue rather than Kumauni, with its limited functions. “Kumauni is a language... But mostly it is used as a dialect. It is considered to be a dialect.” She went on to say that although there is some poetry in Kumauni, it has not been used in education, as it “hasn’t reached that level.” She moved her hand up to show the progression to a different level (E; PQ:06July23).
Just as Dr. Bhatt had done, Shobha-Didi talked about Kumauni being only used as a dialect, even though it may be a language in form. She went on to tell me that she used to write letters to her father in Kumauni when he was away in the army. When he eventually switched to Hindi, she did also. Of course, she said, they still speak Kumauni with each other. “And here [at the Ashram] also, if someone from the village comes, or even among ourselves, Meena and I, etc., we sometimes speak Kumauni” (E; PQ:06July23). Shobha-Didi, who has traveled extensively in other parts of India and some abroad, appreciates the Ashram members' use of Kumauni among one another and challenges to some extent the common educated discourse about Kumauni as boli. Yet she recognizes that it has not reached the level of a bhasha in its function.

For students like Asha, the categories are more black and white. Earlier in the chapter, I provided Asha's example of learning about this concept of language and dialect through hearing people talk about it when she came to the Ashram. I had started the topic by saying: “Some people say that Kumauni isn't even a language -- that it's just a boli.” The interview continued as follows:

Asha: Meaning, Kumauni is a boli. It's not a bhasha. It is a boli of the Kumaun area. It’s used in speaking.
I: What’s the difference between a bhasha and a boli?
Asha: We use a bhasha for writing also. In the whole country. We use Hindi in the whole country. In writing, in speaking. We use a bhasha in all things. In the whole nation it is spoken.... [In contrast], village to village Kumauni is spoken. It’s a small part of the country. Meaning, a village. In small places Kumauni is spoken. They don’t write it.
I: But some people write it, right?
Asha: Some people write it. But now it hasn’t gone to the nation. It hasn’t gone to a bhasha. At the national level, the government hasn’t given it a position as a language. Meaning, they haven’t called it a national language.
I: So, those boli that become bhasha are made that way by the government?
Asha: From the decree of the government they are recognized as languages. By government recognition - and also by being used in writing. Some people use Hindi, I mean Pahari. [But] Like, when I go to do my exams, I won’t use Pahari. NUMBER CUT. [The score would be cut.] Because it isn’t recognized in writing.... (H; DQ:07Oct5)
The practical implication for Asha here is that she will not be able to pass her exams by writing in Kumauni. Points would be cut from her score. This, she says, is because the government has not recognized Kumauni, an issue taken up in the next section. It has not “gone to the nation.” It still has the small scope of a village language.

The scope or size of the area in which a language is used has implications, as Asha mentions, for its status as *bhasha* or *boli*. The fact that Hindi is known and used all over India puts it in a very different position from Kumauni, the language of a small area. As in the conversation mentioned earlier with a group of older Ashram girls: “There is a lot written in Hindi all over the nation. Kumauni is like Garhwali. It is just used here” (H; PQ:07Dec1). This was also given by Dr. Bhatt as a reason for Kumauni’s not being recognized by the government, because it is only spoken in a small area (E; FN:07Aug10). I ventured to ask a group of teacher trainers, in an informal discussion, how English is different from Kumauni. They said that English has been spread or propogated. Globalization has spread it around the world (H; FN:08Mar27). The number of speakers is another aspect of its scope. In talking about the eventual inclusion of Santhali as a scheduled language in the Constitution, one of the speakers at the Kumauni language seminar said that it is not the fact that it has a script, etc... that makes it a language. It is because this language is spoken by so many people (H; FN08:Jan24).

Another aspect of function that differentiates *bhasha* and *boli* is the use of the former with outsiders and the latter with insiders, as demonstrated in the sections describing the use of Hindi and Kumauni. “Among each other we speak Kumauni. It is our personal language -- our *boli,*” Govindi told me (H; FN:08Apr21).

There is also a difference between how a *boli* and *bhasha* are learned. I was told that Kumauni is not learned in the same way as a school language. One of the GIC
“You can’t learn it like Hindi or English - reading it, etc. You learn it from society” (E; FN:06May29). As Saroj-Didi had said: “From birth you are with it. It is what people talk with each other. Like the language you spoke from birth” (H; FN:07Dec8). The young lawyer had also used this in his defense of Kumauni as boli: “You need to learn Kumauni by speaking with people who know it... You can learn Hindi by taking a book or CD... But Kumauni is a boli, so you have to learn it by being immersed in Kumauni society” (H; PQ:07Jan10).

The site for language learning is, of course, related to the use or non-use of the language at school, another common reason given for Kumauni being a boli. A bhasha is a school language and a boli is not. Asha refers to this, as described above, when she talks about getting the numbers cut on the exams if she would try to use Kumauni. As Saroj-Didi had said: “Our Kumauni is not recognized as a language. We just speak it. It is not written. It is not used for teaching” (H; PQ:07Dec8). Shobha-Didi also talked about Kumauni not having reached that level of being used in education. Kumauni may have some literature, but it is not school literature, as mentioned by the group of Ashram girls. Hindi is clearly the school language and the bhasha of the region. Still, the informal use of Kumauni at school and even in instruction is apparently not uncommon, as discussed in the later section on Medium of Instruction.

The use of bhasha in administration and in the workplaces outside of the village, as well as in education, makes it superior for economic success. A boli, on the other hand, is not associated with economic opportunity. “Kumauni is not used for science, administration, etc., therefore it is not useful for getting jobs,” Dr. Bhatt explained (E; PQ:07Aug10). My discussion with the young lawyer about bhasha and boli turned to economic factors. English was needed for future employment and in that respect, the boli mattered little (H; FN:07Jan10). A young man associated with the Ashram once
explained to me that Kumauni has no economic value. It is not useful for getting jobs, in offices, etc., and so it will just remain a spoken language (H/E; FN:08Feb19).

The way that a linguistic variety is used, thus, relates to its designation as a bhasha or as a boli. The former has educational and administrative functions. It is useful for economic ventures and work outside of the village. A bhasha is also used by a large number of speakers and is used to speak with outsiders. A boli, on the other hand, is used for speaking, particularly within the home and village, and not for writing or studying. It is used and learned within the local community.

**Having the Official Status of a Language: The Government Decides**

The lack of recognition of Kumauni by the government is another primary reason for its position as a boli. The government decision is an important part of this distinction between bhasha and boli, and considered by many with whom I spoke to be the deciding factor.

Some people spoke of the government decision to recognize a bhasha as being directly informed by the other characteristics of the language -- whether it has, for example, a script and a body of literature, or whether it is used by a large community of speakers. Thus, if it had the form and the function of a language, the government would recognize it. Others saw the government decision as political and potentially influenced by the demands of the speakers. If a linguistic variety were recognized by the government, there would be opportunities for it to build its function and form as a language. And, of course, it could go both ways. As Asha said: “From the decree of the government they are recognized as languages. By government recognition - and also by being used in writing” (H; DQ:07Oct5).

At the local level in Kausani, I met few people who wanted to challenge the assumptions about Kumauni as boli. It was in Almora that I met a few of the linguists
and activists who themselves recognize Kumauni as a language and who promote the official recognition of Kumauni as a bhasha. Dr. Bhatt described the language activists for me along with some of their reasons:

There are people now trying to persuade the politicians to recognize Kumauni in the Constitution. At first there were only 14 languages, but people have tried and tried and made it, [getting their languages in the Constitution]. Dr. Pokriyal, Dr. Bisht, and Mr. Raavat have been involved in promoting Kumauni's recognition in the Constitution. (E; PQ:08Feb25)

Dr. Bhatt named these three, but also said that there are many people who support this recognition of Kumauni. In Garhwal also they are trying to promote recognition for Garhwali. “But does it matter?,” I wondered aloud. “What difference will it make for Kumauni people?” Dr. Bhatt agreed that that is a good question.

Maybe it wouldn't make a difference where you are in Kausani. But for linguists and for Kumauni writers who are trying to form a rich Kumauni model it would make a difference. The central government gives weight, importance, funds to different languages. Now the Kumauni writers get no notice at the national level, as compared with Tamilian writers, for example, who receive funds for their regional literary and linguistic academies. (E; PQ:08Feb25)

Dr. Bhatt then summarized by saying that the benefits of recognition for Kumauni are both financial and political.

At the university level and among the Kumauni writers, recognition for Kumauni would have economic implications. Support for their work would help in the development of Kumauni. Although neither the state nor national government has officially recognized Kumauni as a language, the University Grants Commission, a national government body that provides recognition and funding for Indian universities, has supported work on Kumauni, recognizing it as a language.

With Dr. Bhatt, I also talked about the possibility of using Kumauni as medium of instruction in the schools or of teaching Kumauni. She said that there is some support for these ideas and continued:
Also there is the great worry that Kumauni will be lost within the next half century. This is another reason for the importance of official recognition for Kumauni. The new generation is giving up Kumauni and speaking Hindi or learning English. They feel inferiority in Kumauni. English is even more important than Hindi. (E; PQ:08Feb25)

Dr. Bhatt notices the threat of language shift and the potential loss of Kumauni within the next 50 years. She sees official recognition for Kumauni as a step towards preventing this loss.

A colleague of hers in the Hindi Department at Kumaun University, Dr. Bisht, also described for me his views about recognition for Kumauni and about the efforts being made. Regarding the difference between bhasha and boli, he said: “If it is developed and has literature, it is a language. But from a Constitutional perspective, Kumauni is not a national language” (H/E; PQ:08Feb25). He went on to tell me also about the effort being made to include Kumauni in the Constitution. There is not yet a movement [andholan], but proposals have been sent to the government, particularly to the state government. It is the state government that presents the proposal to the central government. The political groundwork is being laid, Dr. Bisht told me, and he referred to it as a process. It is the intellectuals who are trying to promote the recognition of Kumauni all over the Kumaun, but mainly in Almora. “There was a movement when Uttarakhand became a separate state. If there would be such a movement for language, there would be a change. The voices are there” (H/E; PQ:08Feb25).

One of the people mentioned by both Dr. Bisht and Dr. Bhatt who is active in promoting government recognition for Kumauni is Hayad Singh Raavat. He has started the Kumauni Prachar Prasaad Samadhi, an organization for awakening or awareness raising regarding these issues among Kumaunis. He also writes poetry and prose in Kumauni, as does Dr. Bisht. In a conversation with Dr. Raavat in his home, he talked about the goals he and his fellow activists have for the recognition of Kumauni. Their
desire is simply for Kumauni to be recognized as a language. I asked whether they wanted Kumauni and Garhwali as state languages alongside Hindi. No, this is not their demand. Hindi is the language of the state, used for all government proceedings. They don’t expect Kumauni to be used in those domains also. They just want it to be recognized as a language. Then good English literature would be translated into Kumauni and vice versa. There would be a large scope for Kumauni (E/H; FN:07Oct14).

Another initiative that the professors at Kumaun University had mentioned to me was a possible attempt to mix Kumauni and Garhwali, the Pahari languages of the two major ethnic groups in the new state of Uttarakhand, to form a state language. Those with whom I spoke about this in Kausani thought it ridiculous or impossible. In Dehradun, the Director of Education also mentioned this initiative, but told me that there does not seem to be much effort in that direction any more. Rather, he believes that the status of Kumauni as a language, and also as a dialect, has come down, even after statehood. This is an issue worth further investigation. He associated the shifting status of Kumauni with the market economy. “English has taken so much importance and this has had a negative influence on Kumauni... Now children are being taught English from Class 1, and this is affecting the local languages. With the introduction of an alien language, the local languages are affected” (E; PQ:08Apr2).

The academics and activists in Almora were more likely to push for a change in government recognition for their language than were other Kumaunis. For them economic issues are also involved. Journalists too take an interest in the issue, as I observed at a local journalists’ seminar in Kausani that focused on Kumauni language. Still, the official recognition of Kumauni or its inclusion in the Constitution seemed to have little relevance for the rural Kumaunis with whom I spoke in and around Kausani. The potential for and potential impact of such a change is questionable from their
perspective, and they are mainly content with Kumauni as boli.

**Summarizing Bhasha and Boli**

There are several overlapping concepts in a discussion of linguistic varieties, how they relate to one another and how they are labeled. *Bhasha* and *boli* seem to capture these concepts in different ways from the labels with which I was familiar. There remains the problem of trying to understand concepts through one’s own lenses and labels – as, for example, the challenge of defining dense Sanskrit terms or of describing the Japanese concepts of *omote* and *ura*. Perhaps even more important is the challenge of understanding how others are reshaping those concepts through their own understanding of the situation in a particular context such as the Kumaun.

In regards to form, linguistic varieties are often classified as standard or non-standard, as having a unique script or not having a script of their own, of being linguistically related or unrelated, mutually intelligible or not. A *bhasha* generally is standardized, has its own grammar, its own script, a rich body of literature, has been written and developed for many years, and has dialects. A *boli* is the opposite. The linguistic uniqueness or mutual intelligibility of *bhasha* and *boli* seem less significant than other factors.

In regards to function, linguistic varieties are often classified as low language or high language in a diglossic relationship, as spoken languages versus written languages, and according to their use in various domains. A *bhasha* is both spoken and written; it is used with outsiders, in the school, as medium of education, in administration, and in other economically useful domains; it has a large scope or area of use and is used by many speakers. A *boli*, on the other hand, is spoken, used with insiders and at home, and acquired naturally rather than through explicit instruction.

In regards to government policy or fiat, linguistic varieties can receive a variety of
labels at the state and national level. In India, they are also recognized or not recognized in the Constitution. While not every bhasha in India is listed in the Constitution, there is certainly no boli with such status or political importance.

Kumauni seems to meet many of the criteria for being a bhasha in terms of form. However, in function and by government recognition, it looks more like a boli. As I was told in the Kumaun: although perhaps it is a language, Kumauni is “like a dialect”; it is “half developed”; it is “‘used’ as a dialect.” From my observations, bhasha versus boli seemed to be a learned distinction, explained by the educated. Boli seems to combine the concepts of spoken language and low language, and yet somehow it does not necessarily imply an inferior status.

Questions remain. What happens when a boli is written? When does it become a bhasha? On the other hand, is it possible for a bhasha to become a boli? But those questions, and perhaps much of my description above, assume that fixed categories and labels match fixed criteria, and even that Hindi and Kumauni are fixed entities. Perhaps it depends more on the lens; it depends on which varieties are being compared and at what scale. Comparing language and dialect is like comparing mountain and hill. The imposing “foothills” of the Himalayas seem to shrink in comparison with the snow-capped peaks looming in the distance.

One could also try to understand the function of the distinction. What are the social implications? I venture that one of the implications for community and identity is the fact that Kumaunis are able to identify themselves both with the bhasha and the boli of their region. Both Hindi and Kumauni are theirs, so much so that sometimes either could be referred to as the mother tongue.

Mother Tongue

“Mother tongue” is another term around which ambiguity arose in my
discussions about language in North India. While this may parallel the ambiguities associated with the term throughout multilingual India, I focus here on how I heard the term being used in the Kumaun, not to pin down the exact semantic significance of the term, but rather to explore the insights that can be gleaned regarding local beliefs about language through the various uses of the term. Sometimes Hindi is considered to be the mother tongue and sometimes Kumauni. Interestingly, the Hindi term *matra bhasha* [mother tongue] implies that mother tongue is *bhasha*, while the Kumauni term *dudhboli* implies that mother tongue is *boli*. I only heard the term *dudhboli* used in reference to the Kumauni magazine by that name. It does not seem to be a commonly used term or concept, but most of my conversations on this issue were in Hindi.

Occasionally “mother tongue” is used in the same way as “dialect.” Thus the mother tongue, or *boli*, would be differentiated from the language, or *bhasha*. For example, the District Education Officer in Bageshwar told me that Kumauni is a mother tongue, not a language, mentioning the lack of standardization (H; FN:08Mar27). The Census of India (2001) also differentiates between “language” and “mother tongue,” listing the various mother tongues that are grouped under each of the languages. Kumauni, with just over 2 million speakers, is listed among the 49 mother tongues that are grouped under Hindi.

On the other hand, “mother tongue” can have a broader meaning. A high-school Hindi teacher with whom I chatted during a jeep ride to Haldwani one afternoon introduced himself and told me that he teaches “mother tongue” (E; FN:08Jan30). He said that Hindi is the mother tongue of all of India. Pahari, composed of Kumauni and Garhwali, is just the local language. In the Constitution, he said, Hindi is named as the mother tongue and English as the official language for the first years (E; FN:08Jan30). Here “mother tongue” seems to imply “national language.” As mentioned earlier, Hindi
is often considered in North India to be Constitutionally named the “national language,” even though the Constitution calls it in English the “official language,” a matter of significance to the South Indians who do not embrace Hindi as their own.5

Outside of Census and Constitution conversations, the question: What is your mother tongue?, can be answered in different ways. The number of times that I heard Kumauni referred to as mother tongue was almost equal to that of Hindi as mother tongue. While I do not have enough data to make a generalization, the rural perspective, including that of the students, seemed to favor Kumauni as mother tongue, whereas the more educated, urban perspective seemed to favor Hindi as mother tongue. Yet individuals often acknowledged the ambiguity. The conversation with Shobha-Didi described earlier in this chapter described Hindi as mother tongue in education -- Kumauni as mother tongue and yet Hindi considered to be mother tongue. In a similar way my neighbor in Kausani Estate adjusted her answer about mother tongue. I think it was when we were talking about how quickly the young girls speak that Hansi mentioned that Hindi is their [her nieces' and daughter's] mother tongue. I asked what her own mother tongue is. She said first that it is Hindi, but then: “Well, actually Hindi is our national language. Kumauni is our mother tongue” (H; FN:08Feb13).

A young mother in Almora is speaking Hindi with her children and sending them to English-medium school. When I asked what her mother tongue was she said: Hindi. When I asked what language she had used first at home, she said: Kumauni. (H; FN:07Aug20). As another example from the urban context, Dr. Joshi elaborated on the issue. This was in the same conversation, described earlier, where he explained to me the

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5 I checked the Hindi version of the Constitution of India (online version). Official language is in Hindi rajbhasha [raja: king, lord, ruler; royal], as used in the Constitution, while national language would be rashtrabhasha [rashtra: state, nation] (McGregor, Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary). Since rajbhasha is not a literal translation of “official language,” there could be some ambiguity when the term is informally translated back to English.
bhasha-boli distinction. “Here Hindi is supposed to be the mother tongue,” he told me.

“What is your mother tongue?,” I asked. He replied:

   Just this morning I was thinking about it. (laugh). I was thinking: I’ve always said that Hindi is my mother tongue, except that at home, with my mother, I never spoke Hindi. (laugh). I always spoke in Kumauni. I always used Kumauni... With my wife I use Kumauni, Hindi, English... The three languages which we use... (E; DQ:07Sept15)

When I asked him next to explain how it is that his mother tongue is Hindi and yet he spoke Kumauni with his mother, he brought up the fact that Kumauni was not considered to be a language, but rather a dialect. “That's what we've grown up with... For us Hindi was the language -- the mother language” (E; DQ:07Sept15). The fact that the Hindi term for mother tongue identifies it as a language may be significant in the distinction. However, beyond semantic issues, the association with one or another mother tongue seems to carry deeper significance, implying association with Kumauni and the home or with Hindi and the nation. One could perhaps say that Kumauni is the language of one’s own mother, while Hindi is the language of Mother India.

   One of the Sadhana students explained this well when I was asking her about whether or not language had been discussed in the Hindi-speaker's section at the Gandhian conference in Kausani. Himani told me that they had talked about “Hindi, our mother tongue.” “Mother tongue?,” I asked. “What is the mother tongue here?” Himani replied: “Actually Pahari is our mother tongue here. It is the language that we speak from childhood. But Hindi is the mother tongue of India. It is the nation's mother tongue” (H; PQ:07Oct11). Again, the mother tongue of childhood is differentiated from the national mother tongue. A teacher in Baijnath told me also that the local languages such as Kumauni, Garhwali, Bhojpuri, etc. are actually the mother tongue. “But we are all Hindi speakers,” he said. “Hindi could be considered mother tongue because it is the national language” (E/H; PQ:08Mar15).
I also received an explanation of this ambiguity when chatting with a group of village women, sitting together on a grassy slope near Baijnath. Some were watching their cows, some heading to their fields, and some on their way home with bundles of fodder. One of the women mentioned Kumauni being their mother tongue. “Kumauni is the language that we speak at home,” she said. “But everyone knows Hindi. Hindi is the language of the school. That's why Hindi can be called the mother tongue” (H; PQ:08Mar15). The position of Hindi as school language, and as known by all, allows it to be considered mother tongue, according to these women.

The language of the nation and the language of the school, or the first language as learned at school, happen to be the same in this part of India. It is a language that most know and identify with: Hindi as mother tongue. And yet Kumauni as the home language, the language spoken most often with the mother, is also mother tongue. The question: What is your mother tongue?, implies a single answer. What is our purpose in asking for a single mother tongue? In a multilingual context, more than one language may be learned in the home and from the mother. Meanwhile, the term mother tongue itself can have various implications: The language of the mother or the language of Mother India, the language of local heritage or the language of broader group affiliation.

**Official and Unofficial Mother Tongue**

A Hindi professor at Kumaun University provided me with an explanation of mother tongue that focuses on the government recognition for a language, in particular Constitutional recognition, as significant for its being considered the mother tongue. In view of the Constitution, Kumauni is just a dialect, although it is a language in his own view. I paraphrase his comments:

In the actual situation, Kumauni is the mother tongue. It is used for everyday communication [bolchal]. Children learn Hindi at school. But Hindi is the official language, the formal language. They read, study in, and speak Hindi. Thus,
Kumauni is the unofficial mother tongue and Hindi is the official mother tongue. (H/E; PQ:08Feb27)

This conversation was embedded in discussion about government recognition for Kumauni and the action that is being taken towards recognition of Kumauni, but for now, since it's not recognized, Hindi remains the official mother tongue.

**Honor for the Unofficial Mother Tongue**

When Kumauni was referred to as mother tongue, the conversation was often focused on giving importance to Kumauni -- that the mother tongue would not be forgotten, that it would naturally be defended, that it was the best of all languages. Kamla-Didi was talking about the urban Kumaunis who use more Hindi than Kumauni. And yet, “they still have faith in Kumauni. They think: 'It is our mother tongue.' They give it importance (E; DQ:07Aug7). The mother tongue is not something to be forgotten. As one retired teacher told me: “People don't forget their mother tongue. You have a mother tongue, you speak it... and you can’t forget it” (H; FN:07Jul25).

The students also believed that Kumauni, as mother tongue, would not be quickly forgotten. I asked Manju and Sunita what they thought about which languages would be used by the future people in the Kumaun. “They will still speak Hindi and Kumauni. But they will know a lot of English,” Manju said. “So they won’t give up Kumoani in the future?” I asked. “No,” Manju said, “because it is the mother tongue.” Sunita was sitting near us, and we repeated the question to her. Her answer was the same: “Because it is mother tongue,” Sunita said. “Just like your mother tongue is English, na? They’ll never give it up” (H; DQ:07Oct26).

The issue of language shift in the Kumaun deserves further exploration. Although some, like Dr. Bhatt, throught that Kumauni may not survive, most assumed that it would, and here the reason given was that it is mother tongue. It was Manju who told me
in this same interview that she likes Pahari the best of all languages. Because it is her mother tongue (H; FN:07Oct26).

**Honor for the Official Mother Tongue**

When Hindi was referred to as mother tongue, it was usually in association with official status or educational function -- as the language of the nation, as recognized in the Constitution, as the school language, or as the medium of instruction. Hindi has been promoted as the language of the nation of India, as well as through Hindu revival movements around the time of independence. It is from a national perspective, and when Hindi is contrasted with English, that Hindi as mother tongue seems in need of promotion.

During an early morning walk with Shobha-Didi, I heard more about Lakshmi Ashram's embracing of Hindi as the language of the school.

> English was here before with the British. But then for some time there was an emphasis on using Hindi, recognizing that Hindi is our language and it is enough for us. But now people have become crazy for English. This is related to globalization. So, now people are saying that children should learn English at the same time as they learn Hindi/their mother tongue, starting in first grade. In some English-medium schools children are even punished for speaking in Hindi! This is not good. Language is identity. (E; PQ:07Sept12)

Here, again, the importance of mother-tongue education shines through. The identity of a child is at stake. And, in this context, mother-tongue is Hindi. Again, it depends on the lens or perspective and on which languages are being compared. Both the unofficial and the official mother tongue are important for identity, and one may be emphasized over the other depending on the context.

**Medium of Instruction, or Language Use in Education**

Issues of medium of instruction are very important in India including debates, most often, around the choice of English versus the regional language but also around opportunities for mother-tongue education for minorities. In the previous chapter, the
question was raised of what actually happens in the classroom in terms of language use, particularly when it comes to minority languages and the possibilities of informal multilingual education. Like the other labels discussed in this chapter, “medium of instruction” is not without its ambiguities – including language teaching versus actual language use; and written materials versus oral practices in the schools. This section explores local values and practices related to medium of instruction and/or the use of language in educational contexts.

Kumauni as Medium of Instruction?

The medium of instruction for the government schools in the Kumaun is Hindi. The books are in Hindi, the exams are in Hindi, and officially all of the teaching is done in Hindi. I was curious, however, about how much Kumauni is actually used in school to facilitate communication between teachers and students, especially in rural areas and especially in younger grades. Nowadays most teachers in the Kumaun are themselves Kumauni, although they may be from different regions within the Kumaun. As I raised the question repeatedly, my suspicions were confirmed that there is some use of Kumauni in the classroom. Although, in asking whether Kumauni is used, I had in mind the value of mother-tongue education and the potential benefits of using Kumauni, many of the teachers and administrators with whom I spoke seemed to see the use of Kumauni as a sloppy interference to proper instruction in Hindi. Still, many were willing to admit that it is used or that they themselves use it, adding to the credibility of their reports. The following examples from students, teachers, and administrators help in describing the how and why and why not of using Kumauni in the school.

From a students’ perspective, Sunita told me about her early experiences with language and education at her village government primary school: “When I was very small, from my childhood, because my mother, etc. knew Kumauni, I learned Kumauni.
We always spoke Kumauni. When we went to school, the teacher also spoke Kumauni.”

She explained how the teacher would use Hindi with the older students but help the younger students to understand by using Kumauni:

When they are older, they understand. The little ones will not be able to understand Hindi. So the teacher also spoke Kumauni. In primary the teacher spoke Kumauni. He also spoke to me in Kumauni so I could understand. The books were always written in Hindi. The books were not written in Kumauni. So after reading it in Hindi, he would explain it in Kumauni. (H; DQ:07Oct22)

Sunita describes here how the two languages were used side by side in the classroom, with a Hindi text and Kumauni explanations and with increasing use of Hindi for older students. She then told me that she thinks that it was good that her teacher used Kumauni when she was young because there was not a lot of Hindi used in her village: “Because then we spoke very little Hindi. We were very little. We didn’t know. We didn’t understand. Then it came to us. Then we knew all of Hindi. Bas [that’s it]” (H; DQ:07Oct22). Sunita does not have a lot to say about her learning of Hindi. It seemed to come naturally as part of the growing up years and with increasing exposure to Hindi at school. However, she does remember the time when she did not understand Hindi and expresses appreciation for the bridge built through use of Kumauni in her early years at school.

Teachers talked about the use of Kumauni in order to help with understanding and at the individual teacher’s discretion, although it is not a part of the curriculum and not encouraged. At a teacher’s training in Bageshwar, I asked the group whether teachers sometimes use Kumauni in remote areas to explain or help the children understand.6 “Yes,” was the answer all around. I also heard: “Why not? It does happen, to help them understand. There is no rule about it, but it is not prohibited. Whatever it takes to explain it to the children is used.” But Hindi, they explained, is the reading/studying

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6 samajaana: to cause them to understand
medium. They use Kumauni to help the little children understand, but they don’t use it all of the time (H; PQ:08Mar27). A teacher trainer similarly confirmed that most teachers use Kumauni in order to explain/help students understand (H; FN:08Mar27). Other teachers told me that Kumauni is sometimes used even at the high school level, depending on the teacher.

At another teacher training in Baijnath, I chatted with some teachers during the lunch break. As we talked about language, one of the teachers confirmed for me that some teachers give their instruction in Kumauni. He said that this is low standard, but it is easier for the students. Then they are able to understand the subject fully. However, he does not think it is a good practice. I asked for more explanation. He said that there is a problem of using mother tongue/Kumauni, because in higher education they need to know Hindi and English. Also job interviews will not be in Kumauni, but in Hindi. He repeated that use of Kumauni in class is “low standard” and “backwards.” It is done in rural areas. The students are not successful. Their job interviews will be in Hindi (H; FN:07Sep10). As other teachers joined in the conversation, these points were repeated – that Kumauni is indeed used in order to help students understand, but that too much use of mother tongue is not good. Students need to be ready to use Hindi for joining the job market. According to these teachers, the use of Kumauni, although it might facilitate full understanding of a subject, did not promote the eventual success of the students. They saw the practice, though common, as “low standard and backwards” and associated with the rural areas.

This critical attitude towards the use of Kumauni in instruction could be a reason for some teachers’ downplaying the practice. In addition, when I asked about language use at school, I was sometimes told about the official school policy or about languages being systematically taught as opposed to actual practice and language use.
Informal use of Kumauni. There were also those who insisted that Kumauni is not used in instruction, although there still seemed to be space for Kumauni in the school. In describing the 5-year-olds who join her primary school, the Kausani government school principal said: “They come from villages. They speak Kumauni first, and then when they come to school, Hindi. At the school we speak Hindi to them. We don't speak Kumauni.” When I asked her whether the students understand, she said that, yes, they do understand. “They understand and they try to speak Hindi. At school we do not allow them to speak Kumauni. Among themselves they do, but with the teachers they speak Hindi” (H; DQ:07Aug8). Communication between students in Kumauni, it seems, was not prohibited, although it was discouraged between students and teachers.

Similarly, a teacher who had previously worked at a rural primary school near Bageshwar described a multilingual classroom atmosphere although official communication between teachers and students was in Hindi. “They speak Kumauni,” she said, of the village children. “Well, nowadays all children are speaking Hindi, even in the villages. But then the children would come to school just knowing Kumauni and we would teach them Hindi.” I asked how they taught the children Hindi.

We spoke with them in Hindi and they picked it up. We encouraged them to speak Hindi also... It's not that Kumauni was prohibited. The children would speak it among each other. The teachers would also speak Kumauni among each other. But the teachers would use Hindi with the children. They didn't have trouble understanding. (H; PQ:08Feb23)

Both among students and among teachers the natural use of Kumauni is common. Thus, the home language is not completely divorced from the school atmosphere. Still Hindi is the official medium of instruction, used for teaching and encouraged for student-teacher interaction.

Changing times. There were hints in these conversations of changing times. Where Kumauni was once needed for helping young children understand, these days
more children are coming to school knowing Hindi. Location also makes a difference, with more Kumauni used in the more remote areas. Himani told me that Hindi was not difficult for her when she went to school. Her mother had already taught her the alphabet, and she didn't have any trouble understanding (H; 07Oct16). Although Himani is a peer of Sunita, she grew up in a village along the road near Kausani and thus would have had more exposure to Hindi before school than Sunita had. It was the teachers from the more remote schools that talked about the use of Kumauni to facilitate understanding.

In a larger village-town like Kausani, children were quickly shifting to Hindi. “The Kumauni students have no problem with language,” the Kausani GIC principal told me. “They easily grasp Hindi.” He said that the students use Kumauni in primary school, amongst each other, while the teachers use Hindi, but the students easily understand them. “There is no difficulty with Hindi. Kumauni and Hindi are very similar” (H; PQ:08Feb12).

One teacher at the local Shishu Mandir, a relatively affordable chain of private schools, even generalized that the pre-kindergarten students who come to school at 3 ½ years old actually know more Hindi than Kumauni (H; FN07Oct26). I got a different perspective and more detailed description of language learning at the Shishu Mandir from the principal when I was living in his home. He said that the children between ages 4 and 6 speak Kumauni. Their home atmosphere or environment is Kumauni, so they come to school with Kumauni. Then slowly, they learn Hindi. By the time they are 6 years old, they speak Hindi well. Before they learn Hindi, the teacher uses Kumauni with them, but after a few months the teacher would use Hindi (H; FN:08Feb29).

Language learning. At the Ashram as well, Saroj-Didi told me that education in Kumauni is not necessary. “It is not needed if everyone understands.” But she went on to
describe the natural language learning that takes place for children who just arrive at school and don't know Hindi, using the example of learning to cut vegetables since we were cutting potatoes together for the evening meal as we talked.

We teach it to them, or, it's like this: We don't teach language to them, but they learn. They learn it like learning from their mothers. Just like a child learns to cut vegetables by watching her mother. Then after a while she takes the knife and can do it. That's how they learn language also. They learn from seeing and hearing. At first they just listen, and then they start to speak it. Then they start speaking it with other children and they learn from each other. They learn from society. One of the girls might hear another one calling you “Cindy-Didi” and she will know that you must be a *Didi* [older sister]. “They say it, so I will also,” they think. They are not taught, but it is learned from society. (H; PQ:07Dec8)

Again, this language learning process seemed natural and not difficult. At the Ashram both Kumauni and Hindi are used in daily interactions, and as the small children gradually learn Hindi, Kumauni is not needed in the formal classroom setting.

It seems that in the multilingual atmosphere of the Kumaun the bridging from Kumauni to Hindi is so common that the gradual learning of the latter, both outside and inside of the school, rarely seems a problem. In the school setting, it also seems that the Hindi production required by the students is minimal in early years, allowing for passive, receptive learning first with little pressure for spontaneous production. Also facilitating the language learning is the fact that children are being exposed to increasing amounts of Hindi before they reach school.

*Language use versus medium of instruction.* I asked an education professor in Almora whether he thought that it is difficult for children sometimes to transition from Kumauni to Hindi when they are small. He said that this is a problem only in the primary level. “Some teachers do use Kumauni with small children. They are not allowed, neither are they banned formally. They are supposed to teach through Hindi or English, but they sometimes use Kumauni to help the children understand.” I wondered if the teachers would be ashamed to say that they were using Kumauni in class, but he does not think
that it is a matter of shame but simply the language of day-to-day use. “The teachers will officially say that, no, they do not use Kumauni,” he said (E; PQ:07Oct12). After mentioning the family role, the unique sociocultural expressions, and the variety of Kumauni, seeming to emphasize its uniqueness and value, he went on to say that everywhere, at least in the rural areas, the first language used at school is Kumauni, by students and teachers (E; FN:07Oct12). Yet this is not medium of instruction. Later in our conversation, this professor talked about there being two types of schools, the Hindi-medium government schools and the English-medium public [non-government, private] schools. There is no such thing as a Kumauni-medium school.

Regarding policies for language use in the schools, the Additional District Education Officer in Bageshwar emphasized the importance of students’ understanding. He told me that Kumauni is used for explaining things in school, for teachers and students to understand each other. “But there is no teaching medium rule. The rule is: What is best for [helping] the children to understand? Understanding is the main thing.”

Many of these children in remote areas are first-generation learners, he explained. In the home these children mostly use Kumauni. So the teachers use a correlation of Kumauni and Hindi. In Class 1 and 2 this is necessary in rural areas, I was told. “It is not the medium of instruction. It depends on the teacher” (H; PQ:08Mar27).

**Official and Unofficial Medium of Instruction**

I realized that I cannot assume a particular meaning for “medium of instruction” and that there is ambiguity in the way the term is used, just as there is in definitions of “mother tongue.” Teaching the language is different from using it. Reading and studying in the language is different from speaking it. I am reminded of Khubchandani’s (2001) description of multilingual classrooms in which “it is not unusual to find... patterns of communication where the teacher and the taught interact in one language, classes are
conducted in another, textbooks are written in a third, and answers are given in a fourth language or style” (33).

A language such as Kumauni may be used in instruction for explanations and to facilitate the students’ understanding, but it is not the official medium of instruction. The medium of instruction has more to do with the language in which the books are printed. One protest against the possibility of making Kumauni the official medium of instruction is the fact that there are no primers, there is no separate script, and there is no commonly accepted standard form (E; FN:07Sep15). There is the assumption that the written medium would be required before the language could be used as medium of instruction. Yet unofficially Kumauni often seems to share that role in oral instruction. I think this is comparable to the frequent use of Hindi in “English-medium” classrooms. While English-medium schools use textbooks that are printed in English, Hindi is often used in instruction, especially in rural schools, to help the students understand, as exemplified in the next section. Similarly, I have trouble imagining the sole use of Sanskrit at the “Sanskrit-medium” school attended by Himani’s brother in Haldwani. The unofficial medium of instruction would be Hindi.

Sometimes when I asked about the use of Kumauni at school, teachers and administrators would assume that I was asking either about teaching Kumauni as a subject or about the official policies related to medium of instruction. When I asked about the use of Kumauni at her junior high school in Kausani, Pushba Sharma mentioned government policies and explained that no school teaches it. Here she immediately assumed that I was asking about the teaching of Kumauni rather than the general use of the language in school. I asked whether some day it may be taught, and she said that there were no books. She agreed that if books were made, it could be taught. In fact, she said, the state is thinking about that decision now. She went on to say,
however, that the students do use Kumauni among themselves, as do the teachers, and teacher to student. Sometimes they even explain things in Kumauni if the students don't understand something from the book. But they do that very little. Mostly they use Hindi (H; FN:07Aug14). While she initially answered my question by insisting that Kumauni is not a part of the school, her subsequent description of language use showed the informal use of Kumauni, even for explanations of academic content.

I had heard about the possible state decision that would promote the teaching of Kumauni and neighboring Garhwali at the primary school level. Most of the students and teachers that I mentioned this to did not think it would happen, however, or that it was even necessary. “They [Kumauni and Garhwali] won’t be taught,” one teacher at the Baijnath teacher training told me. “They are only spoken, not written.” Another teacher in the group pointed out that Kumauni is taught at the university level. But it would not be needed at the primary level for children, I was told, because it is their mother tongue. The teachers would only explain the subjects in mother-tongue (H; FN:07Sep10). Teaching Kumauni is clearly different from teaching using Kumauni. The later may happen informally, but the former seemed unlikely and unnecessary to many Kumaunis.

Although I did not explore the issue at the policy-maker’s level in Dehradun, it did indeed seem unlikely. In a conversation with Professor Pathak of Kumaun University in Nainital during my preliminary research, he told me about attending a meeting in Dehradun that touched on the topic of mother-tongue instruction in Kumauni and Garwali, especially for preschool through second grade. This was not taken seriously or seriously considered, however, he said (E; FN:06Jun12). Kumauni and Garhwali literature has, however, been included in the Hindi textbooks at the junior high school level as part of the addition of LOCAL KNOWLEDGE to Uttarakhand textbooks.
Use of Hindi in English-Medium Schools

Although I often pursued conversations about Kumauni use in school, the question of medium of instruction in North India is usually one of Hindi versus English. The Uttarakhand government schools are Hindi-medium and prestigious schools with high fees are English-medium.

The Kendriya Vidyalay or Central Government School is currently the most prestigious option and the only English-medium school in Kausani, although some locals hesitated to put it into the category of “English-medium.” The textbooks as well as the instruction are officially English-medium, but an English teacher there admitted to me that the teachers use mainly Hindi in class. He explained that the students' parents are mostly illiterate and don't send their children for tuitions [tutoring]. “Since the children don’t have anyone to go to in order to get the meaning, the teachers use Hindi to help them understand. Then gradually they will learn English” (E; PQ:08Apr24). Another teacher had told me that the Kendriya Vidyalay is an English medium school, but that they have bilingual instruction. They prefer English, but they use Hindi when the children don’t understand (FN:07Aug16).

There does not seem to be a policy in the school or a component of their teacher training that encourages this multilingual instruction, at least at the local level. Rather the teachers would be encouraged to use as much English as possible. The principal of the Kausani school did talk about bilingual instruction, but by this he meant that some Kendriya Vidyalay schools would teach certain classes in English and other classes in Hindi according to the preference of the students and their parents. In Kausani, he said, they had opted for English (E; FN:07Sep3). Yet, the school had some form of bilingual instruction, if not officially, and Hindi was certainly not prohibited.

Although the school may wish to emphasize its use of English, I could see the
wisdom of this practice of Hindi support in instruction. The children from my host family who attend this school, though their parents are educated, use Hindi with their parents, hear Kumauni from the older generation and have little exposure to or support for English in their home. They would have been able to understand very little in an English-only classroom.

However, I have heard this school and others like it criticized for inconsistency in their use of English medium. This Kendriya Vidyalay in particular has just started in recent years and did not yet have many fully qualified teachers. In the words of the GIC English teacher, it was not yet “up to standard.” “At good Central Schools, they will speak in English,” he said (E; PQ:07Aug29). He also contrasted it with “real” and “pure” English-medium schools and said that it differed little from the local government school.

“This Kendriya Vidyalay is an English medium school because the books are in English. The teachers don't speak in English. The students come from the same place as the other schools' students. They are living side by side” (E; PQ:07Aug29). In Mr. Prasad's opinion:

A student doesn't group up nicely if they go to an English-medium school that is not a proper English-medium school. In such schools the teachers may speak English in class, but then outside of class and outside of school they speak Hindi. The students end up feeling that they don't know either Hindi or English well. They are confused. People expect them to speak English when they learn that they went to an English-medium school, but the reality is that they cannot. They will have problems in job interviews, as the interviewer will expect them to know English. It is better for those who learn in Hindi in that case. At least they can express themselves! That is the most important thing - to be able to express themselves. (E; PQ:07Aug29)

Students would be better off being able to express themselves in Hindi than being

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7 The contrast was not just in the school, the teachers, or the language use but also in the students who attend. These students had transferred from Hindi-medium schools and lived side-by-side with government school students, while students from “pure English-medium schools,” such as those in Nainital, were from “high class families. Simple people can't dream of going there. At such schools they would not use a word of Hindi” (E; PQ:07Aug29). Of course this teacher had to admit that the environment of the students who go to such schools, including the use of English at home, is quite different from that of the students in Kausani.
expected to know English and finding themselves unable to do so, with insecurity in both their knowledge of English and of Hindi.

The unofficial use of Kumauni in Hindi-medium schools, as described above, and of Hindi in English-medium schools is grudgingly admitted and explained away as a necessity because of the background of the students and their inability to understand otherwise. Pure or real English medium schools, I was told, would be better; then I would see a big difference. In English classes also, even at Hindi-medium schools, the teachers were sometimes apologetic about their use of Hindi.

**Use of Hindi in English Class**

From my observations, Hindi is frequently used in English classes for translation and explanation, with often more Hindi than English being spoken. Although teachers were apologetic about this, they explained that it was necessary. The students also expected and appreciated the use of Hindi to help them understand.

Before I visited any of Ramesh Prasad's English classes at the Kausani GIC, he explained to me that he would be using “half mother tongue,” so that they could understand (E; FN:07Aug16). By mother tongue, in this context, he meant Hindi. He seemed to feel the need to defend himself beforehand for not speaking only in English in his English classes. I described Mr. Prasad's classes to Meena-Didi later at the Ashram, telling how he goes through the reading in the textbook and translates it into Hindi, explaining the text and switching back and forth between English and Hindi. She said that this is typical. When I asked why it is typical, she said that it is because the students don't understand English. They need an explanation in Hindi. Only a very few would be able to understand an English explanation (E; FN:07Aug30).

Other teachers also talked about this language support being necessary. A group of teachers in Garur talked about the necessity of using Hindi for teaching English, so
that the students can understand fully, and compared it to my need for English support when I was learning Hindi. They did not, however, think that the use of Kumauni to aid in understanding was exactly comparable, since most children, they said, know Hindi (FN:08Mar15).

In the English classes that I taught, the students asked for and expressed appreciation for my use of Hindi. During the first day of my English class with the Sadhana girls, as we waited for one student to arrive, I started speaking with them only in English, using simple sentences and repeating to them in English what they were saying to me in Hindi. I could tell that they understood some of what I was saying. But Himani said: “Speak Hindi. We don’t understand.” And Sunita added: “Don’t speak English” (H; PQ:07Sept25). We ended up using some of both, lots of repetition and my own translation of what I said in English to Hindi. I am sure that fuller analysis of my recorded classes would reveal more use of Hindi than of English in class. One student in her farewell to me even said that she enjoyed my English classes because I also used Hindi in class (H; FN:06Jul9).

Even at the university level, students had difficulty understanding English and requested Hindi. In her course for future English teachers, one young professor told me that she started out using English until one day she found written on the blackboard: “PLEASE USE MOTHER TONGUE.” In my visit to this class and discussion with the students about language issues, the social tension between the English-medium and Hindi-medium students became obvious. They also had a range of opinions about the use of Kumauni, Hindi, and English in the classroom, worth further analysis.

**Student Perspectives and Multilingual Education**

In the following conversations with students from the Sadhana program, I heard some of their thoughts about the question of medium of instruction. First is a portion of
an interview with Manju and Sunita. They express their openness to Kumauni in the school, but affirm the importance of being able to learn English.

When asked which language is most important, Manju replied, “In their own places, each is important.” This is a theme taken up in the next chapter, with local descriptions of the role or place of each language. Manju told me that she likes Pahari the best of all languages because it is her mother tongue. As the best language for school, she first said Hindi, and then: “Where Hindi is taught, Hindi, and where English is taught, English.” She and Sunita explained that at some schools, such as in Nainital, they use English. “So there English is OK. And here they teach Hindi, so here Hindi is OK.” According to the level of the school and the tradition or atmosphere of the school, they thought either language was fine (H; DQ:07Oct26).

Then I brought up the question of Kumauni and whether Kumauni could come into the school. “Kumauni is not in school,” Manju said. “It's not in school,” Sunita agreed. “But if it comes, would it be OK?” I asked. “It won't come,” Sunita said. But, “if it came,” Manju said,” then we would support it. They both agreed then that it would seem OK if Kumauni were introduced in the schools and that they would like it even though it seemed unlikely. They also agreed, however, that some teachers do use Kumauni with the children in primary school (H; DQ:07Oct26).

As to whether there should be an English-medium school here in Kausani, Manju and Sunita thought, “yes.” As Manju said, “We think, na, we didn’t learn English so the children who are behind us, the small ones, they should learn” (H; DQ:07Oct26). They told me that they didn't think English-medium education was essential, but that the younger children should have an opportunity to learn English – a better opportunity than they had had.

The importance of English was also emphasized in an interview with Himani and
Pushba, but they also talked about the value of Hindi and the importance of balancing the two. In an ideal, hypothetical school the extremes of Hindi-medium and English-medium would be avoided. I describe the discussion as it unfolded in our interview.

The topic came up of the frequent use of English words in Hindi and the prestige of knowing and using English. Himani explained: “In our place -- in the village -- if someone knows a lot of English, then people will consider that he has become clever... meaning, s/he has become very knowledgeable.” Pushba turned the conversation towards education and the example of her nieces and nephews: “Now, in studies, children are doing it a lot in English. Children are put in English-medium... Like my sister's children -- they study even in English-medium. They don't know so much Hindi. They just study/read in English” (H; DQ:07Oct16). She went on to explain that the children do know Hindi – that they speak with their family in Hindi – but that they have more trouble reading Hindi, preferring to read and write in English. I had heard of this from others as well – children gaining higher literacy skills in English while less able to read and write in Hindi, the language they are more comfortable with orally.

“Does that seem OK to you?,” I asked the two girls. After a pause, Himani said, “It doesn't seem [ok] to me. I think that this is not good. Because Hindi is our language, so it’s important to learn Hindi first.” But Pushba said, “I think it's ok. If they also learn Hindi along with English, that's good.” Himani agreed that children should learn both: “They should be known by them [lit. come to them] equally -- Hindi and English.” Pushba then began to describe how she thought things ought to be, with equal learning and knowledge of Hindi and of English: “Not just one way. Equally. Meaning, not just the English way. That much Hindi and that much English. They [should] know both equally...Meaning, they don't have a problem. They [should] see both languages as equal...” The girls agreed that both languages are needed and that in learning English,
Hindi does not need to be given up. “Meaning, with English, Hindi can be spoken and with Hindi, English can be spoken,” Pushba said (H; DQ:07Oct16).

And yet the situation is usually less balanced. Himani described it: “At English medium [schools] they will mostly just teach English and in Hindi medium [schools] they will mostly just teach Hindi.” Pushba continued to build on the dream of how things could be: “So in English medium, Hindi would stay more, like in Hindi medium. Meaning... staying more in the Hindi way. And in Hindi medium, they would stay more in the English way... They should be equal in that way. “So, we should make a school where they are equal,” I said. “Yes,” they agreed. “Then every single child could study,” Himani said. And Pushba added: “In which the TIME would be equal for Hindi and English. They would learn both LANGUAGES... that would be nice, na [wouldn't it]? (H; DQ:07Oct16).

These four young women articulated well their appreciation for each of the languages in their environment and their desire to see more equal access and use of Hindi and English in educational settings. While usually only one medium of instruction is official in a school, this section has described how the other languages often have a role as well, with frequent informal use of either Hindi or Kumauni to facilitate student understanding. Thus medium of instruction, like the concepts of mother tongue and language, takes on new meaning in this multilingual context. Whatever one's opinion of this informal or unofficial multilingual education, school language use practices seem to reflect the multilingualism common in the surrounding society. The following chapter discusses local views on the value of multilingualism and on each of the languages in the Kumaun, as well as the association of languages with place and status.
“Every mile the water changes, every four miles the speech”

[Kos-kos par badale paani, chaar kos par baani]

This favorite saying was quoted to me in various contexts during my fieldwork in the Kumaun, in praise of the local linguistic diversity. Just as the taste and quality of the water coming from various springs in the Himalayan foothills is unique from place to place, so the speech varieties of neighboring communities have their uniqueness.

Through my discussions about language with Kumauni girls, educators, and community members, I catch a glimpse of the ways that they perceive their multilingual atmosphere. Learning additional languages does not imply losing the first and is not difficult in context. Each language has value in its own place and in its own role. And yet, regarding Kumauni, the reality of eventual language shift is not denied. And regarding English in particular, the associations between language and status are hard to ignore.

The following sections describe, first, the experiences and insights of Govindi regarding language issues in the Kumaun, the value for multilingualism that I heard and observed in the Kumaun, and the value of each of the languages individually: English, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Kumauni. I attempt to separate the views about the different languages. But even as the languages are often mixed in daily use, so also discussion of the different languages rarely occurs in isolation. Views on one language have direct bearing on views on another. The role of one language is compared with the role of another. In comparing the languages and their relationships among each other, the issues of language environment or association with place and of language status emerge, as discussed in the final sections of the chapter.
Govindi’s Language Experiences

In Govindi’s home everyone speaks Hindi. Govindi is unique among the young women with whom I spent time in that all of the others had Kumauni as their home language. Her father was working in a research institute compound where everyone spoke Hindi, so from her childhood it had been that way. Then, when her father retired, they moved back to his home village, just after she had completed Class 5. When they arrived in the village, she and her sisters did not know Kumauni, but they were soon to begin learning it.

The neighbors in the village, if they are old people, don’t understand Hindi. To give respect to just anyone, such as a very old woman that comes, we speak to her. She would say something and we would say, “What is this old woman saying? We don’t understand her!”... So out of consideration for them, we learned Pahari. We learned to speak Kumauni.

If you live in the mountains, you should know the Pahari language. That’s why we learned Pahari. If someone speaks Pahari, I don’t think: “Why don’t they know Hindi?” They speak Pahari. So with people who speak Pahari, I speak with them in Pahari. And those who know Hindi, with them I speak in Hindi. And at home everyone speaks Hindi (H; DQ:07Oct24).

The motivation of Govindi and her sisters, as girls, to learn Kumauni in the village was out of consideration for those who could not understand them, especially the old people. It also seemed natural to Govindi that in coming to live in the mountains, she should learn the local language, which was also her parents’ language. To be Kumauni the language is not essential, according to Govindi. She, like her parents, is Kumauni. “Yet in one sense it is essential,” she says. “Because if someone lives in the Kumaun, they should know Kumauni” (H; PQ:07Oct24). Although Govindi is still not completely comfortable speaking Kumauni, it wasn’t hard for her to learn: “It’s also HEREDITARY2 that parents know

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1 In citing examples from my field notes and interviews, I identify the language being used as Hindi (H), Kumauni (K), or English (E). I then differentiate between field notes (FN), written in my own voice regarding recent observations on the field; paraphrased quotes (PQ), constructed from my field notes in the voice of the original speaker; and direct quotes (DQ), including recorded interviews and quotes that I had written word-for-word in my field notes. FN, PQ or DQ are followed by the year, month, and day of the event or interview.

2 Small caps indicate that the actual English word was used in a Hindi or Kumauni conversation.
it, so we will surely know it. That’s why I didn’t have a lot of trouble in learning Pahari” (H; DQ:07Oct24), she said.

For Govindi and others with whom I spoke in the village context, it is clear that Kumauni has value in its place. That young women would learn Kumauni in order to communicate in the villages seems to be a good sign for Kumauni vitality. But our conversations did not only focus in the villages. When we zoom out in perspective and the international context takes focus, English begins to dominate. During our interview, I asked Govindi about changes in language use over time. “First there was Kumauni,” she said. She paused and zoomed out:

I’ll tell you about today’s international situation. On the international front, if we speak Hindi, it doesn’t have much value. If we know English, we will be special. And other people will [say]: “Wow! She speaks English!” Isn’t that how it is? (H; DQ:07Oct24).

The status of English and the status attributed to a person who speaks English are clear. In the international context, even Hindi seems small. And Kumauni seems even smaller.

And speaking Hindi -- It’s not about Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan -- They’ll think, “She doesn’t know English.” If someone doesn’t know English, people think s/he doesn’t know anything. That’s how they think, isn’t it? Because English has become international language. So such a distinction has come, that Pahari speakers are considered to be tribals [adivasi]. (H; DQ:07Oct24).

There is clearly a negative association with being considered a tribal. The term is usually reserved for those Scheduled Tribes mentioned in the Constitution as requiring governmental support and protection. They usually live in remote places, are generally not Hindu, and are considered culturally distinct. Kumaunis are not adivasi. However, it seems that in comparison with English and the respect that speaking English generates, Kumauni has been bumped down to a lower status. Govindi continues:

In the old times, those who were Indian had Hindi and for the village people, they spoke their own village language, the old language of their own area. But now everyone has joined together. Because outside people come in and people from here go outside (H; DQ:07Oct24).
As Govindi points out, the villages are no longer as isolated as they once were. Just as at the village level, at the international level as well there is increasing exchange of people. She went on to describe, in her own way, the transfer of educated people from India to other countries in search of higher salaries, emphasizing their neglect for the development of their own country. At the same time, foreigners are coming to India. She talked about the influences that this had brought upon language, making the learning of English essential for everyone. This has brought less honor to Hindi, and yet she points out the irony that foreigners are taking classes to learn Hindi all over the world, while the Indians just want to speak English. The way Govindi sees the language situation in India, English, as the international language, has taken first place, while Hindi comes in second. “What about Kumauni?,” I ask.

Kumauni is such a tiny, tiny language. I don't know on what thousandth number it would be, right? Because we shouldn't just look at the village. We should talk about all of India and all of the world. (H; DQ:07Oct24)

We zoom in again to the situation in the Kumaun and the issue of language shift. If Kumauni seems so small in the international context, perhaps its chances are slim. Does she think that the day may come when Kumauni would no longer be spoken?

Govindi thinks that it will still be spoken in the future, but much less.

After many years, they will speak it much less. Because some will speak Hindi, some will speak English... I don't like it. Because whatever language there is, learn that also! I'm not saying that people shouldn't learn English. I, myself, want to learn English because for speaking, for business and for all things, to know someone else's feelings -- that's why learning language is essential. So I won't say about any language: “Don't learn English. Learn Hindi. We are Pahari, so learn Pahari. Kumaunis should learn Kumauni.” I will never say that. Also learn them, but don't forget your own language. If you want to learn, learn it all. But forgetting one's own language, forgetting one's own birth life and taking someone else's -- that should not be. Don't you also agree that it shouldn't be? (H; DQ:07Oct24).

This additive philosophy about language learning was one that I heard from others in the
Kumaun as well. Learning another language did not necessitate the loss of one’s own. However, as other languages enter more domains, Kumauni may be at risk of being forgotten. The tendency to leave behind one’s birthplace, and at least in the next generation one’s language, continues. Govindi doesn’t like the perspective of those who are leaving Kumauni behind:

They say that Kumauni is dirty: “Chi! Who speaks it?.. Nobody knows it. We will speak English.” And they are content speaking English. But that’s wrong. Learn [Kumauni] also! That is also our language. When you go outside, speak Kumauni. And with those who speak Hindi, speak Hindi. And in big society where people don’t speak Hindi and you have to use English, then use it. Right? Throwing away one thing and taking up another isn’t good. (H; DQ:07Oct24)

I asked her where she got this view. “This view came from above,” she said, laughing. “That view just came from there, from the one who made me” (H; DQ:07Oct24).

I wondered how widespread her views are about the value of maintaining the local language. Do a lot of people here think that? In answer to this, Govindi drew from her own experience of moving to a Kumauni village and only knowing Hindi. She started quoting in Kumauni, then stopped and explained: “I’ll say it in Kumauni first, and then I’ll tell you in Hindi” (H). She quoted a hypothetical villager expressively: “Baap re! [My God!]. She doesn’t speak Pahari? She just speaks Hindi. I don’t know who she thinks she is!” (K). Govindi explained that, while she and her family don’t think this way, the villagers would assume that they think highly of themselves, that “I am everything. I know Hindi. What do you people know?” (H; DQ:07Oct24).

Thus, a Kumauni who speaks Hindi in the village seems to be putting him or herself above the others. There is clearly some resistance to the invasion of Hindi in the village context. Hindi is the higher status language, but Kumauni has an important role as the language of the home and village. Govindi continued to describe the reaction in the village to her not speaking Pahari:
They will speak of us badly. They will say: “Even though she's Pahari, she's not speaking Pahari.” They sometimes speak in this way. Nowadays for the present, it's not much, but still some people say it... If I speak to them in Hindi, then they answer me in their own broken [tuti-futi] Hindi. But some people say, “Are! Baap re! Have you forgotten your own language? Now she goes around speaking Hindi!” (K/H; DQ:07Oct24).

Having experienced this kind of reaction to her use of Hindi in the village, Govindi had the motivation she needed to learn Kumauni. “So, I quickly-quickly learned Pahari,” she said. She gave me some examples of common phrases in Kumauni:

Are you working? Are you well? How's it going? Have you eaten your rice? Have you eaten? Are you washing your clothes? (K)... Like that. It will make them happy... I went on with that and then got used to speaking it. (H; DQ:07Oct24)

While Govindi recognizes trends towards language shift on the larger scale and the growing importance of English, her own experience at the village level reflects the strength of Kumauni within its context. She and those around her value multilingualism. Learning another language does not imply loss of the former, and it is important to use the language of the village. Govindi’s experiences, while certainly different from those of most other Kumauni young women, provide a unique snapshot of the language situation in the Kumaun.

**Value of Multilingualism**

In hearing the discourses about multilingualism in the Kumaun, I begin to get a sense of the comfort with, preference for, and naturalness of diversity. The realities of mixed language usage are generally accepted: “Speak however you like!,” some would say. Restrictions on language use are not appreciated: In particular, Ashram members criticized the punishments for local language use enforced at some English-medium schools. There is a general agreement that it is not necessary to forget, reject or marginalize one language when another is learned. The more languages the better. Language is a tool for communication. People should know the language of the place
where they live while also learning the language of the school and the international language. Each language is useful in its own place and role.

A notably absent discourse is that of language as intrinsically difficult to learn. Languages, or the grammar of languages, may be difficult when taught as a subject in the school context, but languages are naturally learned when someone is immersed in the environment of that language.

Mixing of languages and switching between languages in almost all contexts is quite common, as described under Language Use in Chapter 6. “Like in Hindi we mix English right in between, that's how they use it.” Pushba used the English words mix and use in her own explanation. “The words just come sometimes, right?,” she said (H; DQ:07Oct16). At the university level, this also seems quite common. Classes are generally Hindi medium, but English words are used frequently. Sometimes students are allowed to do their assignments in either Hindi or English, and occasionally it is mixed.

Sometimes I would ask the girls what they would think if people only spoke Kumauni, or only Hindi, or only English. The exclusive use of any of those languages was not desirable to them. Speaking only English was undesirable since the knowledge of the local languages would be lost, as Asha said:

Then no one will know their own language... Like the Gujaratis -- if they all speak English, then there won't be a knowledge of Gujarati. If the Marathis all speak English, then there won't be a knowledge of Marathi. And if the people of Kerala all speak English, then there won't be a knowledge of Malayalam. (H; DQ:07Oct5)

Similarly, speaking only the local language is not desirable either. Kumaunis should not speak only Kumauni. They should also know some Hindi for school, and a little English. As Asha said. “For us children, we should not only know Kumauni. For going to school, we should also know Hindi. And for school, we should also know English” (H; DQ:07Oct5). Asha likes the fact that people speak differently in different places:
I like it, because it's not always one language. We should also have the wisdom of other languages. That's why I like it -- because we should know every language... That's why I like it -- because there are different languages... (H; DQ:07Oct5)

The link language, Hindi, is what helps to avoid difficulties in communication. “If we don't understand someone's language, then we speak Hindi. Just like you: We don't understand your English and you don't understand our Pahari... but we all speak Hindi” (H; DQ:07Oct5).

The ideal, it seems, would be that everyone would know several languages. “It would be best if people could speak as many languages as they could. Then they would have no difficulties” (H; PQ:08Jan10), a young lawyer in Haldwani told me. “But English is vital. If you only had one language, it should be English.” The value of multilingualism is acknowledged alongside the importance of English. But in this context, there is no need to have only one language.

There is no need to lose one language when another language is learned. “It's OK to learn English, but people should also keep using Hindi and Kumauni,” a Class 9 student at the Ashram told me (H; PQ:08Apr8). In another context, a Class 12 student said the same: “People should know their own language! It's OK for them to learn other languages also, but they should know their own,” she said (H; PQ:07Dec1). One of the Sadhana students told me that learning English is important, but that people should not throw away Hindi in the process.

I chatted with a neighbor lady about language while we waited for our buckets to fill at the spring. “No one should feel ashamed of their own language,” she said. “Every language should be spoken. Kumauni is the best language. It is the simplest for us. But English is the language that goes the furthest. It is spoken by many people and it is useful for work everywhere” (H; PQ:08Apr15).

A speaker at the conference on Kumauni language talked about the use of Hindi
and English with children in the school. “More honor is given to English and Hindi. That is OK. They should be there. But our language should also be honored” (H; PQ:08Jan24). I asked Kumauni activist, Dr. Ravat, if he thought that, through learning more English, children would lose Kumauni. He did not think so. He would like it if they learn ten languages, but still not forget their mother tongue. He gave the example of the ex-Prime Minister Rao who knew fourteen languages (FN:07Oct14).

In the Hindi department at Kumaun University, Dr. Bhatt summarized it this way:

We can’t do without English, but we should not forget, inferior[ize], or neglect the regional languages. This is why the three-language formula is important. Everyone should learn a regional, national, and an international language. Regarding Hindi dialects, there are many differences in the grammar, pronunciation and use. Every few miles the language changes its form. (E; PQ:08Feb25)

She cited the famous quote about language and water changing. “This is natural,” she said. “It is natural for there to be differences between two valleys that have been relatively isolated” (E; PQ:08Feb25). Multilingualism is natural and expected. School forms should be sent not only in English but also in Hindi. When someone goes to live in a new area, they learn the spoken language of that area.

The environments, locations, or domains associated with the various languages and their value are described in the following sections on Hindi, Sanskrit, Kumauni and English. But first, I share the results of a language game. I asked the Sadhana girls to shout out words that they associate with the word that I named. On the second day that we played this game, I gave them the words Kumauni, then Hindi, and then English. Of course, the roles of each of these languages becomes more complicated in practice, but the responses of the girls placed these three languages into discreet categories, as shown in Table 6.
Table 6: Word Association with Languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kumauni</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pahari</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(City)</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basti [village row house]</td>
<td>The names of languages</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses</td>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A row of houses</td>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbors</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“What did you think of what we said?,” Govindi asked, after I had scribbled down their responses. I said that I had noticed that when I said Kumauni they talked about village and neighborhood, when I said Hindi they talked about languages, and when I said English they talked about subjects in school. “You notice well!,” the girls said (H; PQ:08Apr21). The girls’ associations with English were school subjects. English was something to be learned in school as a subject in a context where Hindi is the medium of instruction. Hindi is a language, lined up with a list of other languages. Kumauni, in contrast, is associated with the village and the home. The following sections, based on my interactions with Kumaunis, detail the value or valued roles of each of these languages, as well as Sanskrit, the other language besides English and Hindi that is taught at local schools.

**English as International Language**

**Demand for English**

“Cindy-Didi, we really want to learn English,” Sunita told me. We were sitting with the other Class 11 students who were also in agreement. They were excited for me to begin teaching their English class after the Sadhana program would begin. Sunita had already mentioned to me several times her desire to learn English (H; PQ:07Aug6).
Especially during the my first weeks at the Ashram, students told me about their desire to learn English and asked me to teach them. Asha showed me the notebook she had started for an English diary and asked me for help in writing about her daily activities. Some of the Ashram Didis also asked me for help with learning English.

When the new Sadhana students arrived from their villages, they also started to talk to me about wanting to learn English. “I have a real desire to learn English,” one of them told me. She had taken English in high school and inter-college, but said that studying English is not easy. She hoped that I would be able to teach her some when I had time (H; PQ:07Sept11). Two new students came into my room one evening. They asked when I was going to start teaching them English, knowing that their teacher had been making arrangements with me for a regular class. One said that if they can learn English they will be able to make something of their lives. I asked what she meant by that. She said they would be able to become teachers and teach children. They would be able to talk with people who don’t know Hindi, like my German roommate who came to stay at the Ashram for six months (H; FN:07Sept22).

Later during my interviews with them, I heard more about this desire to learn English. When we were talking about the things that she likes about school, Manju talked about enjoying reading and Hindi. “And I'm very interested in learning English too. It's an interest, but it doesn't come to me.... I don't know it,” she said. “Why are you interested in English?,” I wondered. “Because I want to learn it,” she said. “In the same way that you learned Hindi, so also I want to learn English.” I asked again for her reasons.

It's just like that -- It seems like this -- that when someone comes from the outside and I'm not able to speak with them, then I think, 'Why haven't I learned it?' Then I feel bad. That's why. And so -- for myself. (H; DQ:07Oct26)

Sunita again talked with me about her great desire to learn English. She thought
that she’d like to take a year after high school to study English. “I’d like to learn English.... If you’re going to do something, you need English.” Then later she added: “Because I didn’t study math, so I’ll study English.” As described in Chapter 8, Sunita was sad about not being able to take higher math courses at the Ashram. However, she saw the opportunity to learn English with me as some compensation for that as a boost towards her future. Himani also was searching for ways to improve her English in hopes of improving her future, asking me for word lists and for an English conversation book just before I left. She, along with the other Sadhana girls, told me that they wished that I had been able to teach them more (FN:08Apr16).

For the high school examinations in Uttarakhand, students need to choose six subjects. For languages, Hindi is required and students can choose to study Sanskrit and/or English. Most frequently the girls at the GIC choose to take Sanskrit, not necessarily because they prefer Sanskrit over English but because, I was told by the teachers, they have better chances of passing the Sanskrit exam. Until 2007, the Ashram students entering high school had also studied Sanskrit, which was easier for the Ashram Didis to teach. Since the class sizes are so small at the Ashram, the girls decide together which subjects they will take for their high school exams. Some of the older students at the Ashram said that they had wanted to take English for high school but that no teacher was available. However, their class was likely not in agreement about all wanting to study English and so had stayed with Sanskrit. At any rate, the eight Class 9 students in 2007 decided together that they wanted to study English, and one of the Didis agreed to teach them. The GIC English teacher, Mr. Prasad, came to teach them also at the Ashram on the days when he was available. Studying English at the high school level was a challenge for all of them, especially since there was a large jump between the Class 8 and the newer Class 9 curriculum expectations. I saw them working hard on reading, writing, and
grammar in preparation for their exams, and they enlisted my help with this also. They decided to study Sanskrit as well, as a back-up plan, since they would only need to pass two languages in the examinations, even though this meant forfeiting the option of taking art as another elective.

When I asked Asha about the decision of the Class 9 students to take English this year, she explained that it was their desire or interest. They wanted to learn English because everyone else in India is learning English now. It has become very important. I asked if all of the girls in the class wanted to take English. She said that some of them were hesitating at first, but when they saw that their classmates were going to take it, they decided that they didn't want to be left behind (FN:07Sept5). Not wanting to be left behind – this is a sentiment not only of a few girls at the Ashram wanting to keep up with their classmates but also of many people throughout the Kumaun. As times changes, English often represents for them the way forward, whether or not there is an immediate practical use for knowing English. Reasons for the value of English and for wanting to learn English are discussed in the next section.

**Why English?**

Some of the reasons for wanting to learn English have come out in the examples above. Sunita sees the current importance of English in education and future opportunities, and others talked about needing English to make something of their lives. Manju wants to be able to communicate with foreigners who visit and avoid the shame of not knowing English. I received various answers as I raised the question: Why English? Why do you – why do people -- want to learn English?

During one of my first English classes with them, I asked the Sadhana girls to each list for me (in Hindi) five of their reasons for learning English. I then compiled the seven lists given to me. Later I did the same activity with a group of Class 9 and one Class
11 students who came to my home near the GIC to study English and compiled five more lists. Table 7 presents the reasons written by the girls both at the Ashram and at the GIC along with the order in which each of them wrote the reason on their list, representing the likely order in which they thought of the different reasons. Thus more numbers indicates more girls who gave that reason and lower numbers indicate a likely higher priority for that reason. This list of ten does not represent all of the reasons that I heard and observed while in the Kumaun, or even all of the reasons that I heard from the girls themselves in later conversations, but I find it a fun starting point for discussing the various reasons below. Rather than cover comprehensively all of the possible reasons for learning English, I focus on those that were talked about most by the Kumauni girls and their educators.

Table 7: Reasons for Learning English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason written by students</th>
<th>Ashram/Sadhana students’ ranking of reasons</th>
<th>GIC (Class 9, 11) students’ ranking of reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because English is important nowadays / the current status and use of English</td>
<td>2,2,2,3,5,5/6</td>
<td>1,2,4,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To communicate with foreigners/English-speakers / to share feelings and perspectives</td>
<td>1,1,1,2,2,2,3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I like it / personal interest and desire</td>
<td>1,1/3/4,1/5,3/4, 4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For getting a job</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1, 1/2, 2/3, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To become something / be successful / bring a change into my life</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,1,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a good reputation / ability to say I know English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/5, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As educational tool (for higher education, for knowledge, as compulsory subject)</td>
<td>1,3,3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read books written in English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because English is important for computers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To teach others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some of the girls wrote two similar reasons which I ended up grouping into the same category. Thus, for example, I listed reasons 5 and 6 by the same girl as 5/6.
The most common reason listed by the girls in this activity emphasized the current importance of English. This was a theme that I heard repeated frequently – an acknowledgment that times are changing and that nowadays, perhaps more than ever, English has become very important in society. “Well, these days it seems important,” Pushba told me (H; DQ:07Oct16). Among the main reasons for her class’s choice to study English, as described above, Asha mentioned that “everyone else in India is learning English now” and “it has become very important” (FN:07Sept5).

The current importance of English is often talked about in terms of English as “international language,” a discourse that I heard repeatedly and in various places during my research, including from students. A simple historical summary of the valuing of English was provided for me by Dr. Bhatt at Kumaun University:

Because of British rule, Indians previously had a complex, thinking that English was superior. The Nationalists preferred Hindi. But English is the language of science, etc. In order to learn science, technology, etc., English is necessary. It has become compulsory. It is the international language. (E; PQ:07Aug10)

She immediately repeated this in other words, a rhetorical practice that I began to recognize in academic discourses in India:

At first Indians thought that English was superior, and they studied it for that reason. Now the environment/situation has changed. Due to globalization, IT, media, etc. Indians have needed to learn English. Now it’s not because of an inferiority complex, but because English is the international medium of interaction. (E; PQ:07Aug10).

According to this analysis, attitudes about the superior status of the English language – and the reactions against this and in favor of Hindi – have been replaced with practical motivations for learning English, especially for the sciences and for international communication. The emphasis on English as international language seems to provide an appropriate rationale for the importance of learning English nowadays. As international language, English is no longer the colonial language. And in the Kumaun perhaps it is
not even embraced as an Indian language, as would be more likely in urban areas and among the elite. But it has become an important language for all to learn – as international language.

Whereas the growing importance of English seems to be an abstract reason distant from the current realities of the Kumauni girls, the reason mentioned by all of the Ashram girls near the top of their lists is much more concrete. They want to be able to communicate with foreigners. This is a concrete reason for the girls at the Ashram because they have frequent access to foreigners who come to visit, observe, and participate in daily life at the Ashram. Every year there is at least one international volunteer who comes for several months to stay at the Ashram, as well as occasional short-term visitors. The more outgoing girls make an effort to communicate with the visitors, using their limited English and teaching Hindi words and phrases. The Ashram Didis also talked about wanting to learn more English for that reason. In contrast, communication with foreigners was not a reason on the forefront of the minds of the girls at the GIC. The GIC English teacher, Mr. Prasad, told me that there are few opportunities for the students to interact with foreigners, even though Kausani does attract tourists because of the magnificent view of the Himalayas. He said that foreigners do not normally talk with them and vice versa. According to Mr. Prasad, the students only know a few words of English. Another issue is that English is different throughout India, he said. The pronunciation varies from area to area in India (E; FN:07Aug16). He implies that the varieties of English would make it more difficult for English learners to communicate with those speaking other varieties. Their main goal for learning English, he said, is to pass and get good marks, although they do enjoy the stories and literature (E; FN:07Aug16).

The Ashram girls also talked about their own personal interest and desire for
learning English. The fact that they like English was one of their reasons for wanting to study it. The growing popularity of English in India is certainly related to its growing importance, described above, and the personal desire of the girls to study English relates also to their aims for the future.

The most common reason for learning English listed by the GIC girls was for getting a job. This reason seemed more concrete, perhaps to the GIC girls than to the older Ashram girls, but the Ashram girls also mentioned this reason in their interviews. When I asked whether English is necessary, Himani provided this explanation for its importance: “Because if we go anywhere to do anything, to find a job, they will ask for English, na [right]? They'll ask if you know English or don't know English” (H; DQ:07Oct16). Sometimes English seems to be not so much a skill needed on the job as a qualification for getting a job, a boost to the high school diploma.

Teachers also talked about the importance of English to their students for finding jobs, although the Ashram Didis framed it more as a societal assumption and they, as well as the government school teachers, saw limits in how far their students could go with English. During an interview, I asked the GIC English teacher, Mr. Prasad, about whether students study English just to get the certificate or to be able to communicate.

You know, I think here it is different. They just study English to pass and to go to other classes, you know. Because the level of English here is not that much... to communicate with. With whom will they communicate here? And for what purpose? Actually, they don't have that much skill of speaking or learning that they can go... from here to Delhi for a multinational company or for other things, for an office job... (E; DQ:08Mar26)

The skills that his students possess, according to Mr. Prasad, are not sufficient for them to be able to use in an urban setting working with a multinational company or in some office job. He confirmed that he did not have such expectations for his students.

Yeah, they are just learning English as a means: “It's an important subject nowadays. And it will be useful in our life.” They don't know where it will be
useful. They are just taking it because it may help somewhere. But they don't have any purpose where it can be helpful, how it can be helpful, how can I use it as a tool. They don't know that much, you know. They are just learning... it for passing the exams. (E; DQ:08Mar26)

I too had noticed that the girls often mentioned rather abstract reasons for studying English – their personal interest and the importance of English in the world. Some also talked about the importance of English for getting a job, but their reasons were rarely very specific. I mentioned this to Mr. Prasad, and he continued:

It's important in the world only for those people, you know, who are professionals... Especially, suppose, it is very important in the US and I will go to the US -- only then. Only that way will it help you. If we stay here only, how can it be helpful thing to me that much, you know? Until I have to go to the US...

According to Kumaun though, it is very limited, I think. We learn English, I think, mostly for office jobs... [or] to become a translator - in higher courses - and for becoming English teacher. Maximum... {light laugh}. (E; DQ:08Mar26)

English may be important for professionals and for those who travel abroad, but Mr. Prasad sees the scope for English in the Kumaun as particularly limited.

The government primary school principal, in explaining to me why the Kendriya Vidyalay in Kausani uses English-medium, generalized that nowadays people go outside for [government] service and to work in an office. If they want to go outside of the area or abroad, they will need English. “So English medium will help the children to adjust quickly” (H; PQ:07Aug8). This, she explained, is why people with money send their children to the English-medium school. “Those who don't have money won't be able to send their children. So they just educate them in Hindi-medium. At our school, all come.” She told about the free-lunch program at her school which provides an incentive for poor children to come and study also. The students coming through the government primary school were not the ones that she expected to pursue the outside, office jobs which would demand English skills.

At the university level also, according to an English lecturer at Kumaun
University, the students study English to improve their chances for jobs. For girls it is to be able to say that they have completed English, for the “marriage market.” Jobs using English, she said, include teaching, call centers, and tourism. She went on to tell me that the students at Kumaun University usually stay in the Kumaun, although jobs like working at call centers would require going elsewhere. Many other students go out to Delhi, etc. after Inter-college to go to better colleges (E; FN:07Aug23). Thus it seems that in the hierarchy of education, even those who make it to the English classes at Kumaun University are a step behind those who go to better universities on the plains and have better access to jobs. Yet learning English, even in the villages, is still seen as important. As this English lecturer told me: “English is a tool of empowerment. Especially in rural areas, students will see it as an important tool” (E; FN:07Aug23).

The next group of reasons from the girls’ lists does seem to reflect English as a tool of empowerment. English is seen as a means for them to improve their lives. They wrote about wanting to study English in order to become something, to be successful, or to bring a change into their lives. While the ways in which English would help to improve their lives were not very specific, English was seen as a step towards moving ahead or towards empowerment.

English is also seen as a way for the girls to improve their reputation before others. The positive reputation that they would gain from knowing English or even from having studied English certainly contributes to that moving forward. Perhaps even more motivating is the fear of being held back by the negative reputation and view even of themselves that comes from not knowing English. As Govindi said, “If someone doesn’t know English, people think s/he doesn’t know anything. That’s how they think, isn’t it?” (H; DQ:07Oct24). In her list of reasons for studying English, Himani wrote: “If we want to go anywhere, people will ask us, ‘Do you know English or not?’” -- At that time, seeing
myself, it seems to me that I don’t know anything” (H; DQ:07Sep25).

I thought about English as a status symbol when I heard how important it was to some of the girls to be able to say in their villages that they had studied English. Asha was eager to show her English diary to her esteemed uncle. If a sibling was studying science and English, the fact would be pointed out to me. Having studied English in high school and intermediate college is an important boost to one’s reputation. I observed how impressed my friends in Dhaulara were with the few men who attempted to communicate with me in English. One of the women was trying out a few English words as we walked down the hillside and was pleased that I noticed. She explained, as reason for having known some English, that she had gone to school in Kausani (FN:08Jan28).

I had observed the use of Kumauni among children in the villages and been told at the Ashram that Kumauni is used in the villages except with outsiders, when Hindi would be used, and about the ineffectiveness of using English in the villages (E; FN:06Jul5). Yet, even in this village, the importance of English was growing. I was talking about Kumauni and Hindi with a group of women in Dhaulara, asking them whether there were some children who didn’t know Hindi. All of the children know Hindi, they said, and the Pahari language is on its way out. “Nowadays the children have English. There isn’t so much study of Hindi. English has gone on more. In school.” I was in the middle of asking about whether the loss of Kumauni was OK, when one of the woman took it a step further and said: “The Hindi language is finished [khatam]. English!” (Some of the others started laughing.) “Kumauni is finished” (H; PQ:08May21). There was some disagreement with these statements and much laughter, but these village women were pointing out a shift that they saw taking place towards English.

Not only in urban areas, but also in rural areas English is in demand. Not only the
students and the younger generation, but also the older generation is encouraging young people to learn English. Since I was talking about diminished use of Kumauni, my host family in Kausani started teasing the daughter about not speaking Kumauni. But the grandmother then immediately began to explain to me the importance of English. “You can’t go anywhere without English,” she said (H; PQ:08Mar8). An elderly woman who was participating in a Kumauni dance and music presentation at Kumaun University was optimistic about her grandchildren maintaining Kumauni. “They should learn English, though,” she said, “because times have changed” (K; PQ:08Feb27).

The English “craze” -- I was surprised to hear this term being used even in the Kumaun. By a student in Almora. By Dr. Bisht in the Hindi department at Kumaun University: “The English craze is increasing. Now English is an international language” (E; PQ:07Aug19). By a young lawyer in Haldwani: “There is a craze to know English now.... English is vital. If you only had one language, it should be English” (H; PQ:08Jan10). By a young activist associated with the Ashram, who also talked about the craze for television: “There is a big English craze” (H; PQ:06Jul5). At a Gandhian conference: “English is a big craze” (E; PQ:07Oct1). My host father in Kausani agreed that the great demand for English is like a craze (H; FN:08Feb29).

Yet “craze” did not necessarily carry a negative connotation for those who had picked up the term. Even in referring to the English craze, most talked about the importance and value of learning English. Some activists and scholars with whom I consulted outside of the Kumaun said of the English craze, “It’s not so crazy. It’s rational. It gives people the chance to get ahead...” (E; PQ:07Sep14). And “English is not a craze. It’s essential - as long as the elite is entrenching itself as it is. English provides access to jobs. It’s the only way to get ahead” (E; PQ:06Jul12).
**Ashram Views on English**

The Ashram Didis, however, had a different view about the increasing popularity of English. As Shobha-Didi explained:

> English was here before with the British. But then for some time there was an emphasis on using Hindi, recognizing that Hindi is our language and it is enough for us. But now people have become crazy for English. This is related to globalization. So, now people are saying that children should learn English at the same time as they learn Hindi / their mother tongue, starting in first grade. In some English-medium schools children are even punished for speaking in Hindi! This is not good. Language is identity. (E; PQ:08Sep12)

The Ashram Didis would list for me the reasons for learning English and for the girls' desire to study it, but usually with a critique of the importance attached to it in society. They talked about the popularity of English, the society-wide desire and demand for English that seems to them to go beyond the practical usefulness of English. The Ashram's broader critique of the concepts of backwardness and development is discussed in Chapter 9, and their preference for mother-tongue over English-medium education was described in Chapters 6. Here I mention a few of the Didis' explanations for why English is valued so highly in society.

Kamla-Didi said that the main reason for the girls' wanting to study English was to talk to foreigners. This was her primary motivation as well. But: “Also they are thinking that English is very popular now in India. They think without English it is difficult to get some job.” I asked if this was true. “I think -- people give more importance [to] those people who are talking in English also.” She talked about multiple settings in which English would be needed: in nurse's training to learn some medicines, for computers, on television, for some newspapers and books, including important books for the sciences, etc. “Therefore, they think, without English our importance will be not so much in society. Therefore this year in 9th class they took English [as a] subject, because they think like this” (E; DQ:07Aug7). Later she provided more reasons:
...in our offices – in the passport office and in education office – everywhere papers are in English. It is very difficult [for] people to get something... Then our girls also are thinking about this. Then we must know English, they think. (E; DQ:07Aug7)

Saroj-Didi also mentioned the practical importance of English nowadays for understanding official speeches, reading signs, reading medicine labels and instructions, etc. (H; PQ:06May29). These are some of her pet peeves – medicine bottles in English, forms that need to be filled out in English, and the student exam results coming in English. She said that It wasn't like that before. The exam results used to come in Hind, but for some years now they has been coming in English. The results are printed from a computer, and the computer communicates in English, she said. “It really bothers me a lot. They need to take the paper and have someone else read it” (H; PQ:07Nov29). Still, she doesn't like the status reasons for which people run after English, as mentioned in another conversation: “Nowadays people are going to English-medium schools and English is the FASHION. People speak English to make themselves high.” She demonstrated this by sitting up straight and saying in a proper voice: “I know English. I am important” (H). But she thinks that English is not really important. She doesn't like it. “Nowadays English has grown so much... so sometimes it is needed. But I can say, 'Cindy, help me read this.' Or 'Lisa, help me read this.' So someone can always help me” (H; PQ:07Dec8). From this perspective, when there are others available to help, when the community is there to provide support, there is no need for every individual to learn English.

In another conversation, I talked with Kamla-Didi about changes in language and dress. She said that people are now giving more importance to English. “The people who have the chance to learn English, learn it. Those who have no chance -- they inside feel that: 'We are below and they are up’” (E; PQ:07Sep12). She highlights the privilege of being able to learn English, the status associated with it, and the inferiority felt by those
who have not had the opportunity. The economics involved in that opportunity are obvious. “The environment is like this,” she said. “Poor people, rich people -- all want to learn. The rich people have money and they go to English school and learn English. But poor people-- how can they? They have no money to learn English” (E; PQ:07Sep12).

Kamla-Didi also talked about the use of English in the national government. Knowledge of English is associated with political power as well.

But at the local level the prestige involved with learning English or attending an English-medium school, as represented by a sharp school uniform, may be more important, as Shobha-Didi points out: “Everyone wants English-medium education: the nice tie, etc. But this is just outward/external, not inward/internal. They don’t think about the full development of the child” (E; PQ:06Jul23). I transition now to discussion of the value of Hindi, the default language of education in the Kumaun.

**Hindi as National Language**

“Why didn't you learn Hindi? Having gone to Kausani, haven't you learned Hindi?” (H). This is a question that Rekha heard when she used Kumauni during an initial visit to her home village. Rekha has been at Lakshmi Ashram from the very beginning, she tells me, since Class 1. When she first went home from school for winter break as a young child, she spoke Kumauni at home. That is when her [younger paternal] aunt asked her why she wasn’t speaking Hindi. Her aunt and uncle speak Kumauni with each other but Hindi with their own children and with her. Rekha’s own mother understands Hindi, but only speaks Kumauni, so with her mother she uses Kumauni. Nowadays, Rekha said, she can use Kumauni and no one says anything. But when she was young, her aunt encouraged her to speak Hindi. After thinking about her story for a moment, Rekha told me: “My aunt said that because in comparison with Hindi, Kumauni seems rather small” (H; PQ:07Oct8). Hindi may seem small in the
international context, but it is still in the position to make other languages seem small in the village context. It is interesting to contrast the social pressure experienced by Rekha to show off her newly learned Hindi as a child with that experienced by Govindi as an older student to minimize her differences after moving to the village by speaking Kumauni.

While Himani had told me that her favorite language is Kumauni, she feels that Hindi is the most important language. Why? “Because Hindi works anywhere you go. For writing, you need Hindi. Reading/studying comes in Hindi” (H; DQ:07Oct30). Sunita said that her favorite language is Hindi. Why? “Because you can know everything in Hindi. Each other's views, etc. But now onwards, English.” She said that the best language for school is Hindi for now, because everyone understands it (H; DQ:07Oct23).

Hindi is the language of the school and of the town. It serves for most official functions in the region. Hindi, I was told, is the language of movies, tourism, and business. It is the language of the offices. It is the language of education, including higher education, and of administration in the region. It is the language of job interviews. The judicial language is still English, but now Hindi is being used more. It is the common language. It is also praised as a “rich language,” as a language used over a large area, and as a language of writing and of literature. In the Kumaun, Hindi seems in many ways to be the default language when compared with Kumauni on one hand and with English on the other. As in Rekha's example, above, Hindi is encouraged at the expense of Kumauni. Yet, in light of the growing demand for English and English-medium education, Hindi sometimes seems in need of promotion.

Hindi is the language of the urban areas in the Kumaun, and is increasingly the language of the children. A young teacher in Almora speaks Hindi with his own children. He and his wife both used Kumauni in their own homes growing up, but now use Hindi
with their children. Why? “Because in the city environment everyone uses Hindi,” his wife told me (H; PQ:07Aug19). A Hindi professor who has done much work in Kumauni told me that he does not use it with his own children. They understand it, but don’t speak it. Why? His wife has mainly been in the cities, so she speaks Hindi with them. “This is the natural practice. In the villages people speak Kumauni, but the city is a Hindi environment,” he said (E/H; PQ:07Aug20). In the villages too, Hindi is becoming the language of the next generation. The children in my own host family in Kausani did not speak Kumauni even though it was used frequently in the household and neighborhood among the older generations. A friend told me about speaking Kumauni with some children in his village, just for fun, conducting his own personal experiment. Their parents stopped him and told him to speak Hindi for the sake of the children (FN:08Jan22). There is clear evidence that Kumauni and Hindi do not have equal status for these parents who favor Hindi for their children.

The status of Hindi as national language is important in the discourses of the Kumaunis with whom I spoke. Many North Indians consider Hindi to be the national language, even though it is named as official language, alongside English, and not as national language in the Constitution, as described in Chapter 5. As national language, Hindi is seen as a uniting language. People are not able to understand each others’ languages and only through Hindi can they understand each other, I was told. Above the desk in the principal’s office at the Central School [Kendriya Vidyalay] in Kausani, a school valued locally for providing better access to English than other schools, was a handwritten sign in large, bold Hindi: “Hindi is our national language. Therefore promote Hindi” (FN:07July18). When I asked about the sign, the principal explained: “Our first language is Hindi. Then we need English for survival in our country” (E; PQ:07July18). Kumauni seemed to be invisible in this context.
Hindi was promoted around the time of independence as the national language in opposition to English as the colonial language, while in recent years English is being increasingly seen, instead, as an important international language, as described in the previous section. Dr. Joshi, a Kumauni scholar and activist in the state capitol, Dehradun, explained that: “For a number of years -- I would say for almost fifty years after independence -- the general policy has been -- it has been a policy, particularly in the state of UP and in many other states -- that you reduce the importance given to English. And increase the importance given to the national language, Hindi, or to the mother tongue” (E; DQ:07Sept15).

At Lakshmi Ashram and among Gandhians in particular, Hindi has been promoted as the national language in opposition to English. In my conversations with the Didis at Lakshmi Ashram, I frequently heard a preference for Hindi as opposed to English. As Kamla-Didi said, “We give more importance to Hindi. Gandhi-ji gave more importance to Hindi” (E; PQ:07Sep12). Shobha-Didi also talked critically of the current craze for English, even punishment for using Hindi in some schools, saying “This is not good. Language is identity.” (E; PQ:07Sep12). Kamla-Didi made a similar association with the Hindi language and the local identity and culture. When seen in light of a Hindi-English comparison, the point is clear. Of the students, she said, “First they have to learn Hindi, after that English. Otherwise, they don’t know Hindi. Hindi and our culture, they are very related. Very near. [If they don’t learn Hindi first] our culture also is going to change with the English language” (E; DQ:07Aug7). Later she explained the transition to English, all too common in her view:

In our society, people are thinking about their children, [that] they have to learn English also. But, we -- we and Sarala Behen and Gandhi-ji -- they think it is necessary to know Hindi first. If we know Hindi very well, after that as a language we can learn English also. First Hindi. (E; DQ:07Aug7).
The value for Hindi was put into action at the Ashram. During the month of April, when the materials had not yet arrived for the new academic year, the Didis decided that the girls should focus on improving their Hindi, both essays and grammar. Through the window of the Class 6 classroom, I saw Saroj-Didi sitting with the students. She was looking at an essay in someone's notebook while the other students were scattered around the room and at the window, writing essays in Hindi. One afternoon at the school meeting, Meena-Didi commented on the essays that the girls had written for the Ashram's in-house newsletter. First she thanked the girls for their essays. She also pointed out that there were some problems with their language [in the essays], for example with the spelling and the vowel markings.

You need to pay attention! This is our language! The message may be good, but it won't get through if the medium is bad. We don't know enough English to write in English - and we don't need to. We also have Kumauni, but we don't write that. So, we just have our language, Hindi, at our disposal. We need to know it well. (H; PQ:07Dec10)

She talked about the importance of practicing through the diaries that they write every day. “Pay attention to your writing!” (H; PQ:07Dec10).

The Ashram students also expressed the value of Hindi as the national language. Asha talked about how in South India, there is more English, so in the house there is English, as well as in the school. “They are completely English-valé [ones] in South India,” she said. That doesn’t seem good to her. “Because their real language is Hindi, na [right]?” (H; DQ:07Oct5). I questioned whether Hindi is the language of South Indians.

Meaning, our whole country's language is Hindi. In South India there's also Hindi, there's Tamil for the people of Tamil Nadu; for Kerala, Malayalam language... [But] There they don't speak Tamil or Hindi, they just speak straight English. They don't even know Hindi or Tamil. That doesn't seem good to me. But, like here -- here we learn a little English to be able to carry on work -- that much we know... But they should know their own country language, their own state language. (H; DQ:07Oct5)

Here Asha is tapping into and exaggerating two issues simultaneously: the tendency of
the urban elite to use English increasingly and the tendency of South Indians to reject Hindi. In either situation, Hindi seems to be the language in need of promotion.

Similarly, Rekha told me that she doesn't like it when some (Indian) people who live here don't know Hindi. “Because people who live here should learn the language here,” she said. She doesn't like English-medium schools. “People should know their own language! It's ok for them to learn other languages also, but they should know their own,” she said (H; PQ:07Dec1). Here she was referring to knowledge of Hindi as opposed to English. I didn't push her as to whether that would include knowing Kumauni.

In discussion with a Hindi professor at Kumaun University in Nainital, I asked about the Gandhian institutions' tendency to avoid English, preferring to use Hindi in their meetings. “The Gandhians are in a different framework,” she explained, mentioning one of the current leaders who was around during the fight for independence when there was a push to choose Hindi over English. “There at the Ashram, they don't get any chili in their food, everyone washes their own plate, they work in the field.” For this professor, the Ashram's choice of Hindi over English is just another example of their different framework or mindset. “They are not after money like the other NGOs, but are content with their simple life” (E; PQ:07Aug23).

**Sanskrit as Root Language**

“Do you think people use language differently than they did in the past?,” I asked Asha one morning as we sat together on a large heap of pine needles on the wooded hillside overlooking the Ashram. She was on duty watching for the cows to return from their grazing, but had time for an interview.

Yes! Village people speak just Pahari [Kumauni]. But some people speak Hindi and Kumauni together. In India there is a lot of English. Many people speak English; like South Indians, they all speak English. It is not our language, right? And our root language, meaning, old language, is Sanskrit... But no people are speaking Sanskrit. It is Hindi’s mother language. Because Hindi came from
Sanskrit. Sanskrit was from the time of the gods. It has changed so much! Now no one speaks Sanskrit! That they don’t speak it is not a good thing. Because forgetting your own culture -- your old times -- is not good... One should not forget one’s culture.

I liked the old times. The time of the gods. In the forest the gurus lived in little cottages. Their students came and took care of them, bringing firewood and water. They didn’t have notebooks to write, but used wooden slates. They took care of the gurus, touching their feet. The guru was very respected. (H: PQ:07Sep25)

Asha's association of Sanskrit with the “time of the gods” ties in naturally with her praise of the traditional Indian education system, with student apprentice and respected teacher or guru. The forgetting of one’s own culture was in this context associated with Sanskrit and the old times of ancient history. When I had asked her about changes in language use, I was initially more interested in the changing status of Kumauni. Although she mentioned the use of Hindi with Kumauni and the increasing use of English, she turned the conversation to the more distant past and to the language that represents it.

The association of Sanskrit with Hinduism contributes to the value of Sanskrit for Kumaunis, who are known for being spiritual people. While there are a small percentage of Muslim and Christian Kumaunis, the vast majority are Hindu. Local buses and jeeps will often stop at roadside temples so that the priest can pass around the puja tray for worshipers to mark their foreheads with colored paste and rice kernels. Even when the bus does not stop, many passengers and drivers acknowledge the numerous little temples along the road with a silent namaskar, the common greeting with palms together, fingers pointing upward in front of the chest, and a slight bow. Sanskrit is used in prayers and in the rituals of the priest, and is the language of the Hindu scriptures.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a political party holding the majority in the Uttarakhand government during my fieldwork and known for Hindu fundamentalism, has promoted Sanskrit education, initiating new policies, to be discussed below.
Sanskrit is also considered to be the root language for both Hindi and Kumauni. One of the Hindi professors at Kumaun University explained the teaching of Sanskrit in this way:

Sanskrit is important as the original language. Just as knowing Latin makes it easier to learn other European languages, so knowing Sanskrit is important. It is most important for study. It is not spoken. It is important for accessing old literature, old books of knowledge. It is also important linguistically. The origin is the same as English. I think that Sanskrit is more rich and has the most systematic grammar in the world... Now there is a new policy that high school and Inter-college Hindi teachers need to have also passed Sanskrit. Since it is the origin of Hindi, they will be able to teach Hindi better. In addition they would be qualified to teach both Hindi and Sanskrit. (E; PQ:08Feb25)

As another example of the value of Sanskrit, this professor added that: “Since it has the most systematic grammar it can help in making computer languages. People are using it in that way already” (E; PQ:08Feb25). Govindi also talked about Sanskrit being the best language for computers. “Computers understand binary language. There is software in many languages. But the easiest language for typing is Sanskrit” (H; PQ:08Apr21). She had read this in the newspaper, she said. Being associated with computers certainly gives value to a language. More often I heard computers being associated with English, the ability to get a highly valued job with computers being contingent upon one’s knowledge of English.

I had originally not considered Sanskrit to be an important part of the multilingual situation in the Kumaun. However, I learned that it does play an important role, not only in religion, but also in education. When I mentioned the three languages that students deal with in the Kumaun: English, Hindi, and Kumauni, Ms. Sharma quickly added Sanskrit. Her students at the Junior Girls Government School in Kausani actually deal with four languages (H; FN:07Aug14). Sometimes school administrators and teachers would overlook Kumauni and only mention the languages taught as subjects in the school: Hindi, English, and Sanskrit.
Sanskrit is most often mentioned as a school subject or in the context of fulfilling school requirements, but the reasons for its importance are also articulated. “Sanskrit is taught for religious and cultural purposes,” Ms. Sharma told me. “It is a national language” (H; PQ:07Aug14). The Sanskrit teacher at the Central Government School enjoys using spoken Sanskrit occasionally, though few understand it. “Here they teach Sanskrit because it is the root language. It is part of the Three Language Formula all over India” (H; PQ:07Jul18), he told me. These teachers were showing their awareness of Sanskrit’s status as listed among the scheduled languages in the Constitution and thus as being able to fulfill the requirement of a third language in the Three Language Formula.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the original intent of the Three Language Formula was to encourage the teaching and learning of the languages of other Indian states, besides Hindi. However, the inclusion of Sanskrit as one of the scheduled languages in the Constitution provided an opening for the practice common throughout north India of using Sanskrit as the third language alongside Hindi and English. This practice seemed quite natural to educators in the Kumaun. In the words of the GIC principal: “English is the international language, Hindi the national language, and Sanskrit the historical language” (H; PQ:08Feb20).

In our interview, scholar and activist Dr. Joshi referred to this use of Sanskrit as the third language, with a laugh, as “subversion of the three-language formula” (E; DQ:07Sep15). This practice of teaching Sanskrit as the third language rather than a South Indian language contrasts with the criticism of South Indians by North Indians for not knowing Hindi. The position of Hindi as the “national language,” at least in the minds of many North Indians, is the rationale.

At Lakshmi Ashram, the Didis also talked about the importance of Sanskrit. Saroj-Didi teaches Sanskrit to some of the older classes. She explained that
Sanskrit is compulsory “because it is related to our culture, to Kumauni culture. So it is important to learn Sanskrit” (H; PQ:07Dec8). Previously, Sanskrit was the only language taught after Class 8 at the Ashram, with both Sanskrit and English being taught in the lower grades as appropriate for the Uttarakhand curriculum. Although the Class 9 girls at the Ashram had chosen English for their high school exams, they decided to study Sanskrit as well in case they didn’t pass the English exam, since they only need to pass one language besides Hindi.

The practical importance of Sanskrit for the students educationally in and outside of the Ashram comes from its position as an alternative to English in the high school (9th and 10th) and intermediate college (11th and 12th) exams. At the GIC in Kausani, few of the girls had chosen English in Class 11 and 12. During the 2007-2008 academic year, 4 out of the 36 girls in Classes 11 and 12 at the GIC were studying science and English, compared to 26 out of 73 boys. According to the teachers, most of the girls choose Sanskrit because it is easier. They want to learn English, but they choose Sanskrit. They aren’t really interested in knowing Sanskrit, but know that it is an easier class, according to the teachers. The girls who do take English are the ones taking science, since English is required or at least strongly encouraged for science students. All other students would take Sanskrit, making it the default language subject. This position of Sanskrit seems quite different from that of classical languages in the US, where learning a classical language in high school is associated with more advanced students.

Besides the importance of Sanskrit in secondary education, some schools are focusing on Sanskrit for training priests and Sanskrit teachers. I was surprised to learn that Himani’s brother had gone to Sanskrit school in Haldwani. “Just like we study in Hindi here, with all of the books in Hindi, they study in Sanskrit there... Even small children are sent there,” she said (H; PQ:07Oct11). I asked Himani what her brother
would do after finishing this school. She said that they had thought he could become a *pandit* [priest]. The students who finish that school should be able to find work. Some of the students become priests and some can become Sanskrit teachers.

**Current promotion of Sanskrit**

From several levels of the education system, I heard about an upcoming policy change that would introduce Sanskrit in Class 1 of primary school, just as English had recently been introduced in Class 1, and would require Sanskrit for all students through the high school level. The reason given by the GIC principal, Mr. Pant, was “because it is the language of our Vedas [Hindu scriptures]” (H; PQ:08Feb12). He explained that this is a decision from Dehradun, the state capitol. The District Education Officer in charge of primary education in Bageshwar told me that: “Now, just three months ago, Uttarakhand has initiated a special focus on Sanskrit... In each district there will be a Sanskrit village. There will be a Sanskrit high school in each district” (H; PQ:08Mar27).

In regards to the policies of the new BJP government in Uttarakhand, a teacher-trainer at the District Institute for Educational Training (DIET) in Bageshwar told me that language is a political question.

There are many political parties. I don't know the stance of each one, but each could be different. Now the government has made Sanskrit and yoga compulsory. Sanskrit is promoted because it is about our Indian culture. The Vedas are all written in Sanskrit. If the government wants Kumauni and Garwhali to be a language, they could do it. (H; PQ:08Mar27)

To make something a language in this context, seemed to mean to make it a school subject. Sanskrit has that status and Kumauni does not. Two issues are conflated here: the recognition of a language in the Constitution and the teaching of a language as a school subject. Since Sanskrit is recognized in the Constitution, it becomes a legitimate school subject.

At the highest level of educational administration in the state, the Director of the
Uttarakhand Department of Education, Mr. N.N. Pandey, spoke with me in his office in Dehradun. Regarding the new Sanskrit requirements, he said that it had been there previously. He also provided an explanation for its further promotion under the current government:

Sanskrit was taught as part of the Hindi language course. When they started the [national] CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) pattern three years back, Hindi and Sanskrit were separated.... Now Sanskrit will be part of the Hindi paper [exam]. They will start having Sanskrit from Class 1, as it used to be. There would be a small booklet for Sanskrit along with the Hindi course for 1st through 12th. The reasons for this change are:

1. A political decision. Under the BJP, culture is promoted. Sanskrit used to be prominent. Uttarakhand is known as the state of the gods.
2. Hindi's origin is in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is a very scientific language. Especially in Uttarakhand, Sanskrit should continue to be prominent.
3. It was a practice earlier. Hindi words came from Sanskrit. Children who are good in Sanskrit will also be good in Hindi. (E; FN:08Apr2).

The first reason represents the value of Sanskrit in Hinduism. The second, reflects the value of Sanskrit as a classical language; and the third points to the value of Sanskrit as a root language. While explaining for me the purposes behind the new policy, Mr. Pandey did not offer an explicit value judgment of it. Rather, he talked about the policies as something that he is called upon to implement. Even from his position, Mr. Pandey does not feel empowered to influence decisions like this. The policies are handed down to him from the politicians, and he laments their lack of consultation with educationalists in such decisions.

Another conversation in Dehradun was with Dr. Joshi, a scholar who pays careful attention to the education situation in his state. He had heard from the newspaper about the plans for further promotion of Sanskrit. He sees it as a result of the political party's desire to promote their ideological agenda in education. “Why I'm concerned about it is because if you introduce new subjects, children, even up to the high school level, can only take so much. And in today's world, I don't know if Sanskrit can get them too far.” He
talked about the limited employment opportunities and the economic implications.

And so we have a large number of educated unemployed. And we either have to provide them with job opportunities or equip them in such a way that they can get jobs in the wider market. Now, is this [teaching of Sanskrit] going to do that? Is that our priority or not? (E; DQ:07Sep15)

He wasn't sure how serious the government was about implementing this new policy.

“We are still experimenting with education,” he said. “One government switched over to this CBSE. The other government now wants to introduce Sanskrit. So, it's a lot of confusion... because you just don't reverse a decision every year” (E; DQ:07Sep15).

The complaint is sometimes made by education activists in India that government officials who make decisions for government schools do not send their own children to the schools influenced by those policies. They, of course, send their own children to more expensive, likely English-medium, schools. Experimentation with education becomes experimentation on the poor, as the recipients of government school education.

Sanskrit is valued as a classical language, the root language, and as the language of the Hindu scriptures. Yet at a practical level, it is often studied in order to pass exams. The position of Sanskrit in education was not questioned by the Kumaunis that I spoke with in the rural Kumaun. It fulfills the language requirement in place of the more difficult English and is now being promoted early in primary schools alongside English. While the Kumauni language enjoys no such promotion, it too has a value of its own.

**Kumauni as “Our language”**

Asha talked about how sweet their own language, Kumauni, is: “Meaning, it's a sweet language. Among one's own people. It's such a good language,” she said. She thought it would be good if everyone spoke Kumauni. “The old ways. The old times would come forward” (H; DQ:07Oct5). About ten days before, we had had our previous
interview in which she associated Sanskrit with the old times, the times of the gods –
times not to be forgotten. But this conversation had focused on Kumauni and its use
compared with other languages. While English is needed for one class and Hindi is the
language to be used at school, Asha said, “those to use at home are Hindi and Pahari
both, according to our desire... Because Kumauni should also be our desire. It should be
kept. It should be kept alive. It should not be thrown out” (H; DQ:07Oct5).

Sometimes Sunita speaks Hindi with her father instead of Kumauni, she told me.
Would she ever forget Kumauni? “Never!” She went on to explain:

It’s like this. Suppose there is a mother. Like, I am a mother and I have a
daughter. She could never forget me. That’s how Kumauni is for me. Kumauni is
like my mother. And if I go outside of this area, I could never forget Kumauni.
Like that. Kumauni should never be forgotten. (H; DQ:07Oct23)

When asked about her language preferences, Himani said that she likes Kumauni the
most. Although she said that, in light of today’s world, it seems likely that some day in
the future Kumauni will no longer be spoken, she doesn’t like the idea of people letting it
go: “I like my own language,” she said (H; DQ:07Oct16). Manju too said that she likes
Pahari the best of all languages because it is her mother tongue. Then when asked which
language is most important, she replied: “In their own place, each is important” (H;
DQ:07Oct26).

Although Asha, Sunita, and Manju were socialized for many years at Lakshmi
Ashram, I don’t think that their valuing of Kumauni can be attributed solely to Ashram
influence. I found in general in the Kumaun a value for Kumauni in its role as the
language of the home and the village community. This is the first of two themes that I
noticed in the girls’ comments about Kumauni, besides the valuing of Kumauni in
general: “In their own place, each is important.” The second is the attitude towards
possible loss of Kumauni. That Kumauni may one day give way to Hindi and English was
not an issue at the forefront of their minds. Still most thought that it was possible or probable, but should not be so.

**The Value of Kumauni: “In Their Own Place, Each is Important.”**

Just as English, Hindi, and Sanskrit are each important in their place, Kumauni also has an important place, especially in the lives of rural Kumaunis but for some urban Kumaunis as well. I heard Kumauni referred to as the mother tongue and the birth language. “It is my mother’s breast,” one senior government school teacher told me. “It is capable of expressing its own feeling... As a Kumauni, I express my thoughts best in Kumauni,” he said (H; PQ:07Oct14). An elderly Kumauni musician told me that, yes, Kumauni should be taught. “In our houses, we have the local gods,” he said. “We use Kumauni for the sake of the gods” (H; PQ:08Feb27).

Several faculty members at the Nainital branch of Kumaun University articulated for me the value of Kumauni, as we sat together in one of their offices. Kumauni is a language that makes you feel like you’re in a family, that brings closeness, I heard. “You can fight better in Kumauni,” a Hindi professor told me, with a smile. “It is a language of intimacy. We hug someone in our own mother tongue” (E; PQ:07Aug23). Sociology Professor, Dr. Bisht, said that his son doesn’t know Kumauni well, but when he talks to him on the phone from where he lives [in the plains], he makes some effort to use Kumauni. This was on his own initiative and brings Dr. Bisht pleasure, he says. Kumauni is used informally. It is their own dialect, for affinity, for emotional attachment. Hindi is one degree more formal, and English one step even more formal. Kumauni gives a “we feeling” an English lecturer sitting with us explained. Just then another faculty member passed by the office where we were sitting and Dr. Joshi pointed him out as a colleague who uses a lot of Kumauni with his peers (E; FN:07Aug23). As Almora Hindi Professor Diva Bhatt explained: “The Kumauni people like their language, but the new generation
knows it less, especially in the urban areas... The people love Kumauni, but they can’t
develop it because they can’t go ahead or progress with it” (E; PQ:07Aug10).

Kumauni is taught at Kumaun University through a literature course at the BA
level. It is an exam for the 3rd year, I was told. The undergraduate requirement is called
Janupadi Bhasha Sahitiya and involves both Kumauni and Garhwali literature since it is
a similar course for all of the colleges in Utterakhand. The Kumaunis that I spoke with
who knew about this academic status of Kumauni were proud to tell me about it.

Sometimes I would ask individuals whether or not they thought Kumauni should
be used in the school. Often they would simply tell me that Kumauni is not in the schools
– or that it wouldn’t be. But some said that if the government would decide to put it in
the schools, they would like it. “I would like it,” Asha said, “because it’s my own language.
Then it would reach very, very far. It will be successful” (H; DQ:07Oct5). Otherwise
Kumauni is accepted as the spoken language of the home and the village, as discussed in
Chapter 6.

Besides its intimate role within the home, I heard praise of the uniqueness of
Kumauni for expressing certain concepts. Dr. Ravat, who has been promoting the
recognition of Kumauni by the government, talked about the strong and rich flavor that
the Kumauni language has, with its idioms, etc. For example, in English there is the word
“smell” and in Hindi it would be gand, but in Kumauni there are fifteen different words,
depending on the different smells. These Kumauni words can be used to say something
that would need to be described in a whole sentence in another language (FN:07Oct14).
Similarly, a young teacher and his father had fun sharing words and expressions that are
unique to Kumauni. There was a special word for very spicy chili. That cannot be
expressed in any other language, they said. Nowadays people use the Hindi word for
cold. It means regular cold. But the Kumauni word that they mentioned means “biting
cold.” They also mentioned a Kumauni word for “hot” that actually means “warm,” pointing out the nuances of the words. The young teacher said that he has had the advantage of living with old people out in a remote area when he was growing up. That is why he knows all these words. They mentioned the Kumauni words for blood, belly and walk. The Kumauni word for belly, they said, means “big belly.” The young teacher got up and showed that there are different Kumauni words for different ways of walking (FN:07Oct14).


The role of Kumauni as the spoken language of the home and village sets it apart from Hindi as a language of the school and wider society. Even in making this distinction, however, my rural friends talked about the importance of valuing and maintaining Kumauni. Regarding the greater honor given to Hindi, one of the young teachers at the Ashram said:

I don’t like it because Kumauni also has some honor [mahatva]. People think when they are at home that Kumauni has some honor, but then they go outside and they see that Hindi is more important. No one understands them when they speak Kumauni. They see that Hindi has honor, and they start thinking that Kumauni doesn’t. (H; PQ:07Dec1)

It is in going outside of the home and the village, to the urban areas and to the plains, that Kumaunis face the diminished role and diminished honor for the Kumauni language.

Not surprisingly, Kumauni is treated quite differently in the urban areas where Hindi and English dominate, even in the towns of the Kumaun foothills such as Almora and Nainital. In the state capital of Dehradun, I met Kumaunis who had been raised outside of the Kumaun and still use Kumauni regularly in their home; but I also met a woman from Almora working at the Department of Education in Dehradun who said of
the Kumaun: “What local language? They speak Hindi there! Who speaks Kumauni now? They use Kumauni very little there now” (E; PQ:08Apr2).

I spoke with a group of adult students at an English language institute in Almora. They said that they thought that people do respect the Kumauni language. Some spoke up and said: “I do respect it.” But I got a different story when talking individually with one of the students I asked her about what she did with her students who came to school not knowing Hindi. She used to teach primary school but has just recently been transferred to middle school. She said that they learn Hindi. She laughs at them when they say something wrong. She says that children make good jokes / can provide a lot of humor (FN:07Aug24). This teacher seems to ridicule her students’ home language, even though it is also her own. Or at least she is amused at their attempts to learn Hindi. Her attitude towards Kumauni comes out even more clearly when she talks about her daughter's language use. She told me that she doesn’t want her 3-year-old daughter to learn Kumauni. Why? Because “Kumauni is a bad language.” She says that her daughter will learn it on her own from her in-laws when they come to visit (E; PQ:07Aug24).

A science student with whom I spoke on the Kumaun University campus, on hearing about my research, told me that she does speak Pahari at home. But “people think badly of Pahari,” she said. “They HATE Pahari,” she said, making a face of disgust. She spoke with me in Hindi, but used the English word HATE (H; PQ:08Feb25).

Hearing reactions like this to Kumauni in the urban area helps me to understand some of the stereotypes that I heard from non-Kumaunis living in the region (and helps me to appreciate my access to the rural perspectives). A young woman who had been raised in the Kumaun by Punjabi parents compared the tendency of Kumaunis to give up their language to that of Punjabis who tend to keep their own. “They don't even want to converse in Kumauni,” one student said during a group discussion in an English...
teacher's class at Kumaun University. Another student responded to this: “I speak Kumauni at home!” Someone said she thought that only Shah families [a particular caste] still speak Kumauni. “It depends on the eagerness to use Kumauni.” One girl said that she is trying to learn Kumauni since her husband is Kumauni. When she was young, her parents refused to let her go out and play with the Kumauni children, so she didn't learn it then (E; PQ:08Feb25).

The stereotypes and assumptions picked up by non-Kumaunis are influenced by what people see in public. In urban areas in particular, the language of the home may not be heard frequently outside of the home in public places, especially if there is fear of its being negatively received. Urban Kumaunis seem more likely to assume that Kumauni is safe in the villages. As long as there are villages, there will be Kumauni. Meanwhile villagers themselves are experiencing the push towards Hindi and English. When I forced the question about the future of Kumauni, many of the young women foresaw the rise of Hindi and English at the expense of Kumauni. Still, many shared Asha's sentiments about Kumauni as well: “It should be kept. It should be kept alive. It should not be thrown out” (H; DQ:07Oct5).

Evidence of action for the Kumauni language include the continuing work of Kumauni poets and writers, the Kumauni magazine *Dudh Boli*, the work of Kumaun University professors in dialect studies and standardization, and the work of Dr. Ravat in promoting Kumauni recognition at the government level and in holding Kumauni essay contests at high schools. A seminar hosted by local journalists in Kausani took up the theme of Kumauni: Past, Present, and Future. These broader initiatives have little immediate impact on the lives of Kumauni young women.

More important to them, perhaps, is an implicit valuing of Kumauni that is maintained at Lakshmi Ashram and, it seems to me, in the villages as well. The daily
informal use of Kumauni among teachers and students does not get much attention. Still it stands in contrast with the schools where home languages are prohibited and with the notorious boarding schools around the world where home languages have been squelched.

At the Ashram, Kamla-Didi initiated the idea several years ago of having a “Kumauni Day” or a “Kumauni Evening” in which everyone would speak Kumauni. She explained to me her reasoning:

I thought our children are going to forget our Kumauni language and they are shy in talking Kumauni. They prefer Hindi. Therefore, I thought it is not good because the Kumauni language is very necessary for our life — for village life. We go into villages and then this is very necessary, to talk in Kumauni. (E; PQ:07Aug7)

Kamla-Didi talked about needing to set an environment for Kumauni for the girls to take interest in it. I was told that the Ashram sometimes has these Kumauni evenings, but never saw it happening. The other Didis have not picked up on or helped with the idea very much.

Kamla-Didi went on to explain why the girls would be shy of speaking Kumauni. They speak their own language at home. It is Kumauni, since it is in the Kumaun region, but there are different varieties. It is not the same from region to region. The slight differences include pronunciation and the verb forms at the end of sentences. For this reason, she said, “the children are shy.... They think: 'Oh, my language is like this, and she is talking like [that].' Therefore they talk in Hindi” (E; PQ:07Aug7). The girls are not ashamed of speaking Kumauni itself, it seems, but rather some were afraid of speaking a variety of Kumauni that is different from the others. Still, this did not seem to be a big enough issue to prevent frequent informal exchanges in Kumauni as students and teachers worked together in the gardens and went about the routines of life at the Ashram.
Language Environment and Language Relationships

So far this chapter has described the value placed upon multilingualism and upon each of the languages relevant to life in the Kumaun. Each is considered to be important in its own place and in its own role. The value given to multilingualism is tied to this acceptance of each language as belonging with a particular place or domain. This has implications also for beliefs about language acquisition and language maintenance. While each language is valued in its place and role, the status of those places and roles has to do with the relationships between the various languages – the ways that they compare and the ways that they influence each other. Using the ecology of language metaphor, we can say that in a particular language environment, the languages evolve and become endangered in relationship with one another.

Language and Location

In my discussions with Kumaunis about language, I began to notice a frequent association of language with place, particularly of the Kumauni language with the mountainous region of the Kumaun. The connection between language and place also relates to the different domains of use of the various languages, with Kumauni as the language of the home and village and Hindi as the language of the school and the outside, although some overlap is still common and acceptable. Those who go outside of the Kumaun use more Hindi, and those who stay in the villages use more Kumauni. As Saroj-Didi said, “There is a place for Kumauni and a place for Hindi” (H; PQ:07Dec8).

The sociocultural environment or atmosphere [mahaul] is understood also to be important both for language learning and for language maintenance, as described below. I asked the Class 12 students at the Kausani GIC about language use in the various phases of life or age groups. Here too the language atmosphere emerged as particularly
relevant for patterns of language use:

...one of the girls said that it depends upon the atmosphere [mahaul] -- what people around them are speaking. If they are in a village, they will speak Kumauni. If they are in a city, they will speak Hindi. She said the same about the other age groups also. They said that it would be different if they were living in Delhi. (H; FN:08Apr22)

From this description it seems that location, and more specifically the community of speakers in which one is immersed, is much more important than age in determining language use patterns. Still, the association of language with particular places does not preclude overlap or mixed language use in each setting.

Learning and using the language of the place seemed a very natural thing. Kumaunis who had lived in different regions outside of the Kumaun talked about learning the local language of that region. A man in the village of Dhaulara explained this to me with the popular saying: *Jaise desh, vaise bhesh* [As the country, so the dress]. Those who migrate to the plains for work, thus, learn to communicate in the local languages there. My Kausani host, Mr. Bhandari, said that when he was growing up, they usually used Hindi in the home, since the family lived in various places throughout India, following his father's transfers in the police force. They also learned the *boli* [spoken language] of each region where they stayed: When in Lucknow they learned the *boli* there; when in Delhi, they learned the *boli* there (H; FN:08Jan14).

Although few outsiders migrate to villages in the Kumaun, those living there are expected to use Kumauni. As Govindi had said: “If you live in the mountains, you should know the Pahari language. That's why we learned Pahari” (H; DQ:07Oct24). Govindi’s story shows evidence of social pressure in the villages towards use of Kumauni, at least for older girls. Similarly Himani and Pushba, in a joint interview, talked about Pahari women making fun of English and sometimes even of Hindi in the villages. “If we speak English,” Himani said, “they will make fun of us.... Meaning, they would say: 'Have you
come from abroad that you speak English?” (H; DQ:07Oct16). Thus, excessive use of English or of Hindi in the Kumauni village setting is marked as inappropriate. This preservation of Kumauni as the appropriate language for the village seems to me a positive sign for the maintenance of Kumauni and for the role of the village women in socially enforcing it.

Even though the use of Hindi overflows into the village context, there are some limits to the extent of its use, as experienced by Himani, Pushba, and as described at the beginning of this chapter, by Govindi. The village women, through mocking the unnecessary use of Hindi or English by community members, influence what is considered to be strange in the village.

And yet Hindi and English are becoming more accepted and promoted, especially for children. Hindi is sometimes talked about as the language to be used with children, even in the village. It could be that the young women with whom I spoke are transitioning from childhood and are now expected to use more Kumauni, while Hindi is expected from school children. Or it could be that, bolstered by the sudden increase in educational access, the children of today experience things quite differently than their older siblings. The snap-shots I was able to glean of the current situation in the Kumaun cannot prove which is true.

**Environment and Community for Language Acquisition**

In talking about language learning, I frequently heard about the importance of being immersed in the environment of a language for efficient language learning, and the difficulty of learning without being immersed in the language environment. Young people lamented their lack of English skills, saying that if they were immersed in an English atmosphere, they could learn easily. English is difficult to learn in the Kumaun because it cannot be learned naturally and there is no natural environment for learning
it. But those who immerse themselves in the language of a particular area will learn it naturally. This is how the Ashram girls who came as young children to the Ashram talked about their own learning of Hindi and also how they maintained optimism for my ability to learn Kumauni.

While Govindi experienced the pressure to use the language of the local place when she moved into the village atmosphere as a pre-teen, that same village atmosphere provided the context that facilitated her language acquisition. Recognizing the importance of the linguistic surroundings in learning a language, she talked about the village atmosphere in describing her own acquisition of Kumauni:

First old women spoke it [with us]: 'What is your name?' (K)... We/I said, 'How would that be said in Hindi?' (H)... We just understood the word naam [name]. So the sense started to come... Then, like this, we did everything with our hands (H) (moving her hands)... 'What is your name?' (K). Then we started to understand that she must definitely be asking our name... So, sometimes we got the sense and sometimes we asked someone – people like papa. (H; DQ:07Oct24)

Govindi remembers hearing again and again: 'Tum ka jaan cha?' (K) [Where are you going?]. She asked: “Papa, how would you say tum ka jaan cha in Hindi?” And her father would tell her: “Where are you going” (H; DQ:07Oct24). She said:

In that way -- because there in the village in the whole atmosphere [mahaul], there are Kumauni speakers, so day and night we were hearing Kumauni. So, it came [or, I learned it]. Even now I can't speak it clearly... After thinking, I understand all of it. (H; DQ:07Oct24)

She recognizes the limitations of her fluency in Kumauni and acknowledges that she mainly uses the language functionally, or while doing work in the village. Knowing Kumauni was important for being a part of the village community, showing respect for the women there and showing a willingness to integrate. It takes some extra thought for her, but she can understand what is going on around her, having been immersed in the village atmosphere for the past seven years.

Learning Hindi is also, quite naturally, facilitated by the linguistic environment.
This is what most village children find when they get to school, including the girls who arrived in their early years at the Ashram. Manju told me that she had learned Hindi at the Ashram. How did she learn it? “Everyone was speaking it, so then I also started to speak it. One word at a time. Hearing it and then saying it. Then it just came to me / I learned it” (H; DQ:08Oct26). As far as writing, she said, her [Ashram] Didi taught her every day, through journal writing (H; FN:08Oct26). It was Manju who tried occasionally to facilitate my acquisition of Kumauni by addressing me in Kumauni. This often produced a confused expression on my part and laughter all around, but I was assured by many that if I spent enough time in the villages, I would easily learn Kumauni. As one primary school principal told me,

If people come from the outside, then if they stay for some days, they'll be able to understand. Just like you have come here, now you understand a little Hindi, so however many months you stay here, then you'll understand Kumauni also. If you talk with people in Kumauni, then you will [eventually] understand. (H; DQ:07Aug25)

One aspect of these discourses about the ease of language acquisition by immersion are the opportunities that the learners have to begin speaking, no matter how little they know. The confidence to use and build on the little that is known seems to go hand-in-hand with a context and community that allows for diversity in code-mixing and switching.

While the village context facilitates the process, learning Kumauni in the cities, even in a small regional city like Almora, is much more difficult. Regarding young people who grew up in the larger city of Haldwani, I heard that they don't speak Kumauni “because they are not in that society” (H; PQ:07Jan10) and “if they had grown up in a village, they would know it (H; PQ:07Jan11).

One young man in Almora spoke with me in fluent English, telling me that, although he considers himself to be Kumauni, he cannot “speak Kumauni properly”
because “there is not the environment for Kumauni here.” The notion of being able to, or not being able to, speak properly in Kumauni has implications for Kumauni’s position as more than just a substandard variety of Hindi. Still, the linguistic environment with his peers in Almora and at English-medium school did not allow for or motivate the acquisition of Kumauni by this young man who had spent his whole life, thus far, in the region. As we talked about my research and better ways to learn English, he said: “People really need English to get out of that environment” (E; PQ 08Feb11). I didn’t get his specifics on what “that environment” was, but it implied the village life of the typical Kumauni with its reputation for hard labor and poverty. There is an environment out of which English can provide the escape, an environment which happens to be associated with the Kumauni language. The importance of learning English in order to step out of an undesirable environment points to English as a tool for access to otherwise unaccessible domains.

Learning English also is constrained by a linguistic environment that provides few opportunities for natural use of English. This is particularly true in the villages. For most students in the Kumaun, especially in rural areas, access to an environment for speaking English is limited. At Lakshmi Ashram, in comparing the local situation with my limited opportunities to use Hindi in the US, Kamla-Didi talked about there being little chance to learn English here. “There is not the environment for it,” she said. Of the students here, she said: “If they were in the US, they would be able to learn quickly. But here it is difficult to learn” (H; FN:07Sept12).

I spoke with an education professor at Kumaun University, during an interview in his home in Almora, about the teaching of English:

I asked if he thought it was difficult for the students, especially in rural areas. He said that, quite naturally, it is difficult. English is not socio-culturally supported. There are not telecasts; it is not used on the radio... [But] the media is using some
English words and expressions, so these are becoming unconsciously internalized. (E; FN07Oct12)

The fact that English is not “socio-culturally supported” in the Kumaun, and especially in rural areas, contributes to the challenge, about which young people complained, of learning English in this context. English words and phrases are easily inserted into Hindi conversations and more easily learned than conversational English.

**Environment and Community for Language Maintenance**

Keeping up fluency in a language that has been learned is also a matter of concern when that language is not supported in the socio-cultural surroundings. The English teacher at Kausani’s GIC, Mr. Ramesh Prasad, talked about the importance of the environment for keeping up language. He said that he sometimes misses words or finds himself searching for words in English. When he went to college in Meghalaya, he was using English all the time with his friends. One friend was from Kenya, etc. But now in the Kausani environment he feels that his English is slipping, since he uses Hindi most of the time (H; FN:07Aug29). He said:

> There is a big gap... It is very difficult if you lose your touch in between. Suppose you are learning Hindi, if you go to the US and will speak English, after some time you will lose your contact -- your toughness. And it will be very hard to get the words... The same thing is with me here also. (E; DQ:08Mar26)

Another English teacher who was working at the Central School in Kausani complained also that he hadn’t had many opportunities in his environment to practice English (E; FN:07Sept6). These teachers were glad for the opportunity to chat with me and put their English to use.

Just as the language environment and community are important for language learning, they are clearly important for language maintenance, both at the individual level for maintaining fluency in a language that has been learned and at the societal level in maintaining use of the local language. Children who remain in the village do not forget
Kumauni because of the village environment, I am told, but those in the cities shift to Hindi because of the environment there. Kumauni is safe in the villages, according to urban Kumaunis.

**Language and Status**

While the language-location connection seemed most relevant to Kumauni, the language of a particular place, language-status connections seemed to come up more often in reference to the relationship between English and the other languages. Societal hierarchies have certainly existed for thousands of years in the Kumaun, particularly through the caste system, but perhaps not through language. While local languages co-exist in their separate locations, roles, or domains, English may introduce a status dimension to language in a way not previously experienced. The local languages in India have been said to co-exist in a horizontal relationship, while English introduces a vertical or hierarchical relationship between languages. This was a concept brought up in my conversations with the leader of an alternative education program in Garhwal, but not explicitly by my friends in Kausani. Yet the relationship between Kumauni and Hindi was clearly different for them than the relationship between Hindi and English.

Why couldn’t the relationship between Kumauni and Hindi be directly comparable with that between Hindi and English? Sometimes it seemed that English was just the next step upward on the language ladder. More practically, Hindi and English provide access to the environments or settings associated with those languages, environments that may move one up in socio-economic status. Meanwhile, the environment associated with Kumauni has come to seem “backwards.”

Still the status of English seemed to be somehow different than the status of Hindi. Usually my informants thought that the Kumauni-Hindi relationship was not comparable to Hindi-English. While English is still seen by some as foreign, Hindi is
accepted by Kumaunis as their national language, the school language, their bhasha [language], and by some even their mother tongue. Hindi is accepted alongside Kumauni, their own boli [spoken language], as described in Chapter 6.

One afternoon at the Ashram's regular assembly, I was given the opportunity to share about my trip to a conference in New Zealand and some language issues there. As I described the Maori people, the arrival of the English, and the consequences for their education and language, I heard expressions of sympathy and concern from the girls. Issues of injustice were often brought up during the reading and discussion of current events in the afternoon assemblies, and the girls recognized this situation as unjust. I said that this happens in many countries throughout the world, including the US, and asked whether they thought the situation here in India had any similarities with the Maori situation. Many of the girls shook their heads: “No.” One of the Class 9 girls said that it might be a little like that, but not a lot. The Didis began to discuss this among themselves and seemed to agree that the situation in India is quite different. They said that language is not oppressed in the same way here. It is still alive. They don’t feel bad about their own language. Because India was English-administered, the English language has indeed found a place, and a dominant place, but the other languages are still there (FN:07Dec11). In my conversation with Meena-Didi about this later, she emphasized the Hindi-English relationship and issues of medium of instruction in school, leading to economically-based division in education (FN:07Dec11). The position of Kumauni was not a part of our conversation.

In various contexts, I heard that language does not cause problems or that it is not a status issue, particularly in reference to the Kumauni-Hindi relationship. Throughout my fieldwork, I often needed to bring up for discussion the issues about Kumauni language that interested me, as they were not at the forefront as problem
issues. Regarding the switching between Kumauni and Hindi common in daily interactions at the Ashram, Manju explained that they use either at any time, according to their desire. Yes, even in front of the Didis, and, in fact, with the Didis. “Some people speak it, some people don’t, but everyone knows it... Whoever likes it, speaks it” (H; PQ:07Oct26). She said that, no, there is not a difference between those who speak Hindi and those who speak Kumauni (FN:07Oct26). At the Ashram, as in the villages, there is a place for Kumauni, and its position does not seem to be in question.

When I asked various Kumaunis about being ashamed of speaking Kumauni, it seemed that I usually got an answer related to the quality of Kumauni spoken rather than answers that would point to status difference between Kumauni and Hindi. Some girls were ashamed to speak Kumauni at the Ashram, I was told, because they come from a different region and speak different varieties of Kumauni. This I heard elsewhere in the Kumaun as well: that some would prefer to speak Hindi rather than be mocked for their variety of Kumauni. Young Ashram teacher, Rekha said: “I don’t feel shame about speaking Kumauni. But some words are difficult -- I don’t know those words. But the rest, I know” (H; PQ:07Oct8). In the context of some words being difficult, she talked about the differences in Kumauni in different areas, naming several different places where they would speak different Kumauni. Just before this we had been talking about her aunt’s encouraging her as a child to speak Hindi, and she had thoughtfully explained that “in comparison with Hindi, Kumauni seems rather small” (H; PQ:07Oct8). Although shame for speaking Kumauni rather than Hindi may not be an issue, there is still some status dimension to the relationship between Kumauni and Hindi that makes Kumauni seem small.

There is some talk of feelings of inferiority for being from the Kumaun, just as there is sometimes an Indian sense of inferiority. There is recognition of the shaky future
of Kumauni in the Kumaun, just as Hindi seems in need of defense in the global scene.

Economic factors that influence educational opportunities are also involved, with

English spoken by the well-educated and “clever.”

“Some people are ashamed to say where they are from -- that they are from a

village,” Meena-Didi told me. She continued:

They would say that they are from the nearest town instead. They would also be

ashamed to say that they speak Kumauni. This is in the same way that women are

sometimes not happy to be women. Or how boys are always wanting to be men. They

haven't looked at or thought about who they are, as opposed to what others

in society say about them. They don’t respect themselves. (E; PQ:07Sept15)

We had been talking about changes in technology and whether Gandhi would have

approved and then about shifts in language use. Meena-Didi had pointed out that for

Gandhi it is people that matter. The technology itself is not bad, but he did not approve

of machines that put many people out of work. Then, when I started musing about

parallels to the language situation and the effects on people of the shift from Kumauni to

Hindi, Meena-Didi began to talk about language as a powerful tool. She said that some

people are using English as a tool for their own advantage. For example someone

speaking English would push his or her way to the front of the line in a train station.

Some people, she said, are ashamed to use Hindi (E; FN:07Sept15). What about

Kumauni? I wondered. This is when she told me that some people are ashamed to use

Kumauni – this parallel to their being ashamed to say where they are from.

This conversation recapitulates some of the status issues in the relationships

among the languages in the Kumaun. Being associated with a backwards place, as

speaking the language of that place, is a matter of shame for some, just as the value of

Kumauni identity, womanhood, and youth can be rejected based on societal pressure

without regard for self-respect. At the same time, knowing a language of prestige,

particularly English, can be a powerful tool for getting ahead in society, wielded
sometimes without regard for its impact on other people.

This chapter has described some of the ways in which Kumaunis experience and negotiate language in their multilingual context, highlighting the value of multilingualism and the valued roles of each of the languages. Regarding the relationships among these languages, there are discourses of place and of status, and issues of language acquisition and language maintenance. The next chapter turns the focus towards the educational opportunities and aims of Kumauni young women within their social context.
Chapter 8
Young Women, Aims, and Education in the Kumaun

This chapter describes the social situation of the young women with whom I interacted in the Kumaun as well as the educational opportunities available in and around Kausani and some constraints on education, both from my observations and from their own descriptions. In this and the following chapter, I highlight some of the young women with whom I spent the most time at Lakshmi Ashram by presenting their stories and hopes for the future. Their stories give a face to some of the social, financial, and educational circumstances that limit their choices. Their hopes for the future, or in their own words “AIMS,” demonstrate the steps that they are taking to improve their lives and their views on what constitutes an improved or empowered life.¹ First I describe what I saw and heard of the wider social context that shapes the opportunities and aims of the young women as they navigate the possibilities for their future.

Women in the Kumaun: “The Backbone of the Hills”

Much could be said about gender issues and the current conditions for women in the Kumaun. Gender dynamics in the hills resemble in many ways those of the culture in the plains and are in some ways unique. My research was not focused on gender issues nor did it spring from any women's studies literature. However, the theme of the role of women in the Kumaun was always before me as I interacted with Kumauni young women and their educators and especially as I spent time at Lakshmi Ashram, an institution run by women and for women. Women’s issues also surfaced as I explored what empowerment means in this context. The Hindi word that most literally translates

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¹ Small caps indicate that the actual English word was used in a Hindi or Kumauni conversation. When I asked students at the GIC about their future goals, the English teacher repeated the question to them using the English word "AIMS." This term was commonly used and understood there, and so I use it here.
“empowerment” [sashaktikaran] is often used in reference to women’s empowerment. I hope to summarize here some of the discourses that I heard surrounding gender issues and the role of women, especially as it relates to the wellbeing and empowerment of Kumauni women.

The heavy work load of Kumauni women is a common theme in the Kumaun. Women can often be seen carrying large loads of pine needles, grass, or firewood on their heads, walking often in groups of three or four along the narrow footpaths on the steep hillsides. As Meena-Didi told me on one of our morning walks, “women are the power of life here. They are the backbone of the hill region” (E; FN:07Aug9). The temporary labor migration of men from the region has been a feature of Kumauni society for generations. This leaves the women with primary responsibility for the agricultural work as well as the care of the animals and the home.

The situation for young women in the Kumaun has been changing in recent years, and yet their position remains quite different from that of young men. The Intermediate College English teacher, Mr. Prasad, described to me his understanding of the situation:

Around here girls usually marry at age 17 or 18 -- or below 20. Their parents think of them as a headache. The girl is helpless if she wants to do anything else. Here they won’t even send a girl to the next city on her own. The girls’ minds are restricted since they have always been talked to in that way. The whole society talks with them in a restricted way. In contrast, boys are independent. No one asks them where they are going. A girl cannot go out for one hour without someone asking her where she has been, but a boy can be gone for the whole day. The girls are a little “down” in comparison with the boys.

But now girls are progressing. They are restricted at home and thus have more time to study. They have been getting the highest percentages. In the last five to seven years, they top [on the exams] regularly. The percentage of girls passing is also higher than that of boys. The change has taken place in this past decade. Before that the girls were not given much facilities for education. (E; FN:07Aug9).

In citing examples from my field notes and interviews, I identify the language being used as Hindi (H), Kumauni (K), or English (E), except when referencing my own memos in field notes. I then differentiate between field notes (FN), paraphrased quotes (PQ) written, as I remembered them, in the voice of the speaker; and direct quotes (DQ), including recorded interviews and quotes written word-for-word in my field notes. FN, PQ, or DQ are followed by the year, month, and day of the event or interview.
The academic achievement of girls has surpassed that of the boys, I was told, now that they have been given similar educational access. Their protection or restriction within the home has, according to Mr. Prasad, translated into more dedication to their studies. In several contexts in the Kumaun, I heard about this higher academic achievement of girls and the assumption that girls are simply smarter in the school context. It remains to be seen what changes will come in the future as a result of girls’ increased academic access.

The restriction of their minds, according to Mr. Prasad, has kept the girls “down” relative to boys. Their choices for the future are limited. In contrast, the high thinking and self-confidence taught at the Ashram seems to address this issue of restricted minds. The Ashram girls knew how to stand up for the value of women and the freedom of their minds. But it was not only Ashram influence that allowed young women to stand up for themselves. Himani was one of the village girls who came to the Ashram to join the Sadhana program in 2007. I start my introduction of her with a conversation we had a few weeks after she had arrived at the Ashram.

**Himani’s Aims**

I sat in the morning sunshine with Lisa and Himani, peeling and chopping potatoes for the evening meal. Himani asked me to tell her about my place in America, about my life and my family, and I asked her about hers. Our conversation provided context for our later discussions about her hopes and dreams for the future.

Himani told me about her two younger brothers and a younger sister who are all studying. Her father works at the post office in their small town, where he has been

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3 Although I have referred to my primary participants as “young women,” they would consider themselves girls and only use the term for woman for someone who is married. Thus, in describing my conversations with them, I often refer to them also as “girls.”
working for 18 or 19 years. Her mother works in the fields. Sometimes her father helps in the fields also, but he is rather weak now. She told me that most men do not help in the fields. They feel that it will bring down their image if they do, that it is women's work (H; FN:07Oct11).

One of the Didis was sitting with us for a little while, taking seeds out of the loki [squash]. She said that men do work in her village. Her brothers do work in the fields. Pushba also walked by and stood and talked with us for a while. They agreed that men do help in the fields at certain times -- doing the plowing -- but most of the time they do not. What do they do? They sit around and talk with each other. They play cribbage.

“How can this be,” I asked, “that the women are doing all of the work and the men sit around?” “This is just how it is,” Himani said. “In India it is a man's world,” Pushba said (H; FN:07Oct11). It was interesting to hear this discussion of men's and women's roles in the villages, a theme brought up by Himani in this conversation. The Didi who was sitting with us defended the work ethic of the men in her remote village. However, Himani and Pushba described a situation in which the women do the bulk of the work. Perhaps influenced by her studies for her BA and MA, Pushba articulates that India is a man's world. I have wondered about whether this is an educated discourse, as I speculate in other chapters about educated discourses on language and dialect. Likely men in the remote villages do help more with the agricultural labor, and yet talk of their lack of participation could be a more common discourse or an issue more freely talked about in less remote areas.

Himani continued to describe the relationship between men and women in respect to the use of honorific versus familiar “you.” In Hindi there are three layers in the hierarchy: aap, tum, tu; while in Kumauni there are two: tum, tu. Himani said that wives are expected to use aap with their husbands here. Husbands use tu with their
wives: “Tu, go get that... Tu, do that...” (H; FN:07Oct11). The level of disrespect that this would imply in Hindi is slightly eased by the fact that Kumauni tu is equivalent to Hindi tum. So for Hindi aap they would use tum in Kumauni, as Himani confirmed. Would she call her husband aap? No, she said, she would call him tu (H; FN:07Oct11).

Our conversation continued into a discussion about female politicians and members of parliament in India, including the current Indian president. Himani said that it is here in the hills that the women are doing all of the work. In the cities, the women just do the housework, etc. She seemed to be implying that they do not have as much to do and that they would have time to pursue other things. “Here it is different than in the cities” (H; PQ:07Oct11).

“The men drink a lot here also. If there is no money in the house, they sell their wife's jewelry to buy liquor,” Himani continued. The conversation suddenly became more personal and I learned about her family's tragedy. Her father used to drink a lot, causing serious liver problems. Some of the expenses for his habit came from the post office where he worked, and when this was discovered the family was charged an astonishing Rs. 180,000. They didn't know what to do. They sold their land and jewelry and borrowed from friends and family. “It was a very difficult time,” Himani said (H; PQ:07Oct11).

In an earlier conversation Himani had told me that because of family problems she was not able to go to university this year as she had planned. Now I understood what she had been talking about. Financial problems barred the way. She hoped to be able to earn money in order to help dig her family out of debt. Himani said that she wishes she could just get some sort of job - any job - to be able to earn money, to provide meals for her family. They also owe a lot of money to their neighbors, who are asking for their money back. When I was telling about my life, Himani asked me about how I liked
university and living in a hostel. It has always been a dream of Himani's to go to
university, ever since she was a child. To live in a hostel, etc. I asked what she would like
to do if there was no concern about money or earning a living. She said that she really
likes games [sports]. She enjoys playing sports very much (H; FN:07Oct11).

Later during our recorded interview, I was able to hear more about Himani's
dreams for the future. She had been a runner during high school and then moved to the
plains, just across the border in Uttar Pradesh, where she stayed with relatives so that
she could compete at a better school during Intermediate College. She won many medals,
including second place in a state-wide competition, an impressive feat in a state the size
of Uttar Pradesh. She thought that she would then compete at the university level. “Then
there was no money. That's why I wasn't able to play,” she said. I asked about
scholarships. She said that they will give money for sports, but students must first pay
for their own admission in the university. “That was it,” she said (H; DQ:07Oct30).

I asked whether she would try to get into the university the following year. This is
when she told me that she would like to pursue a job with the Uttarakhand police.
Regarding the requirements for becoming a police, she said that she would just need
intermediate college and high school. “I will also study further. If I am able to get it, if I
get into the police, then I will study further. Then I'll also study.” She talked about the
requirements for becoming a police including being able to run and do the short and long
jump, skills that she had honed in her high school athletic career. “To become a police is
my choice - my desired job.” She asked me if girls become police also in my country.
“Here also it's both boys and girls. From my childhood, police has been my choice,” she
said, because she likes their uniform (H; DQ:07Oct30).

Regarding her preferred place to live, Himani said that she would like to stay in
the village. She would be a police here in Uttaranchal. In the city there are strange types.
She doesn't like it at all in the city. She could be a police officer and still remain in a rural area. Later in the interview, when she talked about her desire to become a police, she added: “I don't know if I'll go or if I won't go” (H; DQ:07Oct30). Obtaining one of the coveted government jobs would be a challenge. There could be limitations that would keep her from that dream, a fact of which she was well aware.

Despite limitations, Himani was eager to find ways to do something more with her life, even if it meant adapting her aims. In my English class, she struggled more than some of her classmates, often frustrated when she couldn't understand but always eager to learn. As my time in Kausani drew to an end, Himani was searching for ways to develop herself for the future, as described in my field notes:

Himani told me again that she wants an English conversation book - with Hindi so that she will be able to teach herself. At lunch she had also asked me for a list of medicines in English and Hindi. As we were on the way up to the workshop together, Himani asked me if computer is hard. “I would need to know English for computer, wouldn't I?,” she said. She said that she wants to do something. That's why she wants to learn English.

What does she want to do?
She paused. “Maybe nurse,” she said. That's why she had asked me for the list of medicines. Later in the knitting class, I heard her talking to some of the other girls about computer being easy if you know English. That’s what she had heard. She told me later that I had only taught them half English. They have forgotten what I taught. They complained again about my moving away from the Ashram. (H; FN:08Apr16)

Here Himani was exploring the option of getting into nursing, hoping that by learning a list of medicines in English, she would have a better chance. Computers are also associated nowadays with successful jobs, and having a knowledge of computers, so closely tied to a knowledge of English, would perhaps improve her chances for another career option. She and her classmates were aware, as I was, that the conversational English that I had taught them in our brief months together was very little. Perhaps they were even more aware of this having just returned from their study tour outside of the Kumaun where they had contact with more non-Hindi speakers.
The following week, Himani surprised me with some news that she had withheld throughout our time together and in all discussions of her future plans. She asked me whether I would come to her wedding, and said that she was going to get married next year. When I expressed surprise and disbelief, she insisted that she was not joking. She had known the boy for several years, having gone to school with him in the plains. I asked if this would be a love marriage, then, and she laughed, along with Sunita who was sitting with us after knitting class. “Love marriages” are too often associated with Western unfaithfulness, and I wondered how Himani would react to that label. Sunita responded for her, in her teasing way, saying that it would be a love marriage. Himani told me that her parents were in agreement and that she talks on the phone with him sometimes when she is at home. “But before I get married, I want to do something,” Himani said. “Can you find me a job? Tell me, Cindy, what should I do? I want to do something” (H; PQ:08Apr21).

My first conversation with Himani had started with generalizations about the difficult life of mountain women and about gender inequalities. Then the story of her family’s financial disaster helped to explain the more specific constraints upon her own plans for the future. Finding a job became more important than pursuing her dream of university study and athletics, especially given the fees involved in applying for higher education and her family’s financial situation. I watched her searching for ideas and means for “doing something” before getting married and in order to help her family.

**Future Aims and Marriage**

During my fieldwork I heard the hopes and aims of young women from Lakshmi Ashram and from the Government Intermediate College (GIC) in Kausani. The time that I was able to spend with the girls at Lakshmi Ashram allowed me to hear more in depth about their future aims and some of their motivations, as influenced by their families and
life circumstances. The girls at the Ashram were both those like Himani and Govindi who had come to the Ashram to participate in the one-year Sadhana program and those who had been educated for a longer period of time at the Ashram, including Sunita, whose story and aims are described later in this chapter, and Manju and Asha who appear in the next chapter. The future aims that I heard from girls at the GIC were somewhat different from those that I heard from the Ashram girls, and yet their stories reveal similar contexts and limitations, including societal expectations, particularly the expectation that a young woman will marry by a certain age, as well as financial constraints.

The theme of marriage emerged frequently in my conversations and thus in my field notes, a theme that I had not targeted as important for my research, but that is very significant in the lives of Kumauni young women as they struggle to envision their futures. Marriage is one aspect of their lives over which they traditionally have little control. A girl’s parents are responsible to arrange and pay for her marriage. The young bride will be sent to live and work in her in-law’s home, leaving behind the community that she has been a part of throughout her childhood. These factors combine to help explain the hesitation and resistance to marriage expressed by the young women. Some are concerned about their family’s finances, having heard throughout their lives about the financial burden of their marriage on the family.4 Others fear the bondage of being responsible to serve an unknown mother-in-law and the uncertainty of joining a new community. Most, it seemed, simply wanted to postpone the inevitable and pursue other opportunities in education and employment while they were still young. “It is essential to get married! Very essential,” Govindi explained. “If girls don’t marry, no one would RESPECT them... That’s the atmosphere of the village -- the village way of thinking...” (H;

4 Dowry expectations have increased significantly in recent years, I am told, as the Kumaunis are influenced by commercialism and the traditions of the plains.
Students at Lakshmi Ashram have role models who have followed a different path. Some of the Didis have refused to get married, instead devoting their lives to social service. Others had lost their husbands and found new roles at the Ashram. The Ashram community has provided for some, especially first generation, graduates of the Ashram an alternative to marriage. The Ashram founder, Sarala-Behen, had encouraged students to marry only someone who would allow them to continue with their social work and whose family would not demand a dowry. Kamla-Didi told me about how upset Sarala-Behen was when one of the early students agreed to marry a police officer. Kamla-Didi paraphrased her reaction: “I am not preparing girls to marry police. We were making girls to be Gandhian leaders and to serve people in the villages” (E; PQ:07Aug27).

Similarly, I heard current Ashram Didis praising simple, inexpensive weddings and marriages that do not require a dowry. Students are also encouraged to stand on their own feet, with confidence. Yet, even at the Ashram, probably more now than in the past, marriage often seems inevitable. As one of the Ashram teachers told me, most of the girls would marry and become housewives (E; FN:07Oct).

Aims of GIC Girls

At the Government Inter-College, with the pressure of answering in front of the teacher and the rest of the class, one young woman said she’d like to be a pilot, another that she’d like to be a social worker, and a third that she’d like to be a police inspector. Her classmates giggled. Another said “job.” What kind of job? “Any job,” my neighbor Poonam offered (H/E; FN:07Aug16; FN:08Apr12). Young women often said that any job would do, but there are few local examples of women working outside of domestic

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5 In this class a young man said that he'd like to be an engineer, another that he'd like to join the army, and a third that he'd like to be a doctor. Joining the army is a popular career aim for the young men in the Kumaun and is much more achievable for rural youth than careers as doctors or engineers.
and agricultural work. When I had a small group of Class 9 girls gathered in my home, most said that they wanted to study further – to get their BA or up to their MA. After that, they said they didn’t know what they wanted to do. My neighbor, Vimla, was the only Class 11 student in the group. She said that she would get a job. What job would she like? She doesn’t know. Any job (H; FN:08Mar4).

I sat in a classroom at the GIC with Vimla and her female classmates one afternoon, and the topic of exams came up. I asked what girls would do if they don’t pass. “They would get married,” Vimla said quietly. Some of the other girls were saying that they would study again and re-take the exam. “If we didn’t get results, we would get yelled at,” one said. “Our parents would yell at us” (H; PQ:08Apr12). “And if they do pass, what do girls do?” I asked. “They will get married,” Vimla said again. “Whether they pass or not, they will get married…” Other girls were saying that if girls passed, they would get a job. “But here very few girls get jobs,” they said (H; PQ:08Apr12). I felt that the answers that I got from the girls who knew me better, such as my neighbors Poonam and Vimla, were a bit more candid than those of the other girls. If they would get a job, it would be any job. Yet, they would more likely get married, whether they got good results on their exams or not.

Vimla’s sister Hema is facing this reality first-hand. She is one year older than Vimla and was waiting for the results of her Class 12 exams in the spring of 2008. In my field notes, I describe a brief conversation with her and her mother:

I walked up through the courtyard of Vimla and Hema’s home on my way to the GIC. Hema was washing dishes in the courtyard. Her mother invited me to stay for tea, as she usually does. I apologized that again I didn’t have time, but I paused to talk briefly. Hema’s mother asked me when I would be coming back to India, knowing that I was soon leaving. She asked if I would come to Hema’s wedding. When? “Next year,” she said. “Next April.” I looked at Hema and asked if it would really be next April. She didn’t give any comment. “She thinks that she’s too young,” her mother said. She’s… eighteen?, I verified. “Yes.”
I asked Hema what she wants to do. “College,” she said...
“We are just like this,” her mother said. (H; FN:08Apr16)

I thought Hema’s mother was referring to the housework that they were doing and the predictability of their lives when she said: “We are just like this.” She could also have been referring to the economic situation of the family and their inability to afford a college education for their daughter. In order to clarify, I asked whether she meant that more education was not necessary or important. “Education is important,” she said. “Getting a job would be good.” But she went on to explain, with Hema’s help: “We are not the type who would be able to pay for education.” I asked if college was expensive. “It’s not that expensive,” her mother said. “But we only have these small fields” (H; PQ:08Apr16). She motioned to the terraces below and around their house. Hema’s father just earns daily wages, working in the tea gardens below their house. Again, it seemed that financial constraints were keeping girls from studying further. I wondered too whether higher dowry expectations for a more educated girl influenced decisions about whether a daughter could be more highly educated, and whether she would need a more highly educated husband.

Hema’s desire for further education seems directly related to her feeling too young for marriage. College would buy her some time. Yet she was not strongly resisting her parents’ aim of getting her married in the near future. A few days later I did accept the offer to sit for tea with a group of neighbor women, and, along with Hema, listened in on and joined the informal chatter, some in Hindi, some in Kumauni.

Hema was folding her chuni [scarf] into wide pleats and pinning it at her shoulder, tucking one end in at her waist and letting the rest drape around the back. She was fixing it and looking over her shoulder to check the length or how it looked in the back. I asked her if she was wearing a sari. “I am practicing,” she said. (FN:08Apr22)

Nowadays, as in the plains, married women wear saris, while unmarried girls wear the
three-piece salwaar kamiz, including dress, loose pajama pants, and chuni. Practice wearing a sari implied practice for marriage.

Earlier in the spring, the talk of the village and a bustle of activity surrounded the marriage of another neighbor girl who must have been a year ahead of Hema in school. On the wedding day, the young bride, age 19, was decked out in a sparkling red sari and much jewelry. She planned to continue to study for her BA even after her marriage, pleased that her in-laws would allow or even encourage her to pursue her interest in teaching. This is a modern alternative that is likely becoming more common, although for most of the young women job and marriage are not compatible.

I sat with a group of young women at another wedding in Danya. “What a nice life!” they said of my plan to both get married and have a job after I graduate (H; FN:08Apr18). These young women live in a time of changing roles and expectations in the Kumaun. One sign of a good life, for them, was the opportunity both to get married and to pursue a career other than farming. They told me about their BA and BSc studies. The fact that several of them were pursuing higher education was a little surprising to me. At least it came in sharp contrast to a conversation that I had the day before with a young man while I was traveling to Danya for the wedding. When I asked about girls' education in the area, he told me that they just study up to Class 8. “What is the use of Inter for them?,” he said (H; FN:08Apr17). His generalization likely reflected the fact that he was from a more remote village, yet it also showed that not all see a place for Kumauni young women in higher education and in careers outside of the home.

**Aims of Ashram Girls**

The Ashram students were usually quick to tell me that they did not want to get married. The girls at the GIC, on the other hand, seemed more free in talking about boys and about their marriages which would be arranged within a few years. Yet the more I
listened, the more I heard the theme of marriage coming up at the Ashram as well. A discussion about marriage came up one morning with some of the older girls at the Ashram. While most insisted that they did not want to marry, one of the Class 12 girls told me that all of the girls here say that they won’t marry, but they [eventually] do. “They’re young now and so say that they won’t, but they will” (H; PQ:07Aug6). She herself said that she did not want to marry though, and perhaps her obvious limp would make it harder for her to marry. She wanted to get a government service job. One of the girls said that if it was a good man, then she would get married. A good man would be a social worker, she said (H; FN:07Aug6). In another discussion, I heard one of the Didis saying that a man like that – like the kind, honest, responsible groom that she had been describing – was hard to find (H; FN:07Sept27). Saroj-Didi also talked about how hard it would be to find a good man who had vichaar [ideas, thoughts] (H; FN:07Dec4). This seemed to imply a man with conviction, or one who had been trained, as the Ashram girls had, to think beyond mainstream assumptions.

A young teacher, Narayana, had led the Sadhana girls in a unit on marriage. She talked about the importance of building a relationship and having a personal connection with a future partner. We sat and talked in front of the workshop building one afternoon. “These youth,” she said, “will get married in a few years,” referring to the Sadhana girls. “It depends a lot on the parents. There is also social pressure: 'What will people think if I don’t get married?’... But my mother doesn’t give that kind of TENSION,” Narayana said (H; PQ:08Apr11). I mentioned that so many of the girls said that they didn’t want to get married, and yet they do eventually get married. She said that if someone from the outside asks them, they will say that, no, they don’t want to get married. They feel ashamed or shy. “Some say that they will marry, but not one who gives pressure -- who tells you not to work with children or not to become a doctor. There are very few [men]
here who would say: ‘Do whatever you want’” (H; FN:08Apr11).

I was still convinced that some of these girls honestly did not want to get married; they had told me so with such conviction. But I had also heard them saying that they would marry if they found a good man. The characteristic of a good groom that Narayana highlighted here was a willingness to allow his wife to pursue a career, to serve society as a teacher or doctor if she wanted. There were few Kumauni men, as Narayana had said, who would allow their wives such freedom.

While cleaning rice with some Ashram girls one Saturday morning during my preliminary fieldwork, I asked them why some girls don't want to get married. It was the bondage and lack of freedom that they highlighted, their expectations of life in the in-law's home [saasural] (H; FN:06May27). One of these same students, now a recent graduate whom I got to know well, insisted again the following year that she would not get married (H; FN:07Aug5). However, a few months later she told me, to my surprise, that she would soon be leaving the Ashram, and that she would be getting married (H; FN:07Dec1). The wedding did not take place as quickly as she had expected, but throughout the following spring, she told me about the phone conversations she was having with her husband-to-be, a young man whom her parents had chosen or suggested for her before their long-distance relationship began. The time that he had requested to get to know her before getting married broke from tradition, but allowed them to begin to build their relationship.

Marriage in itself was not necessarily what the girls were resisting, it seems. Rather they seemed to be resisting life-changing circumstances that could be completely out of their control, that would constrain their power and freedom. The Ashram girls, it seemed, having seen other options and having learned to speak their minds, struggled with this more than their peers in the village.
Education enters the picture as a means to postpone marriage, though it is an option limited by economic constraints. In the conversation with English teacher Mr. Ramesh Prasad, cited earlier, we talked about the constraints on the future aims of his students.

The parents are thinking that as soon as the girls pass Class 12, they will get married. They talk this way always, and the girls' mind settles for that. There are some exceptions, of course. Some families send their daughters for higher studies, but that is a low percentage of families. That is only the ones with a high economic situation. Those with the money are those who have gone out of this area. (E; PQ:08Mar10)

At the Ashram also, the teachers knew that very few of the girls would be able to pursue university studies. Kamla-Didi talked about the low economic condition of the girls' families and also about their desire to keep their daughters safe at the Ashram. She did not think it possible for the students to go to university:

Because their father-mother -- they don't like to send them. Because they are growing up. They think: 'We have to marry them.' Like this. They are growing bigger and age is going up. Then they like to marry them. (E; DQ:07Aug7)

Kamla-Didi told me that she did not agree that the girls should be married off at such a young age. Her preference would be that they would be able to take some training, such as the Gandhian studies/Sadhana program. But this was the mindset common in the villages, she said: “Village people -- they think about their girls -- to [get them married]. They think: 'This is our work. We have to do this; then we are free’” (E; DQ:07Aug7). She emphasized the responsibility and social obligation involved in finding suitable marriages for daughters. Since this becomes more of a concern as the girls get older, further study does not seem to be an option for many.

Education also plays a role, however, as an investment in a daughter. On one hand, families who are economically stable may see education as a means to improve
their daughter's marriage potential. An English professor at Kumaun University, told me that her students study English to improve their chances for jobs. And for girls it is to be able to say that they have completed English, for the “marriage market” (E; FN:07Aug23).

On the other hand, parents may need to make tough choices about the expenses of their children's education. Asha provided her typical astute exaggeration of the situation. I had been asking about educational opportunities in the villages. She said that girls are busy working at home, taking care of the cow and buffalo and are not educated, while boys, in contrast, all get the opportunity to study.

This is why girls don’t study -- because girls go away later. The girls are married. That’s why people don’t educate the girls very much. The boys they educate fully because they stay. The daughter-in-law comes... Their parents don’t want to bear too much expense. That’s why they don’t educate her. She's going away, so what benefit is there? (H; FN:07Oct22)

In this generation, education of both girls and boys up to high school has become an almost universal expectation, except in the villages that are quite far from a high school. Still, less is usually expected from girls' education. Consider, for example, the relatively small number of girls taking the science and English track at the GIC in Kausani (See Table 3 in Chapter 3). This is one way that language comes into the picture: English as a prestigious school subject, associated with the maths and sciences, that may not have a practical purpose for girls. Yet, although these subjects may not have a practical purpose in terms of career paths for many Kumauni girls, the prestige may be important as their parents search for their daughters’ marriage partners.

One more comment could be made about the Kumauni language in relation to marriage. When parents make decisions about who their daughters will marry, caste is one of the most important considerations, much more important than language or than Kumauni identity. This is reflected in the matrimonials section of the Sunday paper,
which lists potential brides and grooms according to caste. The young Ashram graduate who was getting to know her husband-to-be by phone would be marrying into a Garhwali family of the same caste. They would communicate in Hindi and teach one another their languages, she told me. I met another graduate who had married a man from another state. These matches between different language groups, while not extremely common, are much more acceptable than a rare and controversial inter-caste marriage.

**Future Aims and the Views of Parents**

Parents play an important role in the decisions that affect the lives of Kumauni young women. “It depends on our parents,” one girl told me when I asked what she would do after Class 12. She said that she hadn’t really thought about it (H; FN:07Sept4).

Although I did not spend a lot of time with parents, I heard various perspectives as the mothers with whom I spoke talked about their hopes and expectations for their daughters.

Some mothers were eager to see their daughters married and in a secure place in society. Getting their daughters married is an important responsibility of the parents. Hema’s mother, as described above, was eager to plan her daughter’s wedding soon after she completed Class 12, knowing that they could not finance her further studies. Asha’s mother also was concerned for her daughter’s future marriage, even though Asha was only fifteen years old. The people around her were asking and she needed to make her daughter’s future secure.

Other mothers with whom I spoke talked more explicitly about their desire for their daughters to have other opportunities before they marry, opportunities that they themselves never had. Education would be a path to those other opportunities. After studying further, “she will go around just like you are doing,” one grandmother said to me as we sat having tea with her granddaughter who was in Class 12. “Then later she will
get married” (H; PQ:08Apr14). I asked another mother why she wanted her daughter to study further. Her answer: “Because if she got married, what would she get from that? She can find some work here in [the nearby town] after Inter - at the ITI. Then she can marry” (H; FN:08Mar12). Again I hear the theme of work and study as a means to postpone marriage.

Himani’s mother had a similar desire for her daughter to be able to experience more of the world. She is a hard-working woman who looks older than her age. I found her tending the cows beside their house when I passed through Himani’s village, and she told me that she would soon be heading out to the fields to plant rice. We chatted briefly about her daughter who was nearing the end of her time at Lakshmi Ashram in the one-year Sadhana course. She asked me how Himani is doing and whether she studies well.

“Teach her!,” she said. “Teach her well!” She said that she wanted Himani to go and see the world -- to learn about what all is out there -- to meet big people. She asked me what Himani would do after the program ended in July, and I asked her the same. I asked if she would get married. “Where will we find her marriage?,” her mother said (H; PQ:08Apr23). She asked if I would come to Himani’s wedding. It wouldn’t be for another three or four years. She continued with a striking expression of her desires for her daughter:

She is still young. If she gets married right away, what is there in that for her?... Here in the fields there is nothing. After marriage, one just dies in the dirt. I have died in the dirt, but I don’t want that for my children. They should study -- they should read and write -- and get a good life... Tell Himani that I said that. Tell her to read and write and become something. She can go somewhere else and not come back here [right away]. Her home will always be here. There is a lot to see in

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6 She referred to a local Industrial Training Institute (ITI) that was being expanded in the area. She saw the ITI as a potential local employer for her daughter. The institute seemed to be perceived as a window of opportunity in this rural area, although I understood ITI to be one step towards employment in industries that would likely be found outside of this remote community. These mothers did not, I think, imagine their daughters leaving the rural Kumaun for employment, as young men commonly did, but they did want to give them the opportunity for further education and perhaps even employment before marriage.
the world. Go and see and hear! Read and write! (H; PQ:O8Apr23)

This woman's harsh commentary on the difficult agricultural lifestyle into which most young women marry in the hills provides clear rationale for her desire to see more opportunities for her daughter. Himani's mother was grateful for the opportunity that her daughter had to be a part of the Sadhana program and to travel to other parts of India and learn. She also wanted her daughter to have more such opportunities. Learning to read and write was directly connected to those opportunities in her discourse.

**Education Opportunities**

The aims of Kumauni young women usually involve the desire for further education, despite limitations in their social and economic contexts. The importance of education in society continues to grow. This section describes the educational opportunities available in and around Kausani as well as local perceptions regarding the quality of the various schools, implying beliefs about what constitutes good education.

**Govindi's Experiences in Education**

Govindi described for me some of the challenges that she faced during her junior high and high school education. First, when her family moved to the village, she had to get used to the long walk to school and the cold weather of the foothills. She had trouble fitting in with the other girls and didn't receive help from them or from the teacher in her studies. She was also not able to get after-school tutoring like many of the other students. She did not benefit from the group support common among the other students: “All the girls would form little groups and tell each other quietly and they wouldn't tell me.”

Neither did she get much explanation from her teacher: “The teacher would just read from the book and wouldn't explain” (H; DQ:07Oct24). She describes these as reasons for her disappointing results on her math exams in Class 10.
“My life changed so completely when I failed,” Govindi said. “I can show you a picture of how I was before 10th and how I was afterwards. There was a change in me after that.” She took Class 10 a second time and went out on her own to a tutor, getting her own tuitions. She would come home late every day after going for tutoring. The result was good final exam marks in both math and English, the difficult electives that she was proud to tell me about.

I started to understand everything. Then I didn't need any of the older girls. I didn't need any friends or any group. It was just me, my books, and my self-determination... Whatever I didn't understand in the book, I would think about it by myself a lot. I didn't even ask the teacher. (H; PQ: 07Oct24)

Govindi’s description of her own unique situation highlights the fact that most of the girls would have been working together in their studies. Many also would pay for private tutoring in order to be able to do well on the final exam. Those who were financially more able were also more likely to be able to support their children in their studies at home, as Govindi points out.

I thought a lot by myself in Class 10. Then later I started to understand that the smart children are the ones who have a good home environment, who have someone to teach them, who know everything from home. They will tell them everything... There is going to be this type of inequality. Like -- I don't understand, I don't have [tutoring], in my home, my parents can't tell me, and I don't understand on my own... (H; DQ: 07Oct24)

She went on to explain that the teachers were not very willing to answer her questions. She was afraid of punishment from them. “So I didn’t ask the teachers anything. Sitting by myself all the time -- I thought that I would not treat my children like those teachers did who treated me unfairly” (H; DQ: 07Oct24). Govindi also talked about the children leaving home and needing a loving place. If teachers give the same kind of love that the children get at home, the children will be able to learn, she said. This is part of her motivation for wanting to be a teacher.

Some of the themes coming through in Govindi's experience include the
difficulties involved in getting a good education, the pressure for passing exams, and the disparities in home situation that can influence educational opportunities even for students attending the same school. Below I describe some of my experiences at the local schools in Kausani and the perceptions of hierarchy and differing quality among the various schools.

School Environment in the Kumaun

I watched some students running across the scrubby, fenced-in field beside the Kausani primary school. They were yelling and chasing happily after some goats that had come into the school yard. “Children should be raised this way!,” my Korean colleague said. She compared the children we were watching with Korean students who are constantly being sent to tutoring sessions (E; FN:07Aug9). These village children had a chance to play. We had seen them earlier clustered around the young teacher’s assistant, eager to play a group game.

During our visit to the government primary school in Kausani, the principal and her co-teacher welcomed us into the small school office and served us some sliced cucumber, telling us about the school, with 40 students enrolled in classes one through five, and about the various teacher trainings where they had made the teaching aids that were hanging on the walls of the office. Later we observed their classes. The fourth and fifth grade students sat on mats on the floor facing blackboards on opposite walls. The principal taught a math lesson to each group, and the students copied the problems into their notebooks. The second graders were on the veranda between the two classrooms, working attentively with the young teacher’s assistant as she wrote in the blackboard. The other teacher was with the class one and class three students in the other large classroom. The third graders were copying something from the blackboard into their notebooks, while the first graders were coming to the teacher’s desk, one by one, to have
their notebooks checked. They were practicing writing the “international” numbers. Soon the teachers were asking the students to perform – poems, songs and dances – for us, their guests. They had practiced well for the upcoming Independence Day performance (FN:07Aug9).

This primary school in Kausani used to be the only school available to all village children from miles around. Mr. Simon's father had walked there from the village of Dhaulara for his primary education. In recent years, however, educational opportunities have multiplied, with government primary schools in or near every village, increasing numbers of government high schools, and private school options for those who could afford the fees.

I made frequent visits to the Government Intermediate College (GIC) in Kausani. The students were often mingling in gender-segregated groups in the school yard and in much larger numbers than at the primary school. At the sound of the metal gong, they would return to their classrooms. Some of the classrooms had wooden desks and chairs. In other classrooms, the students sat together on large mats on the floor, girls on one side and boys on the other. A desk and chair stood in front of the blackboard for the teacher. Sometimes classes would meet outside, taking advantage of the warm sunshine, with the students seated on the ground in front of the teacher's chair. During their free periods, the teachers would often sit together on plastic chairs under the big tree in the school courtyard which overlooks the Himalayas, and I sometimes joined them there. At the GIC, I observed some English classes taught by Mr. Ramesh Prasad. He explained the lesson in the English textbooks, using a mixture of English and Hindi and calling upon students to do the reading and answer questions. I also observed several of the school's morning assemblies in which students lined up in neat rows in the large school courtyard, wearing their matching uniforms.
Groups of students in blue and white uniforms walking along the road – this was a familiar scene during my travels in the Kumaun. The girls wear cotton *salwar kameez* and the boys wear pants and shirts. Other school-related scenes became familiar during my visits to the various schools in Kausani and to several other primary school in the Kumaun. Often class groups would be sitting on mats in front of a small chalk board outside of the school building. There seemed to be plenty of time for students to wait or work in their notebooks, and I noticed students working together, helping one another with their assignments. Teachers would often sit at their desks, checking notebooks and giving individual instruction to students. Some teaching is done by teachers' assistants, hired by the school out of the teachers' own funds and not directly by the government. Students would often be asked to lead recitations with their classmates, starting as early as preschool. Free lunches are an important daily feature of government primary schools. Songs and dances are well-practiced and performed for visitors and for frequent cultural programs.

These cultural programs provide an opportunity for competition between the schools. For example, on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, the schools in Kausani each march to a central location, led by a costumed “Gandhi-ji,” and there perform skits and songs for the community and a board of judges. Some students also represent their schools for an essay competition. Similarly, the Kausani GIC hosted a sports competition attended by other high schools or intermediate colleges from the region, and students are sometimes sent for regional art competitions. In a more subtle way, schools compete with each other through the color and style of the school uniforms, with private schools especially doing their best to impress with their students' appearance.

More important for the education of the students according to local discourse,
however, are comparisons in the quality of education at the various schools. While it was not my intention to evaluate or compare the schools, I was interested in the value and practices of those with whom I interacted and, thus, of their perceptions of the hierarchies in quality of education, a theme that was usually initiated for me.

**Quality and Hierarchy in Education: The Schools in Kausani**

The schooling options in Kausani, in the Kumaun, and beyond – and the ways in which they are discussed – highlight a hierarchy among schools and inequalities in quality of education. There are also differing values about what constitutes a good education, as demonstrated in particular at the Ashram.

At its founding in 1947, Lakshmi Ashram provided educational opportunities for many girls who would not otherwise have had access to schools. In more recent years, as government schools have multiplied and spread to more remote areas, the Ashram students primarily come from poor families where family difficulties would have hindered their educational opportunities and in some cases where physical distance would have kept them from school. Lakshmi Ashram has never been an elite boarding school. The Ashram students come from villages all over the Kumaun and, as a residential school, the Ashram is not usually considered among the schooling options for residents of Kausani. The school participates in the local cultural events and school competitions and often takes first place in the cultural programs, including drama, song, and dance. Local residents appreciate the Ashram for its long-term activism and service to the community, but do not consider it academically progressive. Many perceive the school as being primarily vocational – teaching sewing and knitting skills to the girls – and some question the school’s resistance to modernity. The girls at the Ashram understand that they are receiving more than just an academic education, but they were happy to be receiving the same certificates as government school students upon
completion of exams. When educational policy changes pushed the Ashram to switch from the regular government school curriculum and exam system, the girls protested against what seemed to them a downward step in the educational hierarchy, as described below.

The government schools would for many years have been the default, if not the only, formal education option for residents of Kausani. The government schools in Kausani include two primary schools, a girls' junior high school and the Government Intermediate College (GIC). For Classes 9 through 12 the GIC remains the only local option. However, well over half of the younger children in Kausani are now being sent to one of the private schools or the new Central government school. The principal of the Girls' Government Junior High is struggling to keep up enrollment numbers as the more prestigious schools expand to include Class 6 through 8. As one of the Ashram teachers explained to me, and as I observed at the schools in Kausani, the number of students attending the government schools in Kausani is decreasing (FN:07Aug13). For primary and junior high school, the state government schools are perceived to be only for the poor who cannot afford the fees at the better schools. Government schools have fewer resources, and even the teachers and administrators themselves complain about numerous problems in the schools. Most serious in the rural Kumaun is the shortage of teachers, which also influences the motivation of the existing teachers. Besides the vacancies waiting to be filled, government school teachers are often pulled away from the classes to perform other duties related, for example, to elections, census, or exam supervision in the region.

7 Another cause for decreasing numbers of students in the Kausani government schools is the fact that more government schools have been built in nearby villages or upgraded to become high schools (through Class 10) and intermediate colleges (through Class 12). These schools are built and expanded for political reasons, “in order to please the people,” according to one of the Ashram teachers. “The new inter-college [in a nearby village] had no head master and no new teachers. The upgrades make people happy, but the teachers and principals are not provided” (E; PQ:07Sep24).
There is hierarchy also within and among the government schools in the region, especially in secondary education. At the GIC, ambitious students take English, science, and math rather than Sanskrit and home economics. Students also get ahead by going for private tutoring. The GIC in the larger town of Garur in the valley just north of Kausani is said to be better than the Kausani GIC. The GIC in Almora is even better. Even the principal of the Kausani GIC talked about the low quality of education there. The students from Kausani would have trouble competing at the BA level in Almora and Nainital, especially in science courses that may be taught in English, I was told (FN:06May28). Living with an aunt and uncle in a larger town or city is a not uncommon option for young people seeking a better education. Neither is it uncommon for families to move to urban areas to improve the educational opportunities for their children. Himani had even moved to live with relatives in the plains of Uttar Pradesh in order to participate in more fair athletic competitions in Class 11 and 12. The fact that those who are most able to do so have sent their children to better schools elsewhere contributes to the negative perceptions of the local government schools. One of the teachers told me that the GIC in Almora had admissions requirements, or perhaps he was referring to the private Intermediate Colleges in Almora. His point was that the smartest students are more likely to attend Intercollege in Almora, while the more remote schools, such as the GIC in Kausani, are left with the remaining students. These are the students who are less likely to receive educational support from their families (FN:08Apr12).

As at many other government schools in the region, the Kausani GIC faces a shortage of teachers. Ramesh Prasad lamented this problem, talking about the 70-80 students in each class. The standard should be 40, but because of the lack of teachers, they combine sections. With that many students it is hard to check all of their notebooks and give them individual attention, he said. It's either teaching or checking individual
work, not both (FN:07Aug29).

The Saraswati Shishu Mandir is a relatively affordable private school alternative in Kausani for elementary and junior high school, collecting fees of Rs. 120 to Rs. 160 per month.\(^8\) The school has been operating in Kausani for about ten years and belongs to a chain of schools affiliated with the Hindu revivalist organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Because of its affiliation, the Shishu Mandir shares some of the same conservative views and alternative values as Lakshmi Ashram, training students to be well-disciplined and to respect tradition, while also offering recognized academic exams and certificates.

The most prestigious school in Kausani during my fieldwork was the Central government school or Kendriya Vidyalaya, which was in its first years of operation and collected fees of Rs. 500 per month. The Kendriya Vidyalaya belongs to a network of schools that cater to Central government employees under India’s Ministry of Human Resources and that follow a standard national curriculum distinct from those of the individual states. In Kausani, the Kendriya Vidyalay was also known for its greater emphasis on English and was often referred to as an English-medium school. The language of the textbooks used at the school is English. The instruction at the school is bilingual, Hindi and English. Regarding the previous transfer of their children from another private school to the Kendriya Vidyalay, Poonam’s mother said that, yes, it was expensive, “but people said that it was a better school” (H; PQ:08Mar26). Vimla and Hema’s younger brother had been living with some relatives in a larger town to attend a better school, but he returned to Kausani to attend the Kendriya Vidyalay.

English-medium schools are considered to be at the top when it comes to quality of education. In larger towns and cities, there are a range of educational options under

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\(^8\) Around Kausani, a day laborer typically earns Rs. 100 (for a man) or Rs. 50 (for a woman) per day. The exchange rate was usually about Rs. 45 to one dollar in 2007-2008.
the label “English-medium.” In Almora I heard comparisons of several English-medium schools, some charging Rs. 1000 per month or more. The English-medium Christian schools in Nainital are particularly well-known in the region. The English teacher in Kausani, Ramesh Prasad, asked me one day:

So, have you visited any English-medium schools - such as St. Mary's, St. Joe's, St. Paul's...? If you had visited these schools you would have found...the real difference between the government schools and the public schools.9 They are the best, I think....” (E; DQ:08Mar26)

Of Kausani, Mr Prasad said: “...there are no options here” (E; DQ:08Mar26). Even though Kausani has been a well-loved tourist destination for many years, it has not become a political or educational center, as has Nainital, with its proximity to the plains. Thus, the educational atmosphere of the smaller town of Kausani is quite different. As the Intermediate College English teacher in Kausani, Ramesh Prasad faced the challenge of teaching English literature to students who had had very little exposure to the language. This was in extreme contrast with the students he had previously taught at an English-medium primary school in the plains.

Mr. Prasad also contrasts the local Kendriya Vidyalay (KV), the only English-medium option in Kausani, with “real” or “pure” English-medium schools, as mentioned in Chapter 6, and with the local GIC where he teaches. He says there is not much difference between the Central School students and “ours” at the Inter-college. They may be a little more “conscious,” but some of them come to him for private English lessons, which he gives as a neighbor. “There may be some difference in dress, in neatness and cleanliness, but if you talk with them in English, there is not a difference” (E; PQ:07Aug29).

Currently Mr. Prasad observes that the KV and GIC students are hardly different,

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9 In India, “public schools” are a type of fee-collecting private school that is open to the public. They should not be confused with government schools that are owned and operated by the government.
not even in English skills, despite the difference in fees between the schools. Some of his explanations are as follows. The new KV school did not yet have a complete set of qualified teachers. While the books used at the KV are English-medium, much of the instruction is in Hindi. In addition, most of the students currently studying at the KV have transferred from Hindi-medium schools and have not been immersed in an English environment in earlier years. Another difference that Mr. Prasad notes in students who attend “pure” English-medium schools, such as those in Nainital, is that they typically come from higher class families. “Simple people can’t dream of going there. At such schools they would not use a word of Hindi” (E; PQ:07Aug29). Thus, among English-medium schools as well, there are great differences in quality of education and perceived place in the educational hierarchy.

The hierarchies continue in higher education. Many students in the Kumaun earn their bachelors and masters degrees through private study followed by examinations. Attendance at the university would be more prestigious but more expensive, including the costs and insecurity, especially for girls, of living in a city. At Kumaun University, with branches in Almora and in Nainital, ambitious students take English literature courses, or, as one English professor told me, the English department gets the “smarter set.” She also talked about dealing with multilevel classes in which some students have attended English-medium schools, while “others think that the past tense of ‘think’ is ‘thank.’” She sometimes needs to “resort to Hindi” in her classes in order to help the students understand (E; FN:07Aug23). Kumaun University itself, this professor told me, is not at the same level as other larger universities in the plains, since it offers only “pass courses,” of which students need to pass three each year for three years, and not “honors courses,” which would be similar to BA courses in the US. Another Kumaun University professor made reference to “real universities” in the plains, which have more programs
than their university (E; FN:07Aug23).

**English-Medium Schools and Economic Disparities**

Economic inequalities account for major differences in access to preferred educational opportunities, in particular to English-medium education. Those who can afford it send their children to the more expensive, better schools. After describing to me the current importance of English education, the principal of the government primary school in Kausani talked of the limited access to such schools:

Moneyed people [paise-vaale log] can send their children there. Those who don't have money won't be able to send their children. So they just educate them in Hindi-medium. At our school, all come. Our government gives them lunch. Lentils and rice. This way poor children can also come... So all will study. All will become educated [shikshit]... No one would be left uneducated/illiterate [anpaR]. This is why they have this government policy. (H; DQ:07Aug8)

She refers to Hindi-medium education as the alternative for those who cannot afford better schools. The education offered at her school is provided by the government, along with the extra incentive of the free lunches, in order to insure that all children have access to at least some education.

At the Ashram, Kamla-Didi also talked about the growing importance given to English in education and the limited opportunities for the poor:

The people who have the chance to learn English, learn it. Those who have no chance -- they inside feel that “we are below and they are up”... The environment is like this. Poor people, rich people -- all want to learn. The rich people have money and they go to English school and learn English. But poor people -- How can they? They have no money to learn English. In the government English is used all the time. The prime minister - Sonya Gandhi - They all speak English. If they don't know English, I don't know how they can speak in Delhi - in Parliament, etc. (E; DQ:07Sep12)

As she described the situation for me, Kamla-Didi was not expressing approval for the system that places so much emphasis on English and that leaves the poor feeling low, nor of the power of English in the Indian government. Rather, she contrasted these trends with the alternative values at the Ashram and among Gandhians by adding: “But we give
more importance to Hindi. Gandhi-ji gave more importance to Hindi... Sarala Behen was from London but she used to use Hindi -- everything in Hindi” (E; DQ:07Sep12). Indeed, the British founder of the Ashram had written her autobiography in Hindi, which is only now being translated into English. She, like Gandhi-ji, did not approve of the over-emphasis on English and the inequalities that this perpetuated among educational institutions.

“There is so much division in education in India,” Meena-Didi said to me one afternoon. We had been talking about medium of instruction and the expenses involved in English-medium education:

The division is based on money. Education has become a big commercial thing here. We feel that education is sold and bought like other things. That's why parents have to think about the decision a lot -- whether they can pay the fees. (E; PQ:07Dec11)

She was expressing a critique that was shared by other Ashram members. Education should not be bought and sold. One means to break down the hierarchy would be the radical establishment of “common schools,” advocated by Ashram members, in which all children would receive the same quality of education. Meena-Didi believes that education should be equal for all, but “those higher people, those in political positions will not accept it. They feel they will go down. They think they are superior and that their children should go to schools where normal people can't reach” (E; DQ:07Dec11).

Such an equalized system would not work in India, I was told, because of resistance from those in power. The government is making attempts to bridge the gap and to ensure quality education for all. Even when Shobha-Didi was on a committee giving recommendations on how to equalize the education system, however, she found that her ideas were not embraced. “They don't want to make education equal,” Meena-Didi told me in recounting this story. “They won't include themselves in the equality” (E;
Those who are making decisions regarding government education are not the ones whose children are being educated at government schools. Even government school teachers send their own children elsewhere, since they earn enough to be able to afford a higher quality education for their children.

The association between quality education and English-medium education is obvious in the conversations described above. To have gone to an English-medium school was to have gone to a good school, one that not everyone could afford. Since the well-resourced schools and those motivated by competition for students' fees are those that offer English medium, it is impossible to separate language and all the other variables that make a good school or that contribute to a school's reputation.

**Good Students and Good Schools**

An important characteristic of a good school is the economic status of the families who send their children there, and therefore the characteristics of the students. This was a point explained to me by Kanti, an insightful Class 12 student at Lakshmi Ashram. We were talking about the common perception that private schools are better than government schools and about why this would be so. She said that the government schools are bad because people without much money put their children there.

The Garur GIC is good. The government gives a lot of help there. And the students are good - they get tutoring, etc. But at some schools the students are poor; they don't study well, etc. There might be a poor [garib: economically poor] student who keeps failing year after year. Their families are in a bad situation. They go home from school and they need to work: cut grass for the cows, etc. They don't have time to study or do their homework. Then their teacher asks them the next day for their homework and they don't give it.... (H; PQ:08Apr11)

Again, the government intermediate college in the larger town of Garur, in the plain just north of Kausani, is considered to be a better school. The students there are able to afford outside tutoring. In contrast, students from poor families, those likely to attend the more rural schools, need to work at home and are not able to complete their
homework. This says more about the economic background of the students in the area than about the quality of the instruction in the school. Kanti continued her explanation, with a focus on how the students influence each other:

There might be twenty students in a class. Fifteen of them are poor - not poor, but less motivated to study. They fight with the teacher about doing their homework, etc. Then the other five might be very smart. The teacher would have to pay more attention to the fifteen students. At first the five students would do their work very well. Their copy [notebooks] would be very nice. They would write the questions in one color and the answers in another color so that it could be seen clearly, etc. But then when they see the other weaker students, they will think: “They are not doing this.” They will start to do it less nicely and will say: “At least I’m doing it better than those other students.” (H; PQ:08Apr11)

In Kanti’s example, the good students are those who copy the questions and answers carefully and neatly into their notebooks. The style of teaching is not called into question in comparing good and bad schools. Rather, the proportion of smart, motivated students influences the school as students influence one another. “Couldn’t it also be,” I asked, “that the weaker students would see and be inspired by the stronger ones?” “That would happen when there are 15 smart students and 5 stupid, I mean, weak ones,” she said (H; PQ:08Apr11). In this conversation with Kanti, as well as in conversations with some government school teachers, there was some ambiguity between smart students and those with family support, between weak students and those with fewer economic resources. Her point remains clear, however, that the quality of the school relates directly to the characteristics of the students who attend there.

**Characteristics of Good Government Schools**

Even among government schools, we have seen, some are known to be better than others. Here I cite some other characteristics, besides emphasis on the English language and the economic background of students, that are considered to be important in schools. These views come from individuals in different levels of the educational hierarchy, from student to teacher, principal to district administrator to state
Govindi told me about some of the characteristics that were important in her father's decision to send her and her sisters to a GIC slightly further from her home, rather than to the local junior high school. He wanted them at a school where the rules would be dependable and where the teaching is good, and where there are enough teachers. Govindi said that hers was a good school. In the area..., it came first in the games, in the cultural programs, in the rules and laws, in the dress. It is a well-known school (H; FN:07Oct24). The quality of teaching and number of teachers available were important, especially given the fact that there are many vacancies in teaching positions at rural schools in the Kumaun. The school's reputation in terms of sports and cultural competitions, discipline, and the school uniforms were also important. In the community it was a “well-known school.” Similarly, for my neighbors in Kausani, the reputation of the new school in Kausani was important for their decision to transfer their children to the Kendriya Vidyalay.

The positive characteristics that Pushba Sharma wanted to emphasize as principal of Kausani's government girls' junior high school included the external appearance of the school, especially the flowers that she recently had planted; the good teaching, atmosphere, and discipline; and the good relationship that she has with the students. Later she mentioned the good relationships among the students, as well as their beautiful performance of their prayer songs (FN:08Apr23). In another conversation about successes and challenges at her school, she talked about the importance of consistent attendance by the students and about the support of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) program, described below. She said:

The most favorable thing for the school is Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Under SSA, there are efforts being made to ensure that all girls come to school. Not one village should be missed. Everyone should be educated. Through SSA, there are
schools being made for them.... They have initiatives for making the girls want to come to school. Then the presentation [attendance] will go up. The girls won't want to stay home. (H; PQ:08Mar3)

Those initiatives include providing the money for the school to buy supplies for crafts such as painting, drawing and the weaving of thick yarn sitting mats. Pushba enjoyed showing me the drawings and paintings that her students had produced, using the materials provided by SSA. This was, in her opinion, an important incentive for the girls to continue attending school. The further improvements that she wished for her school, given the appropriate funds, included external enhancements for the aging buildings.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, or the "Education for All' Movement," is a national program established with the goal of providing universal primary education throughout India. The program works alongside each state's Department of Education using a variety of strategies to improve schools and educational opportunities. I asked a District Education Officer (DEO) in Bageshwar, higher up in the government school administration, to tell me about a good school in his district. He described a particular primary school that is a kilometer and a half from the roadside. The teachers live nearby.

As to why it is a good school, he said:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has made it very beautiful and well fit. On the walls there are posters, many printed things, that the children can learn from. These were from SSA... The teachers had made them. For example, there is a poster about the vitamins and what all of them do... [Also], the teachers are good. They teach with the new pattern... They teach in a good way. They learned this from SSA. (H; PQ:08Mar27)

The quality contributions of SSA emphasized by this DEO in describing a good school highlighted the beautification of the school, including the posters – some of which the teachers would have made during their teacher trainings – as well as improvements in teaching methodology that the teachers would have learned in those trainings.

Uttarakhand's Director of Education in Dehradun also talked about SSA, but
from a state-level perspective. He told me that all of the funding for the schools flows through SSA, except for the salaries which come from the Directorate. In addition, SSA is politically higher than the Education Directorate of the state and in some ways works independently. He said that the SSA project is headed by administrators and talked about the importance of focusing on education and not just on administration:

There is a big difference in how educationalists and administrators perceive things. The administrator is focused on money and implementation, while the educationalist is focused on how things work and human psychology. They will always be sensitive to the child and the teacher and how they feel. They knock at the heart and the mind. On the other hand, the administrator's focus is: 'This just needs to be done.' (E; FN:08Apr2)

Good schooling, in the perspective of this education-oriented director, requires attentiveness to the needs of students and teachers, the needs of the heart and mind. He also talked about gradual improvements in teacher training and the need for more qualified teacher trainers and better training modules in the young state of Uttarakhand. Educational policies, he indicates, are sometimes made from an administrative rather than an educational perspective. Still, continual efforts are being made at the state and national level to improve the quality of education in government schools, as well as educational access. As described in the following section, some policies may look good on one level but have quite different local implications.

**New Government Policies and Ashram Curriculum Change**

At Lakshmi Ashram there has always been an uneasy relationship with the government educational system. The curriculum used at the founding of Lakshmi Ashram in the 1940's was put together by its founders based on the principles of Gandhi's Basic Education or *Naii Taaliim*. Later, because of feedback from graduates who had difficulties without a government certificate, the Lakshmi Ashram leaders made the difficult decision to use the state government's curriculum and exam system, while
maintaining the school’s basic philosophies, including the holistic educational environment and child-centered pedagogy. As Kamla-Didi explained: “They [Ashram graduates] sent letters and said: ‘We have ability, but we don’t have a certificate. It is difficult in society when we want a job. We need a certificate’” (E; DQ:07Aug30). The Ashram leaders decided that they needed both “our basic education” and the government “board education.” Some compromises were required. The emphasis of classroom time shifted towards government textbooks and preparation for exams. The Class 5 students needed to attend the local primary school to be eligible for board exams. The Class 8, 10, and 12 students took their board exams at the government middle school and the GIC. This was the existing situation when, during my fieldwork, the need to re-evaluate and make another change in curriculum at the Ashram took place as a result of policy change in the government education system.

**Policy Change, Ashram Adaptation, and Student Reactions**

In mid-February 2008, I began to hear concerns from the Ashram girls about a new law requiring that students study full time at a registered school in order to take the exam there. This was talked about locally in terms of the prohibition of “PRIVATE EXAMS,” since students would no longer be able to study privately for government school exams. Ashram students were expressing concern that they would no longer be able to study at the Ashram. For some of them this was a significant crisis. For the Ashram, as well, this required a turning point, but their solution was not one preferred by many of the girls. I observed these changes in progress and talked about them with students, teachers inside and outside of the Ashram, and with educational administrators, trying to understand this new policy and its implications as they were understood from the local perspective.

Lakshmi Ashram students had been taking their board examinations at the local government schools while getting their education at the Ashram, since the Ashram
school is not registered to offer government board exams. Under the new government policy, this would no longer be possible. From the perspective of many of the Ashram students, their expectations of getting a regular certificate for their studies were dashed. Some could still leave the Ashram and attend the government schools near their homes, although this would bring increased financial burden to their parents.

The Ashram leaders and teachers began to consider their options. Most of their information about the new policy came from the local newspaper. The announcement had come suddenly, just a few weeks before the annual board exams, requiring them to scramble for a means for the Ashram students to take that year’s board exams. A long-term solution was needed. Becoming a registered school was not an option, Meena-Didi told me. They would need to have certified teachers and follow the schedule of the regular schools. “We wouldn’t be able to do all that we are doing,” she said (E; PQ:08Feb19). Neither could the Didis see the Ashram becoming a hostel, with the students sent to attend the local government schools. “That’s not the Ashram’s mission,” Saroj-Didi said. “The Ashram has a mission. So, it can’t just be a hostel -- at least not while we are here” (H; PQ:08Mar7). Regarding whether the Ashram could protest this change, Meena-Didi said, with others, “Who will listen to us?” The solution, then, would be to switch to open board exams through a government open school curriculum.

From what I understood, there would be three educational systems available in Uttarakhand, each with its own curriculum and exams: (1) The regular government school system, in which “private” students would no longer be able to take board exams and in which additional board exams would now be required in Class 9 and 11, rather than only in Class 10 and 12; (2) the new state “open exams” or Uttarakhand Open School for students who fail, students studying on their own, or, in this case, students at an unregistered school like Lakshmi Ashram; and (3) the existing National Open School
or National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), the central government system specializing in distance education.

The main problem for the Ashram was a lack of information as they gleaned what they could from the local newspaper, made phone calls, and searched the internet. Even at the district education offices, the details of the change did not seem clear. When I asked about it in Dehradun, the Education Director admitted that the new system was not solid [pakka] at the moment, being in a transitional period (E; FN:08Apr2). The new state “open exam” system, the Ashram learned, was not yet developed. It would have made more sense, Meena-Didi said, for the government to wait to implement this policy change until there had been time for the new textbooks to be made (FN:08Mar4). “All of these things are so complicated,” another Didi had said. “If it weren’t all so difficult, everyone could easily get an education” (E; PQ:08Feb19). The NIOS system was at least already in place. In fact some of the older students at the Ashram had already been taking exams through the system. Thus, the decision was made at the Ashram to switch to NIOS.

Many of the girls at the Ashram, however, were not pleased with this solution. Their repeated concern was regarding the reputation of the open schooling system. Like some of the other girls, Asha told me that she does not want to take “Open Board.” She doesn’t like it because it’s not recognized [manyata]. It wouldn’t look good. She said that she took English because big people in the village now say: “Isn’t that good that she has taken English.” But now, if she goes with Open Board, people don’t think highly of that. Open Board isn’t as good because there are not teachers there as in “regular” (H; FN:08Mar12). Her own reputation, an important motivator in her education and in her choosing prestigious subjects like English, was at stake. She was also concerned that she would not be able to get a good job with the NIOS certificate. “The government might say
that it will be recognized, but people will still look down on it. If you have an Open Board certificate, you might be able to get some small job, but not some big job. But I want to do something after I graduate!” (H; PQ:08Mar12).

Some of the girls jumped to the conclusion that leaving the Ashram was the only solution for them: “We don’t want to leave here! But we have to go... Education is important” (H; PQ:08Mar18). Some were even willing to fall back a few years in order to attend government school and get that coveted certificate. Since they could not get legal proof of the years studied at Lakshmi Ashram, they had to rely on the government certificates for board exams in Class 5, 8, 10, and 12 when transferring between schools.

The five Sadhana students who had finished Class 10 at the Ashram were particularly distraught. I found them several times sitting together and talking about this problem. They had expected to study for the Class 12 exams the following year after the Sadhana program, since there would have been no board exam for Class 11 before the policy change. They were caught in between the new and the old system, but they did not want to switch to NIOS. Their main fear with the Open Board system was that it was not recognized [manyata]. “It is not good to have degrees from two different systems,” they said. “You wouldn’t be able to get a job” (H; PQ:08Mar10). Neither did they want to return home where, they told me, they would have to get married. “We have TENSION about this,” they said. “What will we do? If we had gotten up to 12th, it would be OK,” Sunita said (H; PQ:08Mar10). They wanted to find some third place to go where they could stay together and study. Maybe, they joked, we should just go build a hut in the forest were the five of us can live together.

Meanwhile, the Ashram Didis tried to quiet the fears of the girls about the NIOS system. “I don’t know how the girls got it in their heads that NIOS is not recognized,” Narayana told me (H; PQ:08Mar27). From outside of the Ashram as well I heard
assurances that students should not worry and that the Open Board system is indeed recognized. The GIC principal told me that the degrees received under the two systems get equal recognition all over India. Students can come into Inter-college and go on to degree colleges after completing open exams (FN:08Feb 16). An education officer in Bageshwar also told me that the NIOS certificate is recognized equally with a regular certificate, even for getting jobs. But when I asked whether in society it is recognized or given equal honor, he answered in the negative. “The NIOS is less in people's minds,” he said. “It is not considered as important, as regular (H; PQ:08Mar27). Similarly, the District Education Officer talked about the open system being for “out of school” children and drop-outs. They would report that they did not study in any school and would just take the test (FN:08Mar27). The open board is, Meena-Didi told me, better for “weaker students, for students who are not so good in reading and writing.” That is because in the open exams, you can pass one subject at a time and don't have to repeat a whole year if you fail some subject (E; PQ:08Feb19). I could understand why the reputation of open board seemed questionable in the eyes of the students who were also concerned about how their education would be perceived in society.

The Ashram leaders tried to focus on the advantages of the switch to NIOS. There would be less exam pressure, the curriculum would be more practical and more geared to independent study, students could take or retake the exams one subject at a time, etc. They had always been having trouble with the previous system, I was told, and the government was always changing things, which caused problems (FN08Mar10). From their perspective, the students' desire to switch to government school was naïve. The students were worried, Narayana said, because the Ashram was going away from the “mainstream,” the high school to intermediate to BA track (FN:08Mar10). The students don't understand, the Didis told me. They have an unrealistic dream about what
government school is like. Only later would they realize what a good education they had
gotten at the Ashram. The students, who mainly come from hard family situations,
teachers said, were better off at the Ashram where they had support (FN:o8Mar25). In
defining vikaas [development] for me a few weeks later, Saroj-Didi provided a very
relevant example, bringing up the difference in views between the Ashram and some of
the girls, specifically in relation to the new curriculum:

As for development, they think that it is getting work, a job [naukari], doing
something. The girls think that NIOS isn't development [vikaas]. They think that
the Uttarakhand Board is development. But that is not development!
Development grows slowly, through gaining understanding. Attaining
understanding -- that is development!... They think that by going to school, they
will get development and that they won't get it at Lakshmi Ashram. That is not
true! (H; PQ:o8Apr14).

The parents and guardians of all of the Ashram students were called to the
Ashram for a special parents' meeting on March 25, 2008, some coming from quite a
distance. The Ashram leaders introduced the switch to the NIOS curriculum,
emphasizing the fact that it is recognized: Children who have gone through NIOS are
studying in high universities. It is recognized by the national secondary education
boards. Also there is no requirement that the classes be taught in a certain way
(FN:o8Mar25). The older students impacted by the change were also present at the
meeting and were given a chance to share their preferences. Some spoke out boldly in a
way, I thought, that demonstrated the confidence they had learned through their Ashram
education. The parents expressed their approval of the Ashram's decision for the NIOS
curriculum. Most of the younger students stayed. Twelve students, mainly in Classes 6
through 8, left the Ashram to return home and attend government school.

**Government Policies and Local Implications**

Throughout my fieldwork, I heard about several other government policies,
especially related to education, that look different at the local level than they would at the
state or national level where the decisions were made. For example, because of the cold
winter months, schools in the mountains are scheduled to have their two-month break in
December-February, rather than a summer break in April-June. However, the
distinction between schools was made based on altitude, such that a school in the valley
near Kausani would have a summer break while a school on the nearby hillside would
have a winter break, even through temperatures are similar in neighboring villages.
Implications for the students in the mountains include the fact that, because of state-
wide exam schedules, the most intense time of exam-preparation falls during winter
break when students are without school support.

When I saw all of the turmoil caused in the girls’ lives and at the Ashram
surrounding the new policy that prohibited private study for regular government school
exams, I felt like starting a protest. “I don’t know why this new rule has come,” I heard a
concerned mother say (H; PQ:08Mar13). But there did seem to be understandable
reasons. The government wanted to get all children into school. They would no longer be
able to sit for board exams every other year and remain out of school. For those who
could not attend school, the open school system would be available. Who would have
thought through the implications for the Ashram students?

Still, the Ashram students were not the only ones complaining about this new
policy. One of the two male Ashram teachers pointed out to me the implications for other
out-of-school students, the group most likely targeted by the policy change. We were
walking down towards the Kausani bazaar together, and I mentioned to him the
conversation I had just had with the girls, their concerns about getting a certificate and
getting a job. He agreed that the Ashram perspective is different. “But jobs are important
too. They do need to find jobs. They come from poor families, so they have to earn
money” (H; PQ:08Mar10). About the new exam system and why the government would
do this, he said that the government thought that all students should be in school.

But, some of the young people need to work. They work and do their studying on the side. Now they won't be able to study at all. Also young people get jobs and then advance their degrees in order to get promotions while they are working. This won't be able to happen anymore. So, if looked at in one way, the new exam system is a good idea. But looked at in another way, it's not. (H; PQ:08Mar10)

In other words, if they had to choose between work and school, some young people would need to choose work. This was his own story. He came from a poor family and came to the Ashram to work just after finishing high school (Class 10). Then it was here, while he was working, that he did intermediate (Class 12) and BA privately.

It's not that parents don't want to send their children to school. Of course they do. Every family wants to send their child to school. But sometimes they need to work in order to be able to eat -- to support their siblings... Do you think their parents don't want them to get an education? They just have no choice.

The Open Board is supposed to be for those in between. But it is still very uncertain. Also, the centers for the Open Board would be further away. Students would need to go there to do their paperwork, etc. It would be much more difficult for them than just going to the local government schools. (H; PQ:08Mar10)

Every parent, this teacher explained, wanted their children to have the opportunity to get ahead in life, but sometimes harsh financial realities required them to work. Their chances of getting an education while working would be greater if the system were easy for them to navigate, not full of difficult paperwork, fees, and distant exam centers.

Many, it seemed to this teacher, would just give up and not finish their studies.

Regarding the new policy, Meena-Didi explained that the government wants to “mainstream” everyone. “But the mainstream schools have become nothing! Nothing happens there,” she said. “The students learn to sit still all day. When a student is just sitting still, they say that s/he is such a good student! S/he is not speaking up or asking any questions” (PQ:08Feb19). The alternative education offered at Lakshmi Ashram, among other things, taught students to speak up and ask questions.
**Sunita's Aims**

Sunita is one of those students affected by the new government policy and the Ashram curriculum change. She is seventeen years old. She came to the Ashram eight years ago when she was in Class 3, so she was one of the youngest girls that I had met during my first trip to Lakshmi Ashram in 2000. As I got to know her in 2008, she told me about her family, and her story began to unfold. She has two younger brothers and a younger sister. Her mother passed away when she was quite young, and her father returned from his work in the plains to care for his young family. This involved planning for the education of his children beyond what they would be able to receive from the primary school in their small village. As Sunita described: “Then Papa thought he would educate... the two eldest outside. Then they will do something. Then [my brother] started to study in Gwaldam, and I came here” (H; DQ:07Oct23).

The expectation that she and her brother will “do something” after receiving their outside education weighs on Sunita’s mind, as she expressed in our conversations. The eldest of her brothers is now fifteen and is studying in Class 10 at the Intermediate College in Gwaldam, where he lives with an aunt. It is for her younger sister, who has remained in the village, that Sunita is most concerned. After the recent death of their grandmother, her sister has been left in charge of all of the work of the home and fields. She also has a long walk to get to high school and has no time to study for the exams.

When Sunita talks about her future aims, it is in the context of family financial concerns. As the one who was sent away to be educated, she feels pressure to support the family, and she knows that financial constraints will limit what she will be able to do and the further training that she will be able to pursue. I heard these themes repeatedly in her story. She says: “I think that I should go on and study, but sometimes there is tension that I should go home. That there should be money. That's how I live. Because Papa is a...
farmer. Where will that much come from?” (H; DQ:07Oct23). She talked about living with this tension, this concern about family finances and the burden upon her father, who is physically weak. This desire to support her family is a primary motivator to pursue her studies and yet further studies would add to family expenses. Sunita’s aim is to finish “inter” [Class 12] and to become a teacher. She thinks that before teaching, she will do “inter” and then she will go outside -- outside of the Ashram. She would then find some work and give support to her family. She would like to get good “marks” in “Inter” -- then money, etc. would come (FN:07Oct23).

The goals of this seventeen year old girl are focused on providing for the needs of her family. She was not building independent dreams, but wanted to be able to play a role in supporting her family. Sunita’s dreams were also constructed within the limitations that she knew constrained her options. “Before becoming a teacher, money is needed,” she said. So she would work at little jobs to earn money first because, if she goes outside, “they will ask for money there also.” “I don't have any money, so that's why I think about it a lot,” she said (H; DQ:07Oct23). Even in order to become a teacher, she knew that she would be needing money. She had the urgency of wanting to earn right away for her family and yet the realization that pursuing the career that she wants would bring more expenses in the short term.

Later in the interview, Sunita explained further, first about the needs and expectations of her family, and then about the expenses involved in getting to a position from which she could help them. In the following excerpt from our interview, Sunita uses hypothetical quotes of her younger sister's thoughts to emphasize the contrast between her family's expectations and the limitations in what she feels she can do for them. “My sister is thinking of me here getting an education and thinking that I will do something” (H; PQ:07Oct23):
'Didi [elder sister] will earn. She will bring money.'
But she doesn't know what sadness her Didi has. She knows, but she just thinks,
'Didi will do something. She'll do something. She'll bring money.'
But she doesn't know where the money will come from. She's little, so she thinks:
'Didi is big, so she'll do it.'
Papa thinks that I'll do something. Because Papa is always very sad. My Papa is very thin. Very thin. Because there's a lot of work. He just works in the dirt...
Then there's also the sadness about his wife - the one that is gone - my mother.
Thinking about the children. Thinking about what to do about the marriages.
With work there would be money... (H; DQ:07Oct23)

Here I catch a fuller glimpse of the high hopes that hang on Sunita after she completes her education, as well as the concern that she carries for her father in his weak condition.

She continues:

I want to do something for my family - money, money, money. But until I have finished “inter” I can't do anything. That's how the law [niyam] is... because wherever I would go, I would need money for there also. About one lakh [Rs. 100,000]... For those who want to do “service,” there would be an “interview” and “training.” For that I would also need [money]... So I think: 'Where will that come from?'” (H; PQ:07Oct23 )

Everywhere Sunita turns, money is needed. Even the steps towards getting a stable government position, referred to as “service,” can be expensive.\(^\text{10}\) Earning money was a central theme in Sunita's mid and long-term aims. Limitations also enter into Sunita's answer about her ideal place to live. She would like to live at home in her village, but just for short time periods, because “you can't get holiday for a long time” (H; DQ:07Oct23).

All of Sunita's peers back in her home village studied up until Class 8. She is the only one who is still studying. She talked about the pressure in the mountain villages to get married early. “I absolutely won't do that,” she said. She would like to wait for a long time to get married, until she is 25, 26, or 27. “People think that after studying until 8th, then a good boy can be found, then get married. If you study until 10th, then find a good boy, then get married.” But as the oldest in her family, Sunita feels the responsibility to

\(^\text{10}\) I wondered later where she heard these figures about the cost of getting an interview and training for a government position. In Almora I heard talk of the long line of applicants for few government positions and about the assumption that bribes would be needed. Perhaps this is translated into village discourse as simply an expense of getting a job.
support them. “I am the oldest, so I think I should study,” she said. Others in the village have older siblings; they have someone with a job. “If - like me - I am eldest - I also have responsibility, that I need to watch over the household - I will need to get a job. If I study further, I will get a job.” This, Sunita says, is the main reason for going to school (H; DQ:07Oct23).

As with schooling, language learning also has implications for a successful life. Later in our conversation, I was asking Sunita about her language use and language learning. Learning English is naturally tied to learning math in Sunita's comments, both challenging subjects that become optional in high school [Class 9-10].

When I was in 9th - when I had passed Class 8 - I had both math and English, both subjects in 8th. I thought I would go on, because I really liked math. I was really strong in math. My number was the highest in the class. I was very good, very smart in math. But then there was no one to teach it here, so I gave it up in 9th. Well, it doesn't matter [Chalo, koi baat nahii]. I never really liked English. So, I thought, 'Ok, let it go [Chalo, rehene do].' 'I'll take it in 10th.'

...So I thought, after finishing 9th, then I'll take it. Then I'll take math. Then I finished 9th and again I asked. But then also there was nobody [to teach math]. So I cried a lot. Because I didn't like studying anything else. I liked math. I kept studying it at night. It was my best subject.

...I could have studied it, but there was no one to teach it. So I was really sad. I was really sad. I thought I wouldn't even study in school... Then they started to teach and I thought koi baat nahii [it doesn't matter], I'll just study like that. But I came in “good second division” in high school... Good “marks” came. (H; DQ:07Oct23)

Sunita was proud of the results that she had gotten on her exams, especially in math. She had done well on that measure of success. However, she was not able to continue studying math into the high school level at the Ashram. Usually each class cohort at the Ashram decides together which of the optional courses they will study for the Class 9 and 10 exams. Likely her desire to take math was not shared by her four classmates. Despite these limitations, Sunita continued to talk about her plans to become successful.

After high school, I thought, I’d like to study English for a year. I’d like to learn English — because nowadays in education English is very common [bariya aadit hai]. If you're going to do something, you need English.... I really want to learn it.
Because I didn't study math, so I'll study English. That comes to my mind. Then you came, so we'll learn.” (H; DQ:07Oct23)

Suddenly I realized the importance that Sunita and her classmates ascribed to the informal English class that I had offered to teach them. Sunita, in particular, had repeatedly told me that she wanted to learn English, eager for the start of my English class. She saw the study of English as some compensation for not having studied math in high school, showing the value that she placed upon it as a sign, it seems, of being well-educated, and as a possible door to further opportunities.

Later in our recorded interview, I asked Sunita whether she thought that the Sadhana course would give her some new vichaar, new ideas, thoughts or perspectives. Her initial answer, described in the next chapter was surprising and honest: “What will I do with vichaar?! (H; DQ:07Oct23). As a student who has spent much of her life at Lakshmi Ashram, Sunita recognizes the importance of social work and of the alternative ideas that she has learned about life. She hopes to be able to share them with others throughout her life, but her primary concern is with supporting her family. Those who are in a more stable economic situation, she thinks, are the ones who are able to actually do the social service, to help the poor. She does not see herself being involved in social work because of the financial constraints of her family. “But my condition is very bad,” Sunita said. She listed again the family difficulties and concern about what she can do. “I always stay happy, always laughing. But inside there is a lot of sadness... I always keep on thinking.... I don't find peace. I don't rest well” (H; DQ:07Oct23).

Sunita’s desire to serve was increased in part through her experiences in the Sadhana program, including their travels in the plains. After they returned to Lakshmi Ashram, she told me:

I am so sad that my country is poor. Small children even are in a bad situation. Some children can’t study. I was crying when we saw them in Delhi -- the
children cleaning in the streets. But what can I do for them?.... I could teach students. (H; FN:08Mar10)

Although her own family struggled financially, Sunita was struck by the difference that she saw in poverty levels in the city. She saw it as a reflection on her country and wished to do something to promote change. She could contribute, she thought, through becoming a teacher.

More limitations troubled Sunita's mind that spring when she realized that she might not be able to get a regular government certificate for her Class 11 and 12 studies at Lakshmi Ashram because of the Ashram's switch to the NIOS system, described above. Perhaps she would not be able to become a teacher after all. I asked Sunita what she would do, and she said that she would be a farmer (H; FN:08Apr21). She liked to shock me with her blunt pessimism. “I want to study,” Sunita said. But it was looking less possible now. She compared herself with Himani who had already gotten her Intermediate College certificate and could thus go to university. Sunita felt that without that government certificate, she would not be able to proceed in her education.

In Sunita's story, I hear the sadness of family loss and the pressure felt by an oldest child to make a difference in the family, especially in family finances. Her family believes that through her education, she will be able to “do something,” but Sunita is concerned that she will not have the opportunities that she needs to get that job and fulfill her family's expectations. She is driven by financial problems and yet limited by them. Studying English, she believes, is one step that she can take to further her aims. And, again, education is seen both as a way for her to achieve her aims and as a possible means to uplift her country. Sunita negotiates various discourses and sets of values related to education, future aims, and the meaning of success. In the village, she is encouraged to marry. In mainstream discourses about education, high marks in math
and English are valued in a curriculum directing students towards further education and career. In the family, she is expected and depended upon to earn. At the Ashram, she learns alternative values and the importance of service to society.

The following chapter describes some of those alternative values, exploring local and Ashram understandings of empowerment and of “moving forward,” and including the stories and aims of some of Sunita's colleagues.
Chapter 9
Empowerment, Moving Forward, and Alternative Values in Education

The 2007-2008 Sadhana program was inaugurated at Lakshmi Ashram on a pleasant afternoon in September. The five students from outside of the Ashram had all arrived in the preceding days and begun their adjustment to the routines of Ashram life, accompanied by the five Ashram girls who were also joining the Sadhana program. The bell was rung and the Ashram community gathered for the daily afternoon meeting. After prayers, the ten Sadhana students and Narayana, the young Ashram teacher who was assigned to lead the Sadhana program, were called forward and a lamp was lit to commemorate the event.

As the girls introduced themselves one by one, they mentioned their goals for entering the program and for the future. First the five new girls from outside of the Ashram introduced themselves. Govindi started out her introduction with a formal greeting to all Ashram leaders and members. She then continued: “I want to become a teacher. With this goal, I have come here.” Then a bit about her background: “My academic knowledge is only inter Class 12.” She said that she had studied on the science side and plans to study beyond that privately. She needed some time, and so came here to the Sadhana program. Pushba said that she had come to find opportunities and hoped to learn. Nirmala said that she had been working for an NGO when the letter came inviting them to join the course. “And so I thought that I too would go there -- to see how life is lived in this community,” she said (H; DQ:07Sep11).

1 Small caps indicate that the actual English word was used in a Hindi or Kumauni conversation. Govindi tended to use English words and phrases more frequently than the other girls.
2 In citing examples from my field notes and interviews, I identify the language being used as Hindi (H),
students who were joining the program talked about having seen the Sadhana students in previous years and about looking forward to joining the program, to finally be able to understand everything in the course. In talking about her goals for participating in the program, Mahima added that she wants to help others move forward, as it is done here at the Ashram.

Next, several Ashram teachers shared their thoughts about the goals of the Sadhana program. “As one family -- in community -- they will reach their goals,” Narayana said. “The aim is to learn how to live and to teach others. Also, to reject the bad and embrace the good,” Shobha-Didi said. Meena-Didi talked about the importance of the mental strength that the students would learn in the program:

Gandhi-ji’s views are very important vichaar [thoughts, ideas] for a person and for society -- and for the whole world -- not just because they were Gandhi-ji's... This vichaar has strength. That’s why as much of this vichaar as we can understand, we find it useful in our lives... We should not just say that “he said this” or “he said that.” We should truly incorporate it into our lives. Shouldn’t we? (H; DQ:07Sep11)

Then to the new Sadhana students, she extended a warm welcome to Lakshmi Ashram. The ten girls would spend the next ten months together, forming close friendships and learning new ways of thinking and living.

The goals of the Sadhana program reflect well the mission of Lakshmi Ashram in general. Education at the Ashram is more about learning a way of thinking and of living than about earning a certificate. “Simple living, high thinking” is an important motto there. At the Ashram also students have role models who have not followed the traditional life path of Kumauni women, some who have remained single and who have

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Kumauni (K), or English (E). I then differentiate between field notes (FN), written in my own voice regarding recent observations on the field; paraphrased quotes (PQ), constructed from my field notes in the voice of the original speaker; and direct quotes (DQ), including recorded interviews and quotes that I had written word-for-word in my field notes. FN, PQ or DQ are followed by the year, month, and day of the event or interview.
devoted their lives to serving society. The themes that were mentioned in the afternoon inauguration of the Sadhana program continue to be important at the Ashram and in the conversations of the young women trained there: themes of service, of life in community, of moving forward and helping others to do so, and of gaining *vichaar*.

The goals of the individual girls who joined the Sadhana program, and of girls in general who are educated at the Ashram, are multi-layered and do not always parallel the goals of the Ashram. In her dissertation, Rebecca Klenk (1999) explored the conflicting discourses that Lakshmi Ashram graduates negotiate as they talk about their lives in and outside of the Ashram, including the influences of Gandhian thought and discourses on development, modernity and gender roles. These were issues that I also became familiar with as I observed and spoke with current students and their teachers and as I try to sort through the complexity of what I heard from them and saw in their lives. To gain a better life and move ahead involves, for these young women, both the struggle to find ways to advance economically and the internal struggle towards high thinking and self-confidence. The ways they negotiate different assumptions about empowerment are influenced by the village and Ashram communities of which they are a part and by the changing world around them.

As I got to know the girls in the Sadhana program, I heard more about their goals and about the circumstances that motivated and constrained their future options. In this chapter, I continue to describe the hopes and dreams of some of the girls at the Ashram -- their future goals or “AIMS” -- as well as the life realities and limitations that have constrained those dreams both inside and outside of the Ashram. Understanding the contexts of the girls' lives helps in understanding their dreams and in exploring what empowerment means to them.

Throughout my research and writing, I have hesitated in using the term
“empowerment,” not wanting to jump to conclusions based on assumptions about what empowerment is or to be limited by the various connotations the term could carry, including that of the provision of power by some outside source. I had originally thought of using the Hindi term *utthaan* [uplift] to capture the local concept, but this too, I began to realize, was incomplete and not in common use. In exploring these concepts as defined and experienced in the local context, I wanted to understand more broadly what the young women and educators with whom I interacted understood to be a good life, improved quality of life, or happy living. What were their preferences in life, what did they see as ideal, and what did they aim for? I listened to their aims for the future for evidence of their beliefs about a good life. Their action and attempts to reach those goals, and their plans of how they would do so, also pointed to their beliefs and practices about gaining that better life and about the meaning of “uplift” and “empowerment.”

The aims and life stories of Himani and Sunita, in the previous chapter, and Govindi, Manju and Asha in this chapter, provide a glimpse into the complex circumstances that shape decision-making and life improvement for them. The previous chapter described the social context that influences young women: the pressure to marry, the role of women in the rural Kumaun, and the expectations of their parents and teachers, as well as their educational opportunities and limitations. This chapter explores the concept of “empowerment,” first through key terms loosely related to the concept in the local context, then through various understandings of what is meant by moving forward and being backwards, and finally through there specific values emphasized at Lakshmi Ashram.

**Govindi’s Aims**

Govindi came to Lakshmi Ashram to join the Sadhana program in September, 2007, having finished Class 12 in her village the previous year. Since her family moved
back to her father's home village after he retired from his government job at a research institute, Govindi and her four sisters have had to adjust to life in the village. With an outspoken personality, Govindi was easy to get to know and eager to share her thoughts.

In talking about her future aims, Govindi emphasized the contribution that she hoped to make through her life. It was within the context of her stories about the difficulties that she faced in high school, described in Chapter 8, that she talked about her desire to be a teacher, a different sort of teacher. In her own educational experiences, she had not felt free to ask for help or to raise question. “So, I thought that when I am a teacher, I will tell the children everything, teach them everything that [my teachers] didn’t teach me...” (H; DQ:07Oct24). She talked about small children leaving home and needing a loving place in which to learn.

Govindi had not always wanted to be a teacher. She talked about her hopes for the future within the limitations that have shaped her dreams. Before that, from childhood, Govindi said, she had wanted to be a doctor. Later her dream had shifted.

When I saw my own condition and also saw my home condition -- because to be a doctor a lot is needed: MA, BA. A lot of money is needed. Outside support is needed -- living and eating and drinking outside -- the expenses for everything... Then my parents only had daughters. I have two older sisters and two younger sisters. Mami is usually sick. Money is needed. And Papa himself is always sick. Whatever earning we have just goes away. There is nothing to save. So, from where [would the money come]? (H; DQ:07Oct24)

Govindi may have been referring to a slight handicap in her left eye when she talked about the limitations of her own 'condition.' The home conditions she referred to were financial, as she continued to explain. Even though her father had retired from one of the cherished government positions that guaranteed his family a stable income through his pension, the family was facing financial limitations. Because of dowry expectations, having only daughters is costly, and Govindi’s aging parents were needing more money to cover their own expenses. Govindi wouldn’t have access to the financial resources
needed to become a doctor, but she planned to work her way towards becoming a
teacher. This too, she realized, was a means to serve her country. She told me that then
she saw that in society the best **job** is **teaching**. She would be content teaching children,
giving them wisdom. “As much as I give, I would receive in that,” she said. “Just as being
a doctor is service..., so also the **condition** of my country goes on through its people” (H;

I asked Govindi about why she came to the Sadhana course, and she explained
how it fit into her hopes for the future and how her plans had adapted to her
circumstances. When she passed 12th, she thought about being a teacher. But she
explained that it takes a lot of time to become a teacher. She would need to study for her
BA for 3 years, then MA for 2 years, and then B.Ed. The **application** **form** to start this
process requires Rs 1000. “For everything there are expenses, expenses. And this time is
for earning money, for saving money,” Govindi said, because her parents' health is
getting bad (H; PQ:07Oct24). The conversation had quickly turned again towards the
financial needs of her family. She had not headed straight into teacher training because
of the fees required. Her parents' health is another concern for family finances, as are the
marriages of the five sisters. If she starts earning now, she would be able to meet all of
their needs. It's not that they had to be well dressed, she explained. She just wanted to
start saving money now, so that they would have it in an **emergency**. “So, after a lot of
thinking, I decided to come here. I would also like to earn on my own what is needed for
my education. Then I won't be a **burden** on my parents...” (H; PQ:07Oct24). As Govindi
then confirmed to me, she had taken this Sadhana **training** so that she could find some
good job. “The Lord knows what happens in the end,” she said (H; DQ:07Oct24). Her
long-term aims were temporarily postponed as she took this training in hopes of getting
a job and earning for her family and for her future education. While Govindi accepted
that only God knew the final outcome, she continued to search for ways to fulfill her dreams.

I saw Govindi and the other girls taking the small steps that they could in trying to pursue their goals. She talked about going with Nirmala and Basanti to their village to visit the NGO there where they had been working and where they thought they could get her a job as well (H; FN:07Oct22). Govindi was excited to tell me about this plan:

And then when the Sadhana course is over, I will not let one minute empty! I will go straight there [to work at the NGO]. Then I will study and save also. Then after saving up for a year or so, I will take it to my parents and say: 'Here! I earned this much!' (happily) (laughs). How is it? My idea? (H; PQ:07Oct22)

She had planned to use her vacation time in December instead of going home to go and explore this employment opportunity. However, several weeks later she told me that she had given up this plan and would be going home after all (H; FN:07Dec3).

Her future plans involved both the process of obtaining a job and, as I understood later, simultaneously studying towards her BA. Studying privately for BA exams is quite common in the Kumaun. It was through private study that Pushba, also in the Sadhana program with Govindi, had previously completed her BA and MA. Later Govindi told me that she would likely be moving around from place to place in the next few years, “Earning AND LEARNING” (H; FN:08Apr14). She said that it would take her three years to do her BA in this way. Then she would do her B.Ed. and then she would need to wait for her NUMBER to come up for her to become a teacher, or wait for her selection into a government teacher training program. In the meantime, she would like to work for an NGO. “But not this NGO,” she said, referring to Lakshmi Ashram. “A big NGO where I can get a good salary” (H; PQ:07Oct22).

I had opportunities to chat with Govindi about her plans while we chopped potatoes or washed our clothes together. She continued to talk about her future in terms
of serving her family and then serving society.

I want to be able to earn money in order to help my mother, who is ill.... I want to earn money first to help my mother and father.... Just as they helped us so much throughout our childhood, we ought to help them in return, right?.... I will earn money and put some in the bank. But after that, I don't care if I have one rupee. I will serve society. (H; PQ:07Oct22)

The commitment to social service was certainly something that is emphasized at Lakshmi Ashram, but I believe that Govindi had this conviction before coming to the Ashram as well. Some of her views were influenced, as she explained to me, by a mentor who introduced her to philosophical reading materials. She talked critically about those Indians who leave the country for their own gain, using their skills to follow financial incentives in other countries. She has also experienced, in the village, the reactions of those who have migrated for work to the city and their preference for village life. During our recorded interview, Govindi talked about her own preference for living in the village when I asked her where she would like to live.

In the village. That’s it. I would like to live in the village. And fields. I have a great interest in garden. I plant many flowers. And rose bushes -- rose. I have great interest in them. I would like to do agriculture-related work. (H; DQ:07Oct24)

She told me that she thinks that the lives of Kumauni people are very good, very simple, and very beautiful. There is nothing so fast that there is no time to live, no time to eat, no time to sleep, time for anything.

The people from our area who live in Delhi, when they come to the village, they say: “Wow, Govindi, we enjoy it here so much! People work so slowly. There is so much enjoyment. Where we are, we don’t even sit for one minute. Everyone runs. No one even walks. They run.” So I laugh... (H; DQ:07Oct24)

Govindi’s view of the ideal life, as expressed here, does not involve moving up and out socially or spatially. She laughs at those in what we might call the urban rat race and

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3 Govindi told me about this mentor as being very influential in the development of her thinking. He was running a school at which her elder sister taught and would often visit their family. He began to lend books to Govindi and her sisters, the same types of reading materials that were available at Lakshmi Ashram, including Hindu philosophies and Gandhian themes. These influenced her critique of selfish materialism and her desire to serve in society.
hopes primarily for economic stability for her family and then the opportunity to serve society and live a quiet life in the village. Since her father was on a government salary and did not own fields, she has not experienced the hard labor that most village girls have. Having moved back to the ancestral village after many years at a research institute, her family has somewhat of an outsiders' perspective. Still, I think her preference for village life is not uncommon. If it weren't for the hard work in the villages and the need for outside jobs in the plains, village life would be ideal for many.

In Govindi's story, I hear a desire to support her family as well as to serve society. She prefers rural over urban living, but hopes to bring economic stability for her family. She was taking the steps that she could to make that happen. Govindi believes that education is necessary for her to achieve her aims. She also sees education, and her desired role as an educator, as an important part of helping to advance her country. The unique aspects of Govindi's story come from various influences. She was influenced by her family's relative economic stability during childhood and the experience of growing up in a research institute where her father was working. She was influenced by a thoughtful mentor who lent her philosophical reading materials. And now she was being influenced by the Sadhana training. Her personality is also unique, with her bold, outgoing nature and tendency to question.

Some themes in Govindi's story can also be heard in the stories of Himani, Manju, Sunita, and Asha. Govindi's dreams had changed over the years and months and weeks and were still open to change. Economic and physical constraints influenced those dreams. She took action to prepare for the future, working from within those constraints. Education was as an important step towards her aims, but not an end in itself. She had a preference for village life but a desire to see and bring improvement for her family. Her aims involved service both to her family and to her nation.
Key Terms Related to Empowerment

Throughout my fieldwork, I began to compile a list of Hindi terms that were associated with uplift and empowerment or with improved living in general. While not a comprehensive list, the terms represent themes that emerged during my time in Kausani and that became a useful tool in my discussions there. I sometimes used the list of terms, written on a card, to start conversations with students and teachers or for activities with the students. Table 8 lists these terms in Hindi, with an approximate translation in English, and is followed by a brief description of the most significant terms.

Table 8: Key terms related to a Good Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sashaktikaran</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utthaan</td>
<td>Uplift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aage barhna</td>
<td>To move forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vikaas</td>
<td>Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aadhunikta</td>
<td>Modernity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sukhpurvak Jiina</td>
<td>To live happily; to live with ease or without difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaicharik</td>
<td>Thoughtful / Having ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himmat</td>
<td>Courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aatmavishvaas</td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suavalamban</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency, self-dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aatmanirbharta</td>
<td>Independence, Self-sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahayog</td>
<td>Cooperation, collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sammaan</td>
<td>Respect, honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirmaan</td>
<td>Development (as of views, attitudes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragati</td>
<td>Progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sashaktikaran, or “empowerment,” is not a colloquial term, but rather a Sanskrit-based term used by the government and non-governmental organizations in reference to empowerment for specific groups of people, as in women's empowerment.
and empowerment for low caste groups. During my preliminary research, I chose the term *utthaan*, or “uplift,” to represent the local and more colloquial understandings of empowerment. This concept is particularly relevant at Lakshmi Ashram, founded under the name *Kasturba Mahila Utthaan Mandal*, [the Kasturba (Mahatma Gandhi’s wife) Women's Uplift Association]. However, during my fieldwork I discovered that the term *utthaan* is not now in common usage, especially by the younger generation, in conversations about improvement and a better life. Rather, I began to notice under this theme the use of the every-day phrase *aage barhna*, or “to move forward,” and *aage barhaana*, “to cause to move forward.” This term seems to express more agency than the more abstract *sashaktikaran* and *utthaan*.

The implications of this moving forward, and where one might be moving, remain nebulous, with economic advance being a probable but not necessary component. The same ambiguity surrounds the use of the term *vikaas*, or “development.” In some discourses, development would be clearly associated with *aadhunikta*, or “modernity”; however, among the Gandhians, modernity is not vital for a good life and is to be treated with caution. For them, development is more internal than external, a concept captured in the motto: “Simple living, High thinking.” A positive descriptor of a developed or educated person that I began to hear within the Ashram was the term *vaicharik*, describing one who has *vichaar*: ideas or thoughts. This implied high-quality thinking and convictions.

*Swavalamban*, or “self-sufficiency,” was a term that I learned as the girls began to prepare for the celebration of the founding of the Ashram. December 5 is celebrated as *Swavalamban Divas* [Self-sufficiency Day]. The students defined the term for me as equivalent to *aatmanirbharta* [independence; self-sufficiency]. I also used the adjective *aatmanirbhar*. These are formal terms for a value expressed at the Ashram frequently,
that of women being equipped to stand on their own feet. Similarly, I heard the girls inside and outside of the Ashram expressing a desire to become something or to do something with their lives.

Self-sufficiency, closely associated with independence, could imply for some a complete dependence on oneself and on no one else. However, in the Ashram context, the concept comes with the assumption of inter-dependence and the role of the community, the mutual support and cooperation expressed in the term *sahayog*. This is a theme that Meena-Didi highlighted during her short speech at the end of the *Swavalamban Divas* celebration. She first talked about the happiness that Sarala-Behen had brought through what she did in founding the Ashram. Then she challenged the girls, saying that “each of us can also do something.” She mentioned the gradual learning of *vichaar* and the importance of self-sufficiency, but her final words emphasized community: “Each of us -- and we are many here -- is independent on some area. But no one can do everything on her own. We all live with each other. We each have a role” (H; PQ:08Dec5). Narayana also spoke at the same event about the importance of *sahayog* or “cooperation” and “collaboration.” No one is completely self-sufficient (H; FN). The importance of community – of cooperation and collaboration – is obvious in the daily life at the Ashram. All members work together and play a role in the daily functioning of the community. Education there happens in relationship and is meant to be passed on to others. Outside of the Ashram as well, community support is important in village life.

Each of the above themes and values can be associated with “moving forward,” an advance towards a better life. Beliefs about what “moving forward” means and how it can be achieved vary, of course. The uniqueness of the Ashram ways surfaces in the next sections, as I attempt to describe various views on moving forward and being backwards. I then explore more closely three aspects of moving forward in the Ashram.
perspective and practices, namely 1) high thinking and 2) building self-sufficiency in 3) community and collaboration.

Moving Forward Versus Being Backwards

Moving Forward

In defining *utthaan* for me in simple language, Meena-Didi used *aage barhna* [to move forward] (H; FN:06Jul6). To uplift was to move something forward or advance it. In presenting her goals for joining the Sadhana program, Ashram-trained Mahima talked about wanting to help others to move forward, as it is done at the Ashram. In another context, Kamla-Didi defined *utthaan* as development, with its opposite being *putan* [fall, decline, ruin, downfall]. *Putani* is used, she said, in reference to the time of the British rulers and the [low] condition of our development at that time (E; FN:07Oct19). Lifting up, moving forward, and becoming developed can mean very different things to different people and the meanings are not easily sorted.

When I asked whether the life of Kumauni people is good, Manju and Sunita cracked some inside joke and then explained: “They need development.” What kind of development? “Like... some villages are that way, some backwards villages need to go forward” (H; DQ:07Oct26). They talked about the need for government provision of electricity and roads, and about the new roads being built to their own remote villages. I then asked about *utthaan*, which they equated with *nirmaan* [creation, development, nurture (as of views, attitudes)]. Sunita explained that Sarala-Behen had started the Ashram with a Gandhian perspective. When I asked how this relates to *vikaas* or development, the concept that we had just been talking about, she did not associate the two. Rather *utthaan* was associated with the unique perspective of the school: “The school teaches with that [Gandhian] perspective and so it has that name” (H; DQ:07Oct26). The development brought about with roads and electricity is different
from the view of and attitude towards development advocated at the Ashram and incorporated in its name. Both can be considered a type of moving forward. But the two are quite different.

Moving forward is also an individual goal. It was talked about as a purpose for education, and the girls talked about means for going forward in education as well. After the girls finish their studies, Sunita said, “they will then move forward and get a job...” (H; PQ:08Mar25). This moving forward is similar to the concept of becoming something or doing something in the future, a generalization that the girls inside and outside of the Ashram often offered as a goal and as a purpose for education, and even as a reason for studying English. At the GIC a group of Class 12 girls talked about wanting to do something with their lives, wanting to travel to the US, wanting to be independent. They associated this with the term *vaicharik* [thoughtful, having ideas]. One of them said: “Some people think a lot -- that they will move forward in this way or that way. Some other people don’t think [in that way]” (H; PQ:08Apr16). Thinking ahead, doing something with their lives, being independent and moving forward – these are obviously valued outside of the Ashram as well. The definitions of what these might entail could be quite different. The goal of going to the US, for example, does not fit well in Gandhian philosophy. However, the girls at the Ashram have learned to negotiate these various definitions and values as they strive to move forward.

**Being Backwards**

Just as moving forward can have different meanings, so “backward” carries multiple definitions and implications. Backwardness is sometimes associated with a region and sometimes with individuals. Remaining backwards is something to be

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4: *Aage barhna* or moving forward was often used in contexts where Americans might talk about “getting ahead,” a concept that seems much more competitive in comparison. Perhaps this less competitive wording relates to the atmosphere of community and collaboration described later in the chapter.
avoided. Language and education are very relevant themes in the struggle to avoid backwardness and move forward. The following discussion with government-school teachers in Kausani highlights some common discourses about backwardness and its association with the Kumaun region.

I was sitting under the large tree in the school yard at the Kausani GIC, talking with a group of teachers. I told them about my conversations with students about language. The students had reported that they use Pahari [Kumauni] at home and Hindi at school, and the teachers thought that this was true. I mentioned that some people will say that they don’t speak Pahari, or will not admit it, as if there were some shame involved. Then I listened for their responses. “There is some INFERIORITY COMPLEX,” one teacher said. “If a student goes down to the plains, s/he will feel ashamed.” He said that it is because this is a BACKWARDS AREA. I asked him what he meant by that. “It is poor,” he said. The Hindi teacher joined in: “The education is not good also. There is not much gyān [wisdom] here,” he said.

I expressed surprise at this comment about the lack of gyān in the area, and some of the other teachers laughed and began to discuss and debate this among each other. I asked the Hindi teacher again how he could say that there is no gyān. Wasn’t this area considered to be the land of the gods? The other teachers laughed and said this was a good point. He said something about Pahari speakers not knowing much, if I understood correctly. (H/E; FN:08Apr10)

The factors associated with the Kumaun as a “backwards area” in this conversation included poverty, lack of good education, and lack of wisdom, tying into the claim that Pahari speakers don’t know much. I was reminded of the distinction between elite and folk traditions that I had talked about recently with a retired archaeologist, Professor Agarhwal in Almora. It seemed to me that the elite traditions of the hills – a region known as the land of the gods – are highly valued, while the local folk traditions associated with rural life and ways are considered backwards. The conversation about backwardness with the GIC teachers had come up through my comments about the local language and the use of it by the students. The shame that some feel in admitting that they speak Kumauni is related to the “backwards” region with which the language is associated.

Elsewhere I was told, however, that language differences or regional accents are
not grounds for shame or discrimination. Accents are simply evidence of where a person is from and not looked down upon, according to a group of teachers in Garur. “Language does not cause problems here. It is not difficult. Language is just for communication. It does not put one person above another. The problem would be if people couldn’t communicate with each other,” one said. And, “the more we ignore differences the more developed we become” (E/H; PQ:08Mar15). Minimizing diversity seemed to him a step towards development. Meanwhile, backwardness seems to have much less to do with the language and culture of the Kumaun than with the remote and rural characteristics of the region, although the two are closely associated. Whether the language differences cause problems or not, there would be some stigma attached to being identified as coming from a “backward” region.

Throughout my field work, I was alert to references to the Kumauni people or region as “backwards,” behind, or picche. I heard it less frequently than I expected, actually. But still the references were there. Sometimes they referred to the whole area. Sometimes they referred to individuals. When asked whether the English medium was difficult for the children, the Kendriya Vidyalay principal called this an “interior area” with “orthodox villages,” describing villagers as having a fatalistic mentality (E; FN:07Sep3). Such attitudes towards the Kumauni people also become associated with attitudes towards the Kumauni language.

**Backwardness and the Ashram Perspective**

At the Ashram I heard descriptions and critique of common assumptions about backwardness. While moving ahead for many meant city jobs and English-medium education, the Ashram advocated simple living and high thinking.

Kamla-Didi told me that the village people are or feel that they are very different from city people, from Delhi people, etc. Men are frequently going to work in the cities
to earn money. They don’t like the life in the city, the heat and the busy lifestyle, she said, but they feel that they have to work in the city for the “development of their family.” They need to work and earn money. Otherwise, Kamla-Didi explained, they feel they will be 
back -- backwards people. They feel that they have to talk Hindi and English also and live in the cities (E; FN:06Jul5). She told me about one of the Ashram graduates who joins her husband in Delhi during the winter when her mother-in-law doesn't need her to help work in the fields in the village. Her children attend an English-medium school there.

Why English medium?, I wondered. Kamla-Didi explained the rationale of those who seek English-medium education:

They get English schooling and think that they will go fast in development. “All people are learning English now,” they say. People in English-medium schools are given importance. They think that if they do not get education in English, then they will be “back” [backwards]. (E; PQ:06Jul5)

She then explained the contrast between this common view and that of the followers of Mahatma Gandhi:

The common man thinks like that. But not Gandhian people. We think it’s not necessary / not good to go to English schools. We avoid this and give importance to Hindi and local languages. Live simply, like Gandhi. High ideas. [Simple living, high thinking]. This is how we will develop our country... (E; PQ:06Jul5)

The views of the Ashram Didis and their fellow Gandhians contrasts with the growing value being placed upon English in society, tied so closely with mainstream beliefs about getting ahead.

The avoidance of backwardness was a theme that came up again in a conversation with Meena-Didi and Saroj-Didi when we had been talking again about the popularity of English education. In explaining the common mentality that education should be in English, Meena-Didi said:

They want to fit in this modern world. They don’t want to speak Kumauni, saying: “Oh, if we speak Kumauni, we will be backward.” Speaking English is a symbol of development of people... They think development is equivalent to better living.
[They think that] such [developed] people don’t work in the field. Instead they sit at a chair at a table to work. They have servants in their homes. (E/H; PQ:06Jul6)

These Ashram teachers regretted the fact that so many people were associating better living with such external factors as speaking English and having a desk job. Also language is portrayed here as a sign of either backwardness or of development. Even among their students who had been trained in Gandhian philosophy, these attitudes about development were common, these teachers said:

Still some girls are thinking this way. It’s natural - everywhere. The atmosphere will affect them everywhere... The girls are still not at an age to think about the aim of life. When they reach that age, then they leave. Some change. We want to keep them here until they understand something, until they are 21-23 yrs old. Therefore, we have the Sadhana course. It teaches the aim of life; How to be really happy; NEED VERSUS GREED. We try to make them understand, to think about life. (E/H; PQ:06Jul6)

These teachers believe in the value of the students’ immersion in the Gandhian lifestyle and way of thinking at the Ashram. Students would learn over the long term through example. They would certainly be influenced by the outside world and the assumptions about the glories of the desk job, but through life at the Ashram they would hopefully absorb the alternative values that called for simple living and high thinking.

My discussion with Saroj-Didi and Meena-Didi proceeded into examples of some of the negative consequences of modern development assumptions. The new policies of the local primary school required the girls to cut their hair and wear pants and shirts just like the boys – an attempt at equalization that denied the uniqueness of males and females. While in the past villagers would help one another voluntarily during a wedding, nowadays everyone expects to be paid, making marriage costs extremely difficult for the poor. Examples of the woes of modernization tie in easily with critique of western social problems and immorality, including the break-up of the family. At the Gandhian seminar that I attended with the Sadhana girls, such examples abounded.
Critiques of modernization and economic development are discourses common at the Ashram but often not unfamiliar in the villages as well. Klenk (2009) describes, for example, the opinion of village women in Kausani about the economic development initiatives of the new state of Uttarakhand and their observation that little had changed for them in their daily workload. Rather, increased demand for water by new hotels and industries made the life of these agricultural workers more difficult.

The utthaan that the Ashram sought to bring to the villages was different from the vikaas [development] that politicians envisioned for the economic prosperity of the state as a whole. Although there is critique in the Ashram philosophies for some village ways such as superstition and caste discrimination and although the Ashram promotes change and improvement, there is value for the simple village lifestyle, agriculture, and environmental sustainability.

During an early-morning walk, Shobha-Didi turned my attention to the question of whom we are comparing ourselves with when we talk about being backwards or being left behind. Regarding those who insist on sending their children to English-medium schools, Shobha-Didi said that she is not sure what their long-term goal is. “Do they want every child in India speaking English fluently?,” she wondered. She doesn’t think that’s necessary.

But some say that it is [necessary]. They are comparing themselves too much with other countries. They say that they don’t want to be “left behind”... But left behind, where?! You are in your own country! Work to develop it from within!...

(E; PQ:07Sept12)

This macro-level call to the nation to develop from within, with attention to the needs of one’s own country and with less attention to comparisons with other countries, is applicable also at the micro level. The rural Kumauni people need not feel inferior to their urban neighbors in the plains but can develop in their own way from within, as
Ashram Didis have also advocated through their work. The establishment of the state of Uttarakhand has allowed local government to focus on the specific needs associated with the mountainous region. On an even smaller scale, the Ashram provides a place where students can develop within a sheltered atmosphere. The Ashram philosophy encourages the individual as well to develop from within. The following section explores some of the values advocated at the Ashram, directing the students towards high thinking, self-confidence, and community as they seek to move forward.

**Alternative Aims and Values**

Can they really get those jobs they dream of?,” I asked Meena-Didi one day as we talked about the aims of the girls. “It's hard,” she said. “Even those who have a good education have trouble getting jobs. If they try to get a government job like that, it will be hard. But they can find some work in an NGO or in the volunteer sector” (E; PQ:07Dec1).

The teachers both at the Ashram and at the government school talked about the societal factors that constrain future opportunities for rural Kumauni young people. They did not seem to have high expectations for the students in terms of career options. Their students were from poor families, and the teachers talked about the lack of home support for education and the pressure for young women towards early marriage.

The teachers at the Ashram, however, had other aims for their students. Their goal had more to do with internal development – the development of the mind – than of opening up external career opportunities. Role models at the Ashram had devoted their lives to serving society. Economic success was not placed on a pedestal as the ultimate aim of education. Training of the mind meant so much more.

During my first month of fieldwork in 2007, I was accompanied by a Korean colleague who helped to teach English and yoga at Lakshmi Ashram. We often sat and talked about our observations of the language and education situation in the region.
especially as it related to the girls at the Ashram. From our outsiders’ perspectives it sometimes seemed that the girls needed more motivation. That they needed to be encouraged to pursue higher dreams and to recognize that they could achieve something more – that they could “be somebody,” as my colleague put it. While I could understand my colleague’s perspective, I also knew that the realities faced by these girls and the opportunities that were actually available to them were quite different from those that had been available to us. The thought of traveling abroad, for example, was far removed from the realities of life for a young woman from a poor family in the Kumaun.

Through the international connections of Lakshmi Ashram, a few of the graduates have actually had the opportunity to travel abroad. Some have had influential careers in NGO’s. Some have found positions where they earn a regular salary. These alternative paths are not common for Kumauni girls. But neither do they represent the primary goals of the Ashram. In discussions about future possibilities for the Ashram graduates with my Korean colleague, I felt the need to defend the Ashram in its alternative aims and values, alternative motivations and priorities. The Ashram was not pointing the girls toward the kind of economic success that many people associate with empowerment. Rather girls were being trained to stand on their own feet, to have self-confidence, to think well, to do what is right. This kind of empowerment is something more internal.

As I got to know the teachers and students at Lakshmi Ashram, I heard them negotiating these different goals, these different discourses about what leads to a good life, about the meanings of success and of empowerment. At the Ashram empowerment was more than externals. It involves internal development. In the following sections I explore what I saw and heard at the Ashram related to the value of high thinking and having ideas, of self-confidence and independence, and of community and mutual
High Thinking

“Simple living, high thinking” -- This Gandhian motto emphasizes the values lived out at the Ashram and was mentioned by several of the Didis in our interviews and conversations. The Gandhian value for simplicity and the rejection of mainstream assumptions about modernity and economic success were highlighted above in relation to the overarching themes of moving forward versus being backwards. This section takes up the concept of “high thinking,” especially as expressed in the Hindi noun *vichaar* [thought, idea] and the adjective *vaicharik* [having thoughts or ideas]. I began to notice the use of this term particularly at the Ashram. Having thoughts or ideas was a positive descriptor of a person. If a girl wants to marry a man who will allow her to continue in social service, he should be a good man, a man who has *vichaar* (H; FN:07Dec4). In the Ashram context *vichaar* sometimes also seemed to carry connotations of having convictions and/or understanding and living by Gandhian philosophies. While girls educated at the Ashram may become *vaicharik, vichaar* could also be influenced by family (H; FN:08Apr11), by reading (H; FN:07Oct24) or by having more time to think (H; FN:08Apr14).

The Ashram Didis pointed out to me that before coming to the Ashram the students had few opportunities to think in new ways about their lives: “There is not much thinking about thoughts. There is not much discussion about what they are doing” (E/H; PQ:06Jul6). At the introduction to the Sadhana program, Shobha-Didi had emphasized the importance of gaining mental strength. She talked about Gandhi-ji’s views as “very important *vichaar* for a person and for society -- and for the whole world” and about this *vichaar* having strength. “...We should not just say that he said this or he said that -- we should truly incorporate it into our lives” (H; PQ:07Sept11). Having or
gaining *vichaar* is more than just knowing or learning more facts. These are thoughts and ideas that give strength and are to be incorporated into one’s life.

Ashram-educated students also talk about *vichaar* as something to be applied and to be shared with others. I heard this in Sunita’s answer to my question about whether she would gain *vichaar* in the Sadhana program. She attempts to balance the economic need driving her education and the value of the ideas she learned at the Ashram. She knew that she had gotten an education that was different from that offered at government schools, especially in the focused training of the Sadhana program. Her initial reaction is pessimistic: “What will I do with *vichaar*?,” she said, as if tossing the ideas off as useless in light of the needs in her life. She told me that it is for the sake of her family that she is committed to her education. But she continued:

> I don’t know where I’ll apply the *vichaar*. But I will apply it. I will keep it in my mind. Then wherever I go, I can tell it to other people... like social work, to help other people... I may not be able to do [social work]... I will give support to my family -- because I’m the oldest... But the *vichaar* is in my mind... People who have a nice house, who have their expenses, they can give to poor people. I can tell people, but I can’t do it [social work] myself. (H; DQ:07Oct23)

Sharing *vichaar* with others is an important implication tied also with the value of social work that Sunita has learned at the Ashram. She feels that she cannot be a social worker because of her obligation to provide financially for her family, but she can at least keep the *vichaar* in her mind and spread it to others. Similarly, Kanti associated the Ashram’s goal of *utthaan* with providing *vichaar*: “Here [at Lakshmi Ashram], *utthaan* means: for those whose *vichaar* is little, lifting them up, making their *vichaar* strong” (H; PQ:08Apr11).

This reminded me of the awareness-raising work of the Ashram, efforts to bring awakening or *jagarukta* in the villages regarding current issues such as defending of local water supplies, preserving of forests, and participation by women in local
government [*panchayat*] elections. More could be said about the aims and methods of the projects in which the Ashram was involved in the past and during my field work. But, beyond social campaigns and movements, the strengthening of *vichaar* in the lives of the Ashram students remains central to the Ashram work. As the Ashram founder herself wrote: “Our Kasturba Mahilaa Utthaan Mandal is founded in Kumaun with this hope: that through the spreading of our girls, rays of knowledge shall spread among the women of the hills” (Devi, 1948, 7-8).

Being *vaicharik* or having *vichaar* in the Ashram context sometimes seems to imply making lifestyle choices towards simplicity and service, tying together the dual “Simple living – High thinking.” Another implication is that some are *vaicharik* and some are not. Young teacher Narayana told me about her disappointment in one of her peers for agreeing to a certain marriage proposal. Although the girl was trained at the Ashram, “she doesn’t have that *vichaar*,” Narayana said. “Some of the girls raised at the Ashram aren’t *vaicharik*. And some girls from outside of the Ashram are *vaicharik*” (H; PQ:08Apr11).

In a recorded interview, I asked Kamla-Didi for her views on the various words that I had listed in association with empowerment. She described for me the girls who are *vaicharik*:

They should have ideas in their own minds... [*Vaicharik*] means someone who has a lot of ideas in his/her mind, who speaks. One who doesn’t have much in their mind will speak less or won’t tell... If some girl writes, there are ideas in her mind. Someone who has very little in their mind would only write a little bit. She can’t write very much. (H; PQ:08Apr13)

Someone who is *vaicharik*, in this explanation, speaks and writes. The ideas that are in her mind become evident as she produces orally and in writing, sharing those ideas with others. I thought of the regular in-house newsletter produced at the Ashram in which students are all encouraged to write their ideas about particular topics, an opportunity
rarely available in the Kumaun. Through the newsletter they girls are given the opportunity to express their thoughts in writing. Kamla-Didi continued to explain vichaar:

Like Gandhi-ji’s ideas -- Whoever has read\(^5\) a lot, there are lots of ideas in his/her mind. And someone who doesn't read/study, doesn't have a lot of ideas. And some people who read/study -- there could also be no ideas in his/her mind. They became very great, but they didn't understand. Or they didn't like ideas. If someone likes ideas, they will learn. Then they would tell you and others. Vaicharik means -- there should be ideas -- full of ideas.

... Yes, everyone has ideas. There is no one without ideas. But some people will have few ideas and some people will have a lot. (H; PQ:08Apr13)

Although reading and studying could be a means of becoming vaicharik, Kamla-Didi points out that some who have read, studied, and become great still remain without understanding. Some people, she says, do not like ideas. The connection between vichaar and education is not always a direct one.

The next day I asked Saroj-Didi about some people being considered vaicharik and others not. She said, like Kamla-Didi, that if they are educated they are vaicharik. But then she too qualified this generalization:

They have more thoughts. They can think about outside things. It's not that an uneducated person does not have thoughts. But a vaicharik person's thoughts are developed. Being educated \([pRhe-likhe]\) is not necessary for that, but there should be some education. (H; PQ:08Apr14)

Being vaicharik, then, includes having developed thinking.\(^6\) This is not necessarily associated with education, but education plays a role.

Skepticism about mainstream education as a means for developing ideas or for developing wisdom is not uncommon at the Ashram, as among other alternative

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\(^5\) The Hindi word for both “read” and “study” is paRhna. Sometimes the two English words are used interchangeably.

\(^6\) The example that Saroj-Didi then gave also points to vichaar as more than simply thoughtfulness. It implied, I thought, a conviction or idea towards achieving a goal: “For example, you had vichaar in coming here. You had the laksha [aim] of coming here. You wanted to come here and to do something. You had the idea.” (H; PQ:08Apr14). Similarly, a group of Class 12 girls at the GIC told me that someone who is vaicharik speaks their ideas, and they said, “we also have ideas about wanting to go the US and to do something with our lives” (H; PQ:08Apr16).
educators. The “high thinking” valued at the Ashram is not necessarily promoted through common, mainstream education practices, neither is literacy a requirement for having vichaar. During the Swavalamban Divas [Self-sufficiency Day] celebration at the Ashram, a local Sanskrit teacher gave a speech about the famous poet Kavir, including humorous stories from his life. I asked Meena-Didi about it the next day during our morning walk, and she summarized his message for me:

Kavir was illiterate. He never learned to read and write. Other people wrote down his poems and prayers. And yet he had an incredible mind. He had very deep thoughts. His poems are included in school books, starting from Class 2. His thoughts are so deep that it is hard for the children to understand them. (E; PQ:07Dec6)

In talking about the story, I mentioned that it shows that a person does not need to be educated or literate to have a good mind. Meena-Didi’s response was adamant in agreement: “There is no connection between education and good thinking! Sometimes we even say that education messes up the mind,” (E; PQ:07Dec6) she said. Later I heard her translating this piece of our conversation for Saroj-Didi, who was walking with us: “There is no connection between education and gyan [wisdom] (H; PQ:07Dec6). She continued, saying that here it is not necessary to know how to read and write. “People work together as a community and help each other. Others can read and write for you” (E; PQ:07Dec6). Her habit of translating or summarizing our English conversations in Hindi for Saroj-Didi provides another example and demonstrates her point. It is not necessary for all to know English when people can work together and help one another.

The theme of community will be explored below as another component of empowerment. But first, I explore the themes of confidence and self-sufficiency also promoted at the Ashram. As Meena-Didi had said about the teachings of Gandhi: “this vichaar has strength...” (H; PQ:07Sept11). This strength contributes to the confidence and self-sufficiency of “standing on one’s own feet.”
Self-Confidence and Self-Sufficiency

According to the Memorandum of Association written at the founding of Lakshmi Ashram, an important goal of the organization was to build a mind-set of confidence in village women that would equip them to promote positive changes in their communities:

...the activities of the Society shall be directed more specifically to encourage the women of Kumaun... to realise their dignity, their personal and social duties, the nature of the contribution they shall make to public life, and thus to assist them in every way to make their fullest contribution to the growth of a new society with a fuller life based on the improving economic, social and cultural conditions of the rural people. (Kastruba Mahila Utthaan Mandal, 1946)

This building of self-confidence is a value still promoted at the Ashram today. It is often talked about in terms of being able to stand on one’s own feet.

Kamla-Didi emphasized self-confidence in her description of utthaan as envisioned at the Ashram. She talked about the importance of self-sufficiency for living a happy life and the importance of learning for independence. More choices are good for the girls if they have understanding, she said. At the Swavalamban-Divas [Self-sufficiency Day] celebration at the Ashram, described above, the Didis who spoke made the connection between self-sufficiency and interdependence, emphasizing the fact that we all need one another.

Sometimes when the quiet, polite Ashram girls are seen in town wearing their simple khadi uniforms, they do not seem very confident to outsiders. However, I saw evidence of confidence in the lives of the Ashram girls. Within the Ashram, they take turns in leadership roles, stand up in front of the whole group at Ashram meetings to make reports and presentations, and take responsibility for their own learning. Outside of the Ashram, they participate actively in conferences and lead skits and chants during foot-marches. During a village visit with Asha, I saw her sharing values learned at the Ashram, talking about freedom of the mind, and resisting talk of her own marriage. The
Ashram girls also showed confidence in collectively raising a complaint about the Ashram's decision to switch to the NIOS curriculum, as described in Chapter 8. Klenk's (1999) stories of Ashram graduates also demonstrate the mindset of confidence and self-sufficiency that has influenced their lives.

**Collaboration and Community**

The value of working together and mutually supporting one another in community\textsuperscript{7} is lived out in Kumauni villages and even more so at Lakshmi Ashram. The girls demonstrate this value as they talk about their goals for the future, describe village wisdom, and work together in daily and academic pursuits.

One of the ways that this community orientation is demonstrated in the lives of the young women is in their goals which are geared towards their families and not towards themselves. They desire to support their families and to serve their country. As I listened to these Kumauni young women, really teenagers, talking about their aims for the future, I noticed their concern for their families. Their goals were focused on returning support to their parents, having seen the struggles they were going through and wanting to do all they could to help. This came out particularly clearly in Sunita's story, described in Chapter 8. Some of these young women also talked about wanting to serve their country and bring knowledge and uplift to others through their lives. I talked with Meena-Didi about this eagerness that the girls expressed to support and help their families. She agreed and said that it is true here in India (E; FN:07Dec1). Her comment embraced this trait of thinking of others in one's decisions about the future as an Indian phenomenon. The fact that I had noticed and commented on it seemed to reflect my membership in a group where things are done differently, where stereotypical western

\textsuperscript{7} In India, the term "community" sometimes carries connotations of "communal" violence and separation of people along religious or caste lines. I use it in a broader, positive sense to describe the mutual support and interdependence that keeps people together.
teenagers think only of themselves in decisions about the future. I began to pay closer attention to this theme of community and collaboration, especially as it relates to beliefs about empowerment and a better life. I noticed community-oriented ways of seeing and doing things, of thinking about the future and of working together.

The value of mutual support was also an important piece of village wisdom that the girls identified for me and that I observed. One of my strategies for getting the girls talking about valued Kumauni ways and traditions, and for contrasting that with school knowledge, was to ask about what can be learned in the villages. How to farm and work in the fields was an obvious answer. But the value of community life and collaboration was an equally clear theme in their answers. Manju talked about sharing with one another, living together, and getting along with each other as important lessons to be learned in the villages (H; FN:07Oct 26). In describing her village, Himani said: “There is love and affection. Everyone shares in each other's sadness.” I then asked her what can be learned from a village. “From the village? What can you learn? You can learn to work. And you can learn to love and care for one another and to live together.” Later she talked about the home being the first place of learning for a child: “They learn what they need to support the home, sharing and working together. Then when they are older, they behave well” (H; DQ:07Oct 30). Asha had a similar answer when asked about what can be learned in the village: “They help one another a lot,” she said. She talked about the village people helping her mother, who is poor, and celebrating together during marriages (H; DQ:07Oct22).

When I talked with the Sadhana class about collecting wisdom from the villages, the response surprised me. Sunita immediately started talking about the sharing/caring/community relationships of the village. Some of the other students who were also raised at the Ashram agreed with her, saying that this was valuable wisdom.
that could be learned from the villages (H; FN:07Nov12). While some acknowledged that this kind of caring could exist in the cities too, the general attitude was that rural people were more community-oriented and that this is better than the city way. This was true also for the girls who had recently joined the Ashram and were less influenced by Gandhian philosophies. “In cities people tend to be out for themselves and busy while in rural areas there is more love and community; people help each other out,” Pushba told me during a casual conversation. She mourned the current trend towards the break-up of joint families. “People are living on their own. They are taking their families and going to the city. Everyone knows that life is bad in the cities, and yet they go...” (H; PQ:07Oct23). Himani talked about similar images of city people: “They live for their own pleasures and don’t think about anyone else. They don’t talk with others very much... Here in the villages in the Kumaun everyone thinks about everyone else. Everyone lives together with everyone else. Everyone shares each other’s sadness...” (H; DQ:07Oct30).

In the villages I saw people working together, helping one another and depending on one another: living together in close proximity, interacting often, working together in each others’ respective fields, delivering or examining important paperwork for each other, reading for each other, borrowing an umbrella, moving to live with relatives to pursue further education, and using relationships and connections to achieve goals.

Community-oriented village life is, of course, not perfect. There are conflicts over land and water. There is abuse and drunkenness. A newcomer like Govindi, moving back to the village, has trouble fitting in, and young women face many social pressures, especially marriage expectations. I also heard about and observed some of the village traditions that separated people. The homes of the high-caste families are built higher on the hillside and separate from the homes of low-caste families. I joined a group from the village of Dhoulara who were being paid to carry stones and sand up the hillside for a
new irrigation canal. When they sat together for tea at the construction site, one woman sat apart from the others and brought her own cup since she was high caste. Govindi told me about being scolded by her family for handing a cup of tea directly to an untouchable who was visiting their home rather than setting it at his feet. She resisted this caste segregation and spoke out for change.

There were also traditions that kept women separate from men, including careful requirements about how a woman was to serve food to a man, especially in high-caste families. The Sadhana girls were eager to tell me about these traditions, but said that many of these were things that their grandmothers had done and that were no longer popular.

The work of Lakshmi Ashram in some ways builds upon and strengthens the value for community support and cooperation found in the villages and breaks down some of the barriers that divide. Caste is not recognized at the Ashram and all of the girls work in the kitchen and eat together. One of the Ashram’s goals has been to provide a home and a place of empowerment for destitute women, women who would not have had a role in traditional village life, including widows and those with mild handicaps. For some girls, the Ashram also provides a temporary escape from the pressure to marry.

The Ashram girls and Didis talked highly of the sense of community and cooperation at the Ashram, a place where everyone lives together peacefully (H; PQ:07Aug25) and works together. It is a disciplined, community life where all are living and doing everything together (H; PQ:07Sept24). At the Ashram, life is easier than life in the village, I was told. There is the daily schedule that gives order to the day, and the work is divided up among everyone (H; PQ:07Dec4). From brushing their teeth to studying, all is done together (H; PQ:07Apr8). The group work duties and shared responsibilities at the Ashram provide a clear example of community life and
collaboration.

From the beginning of my field work, the ways that cooperation and collaboration come into play in the academic studies at the Ashram also attracted my attention. The academic life, like the rest of life at the Ashram, is community-oriented, involving the working together of students and teachers.

In my observations of the Ashram classes, I saw lively interaction among students and between the students and the teacher. The students would often chorus their answers together. As I observed 8\textsuperscript{th} and 9\textsuperscript{th} grade English classes taught by Kamla-Didi, I wrote some of the features that I noticed in the class:

There was no raising of hands. Questions could be asked [by students] any time and yet it didn't seem chaotic. (An advantage of a small class). They all seemed to be communicating well in a familiar pattern. But, of course, some girls were answering/chorusing much more than others. Once in a while Kamla-Didi would call on someone by name, but not often. Only once, with the 8\textsuperscript{th} grade group, did she call on someone by name to pay closer attention. All were very attentive or responding throughout both classes. (FN:07Aug2)

Sometimes it was hard for me and other younger teachers to keep down the noise level in class. The chatter going on among the students was not rebellion against what was going on in class, but rather their eagerness to have their voices heard. Mostly the girls were attentive and included, constantly interacting, answering, and throwing in their opinions. The teacher-student relationship is an aspect of community life that is important at the Ashram. This value was highlighted during the Appreciative Inquiry training for Ashram workers in April 2008. The teachers talked about the importance of relationship and emotional support for learning, of having a good learning environment and respected role models.

Beyond their lively interaction in class and with the teachers, the students were often working together and helping one another with their learning. They copied notes from one another's notebooks and often answered teachers' questions together in chorus.
Even when one student was called upon, the other students would often help her with the answer. This was something that my Korean colleague talked about regarding the English class she was teaching at the Ashram. When she called upon individual students to practice reading, the more advanced students would always whisper the words to coach their classmate along. She felt that the girls were not really helping each other, not allowing the other to work out the answer. I could not explore the harmfulness or effectiveness of this kind of collaboration, but noticed that even in class the girls were working together.

When I was showing Sunita my list of words associated with empowerment, she had told me that they learned these from each other. When I asked for clarification, I learned that she was not talking about gaining empowerment from each other, although that may be true, but that they learned these words, these abstract terms, from each other. This says something about education and the learning of new words and concepts, a collaborative process worth more investigation. Back during my first month of fieldwork, my Korean colleague and I had talked about the lack of competition among the girls and sometimes the seeming lack of motivation. I had thought about the fact that a different type of learning system is at work here. The girls are working together to learn things rather than competing with each other to get ahead (FN:07Nov30).

The Ashram students were also expected to take responsibility for their learning. The students sometimes reminded the teachers of the class schedule and what they were ready to cover next in a particular class. When I took over some English classes, the girls had suggestions for me of where to begin, how to structure the class, and even how to control the noise level. The class was a group event and the students were actively involved in and taking responsibility for it. While community and collaboration are important outside of the Ashram and in government education as well, they seem to be
emphasized and enacted more at the Ashram.

At the inauguration of the Sadhana program, described at the beginning of this chapter, Narayana had said: “As one family -- in community -- they will reach their goals.” And Shobha-Didi had added: “The aim is to learn how to live and to teach others” (H; DQ:07Sep11). Not only would they be learning in community, but they would also be learning the value of sharing what they had learned with others. Mahatma Gandhi had emphasized the importance of education as something to be shared with others and used for the benefit of others, another value demonstrating the importance of community and collaboration at the Ashram.

This theme has come to permeate a lot of other themes in my research and my thinking about the Lakshmi Ashram and Kumauni context. A sense of community is hard to define – the naturalness of working together, collaborating towards a common goal, cooperating with others rather than competing with them. As Sunita said in her introduction at the Gandhian seminar: “Society is based on cooperation with each other” (H; PQ:07Sep29). And as Himani said in defining a good life: "To live a good life, first we need to establish our own occupation. We need to speak good words to other people. And we need to live well together with everyone” (H; PQ:07Oct30).

**Manju's Aims**

During our recorded interview, Manju talked about being eager to learn thoroughly and be strengthened by her training in the Sadhana program. I asked her about what she hopes to do after that, and after finishing Class 12. “After Inter, some work,” Manju said. What kind of work? “I haven’t thought about it,” she said (H; DQ:07Oct26). When I encouraged her to tell me what she likes or what she would like to do, she said that she likes working with children, especially those in classes five, six, and seven. We also talked about her ideal living situation. Manju's preferred place to live is
the Ashram. She doesn’t know where she’ll go after Class 12. “It’s unclear,” she said. She thinks she’ll do some sort of work. She’d like to live in half city, half village -- in between – somewhere like Kausani (H; PQ:07Oct26). Like Sunita, Manju had come to Lakshmi Ashram when she was quite young and had spent much of her life there. She often took responsibility for work in the kitchen and among the younger students. Although her future was unclear, she knew that she wanted to find work.

I had been reading about Lakshmi Ashram’s founder, Sarala-Behen, and her disapproval of formal education. One day I asked Manju what she thought about this. “But nowadays everyone needs a CERTIFICATE,” Manju said. Why?, I wondered. Why did they want to study? “In order to get a job. To support ourselves -- and support our families,” Manju replied. I asked what her parents’ view would be. “They would say that I don’t need to study.... But we don’t want that kind of life,” Manju said, “just working at the in-law’s home, and taking care of family, children, home. This kind of life is good at the Ashram” (H; PQ:08Mar10).

For Manju and her peers, studying further, earning a certificate, and finding a job would provide an alternative, if temporary, to getting married, working for the in-laws, and caring for “family, children, and the home.” She preferred to get a job in order to provide for herself and to be able to give something back to her family, a job made accessible through education. Her parents were, however, thinking towards arranging her marriage and securing her in another family. The life that she knew and the community that had become her family at the Ashram seemed most secure to Manju at this phase in her life. Although Ashram life included the same sorts of field and kitchen work that would make up the life of a village daughter-in-law, it was more than “just working,” and it was work done together.

Manju’s desire for a job did not reflect a goal of becoming affluent or important.
She, like the other Ashram girls, juggled the very different discourses and demands of the village, the modernizing world around them, and the Ashram community. During the Gandhian seminar held in Kausani, the Sadhana students got a chance to introduce themselves and make a few comments about their understanding of Gandhi-ji’s teachings. Manju talked about wanting to live as Gandhi-ji lived, having a simple life. Sunita contrasted the values of Gandhi-ji, a small man who had done so much, with those of the average person who simply thinks about how to get a job and how to earn money (H; FN:07Sept27).

After Manju learned, with her classmates, in the Spring of 2008 that they would not be able to get a Class 12 certificate through taking the regular government school exams, she seemed sullen and thoughtful. Although they tried to sort out their options, she felt that the situation was out of her control. “We can't do anything,” she said, “except worry” (H; PQ:08Mar10). I sat with her for a while one afternoon. She said that there is still nothing new about what she will do next year. Just tension in her mind (FN:08Mar21). Then a few weeks later, Manju told me that she also would be leaving the Ashram in July. She would go home. Would she go to Intermediate College? “No,” she said. “I had wanted to do Inter, but now it's not [available] here” (H; PQ:08Apr8).

Perhaps I shouldn't have been so shocked when I learned in a phone call to the Ashram the following year that Manju had gotten married in February 2009.

**Asha’s Aims**

The pseudonym that I chose for Asha means “hope.” My first conversation with Asha about her hopes for the future started as we peeled potatoes together one morning in front of the main Ashram building. I asked about the decision her class had made to take English for the Class 9 exams. In previous years the Ashram students had stopped studying English formally after Class 8, choosing Sanskrit as the language elective for
Class 9, a subject that could be more easily taught by the Ashram Didis and was said to be easier to pass. This year Asha and her colleagues had pushed for English, and the Ashram began to offer English at the high school level for the first time. “It was our desire, our interest,” Asha said. They wanted to learn English because everyone else in India is learning English now. “It has become very important,” she said. I asked if all of the girls wanted to take English. She said that some of them were hesitating at first, but when they saw that their classmates were going to take it, they decided that they didn’t want to be left behind (H; PQ:07Sept5).

The desire to study English involved consideration for the growing importance of English in India, as well as a desire to keep up to pace with a changing world, to not be “left behind.” Asha continued to tell me her reasons for pursuing English, telling me that she has a particular interest in going abroad, to England, etc. That is why she wants to learn English. I asked if she wanted to go traveling or to live abroad. She said either one. She would like to be able to make money there to be able to support her family -- her mother and siblings... (H; FN:07Sept5). The dream of going abroad is quite distant for a village girl in the Kumaun, but Asha is a dreamer. She also has role models at Lakshmi Ashram, a few leaders, who have had the opportunity for short trips abroad. Even within her desire to travel abroad, Asha embeds her goal of being able to earn money and support her family.

I began to ask more about Asha’s hopes for the future and what she would like to do. She said that she would like to do anything that she could do to earn money. I insisted that she should first think about what type of work she’d want to do. She mentioned maybe helping poor people. She could be a nurse maybe. But she doesn’t really like nursing. It scares her. But later she was quoting the amount that a nurse could make after going through the training. She asked me how much education she would
I was uncomfortable with hearing this fifteen year old girl talk about her aims for the future in terms of how much she would be able to earn. She did want to help poor people, she said, likely influenced by her past ten years of schooling and mentoring at Lakshmi Ashram. But the earning was a high priority. She was willing to consider a job like nursing that did not appeal to her but that would bring a good salary. When I persisted in asking Asha what she would like to do, she said that she really likes drama. She’d like to be an actress. Perhaps knowing that this aim could be considered unrealistic, she started talking about means of achieving this goal. She thought she could get help through a contact with a friend of the Ashram and by getting a certificate that showed that she had experience acting (H; FN:07Sept5).

It was the following day that Asha invited me to join her in collecting firewood during work duties, giving us an opportunity to continue our conversation. I learned about her difficult family situation and her deep concern for her mother and two younger siblings, particularly her mother's financial burdens in raising the three children alone and planning for the two daughters' weddings. As her story unfolded, the motivation behind her desire to earn became clear to me. She told me again that she would like to become a good actress. Then she would be able to earn money to help her family (H; FN:07Sept6).

During one of our recorded interviews, Asha started out again with this theme, this desire to be an actress. When the recording started, Asha was telling me about her desire to work for a film company. “One that is about Krishna, about God,” she said. “Not on any old film. A place that makes good CD's about God.” She wants to work for a company like that. “You’ll look for one for me, won’t you?,” she asked. “Somewhere in India -- or in Delhi” (H; DQ:07Oct22). At the Ashram Asha had been raised without
much exposure to television and movies. The films that were shown at the Ashram, occasionally on Sunday afternoons, were often religious films, based on the Ramayana or the life of Krishna. She wanted me to know that her desire to be an actress was not a desire to join the questionable Bollywood scene, but rather to help spread a positive message.

Later during our interview, I asked Asha where she would like to live. She thinks that in order to get ahead quickly in education, she would like to go outside [bahar]. By “outside,” she referred to life outside of the Ashram and perhaps outside of the Kumaun. She doesn’t like living in cities, but for the sake of her studies, she would. “One has to go outside for study” (H; DQ:07Oct22). She talked about the possibility of studying for Intermediate College outside and also taking music classes. Then her dream involved being outside and joining a company somewhere – anywhere (H; 07Oct22).

Most significant to me in Asha’s story is her concern for her family and desire to support them financially. Yet at the same time she sets high aims for herself and continues to dream. She incorporates her dream of being an actress into her value for serving society and helping her family. Education is an important means, involving access to the world beyond the Ashram and beyond the rural hills. Keeping up with societal expectations for learning English are also important to her, as one of the status markers that would keep one from seeming “backwards.”

In a village visit with Asha, I heard her resisting early marriage and a fatalistic mindset and promoting freedom of the mind and the value of village wisdom. Asha took me to visit the homes of two other Ashram girls while I was in her area during her winter break. We hiked down a steep hillside, along terraced fields, to their small village and sat with them in the courtyard in front of one of their homes. They talked about concerns for their daughters’ education. One mother expressed the desire to send her daughter for
further education. She would send her to Bageshwar to stay with an uncle, do
Intercollege, and then study for her BA. Then, as I sat with these mothers in the
courtyard, I heard them talking about arrangements for the marriages of their daughters,
who were then in Class 8. An uncle had come to sit with us in the courtyard and was
discussing with the grandmother plans for his daughter's marriage.

Then they turned to Asha and began talking about her marriage. Asha responded
with conviction, talking about a girl being able to stand on her own feet, that a girl should
be just as free as a boy. The uncle emphasized the need to protect the girls, to which no
one objected. “Freedom -- freedom of the mind is most important. And having courage,”
Asha said (H; FN:08Mar12). I heard Asha expressing confidently some of the values that
she had learned through her upbringing at Lakshmi Ashram, the importance of self-
sufficiency and self-confidence and of developing the mind. I had not understood
everything in this conversation, which was partially in Kumauni, so I asked Asha about it
later. She explained:

    They were telling me that I also need to get married. But I said, “No, I want to
study first and after that, after Inter and BA I could marry]” -- I want to study
further. I want to take more courses somewhere. If I can do that after I am
married, then that is good. (H; DQ:08Mar12)

I heard Asha repeatedly resisting this pressure towards her marriage, although the
theme surfaced frequently in the conversations of her mother and neighbors. Asha was
not resisting marriage in itself, but wanted to postpone it in order to pursue her dreams,
to pursue further education and training opportunities. If she could do those things after
marriage, that would be good, she said. But more often married young women got
involved in farming and family and there remained. As we climbed the hillside after our
visit to the village, Asha continued talking about her concerns for the future, insisting
that she does not want to get married right away. She wants to be able to do something
after Class 12 — to find some work and study for her BA before getting married. But “my family is in a bad situation,” she said. Postponing marriage would just be for a few years: “Here girls get married at 17-18 -- before they are 20. I think 20 is a good age to get married” (H; PQ:08Mar12).

In talking about decisions for the girls’ futures, I heard these two mothers resigning the final decision to the will of God and to fate. When I asked Asha later what they had meant by this, she said: “I don’t know. Village people don’t fight...” (H; FN:08Mar12). It seemed that Asha had many discourses to juggle. She is devoted to her God, or gods, and yet she does not resign her fate to another's will. She fights, taking what action she can to try to shape the future that seems in many ways to be out of her control. Again, education is an important vehicle in this struggle, as well as an aim in itself.

“Thinking About Others -- That Is Also Utthaan”

As I talked with Kanti one afternoon about my research, I asked her about the empowerment [sashakikaran] that the government talks about and the uplift [utthaan] that the Ashram talks about. What is that for you? Kanti is an articulate young woman who came to the Ashram starting in Class 6. She was studying for her Class 12 exams when I was at the Ashram, having completed the Sadhana program the previous year. As one of the oldest students, she also took up many responsibilities at the Ashram, helping to teach and to guide younger students during work duties. She describes beliefs and practices related to empowerment, highlighting important aspects of what the concept of empowerment and utthaan mean in the village and Ashram contexts. She started out with an example:

When we go into the villages and tell people to plant trees. We tell them to plant them for their children and their children’s children. It is for the air -- so that they will be able to breathe. [Otherwise], one day their grandchildren would say: “My
grandparents didn't plant any trees!” (H; PQ:08Apr11)

Concern for the environment and future generations was part of the uplift promoted at the Ashram. But improvement in infrastructure, as in being able to build solid homes, was also relevant to this theme. Kanti described the houses in her village which are mainly made of stone instead of brick and with stone roofs instead of tin.

People also say that utthaan is getting roads built and paved -- and making ditches along the road for when the water comes. Making life easier for the next generation. (H; PQ:08Apr11)

Kanti describes common and very concrete examples of life improvement, signs of development in a community with better homes and better roads. But then she proceeds to contrast this with the meanings advocated at Lakshmi Ashram:

Here utthaan means -- for those whose vichaar [thoughts, opinions] are few -- lifting them up, making their vichaar strong. (H; PQ:08Apr11)

The inner, mental development of making vichaar strong was the kind of utthaan that Kanti had come to appreciate at the Ashram. I asked, to clarify, whether this was the Ashram view of utthaan.

Utthaan is a big word. All of these things come under it. People have different ideas of what it is. Some people think it means becoming strong, etc. If I am just thinking about myself, my vichaar has failed. [It is] thinking about others. (H; PQ:08Apr11)

She gave an example of finding an obstruction along the path.

I could just step over it myself, but if I am thinking about the next person who will use the path, I will move it. I might hurt myself on a stone on the trail and just think about myself. But if I am thinking about others, I will move the stone. Thinking about others -- that is also utthaan. (H; PQ:08Apr11)

The new mindset that brings Ashram-style utthaan goes beyond raising self-confidence and self-esteem. It also involves thinking of others and having a desire to improve the lives of others. Thinking about others also is a form of utthaan. This conversation highlighted for me again the themes of community and collaboration that were coming
to my attention. Uplift, empowerment, and high thinking were more than individual things. Kanti then kindly included my research as one means of bringing uplift. “You also came to give utthaan,” she said. “You do it by asking questions. Each one does it differently” (H; PQ:08Apr11).

One of my aims in this research and in this chapter was to forefront the lived realities and dreams of Kumauni young women, providing their experiences and views on empowerment, their beliefs and practices, as a foundation for the analysis of language and education issues in context. The challenge now is to tie together the many snatches of what I saw and heard, keeping in mind how these language and education issues relate to the lives of the Kumaunis and particularly the young women.

In the stories of Himani, Sunita, Govindi, Manju, Asha and the others, there are common themes. Their aims for the future are shaped by social realities and expectations, and limited by financial constraints. Yet they take action, searching for opportunities to bring a change in their situation, wanting to support their families, and negotiating the different values and discourses that influence them. At the Ashram, the focus is more on an internal empowerment and development than an external one. Moving forward does not necessarily mean economic gain. Rather it involves high thinking and building self-sufficiency in the context of community.
A strong species of pine trees dominates in the foothills of the Himalayas in the Kumaun. The trees grow quickly, are not easily harmed by insects, are not eaten by cows when they are young, and are not easily destroyed by forest fires. Their current dominance is also due to previous forestry regulations that favored the pines. In a purely monetary economy, the pine tree is better, valuable for resin and timber under the jurisdiction of the forestry department. The pine trees often grow alone, their thick carpet of pine needles hindering the growth of other young trees. Contrasting with the thin pine forests are the more dense, mixed forests. Locally, the mixed forests are seen to be clearly better, both for the environment and for the local people's needs. They hold the topsoil better, allow for the growth of a variety of species, and are a good source of firewood and fodder.

When I talked with the Sadhana girls about comparisons between language and the environment, the focus of their response was on diversity: “Yes! Just like the environment is different from place to place, so language is different;” and, citing the popular saying, “Every mile the water changes, every four miles the language” (H; PQ:08Apr21). The naturalness of ecological diversity in the Himalayan foothills compares easily with the naturalness of linguistic diversity there. Differences are expected in language varieties and language use from place to place, in different environments.

Regarding the dominance of some trees over others, the Sadhana girls agreed that the pine dominates over other trees. I asked which language would go with which tree
here. “There are lots of pine trees here, so that would be Kumaoni,” Govindi said. “But --
No -- if we take all of India, it would be English! Because English is the INTERNATIONAL
LANGUAGE. In India, English is first; then Hindi is second; then the other languages” (H;
PQ:08Apr21).

It depends on the lens. When looked at from the village perspective, Kumauni
seems to dominate, spoken by all and unmarked in conversations within the village
where Hindi and English seem out of place. But from the national and international
perspective, English dominates. Like the pine tree, English is not easily stopped; its
economic advantages outside of the village promote its spread and it has the reputation
for excluding smaller varieties and hindering diversity. The lens changes the appearance
of the relationship between the languages.

From either village or national/international perspectives, the analogy of the
mixed forest works. Neither solely Kumauni nor solely English are desirable, according
to the Kumaunis with whom I spoke. The village and the environment thrive in diversity.
The ecology of language metaphor reminds us that the relationships between various
languages in a social environment influence the ways they change and their long-term
fate. The example of the forests also highlights the various benefits of those linguistic
relationships to those involved. Diversity has more value at the local level but seems less
important to those who can benefit economically from uniformity.

The change in perspective from micro to macro provides one example of the
usefulness of the continua of biliteracy in understanding a multilingual educational
context. As Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2003) emphasize:

In order to understand any particular instance of biliteracy – be it an individual
biliterate actor, interaction, practice, program, situation, or society – we as
educators, researchers, community members, or policy makers need to take
account of all dimensions represented by the continua. (pp. 35-36)
On one level, I use the continua as a reminder of the various factors involved in the language and education situation in the Kumaun, highlighting the relationships between the languages – how each of them fits on the continua – and the direction of change on the continua. On another level, the continua serves as a frame for organizing and discussing the major themes that have emerged from my analysis. Although it would be difficult to summarize all of the issues of interest emerging from this research, I highlight several of them in the following sections under the context, media, development, and content of biliteracy (see Figure 1, page 35). I then pursue the theme of community/collaboration and conclude with some policy and pedagogy implications.

**India, the Kumaun, and the Ashram: Contexts of Biliteracy**

Govindi made a shift from *micro to macro* perspective when she described the homogenous pine forests first as comparable to Kumauni and then as comparable to English. At the micro end of the continuum, Kumauni is emphasized at home and in the village. Moving towards the macro perspective, Hindi is most important in the school and in the region, and English dominates at the national and international level. Meanwhile Hindi and English are becoming increasingly important at the micro level as well. The urban centers are more influenced by the macro, striving to imitate the global scene, while rural areas are seen as backwards in comparison.

The micro or macro perspective greatly influences perspectives and potentially decisions on the other aspects of the continua. While location or environment remain important, as described in Chapter 7, the scale changes as one slides along the macro-micro continuum. Mother tongue can seem to be Hindi at one scale or Kumauni at another; minority content can seem to be the Sanskritized Hindu content or local Kumauni content; in terms of job needs, oral skills development can seem more important than written skills from a micro versus macro perspective. India’s multilingual
policies emphasize diversity at one level, but seem to obscure diversity at another. Educational policies also can look very different from the top than from the level of implementation, as in the change in exam requirements that forced a change in Ashram curriculum. At the Ashram, the emphasis on locally relevant education is balanced with commitment to the Indian nation and the Hindi language, as well as engagement with more macro-level current events.

On the oral-literate continuum, Kumauni is strong at the oral end. Sanskrit is used orally in prayers and comes from an oral tradition, but is a literary language. Hindi is valued and developed in both oral and literate contexts. While English shows its importance in the written form for the exams, the demand for oral English is increasing, something that is hard to develop in environments where there is little exposure to spoken English.

The oral-literate contrast brings to mind the larger theme of moving forward in a region often labeled as backwards. The traditional dichotomy ascribed to oral versus literate societies reflects these assumptions of backwardness and advance. Some Kumaunis choose to move away and distance themselves from the label of backwardness. The backwardness associated with the Kumauni region spills over into attitudes towards the Kumauni language, inspiring some to leave behind the Kumauni language as well. At the Ashram, alternative values regarding what it means to move forward shift the emphasis towards internal development of the girls rather than externals such as the socio-economic progress associated with globalization and modernization. The Ashram Didis acknowledge that this internal development and true wisdom, or gyan, do not come from literacy and can often, in fact, be hindered in formal education settings.

On the multilingual-monolingual continuum, the Kumauni context, like the
Indian context, seems to emphasize multilingualism and diversity. The “Unity in Diversity” [anekta mein ekta] motto is popular throughout India. Textbooks pick up the theme and emphasize the unity within the diverse Indian nation (Rajagopalan, 2001). The motto reflects a pluralistic vision for managing diversity, the strategy “simplest to achieve and hardest to maintain,” according to Rajagopalan (2001, p. 10). This motto was mentioned by the young lawyer with whom I spoke about language in response to my observation that in India a boli and a bhasha can live side-by-side without difficulty (H; FN:08Jan10). Through some lenses it seems that the diversity is emphasized: “Every mile the water changes, every four miles the speech.” But through other lenses, unity is most important: “The more we ignore differences, the more developed we become” (H/E; PQ:08Mar15). Most often, it seems, diversity does not appear to be a barrier to unity: “In their own place each is important” (H; DQ:07Oct26).

The Unity in Diversity motto can be compared with the US motto E Pluribus Unum, “out of many, one.” Lo Bianco (2001) used this motto to describe competing discourses about language in US policymaking, the pluribus representing a discourse of language pluralism and the unum a discourse for unity and in opposition to multilingual excess and national disunity. The emphasis on either pluribus or unum has waxed and waned over the years in the US (Hornberger, 2002). Although the nation of India has united a great deal more diversity than most nations, the emphasis of unity over diversity seems also to vary depending on the context and depending on the lens.

Although in contexts of biliteracy, the macro tends to be valued over the micro, the literate over the oral, and the monolingual over the multilingual, these power dynamics can shift or be reversed in different contexts, as Pak (2003) observed in a Korean community context in the US. The older girls in the Kumauni village felt the pressure to use the language of the place: Govindi and her sisters were inspired to learn
Kumauni, and Himani and Pushba noted how the use of English and even Hindi by insiders is mocked in the village setting. Yet the language of the place may be shifting, especially for the younger generation and certainly in urban areas. While discourses of additive multilingualism are strong – one language need not be given up when another is learned -- still in practice emphasis on learning English may come at the expense of Kumauni in the younger generations. Perhaps this deserves an explanation in a context such as India where multilingualism has traditionally been characterized by stability (Pandit, 1975):

Sociolinguists have asked the question, 'Why do people maintain their language?' It seems that this basic question can be answered only in the context of the general acceptability of other language-speaking Indians in an Indian cultural setting. A sociolinguistic inquiry in India may give us a new perspective and prompt us to rephrase the question to, 'Why do people give up their language?' (p. 81).

**The Languages and the Relationships Among Them: Media of Biliteracy**

“Hindi is what they call the mother tongue here,” Shobha-Didi had said. “If we think about it, Kumauni is our mother tongue, but there are not books in Kumauni... it is not used in school” (E; PQ:06Jul26). The *bhasha-boli* dichotomy closely parallels this question of what is the mother tongue. These concepts of *bhasha* versus *boli* and of mother tongue are arguably educated discourses with less relevance at the village level. As a Kumaun University professor told me regarding villagers: “They don't know the difference between a dialect and a language” (H; PQ:08Feb27). Adding to the multilingual mix in the Kumaun are the relationships among not only Hindi and Kumauni, but also Sanskrit and English.

When comparing *simultaneous versus successive exposure* to language, simultaneous exposure is most common in the Kumaun. Hindi and Kumauni are usually learned side-by-side in childhood, more so now than in the past. There is also a shift
towards simultaneous exposure to school languages, as English and now Sanskrit are 
being introduced in Class 1. Regarding *dissimilar and similar structures*, the contrast 
between the forms of languages seems less important in India than in the US. In the 
relationship between a *bhasha* and a *boli* the similarity of the structures can be 
irrelevant. Complaints about learning English are usually focused on the lack of 
environment for learning rather than on its dissimilarity with Hindi, Kumauni, or 
Sanskrit, although the similarities between the latter three does contribute to Sanskrit 
being considered the easier subject compared with English in high school. The question 
of *divergent and convergent scripts* is a common one in India. For many people it is 
important that a *bhasha* have its own unique script, contributing to its status as a 
language. Meanwhile, the convergent use of Devanagari script for Kumauni, Hindi, and 
Sanskrit stand in contrast to the Roman script used for English.

In considering the media of biliteracy in the Kumaun, the ambiguity surrounding 
*bhasha*, *boli*, and mother tongue seems to contradict the dichotomies of language versus 
dialect, official language versus unofficial language, official versus unofficial mother 
tongue. This can be understood within the current literature on the invention and 
disinvention of language (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007) and resistance to the idea that 
language can be separated into countable packages (Jorgensen, 2008). According to 
Khubchandani (2003): “The literate world seems to be circumscribed by the myth of 
treating language in everyday life as a ‘crystallized’ entity characterized by a distinct 
‘tradition’ embodied in its literary heritage” (p. 241). In contrast, the traditionally 
unproblematic plurality described by Makoni and Pennycook (2007) can be observed in 
language practices in the Kumaun and in the recognition of the changing form of 
Kumauni from mile to mile even though educated discourses tend to emphasize the 
dichotomies.
Casting doubt on the concept of languages as fixed entities has implications for how we think about language labels such as mother tongue and how we think about language use practices such as code mixing and switching, or polylingual languaging. The latter is discussed in the following section on the development of biliteracy. The issue of language labels became difficult for Grierson (1927) in his Linguistic Survey of India:

In the course of the Survey, it has sometimes been difficult to decide where a given form of speech is to be looked upon as an independent language, or as a dialect of some other definite form of speech. In practice it has been found that it is sometimes impossible to decide the question in a manner which will gain universal acceptance. The two words 'language' and 'dialect' are, in this respect, like 'mountain' and 'hill.' One has no hesitation in saying that, say, Everest is a mountain, and Holborn Hill, a hill, but between these two the dividing line cannot be accurately drawn. (p. 22)

Living in the “foothills” of the Himalayas, one climbs hills that are much larger than any mountains found in Pennsylvania. Similarly, definitions of “language” and “dialect” -- of bhasha and boli – can vary considerably depending on the context and on the lens through which one is looking. Reasons for the distinction, as locally understood and as analyzed in Chapter 6, involve the form of the linguistic varieties, their functions, and the status attributed to them by the government.

My questions and conversations about language in the Kumaun often followed the assumption of languages as fixed, distinct entities, as I asked, for example, when one uses Hindi versus Kumauni, and why one language is considered bhasha and another boli. Yet the girls did not always talk about language in that way. In attempting to explain when they use Hindi and when Kumauni, for example, Himani said: “Sometimes the words just come out” (H; FN:07Oct18). Language is in some ways seen as fluid, as changing every four miles, paralleling theories about the disinvention of language. And yet the language labels and distinctions are meaningful to local people in the Kumaun,
including the association of language with place; and I use the ecology of language metaphor to describe the relationships between them.

Although the concepts of language and of mother tongue may be artificial or imported, they are used in the claiming of one’s various identities. I heard both Kumauni and Hindi embraced as mother tongue in the Kumaun, and at the national level even Sanskrit is sometimes considered to be mother tongue (Hastings, 2008). Vaish (2004) finds the terms “associated mother tongue” or “dual mother tongue” more appropriate in “a unique linguistic culture where a person can have more than one mother tongue” (p. 68). She notes that “[t]he dialect speakers consider themselves to be part of the great Hindi tradition and not in opposition to it. The dialect speaker is motivated to learn the standard language of prestige without suffering a loss of identity” (p. 208). I heard Kumauni described affectionately as “our language.” In another context, Hindi was also called “our language” and “our identity.” Sanskrit too is accepted as representing “our culture” and “our old times.” Kumauni boli is an important part of Kumauni identity associated with mother, home, and village, while Hindi bhasha is claimed as mother tongue in the school context.

I did not hear a similar ownership of English, although it is on high demand as a language to be learned. Thus, English is unique in the way it is constructed in the rural Kumaun, where discourses of English as international language surface much more frequently than discourses of English as Indian language. When I tried to compare the English-Hindi relationship with the Hindi-Kumauni relationship, my Kumauni friends saw the relationships as quite different. While English may currently be conceptualized as an Indian language in the urban context, it is seen quite differently in the Kumaun. Also, in my discussions in the Kumaun, the multiple Englishes or varieties of English were not emphasized, even though the English learned by the girls in the Kumaun is
certainly quite different from that spoken in Philadelphia. Some educational implications of these language relationships follow.

**Language Learning and Language Use for Teaching and Learning:**

**Development of Biliteracy**

Saroj-Didi compared learning Hindi with learning to chop vegetables, providing a clear description of language socialization: “At first they just listen, and then they start to speak it. Then they start speaking it with other children and they learn from each other... They are not taught, but it is learned from society” (H; PQ:07Dec8). This type of language development stands in contrast with the difficulty of learning English in the Kumaun since, as Kamla-Didi said: “There is not the environment for it” (H; FN:07Sept12). The natural learning of language in context is contrasted with the difficulty of learning a language out of its environment or context. The development of biliteracy skills in the school setting and the question of medium of instruction are highlighted below. First I mention a few observations related to the specific continua.

In the development of biliteracy, regarding the *reception-production* continuum, it seems that opportunities for receptive language learning in the Kumaun allow more time before the learner is expected to produce. Meanwhile, production is not necessarily expected to be perfect, giving the learner some security in the opportunity to use what they know. On the *oral-written* continuum, children usually develop oral skills in Kumauni and Hindi at an early age. Writing in Hindi, English and Sanskrit are emphasized in school, especially in preparation for exams, yet oral skills are also developed to some extent in each of these languages as students learn and recite lessons, poems, songs, and prayers. The *L1-L2* continuum is complicated by the question of which language is the first and which are the second and subsequent languages. Kumauni and Hindi are sometimes learned simultaneously and either is considered to be
mother tongue depending on the context. However, the direction of language development is towards Hindi and the additional languages, English and Sanskrit.

The development of language skills is an important part of the school curriculum in the Kumaun, influenced in part by the national Three Language Formula. Meanwhile, the popular question of medium of instruction is increasingly relevant in the rural Kumaun as “English-medium” schools become available. No one is asking about or interested in Kumauni as medium of instruction, at least not officially. This lack of formal instruction through the medium of the home language could raise questions regarding language disadvantage. Jhingran (2005) observes that even when the home language or dialect is similar to the medium of instruction, children may face language disadvantage, especially because of poor language teaching strategies. Although Kumaunis in more remote areas may face more difficulties, the students with whom I spoke did not seem to be hindered by Hindi as official medium of instruction. This may be in part because of the frequent presence of Kumauni at school, as described in Chapter 6, sometimes simply allowed for oral interaction and sometimes used in instruction to facilitate student understanding, as an unofficial medium of instruction.

The use of Kumauni in Hindi-medium schools and the use of Hindi in English classes and in English-medium schools brings to mind recent research on multilingual classroom ecologies. Such research highlights the use of students’ multiple language resources in the classroom, reflecting the multilingual practices common in society. Language choices in the Kumaun seem to emphasize the understanding of the listener and the importance of accommodating for outsiders and for children who may not otherwise understand. Student and teacher accounts provide evidence of Khubchandani’s (1992, 2001) “grassroots ‘folk’ multilingualism” in Kumauni classrooms and perhaps Annamalai’s (2001) “unplanned simultaneous bilingual education.”
Although such language accommodation in the classroom is often perceived as sloppy pedagogy, the common-sense linguistic strategies used by teachers to facilitate student understanding and learning deserve further exploration. As Hornberger and Vaish (2009) point out, “use of mother tongue in the classroom... can be a resource through which children can access Standard English while also continuing and indeed cultivating multilingual practices inclusive of their own local languages” (p. 317). Meanwhile, students Himani and Pushba describe bilingual education in their image of an ideal school that would use both Hindi and English equally rather than fitting into one of the socially divisive categories of “Hindi-medium” or “English-medium.”

**Local Values and Identities: Content of Biliteracy**

“Everyone wants English-medium education: the nice tie, etc. But this is just external, not internal. They don’t think about the full development of the child” (E; PQ:06Jul23). Shobha-Didi was emphasizing the contrast between the Ashram view of educational development and that of mainstream society. In this section, I first describe aspects of the content of biliteracy that focus on textual content and were not emphasized in my findings chapters. Beyond this is the broader content of the experiences, meanings and identities that influence the young women, including the Ashram influence, as described below.

On the minority-majority continuum, the definition of minority content depends on the lens or scale one takes, making locally relevant education difficult to define. Kumauni content is a minority perspective compared to the nation. Sanskrit and Hindu content is minority compared to the world, a reason for the Hindu nationalist political party (BJP) to promote these in education. Meanwhile members of other religions remain in the minority (see Ramanathan, forthcoming). Folk tradition is valued less than elite tradition, and the urban over the rural. Gandhian ideologies also could be seen as
minority content, nodded at as coming from the “Father of the Nation,” but embraced by relatively few faithful Gandhians. Regarding vernacular versus literary content, Kumauni folk songs and poems take the vernacular end of the continuum, while Sanskrit literature takes the literary end. Hindi and English content also tend toward the literary end, with recent changes to the English curriculum emphasizing more complex literature. On the contextualized-decontextualized continuum, contextualized learning of Kumauni and Hindi are contrasted with the lamented lack of context for learning English. Grammar is usually taught in a decontextualized way. The content of English textbooks attempts to provide stories from the Indian context with which students can relate. However, some of the content assumes an urban audience. For example, Kumauni girls who have never seen a train can hardly relate to a story of a group of friends taking an excursion on a train.

The content of biliteracy relates to the “intersection of school knowledge and personal knowledge” in which school knowledge tends to be valued over minority and vernacular content (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2003, p. 53). In hearing the stories of Kumauni young women, I noticed the multiple influences on their lives and on their future opportunities. Home, village, regional, national, and international expectations interact with diverse school and Ashram discourses, shaping the identities of these young women and pointing them sometimes towards marriage, sometimes towards high exam scores and higher education, sometimes towards any job that would pay, sometimes towards service to society. Thus education, and by extension language learning, has various purposes, influenced by each of the micro to macro level communities of which the young women consider themselves a part.

Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester (2003) point out that the decontextualized-contextualized continuum “has a particularly complicated relationship to power, a
relationship also inherent in Street's (1984) distinction between autonomous and ideological perspectives on literacy” (2003, p. 52). At Lakshmi Ashram, the emphasis is on contextualized, holistic education that addresses the inner development of the students. The students have opportunities to practice leadership skills among their peers, critically discuss current events, participate in social action, write journals and essays to appear in the school newsletter, and learn English in order to communicate with foreign guests. This contrasts with a decontextualized emphasis on passing exams and on the importance of gaining a school certificate and of studying English in order to improve one's reputation. The young women trained at the Ashram acknowledge the value of the unique education they have received, including the values of high thinking, self-sufficiency, and community collaboration, and yet they also see the importance of gaining the marks of learning and good reputation so valued in the society around them.

**Collaboration and Empowerment, Community and Ecology**

“Thinking about others -- that is also utthaan [uplift]” (H; PQ:08Apr11). Kanti’s words point to a type of uplift, advance, or moving forward that does not imply getting ahead of others. This type of empowerment is emphasized in the Ashram values of community and collaboration, values also evident in Kumauni villages. The importance of community and collaboration in the lives of the girls is reflected in their desire to support their families and, in a broader sense of community, to serve their country. They work and study collaboratively and are influenced by the social expectations of their communities. This theme of collaborative community, which I am only beginning to explore, came to my attention throughout my fieldwork and analysis, with multiple examples and implications in relation to issues of language, education, and empowerment.

A definition of empowerment that parallels this value of community and
collaboration is empowerment as “the collaborative creation of power.” In collaborative
relations of power, “...participants in the relationship are empowered through their
collaboration such that each is more affirmed in her or his identity and has a greater
sense of efficacy to create change in his or her life or social situation” (Cummins, 2001, p.
322). This description also parallels the Ashram values of high thinking and self-
sufficiency, reflecting the type of uplift or empowerment that comes through
collaboration and inspires service to others.

At the Ashram these collaborative relations involve not only classroom dynamics,
but also life and interaction in the Ashram community, as well as the ways that the
Ashram members interact with the broader community in their social service projects.
But even while working collaboratively with the surrounding community, the Ashram
challenges the traditional status quo of gender and caste inequalities, creating a new
form of community. At the same time, mainstream assumptions about what it means to
move forward are also challenged at the Ashram, in part through resistance to
assumptions about English as a path towards prestige and empowerment. These
exemplify the tensions between the various discourses faced by Kumauni young women,
as described also by Klenk (1999) – discourses that differ in the various communities of
which they consider themselves a part.

Language learning, language use, and language maintenance influence and are
influenced by community. The ease with which most Kumaunis learn and use Hindi
reflects their membership in the broader Hindi-speaking community. As Kumaunis pull
away from the village community, they gradually use less Kumauni. Children not
exposed to Kumauni are sometimes unable to communicate with their grandmothers. To
be Kumauni it is not necessary to speak Kumauni, I was told. And yet Govindi learned
the importance of Kumauni in village life in the reactions of others towards her: “She
doesn't speak Pahari? She just speaks Hindi. I don't know who she thinks she is!” (K; DQ:07Oct24).

While Kumauni is important for being a part of the village community, English is thought to be important for getting out of it: “People really need English to get out of that environment” (E; PQ 08Feb11). Rural Kumaunis have limited access to the elite English-speaking community, and the question remains open as to whether learning English alone provides them such access, whether integrative motivations for language learning are relevant in the rural context. The Hindi-medium and English-medium divide, more common in urban areas, is reaching Kausani as well.

Language may be learned as a sign of prestige within the community, but may be used to divide rather than to unite. As Meena-Didi pointed out, some people are using English as a tool for their own advantage, pushing their way to the front of the line (E; FN:07Sept15). And Saroj-Didi said: “People speak English to make themselves high” (H; PQ:07Dec8). In contrast, I saw Meena-Didi using her English skills to translate for and involve Saroj-Didi in English conversations. At the Ashram she is safe with her limited English skills, trusting on the community support around her: “So someone can always help me” (H; PQ:07Dec8). This reflects the collaborative use of language and collaborative relations of power within the Ashram community, contrasting with the tendency to use language to push oneself forward and upward. Similarly a primary purpose of education expressed at the Ashram is to pass on what one has learned to others, a value expressed by Gandhi as well.

The influence of language on community relationships parallels the ecological relationships among the languages themselves. The value of multilingualism is expressed nationally and locally as acceptance of diversity within a united community. Yet power relations cannot be ignored. Does English introduce a vertical power relationship among
the languages where they once co-existed horizontally? Has English “obliterated the
traditional complementary relationship between languages and strong maintenance
norms” (Mohanty, 2005)? Is there really unity in diversity? Without digging into his
philosophies on social ecology, we can still see parallels between Bookchin's (1982)
comments about unity in diversity and the language and education situation in the
Kumaun. He describes social change over time and a shift away from “organic society”
towards more hierarchical notions:

The vision of social and natural diversity was altered from an organic sensibility
that sees different phenomena as unity in diversity into a hierarchical mentality
that ranked the most minuscule phenomena into mutually antagonistic pyramids
erected around notions of 'inferior' and 'superior.' (p. 72)

Focusing on historical trends in social change in the world in general, he points to a
transition from the more ecological “unity in diversity” towards hierarchy. Hierarchies
between languages and in educational opportunities in the Kumaun may exemplify such
a trend that puts at risk traditional unity in diversity. There are those who resist
hierarchical notions about language and education in the Kumaun, as seen at the
Ashram, which must relate also to their value of collaborative community. An analogy
was offered at a Gandhian seminar in Kausani in the context of discussions about
resistance to mainstream assumptions and values and the problems they create in
society. The mosquito, they said, that all try to kill is stronger than the lion that is going
extinct. Thus, something higher on the pyramid, though seeming more powerful, may
actually be less important (E; FN:07Sep30)

Many themes and connections have emerged through this research, and this
conclusion attempts to highlight a few of them. Returning to the pine forest, we have
seen that the trees can be construed as representing different languages depending on
whether one is thinking of the local or a broader context: The pine trees could represent
Kumauni in its prevalence in the village context, but, when looking at a broader level, the trees could represent English in its dominance throughout India and the world. Discourses vary depending on the lens or on what level one is considering, from micro to macro. Similarly, these discourses surrounding issues of language, of education, and of power vary within and between communities, from place to place, in various domains. Discourses of power and support for different theories of power depend also on the lens and scale of analysis. In sorting out and understanding these discourses and ways of understanding in the Kumauni context—and how they relate to current theories, there is much to be done, even with the data presented in this dissertation. This includes exploring practical implications and what these discourses mean for Govindi and her colleagues as they experience and negotiate them in their various communities.

**Policy, Pedagogy, and Research Implications**

On hearing about my research interests, a government high school teacher in the Kumaun assumed: “So, you will come to document all the problems.” While I did not come to document problems or to fix them, I still hope that some insights can be drawn from my attempts to reflect local understandings related to language and education. A common assumption is that research leads directly to policy implications. In actual practice, research usually feeds into ideology which in turn influences policy (Cummins, 2007). Alternatively, Cummins recommends evidence-based policymaking in which research influences understanding or theory from which policies are then constructed. In this conclusion, connections have been highlighted between my research and several theories and strands of literature, bearing implications for policies, pedagogy, and future research directions. I name some of these implications and mark them in italics below.

The importance of valuing diversity has come up frequently, connected through the ecology of language metaphor and unity in diversity. At the policy level this relates to
the macro versus micro lens and the importance of considering carefully the local implications of policies. For pedagogy this implies the use of students’ multiple language resources in the classroom, with encouragement and training in these multilingual classroom practices rather than criticism of them. This, along with challenges to notions of backwardness and the oral-literate divide, implies attention to attitudes towards languages and communities.

In teacher training in contexts such as the Kumaun, Jhingran (2005) emphasizes awareness of language attitudes as one of the primary needs: “to ensure that the children’s first language is not derided as an inferior language” (p. 153). He, secondly, emphasizes the need for training in appropriate teaching methods for second language acquisition. Such training could build on existing local knowledge, as seen in the Kumaun, about the importance of place or environment in language learning and the importance of understanding. While the importance of place may imply language immersion, the importance of understanding brings balance with a broader concern for student learning in a safe environment that values the resources of the students’ backgrounds. Thus, teachers who already use Kumauni as a language support for students need not feel ashamed of this practice. Rather they could be encouraged to do so through trainings that include the social and pedagogical rationale for supporting the home language in school.

Kumaunis’ identification with multiple linguistic varieties and theories about the invention of language also imply the importance of adaptation of language policies to diverse contexts and acknowledgement at the national level of local diversity. At the classroom level this implies, again, the collaborative use and acknowledgement of multiple linguistic and cultural resources.

Also relevant to teacher training, the contextualized learning exemplified at the
Ashram, with emphasis on inner development and values such as high thinking, self-sufficiency, and community collaboration, would be beneficial in the wider educational context in the Kumaun. The expertise of alternative educators such as those at Lakshmi Ashram could be a resource in professional development. Students could be encouraged to think explicitly about the various discourses they face. The state of Uttarakhand, already known for its exceptional private educational institutions, could set an example for other states in finding alternative ways to address educational inefficiencies in government education. Meanwhile students in alternative education such as at Lakshmi Ashram should be allowed access to recognized certification of their studies.

Like the young women educated at Lakshmi Ashram, I run into the tensions of negotiating seemingly contradictory discourses and assumptions. Recommending that young women like Sunita in alternative education should have the opportunity to get regular certification for their studies implies that they be allowed to take the government board exams, even if the exams are poorly constructed and the system in general fails to adequately measure their abilities. Recommending that these young women be aided in achieving higher education and finding jobs seems to contradict the values of simple living and high thinking taught at the Ashram. Recommending that Kumauni be recognized as a bhasha, while important for encouraging the use of the home language in school and while linguistically accurate, plays along with assumptions about language as fixed entities and contradicts local understandings of a more fluid boli. Recommending that the Three Language Formula be shifted to include the local mother tongue (here, Kumauni), as its wording implies and as seems important pedagogically, creates a tension for those who embrace Hindi also as mother tongue and for those who see the status associated with English-medium education. Such tensions and apparent contradictions are a part of the language and education situations and the
discourses about them in the Kumaun. There remains a tension also in balancing as a researcher, first, my own concern for the lives and education and language of Kumauni young women and a desire to see positive changes and, second, my awareness of the limitations of my outsider observations and my hesitation to point out problems or superimpose my own ideas.

Regarding future research, the data collected for this dissertation has been presented here in part, but deserves more elaboration and deeper analysis, particularly in how it speaks to the various theories. Each of the themes touched in this dissertation could also be expanded with additional research. Further implications of valuing ecological community relationships over hierarchies in language and education deserve exploration, as do the implications of promoting collaborative relations of power between languages, between language users, and within educational contexts. The relationships among the languages could be further explored, including the question of why there seems to be a shift away from Kumauni despite rhetoric about additive multilingualism and unity in diversity. This could include matched-guise experiments and other assessments of language attitudes, and more focused questions on, for example, language use with children and/or what it means to be Kumauni. Language use in schools could be explored for the extent, rationale, and effectiveness of multilingual language practices. This could lead to action research related to teacher trainings, including attention to language attitudes and teaching methods, in collaboration with local educational research centers and/or the Kumaun University teacher training program. More research on empowering educational contexts could include research in collaboration with the Ashram students and teachers, analysis of student essays, and observations and interviews at other alternative and government schools. Future research and analysis should maintain a focus on the agency of the young women and
other Kumaunis, and the implications of language and education decisions in their lives and their communities.
## Appendix A: Primary Participants

### Kumauni Girls/Young Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Govindi</td>
<td>Sadhana students: Students who came to Lakshmi Ashram in order to attend the one-year Sadhana (Gandhian Studies) program *focus participant; completed Class 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himani</td>
<td>*focus participant; completed Class 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basanti</td>
<td>Worked together at an NGO after completing Class 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nirmala</td>
<td>Completed Masters by correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushba</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manju</td>
<td>Sadhana students: Lakshmi Ashram students who were participating in the Sadhana program, having completed Class 10 at the Ashram *focus participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunita</td>
<td>*focus participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaitri</td>
<td>Only Nepali student at Ashram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hira</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahima</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asha</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanti</td>
<td>Class 9 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poonam</td>
<td>Class 9 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimla</td>
<td>Class 11 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hema</td>
<td>Class 12 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalini</td>
<td>Village of Dholara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhavani</td>
<td>Younger daughter-in-law of Devki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Lakshmi Ashram Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meena-Didi</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
<td>Ashram leader and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saroj-Didi</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
<td>Ashram leader and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamla-Didi</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
<td>Ashram leader and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shobha-Didi</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
<td>Ashram leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganga</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
<td>Young teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narayana</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
<td>Young teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rekha</td>
<td>Lakshmi Ashram</td>
<td>Young teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Government School Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ramesh Prasad</td>
<td>GIC</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Pant</td>
<td>GIC</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Pushba Sharma</td>
<td>Girls' Junior High School, Kausani</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Interview Question Guide

Examples of Preliminary Interview Questions:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Education; How long at the Ashram
4. Home village; Other places lived
5. Home language; Other languages
6. Household members
   1. Education
   2. Current occupation
   3. Language knowledge
7. What is your home like?
   -- Type of house, possessions, access to water, cooking fuel
8. What is your village like? What are the people like there?
9. What educational facilities are available; adult literacy programs?
10. What can be learned in your village? What is the wisdom of the village?
11. Why do people go to school?
12. (How) does a person change when they go to school?
13. Where would you like to live in the future?
14. What would you like to do in the future? What is your aim?
   -- How much education would be needed
15. What do you like most about school? Dislike most?
16. What things would you like to learn about?
17. What is in a good life?
18. What does utthaan mean to you?
19. Do Kumauni people have a good life?
20. Think as far back as you can remember and tell me about how you learned language; about education.
21. When and with whom do you speak Kumauni; Hindi; English?
22. Do you think language is used differently than it was in the past?
23. How will it be in the future?
24. Is language used differently at the Ashram? By men?
25. Which language do you prefer? Is most important? Is best for school?
In citing examples from my field notes and interviews, I first identify the language being used as:

Hindi (H),
Kumauni (K), or
English (E).

I then differentiate between:

Field Notes (FN), written in my own voice regarding recent observations on the field;
Paraphrased Quotes (PQ), written, based on my field notes and as I remembered them, in the voice of the speaker; and
Direct Quotes (DQ), including recorded interviews and quotes written word-for-word in my field notes.

FN, PQ, or DQ are followed by the:

year (06, 07 or 08),
month (May through Apr), and
day (1 through 31) of the event or interview.

(For Example: H; FN_07Oct7 marks a field note that I wrote concerning an event which occurred in Hindi on October 7, 2007).

Throughout the text,

*Italics* are used to mark Hindi or Kumauni words;
[Brackets] are then used for the English definition or closest equivalent of the meaning.
“Quotation marks” are used for both paraphrased quotes (PQ) and direct quotes (DQ), including those translated from Hindi or Kumauni as well as those originally in English.
“’/’Quotation marks’/’” around words or phrases within a sentence mark the exact English words used by the speaker, even when the conversation was in Hindi or Kumauni.
Appendix C

History of Language Planning in India

Part I: A History of Colonial Language-in-Education Planning in India

(compiled from Dua, 1986; Khubchandani, 1981, 2001; Sharma, 1985; Daswani, 2001; Ekbote 1984)

1797 - Charles Grant of the East India Company discussed possibilities for educating Indians.

1813 – The 1813 Charter of the E.I. Company, allocated 100,000 Rs. to educate Indians through an Indian language.

1833 – The 1833 Charter allocated 1,000,000 Rs. to educate Indians.

1835 – Macaulay’s famous Minute of 1835 - T.B. Macaulay, Chairman of the General Committee on Public Instruction proclaimed the superiority of English for use in Indian education, i.e. education to a minority, given the need for development of the Indian languages:

“We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even amongst the languages of the West” (Sharp, H. Selections from Educational Records, Part I 1781-1839, p.110, In Sharma 1985: 2)

– That same year a resolution was passed approving Macaulay’s suggestion.

1854 – The Wood’s Dispatch reaffirmed the importance of English in education but promoted the use of the vernacular at the school level for those who don’t know English.

1882 – The Hunter Commission also suggested the use of vernacular in primary education for subjects not leading to university study.

1904 – A Resolution on Educational Policy by the (colonial) Government of India suggested the age of thirteen as a point of division for use of vernacular versus English in
education.

1913 – A Resolution on Educational Policy called for improvement of English at the secondary level

1915 – Rama Rayaningar’s Motion in the Imperial Legislative Assembly for the use of vernacular in secondary school with instruction on English as a second language sparked debate in parliament but brought no resolution, the decision being left to the states:

“It was also openly admitted that a boy receiving education through the vernacular medium up to the highest classes of the school had an edge over the boy educated in English through middle school because he did not have the disadvantage of studying through a foreign language” (Sharma 1985: 3).

1929 – The Hartog Committee suggested the use of bilingual instruction in one school instead of starting two schools with different media in the same area. The Committee didn’t specifically examine vernacular languages or media of instruction, however.

1931 – The Indian National Congress passed the “Karachi rights” declaring protection for the “culture, language and scripts of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas”

1937 – The Wardha Education Scheme recommended seven years of basic education for all under the influence of Gandhi, who strongly opposed the use of a foreign language.

1937 – The Abbott-Wood Report recommended the use of vernacular in high school, with English also compulsory.

1938 – The Committee of Central Advisory Board of Education advocated the use of the mother-tongue in primary education to be supported by the government. At the Annual Meeting of the Central Advisory Board, however, it was said that dialects were clearly not acceptable as media of instruction.
Part II: Post-Independence Language-in-Education Planning in India

1947 – An Expert Committee of the Indian National Congress made recommendation for the protection of minorities who would not be kept from developing their languages, but also for government support in providing facilities for mother-tongue education if a non-regional language is used by a significant proportion of the population.

- The Minorities subcommittee of the Central Advisory Board of Education made a similar recommendation for rights protection.

1948 – The National Planning Committee on General Education and Technical Education and Developmental Research reported that the time and energy of the students were diverted by the use of English and that the mother-tongue should be used at the secondary level.

1949 – The Central Advisory Board of Education and the State Education Ministers’ Conference stated that at the primary stage mother-tongue instruction should be provided for linguistic minorities with 40 or more students in a school or 10 in a class. The regional language would be introduced after Class 3. Secondary education in the mother tongue would also be provided given sufficient numbers of students. It was stated that:

the medium of instruction in the junior basic stage must be the mother-tongue of the child and that when the mother-tongue was different from the regional or State language arrangements must be made for instruction in the mother tongue by appointing at least one teacher to teach all the classes, provided there are at-least 40 such pupils in a school. (Ekbote, G. 1984, p.200-201)

- The Congress Working Committee issued a resolution on bilingual areas, revealing a language-as-problem orientation. Provinces would choose a language for administration and education. In bilingual areas where a minority group made up more than 20% of the population, public documents should be available in both languages.
State languages for communication with provinces and union government would replace English in 15 years.

- The University Education Commission, however, stated that only modern literary languages were fit for instruction.

1952 – The Secondary Education Commission suggested a Two Language Formula.
1953 – The All-India Language Development Conference decided that tribal languages were acceptable media for primary schools.
1954 – The Congress Working Committee agreed that the use of tribal languages was acceptable in primary schools.
1956 – The Central Advisory Board of Education suggested the Three Language Formula.

- Protection for mother tongue education would still be possible up to the secondary level.

- The Second Five-Year Plan included provision for making textbooks in minority languages.

- On a different note, the Official Language Commission stated that only modern literary languages were fit for instruction, demonstrating that diversity of opinions still prevailed.

1961 – The Conference of Chief Ministers of various states approved a simplified Three Language Formula with the purpose to "promote national integration and equalise the burden of learning languages on children in Hindi and non-Hindi speaking areas" (Kumar 1985). The language to be added in secondary school was to be a modern Indian language, and thus, most notably, languages of the southern states should also be taught in the north.

- On a different note again, the President of India stated that it was not reasonable to expect mother tongue instruction to be provided for small linguistic minorities.
1964 - 1966 – The Education Commission “emphasized the role of mother tongue education for the massive resurgence of national life, the development of indigenous languages, the achievement of industrialization and modernization goals through a wider dissemination of science and scientific outlook and the release of original, creative thinking necessary for national development” (Dua 1986, p.166).

1966 – The Education Commission issued a Modified 3-Language Formula:

1st the mother tongue or regional language would be taught for 10 years

2nd an official language – Hindi or English – would be taught for 6 years minimum, to be introduced in 5th-7th grade

3rd another modern Indian or foreign language would be taught for 3 years minimum, to be introduced in 8th - 10th grade

1968 – A Resolution of Parliament on the Official Language Policy affirmed the importance of the Three Language Formula for learning other regional official Indian languages.


1979 – The National Policy on Education (Draft) affirmed that “the medium of instruction at all stages shall be the regional language except a the primary stage where it will be the mother-tongue.”

1986 – The National Policy on Education, paragraph 4.8 states:

|“Some minority groups are educationally deprived or backward. Greater attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interest of equality and social justice. This will naturally include the constitutional guarantees given to them to establish and administer their own educational institutions, and protection to their languages and culture. Simultaneously, objectivity will be reflected in the preparation of text books and in all school activities, and all possible measure will be taken to promote an integration based on appreciation of common national goals and ideals, in conformity with the core curriculum”| (as cited in Group on Minorities Education, 1991: 76)
This provision under the section on scheduled tribes, was not addressed as an issue of language or titled bilingual education, but was introduced as follows:

The socio-cultural milieu of the scheduled tribes has its distinctive characteristics including, in many cases, their own spoken languages. This underlines the need to develop the curricula and devise instructional materials in the tribal languages at the initial stages, with arrangements for switching over to the regional language. (quoted in Annamalai 1990:2)

Primers were to be prepared for tribal languages with over 100,000 speakers by the end of 1990.


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