"An Ocean of Culture":
Language Ideologies and the Social Life of Language in Multilingual Darjeeling, India[1]

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1. Introduction

It is a daunting task to disentangle the many layers of social belonging in a multiethnic, multilingual city like Darjeeling, India. To add to the complexity, the overlapping and simultaneous nature of languages and social belonging in such a site requires attention to linguistic and social concerns alike. Darjeeling is home to Indians of Nepali descent,[2] who comprise the majority, as well as Tibetans, Bengalis, Marwaris, Biharis, and nationals from Nepal and Bhutan. In such a location, the linguistic landscape is complicated, to say the least, and provides methodological and theoretical challenges when attempting to understand how residents negotiate this complex social, economic, and linguistic field.

In order to meet these challenges, my dissertation project draws on 15 months of ethnographic and archival research, as well as a matched-guise test, which is the focus of this paper. The matched-guise technique was developed to ascertain language attitudes and what we would now call language ideologies. It also counters what, for linguists and social psychologists, is of doubtful validity: self-reported data (see Fasold, 1984, p. 147). Anthropologists focusing on language, including this anthropologist, would consider such

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[2] There are two groups of Nepalis living in India: Indian citizens of Nepali descent and citizens of Nepal who have migrated to India to work and live. This research focuses on the former group, Indians of Nepali descent.

self-reported notions and reactions to be only one aspect of a larger methodological vision that also includes analysis of naturally occurring conversation and participant observation.

The matched-guise technique offers scholars of language, particularly those who study language ideologies, a unique lens into those unconscious ideas that may not be apparent in interviews or participant observation. Since the establishment of anthropology in the U.S., scholars working within the field have been interested in the relationship between language and culture. In the early days of the discipline, anthropologists like Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Whorf explored the role of language in social reproduction and the connections among language, culture, and thought (Boas, 1910; Boas, 1968[1911]; Sapir, 1985; Whorf, 1964). Later linguistic anthropologists turned their attention to language and power and, for our purposes here, language ideologies, which illuminate the ways in which microlevel speech events are connected to macrolevel political and economic networks of power, hierarchy, and inequality (see Gal, 1989; Kroskrity, 2004; Silverstein, 1976, 1979, 2000; Woolard 1985; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Such scholars assume that language has perceptible social effects on thought, ideas, and ideology on the one hand, or on social institutions and the reproduction of hegemonic organizations of power on the other. For this research, I believe that attention to language ideologies is a fruitful way to discover the actual processes by which large, and sometimes unwieldy, discourses about gender, power, globalization, nationalism, morality, and the like, may be concretized and explored through the mechanisms by which such ideas about these discourses are circulated, ignored, engaged with, and transformed.

Although there are many ways of defining language ideologies, they all share an attention to the connection between language and social forms.[3] Such ideas about languages and speakers of those languages are "constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group," are numerous and overlapping, help individuals "mediate between social structures and forms of talk," and are an important aspect of the "creation and representation of various social and cultural identities" (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 501-509). Kroskrity also notes that "members may display varying degrees of awareness of local language ideologies" (2004, p. 505). Therefore, any research on language ideologies *must* be able to gather evidence regarding these more unconscious ideas about language. The matched-guise technique is ideal for such a goal.

2. Ethnographic Setting: Darjeeling, India

The town of Darjeeling is located in the state of West Bengal in a small finger of land between Nepal (14 miles to the west), Sikkim (3 miles to the north), Bhutan (35 miles to the east), and Bangladesh (35 miles to the south/southwest). In the past 216 years, Darjeeling District has been claimed by Sikkim (until 1789), Nepal (until 1817), and the

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[3] Most definitions of language ideologies fall into two general categories: those that emphasize the language structure and those that hold the relationship between language and social forms to be the site of inquiry. The former category is exemplified by Silverstein's definition of language ideologies: "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (1979, p. 193). The latter category is typified by Irvine's definition: "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (1989, p. 255; see also Errington, 2001; Heath, 1989; Kroskrity, 2004; Rumsey, 1990; Silverstein, 1979; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994).

British East India Company, which, after taking control of the area from Nepal, returned sovereignty to Sikkim. The area was ceded again to the East India Company after a conflict with Sikkim in 1835 for the "establishment of a sanitarium for the convalescent servants" of the company (Bhanja, 1993, p. 18). Once the East India Company (re)gained control of Darjeeling, Nepali nationals were encouraged to immigrate for the economic and agricultural development of the region. Workers were needed to meet the increasing demands for Darjeeling tea, and Nepalis were considered more suitable for tea cultivation than local groups such as the Lepcha. By British estimations, Nepali people had been farming on hill terraces in the Kathmandu Valley for thousands of years, and so the cultural practices and technical skills necessary to work in tea plantations were already ingrained and would not need to be taught. More recently, Nepalis recruited into the British army were frequently stationed in, or retired to, Darjeeling, a practice that continues today in the Indian Army. The city and surrounding district is largely populated by the descendents of those Nepali nationals who migrated to the area over the past 200-odd years (who heretofore will be referred to as Indians of Nepali descent) as well as Nepali nationals who migrated during their lifetime (designated in the following text as Nepalis).

Residents of Darjeeling are not only of Nepali descent; the city's history of immigration means there reside many speakers of Hindi, Bengali, Bihari, Tibetan, and various other languages. The city, as a major tourist destination, is popular among Indians from the plains, particularly Bengali speakers from urban West Bengal. Due to this long history of multicultural and multilingual residents and visitors, it is common for words and grammatical structures of these languages to be used even by those Indians of Nepali descent who represent themselves as monolingual speakers of Nepali. Such linguistic syncretism is common in Darjeeling, and although I observed Hindi, Bengali, English, and Tibetan words being used by Nepali speakers, the language ideologies only identified the incorporation of *English* as the marker of "improper" Nepali language use (see also Hill, 1999; Makihara, 2004). English itself holds contradictory roles within this multicultural space. Among residents of Nepali descent, English was ideologically highlighted as a negative influence on the Nepali language spoken in this area. I was told that Darjeeling Nepali was not *pakkā* [real or authentic] Nepali (as compared to the Nepali spoken in Nepal) because the frequency of English used within Nepali utterances in Darjeeling. Borrowings from other languages are not highlighted in the same way.

The use of English, however, is often represented by Nepalis, particularly young Nepalis, as a positive linguistic choice that allows them to navigate the precarious social terrain more successfully than using Nepali alone would allow. This is in spite of the long and incredibly contentious history of the English language within South Asia. English, for these young people, is associated with a class of educated, relatively elite individuals rather than any particular ethnic, regional, or religious group and so may be used without overt associations to any social group in conversation. Nepalis have been typically slotted relatively low in the social and caste hierarchies. They have been, and continue to be, represented as only suitable for marginal positions within the greater nation-state, such as guards, housemaids, and sex workers. With tourists from the plains of India who visit Darjeeling, therefore, Nepalis use English to posit a situation in which their superior use of the English language counteracts supposed social deficiencies that are often used as justification for what Nepalis view as discriminatory government and social policies.

2.1 Research Context

My larger project traces the history of an ethnolinguistic movement emerging from Darjeeling and the subsequent linguistic changes that occurred in the city. After decades of advocacy on the part of the Nepali Language Committee, the Indian Nepali community believed their struggle would finally end with the 1992 recognition of the Nepali language as one of the official languages included in the Indian Constitution. The rights they hoped for did not materialize, however, and individuals living within non-Nepali majority areas reported facing continuing (and sometimes increased) discrimination. Since 1992, many Indians of Nepali descent in Darjeeling have looked instead to proficiency in English rather than to official recognition of Nepali as a way to obtain their citizenship rights and gain what they believe is success in life. In spite of the contentious place of English within India, English has been adopted by many Indians of Nepali descent because it is perceived by them as not only powerful but also as a language that is not associated with any particular political, ethnic, religious, or caste group.

3. Method—Matched Guise Technique

To complement the ethnographic and historical material I collected and expand the data on current linguistic ideas and practices among young people in the Darjeeling area, I administered a matched-guise test to 625 individuals during the fall of 2007. The matched-guise technique was originally devised by Lambert, et al., and published in their 1960 study as a way to discover people's language attitudes. Although the method provides an important complement to other forms of data, it is important to be clear that there are a number of problems associated with the sole use of this method. Critiques of the method vary dramatically and are, in part, dependent on the scholar's discipline.

One issue of solely employing the matched-guise technique is the artificial nature of using pre-recorded text rather than naturally occurring conversation. Since the goal of the technique is to control for all variables (such as voice quality, topic, age, gender), a 'pure' test demands that each speaker read the same passage in each language. This is accomplished by the researcher providing the text, ideally in consultation with a number of native speakers. However, this "introduces one variable as it controls another; the speakers may be judged as performers of readings" rather than as speakers of the language (Fasold, 1984: 153). Fasold points to one way in which scholars avoid this problem: departing from the script structure and instead having speakers talk about a theme such as weather (d'Angeljan & Tucker, 1973) or national landmarks (El-Dash & Tucker, 1975).

Another issue is the limited applicability of the test results beyond the context of the testing site and time, which highlights the differences between naturally occurring conversation and the more artificial laboratory qualities of the test (Ciscel, 2007). However, by combining this approach with data gathered from ethnographic and historical research, I was able to contextualize the results from the matched-guise test. In some cases, as I will explain later, the results from the test directly confirm what I discovered in the ethnographic research. In other cases, it highlights a more complex linguistic landscape than was evident from the ethnographic data alone. For these reasons, I maintain that the matched-guise test is a valuable research method when combined with other complementary methods, such as participant observation, interviews, and analysis of naturally occurring conversation.

3.1 Fall 2007—Darjeeling, India

I did not write the matched-guise test I administered until I had completed seven months of ethnographic research in Darjeeling in addition to research in the Kathmandu valley during 2005.[4] I chose the qualities on the questionnaire from those that had clear salience in the local context for as wide a range of individuals as possible, and I vetted the qualities with a number of people to ensure, as much as possible, that I was not imposing my own ideas about language onto the local linguistic landscape. In addition to Darjeeling-specific terms, I included a number of qualities taken from other matched guise tests (see Bilaniuk, 1998; Ciscel, 2007). The final terms in Nepali and English that were chosen for the final version of the test are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Matched guise test qualities

Qualities Ranked from 0 [not at all] to 4 [very]				
Pleasant [फरसाईलो]	Intelligent [ज्ञानी]	Honest [ईमानदार]	Hardworking [मेहनती]	Happy [खुसी]
Cultured [सभ्य]	Authoritative [गहकिलो]	Friendly [मिलनसार]	Proud [घमन्डी]	Rich [धनी]
Poor [गरीब]	Hard-Hearted [कठोर]	Traditional [परम्परावादी]	Modern [आधुनिक]	Educated [शिक्षित]

Once I chose the qualities, the next task was to find representative (broadly constructed) speakers of the three groups that were most central to this aspect of the research project: urban Darjeeling Nepali speakers, rural Darjeeling Nepali speakers who regularly visited or lived in the city, and Bengali speakers who lived in the area. To limit the variability of the voices, I identified four young women between 18 and 30 who had no immediately distinguishing features in their voices (such as a lisp).

Speaker A is a native Bengali speaker who moved to Darjeeling after marriage. She is the least educated of the group although she is the only one who regularly speaks all four languages. Speaker B is a native Nepali speaker who grew up in a village in the district but has been highly educated and is thought to speak a more urban version of Nepali. She is also regularly mistaken for a native speaker of English and Hindi. Speaker C grew up and was educated in urban Darjeeling. In her profession, she regularly uses all four languages, although perhaps not on a daily basis. In the end, I did not use her recording for English because of issues with the quality of the recording. Finally, speaker D grew up in a village in the Darjeeling district, although she does attend college in the town. While she is a native speaker of Nepali, I was unable to use her recording in Nepali because there was a background noise that was not audible during the recording process but was very evident when played back. The test was limited to one hour, so the number of recordings was kept

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[4] Although not strictly research, my time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Southern Nepal during 2002 has been very helpful with much of this analysis, including contextualizing the findings from the matched guise test with the broader ethnographic context.

to 12. The distribution of speakers' recordings can be found in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Language and speaker distribution[5]

	Nepali	**English**	**Hindi**	**Bengali**
Speaker A	R5	R11	R2	R8
Speaker B	R1	R7	R12	------
Speaker C	R10	------	R6	R4
Speaker D	------	R3	R9	------

The goal of a matched-guise test is to attempt to find hearers' unconscious ideas about language. Therefore, they were not told that multiple recordings were made in different languages by the same speaker; rather, they were only informed that they would be hearing 12 recordings and that they would need to rank each recording from 0, meaning not at all, to 4, meaning very, for each of the 15 qualities. Since respondents were not told that the 12 recordings were created by only four speakers, it was vital that the recordings were scattered throughout the test rather than played in order. The recorded text, which was read in Nepali, Hindi, and Bengali, was as follows:

(1) Darjeeling tea is world famous for its unique and pleasant flavor. This is due to many factors including its geographical location, elevation, fertile soil, and climate. The first tea seeds were brought from China. Those seeds were planted in Lebong and other parts of Darjeeling. The mature plants were then transferred to different parts of Darjeeling for cultivation. These locations were later known as tea gardens. Every year, tourists pour into Darjeeling to visit the tea gardens and enjoy this high quality tea.

After ranking the qualities of the voices, the respondents were asked to answer two additional questions: Would you like this person (and why), and, what is the ethnicity of this person?

4. Research Findings

Due to space constraints, I will limit my analysis here to the results of one quality, 'proudy,' a term that does not directly correlate with the English word 'proud,' although they are loosely related. The results of this quality, overall, had high statistical significance and also highlight the complexity of the linguistic landscape for Indians of Nepali descent in Darjeeling.

In Darjeeling and the surrounding area, 'proudy' is a term with negative connotations that is most often applied to someone who is not simple or humble. It can be glossed roughly as 'conceited,' 'uppity,' or 'too big for her britches' and is often used as follows:[6]

(1) "I don't like her, she speaks in proudy way."

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[5] 'R1' means recording one, 'R2' means recording two, etc.

[6] These examples are taken from answers to question 16 of the recording page: "Would you like this person." All answers reproduced here were originally in English and were in no way modified from the original.

(2) "This person is not much cultured and very proudy."

The word is often used when referring to individuals who have left Darjeeling and return dressing and speaking differently than when they left. It may also be used for a young woman who only wears westernized clothing and not the *kurtā* or tunic that is worn by many adult women in Darjeeling town and most in the surrounding rural area. The term can also be used about those who refuse to use 'their own' language, particularly among friends and family of the same ethnic group; for example, if native Nepali speakers use primarily English with their Nepali-speaking friends.

'Proudy' may also be used for members of other ethnic groups. While conducting initial research about language choice and code-switching in the Darjeeling tourist industry, I heard the term used to describe Bengalis and other visitors to the area who treated Indians of Nepali descent as low on the social and economic hierarchy. From the ethnographic evidence it is clear that this is, therefore, not a positive quality.

But what can the matched-guise technique tell us in regards to the language ideologies about the quality 'proudy?' When analyzing results from the entire survey population [n=625] as shown in Figure 3, none of the speakers' scores were very high on the 0 to 4 scale. 'Proudy' is only associated with the Nepali language two times and both with Speaker A. In every other case, the language with the higher score was Bengali, Hindi, or English. These languages, in other words, were nearly always ranked as 'proudier' than when the same speaker spoke Nepali. It is interesting to note that when compared to speakers of other languages, Bengali speakers were always ranked more 'proudy.' This directly supports my ethnographic findings; individuals speaking Nepali would rarely be accused of being 'proudy.' However, if a Bengali used the Nepali language (as in the case for speaker A), she could be labeled as proudy because of her Bengali accent.

Figure 3: Score comparison for whole sample [n=625] on 0 to 4 scale

Speaker	Language + Score	Language + Score	P-value
A	Nepali 1.26	English 1.14	0.050
A	Nepali 1.26	Hindi 1.17	0.150
A	Nepali 1.26	Bengali 1.43	0.008
A	English 1.14	Hindi 1.17	0.640
A	English 1.14	Bengali 1.43	0.000
A	Hindi 1.17	Bengali 1.43	0.000
B	Nepali 1.13	English 1.55	0.000
B	Nepali 1.13	Hindi 1.46	0.000
B	English 1.55	Hindi 1.46	0.199
C	Nepali 1.26	Hindi 1.30	0.587
C	Nepali 1.26	Bengali 1.44	0.007
C	Hindi 1.30	Bengali 1.44	0.028
D	English 1.61	Hindi 1.37	0.001

I further subdivided the respondents along the lines of self-reported native languages. Within the subgroup of those who self-reported as having only Nepali as their 'mother

tongue' [n=396],[7] the results are slightly different than from the whole sample (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Score comparison for L1 Nepali only [n=396] on 0 to 4 scale

Speaker	Language + Score	Language + Score	P-value
A	Nepali 1.19	English 1.90	0.117
A	Nepali 1.19	Hindi 1.21	0.863
A	Nepali 1.19	Bengali 1.40	0.010
A	English 1.90	Hindi 1.21	0.139
A	English 1.90	Bengali 1.40	0.000
A	Hindi 1.21	Bengali 1.40	0.020
B	Nepali 1.08	English 1.45	0.000
B	Nepali 1.08	Hindi 1.43	0.000
B	English 1.45	Hindi 1.43	0.819
C	Nepali 1.20	Hindi 1.28	0.530
C	Nepali 1.20	Bengali 1.45	0.002
C	Hindi 1.28	Bengali 1.45	0.000
D	English 1.57	Hindi 1.37	0.016

As is clear from Figure 5, Nepali is never ranked as more 'proudy' than other languages and English is always ranked more 'proudy' than other languages for those who self-reported their first language as Nepali only. This is a direct reflection of the conflicted relationship that Indians of Nepali descent have with the use of English. During my ethnographic research, older individuals explicitly reported their displeasure with the younger generation's use of English as well as their concern that the Nepali language was being infected by the corrupting influence of English.

Figure 5: Total rankings for languages

Speaker's language	Number of speakers ranked higher for 'proudy'	
	Whole Sample [n=625]	L1 Nepali only [n=396]
Nepali	2	0
Bengali	5	4
Hindi	3 [-2][8]	3 [-2][9]
English	3 [-1][10]	6 [-2][11]

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[7] Other groupings were those individuals who reported Nepali as well as other languages as their 'mother language' [n=70], and those who reported no Nepali as their native language [n=134].

[8] Two of these pairings were not statistically significant: Speaker A's recordings in English and Hindi (p < 0.640) and speaker C's recordings in Nepali and Hindi (p < 0.587). For this study, I take p < 0.001 as highly significant and p < 0.01 as significant. For this study, I also accept those with p < 0.15 as moderately significant; I am only comfortable doing so because I have the ethnographic and historical evidence to compare.

[9] Two were not statistically significant: Speaker A's recordings in Nepali and Hindi (p < 0.863) and speaker C's recordings in Nepali and Hindi (p < 0.530).

[10] One was not statistically significant: Speaker B's recordings in English and Hindi (p < 0.199).

[11] Two were not statistically significant: Speaker A's recordings in Nepali and English (p < 0.117) and Speaker B's recordings in English and Hindi (p < 0.819).

These same beliefs were occasionally reported by college students and younger adults, but their views about English were in general more positive. They did not see English as corrupting the Nepali language or, rather, their concerns with social acceptance, success in education,[12] and the ability to find employment superseded their concerns about languages. English, although problematic and politically contentious, appears to be the language of those who want to leave Darjeeling or, at least improve their standing in life. The quality of 'proudy' is directly associated with such persons.

Conclusion

These findings reflect the importance of combining ethnographic methods with the matched-guise technique. Without the matched-guise results, I could have arrived at vastly different conclusions regarding language ideologies about Nepali and English; the ethnographic results pointed to more explicitly positive, and fewer negative, associations with English. The matched-guise results, however, clearly demonstrate a more complex field of meanings about English. Yet only relying on the matched-guise test would have provided few of the complex cultural understandings of the qualities, like 'proudy,' or the roles that the languages play in the actual practice of daily life.

In short, the results of the matched-guise test are illuminating, but relying on them as the primary source of data would have been partial at best when considered alongside the ethnographic research and historical data. With the combination of methods, such language ideologies expressed in the test may be connected to macrolevel trends, including the effects of the political movement to add Nepali to the constitution as well as state and national shifts in economic opportunities.

It is also clear that the matched-guise technique will provide a fruitful method for scholars of language ideologies in large part because it is a unique way to gather data about the more unconscious levels of language ideologies. Ethnographic and archival data can provide the more explicit and conscious levels, as well as trace the history of such ideologies. Yet without the more unconscious levels, such analyses and the theorizing based on them would be partial. On the other hand, research that only takes its data from matched-guise tests would be lacking in the broader social meanings. It is only when utilizing the combination of all forms—when evidence from the matched-guise test complements and deepens the ethnographic and historical material, and vice versa—that we can begin to understand such a politically charged multilingual, multiethnic context.

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[12] For a detailed explanation of education, identity, and language in North India, see LaDousa, 2005, 2006.

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