

Linguistic Hybridity: The Use of Code Mixing in Nepali Folk Pop Songs

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Abstract

Code mixing of two or more languages has become a common phenomenon in Nepali folk pop songs. In this context, this study discussed the phenomenon of mixing multilingual terms in Nepali folk pop songs and the reasons for mixing such codes from other languages. This qualitative phenomenological study along with situation analysis used documents and unstructured interviews as the data collection tools. I selected 12 Nepali folk pop songs purposively for analysis. They include Baduliko Khutko ("Sound of a Hiccup"), Champa ("Champa girl"), "Hello Hello", Meri Chhoretti ("My Girl Friend"), Mudda Haldincchu ("File a Case") and Rato Rato Khursani Piro Chha ("Red, Red Pepper Hot"), Chorut Salkauane ("Light a Cigarette"), "Cocacola Figure" and DJ Bajako ("Playing DJ"), Daru Sadkaune ("Gulping Local Wine") and Hi Kali ("Hello Beauty"), and Tension Naleu Yaar ("Don't be in Tension, Friend"). These songs were played in the audio laboratory to identify the multilingual terms used by the Nepali composers and musicians in Nepali folk pop songs and analyzed in terms of the phenomenon of code mixing. Two language teachers and one folk pop singer were interviewed to explore the reasons for code mixing. The result shows that the young generation is mostly attracted towards the folk pop songs with code mixing, and such songs become popular among the youths due to their multilingual flavour. Nepali folk songs have been influenced by the postmodernist tradition, fashion and technological influence. The trend of code mixing in Nepali folk pop songs may lose the linguistic purity thereby resulting linguistic hybridity.

Keywords: Code switching, social media, YouTube, multilingual, musicians

Introduction

Nepali folk pop song industry has grown rapidly due to the attraction of young generation towards

such songs in recent years although old generation often does not listen to such mixed and remixed songs. The social media like YouTube and Tiktok make the popular songs favourable to be hit among the young listeners. The folk pop songs seem to be associated with the youth (Coupland, 2011). In recent years, code mixing has become a common phenomenon in such folk pop songs.

Code mixing occurs in bilingual and multilingual communities mostly in speech (Sitaram & Black, 2016; Wibowo et al., 2017). The phenomenon of code mixing and code switching also occurs in songs including Nepali folk pop songs. “Code switching is used in the song lyrics to make the song more interesting to the listener” (Lestari, 2014, p.2). As Thara and Poornachandran (2018) state “Multilingual speakers often switch between languages in the midst of a conversation” (p. 2382). It has become the common phenomenon that speakers tend to choose the codes from more than one language while speaking in multilingual contexts.

Language and culture are inseparable things. Language is not only a means of communication but also a carrier of societal culture, norms, and generational values (Sarah & Oladayo, 2021). Language transforms the values and norms from one generation to another through literature and songs. Nepal is a country with 131 languages spoken by 125 ethnic groups (Language Commission, 2020). Since Nepal is a multilingual and multicultural country with mixed society, almost every Nepali is either bilingual or multilingual. My observation shows that even the Raute people only found in Nepal are bilinguals as they speak their own Khamci language and Nepali as a lingua franca. This linguistic diversity makes Nepal a multilingual and multicultural nation. Nepali singers and lyrics use English or other words and phrases in Nepali folk pop songs very often to add the multilingual flavour and to make suitable rhythm.

A code is a dialect of a language or language itself. Wardhaugh (2006) defines code as “a language or a variety of a language” (p. 88). According to Richards and Schmidt (2013), code as “a term which is used instead of language, speech variety, or dialect” (p.87). Code mixing is a phenomenon of mixing different codes, dialects or different languages in speech including on a social media like Facebook, Messengers, Twitter, WhatsApp, and so on. Ho (2007) states, “Code mixing refers to any admixture of linguistic elements of two or more language systems in the same utterance at various levels: phonological, lexical, grammatical and orthographical” (p. 2).

This phenomenon is more common in bilingual or multilingual communities and/or between bilingual speakers in informal situations. It may be at the levels of phonology, morphology, grammatical structures or lexical items. Code mixing and code switching, two terms in sociolinguistics, are often used interchangeably, but they are a bit different concepts (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004). Code switching is the process of switching from one language to another language in a single conversation, while code mixing is the practice of mixing codes from different dialects or languages (Al-Ahdal, 2020; Younas et al., 2020). In both cases, there is the use of two or more codes in communicating ideas, thoughts, and feelings with others or in other social contexts. In fact, code mixing in folk pop songs is a kind of linguistic hybridity over linguistic purity (Hopkyns et al., 2018) as it hybridizes the originality of the song by mixing terms from other dialects or languages.

There are 7151 known living languages in the world (Ethnologue, 2022). People often speak two or more languages in multilingual societies. They tend to mix the languages shifting from one language to another. Not only in speech, the phenomenon of code mixing can also be found in different means of mass communication like stories, newspapers, films, novels, songs, and so on.

Music and songs have been an important means of entertainment among human beings since ancient times. Everybody enjoys music as song is a part of life. It is true that the majority of people like songs including pop songs. One may learn about cultures, values, traditions, customs, and so on of different communities through songs (Arevalo, 2010). Nepal is a country with varieties of songs like Folk songs, Rodhi songs, Dohori songs, Pop songs, Jhyaure songs, Deuda songs, Modern songs, National songs, and so on. Among them, folk pop songs have been very popular among the young generation (Greene, 2001, 2002; Henderson, 2002). As a result, the original songs have now been changed, modified or remixed giving the flavour of pop songs, often mixing different codes.

Literature shows that Nepali folk pop songs are very popular among the youths in recent years (Jensen et al., 2011; Yamamoto, 2017). Because of the demand of such songs, the musicians, composers and singers are producing folk pop songs with code mixing of remixed types. In this postmodernist era, local culture becomes global and global the local through glocalisation (Featherstone, 2012; Kraidy, 2003). Since today's mixed societies do not have purely original culture, that is culture with indigenous identity, code mixing in folk pop songs has been the result of cultural and linguistic diversity.

The practice of code mixing in Nepali folk pop songs is an area of interest among the linguists, language teachers and learners. Therefore, this study will be significant to the students of language and linguistics including language planners. Not only this, musicians, song composers, lyrics and singers as well as the listeners of folk pop songs will be benefitted from this study.

Although the phenomenon of code mixing and code switching have been well-documented in relation to the use of language, particularly in speech, a few studies have been done regarding the use of code mixing in songs. There have been some studies carried out regarding the use of code mixing and code switching in songs and music (Babalola & Taiwo, 2009; Chairat, 2014; Davies & Bentahila, 2006; Rianda, 2017; Sarah & Oladayo, 2021). To cite a few examples, Balogun and Oladayo (2021) analysed the case of code switching and codemixing in the Nigerian music industry. They found that most of the musicians tended to lace their song chunks of words and phrases from their mother tongue or at least one of the three major languages Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba although English is the national language of the country. Permatasari (2020) discussed the phenomenon of code mixing as a trend in the Indonesian pop music industry, and found the role of a habitus that gave birth to a trend of English-Indonesian code mixing. He showed that code mixing became a phenomenon in the music industry as a form of new habits. Likhithongsathorn and Sappapan (2013) explored and described the phenomenon of English code-mixing and code-switching in Thai pop songs. They found that the use of English codes in Thai pop songs produce rhetorical and aesthetic effects.

In the context of Nepal, a few studies have been carried out regarding code mixing in Nepali songs. Chhetri (2012) analysed English code mixing in Nepali film songs and found that out of 5722 codes

341 English codes were mixed in Nepali film songs because of the popularity of the English language. Bhetuwal (2020) discussed code mixing in folk songs as a journey towards linguistic creativity. Similarly, Adhikari (2009) studied code-mixing in Nepali film songs, Bhattarai (2014) studied English code mixing in Nepali remixed songs, and Malla (2011) studied English code mixing in Deuda songs. These are just a few studies and none of the study, to my knowledge, has been done about code mixing in Nepali pop folk songs. This study is the result of this gap.

The Nepali language is the national language of Nepal. The musicians often compose songs in Nepali so that almost all people despite the linguistic diversity could understand and enjoy the songs. However, due to the linguistic diversity of Nepal, most of these musicians and singers tend to mix the codes of their songs with the words and phrases from their mother tongues or from Hindi and English.

The phenomenon of code mixing in Nepali folk pop songs is an unexplored field of research. Therefore, this study describes the phenomenon of code mixing in Nepali folk pop songs thereby exploring the reasons for code mixing in such songs. To achieve these purposes, the following research questions were used:

1. What kinds of codes have been used in the selected Nepali folk pop songs?
2. Why do the young Nepali folk pop singers mix codes in their songs?

Methodology

This qualitative phenomenological study along with situation analysis used the document reviews and unstructured interviews as the tools of data collection. Data like images, photographs, graphs, interview transcripts, field notes and video recordings are referred to as documents in qualitative research (Rapley & Rees, 2018). The documents were the songs downloaded from YouTube and unstructured interviews taken with two language teachers and one folk pop singer. One language teacher teaches Nepali language education and another one teaches English language education at the University level. These language teachers were purposively selected because they teach language courses and they have, to some extent, concern about code mixing in language, here Nepali language. The folk pop singer is the one whose songs were selected for this study. To achieve the purpose of this study, I purposively selected 12 Nepali folk pop songs mostly sung by the western singers of Nepal. I listened to them in a quiet environment paying attention to the codes used by the singers. Then I recorded the terms having different codes except Nepali language and analysed the phenomenon of different codes used in these songs. I also interviewed two language teachers and one folk pop singer to explore the reasons for code mixing in Nepali folk pop songs. The first theme has been generated after listening to the selected songs. After transcribing, coding the interview data, two more themes have been generated based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Then the themes have been analysed and interpreted linking them with previous studies and relevant theories of code mixing, demand, generation gap and postmodernist perspectives.

Table 1 shows the selected folk pop songs for this study.

Table 1*Selected Nepali Folk Pop Songs*

S.N.	Song	Singer
1	<i>Baduliko Khutko</i> (“Sound of a Hiccup”)	Sanjaya BC
2	<i>Champa</i> (“Champa girl”)	Avinash Ghising
3	“Hello Hello”	Bhim Bista
4	<i>Meri Chhoretti</i> (“My Girl Friend”)	Tank Timilsina
5	<i>MuddaHaldincchu</i> (“File a Case”)	Durgesh Thapa
6	<i>Rato Rato Khursani Piro Chha</i> (“Red, Red Pepper Hot”)	Durgesh Thapa
7	<i>Chorut Salkauane</i> (“Light a Cigarette”)	Sajjan Dhami
8	Cocacola Figure”	Sajjan Dhami
9	<i>DJ Bajako</i> (“Playing DJ”)	Sajjan Dhami
10	<i>Daru Sadkaune</i> (“Gulping Local Wine”)	Chakra Bam
11	<i>Hi Kali</i> (“Hello Beauty”)	Chakra Bam
12	<i>Tension Naleu Yaar</i> (“Don’t be in Tension, Friend”)	Naresh Rokaya

Results and Discussion

After listening to the selected folk pop songs and analyzing the interviews, I have developed only three themes for the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results of this study.

Multilingual Flavour in Nepali Folk Pop Songs

Nepali folk pop songs are filled with English terms and other indigenous languages of Nepal including Hindi. “These sounds are taking on different meanings and associations within the Nepali context” (Greene, 2001, p.173). Originally, Nepali folk pop songs tend to be in Nepali language. However, the composers, musicians and singers often tend to mix terms from other dialects or languages provided that such songs could have multilingual flavour. Table 2 shows the record of the mixed codes from other dialects or languages along with their English equivalents except.

Table 2

Code Mixing in Selected Songs

Song	Mixed Terms with their English Equivalents	Dialect/Language
<i>Baduliko</i>	<i>Khutko</i> macharkyai (damaging)	Doteli
(“Sound of a Hiccup”)	jhhikuu (much)	Doteli
	khanu (food)	Doteli
	lagdi (happens)	Doteli
	suwa (term addressing a girl)	Doteli
	sai (term addressing a boy)	Doteli
	tamrai (your)	Doteli
	baaja (term addressing a girl or boy)	Doteli
	tamlai (you)	Doteli
	cheli (daughter)	Doteli
	jaso (like or similar to)	Doteli
<i>Champa</i> (“Champa girl”)	champa tamro (Champa, your)	Doteli
	tamlai vetna aaulo (coming to meet you)	Doteli
	jaunlo (will go)	Doteli
“Hello Hello”	Hello, hello, hello, hello! Excuse me, handsome, girlfriend, baby, film, boring, bullet pulsar motor, ice-cream	English
<i>Meri Chhoretti</i>	chhoretti (girl friend)	Achhami
(“My Girl Friend”)	side, police, one piece	English
	baijaun suwa (Let’s go girl)	Achhami
<i>Mudda Haldincchu</i>	Hello, everybody I’m	English
(“File a Case”)	dil (mind)	Hindi
	danger, All girls follow me because I’m a playboy	English
<i>Rato Rato Khursani</i>	Hero, let’s go, land, fan, fit, search, hit,	English
<i>Piro Chha</i> (“Red, Red Pepper Hot”)	Hello, everybody I’m... Love you all.	
<i>Chorut Salkauane</i>	handsome, twenty cross	English
(“Light a Cigarette”)	a	
“Cocacola Figure”	cocacola figure, beauty, disco, party	English
<i>DJ Bajako</i>	suwa (beloved)	Doteli, Achhami
(“Playing DJ”)		

<i>Daru</i>	<i>Sadkaune</i>	jaiki cheli poil gyalai merai ghara aauna (Come my home	Doteli
("Gulping	Local	whosever daughters elope)	
Wine")		phuchero (bad)	Doteli
		tension	English
		chuigam padkaunya aba daru sadkaunya (chewing gum	Doteli
		blowing now wine gulping)	
		swadi (sweet)	Doteli
		are k gaddei hai yar (Oh, what will you do, friend)	Doteli
<i>Hi Kali</i>	("Hello	hi kali (hello beauty)	English +Doteli
Beauty")		nai baaj nai baaj ma ta lagi lau laaja (no boy no boy me feeling	Doteli
		shy)	
		fusion style, baby, mood	English
		chhaymma chudi jhyamma paitali (sound of bracelet pairing	Doteli
		of foot)	
<i>Tension</i>	<i>Naleu</i>	aaija suwa (come beloved)	Doteli
<i>Yaar</i> ("Don't be in	dil, pyar		Hindi
Tension, Friend")	tension, college, kiss		English

Table 2 shows, Nepali folk pop songs are mixed with English and Hindi languages along with Doteli and Achhami languages, both spoken in the Far Western part of Nepal. The national census of 2011 has kept Doteli and Achhami as the separate languages recording 123 indigenous languages spoken as the mother tongues in Nepal (Census of Nepal 2011). The song *Baduliko Khutko* ("Sound of a Hiccup") mostly mixes Doteli terms maybe because the singer is from this region, *Champa* ("Champa girl") also mixes Doteli terms although the singer is from another region. The song "Hello Hello" mixes English terms, whereas *Meri Chhoretti* ("My Girl Friend") includes both Achhami and English terms. Likewise, *Mudda Haldincchu* ("File a Case") includes both Hindi and English terms whereas *Rato Rato Khursani Piro Chha* ("Red, Red Pepper Hot"), *Chorut Salkauane* ("Light a Cigarette") and "Cocacola Figure" only mix English terms. Similarly, *DJ Bajako* ("Playing DJ") mixes Doteli or Achhami term; *Daru Sadkaune* ("Gulping Local Wine") and *Hi Kali* ("Hello Beauty") mix Doteli and English terms; and *Tension Naleu Yaar* ("Don't be in Tension, Friend") mix Doteli, Hindi and English terms.

Generation Gap in Listeners

Nepali music industry has been influenced by the generation gap due to the attraction of the youths towards mixed, remixed, rap and hip hop songs. The old generation prefers only the original and indigenous songs like *lok dohori* (Nepali folk songs sung by two teams of men and women), *rodi* (songs popular among the Gurung communities of Nepal, *Deuda* songs (songs popular in the Far Western and Karnali Provinces of Nepal), *Tamang selo* (songs sung by the Tamang people, one of the ethnic community of Nepal), *Salaijo*, *Kauda* and *Sorathi* sung by the Magar communities, *Adhuni Geet* which are popular, soft and melodious songs, and so on. However, in recent years, the young people have much more attraction

towards pop songs particularly folk pop songs.

Since I am the lover of Nepali folk pop songs, I often find Nepali folk pop songs short, sweet and melodious to listen to. As a result, the youths often listen to these songs. My own observation and experience shows that these songs become popular overnight due to the social media like YouTube and Tiktok. The young generation often views them on YouTube and also share on their facebook and through messengers among their friends. In my neighbourhood, when I asked an elderly person, he said, “I don’t want to listen to such remixed kind of folk pop songs”. It means the old people have no interest in such songs.

When I asked the question “Why do you mix terms from other languages in your folk pop songs?” to one of the Nepali folk pop singers, his reply was like this:

We mix according to the interest, desire and demand of the public...actually in Nepali folk pop songs, there should be only Nepali but we mix for generation and entertainment...we modify in new generation to attract the youth...we think our songs would be hit among all if we mix. If they listen, there can be sweetness in songs. (Interview, 4 June 2022)

These expressions of the singer suggest that there is clearly generation gap regarding listening to the songs. The singers are producing folk pop songs with code mixing to fulfil the desires, interest and demand of the listeners. Their songs become hit among the youths. The demand theory suggests that the supply is according to the demand of the consumers. The consumers of the folk pop songs are the listeners, in particular the youths. As expressed by the singer, folk pop songs are actually fulfilling the demands of the young generation.

Similarly, English language teacher viewed:

Singers of the old generation used to live in their own culture and used to sing songs reflecting their own original culture. But now people in new generation are in touch with people of different communities and cultures. So they mix codes in songs for entertainment and solidarity with them. (Interview, 4 June 2022)

This expression also indicates that there is generation gap in the listeners. Unlike the old generation, new generation is in touch with various cultural groups and mixing of codes in folk pop songs provide entertainment and create solidarity among the youths of different groups. The Nepali language teacher also has similar view: “The youths enjoy listening to the terms from other languages unlike the traditional terms.....Then young people prefer listening to such songs.” (Interview, 4 June 2022). This is in line with the generation gap theory. Generation gap is a difference in values and attitudes in terms of music, language, beliefs, and so on. between one generation and another, especially between the youth and the old generation (Mendez, 2008). Due to generation gap, Nepali folk pop songs are popular among the youths. Old generation is often not familiar with terms form other languages, but the youths are familiar with different cultures and other languages now in multilingual contexts. So new generation likes remix songs rather than purely original songs.

Postmodernist and Technological Influence

Nepali folk songs have been influenced by the postmodernist tradition, fashion and technological influence. Language is just like the fashion. Language changes in course of time like the fashion, and so does music. When I asked “Why do you think code mixing is done in Nepali folk pop songs?”, the English language teacher viewed: “Code mixing occurs due to migration, development of technology and influence of people with cultures living in mixed societies” (Interview, 4 June 2022). In fact, boundary between cultures and geographical landscapes has been minimized due to transportation, and information technology. People living in the mixed cultures learn terms of each other’s language, and use them in their own language. If terms are used from different languages, people from other cultures might listen to those songs and then songs could be popular among people of different communities. He further says, “Code mixing can also make the songs sweet and provide entertainment. It brings newness in songs as well.”

Similarly, the Nepali language teacher viewed:

The educated young people like English words, Hindi words, Urdu or any other terms due to the influence of TV, YouTube, Tiktok, and so on. They have attraction towards mixed terms in the postmodern age. The singers also have attraction towards remix songs thinking that their songs would be hit and take market. Remix brings newness in songs and become catchy. (Interview, 4 June 2022)

Postmodernism has influenced almost all sector of human life and so has been Nepali music industry. Mixing codes from other languages and remixing are in line with the postmodernist view of changes. Communication and technological development has added bricks to such changes in Nepali folk pop songs bringing newness and making them sweet to listen to.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the phenomenon of code mixing in Nepali folk pop songs and also explored the reasons for code mixing in such songs. The Nepali folk pop songs examined in this study reflect the postmodernist influence in Nepali music industry. Folk pop songs popular among the youths largely express linguistic diversity created by code mixing to add multilingual flavour and make the songs short, sweet and melodious so that they could be hit overnight. Code mixing features are mostly found from local and indigenous languages along with Hindi and English. The singers produce songs by seeing the market of the listeners. Thinking that the youths have much more attraction towards such songs, they are encouraged to produce folk pop songs in a remixed way. The features of code mixing help the singers to establish unique identities in the diverse communities of people especially among the youths of all ethnic groups of people. The musicians and singers can reach more listeners due to the mixture of more languages in their music and songs. As a result, there can be more money from the views of the songs on YouTube or other social media along with live performance at concerts and other cultural programmes. In fact, mixing codes in Nepali folk pop songs is a kind of linguistic cocktail for the young listeners to listen to.

This study is limited to Nepali folk pop songs sung by the young singers. Only 12 folk pop songs were selected for the analysis of the phenomenon of code mixing. This study can be significant for the

language planners and the supporters who want to preserve indigenous culture and purity in language. Since this study is limited to only selected Nepali folk pop songs, analysing the use of code mixing in Nepali folk songs can be a further issue of study.

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