

Beginning Nepali

NEPA 1003-1503 (3 Credits)

Nepal: Borders, Identity, and Community Resilience

This syllabus is representative of a typical term. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from term to term.

Course Description

From shared beginnings in Peace Corps Volunteer language training to now, there has always been an emphasis on language as a key to cultural learning and to greater international understanding. Thusly, our language courses are suited to in country socio-cultural dynamics, where attention is given to communicative context as well as content and where we attribute value to traditional languages and/or minority languages as well as “official” languages.

The study of Nepali is the first prerequisite for successful entry into the native communities of Nepal. Language training in Nepali begins immediately after arrival in the country, and throughout the semester, students are encouraged to apply their language skills in all facets of the program, especially during home stay, the village excursion, and the Independent Study Project or internship.

The purpose of language training is communication. Students need to be able to communicate in Nepali to work/stay effectively in Nepal. We emphasize language acquisition (Natural Approach) for application in real life situations. The successful completion of the language training will give the learner a good foundation for language usage in day-to-day life. For each component, topics are identified; tasks performed under each topic are determined and designed by the teachers according to the students’ learning styles and capacities. Each lesson presents the situation, e.g. eating with host family, and the topic, e.g. food and socializing. Students learn to use a certain “dialogue” appropriate to the topic. Dialogues are used to assist in expressing needs, wants, questions, responding to questions, giving and asking opinions, and interviewing, etc.

Language Levels and Placement

Students are placed into appropriate language course levels based on oral proficiency interviews conducted during orientation in Nepal.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Nepali Language course at SIT Nepal, students will be able to:

- Communicate effectively in Nepali in a variety of speaking situations.
- Demonstrate comprehension of Nepali in a variety of listening situations.
- Understand most native speakers when they speak clearly on familiar topics.

- Express feelings, opinions, and emotions using a simple vocabulary.
- Converse in Nepali with host family members about immediate needs and communicate effectively on a daily basis.
- Describe the Independent Study Project to a variety of audiences.
- Conduct independent research or internship using basic Nepali language.
- Discern and compare cultural similarities and differences.

Course Requirement

Methodology

In terms of language teaching approaches, methods and techniques, we utilize multiple approaches based in experiential learning. During the semester, students attend 2.5 hours of language class five days a week. Since our main focus is language acquisition, we do not allow our learners to speak other languages in the classroom. However we sometimes deal with grammar and other issues related to Nepali language learning in English.

Textbook and course materials

Rana, M., C. Rana, S. Pokhrel, and D. Putnam. 2015. *Nepali the SIT Way: Basic and Intermediate Nepali for Multicultural Competency and Fieldwork*. Lalitpur: Jagadamba Press. ISBN: 978 – 9937 – 2 – 5654 – 4

Rana, M., C. Rana, and S. Pokhrel. 2014. *Nepali the SIT Way: Language Workbook*. Kathmandu: SIT Nepal.

Rana, M. 2012. *Let's Learn Devanagari: Nepali Script*. Kathmandu. SIT Nepal English-Nepali Pocket Dictionary

Class Schedule

Students will have at least 45 class hours. During our Kathmandu stay, the class schedule is Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:00am-10:45am. Language class hours and timing may be different during our excursions. Classes are shuffled and reshuffled according to the learning pace and student number so that students will be familiar with each teacher's teaching styles and techniques. Extra individual classes will be provided if students want to work more on language. Students will not be staying in a formal class every day, different language activities (e.g. games, cooking class, assignments, debates) are organized related to language learning.

Assignments

You will have language homework most days. Assignments are given daily after language class ends and are due the next day during class. Assignments are usually reviewed and returned to students before the same day.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Assessment

Teachers plan lessons and evaluate student performance at daily meetings. Students are then regrouped according to learning pace and individual strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the semester, teachers collectively compose a final evaluation for each student, taking into account classroom performance and the use and development of language skills in the host community.

Through periodic and ongoing experiential evaluation students are graded in each of the following areas according to the criteria set out in the syllabi: grammar, vocabulary, oral and reading comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, motivation, attendance, progress, Devnagari and language usage outside of classroom. In addition, there are two written tests during the semester (e.g. short question/answer, fill in the blanks, correcting word order, etc.) and final written and oral exams before ISP and internship starts.

The Academic Director, based on the language teachers' final evaluation determines the final semester language grade. Although not part of grade, students will be given an ACTFL oral proficiency interview before the ISP and internship period by a certified tester at the conclusion of language study to gauge students' language acquisition.

Methods of Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the following criteria in their learning and work in target language:

Grammar

Grammar is the integral part of the language; it governs the composition of word order, conjugation, tenses etc. It is evaluated under assignments, class activities and presentation, exams.

Vocabulary

At least 20-30 new words are taught in class. Students are highly encouraged to acquire extensive vocabulary from the homestay family, books and on their own. Vocabulary is evaluated under assignments, class activities and presentations, and exams.

Intelligibility/Pronunciation/Fluency

Students are expected to be intelligible and clear in their writing, reading, description, discussion in terms of grammar, pronunciation, smoothness of conversation flow. This criteria is graded under class activities and presentations, assignments, and exams.

Attendance/Participation

Students are expected to attend each and every language class and the activities scheduled by teachers.

If students get sick or have important appointments they should inform to the teacher and director ahead of the class. 'Just being in class' cannot be considered 'good participation'. Being motivated in learning, encouraging and being helpful to their classmate, creating Nepali speaking environment inside and outside class, showing respect to language, host-culture without being defensive or distracting are also important. It is graded under attendance/participation, class activities and presentations, and assignments.

Devanagari

Students' fluency and accuracy are graded in Devanagari reading and writing. It is graded under assignments and exams.

Final grades are calculated as follows:

Assignments (20 %)

Class Activities and presentations (20 %)

Attendance/Participation (10 %)

Exams (50 %)

1st exam (5 %)2nd exam (10 %)

Final exam (20 %)

Devanagari exam (15 %)

Grading Scale: The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

94-100% A

90-93% A-

87-89% B+

84-86% B

80-83% B-

77-79% C+

74-76% C

70-73% C-

67-69% D+

64-66% D

Below 64 F

Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) Test

Final oral proficiency interviews are conducted toward the end of the semester prior to the ISP and internship period in order to provide a measurement of students' overall linguistic progress. Course grades usually, but not always, reflect performance in the Oral Proficiency Interview.

Score Description for Major Speaking Proficiency Level

	Functions	Content	Context	Accuracy	Text Type
Superior	Discuss topics concretely/abstractly, handle a linguistically unfamiliar situation, support/object opinion, hypothesis.	Verity of concrete & abstract topics	Formal & informal	Rare errors that never interferes with meaning	Extended discourse
Advanced	Narrate, describe, explain, compare, discuss in past present & future time/ major aspect frames. Can mostly answer in superior level, but not all the time.	Concrete topics going beyond self, family, community & work	Most formal & some informal settings	Generally comprehensible to all	Paragraph length speech
Intermediate	Creates with language, simple conversations, ask & answer, can handle simple social transactional situations. Can mostly answer in advanced level, but not all the time.	Daily routine, familiar surroundings, routine travel needs	Some informal settings & a few transactional situations	Understood with some repetition by speakers used to dealing with foreigners	Discrete sentences
Novice	Formulaic utterances and lists, but shows no functional ability	Objects, numbers, body parts, colors, days, family members, food, etc	Most common informal settings	Very difficult to understand	Below sentence level

Sublevels of Each Major Speaking Proficiency Level

	Quantity and Quality at the floor	Function at the next level
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High	Excellent. Performance exceeds the requirements for the level	Almost always, with breakdown. Patterns of weakness. Cannot sustain the functions of the level above consistently.
Mid	Good quantity and quality. Performance is strong, with ease, fluency, and confidence	A little, but not most of the time
Low	Minimal. Performance is weak but without breakdown into level below. Great effort to sustain the functions of the level. Poor control of the details of the functions at the level, lack of accuracy and fluency	No development of the functions of the level above.

Expectations and Policies

Class attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will reduce the language grade (see attendance policies in the front matter of the syllabus).

Show up prepared. Be on time, have your assignments completed and points in mind for clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.

Have assignments completed on schedule, and done according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.

Ask questions in class. Teachers are highly respected in Nepal. Your polite and engaged behavior is expected.

Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

Respect differences of opinion (classmates', teachers'). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

Trust in the process. SIT has been teaching Nepali for over 40 years and the teachers have a collective 40+ years teaching in both SIT, Peace Corps, and other programs. It might be tough, but we have seen the tremendous results of our course.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

