Multimedia Mapping of Linguistic Structures and Practices in Nepal

This project will support one of the tasks that Dr. Kristine Hildebrandt (Department of English and Linguistics, SIUE) has proposed in her NSF-funded CAREER to produce an interactive, web-based language and dialect atlas of Manang in Nepal. This interactive online atlas will be designed to provide easy access in a geographical context to the multimedia database (video clips, audio, photographs and descriptive/transcribed texts) containing relational modules various linguistic phenomena. The geographic dimension will provide an exciting, new way of understanding human thought and communication as it is linked to landscapes and located in the spaces and places of life in Manang.

The atlas will be developed using Google Maps Application Programming Interface (API), Google Geocoder, and other JavaScript libraries such as jQuery, MySQL (Structured Query Language), Cascade Style Sheet (CSS) and Spry Framework for Ajax. In addition, the graphical user interface of the atlas will provide the sophisticated functionalities for searching and filtering, allowing the user to manipulate the database. In the atlas design, a two-column layout design will be adopted, with one for a map container and another for a sidebar. In the map container, the Google map or satellite imagery will be displayed, and points of interest (e.g., villages) will be marked with customized icons for different languages and dialects. Such content is handy because it guides the user to the points of interest at a glance. If the user is interested in a particular language/dialect, for example, but does not know where it is, the sidebar makes browsing more efficient.

In order to guide the user in interactions with the map, some standard Google Maps controls will be added, such as Pan and Zoom, Map Scale control, and Map Type control: Roadmap and Satellite. In addition, tool tips (e.g., language/dialect name) to the markers will be provided, along with clickable icons to provide multimedia information (A-V clips) about each language/dialect in particular village. The resulting online atlas will be usable in most web browsers like Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE) 7.0+, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, and Safari.