

# Medium of Instruction and Achievement in Social Studies among the Students of Gogan Secondary School, Pokhara

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## ABSTRACT

*This conference paper explores factors involved in the achievement of social studies in the basic level students of Pokhara Municipality. The objectives of the paper are to analyze the different factors associated with students' achievement in learning social studies and to look for associations of mother-tongue education with the students' achievement. A quantitative and applied research methodology with both primary and secondary sources of information was used. The primary data is collected via an online survey using a structured questionnaire. The data has been collected using researcher-administered online counseling and the distribution of online forms. Similarly, secondary data has been collected from different sources. The survey used a population of 155 students from one of the schools in Pokhara, Shree Gogan Secondary School, conveniently selected. The paper provides a theoretical basis showing that language choices are important for raising interest in the subject matter in students, which further increases the chances of attaining better grades. The students' achievement is influenced by several factors, including linguistic, educational, social, and economic expediencies. At the time of the survey, it was observed that the students wanted some changes in the uses of the medium of instruction as well as the method of teaching. The study revealed that most respondents do not find English as a medium of instruction comfortable for study. Most respondents prefer their mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The paper concludes that mother-tongue education should be implemented rather than using an imposed medium of instruction (MOI).*

**Keywords:** *Medium of instruction, mother tongue, secondary education, students' achievement*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a phenomenon that is a historically known method to deliver knowledge and skills from one generation to another. According to Socrates, education means bringing

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out the idea of universal validity which is latent in the mind of every human being. According to Knowles (1975), the main purpose of education is to develop the skills of inquiry and to have the ability to go on acquiring new knowledge easily and skillfully for the rest of their life. Knowles states that there are two approaches to learning, self-directed learning, and teacher-directed learning.

The mediums and methods of delivery of knowledge and skills have never been the same throughout history. Mediums and methods keep changing as per the changes in society. Regarding language facilities, the curriculum and textbooks have been developed in 20 different national languages in Nepal (UNESCO, 2007). Many developed countries, where the number of immigrants is higher, are focusing on providing primary or basic education in the mother language of the children. In Norway, for example, the government has provided its own public school for local communities like the Sami community, with the Sami language as a medium of instruction and the community's culture having an influential role in forming curricula (UNESCO, 2007). The question of providing education in official and national languages has also been mentioned in several reports from African countries. In many reports submitted to UNESCO, language is identified as a key barrier to the integration of immigrant children into the education system. So is the case with countries that have been using medium instruction other than the mother languages of the students.

However, the world is under "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992) which is evident in the spread of English as a lingua franca almost all over the world. Lingua franca, according to Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985) as cited in Phillipson (1992), is "a language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language. The lingua franca could be an internationally used language of communication (e.g., English), or it could be the native language of one of the groups". English being the most used lingua franca all over the world, is dominating almost all other languages. In Nepal, where English is the second language of only 0.35 percent population and the mother tongue of almost none of the population, (*Caste/ Ethnicity Report, 2021*) the domination of English in the education system is confusing and questionable. As English is the language of one of the most influential colonial society and India, Nepal's closest neighbor, being under a strong influence by the linguistic imperialism along with the political imperialism for more than 200 years, Nepal could not be away for the linguistic imperialism of English. This is the reason English has been chosen to be taught in the schools of Nepal. English has been in the curriculum of Nepal ever since the establishment of Nepal's first formal school, Durbar High School (*Durbar High*

*School, n.d.*)

English as the language of instruction was introduced in the Rana regime. As the time went by, the focus on English language became stronger. The love towards English Medium was still prevalent even after the advent of democracy in 1951 A.D. There were 1028 English Medium Schools in Nepal out of 1320 total schools in 1954 A.D. (Pandey et al., 1956). “Most schools devote an unwarranted amount of time to the teaching of languages [foreign, as well as national and mother tongue] . . . Language teaching often occupies 40% to 80% of the curriculum time.”(Pandey et al., 1956). The sprouting of institutional schools in Nepal after the downfall of Panchayat in the 1990s, English became the most wanted medium of instruction for the children.

The major goals of education policies in in Nepal was, and is, to impart knowledge of English to children. In this regard, the communities too look at the English proficiency as the achievement of education over the contents of the curriculum. In recent years, the attraction to the English language has become so intense that the community schools run under the supervision of the community and aided by the government are also shifting their language of instruction to English from Nepali. The public are of the opinion that the schools need to focus in English language even if they fail to avail other basic features of education. Just recently, National Curriculum Framework for School Education issued by Curriculum Development Centre, Nepal has directed that the language of instruction to school level can be either English or Nepali or the mother language of the pupils. However, the framework clearly states that social studies and human value/character education need to be taught either in Nepali or the pupils’ mother tongue. In this regard, the government has scheduled to implement the framework by 2024 A.D. (*National Curriculum Framework, 2019*).

One of the sectors in Nepal that has had a negative impact of the political unrest, backwardness of society, and government’s lack of vision is education, especially the acceptance of or obligation of the English language as the medium of instruction in the primary and secondary schools. The institutional schools which have been widely spread since the aftermath of the restoration of democracy in Nepal in the year 1990 A.D. are teaching almost all subjects other than Nepali in English. So far, the institutional schools have been using English as the medium of instruction, the public could choose the language of instruction for their children as the public schools were delivering their classes in Nepali language. However, in the later years, specifically after the People’s Movement II in 2007 A.D., the government-owned and community-managed schools also started teaching the pupils in English. This has

limited the students' right to choose the medium of instruction for education.

Seeing that the institutional English-based schools have been yielding better results in the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) (previously known as School Level Certificate (SLC)), there has been a recent trend of changing the community-run schools from Nepali MOI to English MOI. This is happening even before creating the necessary environment for English MOI like the technical infrastructures, proper training for teachers and schools' preparedness to shift to English medium instruction (EMI). This phenomenon is making the students more confused in understanding the subject matter, especially in social studies because their social interaction has been curbed regarding the subject matter as the Nepalese society is comprised of almost no population who speak as their mother tongue, and only 0.35 percent of population who speak English as the second language (*Caste/ Ethnicity Report, 2021*). This ultimately is affecting the performance of the students.

A study conducted in Kenya examined teaching practices at the classroom level and related these practices to learners' performance on a curriculum-based test (Ngware et al., 2014). Almost all instruction was conducted in English, which was not the mother tongue of most of the students. One of the findings was that pupils who spoke English outside school scored significantly higher than those who did not. Ngware et al. (2014) claimed that there are positive effects on learning achievements when learners speak the MOI at home and with friends.

Literature on the loss of first language due to second language domination is known as language attrition. Köpke & Schmid (2004) define attrition as, "the nonpathological decrease in proficiency in a language that had previously been acquired by an individual, i.e., intragenerational loss." This can be a good area of study to understand the students' achievement in one or the other language.

It is essential for government of Nepal, Ministry of Education to find out the output result of students after studying social studies in different medium. It is also the responsibility of every school as the primary purpose of social studies is to help children make informed and reasoned decision for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. But the question is which way of teaching social studies teaches students fundamental concepts of culture, economics and politics in effective way? In context of Nepal, is it Nepali language to develop skills to groom students into educated, productive citizen? Or is it English? The objective of the study is to answer the questions and to analyze the effect of teaching social studies in Nepali or English language in Nepal.

## **DATA AND METHODS**

This research is about the students studying in community-based schools. Recently, the community-based schools are also teaching in English medium. A decade ago, all the community-based schools used Nepali as MOI and institutional schools used English as MOI. The study area is the community-based schools of Pokhara valley which are renowned as best community schools in Nepal. Pokhara is one of the popular educational destinations in Nepal. Thousands of students from all over the Nepal came here for the higher education as well as other educational careers. This is why the area of research has been selected.

The students in the community school are taken as the population for the study of effectiveness of Nepali and English languages for teaching social studies. This research, has chosen one school, Shree Gogan Secondary School has been selected. The selection of school is done by researcher's rational preference. The school has students coming from diverse geographical areas and diverse family types. The area where the school is located has varieties of schools i.e., some are community and some are institutional. In this school both medium i.e., English and Nepali are used to teach social studies. Students are divided into different sections. In some section there is English as MOI and in some section, there is Nepali as MOI. 166 students of class nine are the total population. Among 166 students 128 students are using English MOI to learn social studies whereas remaining 38 students are using Nepali MOI.

All 166 students are selected for census method. Due to the ongoing pandemic lockdown and closure of schools for physical mode and 11 students could not be accessed by any means. So, the number of respondents is 155 only, precisely 125 from English MOI and 30 from Nepali MOI.

This study adopted descriptive study. The study was mainly based on only primary source of data with structured self-administered questionnaires. To collect information for the research, self-administered questionnaire was used and those lists of questionnaires was distributed directly among the respondent in Gogan Secondary School. Due to the closure of schools in physical mode due to Covid-19 pandemic, the questionnaire was distributed to students through the social studies teachers, who are in a good academic network with the researcher, in appropriate online platform. A cover letter was attached to the questionnaires to introduce the respondents to the research topic to avoid any suspicion or mistrust respondents might have about the study.

Collected data was analyzed quantitatively. Quantifiable raw data was analyzed with simple statistical measures. While preparing the data, simple descriptive statistical tools like

frequency, percentage, and chi-square analysis were used. Likewise, tabulation and graphical representation were also made.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profiles of respondents indicated that the number of male respondents (35.5%) was almost half the females (64.5%). 92.3 percent of the respondents' family members were reported to have used Nepali as MOI in their school level. Only 7.7 percent used English as MOI. As the total population of our research is currently studying in community-based school, The study displays that almost three fifth population (58.7%) of the respondents have changed their schooling from Institutional boarding schools in their childhood whereas 40 percent have been continuing their study in community-based school and only two respondents reported starting their schooling from mission school.

**Table 1**

*Profiles of Respondents*

Socio-demographic Factors	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	100	64.5
Female	55	35.5
MOI of Senior Family Members		
Nepali	143	92.3
English	12	7.7
Type of school in the early years		
Institutional Schools	91	58.7
Community Based Schools	64	41.3

Note: N = 155

*Source: Online Survey, 2021*

More than four fifths (80.6%) of the respondents spoke Nepali as their mother tongue. Magar language, Gurung language, Newar language and other languages were spoken as mother tongue by 8.4 percent, 5.2 percent, 3.9 percent and 1.9 percent.

**Table 2***Students Classified According to Mother Tongue*

Mother Tongue	Frequency	Percent
Nepali	125	80.6
Non-Nepali (Magar, Gurung, Newar and Others)	30	19.4
Total	155	100

*Source: Online Survey, 2021*

Almost one quarter population (23.9%) of the respondents had gotten their early schooling in Nepali language, 18.7 percent went to English medium schools and almost three fifth population (57.4%) stated that they got education in mixed type of language of instruction.

**Table 3***Students Classified According to Language Followed in Early School*

Language	Frequency	Percent
Mixed	89	57.4
Nepali	37	23.9
English	29	18.7
Total	155	100

*Source: Online Survey, 2021*

About four fifth population (80.6%) of the respondents are getting their present classes in English MOI, whereas, 19.4 percent are getting education in Nepali MOI. The following table indicates that the classes are separated in strictly two mediums, namely Nepali and English. However, the students are experiencing mixed type of teaching (As in table 7). This clearly states that the teachers are not strict in the MOI the school administration has assigned to them.

**Table 4***Students Classified According to Type of MOI at Present (As per school record)*

Language	Frequency	Percent
English	125	80.6
Nepali	30	19.4
Total	155	100

*Source: Online Survey, 2021*

More than three-quarters (77.4%) of the respondents find the Nepali language more comfortable to understand social studies, whereas only 22.6 percent find English medium

more comfortable. Almost half (49.7%) of the respondents prefer the Nepali language to study social studies. Almost three in ten (29.0%) were okay with whatever language they were taught with and about two in ten (21.3%) preferred the English language.

**Table 5**

*Students Classified According to Their Preferred MOI*

Language	Frequency	Percent
Nepali	77	49.7
English	33	21.3
Any Language	45	29.0
Total	155	100

**Source:** *Online Survey, 2021*

About 28.0 percent of respondents secured the grade B+, 27.1% secured A, and A+ was secured by 21.3% of all the respondents. Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents getting A+ and A is higher in English MOI whereas the percentage of respondents getting lower grades is higher in Nepali MOI.

**Table 6**

*Students Classified According to Previous Year's Grade of Social Studies*

Status	Nepali MOI		English MOI		Total	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
A+	1	3.3	32	25.6	33	21.3
A	5	16.7	37	29.6	42	27.1
B+	11	36.7	33	26.4	44	28.4
B	6	20.0	13	10.4	19	12.3
C+	5	16.7	8	6.4	13	8.4
C and below	2	6.7	2	1.6	4	2.5
Total	30	100	125	100	155	100

**Source:** *Online Survey, 2021*

The study demonstrates the association between students' achievement and other variables. The sex, mother tongue, comfortable language, and language preference of respondents are significant to their classroom achievement in social studies whereas their past school MOI and present school MOI were not found to be significant.



**Table 7***Analysis of Achievement in Social Studies by Socio-demographic Status*

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square		Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
	Value	Df	
Sex	16.568 <sup>a</sup>	6	.011
Mother Tongue	68.925 <sup>a</sup>	24	.000
MOI in early schooling	16.499 <sup>a</sup>	12	.169
MOI in the present school	17.424 <sup>a</sup>	12	.134
Comfortable Language	15.038 <sup>a</sup>	6	.020
Language Preference	29.918 <sup>a</sup>	12	.003
Mostly followed MOI by family members	12.626 <sup>a</sup>	6	.049

**Source:** *Online Survey, 2021*

The study illustrates that the major reason of respondents' preference of language for their study is that is their mother tongue. More than half the population stated it (55.5%). 45.8% stated that they prefer the language because it is being studied from early childhood. 35.5% want to improve their skill in a particular language.

**Table 8***Students Classified According to Reasons of Preference of MOI*

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Mother tongue	86	55.5
Being used for a long time	71	45.8
Want to improve language	55	35.5
Language often used	49	31.6
Perception of a better language	17	11.0
Total	155	

**Source:** *Online Survey, 2021, Multiple Response*

In the study, it was found that there is a significant association between the use of the mother tongue in teaching with the achievement, which is supported by the report of UNESCO (2007) which states that it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching children is their mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. The language is a way of getting better achievement of the students. An increasing number use the English language as a medium of instruction in the latter stages of primary schooling and at pre-school levels although it is not the mother tongue for most learners (Milligan & Tikly, 2016). This theory is not supported by

the research as the MOI used in schooling has no significant association with the achievement of the students. Language preference of students in studying social studies has an association with their achievement in class, which is supported by various research by Cummins, (2000) who stated that the major causal factors in linguistic minority students' underachievement are socio-political: specifically, the coercive pattern of dominant-subordinated group relations in the wider society and the ways. There is a strong trend among parents to send their children to an English Medium school, which is often described as 'English-mania' because it has become a fashion (Shrestha, 2008). This revelation is not found to be significant as the type of school the students go to and their achievement has no significant association. The MOI the children are used to from early schooling has a strong association with their achievement in the higher levels too. This finding is backed by The Ife Primary Education Research Project of Nigeria (Fafunwa et al., 1989). Fafunwa et al., (1989) in The Ife Primary Education Research Project of Nigeria state that one of the most important factors that militate against the dissemination of knowledge and skills and therefore of rapid social and economic well-being of most people in developing countries is the imposed MOI. This idea is backed by the research. The study suggests that we are replacing our terms and terminologies with English terms. This is in line with what Gautam (2019) has to say, "our blind support of English and the Englishisation of our education system is contributing to the loss of many traditional and typical achievements which are found in our land and languages."

## CONCLUSIONS

The research has identified that many factors influence the achievement of students' academic careers. The variables under investigation in this study include the use of MOI, and chi-square analysis of different parameters. The study revealed that most respondents are indifferent to the contents being taught in social studies. Most respondents are dissatisfied that they are not studying the subjects in their mother tongue. As per the study, most of the respondents like social studies be taught in Nepali language. According to the study, mother tongue is ranked as the highest priority factor for preference of MOI and perception of people towards a language is the least priority factor. Among the variables examined in the study, students' caste and social status also plays a role in their achievement level. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondent find it comfortable if the teachers teach them in their mother tongue. The study revealed that majority of the respondents agree that they feel uncomfortable with the vocabulary being replaced with English terminology as it is

creating a loss of traditional and indigenous technologies. Study revealed that majority of the respondents agree that they cannot connect their textbook knowledge with outer environments. The study concluded that there is significant association between mother tongue and students' class achievement; preference to language, academic qualification of family members, and likeliness of subject have no significant association with the classroom achievement.

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