



Higher secondary school level students' attitudes towards English language

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Abstract

The main objective of this research article is to scrutinize the XI-Standard management students' attitudes towards English language. A cross-sectional survey design, which consisted of five-point Likert-type twenty attitude measuring statement items, was employed to carry out the research. The statement items were administered to the mass of 1841 students at twelve Higher Secondary Schools situated in Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City, Dang, Nepal in the Academic Year 2017-2018. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 440 students out of 1841 who comprised the population for the study. The collected data were statistically analyzed by using SPSS version 20. Median and Mode of the most of the statement items were greater than 3. Similarly, the percents of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" were greater than those of "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree" and "Undecided". It showed the students' positive attitudes towards English language. The Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis H Test showed that the distribution of the attitudes was the same across categories of campus (Sig.=.980) and religion (Sig.=.188). The Mann-Whitney U Test showed that there was no statistically significant difference (two-tailed sig.=.859) between the groups of girls and boys on their attitudes towards English language. It was concluded that the students had positive attitudes towards English language.

Keywords: attitudes, dang, English language, language, schools

1. Introduction

Charm of English language is increasing day by day. It is an important foreign languages taking hold of a prominent place in Nepal despite the fact that it is neither a national nor an official language. It is the most widely taught foreign language at all stages of education system; but even educated persons whose major subject is not English can't speak and write well. Many Nepalese students commence learning English from their early period at primary schools or even pre-schools. The students of the English medium schools find English easy, but those of the Nepali medium students find it difficult to read, write and speak. English has normally been taught as a compulsory subject at the Higher Secondary level in the management stream.

Some students are found to be attracted towards learning English, whereas some are found to be indifferent to English language. They find it monotonous, tough and puzzling. Some students seem to have a strong yearning to study English language because they think that knowledge of English offers chances for progress in their professional lives. They think that they will get a better job if they know English language along with their mother tongue. Some students are motivated to learn English because it is a global language of communication, literature, philosophy, journalism, science and technology. But some students think that it is the language which has blocked their progress in the field of attaining higher education because they can't pass their English subject examination despite passing other subjects they study.

The researcher adopted a cross-sectional survey design which consisted of five-point Likert-type twenty statement items to examine the students' attitudes towards English language.

This research study is new because nobody has carried out such a study to investigate the XI-Standard management students' attitude towards English language at Higher Secondary Schools situated in Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City, Dang District. Dang, which is the largest valley in Nepal, is a plain area where students from other districts such as Rukum, Rolpa, Salyan, Pyuthan and Argakhachi come to study here. Moreover, students of different castes, religions, cultures, political backgrounds and languages study at these schools. This study is significant because it would provide the readers, parents and teachers or other researchers with the information about the students' general attitudes towards English language.

1.1 Null Hypotheses of the Research Study

The null hypotheses of the research study were:

- i) There is no statistically significant difference in the distribution of attitudes of students towards English language across categories of campus.
- ii) There is no statistically significant difference in the distribution of attitudes of students towards English language across categories of religion.
- iii) There is no statistically significant difference in the distribution of attitudes of students towards English language across categories of sex.

1.2 Objectives of the Research Study

The objectives of the research objectives were:

- i) 1.2.1 To examine the XI- Standard management students' attitudes towards English language.
- ii) 1.2.2 To find out if there is any significant relationship

between the students' campus and their attitudes towards English language.

iii) 1.2.3 To discern if there is any significant relationship between the students' religion and their attitudes towards English language.

iv) 1.2.4 To determine if there is any significant relationship between the students' sex and their attitudes towards English language.

2. Literature Review

Literature review encompasses English language, language attitudes, and some studies on language attitudes.

2.1 English Language

English is a West Germanic language that was first spoken in Anglo-Saxon England in the early Middle Ages. English has become the most important language around the world. There are more people who need to learn this language in order to improve their professional and academic lives. English has been used as the first language in some countries such as United States of America, Britain, Canada etc. It has been used as the second language in Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland etc. It has been used as a foreign language in Nepal.

2.2 Language Attitudes

Language can be considered a valuable property of human race. Diverse persons may have varied attitudes towards language. Language attitudes are the feelings people have about their own language varieties or language varieties of others. Richards and Schmidt (2002) ^[11] remark that language attitudes are the attitudes which speakers of "different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language" (p.297). Attitudes are crucial in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction. From a practical perspective, our language attitudes are important because they affect our behavior. From a theoretical perspective, language attitudes are important because they show how people connect particular aspects of language to social meanings. Many studies on language attitudes have revealed that there is a strong relationship between attitude and achievement. The research studies carried out by Hough and Piper (1982) ^[7], Simpson and Oliver (1990) ^[12] and Visser (2008) ^[14] reflect the prominent relation between the students' attitudes and their achievement in examination and speaking performance. Fakeye (2010) ^[5] and Visser (2008) ^[14] assume attitude as a vital factor that influences language performance. Similarly, Hohenthal (2003) ^[6] and Kara (2009) ^[9] assert that learners' attitudes, apart from opinions and beliefs, towards learning strongly affect their learning behaviors and consequently on their performance. They mean to state that learners' attitudes towards learning strongly affect their learning behaviors. In the simple words, language attitudes may have an effect on second language or foreign language learning. Expressions of positive or negative

feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity.

2.3 Studies on Language Attitudes

Plenty of research studies revealed students' positive attitudes towards learning English language. The research studies carried out by Mohd Sallehuddin (1994) ^[10] with 137 University Kebangsaan Malaysia English non-major undergraduates, Kaharan (2007) ^[8] with 190 eighth grade students of a private primary school in Adana, Turkey, Chalak and Kassaian (2010) ^[3] with 108 English translation major students at Islamic Azad University, Iran, Yang (2012) ^[15] with 20 University Malaya Master students, Al Mamun, Rahman, Rahman, and Hossain (2012) ^[1] with 79 randomly selected non-major English undergraduate students from Khulna University, Bangladesh, Bobkina and Fernandez de (2012) ^[2] with 72 EFL engineering students at the Technical University in Madrid, Chew (2013) ^[4] with 111 students at the University of Malaya, China and Tahaineh & Daana (2013) ^[13] with 184 Jordanian EFL female undergraduates depicted that students had positive attitudes towards English.

3. Methodology

Methodology involves research design, population, sampling design, sample size, nature and sources of data, data collection technique, and processing and analysis of data.

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was used to carry out the study. In this research design, Students' campus, religion and sex were assumed to be the independent variables, whereas students' attitudes towards English language were taken as dependent variables.

3.2 Population / Universe

The population of the study consisted of 1841 XI- Standard management students at 12 Higher Secondary Schools in Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City, Dang District of Nepal in the Academic Year 2017-2018.

3.3 Sampling design and sample size

The researcher followed the simple random sampling technique and selected 440 students through the lottery method.

3.3.1 Projection of the sample size by school

4 Government Nepali medium Higher Secondary Schools and 8 Private English medium Higher Secondary Schools that were situated in Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City, Dang formed the sample size.

3.3.2 Projection of the sample size by religion

Dang, a vast district, retains diverse religions, cultures, castes, varied democratic principles and religious values. There were 380 Hindu, 51 Buddhist and 9 Christian students in the research study.

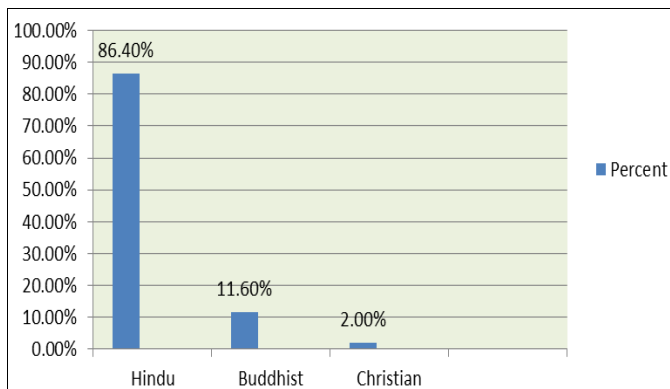


Fig 1: Percent of Students by Religion

This figure shows that most of the students who were involved in the research study were Hindus.

3.3.3 Projection of the Sample Size by Sex and Age

There were 226 male and 214 female students aged between 16-19 years. 69 students were 16 years old, 261 students were 17 years old, 108 students were 18 years old and 2 students were 19 years old.

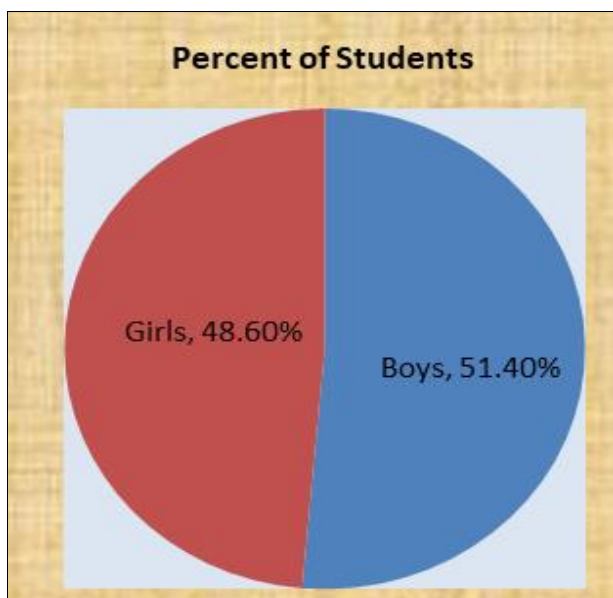


Fig 2: Percent of Students by Sex

This figure shows that the percent of girl students was almost same as the percent of the boys in the research sample.

3.4 Nature and Source of Data

The researcher employed ordinal scale data which was qualitative in nature. Students’ attitudes towards English language were obtained through the use of five-point Likert-type statement items with Strongly Agree (SA) =5, Agree (A) = 4, Undecided (UD) = 3, Disagree (D) =2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The primary source of data was questionnaire in the form of the statements. The secondary source of data included books, journal articles, web-sites etc.

3.5 Data Collection Technique

The modified survey questionnaire was adapted from Gardner’s (1985) ‘Attitude Motivation Test Battery’ (AMTB). The underlying principle of selecting Gardner’s AMTB is its established validity and reliability. There were 20 statement items based on attitudes. The students were asked to provide their attitudes on the statements / questions regarding their attitudes towards English language.

3.6 Processing and Analysis of Data

The researcher designed a series of Likert-type question items to measure students’ attitudes towards English language. Being the Liker-type data or ordinal data, it was appropriate to use median, mode percentage scores to describe the scale. All the data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 version. The researcher used the median, mode and percent scores to examine the students’ attitudes towards English language. The Researcher employed the Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis H Test to assess whether the distribution of the attitude was the same across categories of campus and religion or not. Similarly, the Mann-Whitney U Test was employed to assess whether the distribution of the attitudes was the same across categories of sex.

4. Validity of the Instruments

Validity refers to the degree to which the measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure. To appraise the validity of the instruments, the researcher received opinions and judgments from subject experts, teachers and authorities.

5. Reliability of the Instruments

The Cronbach’s alpha was used to check the reliability of the survey instruments. The reliability of the pilot study questionnaire based on the attitudes of forty-four students was found to be .949 that was very highly reliable. The internal consistency of the questionnaire items of the research study was 0.916 that indicated the instrument to be highly reliable in measuring students’ attitudes towards English language.

6. Findings and discussion

The findings were interpreted based on the median, mode, percent scores, the Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis H Test and the Mann-Whitney U Test of the statement items.

6.1 Median

Median is the point that divides the distribution in half. The median of most of the individual statement must be greater than 3 to show the students’ positive attitudes towards English language.

6.2 Mode

Mode is a statistical term that refers to the most frequently occurring number found in a set of numbers or observations. The mode of most of the individual statements must be greater than 3 to show the students’ positive attitudes towards English language.

Table 1: Median and Mode of the Statement Items Responded by 440 Students

Q.N.	Motivation Items	Median	Mode	Attitude Level Based on Median
1.	You would like to speak in English.	5	5	SA
2.	You would like to read English books, English magazines, English newspapers etc.	4	5	A
3.	You would like to listen to English news, English songs, English speeches etc.	4	5	A
4.	You would like to watch English movies and English programmes.	4	4	A
5.	You would like to write essays, stories, poems etc. in English.	4	5	A
6.	When someone speaks English, You think he/ she is educated.	5	5	SA
7.	When someone speaks English, it creates a good impression for him / her.	5	5	SA
8.	English is important because it is an international language of communication.	5	5	SA
9.	You think that learning English well will open more job opportunities for You.	3	3	UD
10.	Studying English can be important for you because you will need it for your future career advancement.	4	5	A
11.	English is important to you because it helps you understand the cultures, values, norms and traditions of foreign countries.	4	4	A
12.	Studying English enables you to transfer your knowledge to other people for giving directions to tourists, sharing new information etc.	4	4	A
13.	English is important because most of the books of science and technology are written in English.	5	5	SA
14.	Knowledge of English language develops confidence in you to understand other subjects as well.	3	4	UD
15.	English is an easy language to read.	4	4	A
16.	English is an easy language to speak or pronounce the words.	3	2	UD
17.	English words are easier to write than Nepali words.	4	4	A
18.	English grammar is easier than Nepali language grammar.	4	4	A
19.	English as well as Nepali language should be used in advertisements, public signs, maps etc.	3	4	UD
20.	All official documents should be in both Nepali and English language.	4	4	A
Most Repeated Attitude Level			Agree	

This table shows that median of every statement except 9, 14, 16 & 19 was greater than 3. Similarly, the mode of every statement except 9 and 16 was greater than 3. Both median and mode values of the most of the questions were greater than 3. They indicate students' positive attitudes towards English language.

6.3 Percentage / Percent

A percent is a number or ratio expressed as a fraction of 100. The percentage can be used to describe a change and to make comparison. If the percents of "Agree" and / or "Strongly Agree" are greater than those of "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree" and "Undecided", they indicate students' positive attitudes towards English language.

Table 2: Levels of Agreement with Percents

Attitude Level→ Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q.1	10.0%	10.5 %	8.4 %	9.8 %	61.4 %
Q.2	10.5 %	10.0 %	10.2 %	29.8 %	39.5 %
Q.3	1.1 %	5.7 %	1.6 %	49.3 %	42.3 %
Q.4	15.5%	10.5%	10.0%	34.3%	29.8%
Q.5	9.5%	19.5%	1.6%	23.4%	45.9%
Q.6	4.5%	3.2%	12.3%	26.1%	53.9%
Q.7	3.4%	8.6%	6.1%	28.2%	53.6%
Q.8	9.3%	10.7%	9.8%	20.0%	50.2%
Q.9	3.9%	10.7%	35.9%	35.9%	13.6%
Q.10	17.0%	8.6%	8.9%	23.6%	41.8%
Q.11	10.2%	10.5%	4.5%	51.1%	23.6%
Q.12	10.5%	10.0%	20.2%	44.5%	14.8%
Q.13	0.0%	15.5%	0.0%	30.0%	54.5%
Q.14	30.0%	18.4%	9.3%	35.2%	7.0%
Q.15	9.8%	20.5%	0.0%	44.5%	25.2%
Q.16	5.2%	38.0%	15.9%	36.4%	4.5%
Q.17	11.1%	19.8%	9.8%	49.1%	10.2%
Q.18	10.7%	10.0%	19.8%	30.7%	28.9%
Q.19	10.2%	25.5%	20.2%	31.6%	12.5%
Q.20	15.7%	17.3%	9.1%	50.0%	8.0%

The Table No.2 shows that percents of either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” were greater than those of “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree” and “Undecided” in the statements except Question No. 16. This indicates the students’ positive attitudes towards English language.

6.4 Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis H Test

The Kruskal-Wallis H Test is a rank-based non-parametric test that can be used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between more than two groups of an independent variable on an ordinal dependent variable. The parametric equivalent of the Kruskal-Wallis test is the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Table 3: Independent Test: Attitude & Group: Campus Hypothesis Test Summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of attitudes of the students towards English language is the same across categories of Campus.	Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.980	Retain the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is.05.

This table shows that the probability figure marked as Sig (2-tailed) in the table was.980 which was larger than 0.05. It implies that the students of five campuses had the similar attitudes level towards English language. This test hints at the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Table 4: Independent Test: Attitude & Group: Religion Hypothesis Test Summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of attitudes of the students towards English language is the same across categories of religion.	Independent Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.188	Retain the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is.05.

This table shows that the probability figure marked as Sig (2-tailed) in the table was.188 which was larger than 0.05. It implies that the students of three religions had the similar attitudes towards English language. This test shows the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

6.5 Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test

The Mann-Whitney U Test is the nonparametric test selected as the alternative to the Independent Samples T Test. The Mann-Whitney U test uses the data measured at the ordinal level. This test is employed to determine if there are statistically significant differences between two groups of an independent variable on an ordinal dependent variable. In this study, boy students and girl students (Sex) stood for two independent samples or variables or Groups; whereas the attitude functioned as a dependent variable.

Table 5: Independent Test: Attitude & Group: Sex Hypothesis Test Summary

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of attitudes of the students towards English language is the same across categories of Sex.	Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.859	Retain the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is.05.

This table shows that the probability figure marked as Sig (2-tailed) in the table was.859 which was larger than 0.05. It implies that the groups of the boys and the girls had the similar attitude level towards learning English language. This test hints at the acceptance of the null hypothesis.

7. Conclusion

Median and Mode of the most of statements are greater than 3 and the percents of either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” were greater than those of “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree” and “Undecided”. This showed the students’ positive attitudes towards English language. Hypothesis Testing Tools the Kruskal-Wallis H Test shows that the distribution of the attitudes of the students towards English language was the same across categories of Campus (Sig=.980) and Religion (Sig=.188); and the Mann-Whitney U Test shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups of Sex (Sig=.859) on the attitudes of the students towards English language.

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