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- SHYAM PRASAD DAHAL

539

A STUDY ON FACTORS AFFECTING SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Language
Education, University Campus, Kirtipur in Partial Fulfilment for
Master's Degree in Education
(Specialization in English Language Education)**

By

Shyam Prasad Dahal

**Faculty of Education
Tribhuvan University
Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal**

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RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCEPTANCE

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to present an analysis of the social factors affecting second language acquisition of the secondary level students in Makawanpur district. The study focuses mainly on the production aspect of language. The study was carried out with the assumption that the role of social factors associated to the learners play a vital and crucial role in language learning, especially in second language learning. The study has the objectives to find out the social factors affecting second language acquisition.

The sample population of this study was forty students including nineteen boys and 21 girls of two community schools of Makawanpur district. The sample population contained students from ten different castes. The researcher developed a questionnaire and constructed different test items for writing and speaking. The testing continued for three subsequent days. Head masters and language teachers were interviewed. The information obtained through interview were recorded and the written answers to the questionnaires were collected. Simple statistical tools of percentage and measures of variability (mean and standard deviation) were used in order to process, analyse and tabulate the collected data and compare the significance of the proficiency difference according to gender, caste, economical background of the family and educational background of the family. After the conduction of the thesis the researcher found that overall achievement of the students was much lower, so called lower caste students were found how hesitant in getting involved in learning than the students from the so called upper caste, more matured students had lower performance than those who were at an appropriate age related to the

level, social status and income factor had an indirect role to play in the performance of the learner.

The research contains four subsequent chapters. First chapter is introductory chapter, second chapter is about methodology, third chapter deals with analysis and interpretation of data, and the last chapter is about findings and recommendations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page No.

Recommendation for Acceptance

Recommendation for Evaluation

Evaluation and Approval

Acknowledgements

Abstract

List of Abbreviations

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background 15

1.2 First Language and Second Language 16

1.3 Language Acquisition and Language Learning 16

1.4 Factors Affecting SLA 17

 1.4.1 Learner Language 18

 1.4.2 Learner External Factors 19

 1.4.3 Learner Internal Factors (Mechanism) 23

 1.4.4 The Language Learner 24

1.5. Review of the Related Literature 25

1.6. Objectives of the Study 27

1.7. Significance of the Study 28

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Source of Data 29

 2.1.1 Primary Sources of Data 29

2.1.2 Secondary Sources of Data	29
2.2 Population of the Study	29
2.3 Sampling Procedure	30
2.4 Tools for Data Collection	30
2.5. Process of Data Collection	30
2.6 Limitations of the Study	31

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

3.1 Analysis and Interpretation on the Basis of Final Score	33
3.1.1 Comparison of Final Score by Caste	33
3.1.2 Analysis of Final Score by Sex	34
3.1.3 Analysis of Final Score by Age	34
3.1.4 Analysis and Interpretation of Final Score by Income of Family	35
3.1.5 Comparison of Marks on the Basis of the Educational Status of Head of the Family	36
3.2 Analysis and Interpretation on the Basis of Proficiency Test	36
3.2.1 Comparison of Proficiency by Caste	37
3.2.2 Analysis of Proficiency According to Sex	38
3.2.3 Age-wise Proficiency of the Students	38
3.2.4 Distribution of Proficiency According to Income	39
3.2.5 Comparison with Reference to the Educational Status of the Head of the Family	39
3.3 Analysis and Interpretation on the Basis of Spoken Test	40
3.3.1 Evaluation of Spoken Test by Caste	40
3.3.2 Sex Difference in Spoken Test	41
3.3.3 Age-wise Comparison of Spoken Test	41
3.3.4 Evaluation on the Basis of Income	42
3.3.5 Educational Status of Family Head and Students' Performance	43

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Findings	46
4.2 Recommendations	48
REFERENCES	37-38
APPENDIX	39-42

LIST OF TABLES

	Page No.
Table No. 1: Distribution of Sample Population	32
Table No. 2: Final Score by Caste	33
Table No. 3: Distribution of Marks by Sex	34
Table No. 4: Comparison of Marks by Age	34
Table No. 5: Evaluation According to Income	35
Table No. 6: Final Score by Educational Status of Family	36
Table No. 7: Proficiency by Caste	37
Table No. 8: Sex wise Difference in Proficiency	38
Table No. 9: Proficiency of the Students by Age	38
Table No. 10: Comparison by Income	39
Table No. 11: Proficiency of Student According to Educational Status of Family	39
Table No. 12: Evaluation of Spoken Test by Caste	40
Table No. 13: Table Showing Sex Difference in Spoken Test	41
Table No. 14: Comparison by Age	41
Table No. 15: Table Showing Evaluation of Income Factor	42
Table No. 16: Educational Factors and Students Evaluation	43

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SLA	Second Language Acquisition
L1	First Language/Mother Tongue
L2	Second Language
i.e.	that is
esp.	especially
T.U.	Tribhuvan University
Prof.	professor
Dr.	Doctor
UNO	United Nations Organization
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
ELT	English Language Teaching
GT	Grammar Translation

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Language is the most commonly used means of communication. It is one and only property of human beings. It is what that puts human beings higher than the other animals. Human beings use language in order to express their emotions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, experiences etc. They need language to communicate with each other.

There are many languages in the world. None of them is superior or inferior. The present world is the world of business and it is moving towards globalization. So there should be at least a common (internationally common) language to set the world up-to-date with the current information. For this, English has become internationally common and has already earned the international status.

Of the 4000 to 5000 living languages, English is, by far, the most widely used language. As a mother tongue, it ranks second only to Chinese. On the other hand, the 300 million native speakers of English are found in every continent and an equally widely distributed body of second language speakers, who use English for their day to day needs, totals over 250 million, and finally, if we add those areas where decisions affecting life and welfare are made and announced in English, it covers one sixth of the world's total population.

Records show that more than 60% of the world radio programmes are broadcasted in English and it is also the language of 70% of the world's mail. English is one of the six official languages of the UNO. This may also

be the supporting factor for English to be an international language. For this, Voltaire (As cited in Broughten et al. 1978) said "The first among languages is that which possess the largest number of excellent works".

Based on all these reasons the knowledge of English has become inevitable for human beings in this world.

1.2 First Language and Second Language

The present world is going to be multilingual because of the importance of the learning other languages than ones own mother tongue (language). So, a man goes on learning language as he/she needs. The language of the learner's family which he/she acquires first without any effort and without formal instruction is the first language or the mother tongue for the learner. The language without first language of the language learner which he/she learns through formal instruction in formal situation is second language . According to this, English in Nepalese context, is second/foreign language rather than first language since Nepali or any other vernacular language is the first language for Nepali people.

1.3 Language Acquisition and Language Learning

There are two ways of gaining mastery over a language; a) acquisition and b) learning. The way one develops skills in the first language is called acquisition and the way one develops skills in second/foreign language is called learning. Language acquisition is a subconscious and spontaneous process of picking up of a language, which results into knowing the language. It takes place in informal social situation. On the other hand, language learning is a conscious process of knowing the rules of a language, which results into knowing about the language. It takes place in a formal and

academic setting. Ellis (1985: 6) states, "The term 'acquisition' is used to refer to picking up a second language through exposure, whereas the term 'learning' is used to refer to the conscious study of a second language". It means that the term acquisition is not only related to first language learning but also to second language learning because the learner happens to learn different things by generalizing as he/she goes on gaining proficiency in second language.

1.4 Factors Affecting SLA

Second language acquisition is a highly challenging job, in the process of which one should overcome many influencing factors. The same influencing factors that hinder or help in the acquiring of second language are here termed as factors affecting SLA. Ellis (1994) has mentioned four major influencing factors of SLA.

Ellis (1994:17) has mentioned four major influencing factors of SLA. The four areas are; characteristics of learner language, learner-external factors, learner-internal mechanisms, and the language learner. The table below can show the detail description of all the related factors or the influential areas.

Focus on Learning		Focus on Learner	
Description	Explanation		
Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
characteristics of learner language	Learners external factors	Learner-internal mechanisms	The language learner
Errors		L1 transfer	General factors

Acquisition orders and developmental sequences variability Pragmatic features	Social context Input and Interaction	Learning processes communication strategies Knowledge of linguistic universals	e.g. motivation Learner strategies
---	---	--	---------------------------------------

Source: Ellis (1994:18)

1.4.1 Learner Language

Learner language is the language developed in course of second language learning process. Learner language is also known as inter-language. The term reflects two related but different concepts. First, inter-language refers to the structured system, which the learner constructs at any given stage in his development. Second, the term refers to the series of interlocking systems which form what Corder (1967) called the learner's built-in syllabus.

Learners' language (interlanguage) development always suffers from the interference of mother tongue (L_1) of the learner.

The first influencing factor for learner language development is error, although, it is common to all the learners. The fact is that learners should go on decreasing the amount of errors for positive result. The other factor is the "Acquisition order and developmental sequence". There is always a natural order and sequence of learner language development towards perfection. So, every learner should follow natural route, otherwise he/she will get fossilized. Selinker (1972) says "The learners stop learning when their inter-

language contains at least some rules different from those of the target language system and they do not reach the end of the inter-language continuum". Next factor influencing learner language development is the "Variability" in using a target language. The term variability is used in the sense that there is no uniformity in the use of a piece of language, it means language used by learners varies from situation to situation. This also hinders SLA. Lastly, the factor related to interlanguage development is "Pragmatic features". Learners cannot use certain pieces of language in need, although, they know the piece of language. It happens due to the lack of knowledge about the pragmatic features of the target language.

1.4.2 Learner External Factors

External factors are related to the environment in which learning takes place. The external factors have a very crucial role to play in SLA because it provides environment for learning and without positive learning environment it is impossible to learn L₂. When a child is acquiring a second language there are many external factors in addition to internal factors, which can greatly affect a child's success in learning another language. Learning another language has always been a difficult task for those who are placed into a different society, in this case, the American society, where everyone speaks a language differing one's own. Brisk (1998; retrieved on 22, January 2007) explains that a student needs to have a strong academic background in his/her home language, a strong desire to learn, and a strong self-esteem in order to be successful in acquiring a second language. Learning a second language is very difficult and frustrating when a student is trying to learn it by him/herself. To help make learning a second language easier, the student must have adequate help from the school and community

as well as the parents and family members that surround and support the student.

Social factor is the main external factor influencing SLA. The social factor contains age, sex, family, peers social class, ethnic identity etc. Piper (1998; *ibid*) states that "the ability to learn a second language doesn't diminish as one gets older, but the younger the learner is the easier it is to learn the language due to his/her ability to learn the sound system more effectively." The younger the learner more inclined to acquire a second language because he/she is still in the process of learning some aspects of his/her first language. About sex, Ellis (1994: 204) says sex (or gender) is of course, likely to interact with other variables in determining L2 proficiency. It will not always be the case, therefore, that females outperform males. Asian men in Britain generally attain higher levels of proficiency in English as a second language than do Asian women for the simple reason that their jobs bring them into contact with the majority English speaking group. While women are often "Enclosed" in the home. Sex interacts with such factors as ages, ethnicity, and in particular, social class. Labov (1991: 206-7) as cited in Ellis (1994: 202) states, "In stable sociolinguistic stratification, men use a higher frequency of non standard forms than women and in the majority of linguistic changes, women use a higher frequency of the incoming forms than men". Goss and Varon (1986; retrieved on 22, January 2007) research on sex difference interactions involving learners concluded that men use the opportunities to interact to produce more output, whereas women use it to obtain more input. Bacon (1992; *ibid*) found that men reported using translation strategies more than women, while the women reported monitoring their comprehension more.

Since family members may not always speak English to help the student with their homework, they do however, offer other talents that can help contribute to the child's success. "Parents play a crucial role in the linguistic development of their children and they should do so in their own native language. Strong development of the native language is an essential foundation of acquisition of the second language and for academic achievement" (Brisk, 1998: 62). Parents often switched to using English at home, believing that it will accelerate their child's acquisition of English. This pressure of English results in language death or language shifts" (Brisk 1998: 39). When parents try to conform to society's pressures of learning English, many native languages become extinct because people do not practice speaking, reading or writing it. Rather than emphasizing English only in the household, family members can provide the encouragement and support that children need when learning a second language so that they may feel more confident and secure knowing that others believe in them. At any age, but especially with younger children, peers have an influence on one's personality, motivation, and goals. "In Learning a second language the pressure from peers usually overshadows those goals which are set by the learner's parents and teachers. Also, this peer pressure may hinder the learner's motivation to learn the native pronunciation simply because he/she has low self-esteem and view the sounds as unusual" (Walqui, 2000). Maltz and Broker (1982) suggests that girls are more likely to stress cooperation and that they learn to deal sensitively with relationships, whereas boys emphasize establishing and maintaining hierarchical relations and asserting their identity. This means that the students felt a greater comfort level inside the classroom with a familiar audience than on the play ground.

Many researches have been carried out related to social class and SLA. The results mirror the general findings that children from lower socio-economic groups are less successful educationally than those from higher groups. But Holobrow, Generese, and Lambert (1991: 194) as cited in Ellis (1994: 206) report on a study of partial immersion (i.e. learners with a high-status L1 are taught through the medium of the L2 in classes containing only such learners, usually by bilingual teachers) involving kindergarten and grade one pupils. They found the working class and black students were able to benefit from the second language experience as much as middle-class and white students. In other words, the disadvantaged students were not disadvantaged when it came to second language learning. It means when the programme emphasizes communicative language skills, the social class of the learners has no effect.

Culture is another aspect of social factor. It is seen as an important aspect of SLA, because language is one of the most observable expressions of culture and because in second language settings the acquisition of a new language is seen as tied to the way in which the learner's community and the target language community view each other. Schumann (1978c: 34) while describing his acculturation model says ". . . second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language". Showing the importance of culture, Brisk (1998: 57) states, "When students are faced with two conflicting cultures they may adjust to live without both, reject one of them, or feel ambivalent about both. The interaction of all these cultural factors influences school performance."

The second external factor influencing SLA is input and interaction. We may take input as raw material and interaction as the refining process of SLA. Providing input only to the learners is not enough. The emphasis should be given to the interaction or conversation between the learners, which plays a significant role in the development of a second language. Conversation is not only a medium of practice, but also the means by which learning takes place. In other words, conversational interaction in a second language forms the basis for the development of language rather than being only a forum for practice of specific language features. This has been expressed by Long (1996) as the interaction hypothesis. He says that interaction facilitates acquisition because of the conversational and linguistic modifications that occur in such discourse and that provide learners with the input they need.

1.4.3 Learner Internal Factors (Mechanism)

Learners' internal mechanism plays very crucial role in SLA because if the learner himself is not prepared or not well equipped internally, it is fool to think he will learn the targeted language. About the learner, Chastain (1976: 249) states, "If a learner's present knowledge of the native language and his or her life experiences and background knowledge are limited, this will weaken the development of the second language." This means that the student's first language must be highly developed in order to acquire the second language successfully. As the student moves through the learning process, he or she can relate the new language to the native language for better understanding. Also, the students' knowledge of the second language, which they are learning, has an influence on their learning (Walqui, 2000). It

means a learner should know at least some background information on the language that he or she is trying to learn.

A person who has a low self-concept will shy away from learning opportunities that he or she views as threatening. Also, learners usually avoid activities in which they will feel uncomfortable and repeat activities in which they have a high comfort level, Chastain (1976). This shows that a second language learner will have low motivation, high anxiety and low achievement if he or she has a low confidence level; therefore, the learning process will be hindered.

1.4.4 The Language Learner

This factor is related to the individual learners who are leaning a language. Individual difference and learner strategy are the important constituents for this factor. About individual difference in L2 acquisition, Skehan (1991) has pointed out that there is still no comprehensive theory of individual difference in SLA research. A full theory will need to identify those individual differences that are important for successful learning, indicate the relative contribution of particular individual difference to learning, specify how the individual differences interrelate, account for their influence on the learner's choice of specific strategies, and account for the effect that learning outcomes can have on individual differences. It will also have to make clear what effect (if any) individual differences have on the process of L₂ acquisition:

Production strategy consists of an attempt to use one's linguistic system efficiently and clearly with a minimum of effort. A language learning strategy is an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language. It means strategy depends upon personal differences of

the language learners. Ellis (1994: 558) states, "The study of learning strategies holds considerable promise, both for language pedagogy and for explaining individual differences in L₂ learning. It is probably true to say, however, that it is still in its infancy.

1.5. Review of the Related Literature

There are no researches carried out on the topic, 'factors affecting SLA' but there are many researches which are indirectly related to the factors that affect SLA in international level and in the department of English education of T.U. as well.

Burstall (1975, 1979) carried out a study in the relationship between social class and L2 achievements. He found that for both male and female from primary and secondary school learners of L2 French there was a strong correlation between socio-economic status and achievement. Children from middle class homes regularly outperformed those from lower and working class homes. There were also class-related differences in the learners' attitudes.

Oller et al (1977, 1978) conducted researches on the relationship between attitudes and language success. They looked at the relationship of Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican students' achievement in English to their attitudes toward self, the native language group, the target language group, their reasons for learning English, and their reasons for traveling to the United States. They mainly found that positive attitudes toward self, the native language group and the target language group enhanced proficiency.

Heyde (1979) studied the effects of the three levels of self-esteem on performance of an oral production task by American college students

learning French as a foreign language. She found that all these levels of self-esteem correlated positively with performance on the oral production measure, with the highest correlation occurring between task well-esteem and performance or oral production measures.

Shrestha (1991) carried comparative study to find out the efficacy of medium of instruction in teaching English. The efficacy of medium of instruction in teaching English language. The finding of the study showed that teaching English in English medium was more effective for teaching listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary and functional English whereas teaching grammar was more effective through Nepali medium.

Ghimire (1998) conducted a research to find out the gender difference in English language proficiency. The findings were that the boy students had greater proficiency in the English language than the girls, the student from higher ethnic group had better skill than lower ethnic group among them boys were more proficient than girls and there was no significant difference between boys' and girls' proficiency within the higher ethnic groups.

Yadav (2004) studied to find out problems in teaching oral skill in English. He found that physical facility of classroom, time allocated for instruction, students interest and comprehension level of students are the main determining factors of oral skill development.

Timsina (2005) carried out a research to find out the students' ability to communicate orally in English. The findings were:

- 1 Students could perform comparatively better at narrative and descriptive skills than one to one conversation. It was also observed

that students were less hesitant and nervous at the former skills than the latter one.

- 2 Most of the students did not make use of communicative functions and their exponents. The researcher observed a significant influence of mother tongue in their speech.
- 3 Students' vocabulary was limited to basic personal and survival areas (time, food, transportation, family, etc) Choice of words was sometimes inaccurate and limitation of vocabulary prevented discussion of even some common social topics.

Poudel (2005) conducted a research on English vocabulary achievement by the students of grade nine. The findings were that the vocabulary achievement of girls in verbs and adjectives was better than that of boys but in nouns and adverbs, boys' performance was better. Likewise, the achievement of sub-urban schools' students in nouns, verbs and adverbs was better than that of urban schools. Urban schools' students' achievement was better than those of sub-urban schools in adjectives.

Though a number of attempts have been made to find out the effects of the various factors related to the second language acquisition, all of them deal only with single factor. Therefore, the present researcher tries to find out social factors affecting SLA in present situation.

1.6. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are:

- To find out the social factors affecting second language acquisition
- To suggest some pedagogical implications on the basis of the findings of the study.

1.7. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to subject experts, curriculum designers, textbook writers, and language trainers and to all who are deeply interested in second language teaching and learning. More specifically, the study is significant to those teachers and students who are directly or indirectly involved in teaching/learning of English as foreign language.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

To fulfil the objectives of the study there should be a distinct methodology. The methodology adopted for the present research was as follows:

2.1 Source of Data

There are two types of sources; Primary source and secondary source. The researcher used both primary as well as secondary sources for data collection.

2.1.1 Primary Sources of Data

Primary sources are the sources that provide researcher with first hand information (or raw information) for research work. The data gathered from the primary sources is the main thing to be analysed. Here, for this particular research, the students and language teachers/trainers were the primary source of data.

2.1.2 Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary sources were used to facilitate the collected data through primary sources. The secondary sources used for this study were books, theses, articles, journals, and various websites.

2.2 Population of the Study

The students of grade nine of Makawanpur district were population of the study.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

One community school from each, the rural area and the urban area was sampled through judgemental non-random sampling procedure. Forty students (20 from each school of grade nine) were the sample of the research. The students were also selected by judgemental non-random sampling procedure. They were selected from different ethnicity, on the basis of their availability.

2.4 Tools for Data Collection

The main tool for the collection of data from the primary source was questionnaire. A questionnaire was developed to measure the economic as well as social background of each student. Writing skill was measured through free writing test and speaking was measured from the conversation between students in a given situation and from the description they have made about a given picture in the presence of the researcher. The teachers or the language trainers were also interviewed to find their view about the affecting social factors of SLA.

2.5. Process of Data Collection

The processes of data collection were:

- i. At first, the researcher visited the concerned school and talked to the authority (head teacher) to get permission and explained him the purpose and process of the research.
- ii. After getting permission from the head teacher, he consulted the English teacher of grade nine and requested him/her to inform and convince the sample for taking part in the research.

- iii. Then, students were provided with questionnaires giving detailed information and then the questionnaires were collected when they filled them up.
- iv. After that, writing test was conducted among the sample and it was checked and marks were provided to their performance.
- v. Then, the students were made to speak and carry out conversation in pair. The researcher listened to them and marked them according to their performance.
- vi. After that, English teachers of the both the schools were also interviewed. It was mainly because the researcher wanted to know the level of students from teachers' side as well as the related teaching methods adopted by teachers.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

- i. The study was limited only to the social factors affecting SLA.
- ii. Under social factor, only age, sex (or gender), social class, and ethnic identity were regarded as research factors.
- iii. Proficiency of the students was measured in production skills (speaking and writing) only.
- iv. The study was limited to two community schools of Makawanpur district.
- v. Only 40 students of the 9th grade of the two schools were taken as the sample of this study.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter is related to the analysis and interpretation of data. This chapter has been divided into three parts. First part deals with the analysis related to final score of sample population, second part deals with analysis on the basis of the proficiency test, and third part consists of the analysis based on spoken test.

The distribution of total no. of sample population according to cast and sex is shown as follows:

Table No. 1: Distribution of Sample Population

S.N.	Caste	Male	Female	Total
1	Brahmin	7	9	16
2	Chhetri	2	1	3
3	Rai	3	1	4
4	Tamang	1	3	4
5	Newar	2	1	3
6	Gurung	1	2	3
7	Magar	1	1	2
8	Bishwakarma	1	1	2
9	Chepang	1	1	2
10	Others	0	1	1
Total		19	21	40

Among the 40 sample population, the number of the female students was 21, and the male was 19. This population consisted 10 castes. The

number of Brahmin students was 16, Chhetri 3, Rai 4, Tamang 4, Newar 3, Gurung 3, Magar 2, Bishwakarma 2, Chepang 2, and other 1. Other caste consisted Yadav.

3.1 Analysis and Interpretation on the Basis of Final Score

The analysis and interpretation on the basis of final score was mainly carried out to compare the students' achievement before conducting the test related to the present research.

3.1.1 Comparison of Final Score by Caste

Table No. 2: Final Score by Caste

S.N.	Caste	Average	Score (%)	Remarks
1	Brahman		40.53	
2	Chhetri		50	
3	Tamang		34	
4	Magar		43	
5	Newar		40.25	
6	Gurung		41.5	
7	Bishwakarma		45.5	
8	Chepang		45	
9	Rai		42.66	
10	Others(Yadav)		40	

Table 2 shows that the average marks of the sample population was 42.24%. Different castes had got different marks. The achievement of the students from Chhetri, Magar, Bishwakarma, Chepang and Rai was more than the average, which was 50, 43, 45.5, 45 and 42.66 respectively,

whereas, the achievement of Brahmin (40.53), Tamang (34), Newar (40.25), Gurung(41.5) and others (40) was below average. It is also shown that Chhetri students had the highest achievement and Tamang students the lowest.

3.1.2 Analysis of Final Score by Sex

Table No. 3: Distribution of Marks by Sex

Total Sample	Total Average	No. of Girls	Average score of girls	No. of boys	Average score of boys
40	41.7	21	41.58	19	43.23

The above table shows that average score of boys was 43.23 percent, which is above average, and the average score of girls was 41.58, which was below average. This result shows that there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

3.1.3 Analysis of Final Score by Age

Table No. 4: Comparison of Marks by Age

S.N	Age group	Total average	Average score of boy	Average score of girls	Total
1	14	41.7	34.33	47	40.66
2	15		49.92	39.37	44.64
3	16		39.66	39.5	39.58

Total sample population consisted of three age group (14, 15 and 16). The table shows that the achievement of age group of 15 (44.64) had an

average score more than the total average, but the rest had below average i.e. 40.66 and 39.58 respectively. The result was more significant because the standard age of ninth graders should be 15 which was determined by the education policy of Nepal. Higher achievement at this age verified the importance of age in second language learning.

3.1.4 Analysis and Interpretation of Final Score by Income of Family

Table No. 5: Evaluation According to Income

S.N.	Income of family / Year	No. of students	Average marks	Remarks
1	Less than 50,000	17	39.7	
2	Between 50,000-1,00,000	13	43.3	
3	More than 1,00,000	10	41.8	
Total		40	41.7	

The table shows that the students who had less family income had secured the lowest marks, which was 39.7 percent in average. Another result showed the students having more family income had secured 41.7 percent in average that was more than the total average but less than the marks secured by medium level students. The students from medium level income generating families had got the highest average marks, which was 43.3 percent.

The result let the researcher conclude the fact that family income plays only a small role in the performance of the students, however, it can be regarded as one of the influential factors.

3.1.5 Comparison of Marks on the Basis of the Educational Status of Head of the Family

Table No. 6: Final Score by Educational Status of Family

S.N.	Educational status of head of the family	No. of students	Average score
1	S.L.C & above	10	45.3
2	Below S.L.C	16	39.93
3	Illiterate	14	40.7
Total		40	41.7

The table shows that the students from the educated families had better achievement, which was 45.3 percent in average. And the result was more than that of the students from only literate and illiterate family. The table shows that the students' achievement from literate family was 39.93 percent and that of illiterate family was 40.28 percent. The result shows that educational status of the family also affects the achievement of the students.

Though Ellis (1994) has presented income, education and occupation as the causative factors for social status of a family, the researcher analyzed only income and education factors because the occupation for almost all the family was common i.e. agriculture. But again social status of the family was also seen as one of the causative factors related to the achievement of the learner.

3.2 Analysis and Interpretation on the Basis of Proficiency Test

Proficiency test was conducted to know the proficiency level of the sample population. It was a written test. Full marks for this was 50. Marks obtained in the proficiency test were analyzed in the form of percentage.

3.2.1 Comparison of Proficiency by Caste

Table No. 7: Proficiency by Caste

S.N.	Caste	No. of student	Average marks in %	Remarks
1	Brahman	16	25.59	
2	Chhetri	3	32	
3	Tamang	4	25	
4	Magar	2	32	
5	Newar	3	28.5	
6	Gurung	3	31.5	
7	Bishwakarma	2	39	
8	Chebang	2	38	
9	Rai	4	30.33	
10	Others (Yadav)	1	30	
Total		40	31.1	

The table above shows that students from Dalit, Bishwakarma had the greatest proficiency level whereas the so-called upper caste Brahmin got only 25.59 percent achievement. Like-wise Chhetri students had 32%, Tamang 25%, Magar 32%, Newar 28.5%, Gurung 31.5%, Chebang 38%, Rai 30.33% and others had 30% average achievement in the proficiency test. With the help of this result, it can be concluded that the cast-wise determination does not have any role to play in the achievement of knowledge.

3.2.2 Analysis of Proficiency According to Sex

Table No. 8: Sex wise Difference in Proficiency

Total sample	Total average	No. of boys	Average marks of boys	No. of girls	Average marks of girls
40	30.75	19	30.36	21	31.15

Above table shows that the girls' achievement was 31.15% and it was more than the achievement of boys, which was 30.36 %. The result itself said that gender discrimination made by our society was only biased view because both the sexes were equally performative. The only necessity here was that they should be provided with equal opportunity.

3.2.3 Age-wise Proficiency of the Students

Table No. 9: Proficiency of the Students by Age

S.N.	Age group	Average score of boys	Average score of girls	Total
1	14	26.66	35.66	31.16
2	15	31.76	28.81	30.78
3	16	29.66	29	29.33
Total		29.36	31.15	30.42

Girls' (35.66%) proficiency at lower age was far more than boys (26.66%). But at the age of 15, boys (31.76%) were proficient than girls (28.81%). At the later age (16) also boys were proficient than girls. Collectively, the students of 14 years of age had 31.16 percent, 15 years had 30.78 and 16 years had 29.33 percent proficiency. It was seen that the greater the age the lower was the proficiency of the students.

3.2.4 Distribution of Proficiency According to Income

Table No. 10: Comparison by Income

S.N.	Yearly income of family	No. of students	Average marks of students	Remarks
1	Below than 50,000	17	30.33	
2	Between 50,000-1,00,000	13	31.07	
3	More than 1,00,000	10	30.6	
Total		40	30.43	

Students whose family income was below Rs. 50,000, had average proficiency i.e. 30.23 percent, between Rs. 50,000 – Rs. 1,00,000, had average proficiency 31.07 percent and those who have more than Rs. 1,00,000, had 30.6. It was seen that income did not play a vital role for learning even it had got some role to play in the life of human being.

3.2.5 Comparison with Reference to the Educational Status of the Head of the Family

Table No. 11: Proficiency of Student According to Educational Status of Family

S.N.	Educational status of family's head	No. of students	Average proficiency score	Remarks
1	Above S.L.C	10	32.1	
2	Below S.L.C	16	27.75	
3	Illiterate	14	30.35	
Total		40	30.06	

It was found that the students from the family whose family head had educational qualification above SLC, had proficiency of 32.1 percent, below SLC had 27.75 percent and illiterate had 30.35 percentage of average proficiency. The result showed that students with educated family background had greater proficiency.

3.3 Analysis and Interpretation on the Basis of Spoken Test

3.3.1 Evaluation of Spoken Test by Caste

Table No. 12: Evaluation of Spoken Test by Caste

S.N.	Caste	No. of student	Mark in average(%)	Remarks
1	Brahmin	16	42.62	
2	Chhetri	3	45.5	
3	Rai	4	40	
4	Tamang	2	40.5	
5	Newar	3	43	
6	Gurung	3	43	
7	Magar	2	45	
8	Bishwakarma	2	52.5	
9	Chepang	4	43.85	
10	Others	1	49	
Total		40	44.4	

After the conduction of spoken test, marks were tabulated and analyzed. The result showed that total average performance of Brahmin students was 42.62%, Chhetri 45.5, Tamang 40, Magar 40.5, Newar 43, Gurung 43, Bishwakarma 45, Chepang 43.85, Rai 43.85, and Yadav 49

percent. It is seen that the Chepang, which is socially regarded as the lower one, had the highest performance in spoken English. But the highest caste Brahmin had only 42.62, which was below the total average. Such result allowed an interpretation that performance of students does not depend on the caste system.

3.3.2 Sex Difference in Spoken Test

Table No. 13: Table Showing Sex Difference in Spoken Test

Total sample	Total average	No. of boys (%)	Average score of boys (%)	No. of girls	Average score of girls (%)
40	43.26	19	42.56	21	43.97

The table shows that boys had average score of 42.56 and girls 43.97 percent. Since girls' performance was better than that of boys, it can be said that girls also may perform not less than the boys.

3.3.3 Age-wise Comparison of Spoken Test

Table No. 14: Comparison by Age

S.N.	Age group	Average score of boys	Average score of girls	Total
1	14	41	49.66	45.33
2	15	42.69	41.25	41.97
3	16	44	41	42.5
Total		42.56	43.97	43.26

While analyzing age-wise difference, it was found that the total performance of the students of 14 years was 45.33 percent, which was the highest, and the performance of 15 years was 41.97, which is the lowest performance. The performance of the 16 year age group students was 42.5 percent. The result supports the saying "sooner the better" in the field of learning.

3.3.4 Evaluation on the Basis of Income

Table No. 15: Table Showing Evaluation of Income Factor

S.N.	Yearly income of family	No. of student	Average score	Remarks
1	Below than 50,000	17	43.05	
2	Between 50,000-1,00,000	13	43.76	
3	More than 1,00,000	10	44	
Total		40	43.2	

Here, the students from the families of greater income were better than those from the lower income families. As the performance of students from the family of income lower than 50,000 was 43.05 percent, between 50,000 – 1,00,000 was 43.76 percent and more than 1,00,000 was 44 percent, the economic factors also may be regarded as one of the causative factors in the performance of the learner.

3.3.5 Educational Status of Family Head and Students' Performance

Table No. 16: Educational Factors and Students Evaluation

S.N.	Educational status of family head	No. of students	Average test score	Remarks
1	Above SLC	10	46.6	
2	Below SLC	16	41.5	
3	Illiterate	14	43.04	
Total		40	43.2	

The students from the family whose head had academic qualifications above SLC had got 46.6 percent, below SLC had 41.5 percent and illiterate had 43.04 percent in average. Hence, the important factor, education, also played a vital role in the students' performance. So, to be a proficient learner, an individual should have a good academic family background.

3.4 Discussion

Though the comparison made above did not show the greater difference among the students from different angles, the overall performance of the total sample was very weak. The researcher discussed with the concerned people like head teachers, teachers of the students etc. of the area regarding the poor performance of the learners. So from the discussion made as well as using his own experiences, the following conclusions have been made.

1. In both schools, the students' number was very large (e.g. 80, 65).

Because of this, one language teacher within a limited period of time

- could not give each student individual attention in teaching learning activities.
2. Though some teachers were trained in ELT, they could not apply modern language teaching methods because of the lack of instructional materials in classrooms, most of the teachers were untrained and under qualified, lack the knowledge and training. They could not teach scientifically rather they used GT method in teaching.
 3. All the language teachers and the head masters thought that the time allotted to teach the English language at grade nine was not sufficient i.e. 40m per day. How could the students learn the language without any other extra options?
 4. The environment for teaching English in schools was not conducive, the teaching/learning environment in the school was affected by politics.
 5. There are many others reasons / factors that / influence the students proficiency.
 6. According to the headmasters, students' (esp. girls') proficiency was affected by their maturity. The greater the age, the lesser was the proficiency. The girls stood first in primary classes but this ability decreased during their teenage.
 7. The girls had heavier work burden than the boys "Girl children between the ages of 10 and 14 spent 7.31 hours on domestic chores in comparison with the 4.93 hours that of boys of same age group." (CWIN: 1996)
 8. Since the occupation of the most of the family was agriculture, they did not think positively towards the education factor and they do not provide necessary attention towards the study of their children. Due to

the workload in the field, students were also affected because they had to help their parents to their work for the achievement of daily basic needs.

9. Attitudes of the students towards the English language was not positive because they did not realize its importance and they study only to pass the exam not for learning. It also hindered the proficiency of students.

Besides these, the students who were from lower family background and lower social status feel shy in front of the students of higher social status. Like wise, those who repeated class again were less willing to take part in the process of learning.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the present study was to find out the external factors that may hamper the overall teaching learning activities especially the learners' performance. It was supposed that due to the influence of factors related to society, culture and other unseen factors, the living environment was somehow unexpectedly imbalanced and the students were so unwilling to merge themselves into that kind of environment, hence the result was unsatisfactory. But, the result was quite unpredictable because the performance of the students was not as respective towards caste, gender, age and social status as imagined by the researcher.

To fulfil the objectives of the study, the researcher tested the students' performance at different skill levels and recorded the results obtained from the tests. He conducted discussions among the language teachers, headmasters and some of the guardians also in a special social setting. He recorded the information obtained through observations. After all, he examined, analysed and interpreted the collected information. The researcher used the measures of variability (i.e. mean and standard deviation) and other simple statistical tool of percentage to analyze and interpret the data and also to compare the significance of the proficiency differences.

4.1 Findings

After adopting all the above mentioned procedures, the researcher found the following results:

1. Overall achievement of all the students in the final exam, proficiency test and spoken test was very lower, which signifies that students were very weak in English.
2. Though there was no significant difference in terms of the caste- wise distribution. Some of the students were found hesitant mainly because of being lower caste student so they were underperformative than the upper caste students.
3. Boys were better in their final exam result but girls were better in proficiency test as well as spoken test. The difference was not very significant so the sex factor can not be taken as the causative factor to influence the learning factor if equal opportunity is provided to both the sexes.
4. Age factor was found very significant while analyzing the different results of students. More matured students had lower performance in every item (esp. the girls). The students, who were in the appropriate age related to the class, were far better than others. The reason for the lower performance of the matured students was the hesitation due to repetition of the same class.
5. Social status of the family also had a kind of indirect role to play towards students' learning. Educational status of family was a little bit significant because the students with better educational family background were comparatively better than the students from lower educational background. Income factor was also significant because the present world is the age of competition. Without capacity to purchase different needs a man can never present in the field of competition.

6. Since the main occupation of the families involved in research sample was agriculture, the students were not much inclined towards learning. This may be mainly because of irrelevancy of their occupation.
7. The classrooms were very crowded and the student teacher ratio was also not according to the principle of learning and because of this it was difficult to provide them with suitable physical facilities even those, which were regarded as the basic ones.
8. Students were learning only through the examination point of view and a kind of awareness related to learning the language and its importance was somehow lacking in the side of learners.
9. The English language was also not as prestigious as that should be in the eye of students as well as people around the community.
10. Lack of training of the teachers and the lack of time allotted for teaching was also clearly seen.

4.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The rural schools need to be cared more and more. The government should treat all the schools equally for the fair distribution of facilities.
2. The concerned authority should pay attention on the construction and the use of teaching materials i.e. library with rich resource of course books, teacher's guide and supplementary materials, audio-visual aids etc. in all the rural schools to uplift them from their present conditions.

3. Most of the students of rural schools are poor in writing skills. To improve this skill, the teacher should teach the students by dividing them into groups, giving them more practice in writing (i.e. punctuation, guided writing, letter writing free writing etc.) and correcting their errors regularly.
4. The concerned authority should manage the training programmes for the teachers on how to teach the language skills.
5. In most of the schools, the number of students is too high only one teacher is not sufficient to teach the English language. Their teaching load should be reduced so that they can prepare lessons and can give individual attention to teach the students paying equal attention.
6. The teacher should encourage the girls to take part in the learning activities and also in extra-curricular activities held inside and outside the school so that the girls' shyness could be removed.
7. Ignorant and conservative parents do not understand the value of education. They should not make sex based discrimination, caste based discrimination etc. in their children's education. All the students should enjoy equal social status.
8. Teachers should create such environment inside classroom to prevent any kind of sense of biasness giving equal priority to the students from minority groups and the students of lower social status.
9. The government should provide the scholarship for the poor students and reserve some seats in all of the educational institutions for those

female who are very poor economically but talented in learning language and those who are regarded as the minority group.

10.To prevent age problem, related to students, the policy of government should be made to control dropouts and the strategy should be adopted for liberal upgrading of the students.

11.Concerned authority should launch different kinds of awareness programmes focusing the students to make them realize the importance of English language throughout this competitive world.

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APPENDIX
Questionnaire

This questionnaire is formed to conduct research on factors affecting second language acquisition for the partial fulfillment of thesis writing of M.Ed. English program.

[You are requested to provide answers to the questions as comprehensively as possible. I assure you for the secrecy of the answers.]

Give informations about followings:

1. Personal Details:

- a. Name (optional):
- b. Age:
- c. Sex:
- d. Caste:
- e. Religion:

2. Family Background

- a. How many members do you have in your family?
.....
- b. Who is the head of your family ?
.....
- c. What is the main occupation of your family?
.....
- d. How much is your family's monthly income?
.....
- e. Is monthly income sufficient for survival of your family?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
- f. Does your family support your study?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

g. Are you satisfied with the support of your family towards your education?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

h. Is your family educated?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

i. How many members have passed SLC?

.....

j. What is academic qualification of the head of your family?

.....

k. What is the attitude of you family towards education?

.....

3. Do you feel easy/comfortable to study in school in front of friends?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

4. If not, what makes you feel uncomfortable?

- i. Humiliation due to family background
- ii. Economic Status
- iii. Caste/Religion system
- iv. Others

'Thank You'

Proficiency-Test
Writing Skill

FM.: 50

Time: 1.5 Hour

Name:

1. Tick the best answer: **10**

- a. Mira doesn't run as fast as Sarala but she's faster than kamala. It means:
- i. Sarala is faster than Mira and Kamala.
 - ii. Mira is not as fast as Kamala
 - iii. Sarala is Faster than Mira but not as fast as kamala
 - iv. Kamala is faster than Mira and Sarala.
- b. "In spite of loud music, I soon managed to fall asleep" the meaning of this statement is:
- i. The loud music soon helped me to fall asleep.
 - ii. I soon fell asleep as the result of the loud music.
 - iii. The loud music made me unable to fall asleep soon.
 - iv. I soon fell asleep though the music was loud.
- c. I can't decide now but I'll think over your idea and tell you what I decide.
- Here the underlined sentence means the same as:
- i. I won't think about your idea.
 - ii. I will consider your idea.
 - iii. I will change your idea.
 - iv. It is difficult to think about your idea..
- d. The tag of the statement "preeti hardly ever complains other" is:
- i. doesn't she?
 - ii. isn't she?
 - iii. does she?
 - iv. is she?

e. As we visited through Kathmandu valley, my brother pointed out the main official buildings. Here the underlined sentence means:

- i. My brother went to the main official buildings.
- ii. My brother showed me the main official buildings.
- iii. My brother forgot to show the buildings.
- iv. My brother selected the main building to visit.

2. Write a letter to your father, who is abroad, informing about your study. 12

3. Describe a boy on the basis of the following points 8

Name	:	Ravi Lama
Age	:	15
Class	:	9, stands first
Economic Status	:	Poor
Interested subjects	:	Science, English
Hobby	:	Singing, study
Nature	:	Friendly, honest

4. Develop a readable story from the outline below: 8

A boy steals a book from school mother very much pleased next steals a watch then a purse the mother is very happy..... the boy becomes a robber one day police catches an produces before a judge. on the day of hanging, the boy wishes to see his mother prayer granted bites off mother's ear explains why he did so moral.

5. Write an essay on "life and Fuel" in about 200 words: 12

The end