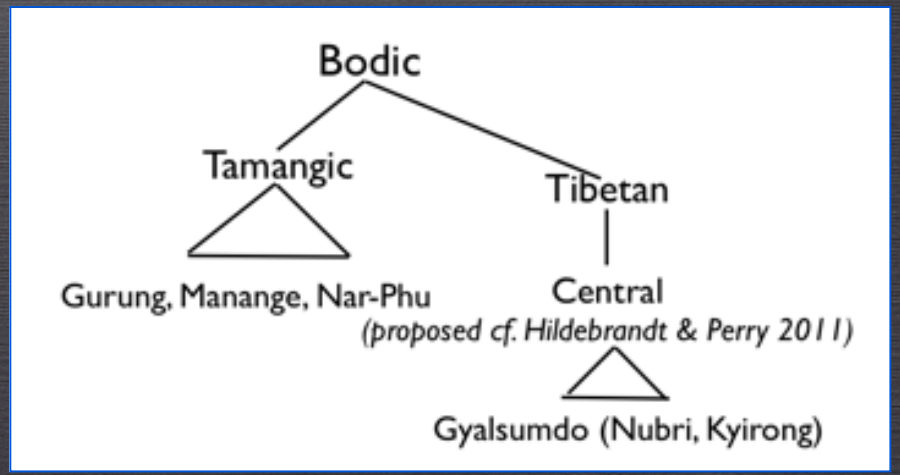
A Sociolinguistic Survey of the Languages of Manang, Nepal: Co-existence & Endangerment

Kristine A. Hildebrandt
Dubi Nanda Dhakal
Oliver Bond
Matthew Vallejo
Andrea Fyffe

Introduction

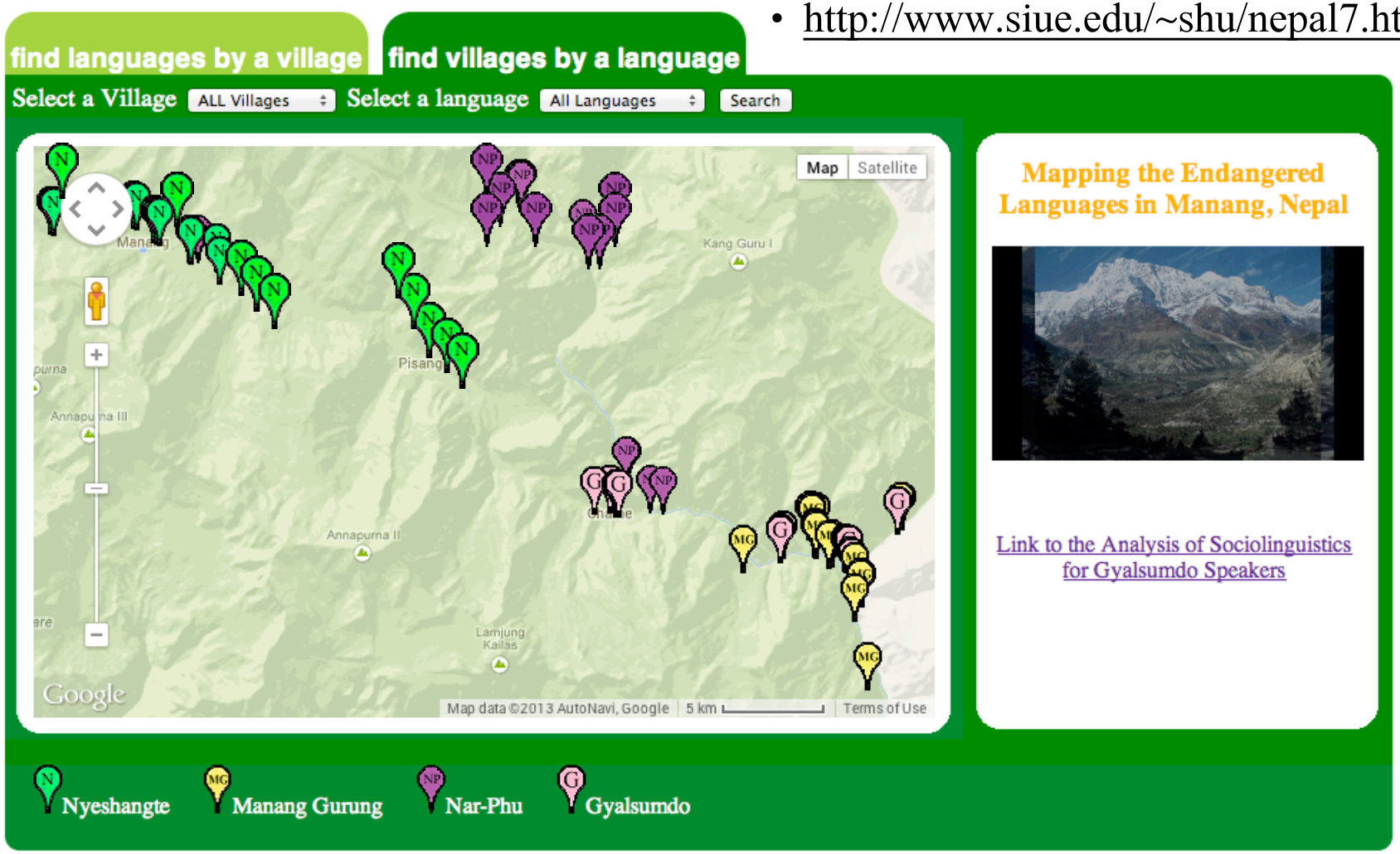
- With ± 100 languages from four major families (and at least one isolate), and close to as many caste-clan groupings, Nepal is a country of great diversity (CBS 2012; Kansakar 2006; Gurung 1998)
- Although it has a low population density in relation to its geographic area, the Manang District is also multi-lingual & multi-ethnic
- The rapid growth of a motor road has also precipitated population movements & introduced new contexts of language contact & viability



- Map designed by Shunfu Hu, with assistance from Prita Malla & Kanchan Karki

Hildebrandt, K.A. and S. Hu. 2013. Multimedia mapping on the internet and language documentaiton: New directions in interdisciplinarity. *Polymath*: 3.3 1-11.

- http://www.siue.edu/~shu/nepal7.html



THE MOTOR ROAD

Background

- Sociolinguistic survey: An assessment of speaker practices, attitudes & factors behind variation & mutual intelligibility across codes (Mallinson et al, eds 2013)
- Sociolinguistic surveys include investigations of lexico-grammatical similarity & differences, but they also include investigations of speaker attitudes, feelings & community ideologies about language
- Adjusted to Nepal: An assessment of language promotion or vulnerability in private & public contexts like schools, in written form and in advertising & official environments

Background

- In Nepal: There have been many surveys on individual languages
- For example: Balami Newar (Pradhan 2012), Kinnauri (Negi 2012), Tamang (Thokar 2008), Baram (Kansakar et al 2009, 2011), Raji (Sah 2011), Byansi (Nawa 2004), Bantawa (Eppele 2011), Gurung outside Manang (Glover & Landon 1980)
- Far fewer surveys on multilingual practices/attitudes in larger regional settings
- However: Japola et al 2003, Webster 1992, Eppele 2003 for practices in Mustang, Gorkha, Kiranti diaspora in Kathmandu & Watters 2008 for a typology of sociolinguistic research in Nepal

Goals of This Survey

- Original plan: establish a ratio of interviewees across the languages based on village household counts (Quota sample)
- However: census household counts are unreliable, and many houses in certain villages are empty/abandoned, or else sub-let to recent arrivals (e.g. Lhomi, Gorkha, Thakali, etc.)
- Therefore our approach is a mixture of "Snowball" (interviewees help point us to additional interviewees) and "Sample of Convenience" (anyone who is available)

Distribution of Interviews

VDC	Gurung	Gyalsumdo	Manange	Nar-Phu
Taal	3	2		
Gyerang	2			
Kotro~Karte	2			
Dharapani	3	1		
Thonce	1	3		
Tilce	3	1		
Nace	2			
Tace	3			
Otar	3			
Bagarchhap~Danakju		4		
Temang~Thancowk	9			
Chame~Koto	2	6		2
Pisang			3	
Humde			3	
Braagaa			3	1
Manang~Tengki			6	
Khangsar			4	
Ngawal			2	
Ghyaaru			2	
Nar				7
Phu				3

Gurung Villages

THANCOWK
(CHONGUE
'PINE BRIDGE-WATER')

OṬAR
(U-NASA 'CAVE VILLAGE')

Gurung Villages

Nace
(na-sa 'nose place')

Tace
(to-kha 'return place')

Gurung Villages

Temang
(temju 'mushroom')

Gyerang
(kyorang 'place')

Gyalsumdo Villages

Thonce
(tʰõ-ce 'pine tree place')

bagarchap~Danakju
(tsap '??'; 'hill-water')

Gyalsumdo Villages

chame (district hq)
(ce-me 'bridge-location')

Mixed Gurung/Gyalsumdo Villages

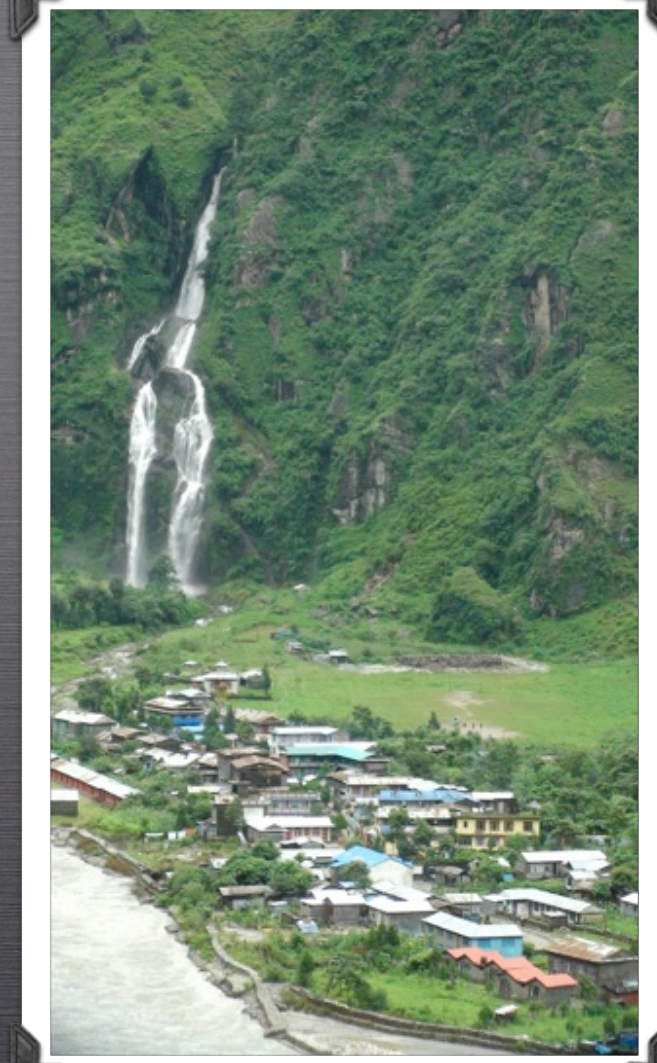
DHARAPANI
('CATCH/TAP-WATER')

TILCE
('MUSTARD TREE-PLACE')

Mixed Gurung/Gyalsumdo Villages

koto ('walnut')

khotro



Taal
(nam-kyu 'sky-water')

Nyeshangte/Manange Villages

Pisang
(Pi)

Humde
(Ongre)

Nyeshangte/Manange Villages

Manang Village

Tengki Manang

Khangsar

Nyeshangte/Manange Villages

Ngawal
(Pompa)

Ghyaaru
(ya-Ru 'yak horn')

Nar and Phu Villages

Nar (Tshyprung)

Phu
(Nartwe)

Interviews

Gurung

gyalsumdo

Interviews

Manange

Nar

Phu

Sample By Gender & Average Age

GENDER	Gurung	Gyalsumdo	Manange	Nar-Phu
Male	19	12	13	9
Female	15	5	10	4

AGE	Gurung	Gyalsumdo	Manange	Nar-Phu
Males	59	59	50	58
Females	37	40	38	28
All	45	54	42	44

Sample By Degree of Formal Education

Education	Gurung	Gyalsumdo	Manange	Nar-Phu
None	27%	20%	35%	61%
Between 1-9 years	16%	40%	39%	31%
Up to SLC	14%	13%	0%	0%
10+2	47%	13%	26%	8%
Bachelors	3%	7%	0%	0%

Sample By Reported Occupation

Occupation	Gurung	Gyalsumdo	Manange	Nar-Phu
Hotel/Tourism	3%	35%	0%	0%
Agriculture	25%	20%	22%	61%
Teaching/ Student	10%	12%	9%	0%
Combination of Above	67%	28%	61%	31%
Gov't	5%	5%	4%	8%
Retired/None	0%	5%	4%	0%

Demographic Summary

- More males than females
- Gyalsumdo speakers are older on average (it's difficult to locate adults between 18-35 years)
- Most interviewees have between "none and some" for formal education, but we also found Gurungs who had completed 10+2 level
- Occupations are largely of a mixed variety: agriculture & local business (hotels), although we did locate some teachers and government representatives

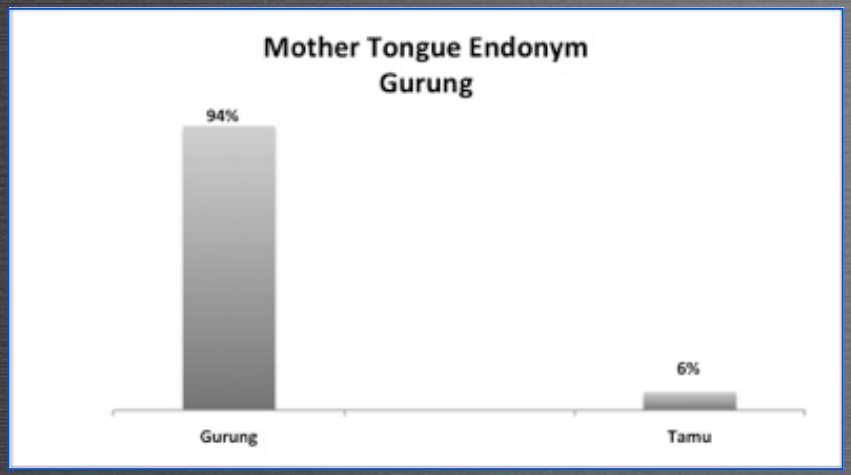
Methods

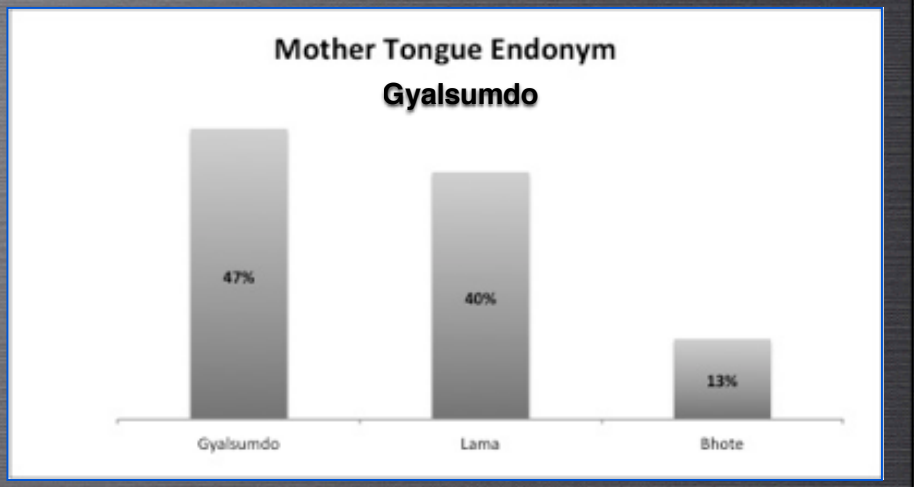
- Questionnaire modeled on Kansakar et al 2011, LinSuN, Milroy & Gordon 2003, Newman & Ratliff (eds.) 2001
- Five sections: General & personal information; Family background & practices; Current family situation & practices; Work & education practices; Subjective contemporary [e.g. opinions on language/variety locations & mutual intelligibility, language prospects in different domains] and a question devised part-way in 2012: “In your opinion, is there only one language spoken throughout Manang, or several languages?”
- Interviews conducted in person, in Nepali, and audio-recorded

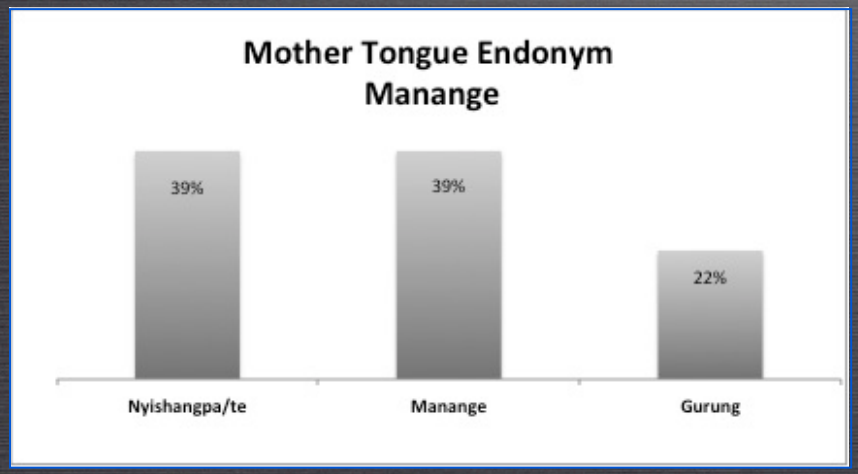
I. Self-Perceptions

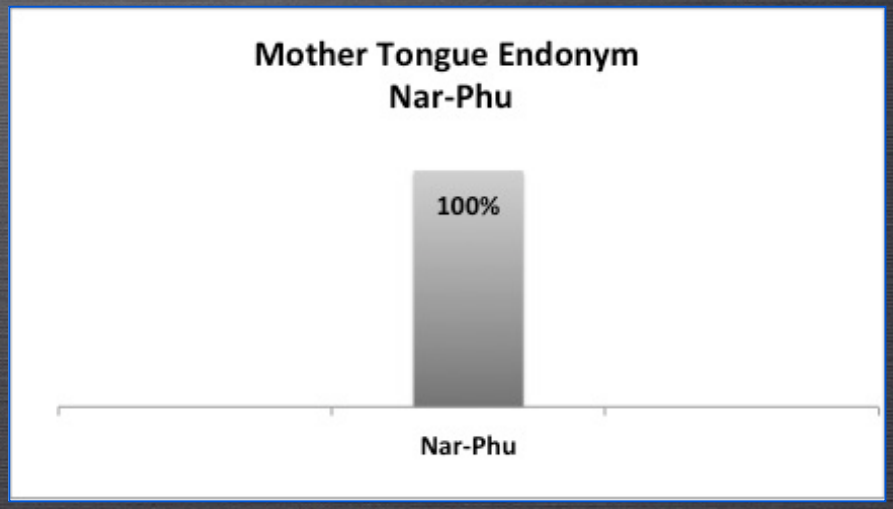
- Ethnologue entry for Gurung: ISO GVR, “Western Gurung,” “Tamu Kyi”; Glover (1974): Kaski Gurung endonyms “Tamu kɦyui,” “Gurung,” and Gurung Bhaaṣaa; Burton-Page (1955) “Gurungkura” (noted as a Nepali exonym)
- Gyalsumdo: Khadgi (2006: 6): “Gyasumdar….Gurungs (living) in Lamjung”; identified as Tamangic in van Driem (2001)
- Manange: ISO NMM; endonyms ŋjeʃɑŋ, ŋjeʃɑŋte; exonyms Manangpa, Manangba, Manangbhot
- Nar-Phu: ISO NPA, endonyms tʃʰypruŋ and nɑrtœ; Phu evidences more phonological & lexico-grammatical affiliation with Tibetan but exogamy traditions and long-term contact gives Phu a “Tamangic air”

What Do You Call Your Language?

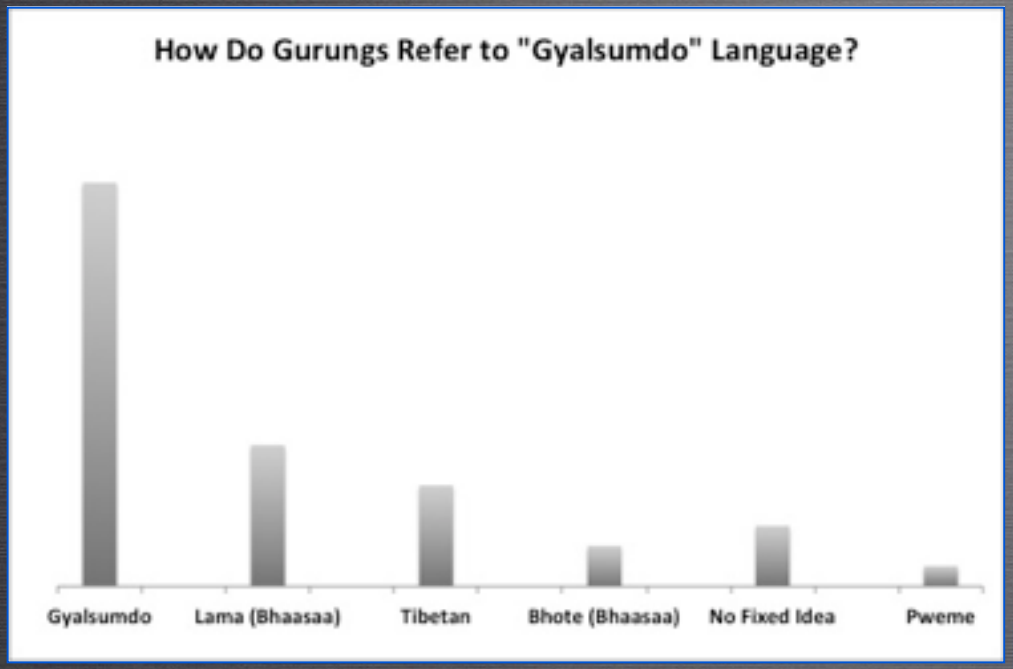


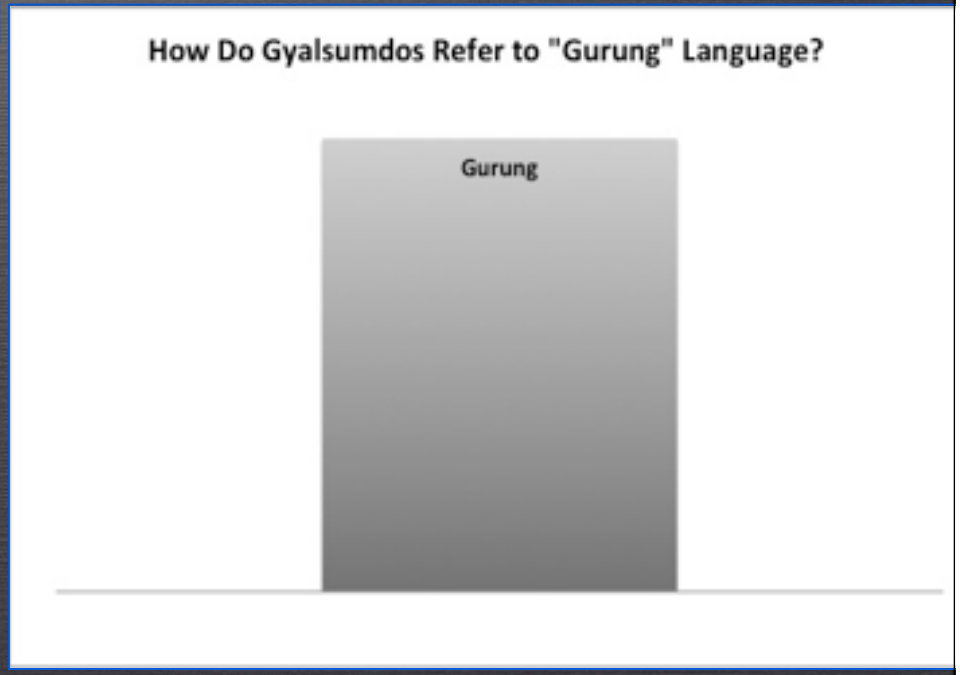




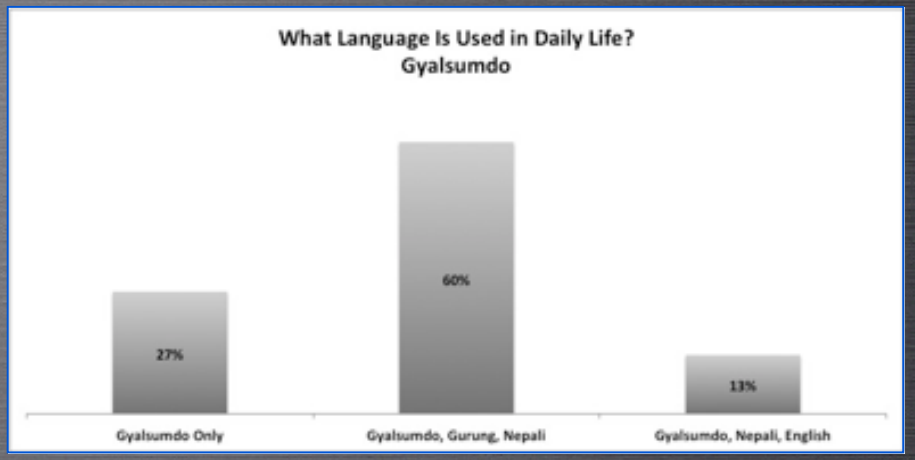


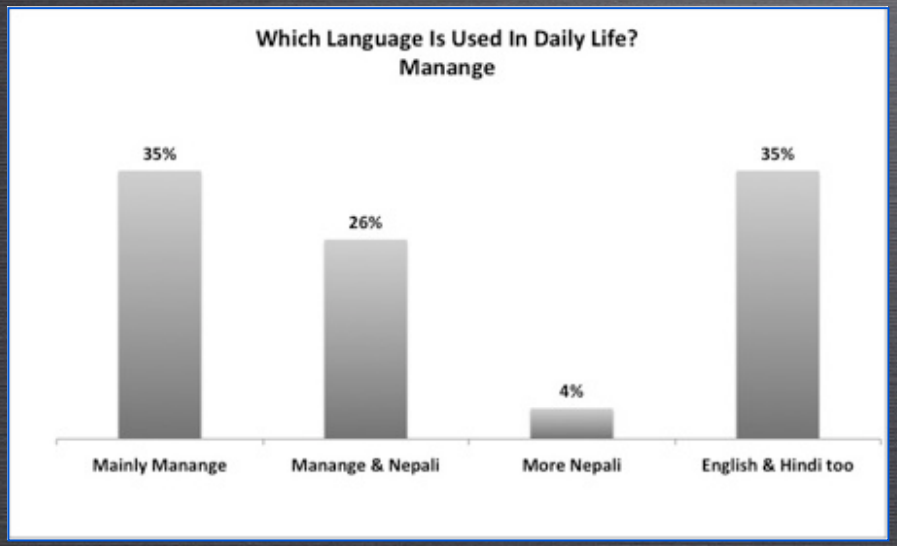
Gyalsumdo~Gurung Identifications

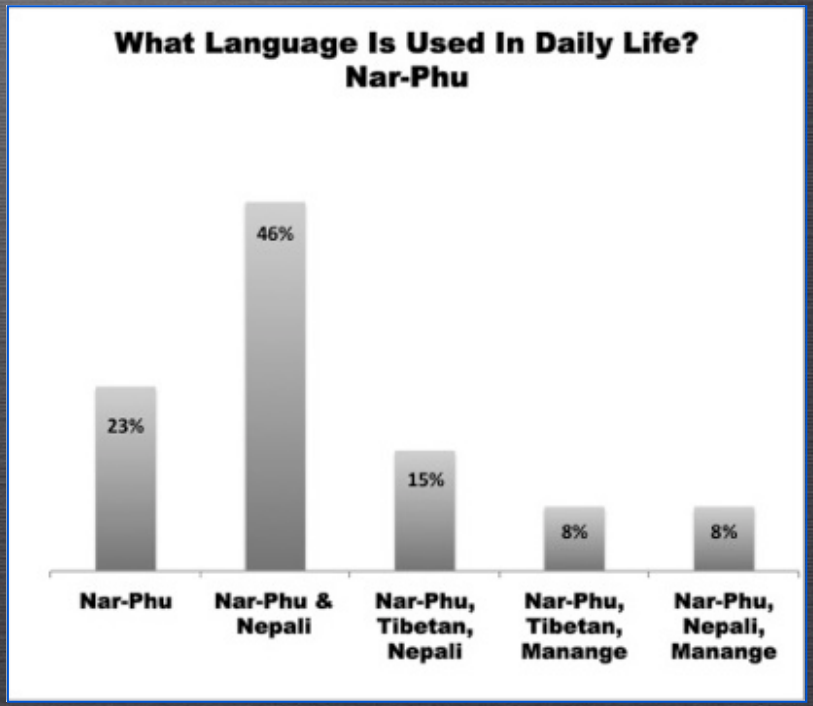




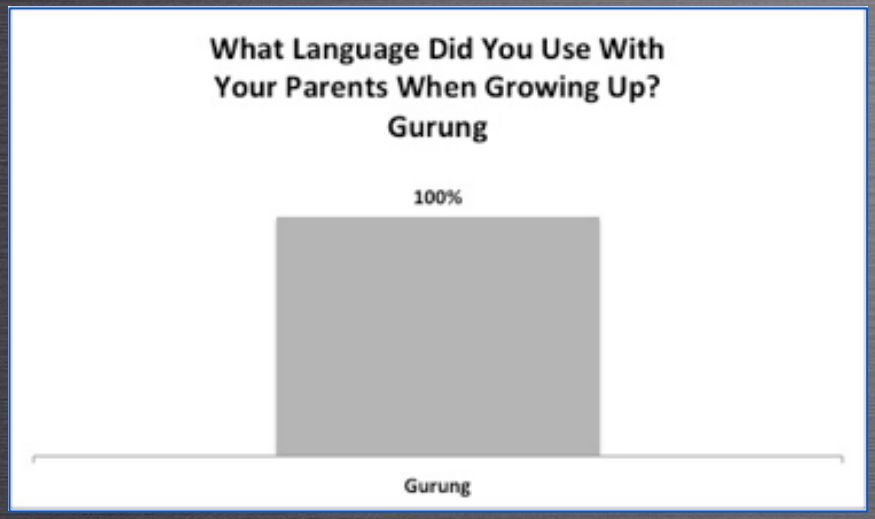
Language Use in Daily Life

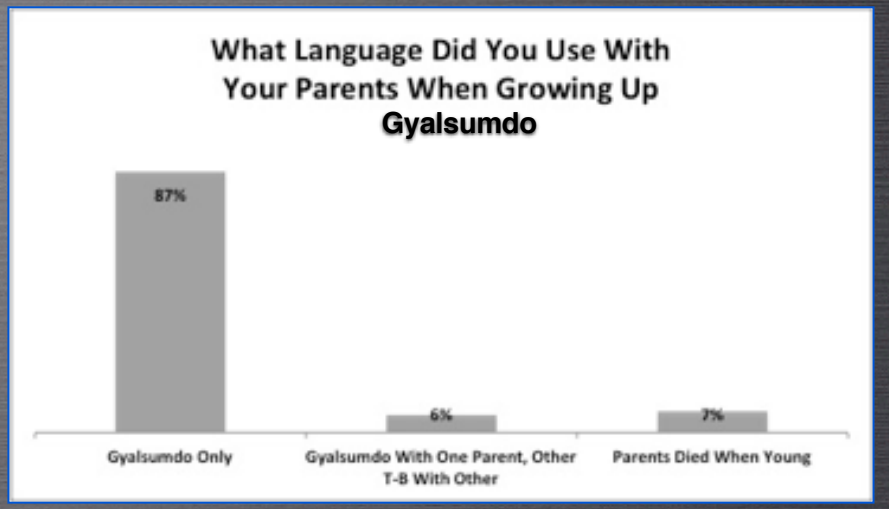


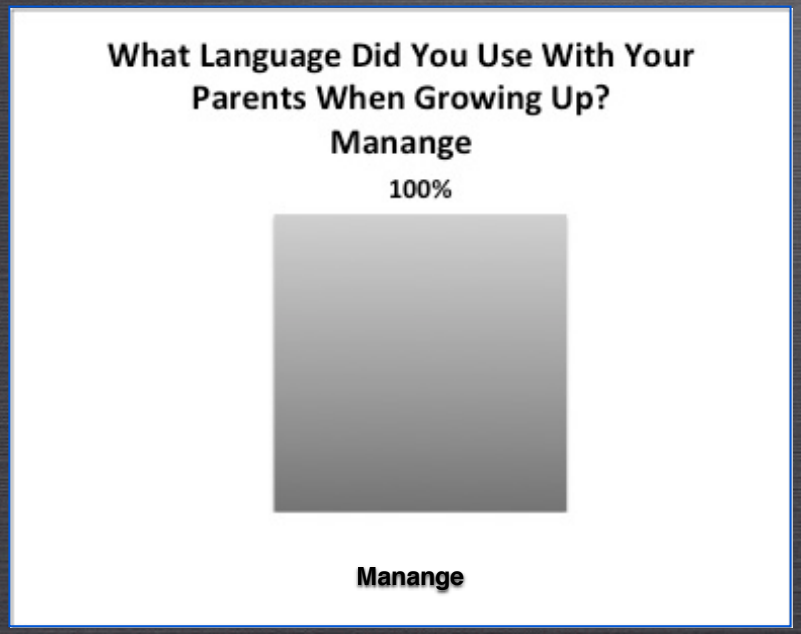


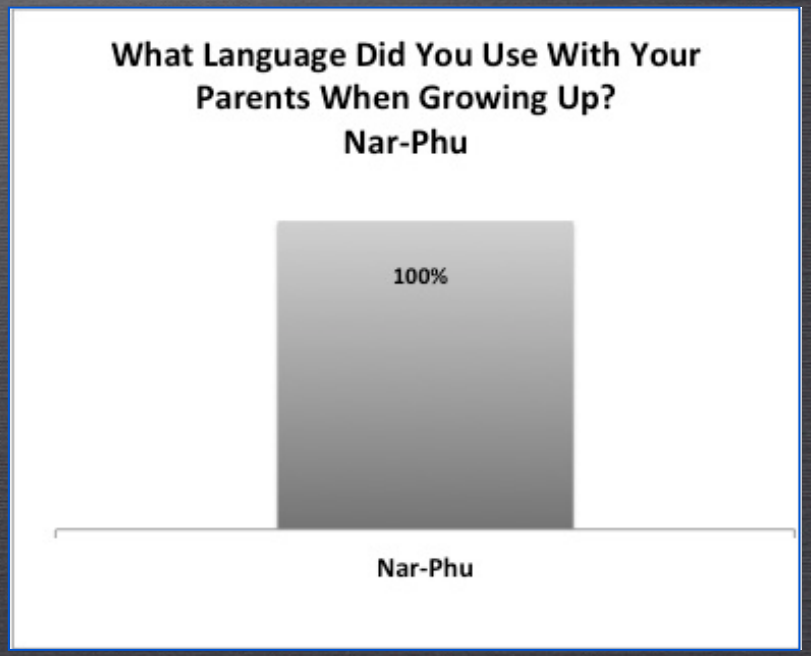


Lg Use in Private/Family/Local Contexts: Childhood

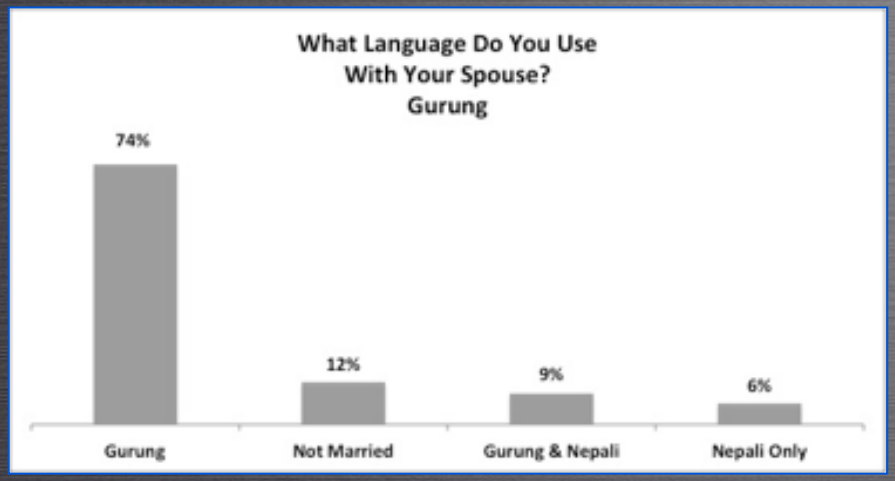


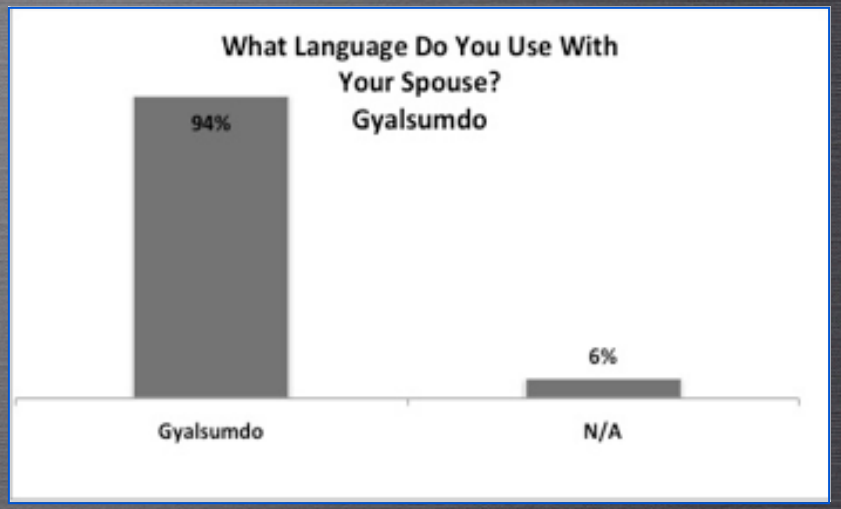


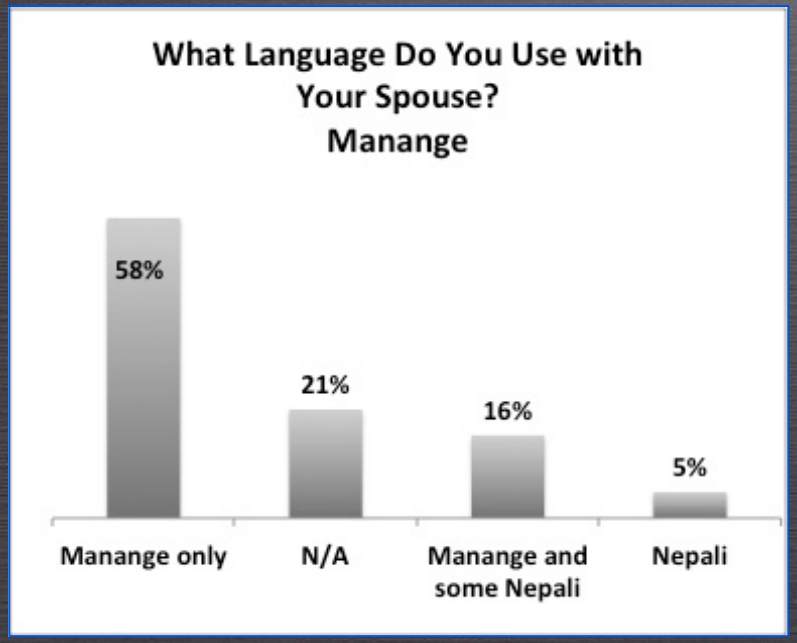


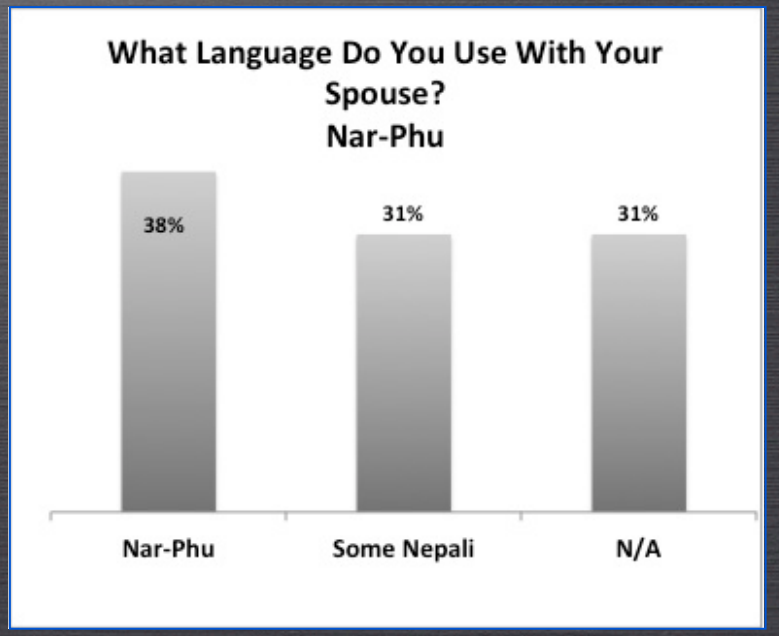


Lg Use in Private/Family/Local Contexts: Spouse

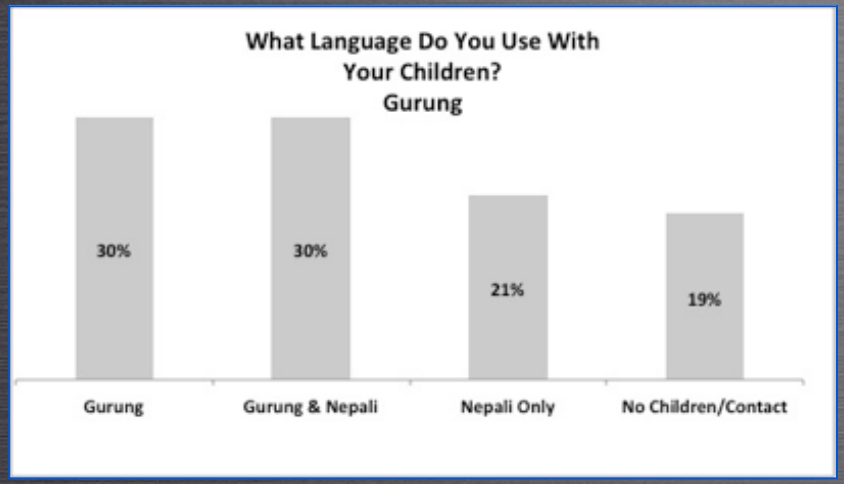


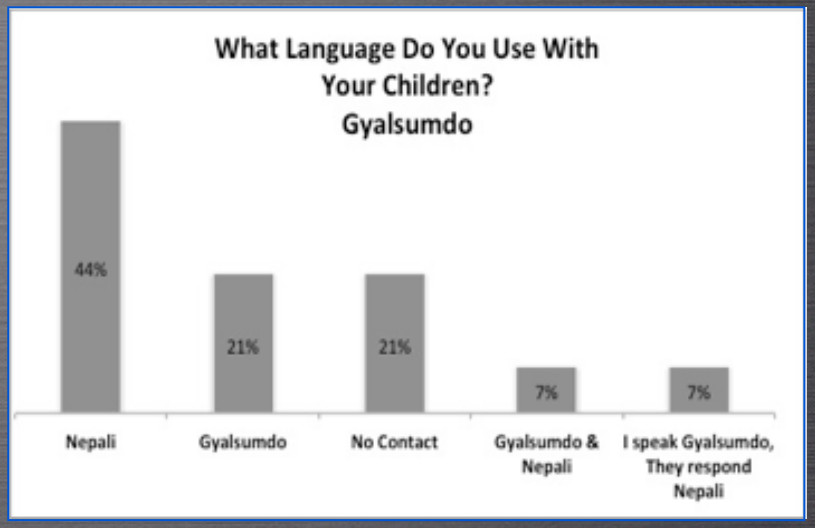


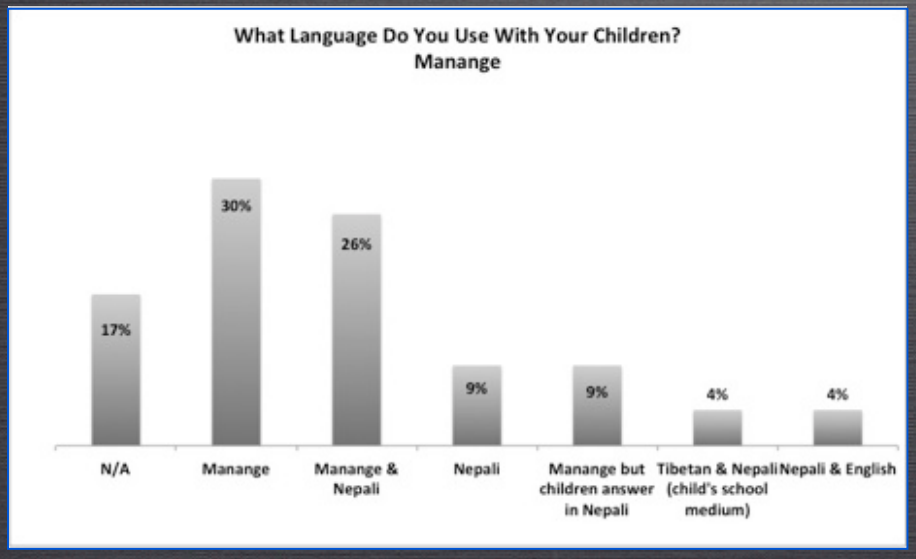


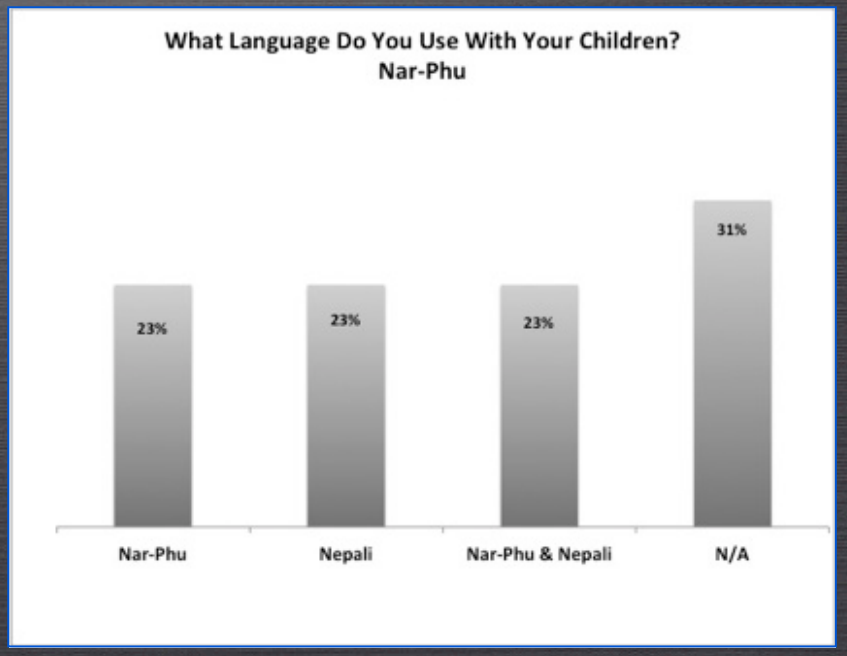


Lg Use in Private/Family/Local Contexts: Children

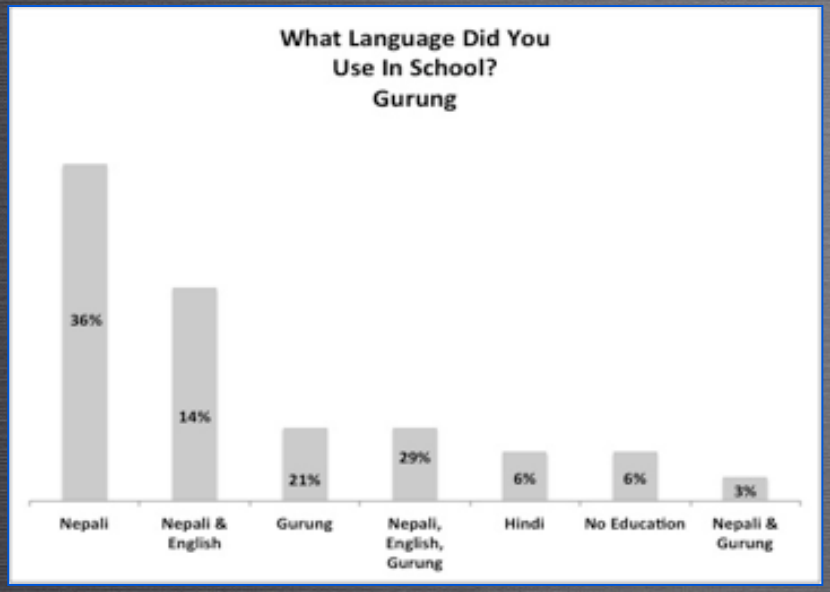


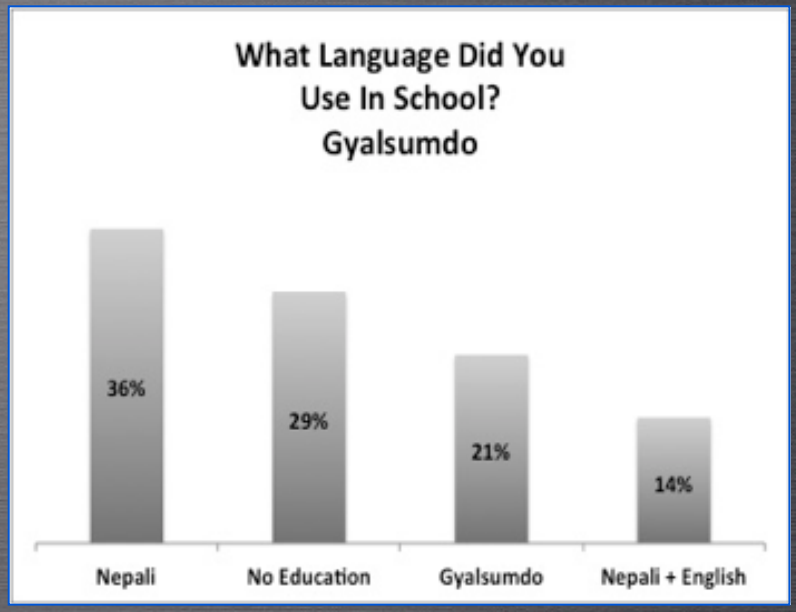


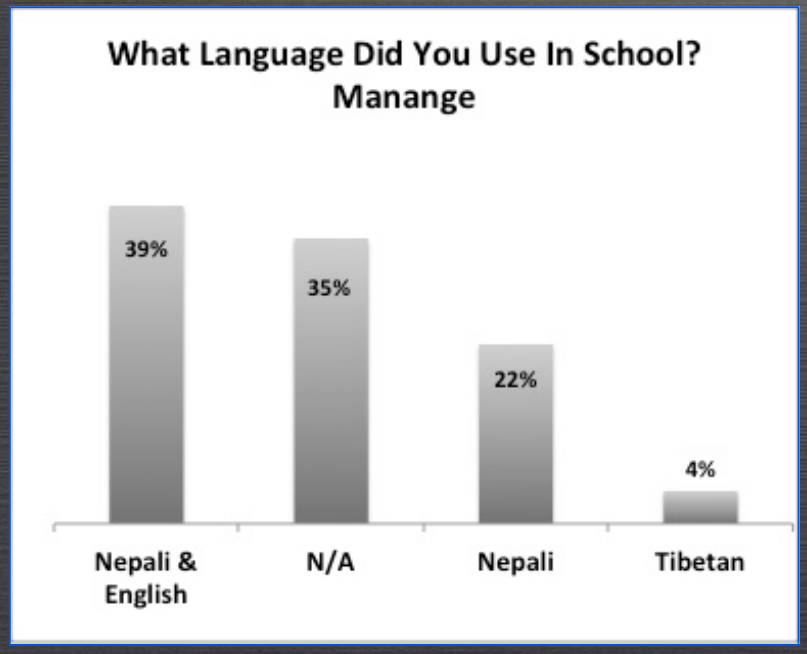


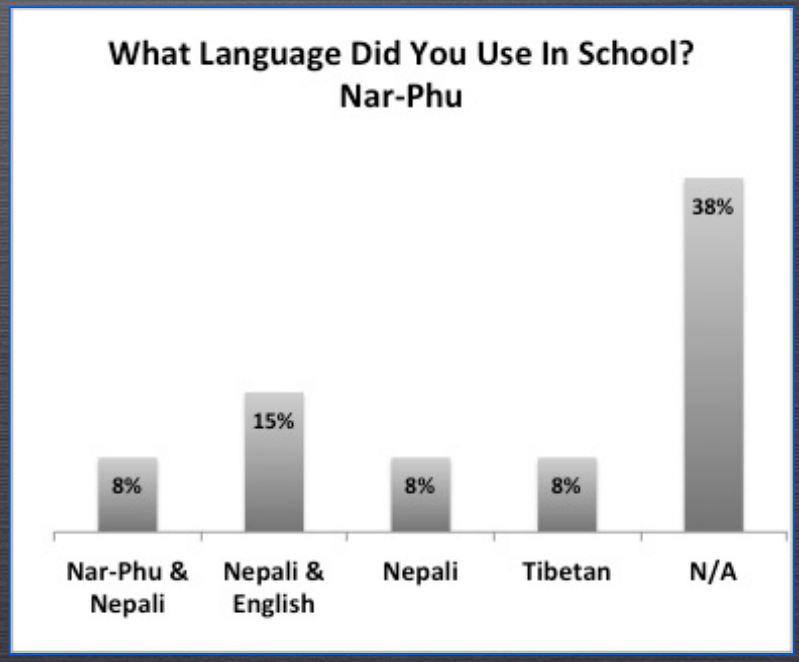


Language Use in Public: School

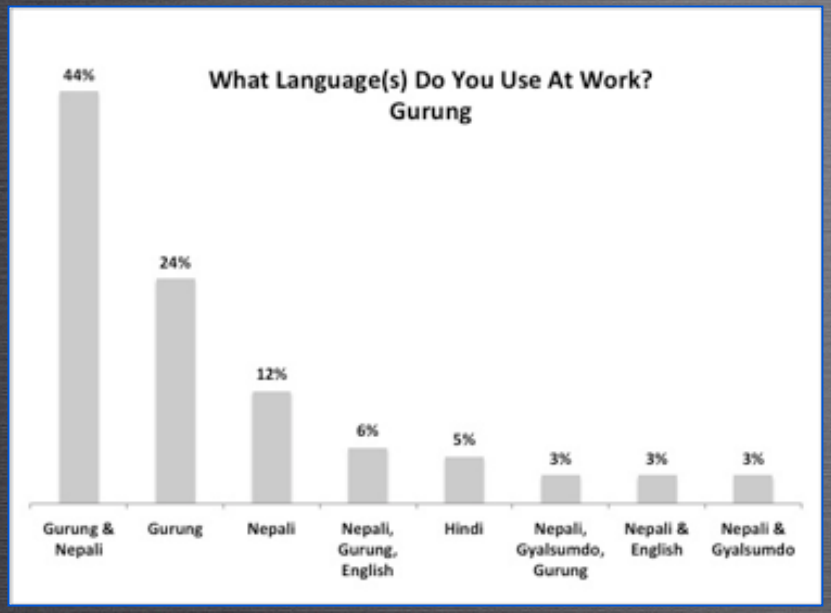


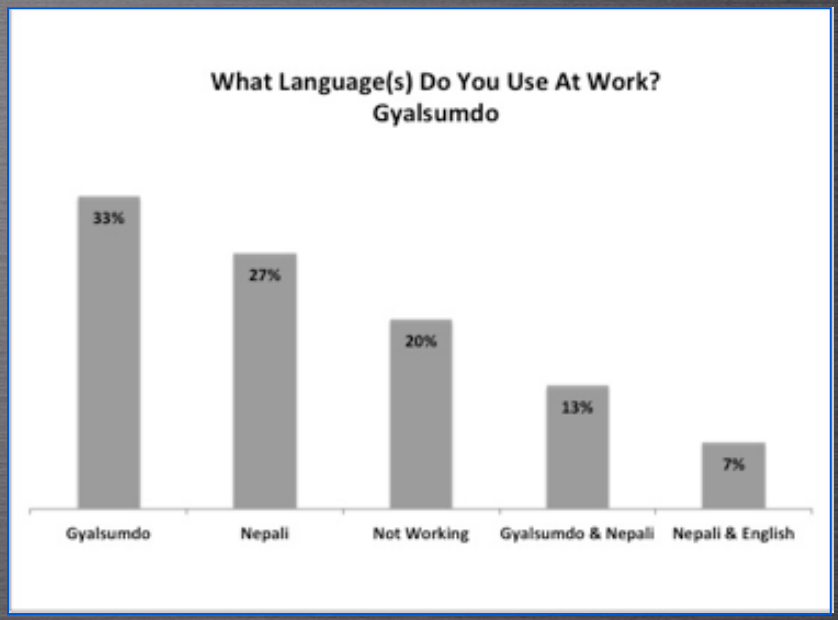


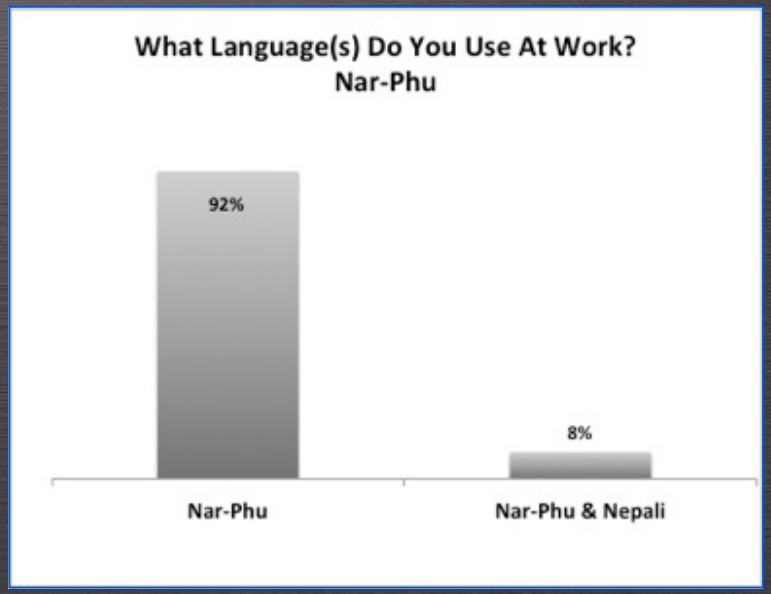




Language Use in Public: Work



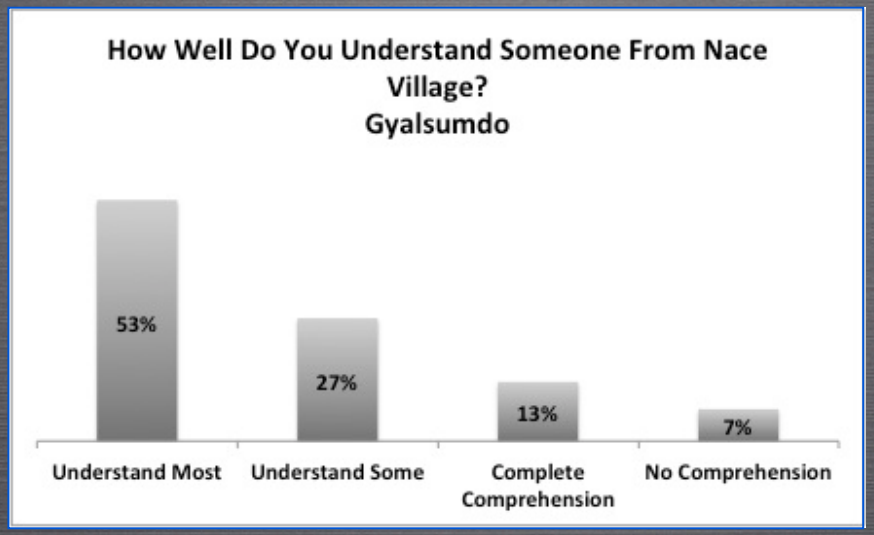


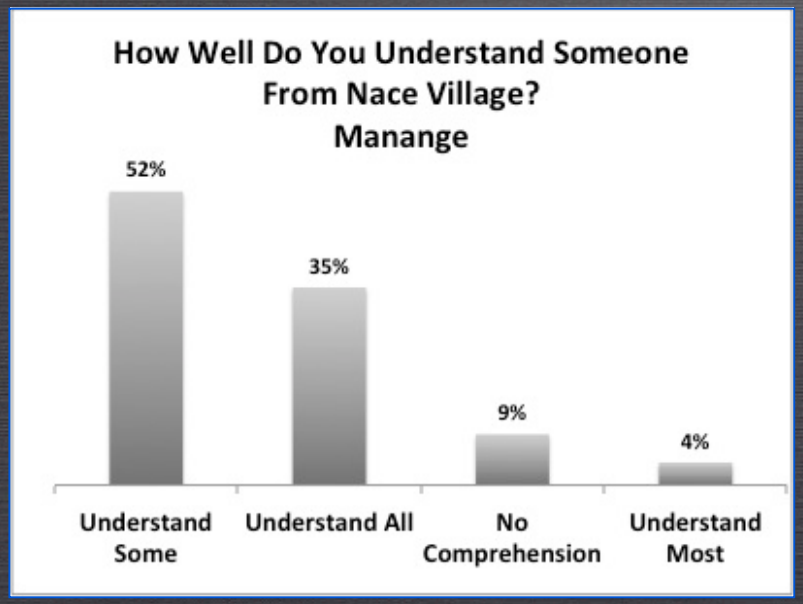


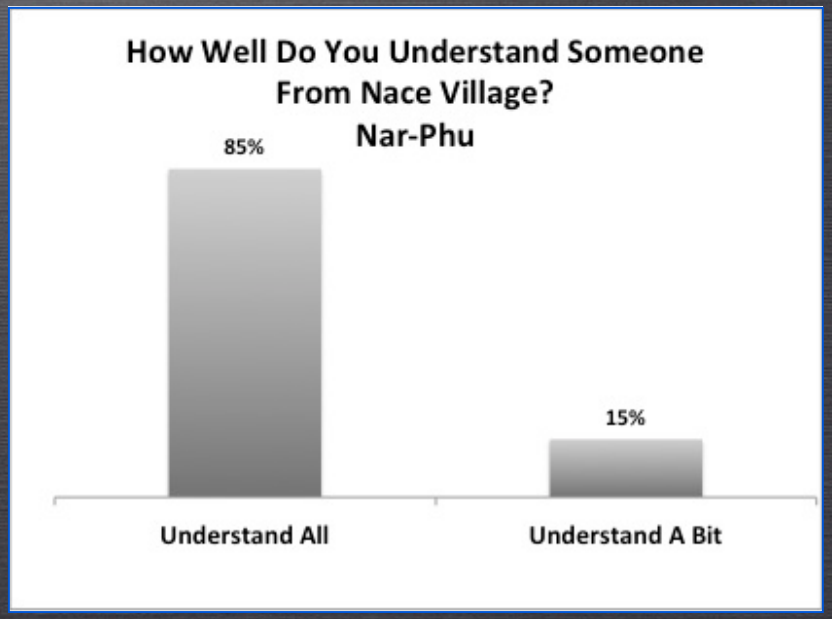
Perceptions of Use Summary

- Interviewees seem to be accepting of Indic-originating language names
- Some interviewees refer to Gyalsumdo and Manange as “Gurung”
- Some interviewees refer to Gyalsumdo as “Tibetan”, but others see it as different (Gyalsumdos certainly do)
- Daily language use is largely M-T combined with Nepali
- In childhood, the language was almost exclusively M-T
- Language with spouse: Gurung & Gyalsumdo report M-T use exclusively, while Manange and Nar-Phu report mixed language use
- Language use with children leans more towards Nepali, or else the parents use the M-T and children respond in Nepali
- Language use in schools is overwhelmingly Nepali and at work the M-T is used if work is agriculture-based and local

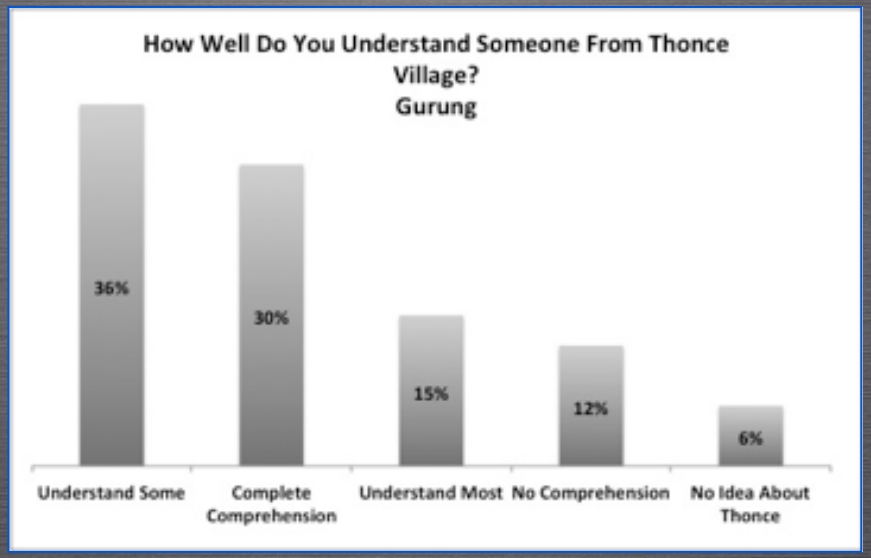
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Nace is a 'typical' Gurung Village)

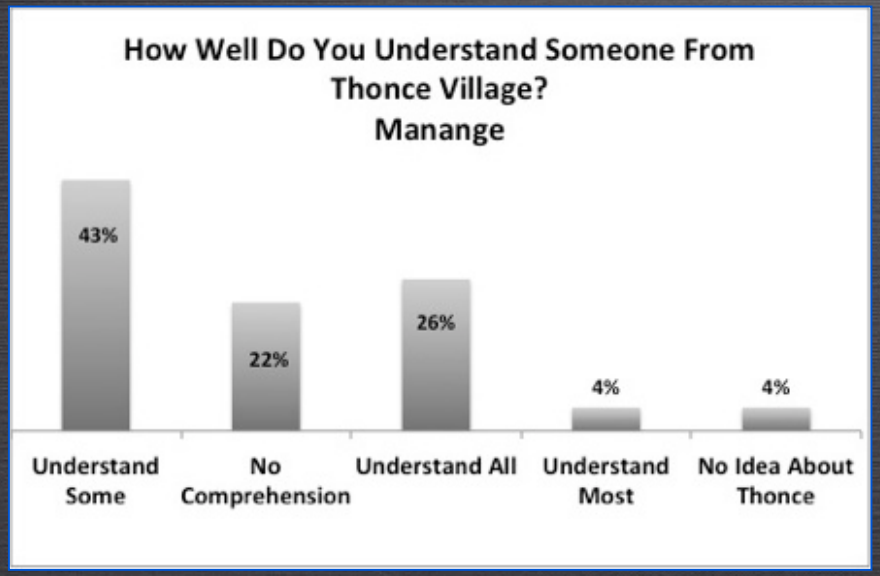


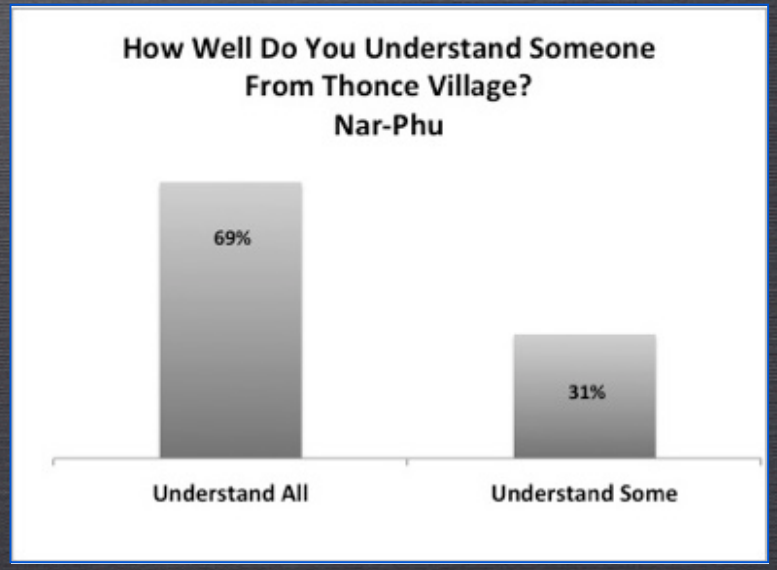




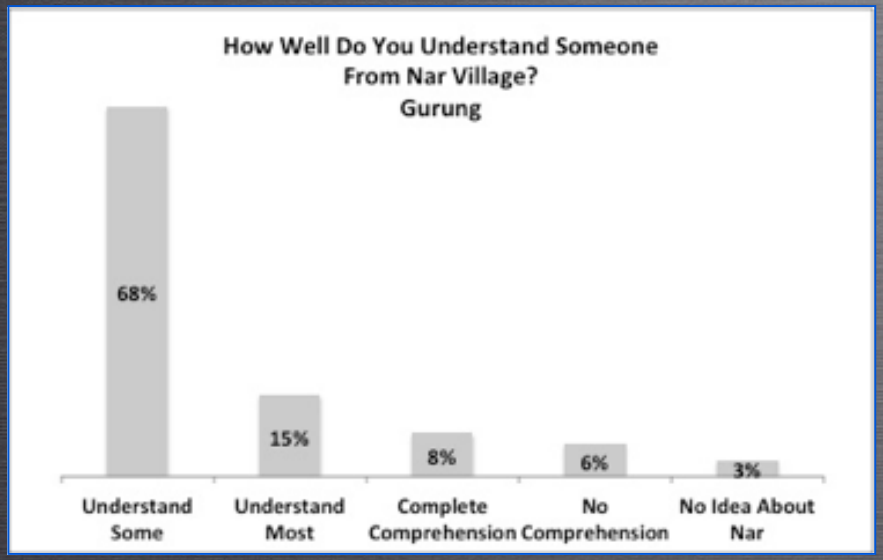
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Thonce is a 'typical' Gyalsumdo Village)

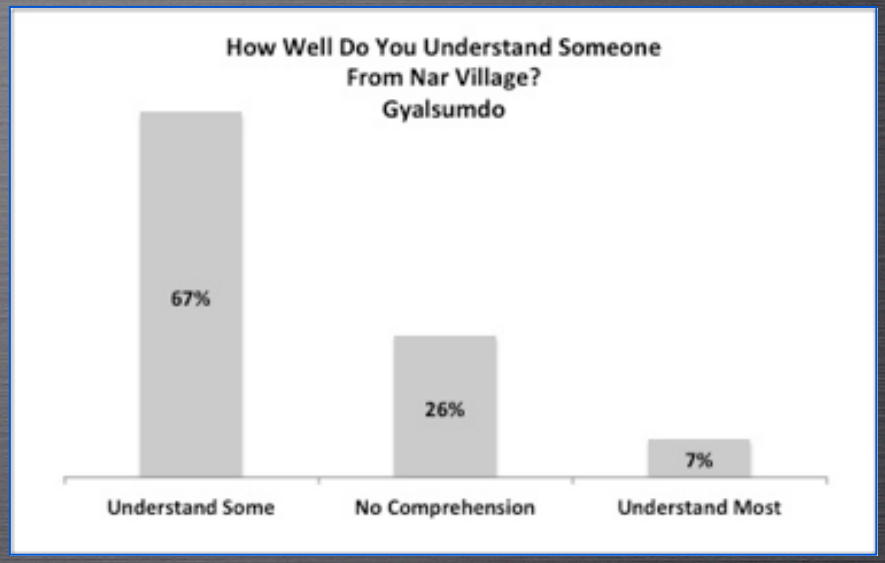




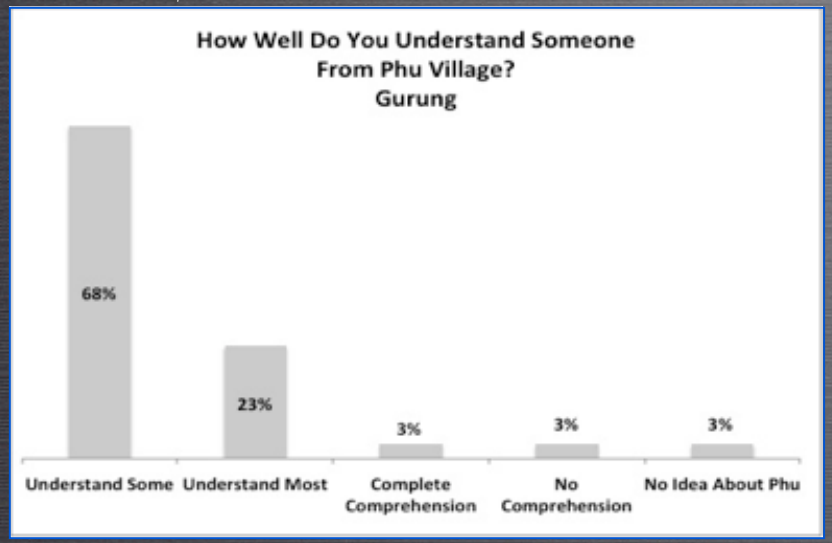


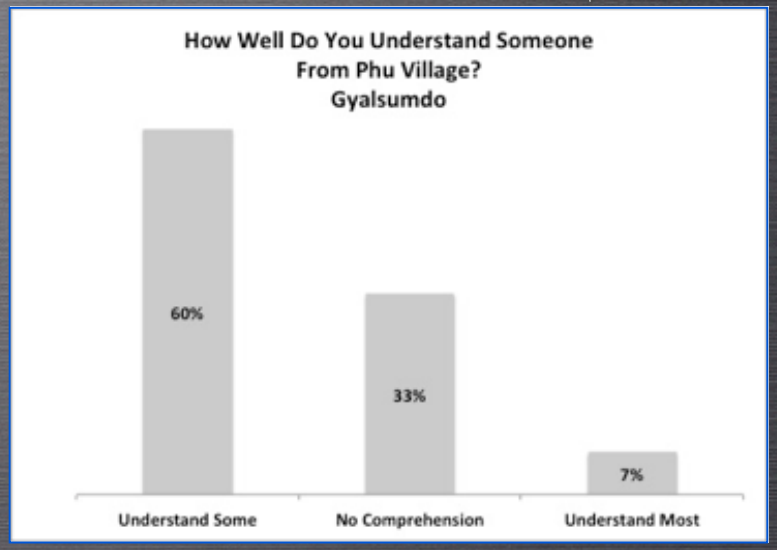
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Nar is 'the' Nar-Speaking Village)



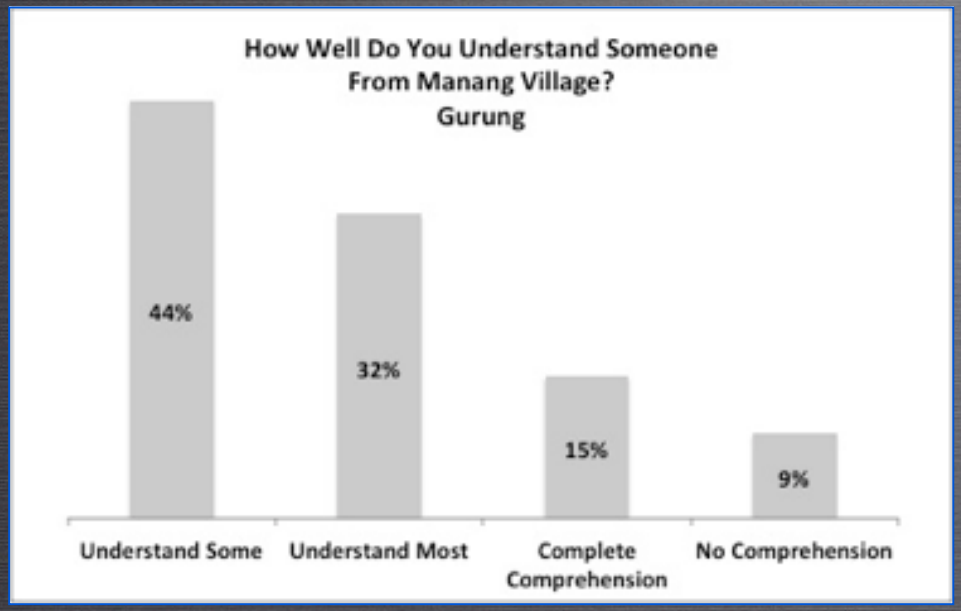


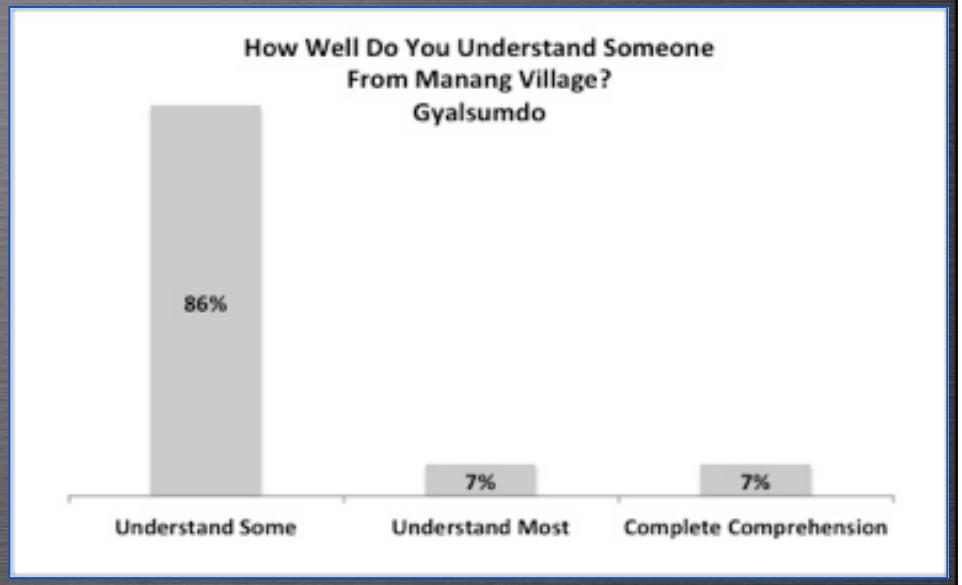
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Phu is 'the' Phu-Speaking Village)

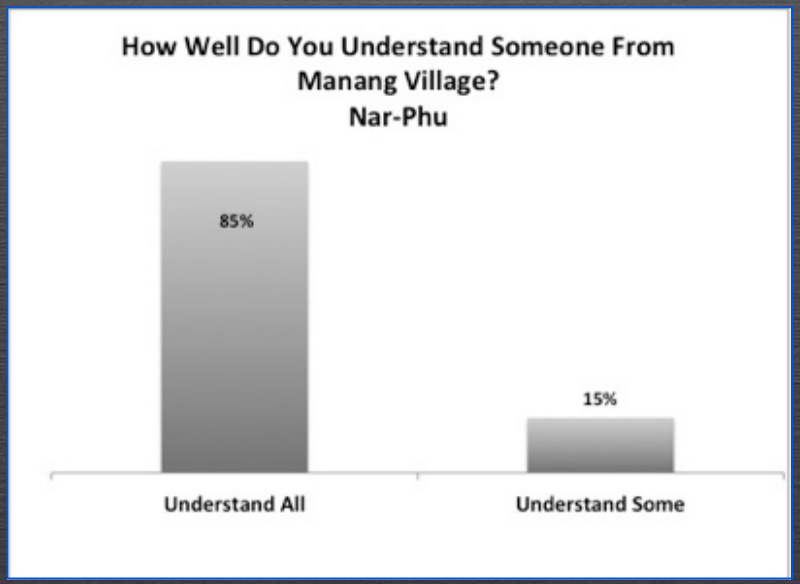




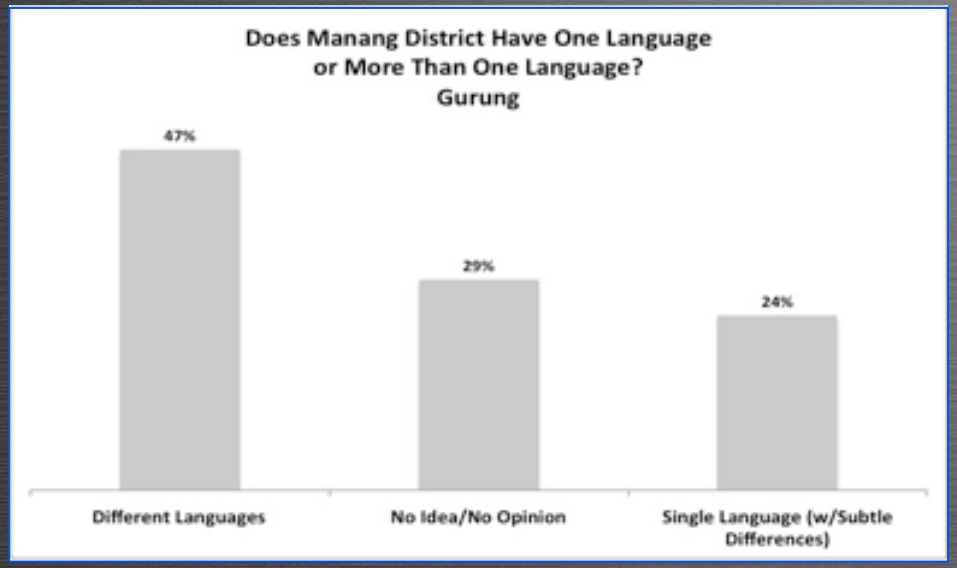
Opinions of Intelligibility in Greater Manang District (Manang is a 'Typical' Manange Village)

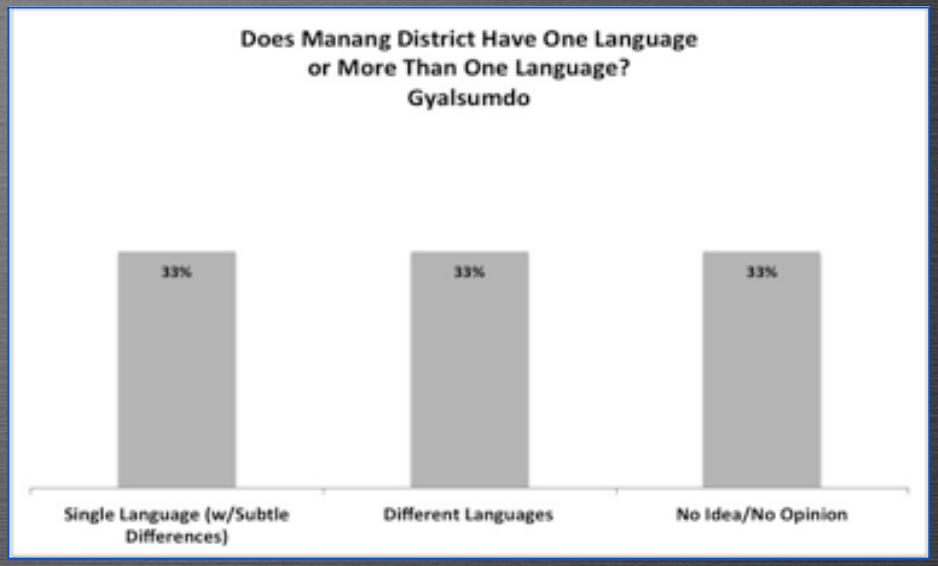


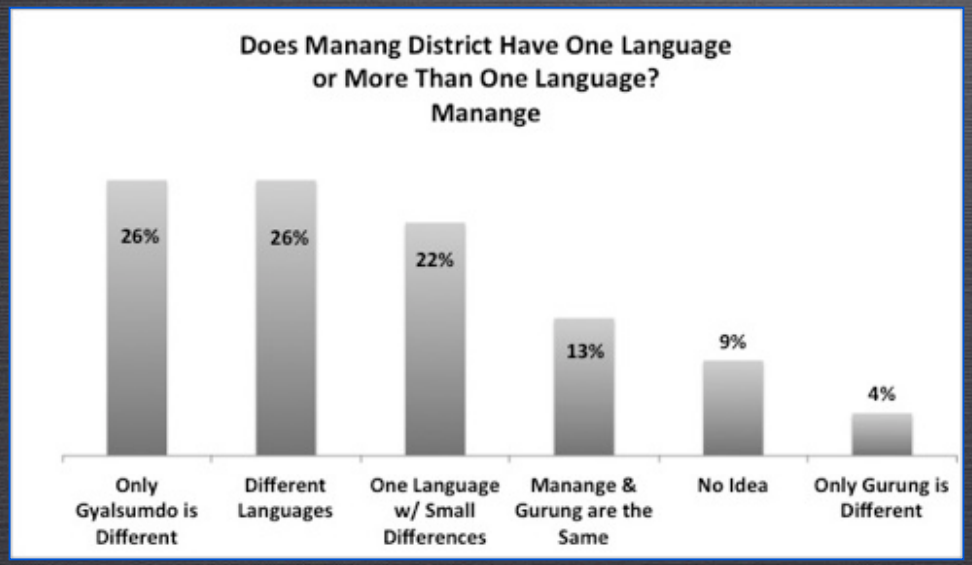


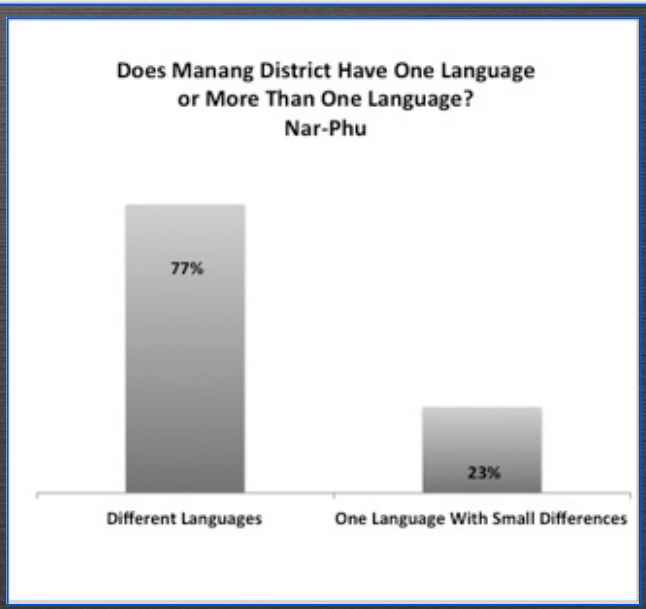


One or Several Languages in Manang?





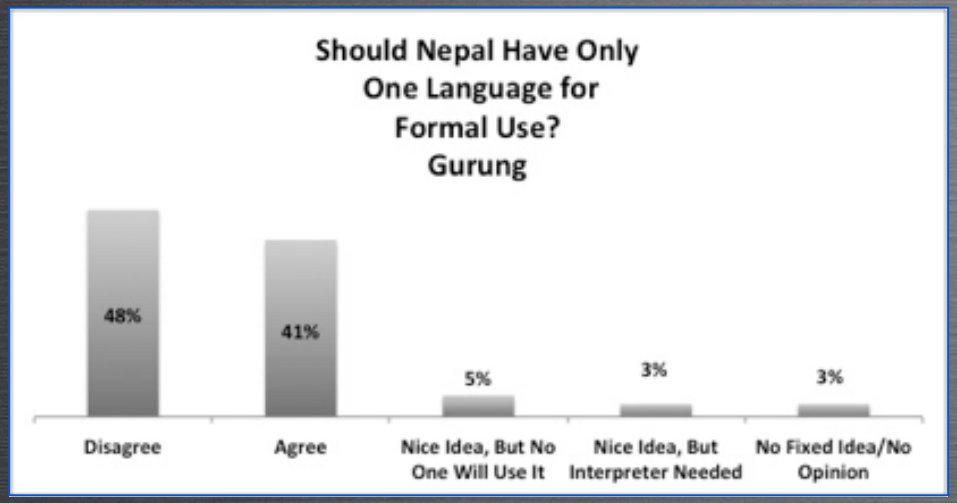


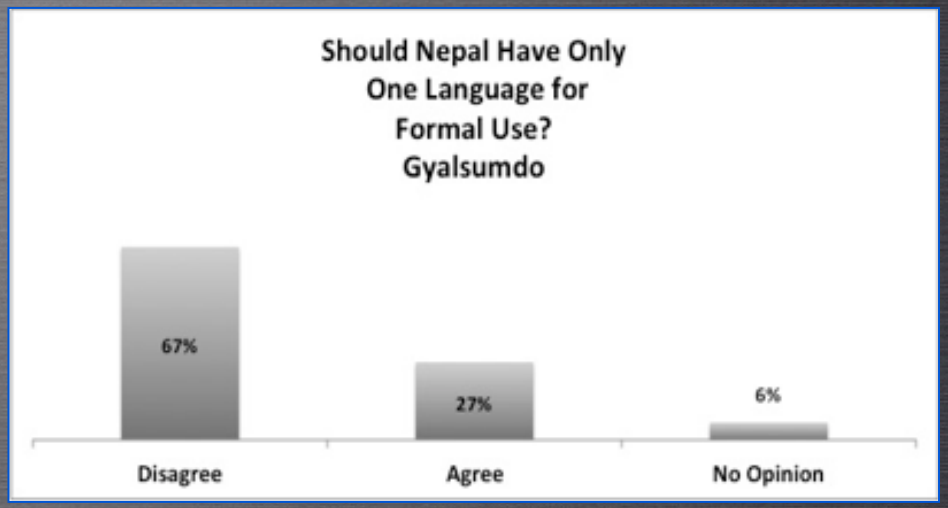


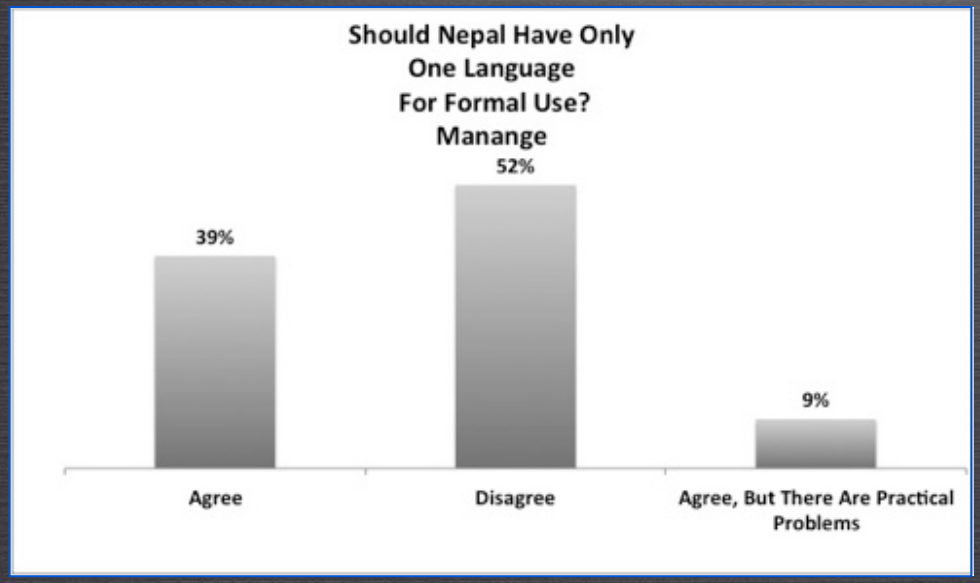
Intelligibility Summary

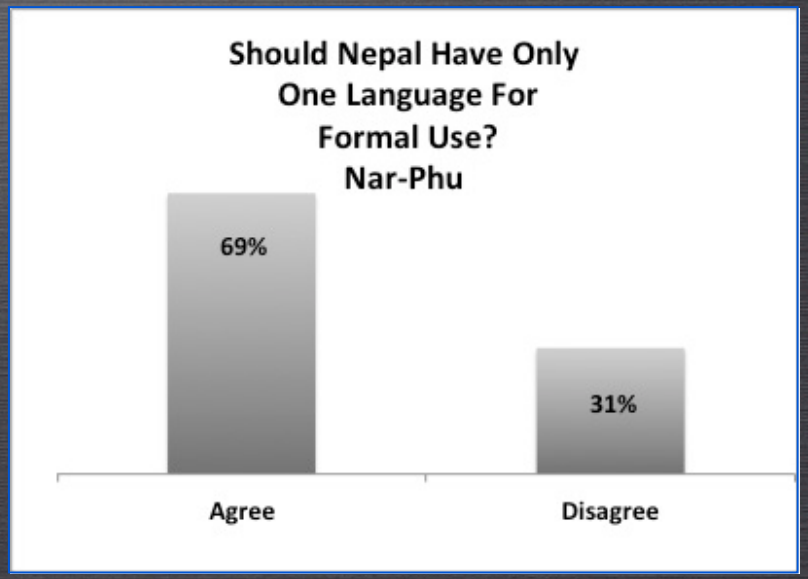
- High intelligibility of Gurung language across groups
- Gyalsumdo report intelligibility of Gurung, but not the other way around
- Gyalsumdo report medium intelligility of Manange and Nar-Phu
- Nar report high intelligility of Manange, then Gurung, but they generally do not report intelligibility of Gyalsumdo
- Phu report higher intelligibility of Nar, and less so of other languages
- Mananges generally report intelligility of Gurung and of Nar, less so of Phu and Gyalsumdo

Attitudes About Language: One National (Nepali) Language?

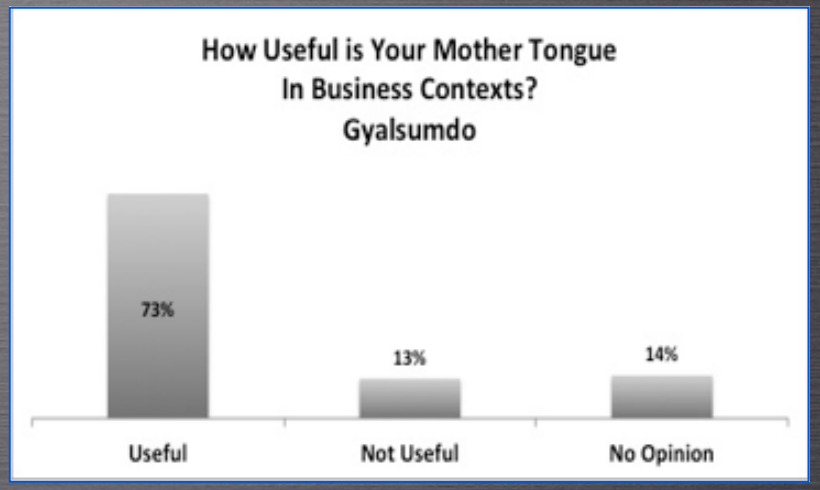


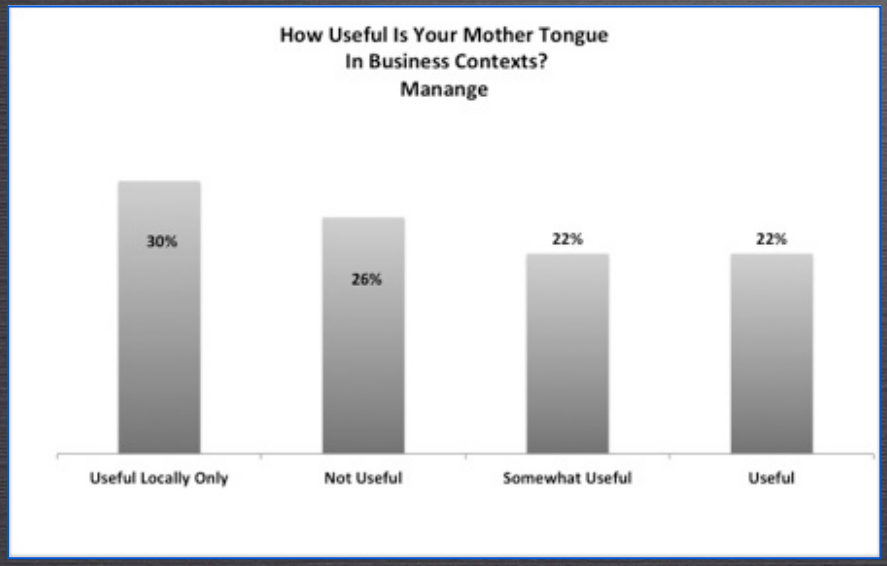


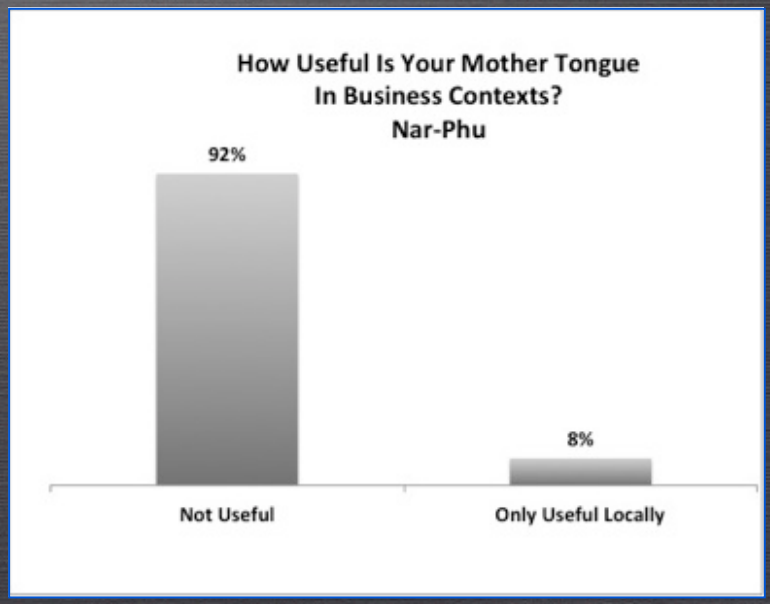




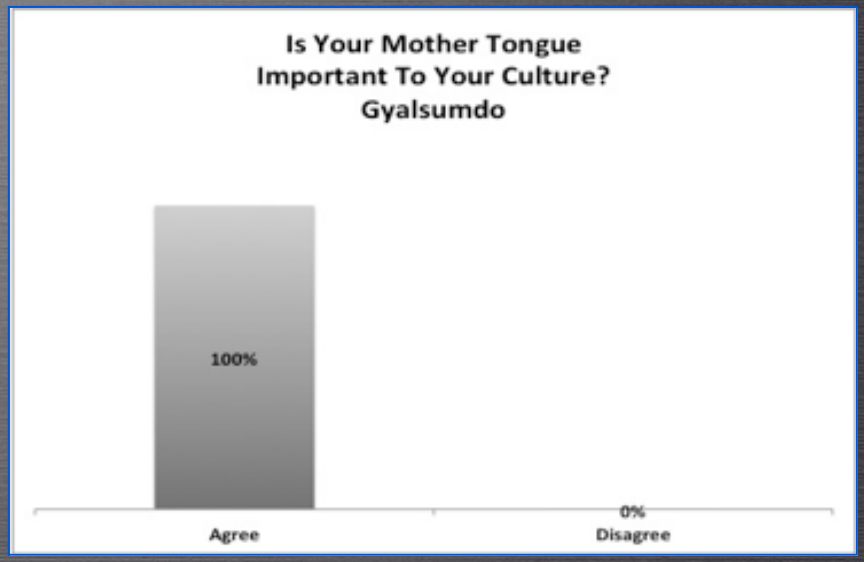
Attitudes About Language: Getting Ahead Financially

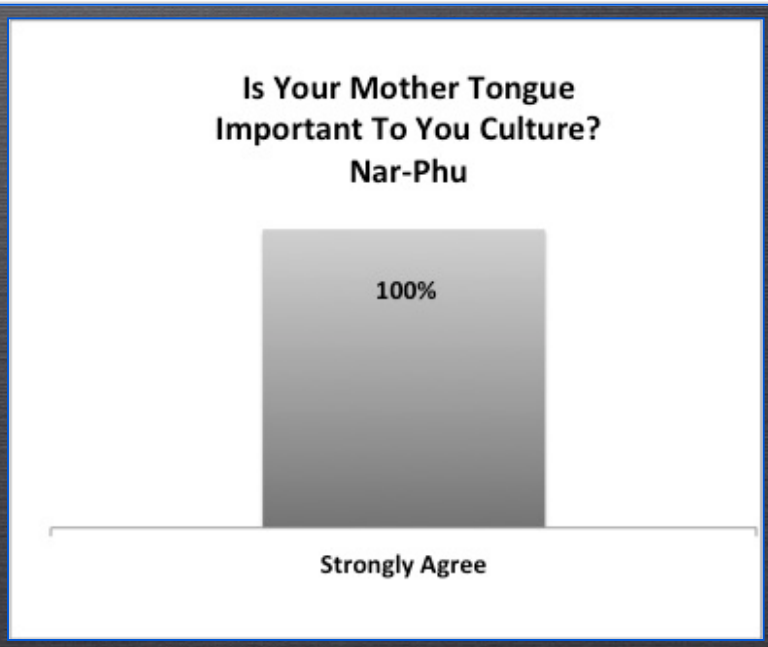




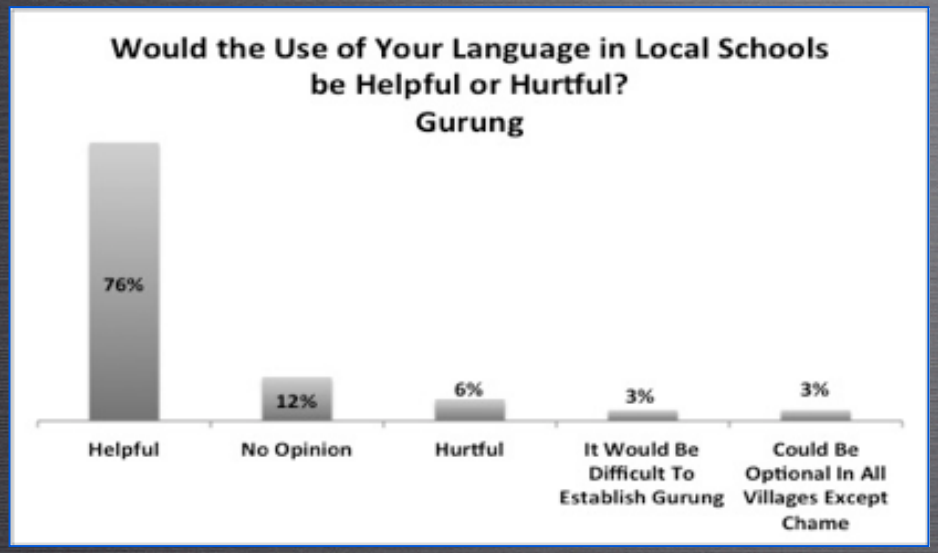


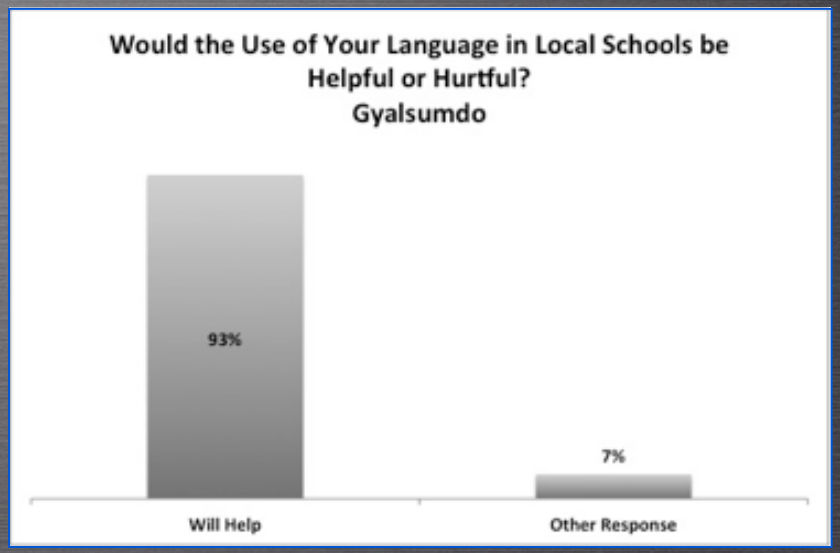
Attitudes About Language: Importance to Cultural Identity

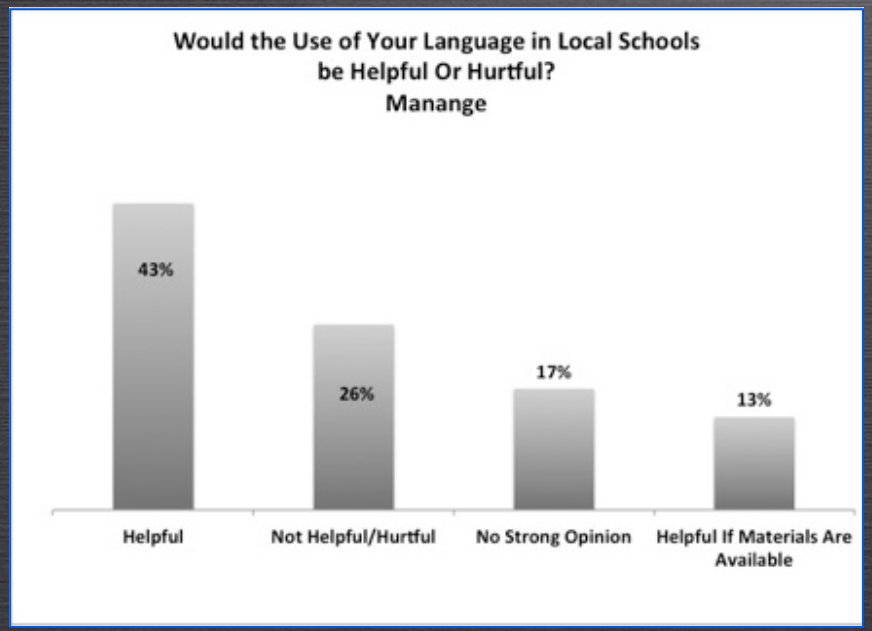


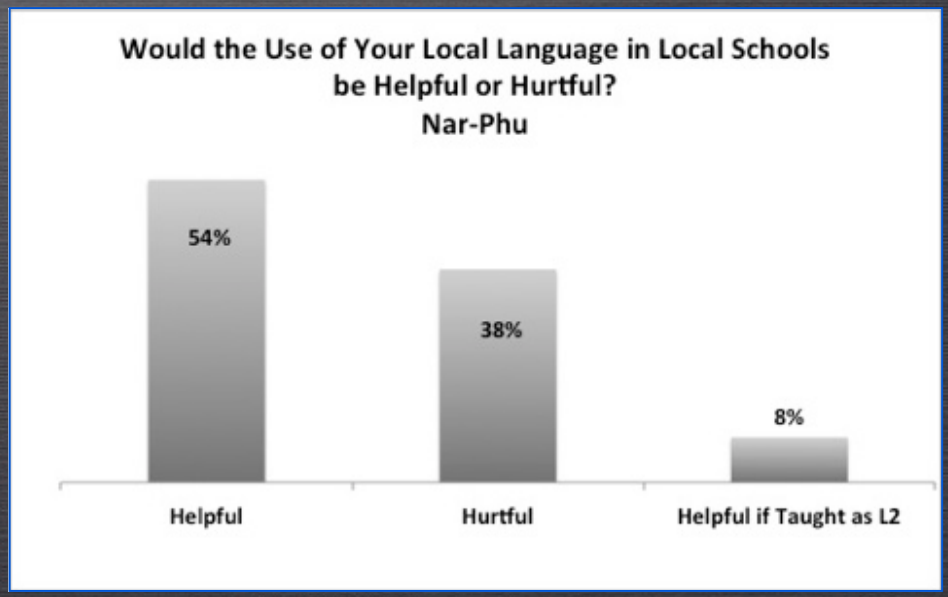


Attitudes About Language: The Place of Local Languages in Local Schools





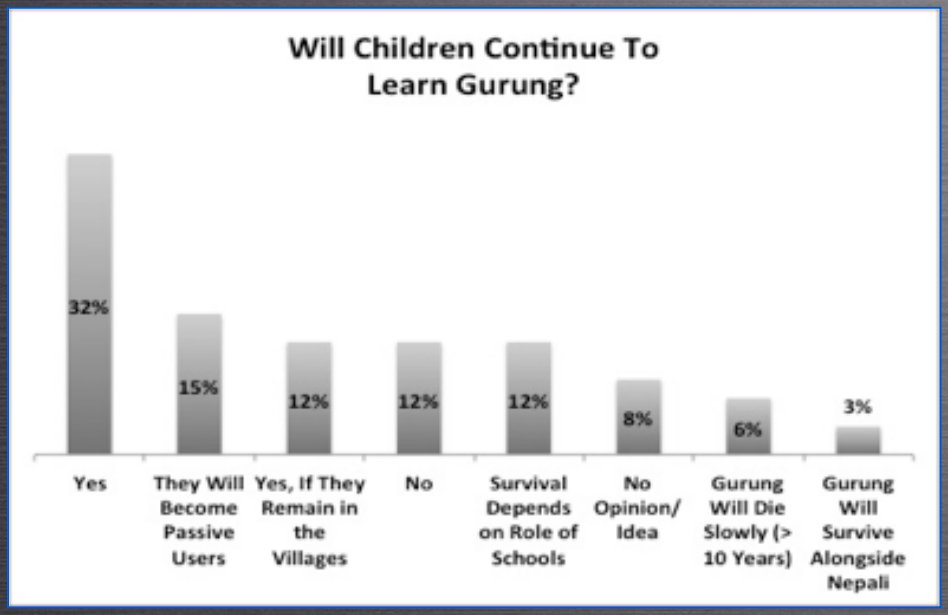


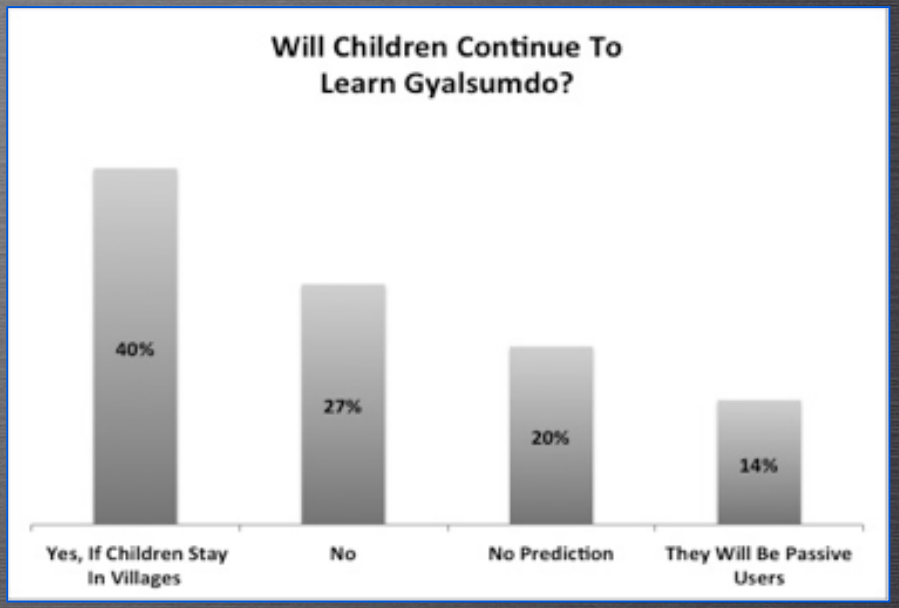


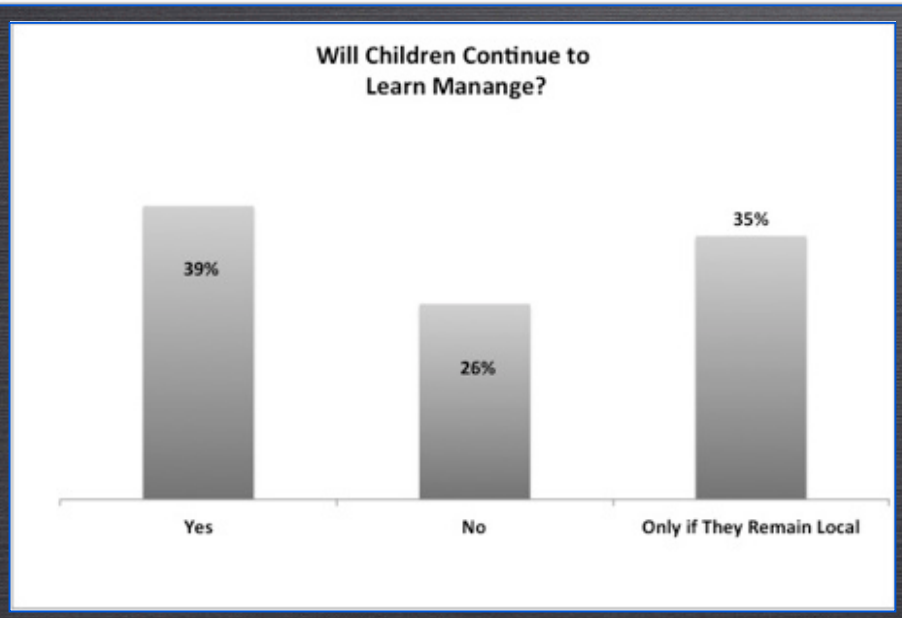
Attitudes Summary

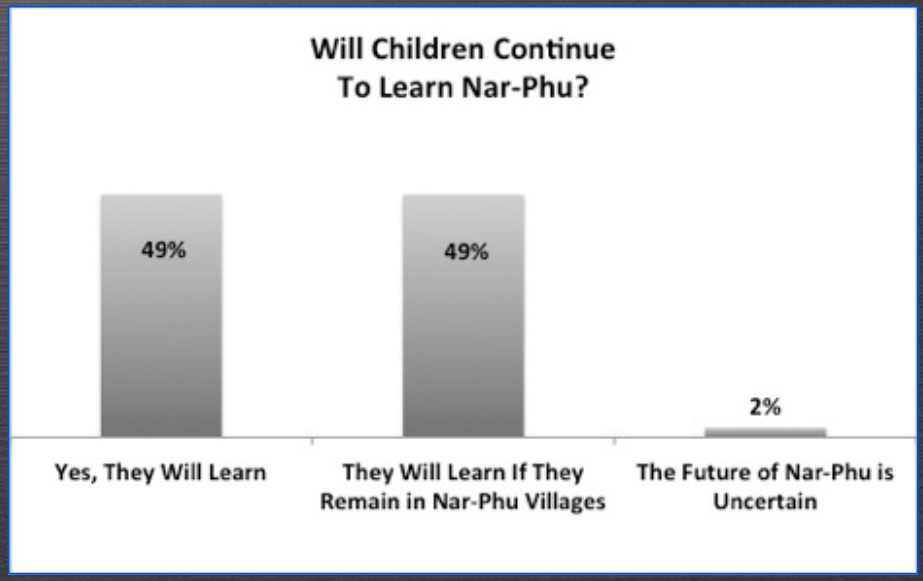
- Most interviewees disagree that Nepal should have only one official language--they would like to see their M-T used in contexts like banks, government offices, etc.
- But many of these are doubtful of the practicality of implementing this (no writing system, difficult to produce materials, etc.)
- Most interviewees see a value in their M-T in cultural contexts, but they don't see it as economically beneficial, except for those whose occupations are solely placed in local domains and with fellow group members
- Mananges and Nar-Phu are doubtful of the usefulness of M-T in schools, or else they don't see it being practical to implement

Attitudes Regarding Future Prospects: Future Users

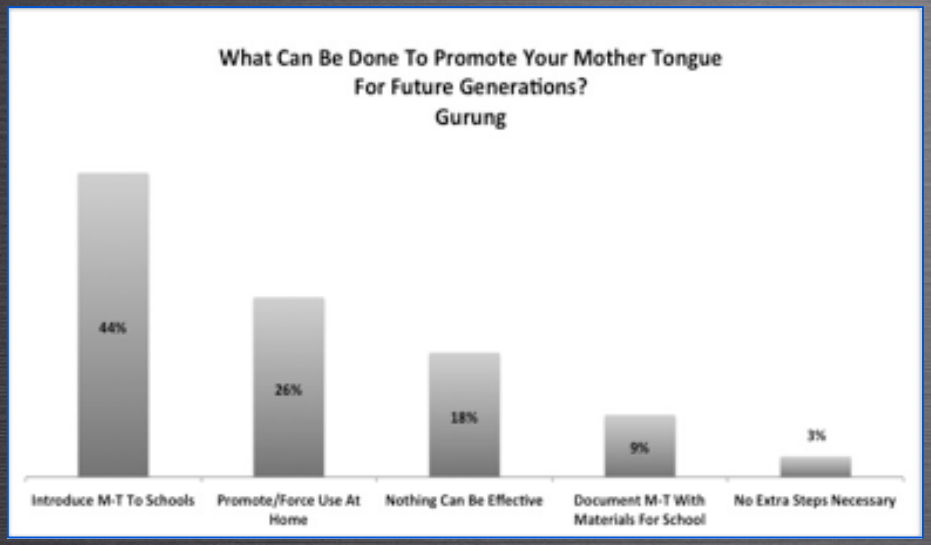


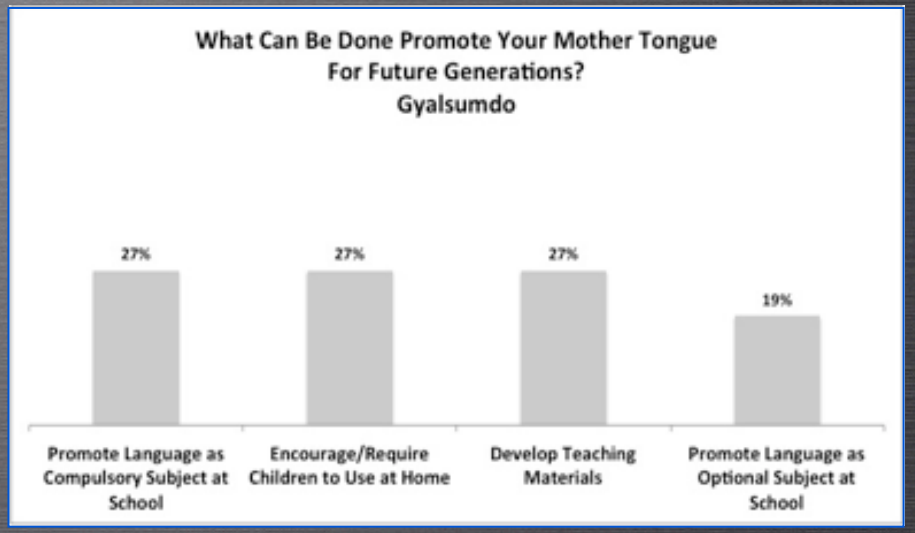


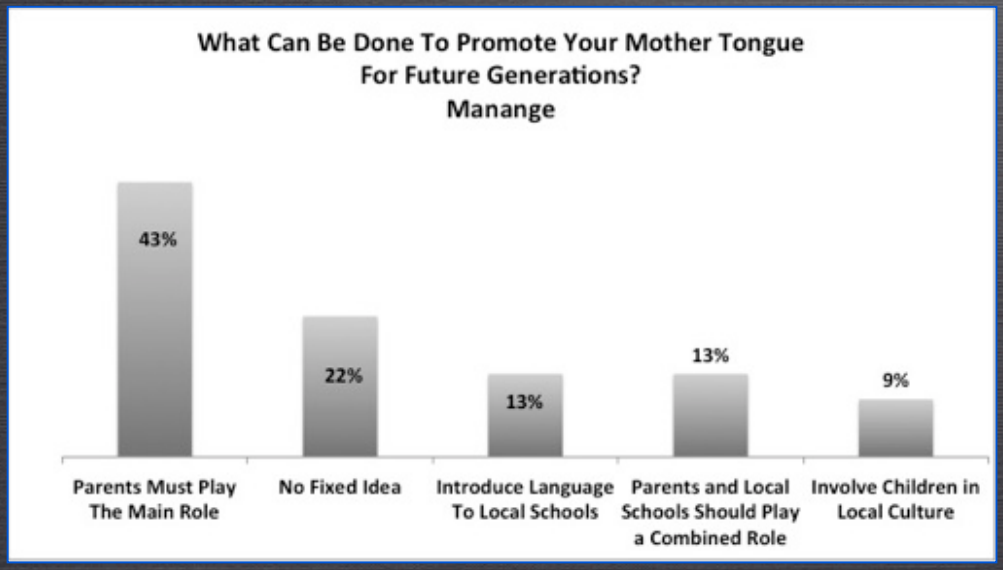


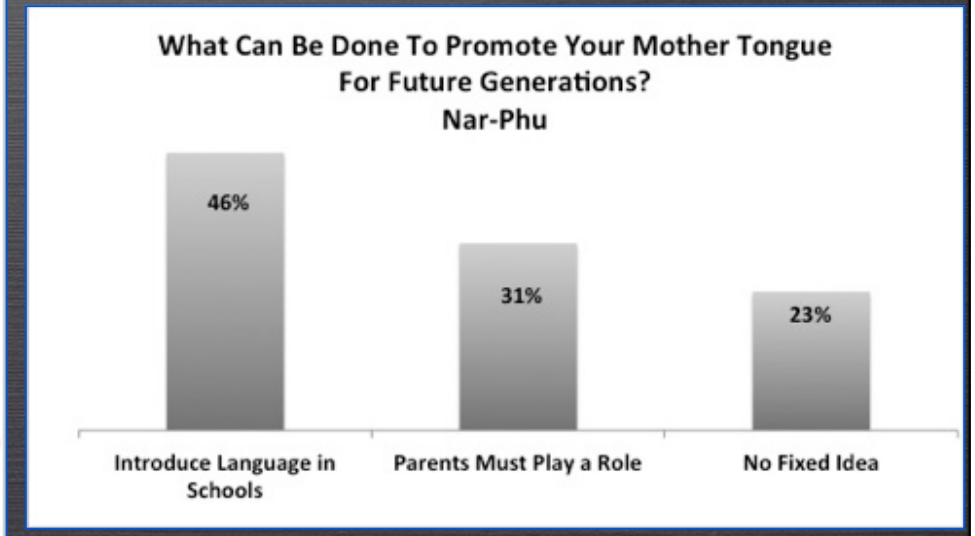


Attitudes Regarding Future Prospects: Advice For Promotion









Closing Observations

- One hope is that this survey can rectify some mis-information about types & population numbers of languages in Manang
- Nepal CBS (2012) reports: Gurung with 226,000 speakers across the Western Development Region (where Manang is located); Manange has 392 speakers (but in the Central Development Region, where Manang is not located), "Tibetan" has 151 speakers in WDR, and Nar-Phu not counted; but Nar-Phu is noted by Tumbahang (2012) as "seriously endangered (83)" CBS reports of Manange populations appear to be low (< 400?)
- Our survey reports ca. 350 Gurung & 200 Gyalsumdo households in lower Manang, but counts are complicated by the influx of other groups into Chame, the exodus of local children to boarding schools outside of Manang, of adults to other parts of Nepal or overseas jobs; the houses are either abandoned or sub-let to families from western Nepal

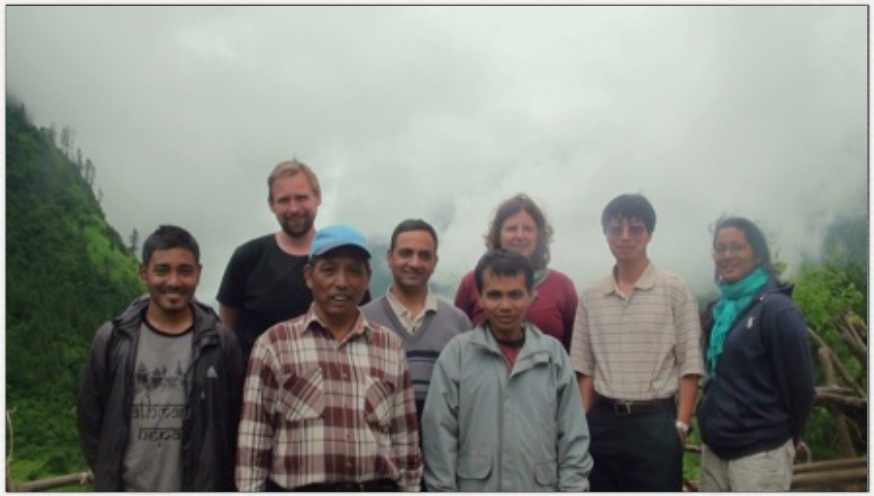
Closing Observations

- At this point, most indicators point to Gyalsumdo & Nar-Phu as more threatened; Gurung population remains more stable, but it has undergone significant contact-induced language change
- Manange appears to be potentially endangered/endangered
- Landweer (2000): A language spoken within urban confines is more affected by those confines & thus is weaker than than a language whose speakers are in more remote areas
- But what counts as "urban" vs. "rural" in Manang? If Landweer is speaking of émigré speech communities in large metropolitan areas who are cut off from their larger/heritage speech network, then this is not the case for either community
- Manang is characterized by a continuous chain of semi-to-fully populated small to medium-sized villages, many of which are a patchwork of traditional & introduced languages

Closing Observations

- Also Landweer (2000): Home is the foundational social domain, followed by cultural events, then social events, so a vernacular vitality level is high if it is used in all domains; likewise, a strong ethnic identity facilitates survival
- This is difficult to test in Manang; all languages show high levels of ethnic pride & identity; M-T is also favored in private/domestic environments
- What might be happening here (particularly for Gyalsumdo & Nar-Phu)-- "boarding school/work emigration phenomenon": children & adults leave Manang (& Nepal) to seek educational & employment opportunities. This is particularly significant for children, as it disrupts the acquisition-transmission cycle
- Social-spatial factors should be considered as carefully as the "traditional/usual suspects" (exogamy, Nepali in schools, negative attitudes/oppression, majority language dominance) in language endangerment situations (cf. Angdembe 2012)

Our Project Team (2012-2014)



Thank You: Ritar Lhakpa Lama, Sangdo Lama, EkMaya Gurung, Sassi Gurung, Pushpa Gurung, Chimi Lama, Prita Malla, Prabal Malla, Kanchan Karki, Yesha Malla, Alex Kalika, Tiffany Downing, Cassidy Jacobsen, Alex Taitt