**A Survey of Language Practices and Attitudes Among the Gyalsumdo
(Tibeto-Burman, Tibetic) in Manang, Nepal**

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I. Introduction

An important component of the documentation of under-studied (and vulnerable or threatened) languages is a fuller picture of how and where the language of study is spoken, and what types of attitudes speakers may carry regarding the past and current places and future prospects of the language in both private and public domains. In many documentation projects, due to varying logistics and timing constraints, this information is frequently gleaned from discussions with one or two speaker representatives. This documentation effort attempts to survey multiple speakers in order to ascertain what the predominant knowledge, information impressions and attitudes are across the entire Gyalsumdo speech community.[1]

With the exception of preliminary lexical and phonetic studies (Vinding 1978, Hildebrandt & Perry 2011), very little is known about the Gyalsumdo language, although the community is referred to in various scholarly and trade publications about the lower Manang District (Snellgrove 1961, Gurung 1976, Mumford 1989, Khadgi 2006, Thomas 2006). Joseph Perry (King's College Cambridge) is now researching Gyalsumdo towards his Ph.D. Dissertation. We offer this survey as a first component within a larger, more comprehensive account of Gyalsumdo linguistic description and language practices.

II. The Survey Instrument and Methods

The sociolinguistic interviews were collected via individual, audio-recorded interviews during summer of 2012. All interviews took place in the home villages of Gyalsumdo speakers and were conducted in Nepali, by the first two authors. All Gyalsumdo interviewees were fluent speakers of Nepali.

Although some Gyalsumdo have relocated to other Manang villages (or beyond), the three traditional villages of Gyalsumdo habitation are Cāme (also the Manang District administrative headquarters, and home to other language communities), and Bagarchāp/Danakju and Thonce to the south and east of Cāme. The location of each interview site is displayed on the following map (in some cases we undertook multiple interviews from several residents of a single household, so the number of points on the map does not neatly correspond to the number of interviews).
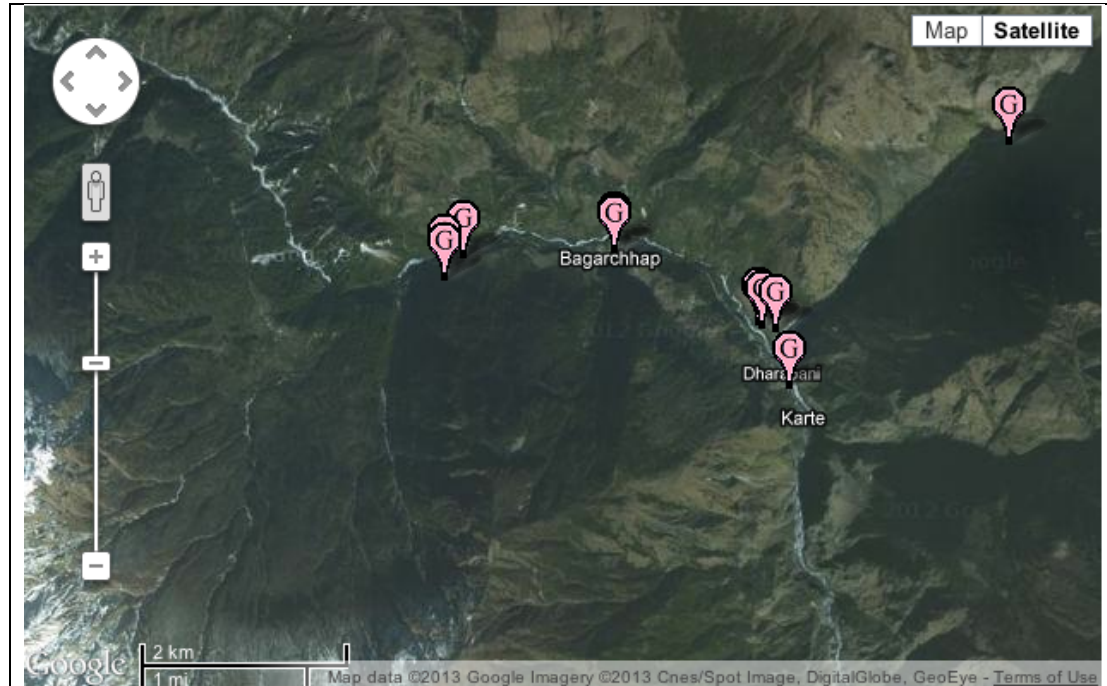
Gyalsumdo Interview Locations (map design by Shunfu Hu,
http://www.mananglanguages.org/multi-media.html)

Our survey currently has data from 15 interviewees who were born and raised in the three main
Gyalsumdo villages, plus one interview from a Gyalsumdo man living in Dharapāni village just
south of Thonce and a Gyalsumdo man living in Tilce village to the north-east of Thonce). Each
interview began with an oral consent process. In addition to metadata (interviewee name,
location, date, time, recording equipment details), a total of 61 questions were asked across five
general categories: General/personal information, family background, current family situation,
language use/attitudes in work and education environments, and subjective contemporary
questions about language use/attitudes in a larger regional and temporal context. In the following
sections, we present and comment on responses to selected questions in the larger interview. The
entire interview questionnaire can be accessed at the following website:
www.mananglanguages.org/sociolinguistic-interviews.html.

III. General/Personal Information

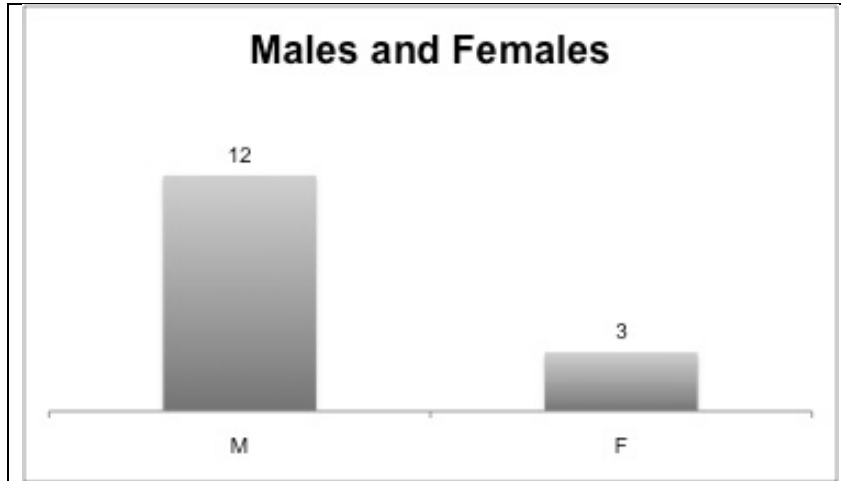Charts 1 and 2 show the distribution of interviewees by gender and by age.

Males and Females

Chart 1: Interviewees by Gender
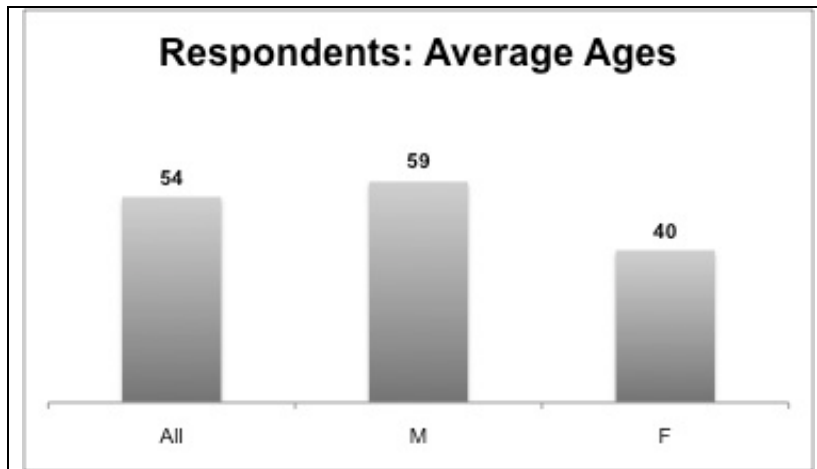
Respondents: Average Ages

Chart 2: Interviewees by Age

We encountered more males than females who were willing and able to be interviewed. We also observe that the male interviewees' average age is older than females, but most speakers are over 40 years old. This reflects a general trend we experienced of encountering fewer Gyalsumdo in Manang, most of whom were older. Most younger Gyalsumdo adults had relocated to Kathmandu or beyond.

We also asked interviewees what term or title they use to refer to their own language. This is shown in Chart 3.
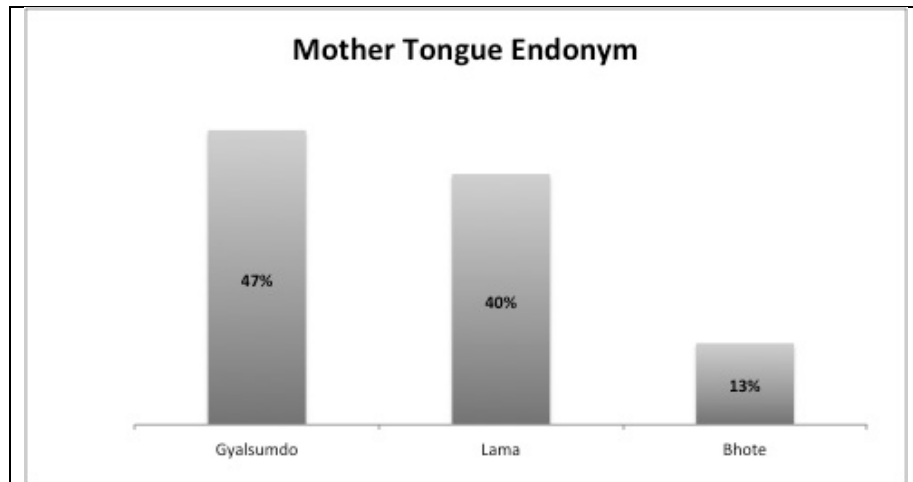
Mother Tongue Endonym

Chart 3: Endonym Choices

We observe that there is some diversity amongst Gyalsumdo, where some refer to their language by the same term, while others prefer "Lama Bhāsā" (lit. Nep. "Lama language") or "Bhote (Bhāsā)" (lit. Nep. "Hill language").

IV. Family Background

The questions in this category ask interviewees to identify and comment on language(s) spoken by their parents or else used by the interviewees with family and peers/friends when they were children. Charts 4 through 6 provide an overview of these patterns.
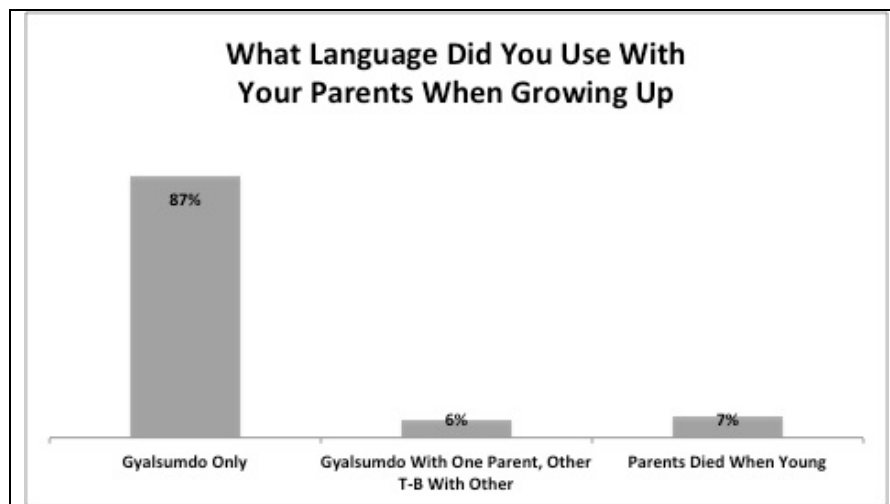
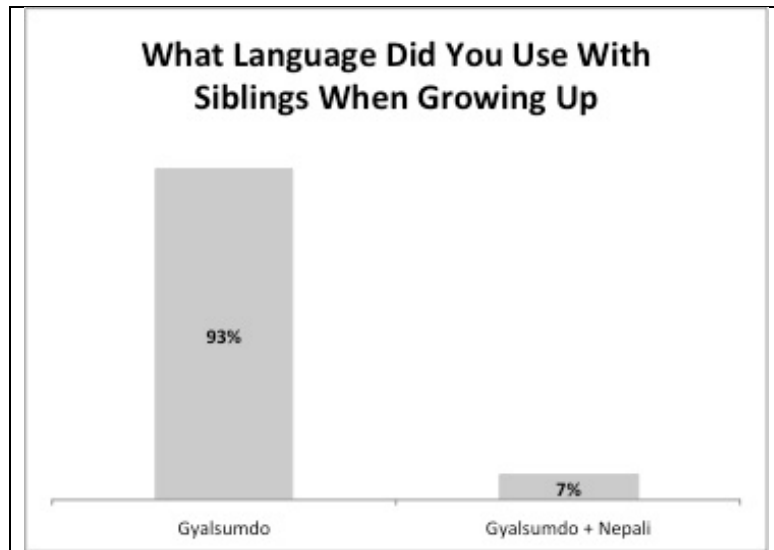**What Language Did You Use With Your Parents When Growing Up**

Chart 4: Language Use With Parents

What Language Did You Use With Siblings When Growing Up

Gyalsumdo: 93%
Gyalsumdo + Nepali: 7%

Chart 5: Language Use with Siblings

What Language Did You Use With Peers When Growing Up

Gyalsumdo: 58%
Gyalsumdo + Nepali: 14%
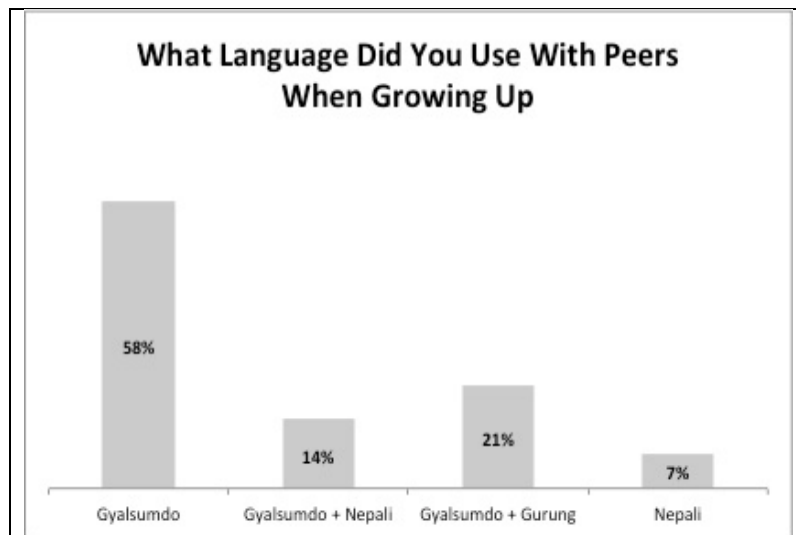Gyalsumdo + Gurung: 21%
Nepali: 7%

Chart 6: Language Use with Friends in Childhood

We see a mixed pattern emerging, whereby Gyalsumdo is the dominant language used by interviewees in household environments when growing up (the lone other Tibeto-Burman language is Thakali), while language use amongst peers outside of the house is distributed across Gurung (Tibeto-Burman, Tamangic) and Nepali (Indo-European), either in an alternating scenario, or in one case, only Nepali use. We can compare these trends in the history of the interviewees' lives to current/contemporary language patterns at home and in daily situations, shown in section V.

V. Current Family Situation

We began with a general question: "What language do you use right now, in your everyday life?" and then turned to questions about language practices with specific family members, shown in Charts 7 and 8.
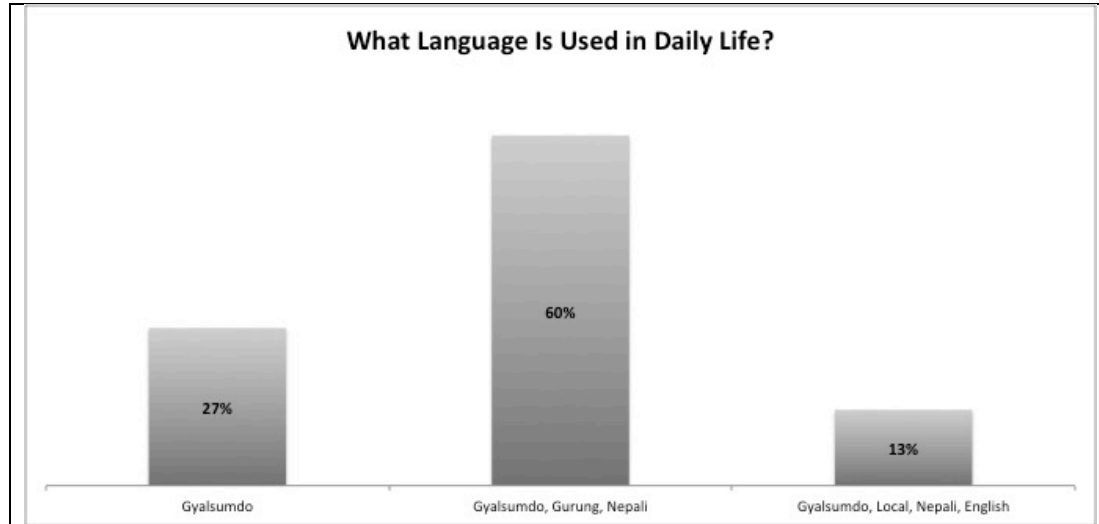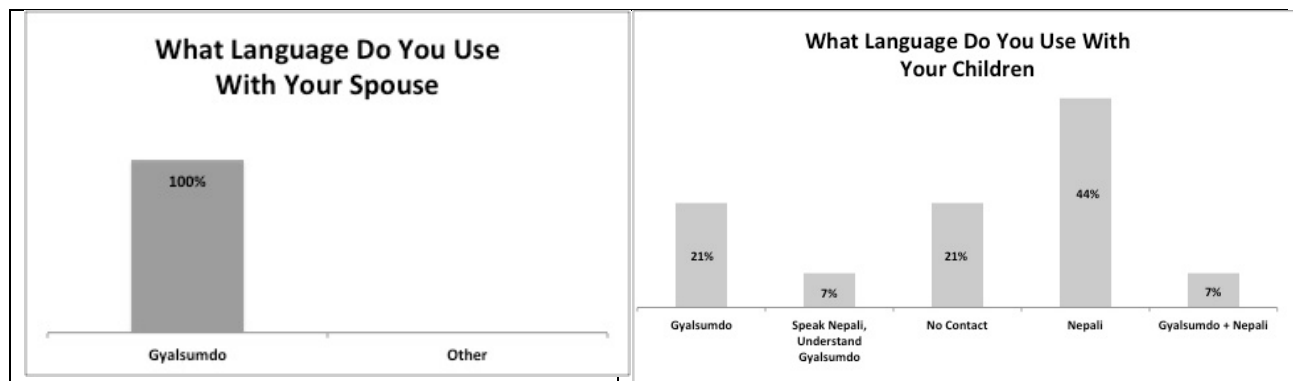
What Language Is Used in Daily Life?

27%	60%	13%
Gyalsumdo	Gyalsumdo, Gurung, Nepali	Gyalsumdo, Local, Nepali, English

Chart 7: Language Use in Everyday Life

What Language Do You Use With Your Spouse

100%	
Gyalsumdo	Other

What Language Do You Use With Your Children

21%	7%	21%	44%	7%
Gyalsumdo	Speak Nepali, Understand Gyalsumdo	No Contact	Nepali	Gyalsumdo + Nepali

Chart 8: Language Use with Spouse and Children

In general, while Gyalsumdo is the dominant language of practice between spouses, we find that the use of Gyalsumdo is varied outside of the house and with younger generations. Outside of the house, Gurung is used more amongst peers, while Nepali is the dominant alternative with children. This is largely due to the common placement nowadays of children in boarding schools in Besisahar (Lamjung District, to the south of Manang) or in Kathmandu. As Chart 8 also shows, many younger Gyalsumdo can understand their parents' mother-tongue, but they speak Nepali to their parents. The more restricted use of Gyalsumdo in favor of Gurung or Nepali becomes even more evident in responses presented in sections VI. and VII.

VI. Language Use/Attitudes in Work and Education Environments
Not all of the interviewees received a formal education, but for those who did, we asked about the language of instruction that they received in school. We also asked interviewees what language(s) they used predominantly in work situations. These responses are shown in Charts 9 and 10.
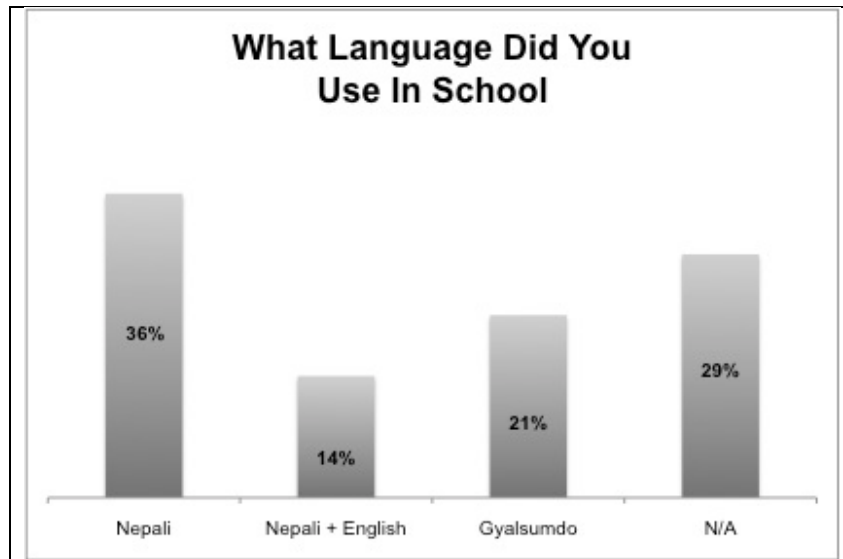
What Language Did You Use In School

36% Nepali
14% Nepali + English
21% Gyalsumdo
29% N/A

Chart 9: Language of Education

What Language(s) Do You Use At Work

33% Gyalsumdo
13% Gyalsumdo and Nepali
27% Nepali
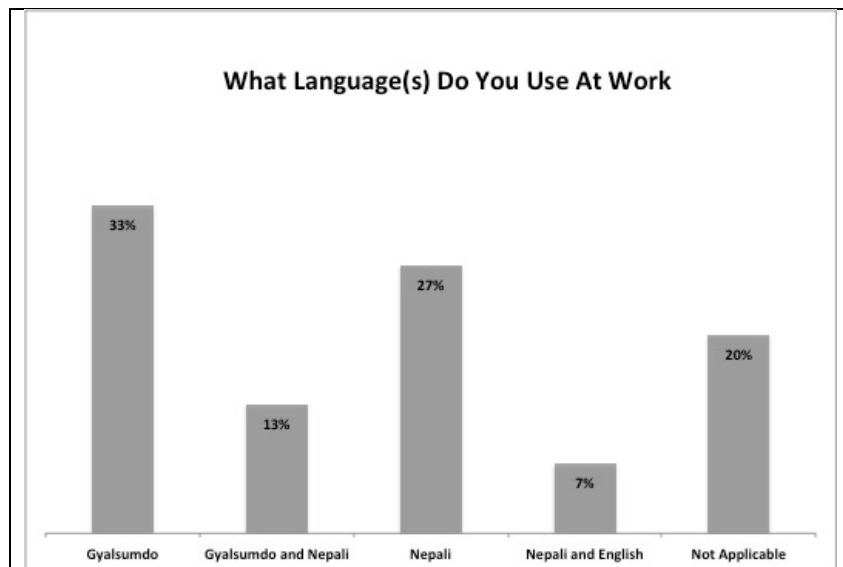7% Nepali and English
20% Not Applicable

Chart 10: Language of the Workplace

It's not surprising to see Nepali (and English) as the dominant language of instruction for interviewees. Gyalsumdo was only noted by interviewees in the context of their early years of schooling; some instructors who were also speakers of Gyalsumdo used this language with young (monolingual) children to help transition them into the school environment before switching over to Nepali.
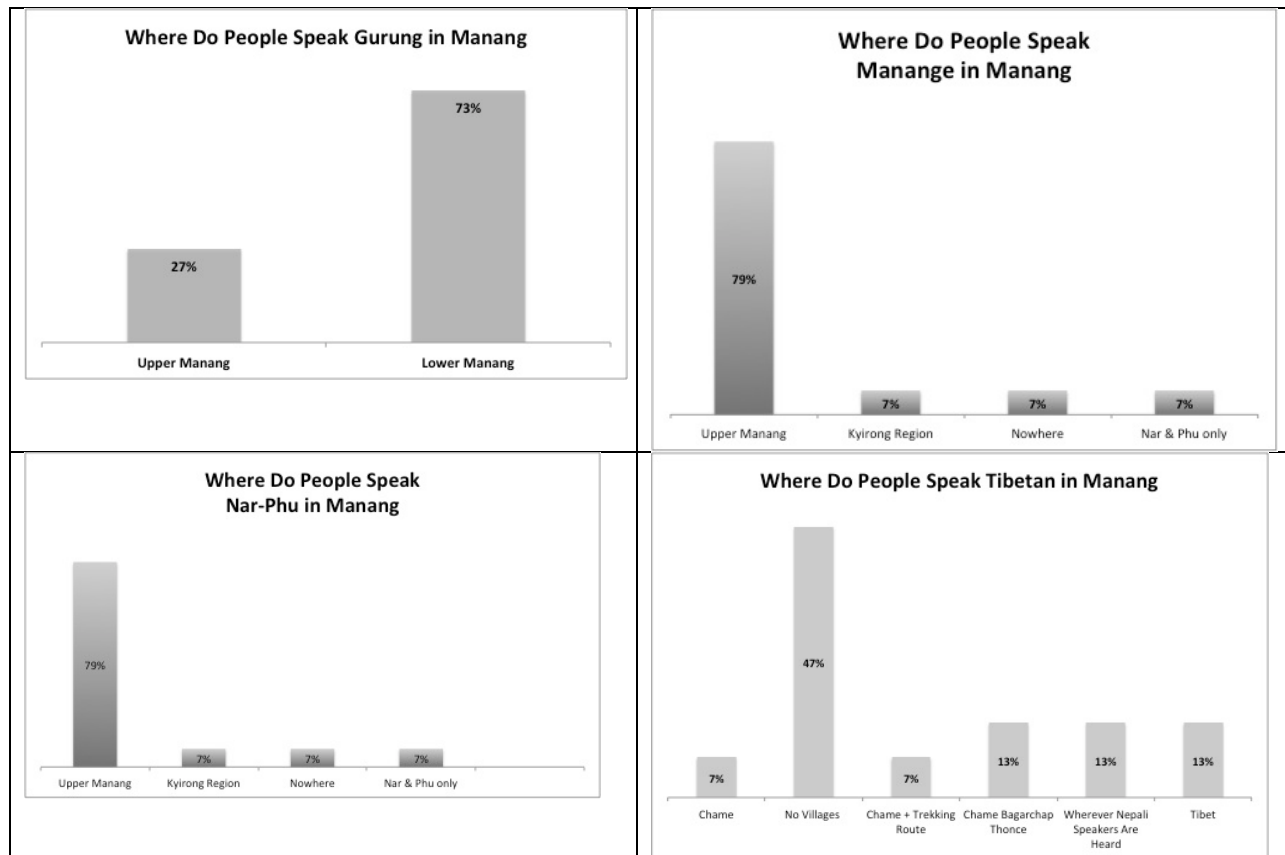
The interviewees perform a range of different occupations, including agricultural work, lodge ownership/management, administrative work (particularly in Cāme village), school teacher or headmaster/principal, or local trade/business. Three interviewees did not hold work at the time of the interview, so they preferred to answer "not applicable." The charts show that while about 30% of interviewees are able to rely exclusively on Gyalsumdo in the workplace, almost 50% use only Nepali or some combination of Nepali and Gyalsumdo or English. Similarly to the

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results from questions regarding language use with friends and family, the further the situation of interaction is from the home, the more likely it is that a language other than Gyalsumdo will be necessary.

VII. Subjective Contemporary Questions

As described by Hildebrandt (2003, 2004, 2007) and Noonan (2003a, b), the Manang District is home to four languages from two Tibeto-Burman subgroups: Gurung, Manange and Nar-Phu are Tamangic, and Gyalsumdo is Central Tibetan. We were interested to get an understanding of how local inhabitants view the language (and possibly dialect) diversity of Manang. Do they see Manang as largely comprised of a single language with different variants, or do they see Manang as multi-lingual? We explored this concept from two directions. First, we asked interviewees where they thought these languages were spoken throughout lower and upper Manang. We then asked the interviewees whether (and how well) they would understand a lifelong resident of specific villages if they met him/her for the first time and each person spoke his/her mother-tongue to the other.

As to the first question, where interviewees thought specific languages were spoken, Chart 11 illustrates the responses as organized by-language.

Where Do People Speak Nepali in Manang

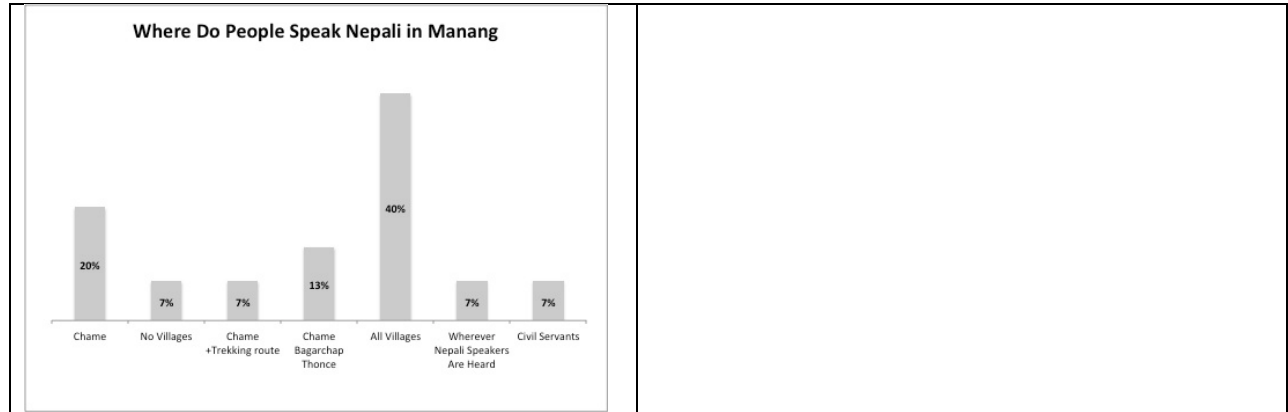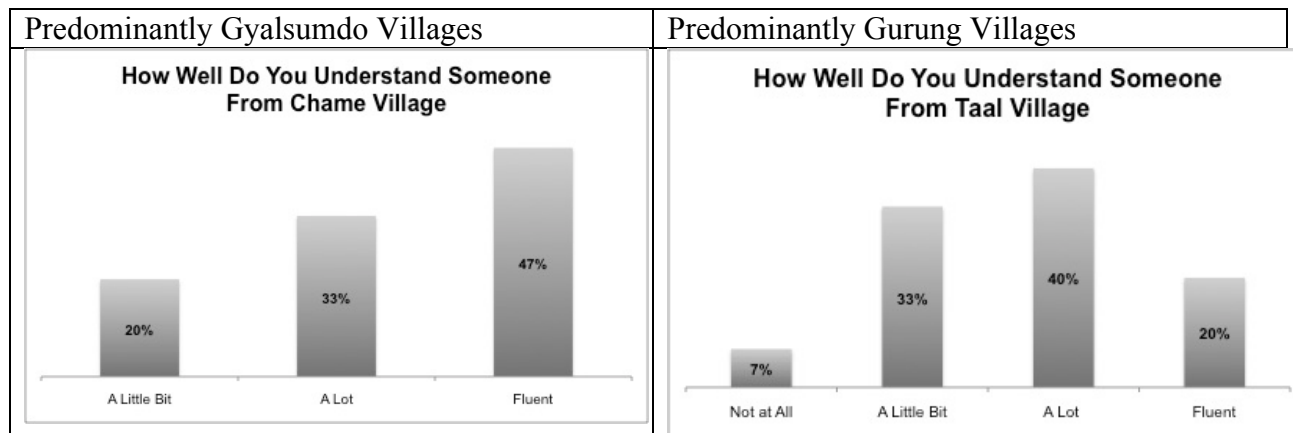|	
Chame: 20%	
No Villages: 7%	
Chame +Trekking route: 7%	
Chame Bagarchap Thonce: 13%	
All Villages: 40%	
Wherever Nepali Speakers Are Heard: 7%	
Civil Servants: 7%	

Chart 11. Perceptions on Where Different Manang Languages are Spoken

There are some interesting observations to be made from these charts. One observation is that Nar-Phu and Manange are spoken in the same general "upper Manang" region. From a linguist's perspective, Nar-Phu and Manange are different languages, and Nar-Phu is spoken in its respective two villages, while Manange is spread across roughly thirteen villages of upper Manang. However, due to their structural similarity to each other along with the greater differences between Gyalsumdo and the two languages, the general feeling is that the two languages occupy the same general geographic space. Another observations is that Gurung is generally limited to lower Manang. A third observation has to do with "Tibetan." We framed the question with the word "Tibetan" used specifically because we had learned from some Gyalsumdo that Tibetan is a different language. We observe that a number of Gyalsumdo agree with this idea, and that "Tibetan" (presumably liturgical varieties) is not a spoken language in Manang in their minds. Finally, we can observe that Nepali is spoken throughout Manang, but particularly in Cāme, the district administrative headquarters.

As to the second question, whether (and how well) they would understand lifelong residents of different villages when the interlocutors spoke to each other in their respective mother tongues, we present the findings in a set of two charts. Chart 12 illustrates lower Manang villages (in which mainly Gyalsumdo- and Gurung-speaking communities are found), up to and including Cāme. Chart 13 illustrates upper Manang villages (in which mainly Manange- and Nar-Phu-speaking communities are found).
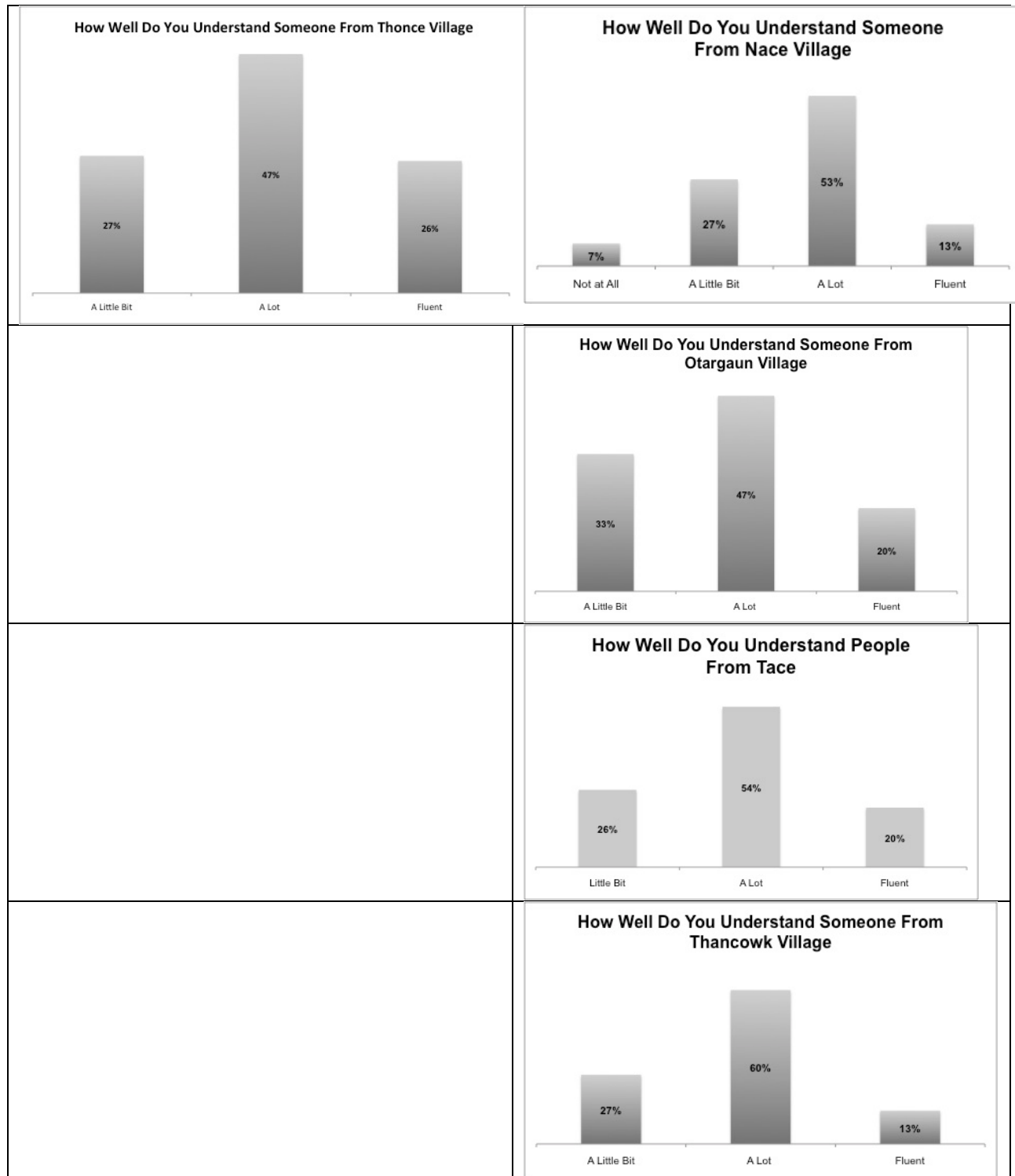
Predominantly Gyalsumdo Villages	Predominantly Gurung Villages
How Well Do You Understand Someone From Chame Village A Little Bit: 20% A Lot: 33% Fluent: 47%	**How Well Do You Understand Someone From Taal Village** Not at All: 7% A Little Bit: 33% A Lot: 40% Fluent: 20%

Chart 12: Mutual Intelligibility of Residents of Lower Manang Villages

Manange Villages	Nar-PhuVillages

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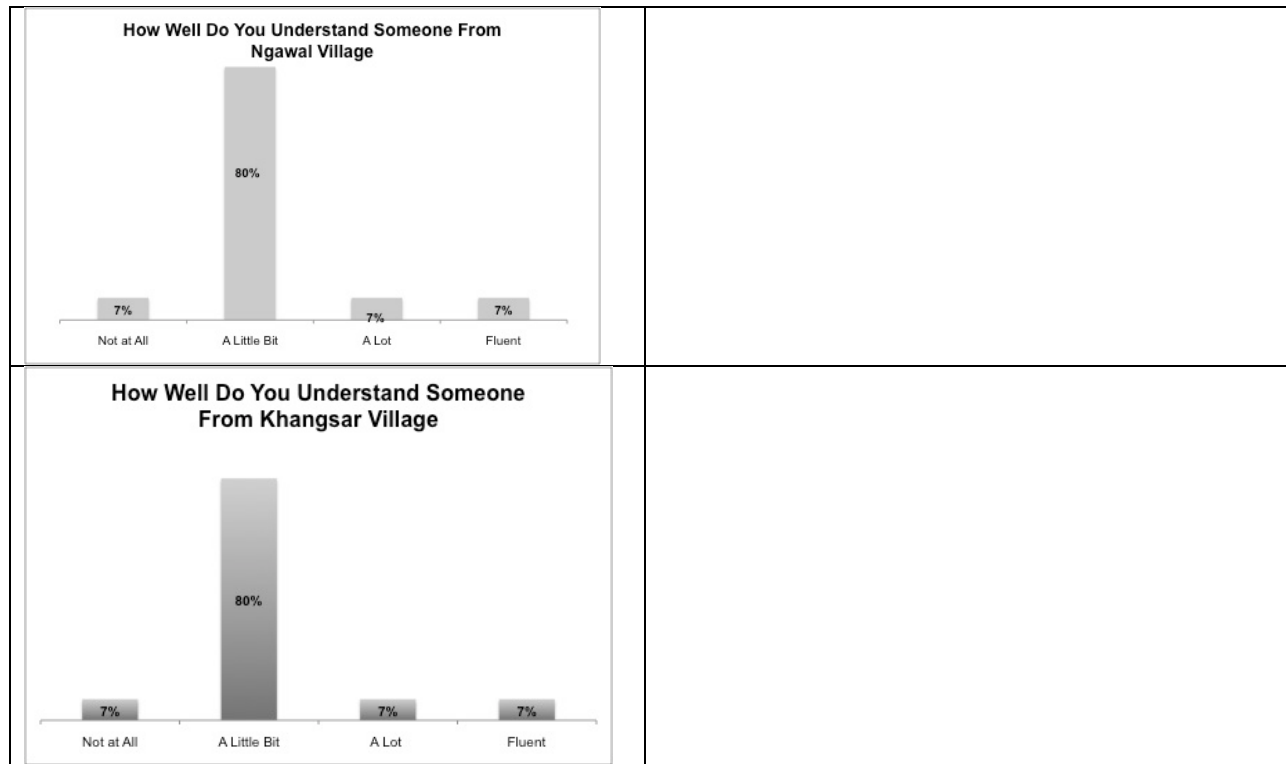|	
How Well Do You Understand Someone From Ngawal Village 80% (A Little Bit) 7% (Not at All), 7% (A Lot), 7% (Fluent)	
How Well Do You Understand Someone From Khangsar Village 80% (A Little Bit) 7% (Not at All), 7% (A Lot), 7% (Fluent)	

Chart 13: Mutual Intelligibility of Residents of Upper Manang Villages

In Chart 12, the villages that are home mainly to Gyalsumdo families are on the left, while those that are home mainly to Gurung people are on the right. We can see that mutual comprehension is overall high for people hailing from all lower Manang villages, but that the percentages of very high mutual comprehension are greater for people Gyalsumdo communities. These trends can be contrasted with those in Chart 13, where villages that are home mainly to Manange people are on the left, while the Nar-Phu villages are on the right. Overall mutual comprehension is much lower for people hailing from upper Manang, particularly so for those coming from Nar and Phu.

These two sets of questions then paint a picture of more Gyalsumdo familiarity with both the types of languages used in lower Manang (in terms of their identification) and also greater comprehension/mutual intelligibility of Gurung in comparison to the other languages of upper Manang. This also correlates with questions posed to Gyalsumdo interviewees about their perceived levels of proficiency in Gurung and in Manange, shown in Chart 14.
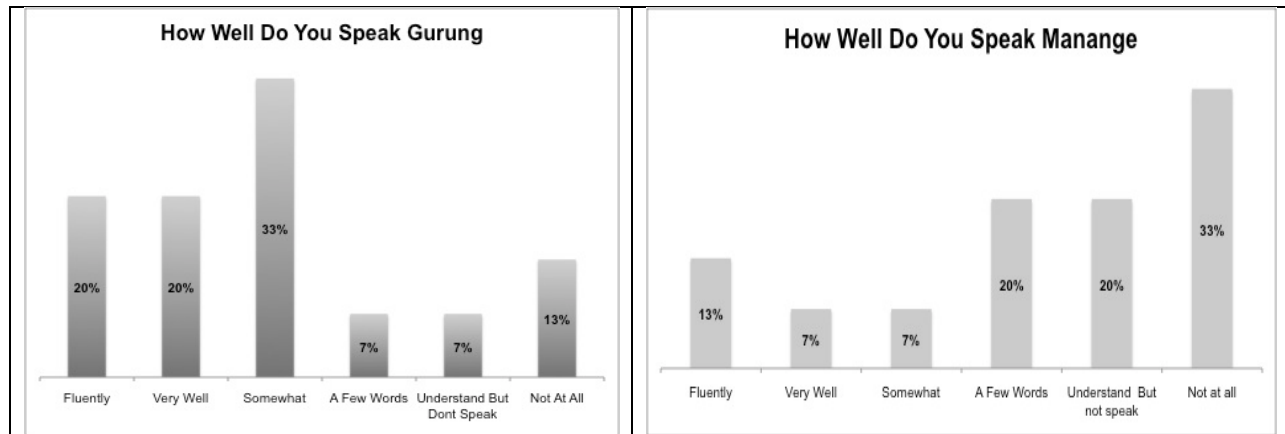
Chart 14: Degree of Proficiency in Gurung and Manange

We asked framed a final question on this topic in a very general way: "In your opinion, is there only one language spoken throughout all of Manang, or are there several different languages spoken throughout Manang?" We actually did not ask this question of every Gyalsumdo interviewee. The question emerged as potentially relevant once we had completed several interviews, so it was added later into the process. Chart 15 illustrates the responses to this question from those interviewees that we were able to ask.[2]
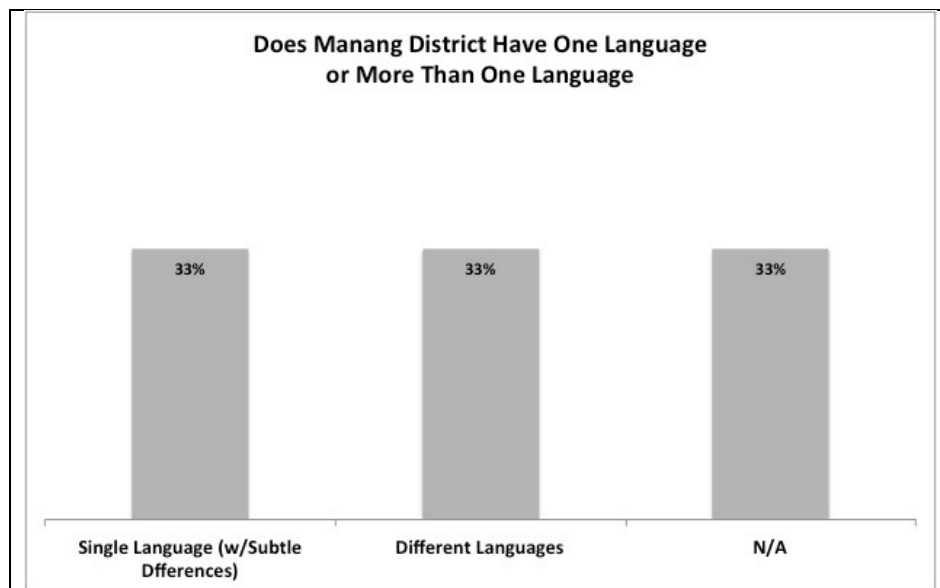

Chart 15. Does Manang Have One or Several Languages?

Of those Gyalsumdo who think that there is a single language in Manang, there is general consensus there is still some regional variation, with an emphasis on a greater difference between what is found in lower Manang versus upper Manang. Of those who feel that there is more than one language in Manang, some people feel that upper Manang languages are "pure Gurung" (even in contrast to the Gurung spoken in lower Manang), while Gyalsumdo is different. Others

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[2] We also asked questions about perception of possible dialect variation and prestige varieties within Gyalsumdo. These responses are still being coded and will be included in the general survey soon.

feel that Nar and Phu are the same language, but that Manange, Gyalsumdo and Gurung are each different languages.

We closed our interview with a series of questions addressing the interviewees' opinions about the importance and/or role(s) played by Gyalsumdo in specific contexts, questions regarding future prospects for Gyalsumdo, and questions regarding advice they might offer to maintain or increase the presence of Gyalsumdo in their communities. Charts 16 through 20 represent these questions.
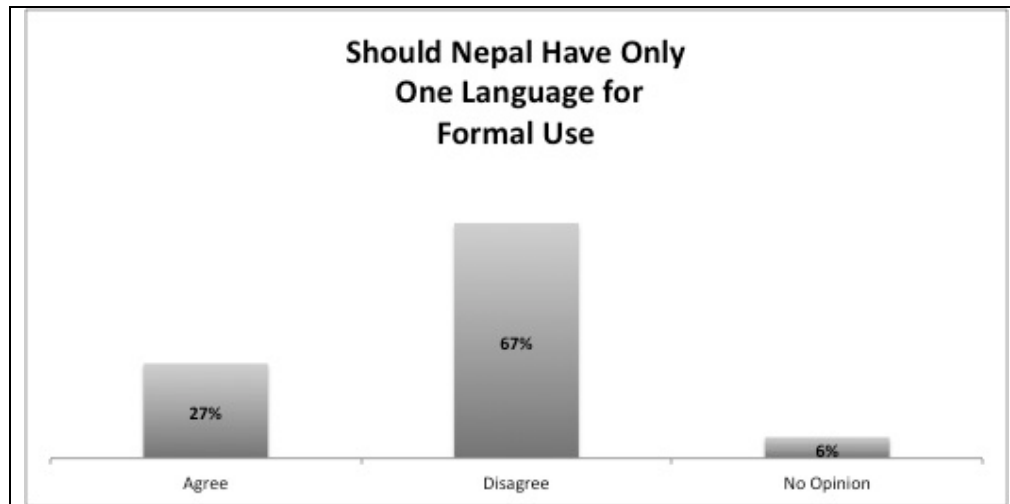

Chart 16. Should Nepal Have Only One Language for Use in Formal Settings
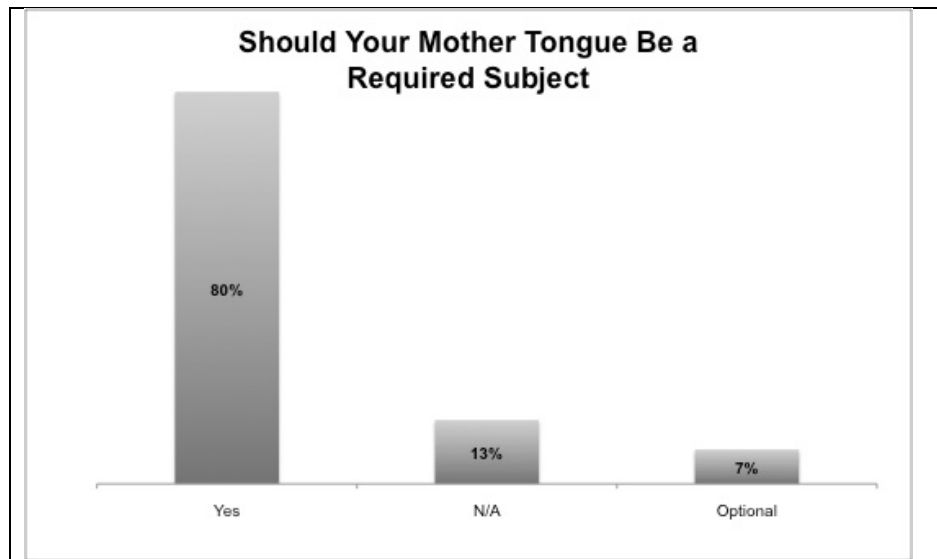

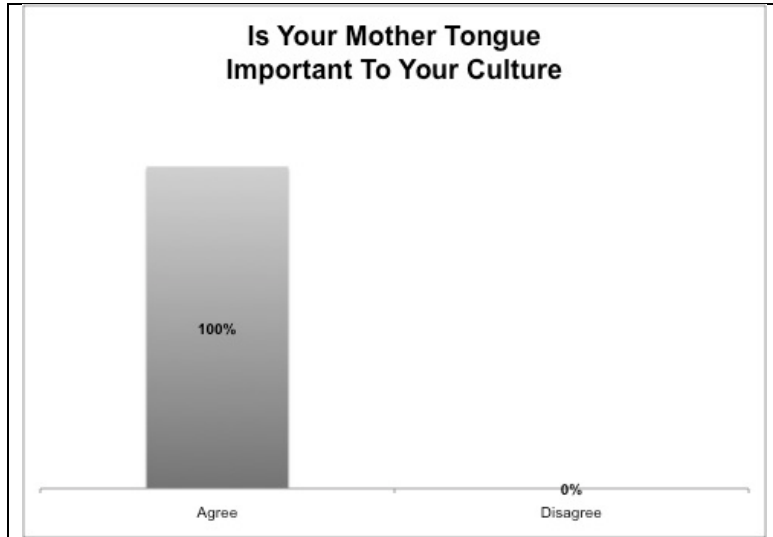Chart 17. Should Gyalsumdo be a Compulsory Subject in Local Schools

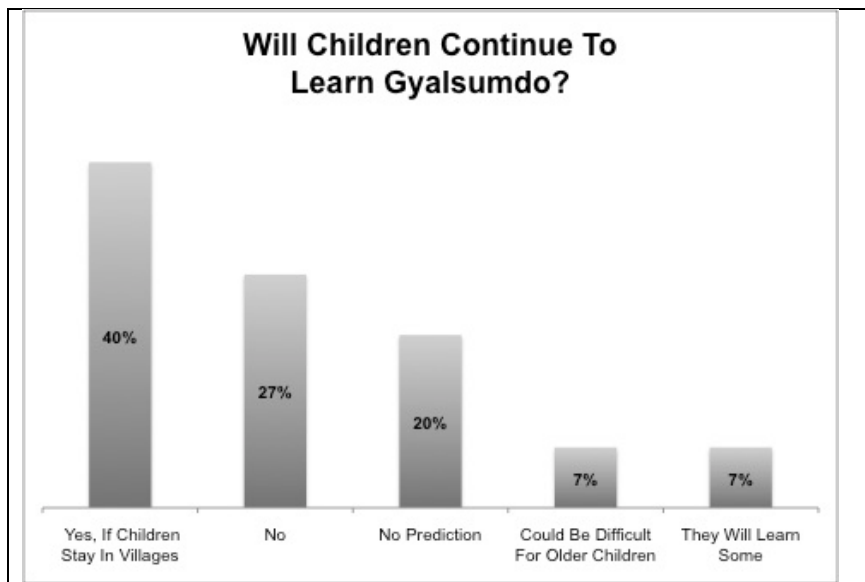Chart 18. How Important is Gyalsumdo for the Practice of Your Culture

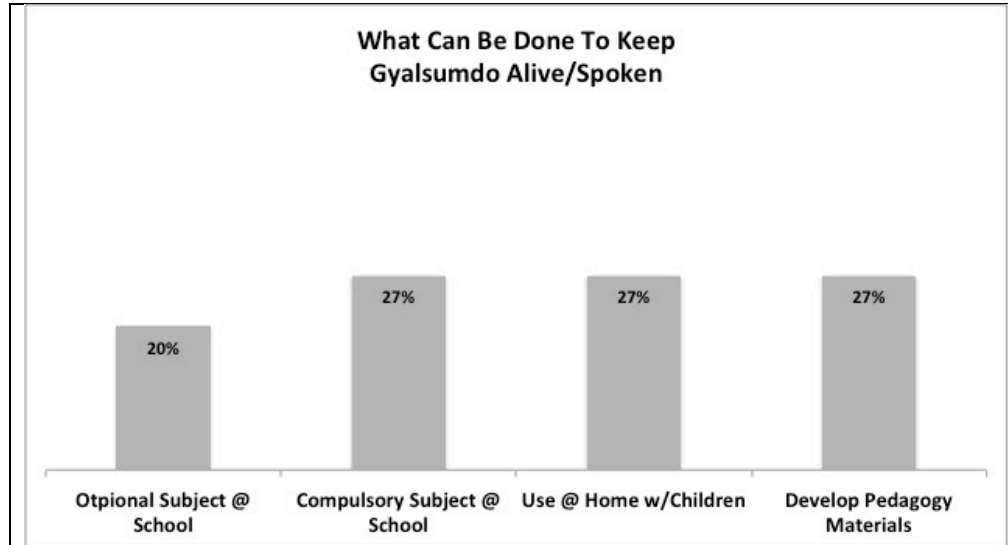Chart 19. Will Gyalsumdo Children Continue to Learn Their Mother-Tongue

Chart 20. What Can Gyalsumdo People Do to Keep the Mother-Tongue Alive

These responses suggest that local attitudes about the role and status of Gyalsumdo are quite strong (e.g. there is complete agreement that Gyalsumdo is important for the practice of community cultural traditions, and there is majority agreement that Gyalsumdo should have a place in the local schools). Gyalsumdo interviewees also feel that Nepali should not be the only language adopted in official context (e.g. business and administrative interactions). Some interviewees also mentioned that Gyalsumdo is a language of local business already (cf. Chart 10). However, these positive attitudes compete with somewhat skeptical predictions about the fate of the language (e.g. in Chart 19, almost half of the people surveyed predict that Gyalsumdo will disappear, or will be compromised in future generations).

VIII. Discussion and Concluding Comments

The overall picture that emerges from this sociolinguistic study is that the use and transmission of Gyalsumdo has increasingly (through time) become more restricted to residential (private) environments, although it is a form of communication to some extent in those (public domain) occupations where Gyalsumdo speakers interact with each other (e.g. agriculture, local business) or where monolingual children need to transition from their first to second language (e.g. the first years of primary school).

Gyalsumdos appear to make willing use of both Gurung and Nepali as second language choices in public contexts, and Gyalsumdo parents in particular claim to use Nepali increasingly when communicating with their children (particularly those children who have relocated to boarding schools in other parts of the country). The establishment of Cāme as the district administrative headquarters has also necessitated the use of Nepali in a community that was traditionally Gyalsumdo.

Because of this convergence of sociolinguistic and geographic factors, Gyalsumdos have a clearer picture in their minds about where Gurung and Nepali spoken, and they are more comfortable communicating in Gurung and Nepali as alternative languages in comparison to the other Manang languages. This is particularly interesting to note, given the general perception

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throughout Manang (and even into Kathmandu) that Mananges are the economically and politically dominant communities in Manang. It remains to be seen, from future sociolinguistic surveys in upper Manang, whether and how far the role of Manange as a regional lingua franca applies.

The increasingly narrowed contexts in which Gyalsumdo is used and transmitted stands in contrast to largely positive opinions about the importance of the language to cultural traditions and about how it should be used, for example in local primary schools. So, to the extent that Gyalsumdo is increasingly endangered via restricted contexts of practice and transmission, a negative self-image about the language is not an obvious factor in this endangerment scenario.

Finally, it's also interesting to note that many Gyalsumdo view (liturgical) "Tibetan" as a separate language from theirs, and that they view language variation throughout Manang as a mixed picture: Manang may have one larger language with regional differences, or if there is language diversity, is it largely viewed as a "Gyalsumdo" vs. "Gurung" situation.

This represents only part of the picture of language use and attitudes in Manang. As of March 2013 our project team is currently preparing a parallel report on sociolinguistic interviews undertaken with 34 Manang Gurung speakers, and we have the same interview structure planned for Manange and Nar-Phu residents in summer 2013. Added to this, we hope to work with diaspora Gyalsumdo, Gurung, Manange and Nar-Phu speakers in future years to provide a more fully formed picture of language attitudes and practices both in local/traditional scenarios and in long-distance, expanded perspectives.

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