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## Achievement Level of Compulsory and Major English Groups of B.Ed. Students in Subject Verb Agreement of English

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### Abstract

*This paper<sup>2</sup> attempts to test the achievement level of students who are studying English as a Compulsory English (hereafter CE) and a Major English (hereafter ME) at Bachelor of Education (hereafter B.Ed.) level at Dhankuta Multiple Campus under Tribhuvan University's syllabus. Both CE and ME groups are being taught the same books as the Compulsory English in the same class by the same teacher. Most of the CE groups fail in the exam in compulsory English. On the basis of findings, this paper recommends that both CE and ME should not be taught together in the same class. They should be treated differently in different classroom.*

**Key Words:** *Compulsory English Group, Major English Group, Achievement, Subject Verb Agreement.*

### Introduction

There is not so long history of teaching English in our educational system of Nepal. English was introduced formally in the school level education system about one hundred fifty years ago that is exactly in 1854 A.D. (Bhattarai, 2006). At that time, there was no any university in Nepal so it was not possible to introduce English in the higher level education. At present time, English is being taught as one of the compulsory subjects from Nursery level to Bachelor level. Besides Compulsory English, students get a chance to study English as one of the major subjects from grade Even to Masters' degree under the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of different universities of Nepal.

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All four year B.Ed. students should study English (Eng. Ed. 400) as one of the compulsory subjects which carries 100 Full Mark. The course of the compulsory English includes grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing components. Grammar incorporates the essential aspects of the English usage in context. Vocabulary covers words from different academic fields. The reading component deals with a wide variety of carefully selected materials. The writing part includes materials geared to developing various writing skills required for effective communication on matters of general and academic interests. On the contrary, all students are not allowed to select English as the major subject. Those students who have passed the twelve grade or Intermediate level with major English get a chance to study English as specialization in B.Ed. English as major subject includes two specialization subjects, viz. Foundations of Language and Linguistics (Eng. Ed. 416) which carries 100 Full Mark and Reading Writing and Critical Thinking (Eng. Ed. 417) which also carries 100 Full Mark. Specialization I is a foundation course on language and linguistics which deals with different concepts and dichotomies related to linguistics. It also introduces different levels and areas of language and linguistics such as phonetics and phonology, morphology and syntax, semantics, pragmatics and discourse analysis. It further includes the application of linguistic knowledge into language teaching. Similarly, specialization II is Reading Writing and Critical Thinking which is a course that helps students to improve their reading, writing and critical thinking skills for personal and professional studies. The course presents varieties of English texts through which students are exposed to the authentic English texts blended with the contemporary themes. Similarly, the course also presents an inspiring collection of authentic sources to stimulate student's written work that develops their free written expression through a series of graded steps. Furthermore, it focuses on stages of the writing process and the structure of academic writing.

In the context of Nepalese examination system, students are required to read and recite the contents prescribed in the curriculum and they are required to solve the questions based on the prescribed contents within 3 hours. On the basis of answering, s/he gets marks in different ranges. On the basis of marks' ranges, they are categorized from fail below 35% to distinction degree above 75%. As a result, students have an attitude that exam is designed not to speak but to write. If anyone is able to write, s/he will score high marks and if anyone cannot write, s/he will fail in the exam. In this way, our curriculum has focused on only written mode of testing.

In Nepal, English is being taught as a foreign language [hereafter EFL]. In the past, English was taught on the basis of Grammar Translation Method [hereafter GTM]. Now, English curriculum has been designed on the basis of Communicative Approach [hereafter CA] but in most of the remote government schools of Nepal, English is being taught by GT method. The teacher presents structures of both

language and provides the students with possible translation of each word. On the basis of structures and equivalent words of English, the students practice to translate from source language (Nepali language) to target language (English language). This is the situation of teaching English in Nepal.

According to the result published in 2077 by Office of the Controller of Examinations, Only 9604 have passed the examination out of 22260 students. The pass percentage is 43.14%. Majority students fail in Compulsory English. This study carried out a research on testing the CE and ME students' achievement on SV agreement of English which is the major aspect of English grammar. There were remarkably different levels of achievement in SV agreement of English. One of the main causes of failure in English is that CE and ME group are being taught at the same class and treated them equally.

### **Literature review and SV agreement**

This study is basically based on the linguistic comparison, more specifically Contrastive Analysis (hereafter CA). Nepali students find the difficulty in learning English language. This is the study of CA. This study is not directly related to CA but is concerned with CA assumptions. Crystal (1996) states that

The phrase contrastive analysis also identifies a general approach to the investigation of language, particularly as carried on in certain areas of Applied Linguistics such as foreign language teaching and translation. In a contrastive analysis of two languages the points of structural difference are identified and there are then studied as areas of potential difficulty in foreign language learning. The claim that these differences are the source of difficulty in foreign language learning and thus govern the progress of the learner is known as the contrastive analysis hypothesis (p. 90).

So, CA or inter-language study is very close to bilingualism though there are some differences. In the words of James (1980) states that

It has much in common with the study of bilingualism. Bilingualism, by definition, is not the study of individual single languages, nor of language in general, but of the possession of two languages. If it is the possession of two languages by a single community we speak of societal bilingualism, if we study the person who has competence in two languages we are dealing with individual bilingualism: CA's concern is with this second category. Bilingualism refers to the possession of two languages by an individual or society, whereas CA is concerned with how a monolingual becomes bilingual (p. 8).

But this study does not deal with interlanguage study but focuses on the comparative study between CE group and ME group of B.Ed. level students under Tribhuvan University who had been studying English as a foreign language.

Nepali students as being EFL students face difficulty in SV agreement of English which is one of the most problematic and tricky areas. They make many mistakes on SV agreement. There are many puzzling rules in SV agreement of English which do not match in Nepali. For resolving the puzzles in SV agreement of English, I followed the rules of SV agreement of English purposed by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999, pp. 60-62) and designed the test items on basis of their rules.

## **Objectives**

There are some objectives which are listed below.

- To find out the overall differences in achievement level in SV agreement of CE group and ME group of B.Ed. students.
- To find out the differences of achievement level of both groups in SV agreement through subjective and objective test and achievement level of male and female students.
- To recommend some suggestions

## **Methods and Materials**

Under it, four major components, namely research design, participants, tools and procedures have been discussed.

### **Research design**

This study is based on a survey method. For carrying out a research, there should be certain procedures. Nunan (1992, p.141) suggested the eight steps procedures. They are as follows:

- Step 1: Define objectives - What do we want to find out?
- Step 2: Identify target population - Who do want to know about?
- Step 3: Literature review - What have others said/discovered about the issue?
- Step 4: Determine sample - How many subjects should we survey and how will we identify these?
- Step 5: Identify survey instruments - How will the data be collected: questionnaire/ interview?
- Step 6: Design survey procedure - How will the data collection actually be carried out?
- Step 7: Identify analytical procedure - How will the data be assembled and analyzed?
- Step 8: Determine reporting procedure - How will be written up and presented?

### **Sample and Sampling Procedures**

All Bachelor students (B.Ed.) who were studying at Dhankuta Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University were universe of the study. All B.Ed. students were categorised into two groups as CE group and ME group on the basis of their major subjects. From

both groups 40 students were selected on the basis of random sampling. Out of 40 students, 20 from CE group and 20 from ME group were selected. In each group, 10 students were male and 10 students were female.

## Tools

I have prepared two different types of tests, namely objective and subjective. Objective test consisted of three types of test i. 'choosing the correct form of verb, ii. true/false, iii. 'making correction the wrong sentences. Similarly, free writing on two topics was designed for subjective test. All those four types of tests were used as the tool for data collection. The test weighing 50 Full Marks were designed with 1.5 hrs time allotment. The scheme of these test items is shown in the following table clearly.

**Table 1:** Scheme of Tests

S.N.	Test items	No. of questions	Full Marks
1.	i. Choose the correct form of the verb from the given brackets	10	1x20=10
2.	<b>Group A</b> ii. Write (T) after the correct sentences and write (F) after the wrong sentences.	10	1x10=10
3.	iii. Find out the errors and correct them.	10	1x10=10
4.	Free writing about	2	2x10=20
	<b>Group B</b> i. importance of village and village life ii. an unforgettable moment		
5	Total		50 FM

## Procedures

I collected the data from student's response. While collecting the data, I adopted the following steps. In the first step, I made four sets of the test. Then I informed both groups of students and selected required number of students through random sampling. Then, they became ready to involve in the exam. They solved the questions within time given and submitted the answer sheet to me in time.

## Results and Discussion

The collected data were interpreted and presented descriptively. The analysis is based on three perspectives, viz. major wise CE group and ME group, test item-wise analysis and interpretation, gender-wise analysis.

## Achievement Level of CE and ME Groups

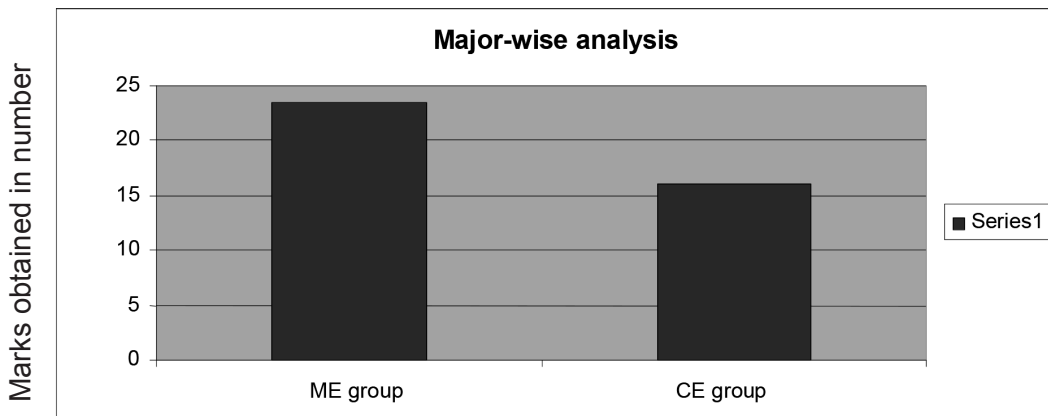
Achievement level of both CE and ME groups has been calculated in the mean scores. The mean scores were calculated in the following formula.

$$\text{Mean scores (X)} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

[ $\sum x$  stands for summation of scores, N stands for number of students]

The achievement level in subject verb agreement of both groups was examined by four different types of questions. Both groups were administered the same set of tests with 50 full marks. Out of 50 full marks, students from ME group scored relatively higher number in comparison to CE group. The figure 1 shows the mean scores of both groups in major-wise tests.

**Figure 1:** Achievement level of CE and ME groups

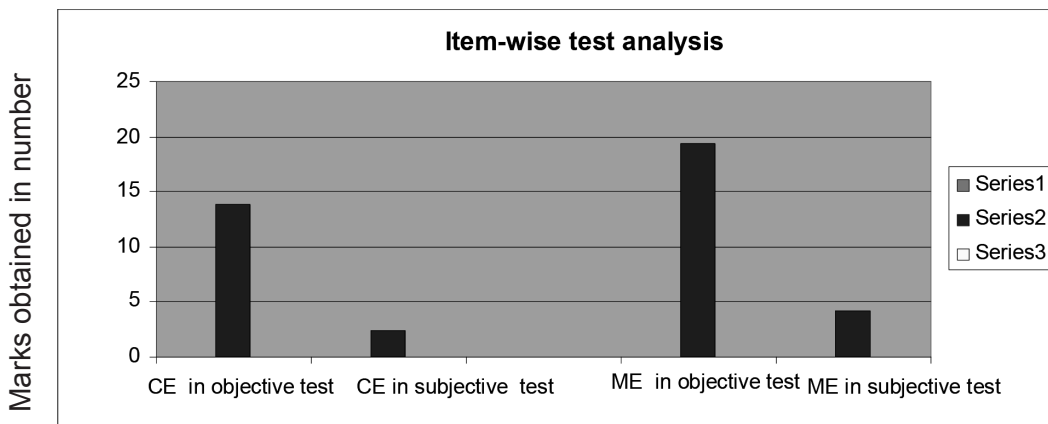


From the figure mentioned above, mean score of ME group was 23.47 out of 50. When it was calculated in percentage, it comprised of 46%. On the contrary, mean score of CE group was 16 which comprised of 32%. As I compared the scores of both groups, there are considerable differences in achievement level in subject verb agreement.

***Item-wise analysis***

Both groups were given same sets. Tests were of two types namely subjective and objective. The figure No. 2 shows the mean scores of both groups in item-wise tests.

**Figure 2:** Test item wise analysis

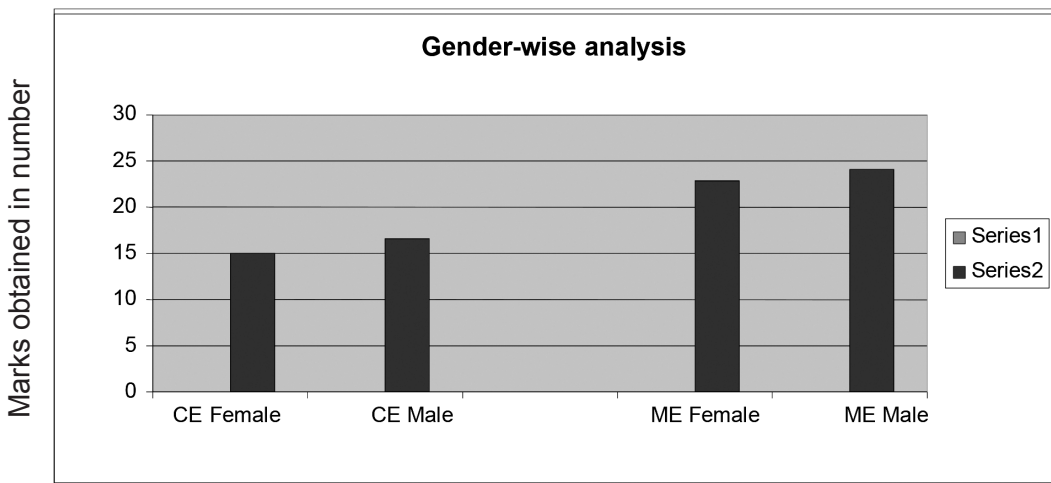


On the basis of their performance shown in the figure 2, mean score of CE group was 13.9 in objective tests which comprised of 27.8% and 2.4 in subjective test which comprised of 4.8%. On the contrary, ME group had 19.32 mean scores in objective tests which comprised of 38% and 4.2 mean scores in subjective tests which comprised of 8.4%. Both groups are considerably weak in subjective tests in comparison to objective tests. In objective tests, there was more probability to select the correct words by accident.

### ***Gender-wise analysis***

After analysing the marks obtained by male and female students of both groups, there was no considerable difference in obtaining marks in terms of gender distinction. The figure No. 3 shows the mean scores of male and female students of both groups.

**Figure 3:** Gender-wise analysis



In the figure No. 3, female students from CE group had 14.95 mean scores which comprised of 29.9% whereas male students from CE group had 16.65 mean scores which comprised of 33.3%. So is the case in ME group, female students of ME group had 22.85 mean scores which comprised of 45.7% whereas male students of ME group had 24.10 mean scores which comprised of 48.2%. From the data, female students scored relatively low marks in both groups.

### **Analysis of Students' Response**

Both CE and ME groups were weak in free writing. Both of them committed the following errors in free writing. They are presented as examples.

- a. They have to allowed.  
[to infinitive problem]

- b. Students are do.  
[‘are’ is unnecessary]
- c. Campus life is the not happy and free life.  
[‘the’ is unnecessary]
- d. My study was continue.  
[‘was’ takes present participle here]
- e. We looks around.  
[ ‘-s’ is unnecessary]
- f. Our nation is develop easily.  
[‘is’ takes present participle here]
- g. We are regret.  
[‘are’ is unnecessary]
- h. He go to foreign country.  
[‘he’ takes –s/es form]
- i. I running the school.  
[‘am’ is necessary after verb]
- j. We are play a football.  
[‘are’ takes present participle and ‘a’ is unnecessary]
- k. My friend are laugh.  
[‘are’ is unnecessary and ‘laugh’ takes –s form]
- l. We are together study.  
[‘are’ is unnecessary and ‘together’ comes after study]
- m. We are listen to.  
[‘are’ is unnecessary]
- n. I am make a plan going to Pokhara.  
[‘am’ is unnecessary]
- o. I am says friends.  
[‘am’ and –s inverb are unnecessary]
- p. Our campus are four faculties.  
[problem in selection of verb]
- q. I am meet more friends.  
[‘am’ is unnecessary]
- r. Some student are noise in the classroom.  
[selection of verb]
- s. My passed the S.L.C.  
[ I in the place of ‘my’]



- t. We are stay in discipline.  
[‘are’ is unnecessary]
- u. All students are not come from higher economic family.  
[‘do’ in the place of ‘are’]
- v. I has to go to school.  
[‘have’ in the place of ‘has’]

In this way, there are many types of mistakes in subject verb agreement. They are making mistakes in the use of BE, DO as an auxiliary verb, HAVE as an auxiliary verb and main verbs. In majority cases, they are making errors in the use of BE verb in comparison to others. They used ‘BE’ verb in many places where ‘BE’ verb is not required. The errors committed by students in the use of ‘BE’ can be shown in the examples ‘b, g, j, k, m, n, o, q, t’, and ‘u’. Similarly, error in the use of ‘DO’ as an auxiliary verb can be shown in example ‘u’. Similarly error in the use of ‘HAVE’ as an auxiliary verb can be shown in example ‘v’. These verbs ‘BE, DO and HAVE’ play an important role in subject verb agreement of English. In addition, there are other important aspects in the subject verb agreement. First is selection of verb which can be found in example ‘r’. In this example, ‘are’ has been used in the place of ‘make’. Second is person number agreement which can be shown in examples ‘a, e, h, k, p’. In example ‘a’, there is problem in the use of ‘to’ infinitive form. In example ‘e’, there is violating person agreement. The person ‘we’ can never take ‘-s’ morpheme in stem. Same case is found in example ‘h’ in which ‘he’ always takes ‘-s’ form of verb. In this way, there are different aspects in committing errors by Nepali learners in subject verb agreement of English.

### **Conclusion**

From the analysis of the data collected, there are some conclusion. They are as follows:

- i. For this study, students from ME and CE group of B.Ed. first year were selected to evaluate their achievement level in subject verb agreement of English. So, this study focused on one of the major aspects of English grammar. It was hoped that there were considerable differences in achievement level between ME and CE groups. ME students' mean score was found 23.47 which comprised of 46% as calculated in percentage whereas CE students' mean score was 16 which comprised of 32%. The finding shows that CE group is relatively weak in grammar in comparison to ME group. So, they cannot sit together for the same course. They should be taught differently in different class with different treatment. There should be two sections at least while teaching compulsory English. One section should be managed for CE group to teach the compulsory English and the other should be managed for ME group to teach the compulsory English. It is not so effective to teach

- both groups in the same class room because they have different level of achievement in grammar of English.
- ii. Both groups are committing many errors in the use of BE verb, DO verb, HAVE verb, selection of main verb and number/person agreement. So, the teacher should give emphasis on these aspects of grammar to make error free in the use of subject verb agreement of English.
  - iii. According to this study, female students are relatively weak in CE and ME groups. In both groups, female students' scores are lesser than that of male students' scores. So, female students of both groups should be given emphasis while teaching subject verb agreement of English. For this, the teacher should make teaching gender friendly and make the female students more active in the teaching learning activities.
  - iv. Both CE and ME groups are very weak in free writing. They committed a lot of errors in subject verb agreement. There were some examples which have analysed above. So, the teaching should be focused on the use of 'BE, DO, HAVE, selection of verb and person number agreement. For this, students should be given a lot of exercises related to subject verb agreement and free writing.
  - v. Rules with many examples related to subject verb agreement should be presented to make their learning easy, effective, permanent and meaningful.
  - vi. Appropriate teaching materials like picture, strip story, jumble words related to subject verb agreement should be used while teaching. Teaching materials make the teaching more attractive, effective and meaningful. As a result, students can recall the correct use of subject verb agreement very quickly.

From this study, there is an interesting finding about teaching English to the students of B.Ed. first year. There was no any significant difference between male and female students. But there was significant differences between CE and ME groups. CE group cannot compete with ME group if they are treated differently. So CE group should be given more emphasis while teaching English grammar. So, CE and ME group cannot be taught in the same class while teaching compulsory English. At least, there should be two sections for compulsory English. One section for CE group and the other section for ME group should be managed to teach the compulsory English. As a result, our passed rate will increase remarkably.

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## Appendix A

### Group A: Test Items

These following four different groups of the questions are not taken line to line from any book but they were constructed by myself for the purpose of testing the achievement level of both CE and ME groups of B.Ed. in subject verb agreement.

**Full Marks: 50**

**Time: 1.30**

**Student's Name:**

**Level:**

**Major Subject:**

#### Group A (1x10)

**i. Choose the correct form of the verb in the given brackets.**

1. Ram (work/works) for an international agency.
2. A bird (fly/flies) in the sky.
3. Either Ram or Hari (study/studies) in the Bachelor level.
4. Both of them (play/plays) football.
5. Ram and Sita (love/loves) each other.
6. Slow and steady (win/wins) the race.
7. Where (do/does) she live now?
8. All people (have/has) their own dreams.
9. Someone (is/are) following us.
10. The earth (rotate/rotates) on its axis once a day.

**ii. Write (T) after the correct sentences and write (F) after the incorrect sentences (1x10)**

1. The books on the table is expensive [ ].
2. I as well as my friends am going to college [ ].

- 3. I believe in the god [ ].
- 4. Somebody is searching job [ ].
- 5. Illness mean sickness [ ].
- 6. The rest of the story is exciting [ ].
- 7. Ram, Shyam and I are playing football [ ].
- 8. Did you played football [ ].
- 9. It costs five rupees [ ].
- 10. That blue and green shirt looks nice [ ].

**iii. Find out the errors and correct them. (1x10)**

- 1. Ram works much harder than Sita do.....
- 2. Which way did he goes?.....
- 3. People believes in democracy. ....
- 4. Does Sita works in the field. ....
- 5. The Welsh Mountains is attractive. ....
- 6. Every boy and every girl were present in the class. ....
- 7. A team of doctors are busy. ....
- 8. Ram, Shyam and I am playing football. ....
- 9. Did you liked a mango? .....
- 10. She is not able to goes to school today. ....

**Group B (2x10)**

**Free writing**

- i. Write an essay about your village and importance of village life in about 500 words (10)
- ii. Write an essay about your unforgettable moment in about 500 words (10).

