

Nenglish and its Features in Practice

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Abstract

This article explores the emergence, features and practices of Nenglish. Globalization is the cause of the emergence of world Englishes and Nenglish. Along with the emergence of world Englishes, Nenglish has also gained its space in Nepal and Nepali diaspora. This research paper is based on phenomenological research design. The primary sources of data were collected through interviews from two participants. Secondary sources were also studied for theoretical literature. The findings include the lexical, morphological, syntactic, phonological and semantic features of Nenglish. It also includes the existence and status of Nenglish in Nepali diaspora, features of Nenglish, and the practices for its promotion as the major themes.

Key words/terms: globalization, world Englishes, emergence, Nenglish, diaspora

Introduction

Globalization is a process of interaction, integration and interconnectedness among people. Held and others (1999) view that globalization is a process which embodies transformation of social relation and transaction with networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. Similarly, Steger (2003, p. 13) defines globalization as “a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges”. The report of United Nations on Human Development (UNDP, 1999, p. 29) states that globalization is changing the world’s landscape in three distinct ways which include: (a) shrinking space of people’s lives, jobs, incomes and health; (b) shrinking time by changing markets and technologies with unprecedented speed at a distance; and (c) disappearing borders by breaking down the national borders for ideas, norms, cultures and values. Travelers, pilgrims, tourists, migrants, merchants, traders, workers, governmental organizations and the contemporary communication media take part in globalization and emergences of world Englishes.

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Globalization in general

Scholars talk about several forms of globalization. Political globalization, as Moghadam, (2005, p. 35) states, is an increasing trend towards multinationalism, transnational affairs of the states, and the emergence of national and international non-governmental organizations. Economic globalization refers to the increasing interdependence of world economies. In the context of cultural globalization, Jay (2001, p. 37) states that globalization is tied to the acceleration of symbolic exchanges such as the production and dissemination of films, novels, advertisements, music and fast food. Jay further (ibid., p. 38) states that diasporic communities and cultures have appeared due to increased migration and the proliferation of electronic and communication media. And similarly, Jameson (1998, p. 55) defines globalization as “a communicational concept, which alternately masks and transmits cultural or economic meanings”.

Language and globalization

Discourse deals with language in relation to the social context. Bolton (2013, p. 233) states, “From the mid-1990s onwards, spread of the English language became increasingly associated with the complex of forces associated with globalisation”. Fairclough argues that language deals with discourse (Fairclough, 2006). Not only language and discourse are commoditized but also, as Jay (2001) claims, English literature is becoming increasingly globalized. Globalization has brought a drastic change in the perspectives of education and also recently in the ELT of Nepal. Sun (2014, p. 7) claims, “English language educators have realized that many new English language learners already know two or more languages”. Due to globalization, the field of study has also evolved from ESL (English as a Second Language) to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and from TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) to TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). (Sun, 2014, p. 8)

As English has been used throughout the world; and it has become the dominant lingua franca in worldwide commerce, education and media. Different language speakers mixed the features of their native languages into global English, and hence, it caused the emergence of World Englishes. In this context, Rai (2006, p. 34) states, “With its global use, English is losing its Englishness and the native speakers sometimes have hard time to understand English spoken by non-native speakers”. And hence, varieties of regional forms of English have developed in foreign language contexts such as

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Hinglish (Indian English), Singlish (Singaporean English), Spanglish (Spanish English), Manglish (Malaysian English), Nenglish (Nepali English), etc. that are termed commonly as World Englishes. English in India is Indianized with its sufficient distinct features. As for example, the word 'cat' /kæt/ is pronounced as [kəit] in Hinglish. Though the status of English in Nepal is of foreign language, it is increasingly occupying the status of second language among the school children, youths and professionals. And, it has also developed its Nenglish features. As Hinglish is different from Standard English and other Englishes, so is Nenglish. Rai (2006, p. 34) states, "Of course, Nenglish is influenced by and closer to Hinglish, which is more or less used in the SAARC countries; however, Nenglish has its own specialties that make it different not only from English, but also from Hinglish". Nenglish came into existence due to the growing number of English medium schools and FM stations in the country. (Rai, 2006)

National context

Nenglish, the variety of English spoken in Nepalese communities, is different from other varieties. As many Nepalese scholars working in language in general and English language in particular take it as an issue of study, I felt this area is researchable.

Research questions

This study is based on the following research questions:

- i. How is the existence and status of Nenglish in Nepal and among the Nepali diaspora?
- ii. What are the various features of Nenglish in practice?
- iii. How can we promote Nenglish practices?

Literature review

This section includes the review of the theoretical as well as empirical literature undertaken in this research area.

Existing literature on Nenglish

This part occupies a number of examples of Nenglish features found in secondary sources. Rai (2006, p. 35) mentions the following examples of vocabulary items used in spoken Nenglish that are derived from English and Nepali languages. For example, 'Dadu', 'Mamu' and 'Nanu' became

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Nenglish words that do not exist in English. ‘Dadu’ was derived from English word ‘daddy’, ‘mamu’ derived from ‘mummy’ and ‘nanu’ from Nepali word ‘Nani’ that means ‘child’.

Rai (2006) further presents some of the written and spoken examples of Nenglish words such as: loadshedding, waitage, training package, and khalasi and the morpheme ‘-wise’. The word ‘loadshedding’ that means ‘power cut by electricity supply office’ in Nenglish is derived from Hinglish. Similarly, the terms ‘waitage’ and ‘sent up examination’ are derived from the English words ‘waiting’ and ‘send up examination’ respectively. Likewise, the word ‘package’ means parcel or bag; but in Nenglish it frequently collocates with ‘training’ as in ‘training package’. The word ‘khalasi’ is used to mean the helper to the driver and passengers in a vehicle, which was derived from Hinglish, and not found in English. In English, the morpheme ‘-wise’ means ‘in the manner of’ as in ‘clockwise’ but in Nenglish it gives the sense of ‘each’ or ‘according to’ as in the words ‘classwise’, ‘areawise’ and ‘itemwise’ (Rai, 2006).

Nenglish features are found at all levels of language viz. phonology, morphology, vocabulary and syntax.

Nepali speakers’ errors committed due to overgeneralization, mother tongue interference and the group errors ultimately turn into Nenglish features. Gnawali (2003) states that students commit errors saying ‘trouser’ in place of ‘trousers’ as in an utterance ‘I bought trouser’. Another evidence in classroom conversation can be pointed out that a speaker often replaces /v/ with /b/; and teacher does not understand what the speaker is trying to say as in the example ‘vote’ pronounced as /bɔ t/.

Gandhi in his text extracted from ‘The Story of My Experiment With Truth’ (included in Awasthi and others, 2015, p. 233) mention five Hinglish words which are common to Nenglish as well; they are: ‘Kedarji Mandir’ (temple of Kedarnath), ‘Ramji Mandir’ (temple of lord Ramchandra), ‘dhatura’ (a plant for drugs and poison), ‘darshan’ (see), and ‘Ahimsa’ (no sacrificing animals/ men, etc.).

Kulkarni (1973, included in Awasthi and others, 2016, p. 130 and 131) has included some lexical features of Hinglish words: ‘Dharma’ (religion), ‘Upanisad’ (a holy book), ‘shravana’ (listening), ‘manana’ (grasping in mind), ‘guru’ (teacher), ‘gurukul’ (teacher’s resident as school), ‘gurudakshina’ (voluntary payment to teachers), ‘ashram’ (teacher’s resident), ‘acharya’ (highly respectable teacher), ‘saucha’ (purity), ‘santosa’

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(contentment), ‘tapas’ (penance) and ‘Swadhyaya’ (self study). These words are also common to Nenglish.

Nenglish did not only take birth from English speaking context in Nepal, but also from the English speaking context of Nepali diaspora in different countries. People in diaspora often struggle for their identity and equality in the host country so that they mix up the features of their heritage language (of the home country) in their speech and writing in English. It is evident in Nenglish.

Shrestha (2018) includes the following words as examples of Nenglish: ‘vojanalaya’ (food house), ‘jatra’ (a typical festival), ‘ratha’ (chariot), ‘bandas’ (strikes), ‘dal bhat’ (typical Nepali food), ‘chautari’ (stage with tree on the side of the way), ‘kharpana’ (a typical basket for carrying vegetables) and ‘mamaghar’ (mother’s maiden house).

Theoretical perspectives

While exploring the features of Nenglish, I applied the theoretical insights related to the emergence of new languages and their practices. According to Max Muller as mentioned by Verma and Krishnaswami (1998, p. 5), “It is quite clear that we have no means of solving the problem of the origin of language historically.” However, there are some speculations about the emergence of a new language. In this study, to interpret the origin of Nenglish items, I used the natural-sound source theories (bow-wow theory and pooh-pooh theory), the musical theory and the contact theory. I used bow-wow theory for the imitation and invention of onomatopoeic words; pooh-pooh theory for the use of the words of interjection category, the musical theory for the rhyming words and the words with alliteration and assonance, and the contact theory for the words that are used into Nenglish from Nepali and Hindi languages in Nepali communities as well as in the UK Nepali diaspora. Another theory that I used is Vygotsky’s social constructivism which emphasizes the collaborative practice of language in relation to the culture of the particular group or community. Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) states: “Language and culture play essential roles both in human intellectual development and in how humans perceive the world”. New language is practiced along with the input of culture specific terms and features provided.

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Methodology

This paper was based on an instance of phenomenological design of qualitative research. I collected primary sources of data from two participants: one representing the UK Nepali diaspora who is also a researcher on eastern culture, ethnicity and minority languages, and the other is an experienced college level English language teacher working in Kaski district of Nepal. To capture their perceptions and experiences with reference to Nenglish, I interviewed them with some semi-structured open-ended questions. I also consulted secondary sources for the study.

The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and coded. The data were also cross checked. Any repetitive or vague statements found in the transcript of interviewees were omitted. Specific themes were drawn from the analysis of the coded data, and interpretation was made based on the theoretical insights and researcher's reflection.

Findings and discussion

The data about the emergence, existence and status of Nenglish, features of Nenglish and the practices towards promoting Nenglish are analyzed and discussed here in relation to the theories mentioned. They have been interpreted thematically. For the economy of space and for recognition, the participants are also coded here using P1 and P2. Thus, collected data have been interpreted theoretically under three major themes: existence and status of Nenglish, general features of Nenglish and practices on promoting Nenglish.

(a) Existence and status of Nenglish

For a particular language to exist, it is to be practiced in the various domains of language use such as "home, neighborhood, school, church" (Spolsky, 1998, p. 47) as well as "family, friendship, religion, education, employment" (Holmes, 2001, p. 21) in spoken and written medium. As I asked whether Nenglish exists among present Nepalese communities and how it has emerged, they mentioned a series of common ideas. In this regard, P1 said:

We easily see the existence of Nenglish frequently occurred in the writings of Nepalese authors, in the publications of Nepalese media, in the speeches of Nepalese elite groups while speaking English, and in the English speeches among the Nepali diaspora in the UK.

On the same question, P2 responded:

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We use Nenglish in our daily life also. While speaking in the classroom, we use Nenglish features. Our students also easily catch the Nenglish words and features rather than pure English. Recently, it is used in textbooks, media language and especially while speaking to the tourists.

P2 also claimed that Nepalese teachers and students often use Nenglish in classrooms. And students easily divert towards Nenglish during the teacher's teaching of Standard English. This means the speakers of Nepali mother tongue are easily bound towards Nenglish. And a step ahead, it has been started including in textbooks, various media and advertisements. P1 also realizes its existence in Nepalese elite group discussions. Hence, Nenglish also existed due to social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Both the participants accepted the existence of Nenglish that can be found in the domains such as school and education, employment, friendship, tourism and media.

In response to the question 'how do you realize the existence of Nenglish?', P1 said "Sometimes when we speak English, we automatically use Nenglish words and it makes the foreigners difficult to understand the ideas. They immediately say 'sorry' and ask to repeat what we said." Here, P1 means Nepalese speakers may or may not realize Nenglish while speaking; but when the listeners of Native English become unable to interpret the words, then we realize that we are using Nenglish features.

Similarly, P2 says, "When we use Nepali words in English conversation a little bit by modifying or applying the features of Nepali language, we easily realize the existence of Nenglish". Here, P2 means Nenglish takes Nepali language-like features in English. Nenglish has been recently realized and is still in the stage of infancy; and it requires support and longer duration of English practices.

Regarding the question about the status of Nenglish, P1 said, "Nenglish is recently growing as a variety of English, which is realized only among the Nepali communities and in the Nepali diaspora in the foreign countries. It's taken positively among Nepali language speakers. It's just initiated and growing to be matured". P1 means Nenglish is the recently talked issue with positive attitudes and its features are found in limited context. Regarding the same question, P2 says:

Nenglish has just crawled, though talked hotly among academicians in Nepal; and it will take a long time to be established as a separate

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variety of English. We treat English as a foreign language. We discourage our students to use Nenglish in the examination though we frequently use it in the classroom.

Here P2 claims that Nenglish has just got initiated. It does not have the position of separate variety of English as Hinglish has at present; but it can grow in the future. For this, English must be practiced to a maximum for a long duration. In the school and university curricula, Standard English courses and textbooks have been prescribed. Though Nenglish is used in classroom conversation, only Standard English is allowed in the examination to answer the questions.

In another question ‘how did it come into existence?’, P1 replied, “We used the sounds, grammar rules, words and their meanings of Nepali language into English and a new Nenglish came into existence”. Regarding the same question, P2 said, “We are two or more than two language speakers and often mix up the features of one into another; and a new one is created. In a nutshell, it is Nepaliness into English”. Both of them agreed that knowingly and unknowingly, we use the features of Nepali and English language and start speaking. Thus, Nenglish, came into existence.

(b) Features of Nenglish

To get the status of a variety of any language, it requires the phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical and semantic features along with large vocabulary store. Nenglish has some linguistic features and a limited words which are frequently used and recognized as Nenglish.

Lexical features: A number of vocabulary items have been derived from Nepali, Hindi and Sanskrit into Nenglish. Regarding the question of lexical features, P1 said:

The words such as Gurkha (derieved from Gorkha), Palton (platoon), Karnel (Coloneal), Gernel (General), Top (rifle/gun), Salote (salute), Sainik (army), Shahi (Royal), and Khukuri (knife) have been widely used among the British Gorkhas/Ex-Gorkhas and in the field of security as Nenglish and are also common to Hinglish.

In the same context, P2 added:

Words like Purnima (fullmoon), Dharahara (Bhimsen Tower), Sahamati (agreement) are found in students’ textbooks. The names of the Nepali months such as Baishak, Jestha, etc., the word ‘patro’ (calendar) and the words referring to ways and place centres such as

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marga (way), sadak (road), nagar (city/town), chowk (centre), and bazaar (market) are found frequently used in Nenglish.

Similarly, P1 also claims that English-Nepali word collocations such as ‘handsome keto’, ‘over draft karja’ and ‘hospital chowk’ are found in Nenglish. P1 further mentioned ‘all-bida’ (a term frequently used in the condolence in facebook, twitter and other media). P2 adds, “English translated forms of Nepali words have also been used quite warmly in Nenglish as in the word ‘Fishtail’ (from ‘Machhapuchhre’ – name of a snowcovered mountain)”. The word ‘fishtail’ has been used for different other entities such as ‘Fishtail Hospital’, ‘Fishtail Hotel’, etc. in Pokhara.

Onomatopoeic words taken from Nepali language also add a brick in the lexis of Nenglish.

As p2 said, the words “Bhururu, dhururu, siriri, tiriri, khururu and lururu and similar other onomatopoeic words have entered into Nenglish”. Some of these words can be realized remarkably in the sentences like ‘Chari flies vurururu’; and ‘Baby weeps dhurururu’. These features of Nenglish are connected to musical theory as in Krishnaswami (1999).

Phonological features: To the question “In what context Nenglish pronunciation is deviant from Nepali and Standard English?”, P1 replied, “The Nepalese people in English produce the names such as ‘Phanindra’ as ‘Phanindra’ and ‘Narayana’ as ‘Narayaṇa’”. Due to the availability of retroflex nasal /ŋ/ in Nepali, Nepali-like pronunciation is used in Nenglish. P1 further said:

When Bhojharaj, one of my Nepalese friends, went to England he had to change his name as ‘Bozaraj’ due to the difficulty to the Englishers. It created difficulty for him while banking and in consulting or facing interviews with foreigners. But people in the Nepali diaspora there always call him ‘Bhojharaj’ while speaking English.

So, people in the UK Nepali diaspora intrigued the features of aspirated Nepali [z^h] into English. It’s due to the lack of availability of aspiration except in /p/, /t/ and /k/ in English.

P2 added, “Though English aspirations seem minimized in Nenglish, Nepali aspirated phonemes are generally phonemized in Nenglish. Teachers and students generally do not use aspirations in the words like ‘pen’, ‘temple’ and ‘cat’.” In this context, P1 again added, “There is no difference in the

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pronunciation of the Nepali words ‘bhata’ (rice) and ‘bhatta’ (a sort of soyabin used for curry) to the Britishers; but it makes difference in the Nepali diaspora there”.

P1 further said, “I dislike listening when people pronounced ‘Kathmandu’ as /kætma:ndu/ or /Kæma:ndu/ or /kæməndu/ and Tansen as /tænzən/; such a pronunciation is artificial and twisted”. He adds that the elite groups who remain in the Nepali diaspora in the UK do not use twisted English. Here, P1 added, “The word ‘Nepal’ is pronounced mostly as /nepa:l/ among the Nepalese people living in Nepal as well as in the UK-based diaspora while speaking English, though it is pronounced with five different variations: /nipɔ:l/, /nepɔ:l/, /nepa:l/, /nepaul/ and /nipaul/ by the British.” So, in this word, we see more or less free variation in Nenglish pronunciation there.

Both p1 and p2 agreed on the production of final /-r/ in the words such as: father, brother, mother and sister even in the connected speech and before a vowel. Similarly, both of them claim that the words ‘go’, ‘no’, ‘hello’, ‘polo’, etc. are produced with final /-ɔ/ sound. Similarly, P2 responded, “The words ‘day’, ‘they’, ‘play’, ‘hay’, ‘lay’, ‘yesterday’, etc. are produced with /-e/ in Nenglish in place of the use of /-ei/ diphthong in the word final position in English”. The vowels /ɔ/ and /e/ are not found in word final position in English but, are frequently found in Nenglish. In this way, English diphthongs in certain cases are monophthongized in Nenglish. In return, certain monophthongs are diphthongized in Nenglish – for example, cat /kæt/ is pronounced as /kait/ in Hinglish and Nenglish in the Terai region, and ‘saloon’ /səlu:n/ in English as /səilu:n/ in Hinglish and Nenglish. These examples prove that Nenglish is highly influenced by Hinglish. Hence, these become the widely accepted phonological features of Nenglish.

Morphological features: Limited morphological features distinct from English are found in Nenglish. To the question ‘what various morphological features exist in Nenglish?’, P2 said:

We wrongly use the English suffixes in English words such as: Englishzing, Englishers, Englishize, inavailability, illegal, etc. which are not acceptable in English.

While putting status and commenting, we wrongly use some inflectional and derivational suffixes of English and hence take as Nenglish features. P2 responded, “The Nenglish words such as ‘highty’ and ‘cutty’ seem funny as the imitation of ‘ratty’, ‘catty’, ‘fatty’ that use the suffix ‘-y’ and made the sense of adjective”. These are just like the words ‘dadu, mamu, nanu’ on

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which inflection ‘-u’ is used in the names of family relations. Both the participants agreed on English word taking Nepali prefix ‘upa-’ as in the root word ‘Mayor’ and ‘Upa+ Mayor’ becomes ‘Upamayor’, which is recognized as Nenglish.

Syntactic features: In the question of Nenglish syntactic features, P2 said, “We often use the tag questions ‘-isn’t it?’ and ‘-do you?’ following most of the statements”. Nepalese students and teachers both have been habituated to use the tags: ‘-isn’t it?’ and ‘-do you?’ without caring the auxiliary verb and the tense of the statements.

P1 and P2 both agreed on no need of present tense third person singular verb inflections while using Nenglish. P2 made examples saying, “Nenglish in the tourism area in Nepal is found as: ‘He eat rice’, ‘She eat rice’ and ‘It eat rice’”. It is just as in English sentences with other first and second person pronouns: ‘I eat rice’, ‘We eat rice’, ‘You eat rice’ and in past tense as ‘I ate rice’, ‘you ate rice’, etc. Use of the common rule of subject-verb agreement in present tense form of verb; and in simple past tense form of verb with singular, plural and mass noun subjects is one of the strong syntactic features of Nenglish in an informal context.

P1 added one more rule saying with examples: “We frequently use passive sentences with ‘it’ as a subject like: ‘It is done’, ‘It is said’, ‘It is given’, etc.” So, the maximum use of ‘It+be (present mostly) + passive voice verb form’ is another syntactic feature of Nenglish. P2 also claims that the maximum use of ‘it’ and ‘there’ as the subjects of the sentences is also another feature.

Semantic features: P1 expresses with quite awkward feeling that he sees in the advertisement of Fresh House, “We see ‘Fresh Chicken Meat Available Here!’”. Literally, it gives anomalous meaning. Chicken is not being offered, but the meat”. Both P1 and P2 gave a number of examples of semantic and syntactic features. P2 claims:

The roundabout expression, for example, is: ‘In this lesson, what the writer actually wants to say is not to bore them but to give a moral lesson.’ equals to ‘In this lesson, the writer wants to give a moral lesson’. The use of unnecessary verbs is another feature such as: ‘Ram often makes jokes’, in place of ‘Ram jokes.’ The use of two part verbs such as ‘He works as a chaukidar (guard), in place of ‘He is a chaukidar.’ is also another semantic as well as syntactic feature.

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P2 further claims, the mis-match use of 'give and take' sense of words in the sentences is another feature. He says, "Our students frequently say, 'I gave exam' in place of 'I attended examination' or 'I took exam'. We teachers also say, 'It gives the meaning.' instead of 'It means...".

P1 said, "I have seen, the use of 'be' verb to mean 'cost' in Nenglish. As for example: The application form is \$20, and it must be submitted within seven days along with original certificates of S.L.C. degree". P2 further added, "The words 'many', 'very' and 'little' can be repeatedly used just as in the beginning of the fairy tales 'Many many years ago, there was a king...". Repetition of quantifiers and qualifiers in the same position of a sentence is another semantic feature of Nenglish as in the examples 'Many many congratulations to you!', 'Very very beautiful', 'Many many thanks!'. Redundancy is not only a syntactic but also a semantic feature of Nenglish.

(c) Practices of promoting Nenglish

Both the participants claim that Nenglish is the property of Nepalese English speakers; and their duty is to protect and conserve it. To the question 'What various practices have been done to promote Nenglish?', P1 said, "No or very little formal practices, as I see, have been done to promote Nenglish in Nepal and in the UK Nepali diaspora. It's automatic and we feel proud of it and sometimes laugh also". This means Nepalese people in Nepal and in the diasporic communities show their positive attitude towards speaking Nenglish. On the same question P2 said, "In the recent days, little bit focus is given. Some of the Nepalese authors' books, articles and literary pieces which consist of Nenglish features have been included in the courses of school and university level". Here, little bit of formal practice seems adopted by the course designers in the English subjects of school and university level.

To the question 'how can we conduct and promote practices on Nenglish?' P1 said, "Nenglish can be promoted through public awareness media like films, F.M. radios, radio/TV broadcasts, child magazines, women magazines and local newspapers". To the same question p2 replied, "Awaring teachers, students and elite groups on the existence of Nenglish, researching continuously and identifying its features, we can promote Nenglish". So, we can promote its practice by using it in media, allowing particular programmes in Nenglish in FM radios and TV channels, giving it a section of space in journals, local newspapers, child magazines, promoting its use in

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English advertisements, including in book publications of s, doing researches on the use of Nenglish and making Nepalese English speakers aware on it.

Conclusion

Globalization is the main cause of global English and the emergence of world Englishes. Nenglish is getting a little stand with a few distinct features with its limited use among Nepalese English speakers in and outside the country. However, for its national and international recognition and wider space, there must be sufficient practices of global English in Nepalese context.

Nepali people use English with Nenglish features not only in Nepal, but also in diasporic context. They feel proud of using Nenglish in their speech and writing. For the practice and promotion of Nenglish, its use simply in classroom is insufficient; but its authentication in student's writing in the exams is a must. And similarly, it requires wider application in language education, and acceptance in society in addition to (English) language classrooms. As well, it demands positive attitude and strong motivation of use among its users.

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