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Perception of the Grade XII Students Regarding the English Language Curriculum

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Article Info	Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of Grade XII students in Nepal regarding their English language curriculum, focusing on its relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with their academic and professional goals. It evaluates the effectiveness of the curriculum to prepare students for practical communication, enhance their language skills, and respond to contemporary global communication trends. A structured survey questionnaire was employed to collect data from 59 students at a public secondary school in the Kathmandu Valley. The findings indicate that most students view the curriculum positively, particularly its effectiveness in improving language skills (86.5%) and preparing them for future academic and career opportunities (79.6%). 96.6% of students express a strong appreciation for the strength of the curriculum to foster critical thinking and engage themselves with interesting content (88.1%). There is a notable demand for modern language use and relevant subjects, as 96.6% of students emphasize the need for contents that align with current communication trends. However, despite the curriculum's promotion of cultural awareness, 28.8% of students remain neutral, indicating potential areas for enhancement. This study highlights the critical need for ongoing revisions to the curriculum, incorporating student feedback and contemporary language practices to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

Introduction

In Nepal, English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary to secondary education. In secondary schools, English is prioritized as the medium of instruction. However, there has been growing concern regarding perceptions of the English language curriculum. This research article explores the perceptions of secondary-level students in Nepal regarding the English curriculum.

Understanding students' opinions about the English language curriculum is crucial for ensuring it aligns with their needs and future goals. Students' perceptions of an educational curriculum are vital in determining its effectiveness and relevance, especially in language curricula, where their satisfaction and engagement significantly affect their proficiency and confidence in using the language.

The curriculum defines a specific educational program's philosophy, objectives, instructional materials, pedagogical methods, and assessment strategies (McFadden & Roehrig, 2017). It outlines the skills and experiences students must acquire upon completing the program. When designed and delivered effectively, the curriculum equips students with essential abilities that empower them to achieve future success and engage in continuous growth. Conversely, if particular graduate attributes are not integrated into the educational program, students may become ineffective and lack the necessary skills. Therefore, educational institutions must develop curricula that enhance skills and competencies, enabling students to apply their knowledge and experiences in real-world contexts.

Students' perceptions often reflect their experiences with the curriculum, including its content, instructional strategies, and evaluation methods. Richards (2017) asserts that a well-designed language curriculum should enable

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students to communicate effectively in real-life situations by balancing linguistic understanding with practical application. Disengagement and poor learning outcomes may occur if students find the curriculum unnecessary or overly theoretical (Brown, 2014).

Regular feedback from students allows teachers to identify and address flaws in the curriculum, keeping it adaptable and responsive to changing needs, as noted by Tomlinson (2012). This approach aligns well with contemporary teaching methods that emphasize flexibility and diversity.

The research underscores the importance of incorporating student-centered approaches in curriculum design. Students are likelier to engage with a curriculum considering their interests, cultural backgrounds, and career aspirations. For instance, adding practical assignments and communication exercises can boost students' motivation and language skills (Ellis et al., 2020).

In the context of Grade XII education, the English language curriculum is often a gateway to postsecondary education and career opportunities. Its relevance and applicability are paramount. Rimal (2018) states that curriculum development is critical to educational reform. Teachers assume various roles in this process, such as translating learning objectives into outcomes and acting as intermediaries between the curriculum and the students. Conversely, curriculum specialists contribute by producing materials based on educational theories and identifying what is needed. However, recent literature indicates gaps in the transfer of knowledge and skills between these two key players in developing school curricula. According to Norbu and Thinley (2022), creating a new college English curriculum is central to reforming school English instruction, with assessment as a powerful tool to advance this initiative.

The term "curriculum" refers to a school's program's overall design to meet students' educational needs and fulfill its mission. Curriculum design is the tangible expression of social development demands and academic training objectives, providing essential content and serving as a crucial assurance for realizing talent development goals.

Current English Language Teaching (ELT) should be tailored to meet specific needs. It is essential to align educational objectives with global demands while considering local challenges (Simpson, 2014). English instruction aims to prepare learners to respond to these local needs. Instruction should emphasize English's role as an International Language, enabling students from various countries or regions to communicate in their dialects, which do not necessarily have to conform to native standards. In teaching English as an International Language, each student must have the opportunity to learn according to their existing knowledge.

Aljuhaisha (2015) aims to evaluate the efficiency of the English language coursebook recently provided by the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) for Grade Six primary schools. The research investigates teachers' challenges when integrating the four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—within the limited time allotted for lessons. It also compares the level of English language instruction offered by the new curriculum with the student's language needs.

Subedi (2018) examines the policy guidelines and practices related to the local curriculum in elementary schools. The study gathers data through focus group discussions and interviews involving educators, including teachers, head teachers, resource personnel, and assistant district education officers. The findings indicate that providing a local curriculum is only a policy in most primary schools without adequate implementation. The study also includes document analysis to assess the current status of local curriculum implementation.

Karki (2014) defines a curriculum as a comprehensive educational program that meets the goals of the national educational system and provides essential guidelines for instructors. Nepal's English language curriculum at the secondary school level aims to develop students into proficient communicators. This paper investigates the extent to which English language instructors in Nepal understand and apply the English curriculum while teaching secondary students.

Tilahun (2016) conducted a study examining the perspectives of Grade 12 students and teachers regarding the English textbook used in Ethiopia. The findings reveal that teachers and students view the textbook positively, noting its strengths in providing a well-organized learning framework. However, they also point out weaknesses, such as issues with pronunciation lessons and insufficient time to cover all objectives. These insights are important for curriculum developers aiming to enhance the effectiveness of English language textbooks.

A study conducted by Em & Nun (2022) explored the perceptions of Cambodian Grade 12 students regarding public English textbooks and exam papers. The research revealed that while students considered the textbooks useful, they identified areas for improvement. Many desired more engaging content and better alignment with exam requirements. This aligns with Tilahun's (2016) findings, which emphasize the need for ongoing assessment and modification of educational resources to meet students' needs.

Ella (2018) explores the relationship between language learning strategies and language competency among Grade 12 students. The research evaluates the levels of language proficiency and the predominant learning techniques employed by the students. Findings reveal that metacognitive strategies are the most commonly used, while memory-

based strategies are utilized the least. The study concludes that there is no significant correlation between language learning methods and language proficiency, highlighting the complexity of the language acquisition process.

A study by Do Le and Tran (2021) evaluated an English language training curriculum for English majors at a Vietnamese institution. The research assessed students' perceptions of the curriculum's effectiveness in improving their language skills. The findings indicated that while students appreciated the curriculum's comprehensiveness, they suggested including more interactive and communicative exercises to better prepare them for real-world language application. This underscores the importance of aligning instructional content with students' practical needs and expectations.

Statement of the problem

The English language curriculum is a crucial component of secondary education in Nepal, aimed at preparing students for academic, professional, and practical communication. Concerns have been raised regarding the curriculum's alignment with students' needs, aspirations, and contemporary global communication trends. Despite its vital role in the educational framework, the extent to which the curriculum addresses students' linguistic, cultural, and practical competencies remains unclear. This study evaluates Grade XII students' perceptions of the English language curriculum to assess its relevance and effectiveness and identify potential improvement areas, particularly their aspirations and readiness for future academic and professional endeavors. The research question guiding this study was, "What is the perception of Grade XII students regarding the English language curriculum?" The objective was to find out the perception of Grade XII students regarding the English language curriculum.

Methodology

The research paradigm of this study is grounded in the positivist framework within the epistemological continuum. This paradigm seeks to identify a single reality (Park et al., 2020) and does not favor examining knowledge from multiple perspectives. The primary epistemology of this paradigm focuses on inter-subjective knowledge construction. According to the positivist paradigm, learning is considered valid only after observation. Central to this approach is the belief that factual knowledge is derived solely from observable data rather than through verbal assertions. The scientific method is considered the most suitable research method within the positivist paradigm, which involves identifying the problem, determining variables, formulating and testing hypotheses, collecting and analyzing data, and reaching conclusions.

Overall, the positivist research paradigm holds that observation is a legitimate source of knowledge. This paradigm aligns with a status quo perspective in which students and teachers prefer to maintain their previous conditions. The ontology for this study posits that there are objectively provable facts and that reality is consistent for everyone. My stance in this study is that the observed data from a survey questionnaire are valid for my research.

The axiology of this study emphasizes the importance of the individual responses provided by students and teachers to the survey questions. The methodology utilized a quantitative research design, focusing on public schools in the Kathmandu Valley. This area was selected because the researcher can easily access schools there. This accessibility facilitates interaction with students for data collection. The sample was drawn randomly from this population.

This study implemented a quantitative design, with data collected from secondary-level students in the Kathmandu Valley through a questionnaire survey. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software version 25. The prepared survey was administered to 59 students from various sections within the same school.

Findings and Discussion

After administering the questionnaire, the responses were carefully studied, counted, and tabulated. The results are presented and analyzed first holistically.

Table 1

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	15	25.4	25.4	25.4
	Female	44	74.6	74.6	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 1, most students were female, and 15 out of 59 were male.

Overall Perception of Students

The perception of students is presented below:

Table 2

S.N	Students' Perception	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
1	The English language curriculum adequately prepares me for real-world communication.	22 (37.3%)	28 (47.3%)	9 (15.3%)		
2	The English language curriculum helps improve my language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).	28 (47.5%)	23 (39.0%)	8 (13.5%)		
3	The English language curriculum is relevant to my future academic and professional goals.	35 (59.3%)	12 (20.3%)	9 (15.3%)	3 (5.1%)	
4	The English language curriculum challenges me to think critically and analyze texts effectively.	23 (39.0%)	34 (57.6%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.7%)	
5	The English language curriculum is engaging and interesting.	37 (62.7%)	15 (25.4%)	5 (8.5%)	2 (3.4%)	
6	The topics covered in the English language curriculum are relevant to current global communication trends.	31 (52.5%)	17 (28.8%)	7 (11.9%)	4 (6.8%)	
7	The curriculum prepares me to communicate effectively in both formal and informal situations.	22 (37.3%)	29 (49.2%)	8 (13.5%)		
8	The curriculum enhances my cultural awareness and understanding through literature and language studies.	16 (27.1%)	22 (37.3%)	17 (28.8%)	4 (6.8%)	
9	The curriculum equips me with skills that will be valuable in my future career.	36 (61.0%)	13 (22.0%)	8 (13.5%)	2 (3.4%)	
10	The curriculum should include more modern language usage and relevant topics.	19 (32.2%)	38 (64.4%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.7%)	
11	Overall, I am satisfied with the English language curriculum.	17 (28.8%)	26 (44.1%)	4 (6.7%)	3 (5.1%)	9 (15.3%)

The table summarizes students' perceptions of their English language curriculum across various dimensions. Each statement represents a specific aspect of the curriculum, and students rated their agreement using five levels: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The table provides the frequency of responses (F) and the corresponding percentage (%) for each level.

With 84.6% of students affirming that the curriculum equips them for real-world communication, it is evident that the course design focuses on practical language application. Likewise, 86.5% of respondents recognize the improvement of fundamental skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—demonstrating the curriculum's effectiveness in fostering comprehensive language competency. These findings are significant as they emphasize the curriculum's congruence with crucial communicative competencies required for students in their academic and professional pursuits. The curriculum's perceived relevance to student's future educational and professional aspirations (79.6%) and its capacity to impart career-relevant skills (83%) further validate its practical applicability. These advantages suggest that the curriculum prepares students to confront real-world challenges and adapt effectively to professional settings. The overwhelming consensus (96.6%) regarding the curriculum's capacity to promote critical thinking and facilitate text analysis underscores its intellectual rigor. This underscores its capacity to develop pupils' analytical skills, which are essential for advanced education and competitive employment markets. The substantial engagement level (88.1%) among students indicates that the curriculum utilizes compelling content and methodologies, enhancing motivation and sustained interest. Over 81% think the topics covered are relevant to current global communication trends, but 6.8% disagree. About 86.5% agree that the curriculum prepares them to communicate effectively in diverse contexts. Although 64.4% of students concur that the curriculum fosters cultural understanding, the neutral responses (28.8%) and dissenting opinions (6.8%) indicate the potential for enhancement. The curriculum would benefit from incorporating diverse cultural viewpoints and globally pertinent literature to facilitate the development of a broader worldview among students. An overwhelming 96.6% of students concur with integrating modern language and contemporary subjects. This discovery highlights a significant deficiency in the curriculum's capacity to adapt to changing global communication trends. As the linguistic landscape evolves, primarily due to technological progress and societal transformations, students want content that mirrors these changes. While 72.9% of students indicate satisfaction, 15.3% strongly disagree, and the significant neutral responses across multiple metrics suggest possible discrepancies in individual experiences. Elements

such as pedagogical approaches, resource accessibility, or particular curricular material may influence these disparities. Examining these difficulties may yield practical insights for enhancement.

The findings demonstrate that the curriculum succeeds in essential domains, including practical communication, skill development, analytical reasoning, and vocational readiness. Nonetheless, evident deficiencies exist, especially concerning cultural relevance and modernization. The robust demand for contemporary and contextually pertinent information underscores the evolving landscape of language education and the necessity of conforming to global trends.

The neutral and negative replies in several areas underscore potential discrepancies in individual student experiences. These insights can assist educators and policymakers in modifying the curriculum to rectify particular deficiencies and better accommodate students' changing requirements.

Conclusion

This study explores the perspectives of Grade XII students in Nepal regarding the English language program, revealing important insights into its strengths and areas needing improvement. The findings indicate that the curriculum effectively prepares students for practical communication, enhances their foundational language skills, and fosters critical thinking. These elements align well with the student's academic and professional aspirations, underscoring the program's practical and intellectual importance. Its engaging and dynamic design promotes sustained student motivation, which is crucial for successful language acquisition.

However, the research also uncovers shortcomings that must be addressed to improve the curriculum's effectiveness. Many students desire more contemporary and contextually relevant content, highlighting the need for curriculum revisions to align with current trends in global communication. Furthermore, while the curriculum encourages some degree of cultural awareness, many students remain indifferent to this aspect, indicating a need for a greater emphasis on diverse and inclusive materials.

The study underscores the importance of student-centered approaches in curriculum development. Incorporating modern language use, technological advancements, and practical applications can help bridge existing gaps and better prepare students for academic, professional, and global challenges. Engaging students and educators in ongoing feedback is essential for refining the curriculum to meet their evolving needs and objectives.

While the English curriculum in Nepal demonstrates notable strengths, specific enhancements are necessary to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Addressing these shortcomings through systematic updates and active stakeholder involvement will improve the quality of English instruction and enhance students' overall language proficiency, cultural awareness, and professional readiness. This study lays the groundwork for future research and initiatives to improve the English language curriculum within Nepal's secondary education system.

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