

‘English only’ to ‘English for all’ - a new Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

Due to globalisation and the influence of the historical events like colonisation made English language as a global lingua franca and the language comprising highest speakers in the world. Because of its indomitable nature, the languages of the world got influenced. Thus, English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) might be the counterpart to any other languages belonging to any nations. Consequently, bi-multilingualism has been a new paradigm shift from monolingual era opening the horizon of divergent linguistic features. This paper provides an ample space to discuss about the implication of multilingualism eradicating the era of monolingualism and diversity management in ELT classroom in academia. This article articulates about the new innovative ideas for creating the languages of same standard in the society, without any biasness, releasing the more luring path for cultural connection. And yet a gap has been left behind to plan, promote and produce for the further researches in this field.

Keywords: multilingualism, linguistic, education, languages, teaching

Introduction

Graddol (2006) estimates English, as a familial language, is used approximately by 400 million people in the world along with 2 billion as a second or foreign language. Moreover, he also clarifies that the number of users of English, for the purpose of official use, may be extended up to 3 billion until 2040 which may cover closely half of the population of the world. Furthermore, English, one of six official languages (i.e. Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish) of UN, had sprouted first from the advent of early medieval England (United Nations, 2015, Mar 17). At the present context, English may be one of the leading languages of international discourse and communication (European Commission Directorate-General for Translation, 2011, p. 8). Moreover, colonialism provided stimulus for the spread of English (as well as other European languages) as early as the 18th century to North America, South Asia, and the Caribbean countries, later to Africa, other parts of Asia, Australasia, and the South Pacific (Altbach, 2013). 100 plus countries, For instance, China, Russia, Germany, Brazil and many more in the world, have accepted English as a medium of instruction and due to its imposition in schools' pedagogy, other languages are being displaced (Crystal, 2003, p. 5). Thus the greater influence by English perhaps moves world science toward hegemony guided by the main English speaking academic systems and puts a sufficient pressure on scholars and universities that do not prioritise English as a means of communication (Altbach, 2013).

It seems that the world, by any means, has accepted English as a global lingua franca however every nation including first world nations too has been striving for preserving and promoting their own national or indigenous languages. As a result, there has been a substantial evidence to testify that the world has already experienced a shifting in the linguistic pattern from 'English only' to 'English for all'.

Method

This paper highlights the research questions such as, how English language switches the linguistic pattern from 'English only' to 'English for all', in what ways English language transforms the linguistic heritage of the third world non English speakers.

The study followed the review method in design with analysis of policies, reports and practices of the Government of Nepal about the integration of English as a medium of instruction in the classroom teaching. Some journals that focused on English as an international language (EIL) or global Englishes and English as a lingua franca (EFL) were analyzed to explore the spread of English globally. Some research articles related to the issues of Linguicide and critical position of English were studied and reviewed to find the diminishing state of languages in minorities and cultural loss. Journal articles were chosen to analyze highlighting the world's context in general and Nepal's context in terms of language policy and its implementation in the pedagogy. The central focus was mainly on how the third world non-English speakers experience the transformation in the linguistic heritage due to English language, how the use of English language is marginalizing the main stream languages of the world, what might be the consequences due to language policies of the Government of Nepal in teaching and learning practices. The author's own experience of teaching and learning in the various levels covers some issues related to the subject.

Results and Discussion

English Language in Nepal's Education

In the context of Nepal, as it has never been colonised, the expansion of English language as a foreign language and its wider influence can be studied through the lens of neo-liberal colonialism. Nepal has socio-cultural, religious linguistic and geographical diversities. Central Bureau of Statistics (2011;published 2012 November) reported 123 languages in 125 ethnic communities including Nepali, the national language, spoken as a mother tongue by 44.6% of total population followed by Maithili, spoken by 11.7% (3,092,530 people) where Newar has covered 3.2% (846,557 people) out of the total population.

In such local diversities, in terms of languages, the intervention of English, as international language, was seen as early as seventeenth century in Nepal, for example, the kings of Mall dynasty would have trading arrangements with Tibet and North East India,

and used some form of English to carry out their business transactions (Giri, 2014). Nepali language is believed to have undergone sufficient changes in terms of its number of users, its purpose and the context. When a meaning of a word gets changed due to the several changes made by social, cultural and technological hybridisation in course of time, it may be considered as a usual phenomenon. Such interlingual changes pertain to be featured as the way of getting modernised in the modern world. Viewing through the lens of pragmatics, many of the languages of the world are supposed to be hegemonised by the languages of main stream as English and Spanish. For instance, in Hong Kong, China Lai and Byram (2010, p. 322) argued the use of English language may remain as an asset to the culture of the people of Hong Kong because of which they like to impart the knowledge of English through schooling having a faith that it will empower them socially, politically and economically.

The advent of modern education and the teaching of the English language was started by Jung Bahadur Rana, who established Durbar High School in Kathmandu for the children of close family members and teachers were brought from England or India to teach English (Eagle, 1999). The author, Eagle (1999) further states that with the establishment of Tri-Chandra College in 1918 by Chandra Shamsher, the Prime Minister of Nepal, English language course became a part of higher education. The above information indicate that the growing scenario of English empire in Nepal, however, inter-generational language transmission, marginalised number of speakers, scarcity of materials for language education and unfavourable language policies may be threatening the status of Nepali languages (Yadava, 2007). Furthermore, the policies of public school are focusing on the English medium since early grades to lure the students to public school (Phyak, 2011). Rana (2018), furthermore, informs that the growing attraction towards private schools, which are English medium, also indicates that the English language is gradually expanding its space in education in Nepal. It is very significant to explore the ground of reality of mother tongues in the dominant world of main stream languages.

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) as a global language policy

Khatai (2016) informed that medium of instruction refers to the language used in a classroom for the teaching purpose either being official language of nation or not. In Africa, the European languages are still the dominant languages in Science and technology, medicine, engineering and ICT, thus, the linguistic dominance of the English language in Science and technology has marginalised other languages in this field (Agyekum, 2018). However, Lanvers (2011) reported that the language policy of England (the birth place of English language itself) makes a lot of endeavours emphasising another language or several languages. The recent policy of language that emphasises on the phrase 'parallel language use', was issued by Ministers for Education and Culture and other governmental representatives from the Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as several autonomous regions, highlights on the parallel language use of English and one or several Nordic languages in research and education (Kuteeva, 2014).

Bista (2011) reported that the English language is emphasised as the medium of communication not only in higher institution but also in public speaking however it has been implemented as medium of instruction from primary level in Nepal. The Federal Government policies for Education advocates the use of Nepali, English or both of them as the medium of instruction and also legitimised the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in school (Poudel & Choi, 2020). However, Phyak (2016) argued that at one hand it seems to promote Multilingualism imparting an ample domain for mother tongue education but on the other hand it focuses on the EMI in the Government owned public school in the name of competition with private schools.

Thus, in the context of Nepal, such a great priority to English as a medium of instruction in both community based and private school, has brought a chaotic situation. As a result, the students are unable to be competent in handling both languages. For instance, there has been a hot discussion among the teachers belonging to Grade-11 in terms of the subject social studies, which is to be taught in Nepali medium compulsorily as per the Secondary Education Curriculum-2076, that the students, who are from English medium

background, are unable comprehend the Nepali vocabularies. Therefore, the language policy of the Government of Nepal should be well formulated for the proper outcome.

Glocalisation, Multilingualism and Multiculturalism

Guo and Beckett (2007) reported that ‘monolingualism’ or ‘English only’ policy may be an outcome of the hegemony of English as global language, and it may often be assumed that English is best taught monolingually. However, they further clarified that the first language of the learner devises his/her intellectual mind giving more emphasis on bilingual and multilingual education. As an example of critical multiculturalism and multilingualism is the shifting of Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) to Teaching English to Glocalised Communication (TEGCOM) (Lin, Wang, & Akamatsu, 2005). Bekerman and Kopelowitz (2008) found that Glocalisation comprises the interconnectivity between both global and local factors where an active agent may be able to demand the possession of English so as to participate it in various creative tasks using English with non-native than native speakers which may open the avenue of the language equality. However, Yazan (2018) found that glocalisation may not be able to go beyond a binary and signifying the inter-connection between the global and the local. Moreover, he reported that only the recommended ideology from the global scenario is imported into local after going through several negotiations and adjustments since teaching and learning process is the cultural practices.

The aforementioned literatures show how ‘glocalisation’ is bringing equity between English with other tertiary languages of the world, however, using the glocalization perspective, how ELT discourses let the global knowledge be fit in the local culture of teaching and learning process is yet to be researched.

Current English Trends in Nepal

The initiation of English in Nepal as a modern education started from the time of Jung Bahadur Rana, who established Durbar High School in Kathmandu bring teachers from England or India to teach English (Eagle, 1999). Gnawali (2016) stated that since 1992, Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA) has been a backbone for the enhancement of English language teaching in Nepal which includes 55 local branches

3000 plus members who are contributing in research, training, and symposium. Pandey (2020) informed that besides NELTA, British Council, Regional English Language Office (RELO) in the US embassy for Nepal have been partnering Nepal in promotion of English language. However, Khati (2015) argued that there are not sufficient scaffoldings and teaching materials that may be enhancing the quality assurance of teacher in English medium except textbooks designed by the government. Further, Sharma (2018) argued that English has got very dominating scope in school curriculum of Nepal from the past to present along with other markets like tourism industry besides Japanese and Spanish languages.

Caddell (2006) argued that the international curricula like, A-Level along with teaching staffs from abroad, are running successfully luring the elites of Kathmandu, however, budget private and public schools having lower-level facilities, less qualified teachers are selling the dream of success just for students' recruitment.

The aforementioned literature shows that among the recent practices in the context language learning such as, the code switching between L1 and L2 (as a linguistic adaptation in the different media like TV, radio and social media like facebook blog and twitters) and the use of ICT in learning Second or foreign language have gained a little attention in the field of research in Nepal.

Conclusion and recommendations

This paper has highlighted the overarching role of English language and displayed it as global lingua franca. Since, English is an international or global language, this article has illustrated several glimpses of the influences over other tertiary languages. Linguistic superiority of English language is not only due to colonisation, globalisation or hegemonisation, but as per the pro-English linguist, it was the demand of the time seeking to bridge the communication gap among the billion people in the world. The reviews made on the various literatures give ample insight that the English hegemony as global language has already established its superior position not only in the pedagogy of the world but also in the domains like global power, politics and sciences.

The world linguistic heritage is trying its best for the reciprocal existence with English following the principles of multilingualism, multiculturalism and glocalisation which advocate for the win-win condition for the languages of the world paralleling with English language. But at the same time, linguists show their great concerns for eradication of their mother tongue or languages of the nations due to Linguicide. This has placed English to a critical position, thus it can be asserted and recommended that the linguists of the world should seek for a kind of correlation between English with other languages by following glocalisation importing global linguistic entities interacting with local culture for teaching learning process.

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