

## Hegemony of English Language: An Analysis of Advertisement Strategies Adopted by Private Schools of Nepal

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### Abstract

Using Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework (i.e., discourse, text, and social practice), this paper critically examines the linguistic and pictorial discourse of private school advertisement strategies, particularly those for new admissions initiatives, to better understand how the English language functions and how it predominates Nepali and other languages in the context of Nepal. The pictures of advertising in English for 'new admission open' published by private schools were collected as research data and, then, critically analyzed the pictorial and linguistic discourse represented by them. This critical discourse analysis reveals that although Nepalese language policy in education prioritizes multilingual education, all private schools solely offer instruction in English as a second language. Most parents and children are drawn to English-speaking schools due to the influence of the language and the appealing marketing tactics utilized by private schools. Language prejudice and racial inequity are brought about by the idea that English is a superior language. The idea that English is a better language generates prejudice towards other languages and social injustice and the identity of Nepali and other local languages is being undermined by the dominance of English in schools.

**Keywords:** hegemony, domination, linguistic discourse, pictorial discourse, advertisement strategies, ideology

### Introduction

The discourse of hegemony, according to Fairclough (2003) and Van Dijk (2001), is discursive, ideologically constructed, and socially situated. Gramsci, Hoare, & Nowell-Smith state that hegemony is developed by consent and persuasion through the processes of leadership without force, legitimization, and consensual rule, which are the core processes of hegemony. Similarly, Fairclough (1995) defines hegemony as the process of

a dominant group wielding authority over society as a whole, but it's also about forging alliances and gaining subjugated groups' agreement. Hegemonic struggles occur at a variety of levels, including local (e.g., family, workplace, community), national (e.g., education policy, welfare policy, naturalization tests), and worldwide (e.g., globalization). In terms of Korkmaz (2016), hegemony has an ideological, social, cultural, political, and economic influence of a dominant group of people on the others. The creation of hegemony through power, ideology, and legitimation also involves linguistic hegemony.

Similarly, Awonusi (2004, as cited in Mustapha, 2014) asserts that hegemony concerning language connotes a fairly complex interplay of several variables such as power, control, legitimacy, and influence. Although the exercise of power may be either implicit or explicit, hegemony is generally an implicit exercise of power by the dominant group of people over the less powerful or powerless ones. Van Dijk (1993) asserts that the members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders (elites), have exclusive access to, and control over, one or more types of public discourse. In a similar vein, Fairclough (1992) states that linguistic hegemony in society is primarily linked to power and ideology. He further asserts that hegemony in general and hegemony of the English language influence both dominance and integration of various discourses. To put it in other words, linguistic hegemony (especially the hegemony of the English language) is about a dominating group wielding power over society as a whole, as well as forging alliances and obtaining agreement from subjugated groups (Mustapha, 2014). However, Van Dijk (2005) argues that hegemonic struggles in terms of language occur at a micro and macro level of social structure and the power of the dominant group of people is usually represented in laws, rules, norms, and habits through language. Hegemony, on the other hand, is never absolute, and there will always be areas of instability and conflict, resulting in an "unstable equilibrium" (Fairclough, 1992). Even though the hegemony of the English language is prevalent in all sorts (e.g., social, political, economic, educational) of discourses, this paper critically analyzes the linguistic and pictorial discourse of advertisement strategies used by private schools (especially, the advertisement strategies for new admission programmes) to investigate how the hegemony of English language functions and how it dominates Nepali and other languages in the context of Nepal.

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### **Statement of Problem**

Though the education policy in Nepal mentions a liberal attitude towards teaching different languages in schools, the hegemony of the English language in admission advertisements in schools itself reflects the undermining of the identity of Nepali and other local languages. This results in the marginalization of Local Languages: When English becomes the dominant language of instruction and communication, local languages are often pushed to the sidelines. This marginalization can lead to a decline in the use and promotion of local languages within educational institutions and wider society, resulting in a loss of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Similarly, this hegemony creates Educational Inequality. The hegemony of English in admission advertisements can contribute to educational inequality. Students from privileged backgrounds, who may have better access to English language resources and opportunities, are at an advantage, while students from marginalized communities or those with limited exposure to English face additional barriers in accessing quality education. Moreover, this leads to an imbalance in multilingual education. The liberal attitude towards teaching different languages in schools, as mentioned in the education policy, should ideally promote multilingual education where Nepali and local languages are given equal importance alongside English. However, the dominance of English in admission advertisements indicates a potential imbalance, with English receiving disproportionate attention and resources.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the linguistic and pictorial discourse of advertisement strategies used by private schools (especially, the advertisement strategies for new admission programmes) to show the existing discrimination of Nepali and other local languages and to investigate how the hegemony of English language functions and how it dominates Nepali and other languages in the context of Nepal.

### **Research Questions**

To fulfill the purposes, this paper basically deals with the following research questions:

- How is hegemony connected to the English language?

- How does the hegemony of English influence advertising and the medium of instruction?
- What is the relation between linguistic and pictorial discourse in advertisement strategy used by private schools?
- How does English hegemonise other mediums of instruction?

### **Literature Review**

This paper uses some theoretical frameworks and some previous literature related to power, ideology, hegemony, discrimination, and denial to analyse how the hegemony of the English language functions and how it dominates Nepali and other languages in the context of Nepal. According to Van Dijk (2001), Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a sort of discourse analytical research that focuses on how text and talk in the social and political context enact, reproduce, and oppose social power abuse, dominance, and inequality. Critical discourse analysts, in his opinion, take a firm stance in investigating, exposing, and eventually opposing social inequalities. Ideologies are the essential frameworks for organizing the social cognitions held by members of social groups, organizations, or institutions (Van Dijk, 1995). They essentially function as a link between the cognitive representations and processes that support language and conduct, on the one hand, and the societal position and interests of social groups, on the other. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) state that hegemony is established by "building alliances and merging classes through consent" (p. 449), and that the consent is spontaneous since the general public has the free will to accept power hegemony. Although power can be exercised in both implicit and explicit ways, hegemony is usually an implicit exercise of power by the dominant group of people over the weaker or helpless. Hegemony presents itself as "common sense," which is "acquired from the past and assimilated without question," perpetuating "moral and political passivity" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333)

In a similar vein, Fairclough (1989), claims that ideology and power are inextricably linked. People in positions of power attempt to impose their ideology on people who have little or no power. Blommaert (2005, p.166) defines hegemony as a "generalized, even internalized" consent, while Van Dijk (2001) clarifies that the dominating group's authority is usually manifested in laws, regulations, conventions, and habits.



Similarly, Fairclough & Chuliaraki (1999), assert that hegemony refers to dominance relationships based on consent rather than force, and it entails the naturalization of practices and their social relations, as well as relationships between practices, as common knowledge. As a result, the idea of hegemony emphasizes the role of ideology in establishing and maintaining dominance relationships. Blackledge (2005), argues that ideologies that appear to discriminate against languages often prejudice against the speakers of those languages. This concept argues that dominant ideologies that favor certain languages and varieties contribute to the formation and reproduction of social inequality, resulting in linguistic hegemony. Phyak (2021), states that English is infrequently utilized for ordinary social interactions at home and in the community. Because the majority of students use Nepali and other indigenous/minority languages in everyday situations, they feel at ease talking in these languages with their teachers and peers. Many children, however, are obliged to utilize English only at school due to English textbooks, EMI policies, and English-only assessments and exams. However, Gramsci (1971) argues that state domination over a language cannot be sustained over time without the consent of the polity through ideological persuasion; that is, through hegemony. Similarly, language ideologies, according to Blackledge and Pavlenko (2002), continue to serve as gate-keeping strategies in a variety of contexts, including community, nation, nation-state, state, and global levels, to construct, maintain, and enforce borders between people. Blackledge (2005), revealed that these ideologies emerge in explicit and implicit discourses, visible and invisible discourses, official and unofficial discourses, long-term and ephemeral discourses, contested and uncontested discourses, and negotiable and nonnegotiable discourses. According to Foucault (1982), Power is a basis for molding knowledge and it also recreates its own areas through knowledge. Foucault asserts that Knowledge is linked to power. It does not only assume the authority of 'the truth' but it has also the power to make itself true. Foucault said that power is not in the hands of one special group rather power is considered as a pervasive force and symmetrical relations that is dominant over the whole society. According to Van Dijk (1993), there is no direct relationship between social structures and discourse structures, but they are linked through personal and social cognition. All of their work in shaping and analyzing the theory is political, and their critiques of discourse will include political criticism. They are the ones who keep ascendancy and social disparities alive

(i.e., elite groups who are in power; those who establish social inequalities and injustice continue and legitimize them). Critical discourse analysis expertise may aid in assessing and determining the prejudice, inequality, and dominance that exist in any ideology. Power is exercised in speech by powerful individuals, according to Fairclough (1989), who "control and constrain the contributions of non-powerful actors. "The goals of private schools differ from those depicted in ads. English has surpassed all other languages as the global language of communication, business, aviation, entertainment, diplomacy, and information technology. English hegemony describes a condition in which English dominates other languages in communication, resulting in disparities between English speakers and non-English speakers (Tsuda, 2008). Furthermore, Tsuda (2008) argues that English hegemony endangers other languages and discriminates against non-native English speakers, resulting in the English split, in which English speakers have more power and resources than non-native English speakers

### **Methodology**

This paper uses the critical discourse analysis approach as a research methodology employing Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework to critically assess the advertisement in this study. (i.e., discourse, text, and social practice). These dimensions in this framework are all strongly related to one another. These dimensions are 1) textual analysis description, 2) interpretation of production and reception, and 3) explanation of social conditions affecting production and reception. The pictures of advertising in English for 'new admission open' published by private schools were collected as research data and, then, critically analyzed the pictorial and linguistic discourse represented by them. To critically analyze the discourse of the advertisements and to investigate how the hegemony of the English language functions and how it dominates Nepali and other languages in the context of Nepal, I used constructs such as ideology (van Dijk, 1989, Blackledge, 2005), hegemony, (Fairclough, 1992), and denial as theoretical lenses.

### **Findings and Discussion**

To compete with the modern globalized era, schools are establishing their identities, portraying their ideologies, and developing relationships with parents and

students. We can see different types of pictorial and textual discourses used by schools to attract and persuade students in advertisements. Let's take an example of an advertisement notice published by a school named Kids School.



The school's name informs that it is for kids who basically are supposed to have no or very little competence in the English language. Similarly, the information is also targeted to the prospective parents of the school. However, there is also no evidence that all parents use and understand English. There arises a question: what is the meaning of using English in such advertisements? The answer to this question is contested and discursive in nature. The use of the English language in such pictorial discourses is linked with a number of factors such as ideology, power, and hegemony.

Language ideologies, as Blackledge (2005) says, are situated in their social, political, and historical contexts and are influenced by them. The pictorial discourse here reflects the neoliberal ideology. English is taken as a resource for financial benefit and future career. Thus, advertising in English can be a way to attract the attention of the students and parents through commercial perspectives. The discourse of this pictorial representation also reflects English as a way of showing the power what Bourdieu (1991) terms as 'symbolic power'. The school through this advertisement is not only reflecting the ideology but also demonstrating its social and financial status. To put it in simple words, the schools that use English as a medium of instruction are symbolically concerned with higher social class people. However, power and ideology do not function separately, they are, as Fairclough (1989) claims, inextricably linked with each other. Even though ideology and power are interlinked in advertisement strategies adopted by private schools, the hegemony of the English language which sidelines Nepali and other languages cannot be excluded from the discourse of ideology and power. The

advertisement shows that there is no place for the Nepali language because advertising in Nepali can show the school as inferior in terms of power and status. This belief considers that English is a more powerful language than the other language. The advertisement discourse also presupposes that private schools are meant to use English as a de facto medium of instruction. This ideology reflects a linguistic hegemony (hegemony of the English language). In this context, Fairclough & Chuliaraki (1999) assert that hegemony incorporates dominance relationships based on consent rather than force, and it entails the naturalization of practices and their social relations, as well as relationships between practices. Drawing on this notion, we can say that the use of the English language in advertisement discourse hegemonizes it and consequently Nepali and other local languages are dominated.

Apart from the ideology and power, the adoption of English medium of instruction also contributes to the domination and hegemony of English over Nepali and other local languages. However, the choice of the English language as a medium of instruction is also implicitly and sometimes explicitly guided and influenced by ideology and power (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1989). Regarding, English as a medium of instruction that hegemonies English, Phyak (2021) reveals that English as a medium of instruction is being wrongly promoted by schools and government authorities (primarily at the local level) as a remedy for the problem of declining student enrollment in public schools. This fixation with English as a medium of instruction has become a central theme in both educational reform and the government's development strategy. For example, let's see the advertisement of Shree West Sunrise English Boarding School from Dhangadhi:



Even though multilingual education is prioritized by the government, these private schools are only promoting the English language. While talking about the text used in advertisements, only the English language is used there. The information is given in big font, bold, capital, and in different colors to attract the students' attention. In fact, rather than being communicative, schools have become strategic in action because they have specific ideologies to follow and specific discourses to draw upon, even though they have been drawn upon specific discourses. These ideological notions can be connected to Fairclough's (1995) notion of linguistic hegemony that asserts both dominance and integration, i.e., about dominating group wielding power over society as a whole, as well as forging alliances and obtaining agreement from subjugated groups. There are power relations in the linguistic marketplace, which means that not all speakers start off equal. It also elaborates on the social phenomenon associated with obtaining an education, namely, gaining status through education, because education and the nature of education determine the student's future path. The advertisement conveys the consumer's desired outcome in a persuasive manner, which is conveyed through the discourse marker displayed in bold letters. Similarly, this pictorial representation can also be described in terms of neoliberal ideology as Blackledge (2005) says Speakers of linguistic minorities and speakers of majority languages alike come to understand that the majority language is superior and that it is only natural that those who do not speak English have difficulty accessing certain markets, such as the educational system, the judicial system, and welfare rights organizations.

Even though some private schools adopt bilingual advertisement strategies (Nepali and English), the power and hegemony of the English language is still persistent. In case the Nepali language is used, it is also found to be dominating other local languages which is against the spirit of the multilingual education system adopted by Nepal.





In the above advertisement of Golden Future Boarding School, two languages are used (i.e., English and Nepali) however, we can see the domination and discrimination of the English language there. The name of the school is written in English in bold and big font but only the general information about the time of the college, food, hostel, and transportation is given in small font. This shows that they want to grab the attention of the audience by showing and focusing on its special characteristics and positive vibes. This is the discourse of promise about the output and desired notion behind the whole activity. In this advertisement, the main information is highlighted using English language, and the additional information is given in Nepali language in small fonts. This type of difference indicates the hegemony of the English language over the Nepali language. This pictorial discourse represents symbolic abuse of power (Van Dijk, 1997), English as a superior language ideology, inequality, dominance, and hegemony (Blackledge, 2005).

Similarly, another pictorial discourse represented in the advertisement of an English medium school also shows the discrimination between English and Nepali languages, even though the schools adopt bilingual (Nepali and English) strategies to advertise themselves. This advertisement has not used any pictures instead used both the English and Nepali languages. However, the English language is used while giving information about admission, information on courses, information about entrance exams, their schedule, duration, and the areas that will be addressed in the program are included before the institute's name in bold and large print. After the name of it, the Nepali language is used only to describe the characteristics of the school.

**Admission Open**  
2075/076

**+2 (NEB)**  
Science (Ex. 2052)  
Management  
Humanities  
Education (Ex. 2051)

**Entrance Exams:** 2075 Ashadh 27  
Time: 8:00 am  
Entrance Result: 2075 Ashadh 27  
Classes Begin: 2075 Sawan, 06 (8:30 am)

**फees (NPR):**  
1. Science: 200  
2. Management: 300  
3. Arts/Education: 120

**Entrance:**  
1. Science: Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Maths, Nepali, English, and a Period of free choice.  
2. Management: Business/Accounting/IT/Marketing, English, Nepali, and a Period of free choice.  
3. Arts/Education: Nepali, English, and a Period of free choice.

**New Program: Hotel Management**

**AISHWARYA VIDYA NIKETAN**  
Secondary School, Chandrahari, Kathmandu, Nepal  
www.aishwaryavidyaniketan.com.np



The discourse in the above advertisement shows the inequality between the dominant language and local language or the symbolic discrimination of the so-called powerful language or local language. Among four advertisements, three advertisements have used both pictures and text but the fourth advertisement has used only text. This idea can also be connectSed with Fairclough's (1995) notion that language in a social context can lead to new concepts about language and power; the power and ideology of powerful people in a social environment influence linguistic standards.

Although multilingualism is better than EMI, the global spread of EMI education and the ideology of English have influenced the Nepalese education system. There are some counterarguments of the scholars that support English medium instruction and the hegemony of English. In this context, Sah and Li (2018) argue that parents, students, and teachers viewed EMI as a preferred type of linguistic capital for developing advanced English abilities, improving scholastic results and access to higher education, and raising the likelihood of upward social and economic mobility. Similarly, Saud (2020) argues that parents are increasingly demanding EMI because they see English as a linguistic capital in the global socio-economic market, and they see it as an investment in their children's education. Furthermore, Ghimire (2019) and Sah (2015) argue that students learn the English language for getting work in the country and overseas and for socio-economic and socio-political development. However, I think the ideology of EMI is not good. The global spread of English is creating discrimination between Nepali languages and local languages. Students can express more in their mother tongue rather than in English medium instruction. The dropout rate will be less if they feel comfortable and easier to express in the class and there will be no chances of language death. Multilingual education provides, as Poudel (2019) argues, the best opportunities for preparing the next generation to participate in the construction of more equitable and the translation of such insights into real-life practice in democratic societies in the globalized world is difficult.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, multilingual education is prioritized in language policy in our context, but all the private schools focus on only English medium instruction. They use technical language, catchy taglines, and pictures to grab the attention of parents and students. In other words, pictorial and linguistic discourses are used to grab the attention. People of

poor backgrounds are also attracted towards private schools to secure the future of their children. Due to the influence of the English language and due to the catchy strategy used by private schools most of the parents and students are attracted towards English language schools. The ideology of English as a superior language creates discrimination among languages and inequality between the people. The hegemony of the English language in schools is undermining the identity of Nepali and other local languages. Even though Nepal is a multilingual country, the English language is overpowering Nepali and other languages in the context of Nepal. This domination of English over Nepali and other languages is attacking linguistic diversity and local identities.

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