

Prospects and Challenges of ELT at a Glance

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Abstract

English has been utilized for more than 150 years as the primary language of instruction, evaluation system, and subject matter to be taught and learned, or both, covering a broad variety of subjects from early childhood to higher education (Khadka, 2022). This paper uses the qualitative method, relying on secondary sources of data. An overview of teaching English in Nepal is provided in this article. It makes an effort to investigate how teaching and learning languages are situational. The study aims to discuss Nepal's ELT paradigm shift along with societal inequality and disparity, which lead to difficulties in English language instruction in Nepal. How an English language education practitioner would address those challenges is covered in the paper's conclusion.

Keywords: ELT, proficiency, prospect, challenge, language

Introduction

English language proficiency is seen in the current global system as a requirement for empowerment, improved education, upward social mobility, and even the alleviation of poverty and hunger (Arcand & Grin, 2013). In many non-Anglophone nations, including Nepal, the use of English as a foreign language and a medium of instruction (MoI) in school curricula has been usurped by the ideology that views English as a language of development and necessity (Sah, 2022). The English language has a significant impact on Nepal's educational system (Jora, 2019). During the Rana era, English language instruction was introduced in Nepal. English language instruction was introduced in Nepal when the Ranas took power (Shrestha, 2008). At Durbar High School back then, the Ranas' children received English instruction. Jung Bahadur Rana introduced the English language to Nepal in a systematic manner following his return from England. It was formerly exclusive to Durbar High School only. However, later on, access to English-language education was extended to Nepali commoners' children as well. According to Mainali and Sunar (2019) Jung Bahadur Rana established the first formal school (Durbar High School) in 1853, which was intended for the clan of *Rana and Shah* Families. However, it is assumed that the birth of Nepalese democracy in 1951 opened its classroom to a more diverse population (Caddell, 2007).

With over 123 local languages spread across different ecological zones, Nepal boasts a great linguistic diversity (Phyak, 2015). Nepal is therefore, referred to as a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual nation because of the variety of its languages and ethnicities. English is taught and learned as a non-native and/or foreign language in Nepal, despite the fact that it is not the language of everyday communication (Khadka, 2022). English is apparently becoming increasingly widely used and is thought to be the language for a variety of uses, including tourism, media, education, and diplomacy. Additionally, our classrooms mirror the composition of Nepali society, which on the one hand contributes to the hegemony of learning a foreign language—particularly English—on the other. Teaching and learning were considered highly significant tasks in the past, and they were typically limited to a specific group of individuals. On the one hand, the existing caste and gender discrimination in Nepal prevented women and other oppressed groups from attending gurus' homes in order to receive an education, while on the other side, some people were denied the right to an education (Devkota, 2023). However, given that Nepali pupils are diverse in terms of their linguistic proficiency although being uniform in age, teaching and learning English is challenging in that country. The prevalent problem of Nepali English language classrooms is lack of trained teachers, teachers' tendency to work only in urban parts of the county, bogus pre-

service teacher education, social inequalities, different types of challenges that ELT professionals have been facing. The issues will be dealt in the following section with sufficient exposures considering different literatures.

Methodology

To perform the study and offer a convincing argument, the current paper used a qualitative approach to investigate the opportunities and difficulties associated with teaching English. The reason for this is that a qualitative technique can be used to find detailed information about a specific topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), and this academic paper has been created based on the same perspective. Furthermore, the research begins with a claim in the form of a theme, and it supports this claim by citing several literary works that provide relevant background. The study only used secondary sources of information to support its claims with persuasive arguments. The following parts, under the results and discussions, provide the claims and the supporting evidence.

Literature Review

English language instruction (ELT) is becoming more and more popular throughout the world, in both developed and developing nations (Aryal et al., 2016). Some of the studies like (Shrestha et al., 2016; Khadka, 2022) demonstrated that English is highly valued in official communication in Nepal and has a prominent role in journalism, research, technology, and education. Actually, the students who went to the

best English-medium schools were able to perform better academically and had more career opportunities due to their high level of language competence (Ghimire, 2019). Contrary to these idealistic views of EMI and its blatantly superficial claims, the adoption of EMI had resulted in a number of unanticipated negative effects, including a continuous process of improving English proficiency, because there was insufficient infrastructure support and teacher preparation (Sah & Li, 2018).

Analysis, Interpretation and Result Discussion

Based on analysis and interpretation of literature reviews related to the ELT policies practices, prospects and challenges in Nepal, the findings and discussion is described in the following sub-headings:

Nepal's ELT Paradigm Shift

The paradigm shift in second language education has prompted numerous recommendations for improvements to the methods and ideas of second language instruction (Fillmore, 2020). There is no way that ELT in Nepal differs from the paradigm shift in language instruction. It is connected to the main tenets of English language instruction. Many developments have gradually affected how ELT has been taught and learned in Nepal (Aryal et al., 2016). Many developments have gradually affected how ELT has been taught and learned in Nepal. There has been a significant shift in textbooks, teacher styles, student learning styles,

instructional materials, and other associated sources. English as a foreign language has changed to become English as an international language (EIL) from the standpoint of globalization. Language acquisition happens outside of the classroom. Students' reliance on their professors has decreased. The Nepali government initiated the notion of multilingual education. New ideas in English have emerged, such as English for Specific Purpose (ESP) and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) and so on (Jora, 2019). Academic courses now use more functional and communicative exercises, resources, techniques, and procedures than they did in the past. Instead of teachers, the learner sides are the center. The curricula include numerous tasks related to personal language development, self-evaluation, group work, and pair work. Those works are really focused on the communicative perspective. The textbooks in Nepal used to contain writings written by native speakers. The current trend has reversed, with many books written by Nepali authors. These days, teaching and learning advocate the use of L1, in addition to a range of accents in listening exercises and evaluations. The ELT classroom is multidisciplinary at the moment. Content Based Language Instruction (CBLI), Content and Language Learning (CLIL), ESP, EAP are current subjects that should be included in Nepal's curriculum. Consequently, an increasing number of programs now mandate that English teachers employ cross-disciplinary and cross-curricular content while instructing

students. The learning objectives, also known as learning standards, are far more comprehensive and cover not only language proficiency but also critical thinking, learning techniques, and relevant material knowledge and practical skills. Standards, accountability, and assessment are now at the center of Nepal's ELT educational reforms (Shrestha, 2018).

Social Disparities

Nepal is a beautiful country with the diverse culture, religion and ethnicity (Hutt, 2012). The 2015 constitution defines Nepal's identity as multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural country (Phyak, 2016). Language education policy is a major issue in multilingual contexts (Mohanty, 2006). This case is no exception for a multi-lingual country like Nepal. English Language Teaching, which is one of the compulsory subject in the national curriculum is leading to social inequalities and it has become the major fact for the socially, culturally and economically backward children (Devkota, 2018b). Devkota (2018b) further asserts that though, modern schooling in Nepal is supposed to be the essential factor for development and modernization. Government policies and pedagogies are made to include inclusion, socialization and democratization with the overall development of school children irrespective of their caste, class, gender and ethnicity, the actual realities are found to be limited only in the papers.

English has a hegemonic position in contemporary school teaching and is

now necessary to communicate with members of the global village (Crystal, 2012). However, there is a problem with inequality arising from the current global growth of English and ELT, since schoolchildren are divided into social classes known as "English Language Rich" and "English Language Poor" (Devkota, 2018b). Since English's neoliberal ideology already shapes public discourse, this program encouraged public schools in Nepal to use English as their primary language of instruction (Phyak, 2013). English Medium Instruction (EMI) has been viewed as a sign of improvement in education in our nation, despite the fact that it can be a demotivating factor for learning in the early grades (Phyak & Ojha, 2019). A study carried out by Sah and Li (2018) found that though the parents, students and teachers regarded EMI as sole factor for developing advanced English skills, EMI has contributed to the continuation of educational inequity, inequality, and marginalization for students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Likewise, the reason for dropout is failure in English for most of the student from the minor ethnic community (BK, 2017).

Students' gender, ethnicity, and other personal characteristics contribute to further social injustices that exist in Nepali classrooms (Witenstein & Palmer, 2013). For instance, because girls in the family are not treated equally, daughters attend government schools, while sons attend English-medium boarding schools (LeVine, 2019). Students' linguistic

abilities vary even when their ages are similar, which makes it difficult for the classroom to work. Other factor for causing inequalities in Nepali English language classroom is types of schools. In Nepal there are two types of schools which are government and private schools. In government schools, English language is taught only one period in a day while in private schools except Nepali all subjects are taught in English language. The result of SEE examination shows significant disparity in results in English language (Thapa, 2015). Moreover, the lowest score of a student in private school can be highest in state run school. It is an inequality caused by linguistic reason in one hand and on the other, it is a challenge among the ELT professionals in Nepal.

Challenges

It is difficult to teach and study English in a multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic nation like Nepal (Phyak, 2015). The children of ethnic group of Nepal speaks mother tongue and has Nepali as official language and studies English at school. Here the child in this situation has to navigate three languages, For instance in Nepal, Tamang as a local language, Nepali as the official language and English if in an EMI school. Next reason is due to the geographical feature of the country. There is always lack of trained teachers to teach in most of the rural areas of Nepal.

In Nepal there is huge gap between the education provided in private sector and public sector institutes

(Caddell, 2006). This is my own personal experience as I teach in private and community college. The students who study in private college have very good English whereas the community student are very poor in English language. Except few students, most of the students 's difficult subject is English in community college. Whereas, private college students take English as an easy subject. However, I teach to the same level, I have to change the methods to teach in private and community college. It is difficult for me to teach English in community college, whereas I can easily teach without any hard work in private college. The reason behind this sort of difference is the schooling. The students who are from English medium especially private school already have developed English language as compared to the student who are from Nepali medium schools specially government school. It is a great challenge for me as they do not have a Basic English and in exam, they have to appear the tough paper designed for the higher secondary level students. The students who do not have opportunity to learn English properly or who somehow passed secondary level examination has to face challenge of high level English designed for the high competent student. A study (Rana, 2015) also shows that the primary cause of school dropout is English proficiency deficiencies. This kind of situation is always challenging for the teacher as well as students. Likewise, challenging factor in teaching and learning English is gender biasness. For example, a study (Devkota, 2018a) found

that sons are given more preference in many of the Nepalese (especially uneducated and socio-economically poor) community. The attendance of female students in rural areas is less in class as compared to the male students. The gender inequalities are the obstacle in every aspect so there is no exception that it is also the effecting factor in EFL/ESL classroom. Among the several other challenges, Rana and Rana (2019) found that the negligence of listening and speaking tests at secondary level examination is also challenge. While teaching language, all four language skills should be equally prioritized, however speaking and listening have not received the same emphasis from the Nepali government. This led to the discontinuation of practice of listening and speaking test from the school. Likewise, another study (Kafle, 2022) found that challenge for the EFL/ESL teachers is the content of the textbooks, which are not localized or nationalized. The examples in the textbook are focused with the name, culture, religion of USA or UK. If the same example is illustrated with the local name or nationalized culture, the teacher can make students understand better and students can conceptualize the examples faster. Another challenge is due to the heterogeneous nature of the students. The Nepali classroom is the representation of diversified Nepal. In a single classroom, we can find the students of different castes, religion, and ethnicity, which are huge challenges for the teacher to address that heterogeneity. Likewise, Phyak

(2016) argues that there have always been disagreements regarding adhering to language policies due to frequent policy changes.

Teachers' Increasing Responsibilities and Shifting Roles

In ELT classes, it is the duty of the English teacher to provide support (Renandya, 2012). Teachers with training and expertise have a big part to play in motivating students to learn the language, not just about it. The teaching atmosphere and scenario can be stimulated by the teacher's participation and activity. The majority of communication in today's globalized world occurs in English, which is also the language of instruction. Everyone is aware that it is a comprehensive or global language, indicating how the modern world is advancing through its connections with others to maintain peaceful ties. A learner must become proficient in all four communication skills—listening, verbal communication, interpretation, and inscription skills—in order to develop strong communication abilities or to excel in them (Moore, 2014).

Way Forward

Many steps can be made to address the issues that teachers and students are having with ELT. Creating an approachable ELT policy that is reassuring to all ELT experts is the first and most important action that can be taken to address the issue (Sukri & Yunus, 2018). Therefore, the policy that the government of Nepal formulates should be friendly to ELT professional and if

such can be done, the prospect of English language can be made more productive throughout the nation. On the other side, professional development of teacher is another dire need of present day ELT classroom in Nepal. The training programs being conducted are not sufficient enough to cater the needs to teachers – pre service and in service teachers. The training programs should be practice oriented in which trainers should teach how to fish to the teachers so that once those teachers go their classroom, they find the training program equally fruitful.

The government should work with various non-governmental and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs and INGOs) to support the professional development of English language teachers. The INGOs like British Council, American Centre can play instrumental role in ELT teacher training and strengthening the prospect of teacher development. For the same, the government should work shoulder with shoulder with them so that teachers' professional development can be imagined. On the other side, different online training courses can be found, like Coursera, MOOC, etc. and teacher should be made compulsory to attend such online training programs so that their professional growth can be imagined. Moreover, the same should be allowed on the part of pre service teacher educators too so that once they go to their professional field, they can perform in a better way.

Since English does not contain this kind of discrimination, the general issues of sex, ethnicity, multilingualism, etc., can be adequately handled in English language classrooms. On the other hand, course books should be written considering Nepali context so that while learning English language students should be able to learn something. Another factor to be developed is to enhance the critical consciousness on the part of students, if through English language critical consciences is developed, they can implement in their real life context and they will not accept something for granted, rather they challenge authority, if there is some sort of discrimination. Moreover, if students are crucially aware, the classroom becomes inclusive in one hand and on the other harmony in learning can also be found.

Finally, another issue to be addressed is that ELT classroom should be made participatory in which decision about teaching and learning should be made in a collective way by the teacher as well as students. The teacher should choose this means while deciding the content in the classroom, the teacher should regard the need and demand of the students in one hand and on the other, those contents while are lifelong. Moreover, teachers support groups, Facebook pages can also be developed so that those ELT professionals can meet, exchange their ideas and take suggestions from others to improve the condition of their classrooms.

Conclusion

Learning the English language is more than just a talent; it's a means of using a master key, which allows one to unlock a vast ocean of information. Language proficiency in English is required in many developed nations across the world in order to be admitted to various subjects. In the same way, learning the English language in Nepal involves learning how to use a master key. Therefore, there is dire need of learning English language and the case of Nepal is also not an exception. Nepali ELT professional have been encountering different issues in English language teaching. They must contend with a variety of issues, including socioeconomic inequality, hegemony, inconsistent government policies, and differences in student outcomes between schools and areas. Furthermore, the challenges that need to be addressed by Nepal's ELT strategy include the construction of language labs in all academic institutions across the country, the socialization of underprivileged people, and exam-focused learning.

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