

# Postcolonial Pedagogy: Practices, Understandings and Experiences of Secondary Level English Teachers

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## ABSTRACT

*The issue of postcolonial pedagogy is a well-established issue in the academia. With the aim of exploring the practices and understanding of postcolonial pedagogy in Nepali context at secondary level of Nepal. The current study had been conducted for enhancing the knowledge of English language teaching. The study explored the practices, understanding and experience of secondary level English teacher on postcolonial pedagogy based on the data achieved from the field. Applying the qualitative research design, the current study revealed the reality of practices of postcolonial pedagogy in Nepali context based on the purposive sampling. The study discovered that the secondary level teachers did not possess clear concepts of postcolonial pedagogy. The teachers' practiced based on Western elitism ideologies and their knowledge was found lacking on postcolonial pedagogy as they were away from the entire ethnic group, their culture. They were less aware of the sympathetic engagement of the learners missing the skills of creating a situation in the classroom and serving hegemonic modes of knowledge.*

**Keywords:** *postcolonial pedagogy, understanding pedagogy, cultural hybridity, critical learning*

## Introduction

Nepal, though not colonized physically, can be described as a third space (Bhabha, 2009) as people coexist with diverse language, caste, religion, and social cultural identity. Internal migration inside the country for a long time to now different castes, languages, religions, and cultures are mixed together. Further, because of business, education, job people are obliged to leave their original land and living in the location, making the local people feel that they have been colonized; they feel themselves as an oppressed group and majority group feel as if oppressor (Bhabha, 1995).

The development of science and technology has connected the world in a small thread. By the help of means of mass communication or information, Nepali have learned the culture of the West. School children sing and recite the rhymes in

English. English seems to have influenced culture, costume, language, and identity. English is used as a medium of instruction in different schools and universities. The questions in exam are asked in English. Now, English is not more a foreign language; it has become the second language in Nepal (Giri, 2014). In that sense, Nepali are linguistically, culturally, ideologically, and materially colonized (Phyak, 2016). Similar, experience is undergone by the people in any neo-colonized world (Bertolt, 2018). These are the features of Nepali society and these features reflect in the classroom of schools and universities.

During the twentieth and before century many countries were under the colony of European power like Britain, Germany, France, and Italy (Mackenzie, 1824). These countries were developed and educated as well as powerful countries as claimed by Said (2003). These countries are from the west in present and even in past. At that time, The West was the powerful in the world and it had colonized many countries in the east and African continent Said (2003). India, the neighboring country of Nepal, was the colony of British before 1947 (Heathcote, 2013). India was the colony of British around three hundred years. British or colonizers had their own culture and ideology which they brought in India. They continued their culture and ideology though they were away from mother land physically. English was the mother tongue of British but not Indian when India was colonized. Colonizer is always powerful than colonized. People during the time were colonized and suppressed physically and mentally. Colonized behaved with colonizer thinking them as barbarian, illiterate, blunt and they suppressed from their rights.

The colonized even think that colonizer is superior in every matter than colonized; they are smart as well as powerful, and colonized wants to be close with colonizer and make them adjust in a mixed cultural society (Cesair, 2014). Similarly, colonizer wants to adjust in new mixed cultural society. They accumulate their culture either adding or subtracting from others. After the long time, they come to a hybridity (Bhabha, 1995) which will be accepted by both cultural groups.

Today, colonized are independent and are not the colonies of west, but, they still in dilemma whether the colonizers were good or bad for them (Cesair, 2014). They have mixed feeling towards the west; they have the feeling of ambivalence (Bhabha, 2009). Still, they feel the presence of west in some part of their life. They follow some part of their culture and try to be as if them. There seems the presence of mimicry and they copy accent in language; modify their culture; and wear as if they wear (Bhabha, 1995). In the postcolonial situation, the life style, culture, ideology, status, and knowledge have been changed and they have been living as if in the new world (Bhabha, 2023). Moreover, he claims that they have changed their identity and have presented them different than the past. On the other hand, the development of education and science and technology, the life style and attitude and knowledge of the people have been changed. People migrate in search of

education; facilities and job. When they migrate, they not only bring their physical matter and body but also bring their culture along with them that is an abstract property which always moves along with human body (Vuong, 2023). Therefore, the society becomes diverse cultural society. The migration has made multicultural society everywhere. The migration has made a complex society. The complexity reflects in the classroom. The teacher who teaches in such multicultural class need to think more than the past and has to be reflexive. Liberal education is the demand of postcolonial pedagogy (Enslin, 2017).

Postcolonial pedagogy is a way of teaching in the classroom focusing on the minority. When a teacher teaches in a classroom, some of the students in the classroom may not understand what the teacher taught. When they don't know, they feel bore and they are oppressed (Freire, 2005). Postcolonial pedagogy sees the entire ethnic group, their culture and suggests to the teacher for sympathetic engagement of the learners. It is a situation in which teacher creates a situation in the classroom and serves hegemonic modes of knowledge (Youatt, 2007). The culture of all the ethnic is used in the classroom as far as possible. Postcolonial pedagogy is judged through three levels: content level, delivery level, knowledge level (Mayne, 2019). It is a pedagogy that put all the cultures and religion in the same rank either they have covered large population or small population (Cloete, 2023). A teacher behaves equally with all and preserves the rights of learners in the classroom as far as possible. It believes in the hegemonic culture or the mixed up of cultures and developed new culture. Our relation is to the larger university, community in terms of those identities which are believed equally. This involves our sense of the explicit and implicit attitudes of the larger community. The study was conducted with the aim of exploring the practices and understanding of postcolonial pedagogy in Nepali context at secondary level.

### **Postcolonial Theory**

The countries were suppressed when they were the colony of west. West was seen as a power of the world. Colonialism is taken as a power that imposes a standard ideology and the ideology is used to measure and perceive the subjective reality of the world (Macedo, 1999). The subordinate in the society is also treated as if the colonizer treats to the colonized world. The subordinate always feel they are always inferior to other. Such similarly can be seen in the world of the postcolonial situation. The colonized condition can certainly be found in early childhood classrooms when school quality in the 'non-west' begins to be measured in terms of 'Western' standards (Gupta, 2015). West is seen as a trade-mark of quality. Non-west is evaluated through the lens of west and west is the trade quality. West indicates to the Euro-American world where they speak English as their cultural trade. The present pedagogy has to be away from neo-colonized and colonized ideology and has to adopt neo-liberalism. The postcolonial world sees the mixed culture, mixed identities and diverse nature of knowledge. The de-centralization of

world and de-centralization of knowledge are the lenses of postcolonial pedagogy. The transactional nature of the colonized condition may be described as a negotiation, a powerful and lingering interdependence between the colonized and the colonizer (Gandhi, 1998), and two-way dialogue between the philosophies of the colonized and the colonizer (Trivedi, 1993). The use of postcolonial theory helps us to address the complexities of the world and the complexities of the classroom. Bhabha (2009) defines such complexities as cultural complexities and in his word as cultural hybridization. It is seen in between the philosophies and ideas of colonizer and colonized. Moreover, it is also seen in between the language, ideologies, pedagogies and cultural practices of the colonized and the colonizer.

When the ideas interact with each other cooperating rather than opposing then they come to a point in the modification of new culture and embedded into next culture. This process of transformation then leads to the creation of a hybrid third space, a grey area, which holds infinite new possibilities (Bhabha, 1994). Tikly (1999) claims that the cultural attention being drawn to the trans-cultural mixing and exchanging, which is the result of cultural hybridization. Moreover, Viruru (2005) writes 'postcolonial theory is not limited to the study of how nations have recovered from colonization, but is more concerned with the adopting of an activist position, seeking social transformation' (9). In this paper, I used the postcolonial theory to explore the level of knowledge production with the understanding of English language teachers of secondary level in the context of Nepal.

### **The Pleasure of Postcolonial Study**

Postcolonial pedagogy does not use narrative pedagogy (Freire, 2005). It is a two-way interactional pedagogy; an interactional environment is created in the classroom so that students learn their content interacting in the classroom. The teacher in the classroom encourages all the group of students equally. The minority of the group is not oppressed by the majority of the group and even not by the teacher (Freire, 2005). There will be sympathetic engagement of the learners and self-reflective of the teacher is seen in the classroom. It creates equality among the students, therefore all the students participate equally in the classroom activities and no group is oppressed. The balanced culture is used and all the learners feel their affinity in the activities and in the achievement or the production of knowledge. The teacher creates the situation of utopia in the classroom so that everyone feels happy and reading becomes a fun (Darder, et al., 2023).

### **The Future of Postcolonial Pedagogy**

In the past teaching and learning was limited within the particular class or group and education was not given to all. It was the task of elite and powerful group or the group of ruler. Education was given for specific purpose and the production of education was very low. Artificial environment was created; disciples used to follow tough rules and regulations. Education was limited around the periphery of

Gurukul System. Rote and repeated learning was focused in the context of Nepal. However, after the long practice of Gurukul System, the pedagogical system in Nepal seems to be changed and several methods and approaches are seen in practice. Teachers are trained and every year Ministry of Education allocates the budget for teacher training and teaching materials. But in the most of the classroom practices minority is in oppressed; they are neglected and classroom activities are under the control of majority. When English is taught without the engagement of minority, the minority group is oppressed (Freire, 2005). The minority doesn't understand what the teacher taught them. The mindset of the teacher works there as if similar to the past teaching and learning models. The culture of minority is not used; their participation is not searched, and hybridity is neglected. Third space doesn't become the theory of learning.

The present world has been changed drastically; the diverse nature of society reflects everywhere. The concept of *Third Nation* has been developing rapidly (Bhabha, 2009). After the migration, the culture has been mixed up and the new concept of nation has been developed because the people have left their origin or birth place and accepted new geography as their new nation though it is not their mother land. Along with the migration, they also bring their culture where they have migrated. They mix up with the new community and the community already has its own culture. After the long amalgamation in between migrated group and original group, there will be the formation of new hybrid culture (Bhabha, 2009).

These all the changing scenario of the world make us compel think over the pedagogy of future. The future pedagogy has to accept these all new concepts of global citizen and has to reflect on the teaching learning activities.

### **Understanding Pedagogy**

Teaching and learning is a lifelong process (Blossfeld & Maurice, 2011). A child starts to learn after the birth and ends his learning with the pyre. The learning of the child may take formally or informally. Home is the first school for a child and mother is the first teacher for a child. When a child joins at school, starts to learn formally with the pre-setting of school education. Several teachers teach him multiple subjects and diverse nature of contents. They use different pedagogies for teaching in the classroom or at the periphery of the school. Same teacher may use a sort of pedagogy to teach a topic whereas the teacher may use another pedagogy to teach next topic. Pedagogy differs content to content, situation to situation, time to time and level to level.

The history of pedagogy reflects the changing nature of pedagogy. The pedagogy that was used during the Gurukul system was different than the pedagogy in the past few years ago and even in the present. It is the demand of time, situation, content, and context. The postcolonial world differs than the past world. Homogeneous society has been mixed into multicultural society. Migration and

development have created a complex nature of the society. The present pedagogy needs to be adjusting with this complex nature of the world. Students have to feel freedom in the classroom. Teacher has to respect all the cultural groups of students and all the students have to be engaged equally. Teacher should not neglect the students in the name of minority, caste, culture, language, ethnicity, identity, and *third nation*. Minority group of learners may be oppressed in the class, therefore it is the duty of the teacher not to let in such situation and teach equally forgetting the nature of bias.

### **Research Method**

To achieve the goal, this study used qualitative research methodology. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that "Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods". For this study three secondary level English teachers were selected purposively (Creswell, 2012) from a district of Nepal. The bases of selection were an experience and teaching English at secondary level schools of Nepal. All three teachers were the permanent teachers of public schools funded by Nepal government having more than ten years of experiences.

For the study more than ten years of experienced secondary level of English teachers were selected with the aim of getting in-depth, detail, and rich information. To collect the data in-depth interview was used (Anderson, 2010) and the classrooms of the teachers were observed. In order to find out the theme, those data were transcribed, sub-categorized, categorized and finally developed for an idea. Based on the data gained from the in-depth interview with the participants, this study revealed the reality of postcolonial pedagogy practiced in schools of Nepal. For this, the data were interpreted through the lens of postcolonial pedagogy.

### **Cultural Hybridity**

Classroom represents the society (Brint, 2020) from where students come to study in a school. The diversity of caste, culture, religion, language, gender, and age make the society living and dynamic. It is the classroom where such diversity of society reflects and makes classroom lively. Students share their culture, language, religion, festival, understanding, and experience with their peers or friends. Peers listen them; understand them and adjust with their friends' or peers' culture and feeling. Students are free to celebrate their birthday at school. They celebrate according to their interest and desire. My participants, the secondary level English teachers claim that *all the students celebrate their birthday at school. During the birthday, they collect money and buy necessary things and enjoy together. Moreover, there won't be any restriction of caste, culture, language, social group, and gender. The celebration is different than their own particular cultural celebration. The sense*

*of equality is seen in their celebration and entertains.* There exists a hybridity in culture (Bhabha, 2009). School activities were mixed up with all cultural activities where sense of fear was not seen. The sign and symbol suppression and domination were not seen in the activities during my classroom observation in the classroom observation.

School itself is a third space (Bhabha, 2009) for all the students. All the students come from their home representing their own culture, norm, value. It is a new space for the students. However, all enjoy being together exchanging their feelings, thoughts, experiences, and ideas. Coming at school has not become a pressure to them. *Moreover, teachers claim that when they remain stuck at their home because of their private matter or because of the order of their parents, they feel uneasy whole the day at their home. They know that school is not their home however they enjoy at school. Students love school as equal to their own house; they never feel that they are away from own house when they are at school. They further claim that they ask assignments to write paragraphs or essays on their favourite festivals but not on a particular dominant festival that make them feel free and affinity.*

### **Sense of Freedom**

During the colonial period people were suppressed in the name of caste, culture, religion, and region. Particular group of people was considered as a supreme group and others are regarded as barbarians. White people from Europe were the supreme people and elite one, but South Asian and African people were considered as uneducated, blunt, and uncivilized (Said, 2003). European colonized over the several countries of the world due to such supremacy. They still feel themselves as a centre power of the world: education, economy, science, and technology. This perspective of understanding was privileged during the colonial world. The lens of western world was used to see the eastern people thinking themselves all in all. Pedagogy in school was affected by colonial power and the culture of colonizers (Enslin, 2017).

In the classroom, there is equality. There is not the feeling of supremacy even if the student is from the family of rich economic and social cultural background. Secondary level English teachers claimed that *they behave equally to all the students in their classrooms either they are from rich economic background or poor economic background. All the cultures are believed to be equal. Homework is assigned differently to the students when the text of festival is taught. Dashain is assigned to the students of Brahmin and Chhetri community; ID is assigned to the students of Muslim community; Badaki Atwari is assigned to the students of Tharu community; and Holi is assigned to the students of Awadhi community.* This sense of feeling and practice is because of postcolonial thought (Pietersen, 2023); the postcolonial thought brings a sense of feeling equality and equity where the students can enjoy the activities that are practiced in their classroom for teaching and learning.

## Critical Learning

Anglo English, Elizabethan English, Shakespearian English, English history and English world are taught in the name of English language teaching and learning. Colonizers believe students' understanding becomes good when the drama written in Western world is taught to our students (Ogunniyi, 2023). It is believed that students will have better learning on language when a teacher teaches novel written in Western world. Likewise, European and American poetry, essay, and story are considered to teach in the classroom in the name of teaching English language. The belief of elite scholars and teachers of Nepal seems to be stronger over the Western world rather than own history, culture, and literature. It is the Euro-centric teaching or pedagogy. Moreover, it is the colonial pedagogy.

The secondary level teachers proclaim that *English can be taught based on Nepali culture. Nepali culture and literature are strong enough: the literature written in Nepali language can be brought in secondary level classes, and the text found in foreign culture can be localized that can bring a favour of both Nepali and target culture where the students can enjoy a lot having benefit on both sides.*

Nepalese culture is more strong and advanced. It has organic flavor and still it has purity in nature. Culture is our identity and our pride; it shows way of living as well as history of Nepalese civilization. The books written in Nepalese culture with Nepalese flavor such as *Muna Madan* can be used English language teaching. *Lunatic, Chariko Bilap, and Nepal Rahena Vane* are the best best poems composed in Nepalese culture internalizing the Nepalese perspective. But, pedagogy of English language teaching has been lacking in the context of Nepal. Still, the philosophy of elitism has been working strongly and the pedagogy of teaching English loitering and not getting the proper way.

Indian English, Australian English, French English can exist in teaching English then why not Nepalese English. It is the responsibility of Nepalese English teachers to establish such notion of teaching and to bring pedagogy away from colonial world, towards postcolonial world.

## Missing the Ideas

Postcolonial pedagogy is a pedagogy that was developed after the colonial world (Enslin, 2017). Western world had colonized many countries in the world. Western world was the supreme power in the world. During the colonial period, the countries of Asia and Africa were using the policy of colonizer in education too. Pedagogy in education was affected and still many societies have the concept of ambivalence (Bhabha, 2009). Still the schools are in search of such culture in text, such accent in pronunciation, and language for communication. Teachers and students are in search of native speaker of English in place of local speaker of English which is a colonial concept. They believe on Western pronunciation, accent, grammar, culture, and language instead of their own. Their elitism



philosophy keeps them colonized; they cannot see out of the colonial world even in postmodern era.

The teachers proclaimed that *people believed in western accent and their culture rather than Nepali accent and culture. The children sing English songs and in English accent and speak English as well are praised in society.* My participants shared *the idea of diversity of culture, caste, and language that make difficulty practicing in the classroom.* They surprised when I talked about the use of postcolonial concept in the classroom. They expressed a narrow concept of it and they were not aware of it in micro level of concept. Slowly, when I raised the matter of culture, language, festivals, they expressed their acceptance of using it as their pedagogy.

My participants lack the concept of local text, local culture, and local pronunciation in English. In the present context of Nepal, local governments have been playing a role of designing local curriculum for school students. Students of primary level can get the chance to read at school in their mother tongue. This practice has been developed and implemented in Nepal for the better cognitive development of small students. Local curriculum and use of mother tongue develop a sense of affinity which encourages students for the study diving in the cultural ecstasy. Local curriculum incorporates local matters in which students can bliss as their own property and identity.

### **Mindset lens**

From the classroom observation it was found that the colonial era seems to be deeply rooted in the in the mind of elitism. Colonial era started from colonial world. It is Western who introduced colonial world and kept themselves in the supreme of power along with economy, education, social transformation, science, technology, and development. They dispersed their language, culture, history, and literature in different countries of the word being colonizers. The colonized world accepted their supremacy slowly and gradually. After the long race of accepting, it is internalized by the heart of colonized world. Therefore, it became a perfect habit as if natural world. People cannot go away from such settled habit and see the world through this lens. Even my participants stated that *the stories, poems, dramas selected for secondary level curriculum advocate about culture of colonizers, their activities. While teaching in the classroom Nepali culture and activities are lacking due to the designed curriculum.*

The participants had such lens through which they visualized their world of pedagogy. At the early stage of collecting data, they were seemed to be surprised; they could not come out of the pond of colonial world. My probing questions made them easy over the issue so that they presented the diverse culture which they practice in their classroom when they interact with their students. Use of Tharu and Awadhi mother tongue facilitates learners to understand the content in the class

(Cuartas Alvarez, L. F., 2014; Jadallah & Hassan, 2010). They argue that they do not hesitate to use local mother tongue to facilitate the learners. Teachers practice somehow part of local culture in some context only but not localized most often.

## Conclusion

In the postcolonial world, postcolonial pedagogy seems to be loitering. English language teaching teachers are pursuing fancied pedagogy in the name of postcolonial pedagogy. Though they use tit-bits of concept of postcolonial teaching, still they are unable to catch right tract in the field of teaching and learning. However, the local government has taken a responsibility for designing and implementing local curriculum, it is in progress in the speed of tortoise and again it is up to the primary level and it is not a compulsory course. The issue of local culture and local text need to be addressed timely in different level.

In one hand teachers teaching at secondary level lack the concept of postcolonial pedagogy, on the other hand, they have a sort of mind set about this pedagogy which they use to judge the teaching and learning activities. They incorporate elitism in their pedagogy; therefore their measuring parameter is not local but Western. Nepalese cultural diversity, religious diversity, unique cultural accent cannot be judged designing the Western parameter. The concepts of hybridity and ambivalence have not been well established in teaching and learning activities.

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