

English Language Education and Globalization: A Comparative Study of Nepal and Sri Lanka

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Article History: Received: 01 Oct, 2020 Accepted: 03 Sept, 2021	ABSTRACT English language education has evolved in Nepal and Sri Lanka over the course of time. Sri Lanka was colonized by the British Empire in the history. Nepal was never colonized; however, colonial influence can be observed in terms of English language education and planning issues. The progression of English in Sri Lanka and Nepal has been a gradual process, but it has been dissolved in everyday life of ordinary people as a necessity. Concerned to comprehend English language education in Sri Lanka and Nepal, this paper briefly investigates historical development of English education system in both countries. It tries to compare the English language education system in Sri Lanka and Nepal in terms of history, policy, textbooks and teaching methodologies. Likewise, the paper tries to find out the problems in English language education in both countries. The analysis of documents demonstrates that there are several things in common in Sri Lanka and Nepal in English language educational practices. Key Words: English Language Education, Sri Lanka, Nepal, globalization, problems
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Introduction

The English language is used among the people who belong to different linguistic backgrounds across the globe. It has now gained a global status. "A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country" (Crystal, 2003, p.3). In fact, the role of English has been accepted in the world by different countries for international communication. Initially, English was thought to be the language of Britain, but over the period of time it has become the principal language in the former British colonies such as India, Canada, Australia, etc. English is now not limited to those countries influenced by British colonialism, but it is the main language used in the trade around the world (Parupalli, 2019). Each and every country in the world is obliged to learn English not only for international trade but also for international communication, education and diplomacy at present. In fact, English is

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rapidly spreading around the world. The spread of English has been described in terms of three circles: the Inner circle, the Outer circle and the Expanding circle (Karchu, 1985). Based on this classification, Sri Lanka lies in the Outer circle and Nepal lies in the Expanding circle. "Sri Lankan English education started in British era and was subjected to change from time to time" (Kariyawasam, 2014, p. 199). Although, Nepal was never colonized in the history, however, colonial influence can be observed in the development of English education system (Poudel, 2016; Kerr, 1999). In fact, English has already entered into different domains of Nepalese lives and the craze for it has been growing (Khatri, 2013). Therefore, most of the parents want to send their children to English medium schools rather than sending them to government funded schools. Almost Similar situation is seen in Sri Lanka for the growing interest of parents to send their children to English medium schools. Despite the differences in the historical contexts of Nepal and Sri Lanka, the use of English is becoming similar in both countries due to the influence of globalization. In fact, the influence of globalization is seen everywhere and English language has got great influence on it (Abdalgane, 2020). Now, both the countries have realized the importance of learning English for international trade and diplomacy.

Sri Lanka and Nepal were selected for the purpose of comparison primarily because these countries belong to two different concentric circles, but both of them are South Asian countries. A comparative study of English language education in these two countries will provide an insight into how English language has evolved in the course of historical development. Likewise, this comparison will help to understand English language education system in Nepal and Sri Lanka in the globalized world in terms of policy, textbooks, teaching methodologies and problems. This is entirely literature-based paper. To prepare this paper, the researcher went for library studies, consulted various journals and articles. This is totally based on secondary sources of data.

Globalization and spread of English

Globalization is the word used to describe the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people and information. It is a process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, ideas and other aspects of culture. American sociologist Steger defines globalization as "multidimensional set of social process that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant" (Steger, 2003, p.13). Robertson identifies three "waves" of globalization which can be associated with three phases of modern colonialism/imperialism. The first wave of globalization started with regional trade led by Spain and Portugal; the second wave was

led by Britain from industrialization, and the third wave started from the post-war world order led by the United States (Robertson, 2003). According to a United Nations Report on Human Development 1999), the current phase of globalization is changing the world landscape in three distinct ways by shrinking space, shrinking time, and disappearing borders. Appadurai has described globalization as 'a complex overlapping and disjunctive order' 'made up of five types of forces and flows, which he calls "Scapes"(Appadurai, 1990). These five Scapes include: Ethnoscapes or flows of people, Technoscapes or flows of technology, Financescapes or flows of money, Mediascapes or flows of information and Ideoscapes or flows of ideas. English education and English teaching thus seem to be an Ideoscape, that is, a global flow of ideas about language teaching and learning. Now, English appears the foremost world language due to its function as lingua franca. English is now becoming a global language for global education, international trade, and diplomacy, etc. A language becomes a global language not because of the number of people who speak it but because of the powerful people who speak it (Crystal, 2003). In fact, English is global language because of its power. English is seen less as the language of native speakers but more as a language for learning the world and community with world people who use English as a lingua franca. English as a global language has resulted in the concept of World Englishes which belongs to everyone who speaks it. Specifically, World Englishes refers to "localized forms of English" which are used across the world (Bolton, 2005 as cited in Xiao, 2009, p. 421). English is now regarded as the international lingua franca. To conceptualize the global spread of English, Kachru introduced three circles: inner, outer and expanding (Kachru, 1985). The notion of World Englishes is rooted in the fact that, over several centuries, a number of L1 standard varieties have emerged such as British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English, etc. Therefore, the ownership of English is not limited to the core English speaking countries, but to the all who speak it. English has equal ownership for Sri Lankan and Nepalese people at present day world. However, globalization has created a kind of conflicting condition among the countries in the post-colonial world where they seem to be trapped between decolonization that emphasizes the autonomous nation state and globalization which emphasizes the importance and importation of English (Canagarajah, 2005). Now, it can be said that it is the English language that is helping both the countries to connect with the rest of the world for globalization process and it is the globalization process that is helping English to spread in these countries. Moreover, globalization has motivated Sri Lankan and Nepalese people for learning English even at the cost of their vernacular languages.

English education in Nepal

Nepal is a landlocked country that lies in the Southern region of Asia. To the northern boundary of Nepal lies China and to the southern, eastern and western boundaries lies India. It covers 147,181 sq. km. of land. Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious country (Bista, 2011). The last census 2011 revealed that there are 123 languages and 125 casts and ethnic groups (CBS, 2014). However, the latest annual report of the language commission of Nepal has added six new languages to the list (Annual Report of Language Commission of Nepal, 2020). Likewise, there are four language families: Tibeto-Burman, Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic/Munda, Dravidian (kansakar, 1996). According to census 2011 (CBS 2014) top ten mother tongue speakers are as follow: Nepali (46.6%), Maithili (11.67%), Bhojpuri (5.98%), Tharu (5.77%), Tamang (5.11%), Newar (3.20%), Bajjika (2.99%), Magar (2.98%), Doteli (2.97%), Urdu (2.61%). English holds 76th position having 2,032(0.01%) speakers in Nepal. Similarly, 81,447(0.30%) Nepalese speak English as a second language (Shrestha, 2017). Nepali is the national language which is spoken by nearly half of the total population. It is the language of legal affairs, business transaction, mass media and administration. It is also used as a medium of instruction in public schools, private schools and universities.

Historical record shows that English was in use in Nepal in early 17th century (Giri, 2015). The Malla kings used English language as a lingua franca to trade with Tibet and North India (Hodgson, 1864; Morris, 1963 as cited in Giri, 2015). In 1767 When King Prithvi Narayan Shah attacked over Kathmandu valley, the then King Jay Prakash Malla of Kathmandu requested the East India Company to provide military support to fight against Shah king. Captain Kinloch came to support Jay Prakash Malla with British military (Levi, 1952, as cited in Poudel, 2016). It was the first contact of English people with Nepalese. In 1816, there was Sugauli treaty between Nepal and the East India Company that provided legal provision to British people to settle in Nepal. This provision had a significant effect in Nepalese linguistic scenario as Elite Nepalese started learning English language due to the influence of British people (Shrestha, 2017).

There was a significant turning point in the history of English education in Nepal when Jung Bahadur Rana became the prime minister of Nepal. His visit to Europe in 1850-51 brought a kind craze for learning English as he was much influenced by the British education system. After his visit, he realized the importance of English language for communication with the outside world and felt that his sons should be given western education (Sharma, 1990). Therefore, Jung Bahadur Rana established Durbar school in 1853. It was the first government- run English medium school in Nepal. Likewise, Tri-Chandra college was established in 1918 as the first institution of higher education which

started teaching English courses under the supervision of Patna university, India (Bista, 2011). Gradually English language education began to develop in Nepal, thereafter.

Rana rule ended in 1950, and then Nepal government became interested in cultural unification. According to Rai, V.S., Rai, M., Phyak, P. and Rai, N. (2011) the Panchayat government imposed political ideology through the slogan of one language, one way of dress, one religion, one nation for national identity. During Panchayat regime, the role of English was changed from medium of instruction to subject of study (ibid).

The report of NNEPC (1956) advocated Nepali as the sole medium of instruction for national integration purpose. It strongly supported monolingual policy of promoting Nepali language not only in class but also in all spheres of life. In 1959, the first university of Nepal, Tribhuvan University was established for higher education which gave high priority to English curriculum, but National Education System plan (NESP, 1971) brought several changes in the system of education from primary to university level. It advocated the use of only Nepali in administration, education and media. It also reduced in the weight age system of English from 200 to 100 marks (Bista, 2011). After 90s Nepal became open to the outer societies after the re-introduction of democracy in 1990. For the first time in constitution recognized Nepal as a multicultural and multilingual country. The constitution of 1990 states that all the languages spoken in Nepal are national languages. The constitution guarantees for the development of all languages spoken in Nepal including English

The ministry of education in 2005 via National Curriculum Framework for School education (NCFSE) states that Nepali, English or both can be the medium of instruction for school level. It also states that mother tongue can also be used for medium of instruction in elementary level. Later in 2009, School Sector Reform Plan, the ministry of education presses on the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for grade 1-3 (Ministry of Education, 2009). The ministry of education also mentions that English will be taught as a subject from grade one.

Despite these policy provisions of government to establish Nepali as the sole medium of instruction in school levels have failed as prestigious schools continued to impart education in English and elites were always influenced by the English medium of instruction to maintain their social and economic dominance (Baral, 2015). To support this emerging and increasing scenario of English, government has implemented English as a compulsory subject from grade one (MOE). Nepal constitution (2015) states that the medium of instruction can be Nepali or English. It is also seen that most of the public schools in Nepal are shifting their medium of instruction from local, most probably from Nepali to English. Likewise, Private schools and universities have begun offering several courses in English. The urgent need of English learning has added a further dimension with growing number of English medium schools across nations (Bhattraï & Gautam,

2005, as cited in Bista, 2011). Now the government has adopted a liberal language policy to allow the establishment of private schools (Thapa,2001). The establishment of these schools has created a kind of craze for learning English among the Nepalese people as it has entered into different domains of Nepalese lives. The status of English has also changed in Nepal in the course of gradual development. Adopted first as foreign language, English now has become an important part of Nepalese people. It is now used as an additional language, second language, and even primary language in many socio-economic and educational domains (Giri, 2015). That means, now English has deeply rooted in the hearts and mind of Nepalese people and the need of it cannot be avoided.

Problems of English Education

There are several problems in English language education in Nepal in terms of curriculum, textbooks, methodologies and use of teaching resources both at school and college levels (Bista, 2011). The school level curriculum in Nepal is designed and implemented by Curriculum Development Centre whereas college level textbooks are selected from international publications by the universities. The selected books may not be appropriate for the context of Nepal. The curricular goals of English language teaching cannot be met due to lack of sufficient practice in speaking as more focus is given in the classroom to reading and writing. There is heavy emphasis on English reading texts to illustrate specific grammatical points (Davies, et al. 1985, as cited in Bista 2011).

Nepal is lacking proficient teachers to effectively teach English language (Shrestha, 2008). There are no proper teacher training programs and they are just over formal.

There is overuse of Nepali in English language classes and the students hardly get exposed to English. The majority of teachers in the high school are still found to be using grammar translation method. Similarly, college teachers are mostly seen using translation or lecture methods. (Malla, 1977; Awasthi, 200; Shrestha, 2008, as cited in Bista, 2011). Similarly, in private schools there is high emphasis in English but students' participation is very low. Likewise, poor physical facilities, improper teaching methodologies and overcrowd of students in the class are some other problems (Bista, 2011). Besides these, one of the pressing problems faced by the public school is that they are obliged to shift their medium of instruction from Nepali to English in the name of providing quality education. There is real fear that public schools may either close or be left for the children of lowest socio-economic groups (Hayes, 2012). Majority of parents do not want to send their children to public school rather they want to send them to private English medium school. In fact, it has created a big problem on the part of the public school. Therefore, public schools have big challenge in front of them to continue their existence due to growing craze for English among Nepalese people.

English Education in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an island country in South Asia, located in the Indian Ocean to the southwest of the Bay of Bengal and to the southeast of the Arabian Sea. The island is geographically separated from the Indian subcontinent by the Gulf of Myanmar and the Palk Strait. It is an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse country. English was the official language of the country from 1815 to 1956, and it is widely used in government, administration, and higher education. As a colonial language it continued to be the official language even after Sri Lanka got independence in 1948. At present Sri Lanka has two official languages, namely Sinhala and Tamil. The system of education in Sri Lanka evolved over through Buddhist temples (Coperahawa, 2009).

Sri Lanka was much influenced by British education system until it got independence in 1948. They changed the temple centered education system into English based education system in order to produce English speaking locals to assist them in daily duties and law enforcement. They imposed English language in Sri Lanka (Kariyawasam, 2014). In fact, the whole education system was controlled by the Christian clergy in Sri Lanka (Dharmadasa, 1991 as cited in Kariyawasam, 2014)). The aim was to spread English and Christianity.

Several amendments took place in the constitution to establish British education system. The 1833 Colebrook and Cameron reformation remain significant to the history of Sri Lankan education system. The Colebrook and Cameron Commission (1833) remains a turning point in Sri Lankan education system since it is the moment when the church rooted education was reduced by introducing the strategic educational reform planning (Kariyawasam, 2014). As a result of educational changes, the first British model Colombo Academy was established in 1835 as the main public school. They discriminated the government vernacular schools and the acquisition of English was encouraged (Dharmadasa, 1992, as cited in Kariyawasam, 2014).

C.W.W. Kanangra played a significant role when he became the first education minister in 1943. He brought changes in the British education system. He introduced central colleges in the country to provide English medium education for all Sri Lankan students free of charge. Besides this, he established 54 other central colleges to provide free education to the students. He also started mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the primary level in 1945. These changes brought about by him helped reduce the gap between elite and non-elite (Kariyawasam, 2014).

After Sri Lanka got independence in 1948, several changes took place in colonial language policy. In 1956, Sinhala only act was passed to replace the official language of Ceylon with Sinhala. The Sinhala only act was opposed in Tamil community in Sri Lanka in 1958. As a result, Tamil language was introduced as a medium of

instruction for Tamil and as a medium of examination for the admission of public service. This is how, Sri Lankan people fought against the British language policies after independence and English started losing its dominance (Kariyawasam, 2014).

After independence Sri Lankan education policy focused on prioritizing the national languages (Sinhala and Tamil), but due to the effect of globalization, Sri Lankan felt the need of English language education to communicate with international community. Therefore, English language recurred as a compulsory component of the education system. In 2001 bilingual education system was put into practice. The main purpose of the programme was to use English as a tool for thinking with the global mind while protecting and caring local languages and cultural identity. (Algama, 2009, as cited in Kariyawasam, 2014).

According to the accepted national policy, primary students are promoted to acquire activity based oral English through conversational/situational approaches by the class teacher. Junior secondary students begin to learn English as a second or foreign language from grade six for the General Certificate Examination of Ordinary level in grade 11, and they have to sit for General English paper in General Certificate Examination of Advanced level in grade 13 (National Report, 2004).

English is considered as the second and link language of the country in the curriculum by the 13th amendment of the constitution (Kariyawasam, 2014). Currently, bilingual system is practiced in few schools in Sri Lanka. Most of the schools follow the monolingual systems of teaching either in Sinhala or Tamil and English is taught as a subject (Algama, 2009, as cited in Kariyawasam, 2014)). At present, English medium classes are offered to the students by government as well as private schools as part of local curriculum (Coperahawa, 2009).

English enjoys the prestigious status in Sri Lanka not only because of its global significance but also because of English being used as a link language. Besides these, English seems to demarcate the elite from non-elite. It can also assist the less privileged to reach high society (Kariyawasam, 2014). That is what has made many Sri Lankans, even those who formerly belonged to middle or lower middle social classes, to send their children today to schools where the medium of instruction is strictly English with the hope of climbing the social ladder. The same reason makes certain others oblige their children to learn and use English as their 1st language even at home, even at the cost of not learning their own native language for the symbolic value attached to English and its value as a cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, English is a symbol of prestige in Sri Lanka, which many Sri Lankans use to show that they belong to a special class who are different from the lower or middle class.

Problems of English education

There are several problems in English education in Sri Lanka and most of them are overlapping like the problems in Nepal. There is lack of competent teachers to teach English particularly in rural schools. Teachers are seen unwilling to go to rural parts of Sri Lanka that causes shortage of teachers in remote area (Balasooriya, 2013). Likewise, there is a problem with bilingual teachers for bilingual education. The level of English competency that teachers should possess to implement English has not been prescribed by the Department of Education. There is lack of qualified bilingual teachers (Neranjani, 2013).

Textbooks in Sri Lanka are said to have been designed on a communicative principles of language teaching and these textbooks have completely replaced the structurally-based language course, but the teachers do not follow communicative principles of teaching language in the class. Therefore, there is little interaction between students and teachers. The teaching approaches are mostly teacher dominated and traditional in classrooms (Karunaratne, 2008, as cited in Aloysius, 2015). The state monopoly on single textbook production discourages the textbook writers to develop quality textbooks (Karunaratne, 2003 as cited in Aloysius, 2015). The students do not have the choice for enjoying different varieties of text book. The students become demotivated when they have difficulty in understanding the learning materials (Canagaraja, 1993). The availability of the same learning materials for heterogeneous group of students might result failure in English. The limited teaching facilities have been a constant problem for learning in developing countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka. Likewise, heterogeneous and overcrowded classes are common problem between these two countries. Besides these problems, low socio-economic status of Sri Lankan parents affects their children's learning of English especially in rural areas. Likewise, the students lack the opportunities to practice English in their social context (Karunaratne, 2008 as cited in Aloysius, 2015). Therefore, they have limited opportunity to practice language except from schools and colleges that result in lack of exposure to English language input.

Discussions and Conclusion

English education system formally started in Nepal after the visit of Jung Bahadur Rana to England, especially with the establishment of Durbar High School in Kathmandu. He adopted different approach to language to segregate people as he learned the power of language due to his association with the British (Stiller, 1993, as cited in Giri, 2010). This clearly shows the influence of British education system from the beginning of English education system in Nepal. After that, several provisions were made in the past by the elitists to establish Nepali as the sole medium of instruction in school levels, however, due to growing craze for English Language the provisions failed. Therefore, government of Nepal has implemented English as a compulsory subject from grade one (MOE). Nepal's constitution (2015) has clearly stated that the medium of instruction can be Nepali or English. As a result of this liberal language policy, several public and private schools are shifting towards English as a medium of instruction. Although, the craze of learning English is growing rapidly, Nepal faces several problems in English education in terms of curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods and teaching resources (Bista, 2011). Based on the literature reviewed, there are some pressing problems found in English language education in Nepal, such as- heavy emphasis on English reading texts rather than oral practice, lack of proficient English teachers, still focus on Grammar Translation method, following English-only principles, parental craze for English as a medium of instruction, and so on (Shrestha, 2008; Bista, 2008, 2011; Hayes, 2012). The problems mentioned here are similar to the Sri Lankan English education system as well. In fact, both the countries share many things in common although they belong to different contexts on the basis of concentric circles (Kachru, 1985). However, Sri Lankan English education started in British era and was amended several times in the historical developments. The whole system of education was affected by the colonial domination as it was colonized by the Britishers (Kariyawasam, 2014). The British education policy discouraged the spread of vernacular languages (Coperahawa, 2011). One can find English dominance before it got independence. Later, Sinhala only act, 1956 reduced the dominance of English in Sri Lankan history. But later when Tamil community fought against Sinhala only act, Sri Lankan Constitution accepted either national language as the medium of instruction and English was treated as second language in the school curriculum. However, due to the impact of globalization, English again got its position back in Sri Lanka. Therefore, bilingual education was started in order to cope up with global challenges.

From the literature reviewed throughout the paper, it can be inferred that Sri Lankan and Nepalese language policy is generally shaped by political motive rather than educational motive and there is some kind of political ideology hidden behind, for example, Sinhala only act (1956) in Sri Lanka and Nepali- only as a sole medium of

instruction (NNEPC, 1956). According to Sri Lankan context the policy made after post-colonial situation seem to be nationalistic that is similar to the monolingual policy made in Nepal in 1956 especially during Panchayat regime.

In fact, ELT policy should be grounded on second language research and focused on what is appropriate for all since Nepal and Sri Lanka even after having different contexts cannot avoid the global forces to learn English language especially for international communication, trade and diplomacy. Both the countries should continue challenging the hegemony of the English-speaking countries as the concept of world Englishes has emerged (Bolton, 2005 as cited in Xiao, 2009). Now English is no more the language of core English-speaking countries but also the language of all who speak it. Therefore, these two countries should try to develop textbooks and teaching methodologies appropriate for their own contexts for the overall development of English language education system.

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