

Nepali English or Other Varieties of English: Perspectives from English Language Teachers in Nepal

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Abstract

This qualitative content analysis article aims at exploring the perspectives of English language teachers on Nepali English (NE). I purposively selected six college level English language teachers from Sunsari and Morang districts and collected the required data through a semi-structured interview. The study reveals that NE has emerged in Nepal as a result of mother tongue influence, nativization of English to local contexts, and exposure from the non-native teachers during the second language acquisition process, and it is practically more appropriate than other varieties of English in Nepal. All the research participants favour NE as it is more intelligible and easier to teach and learn than the other varieties of English, promotes Nepali identity, boosts confidence, reduces anxiety, and helps to resist the hegemony of British English (BE) or American English (AE). They, however, believe that more research and discourse on NE, its codification and standardization, and power (political, economic, and ideological) are necessary for bringing NE into concrete form. These perspectives from the English language teachers on NE pave the ground for appropriating English language policies, English language curriculum, textbooks, and pedagogy in Nepal, and rethinking the traditional treatment of errors.

Keywords: *World Englishes, identity, practicality, intelligibility, nativization*

Introduction

Globalization of English (Crystal, 2003), nativization of English (Kachru & Nelson, 2011; Rubdy, 2015), localization of English (Sharifian, 2016), and both global and local, or centrifugal and centripetal forces (Schneider, 2016), have paved the way for the emergence of different English varieties worldwide. They are known as transplanted or transported or twice-born Englishes (Kachru, 1981), World Englishes (WEs) (Kachru, 1985), twice-born varieties (Patil, 2006), postcolonial Englishes (Schneider, 2003, 2007), New Englishes (Ferguson, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Rubdy, 2015), reincarnated Englishes (Kachru, 2011), and unequal Englishes (Tupas, 2015; Tupas & Salonga, 2016). These different terminologies reflect how new English varieties are perceived differently around the world.

With the emergence of WEs, three different schools of thought have emerged in the world. Many scholars around the world hold the Universalist position and argue for BE or AE as an appropriate pedagogical model. They perceive BE or AE as “the variety most widely accepted, understood, and perhaps valued within an English-speaking country” (McArthur, 2003, cited in Farrell & Martin, 2009, p. 3) since BE or AE is a highly developed, well-organized, systematic, and codified variety which needs to be followed everywhere for maintaining mutual intelligibility. Supporting the standard BE or AE, Prator (1968, as cited in Ferguson, 2006) claimed that to recognize non-native English varieties as teaching models would be most unwise since there is doubt regarding their existence as coherent, homogeneous linguistic systems and, despite their existence, they are qualitatively varied from and inherently less permanent than native varieties of English. Similarly, the conservative viewpoint was adopted by Quirk (1985), who argued in favour of a single monochrome standard. In Nepal, Sharma (2008) claimed it is premature to teach NE as the target language without considering its ideological implications and its potential effect on students’ future careers. Duwadi (2010) argued that there is doubt about whether NE is an unavoidable fact or merely a mirage, that making a NE campaign is impractical, and that when English is deviated from the standard variety, it only brings chaos to the community. For Giri (2015), Nepal is developing its own local variety of English, but it is only in the inception or conception stage, which clearly implies that Nepal is not currently in the position of choosing NE as a pedagogical model.

However, supporters of indigenized varieties of English argue that those who advocate Standard English neglect the sociolinguistic realities of different varieties of English (Kachru, 2011). Local Englishes are autonomous Englishes in their own right rather than interlanguages or subordinate varieties (Canagarajah, 1999), and to insist on Standard English is to “devalue new or local varieties of English that exist around the world” (Farrell & Martin, 2009, p. 3). Some scholars advocate for new varieties of English because it is neither necessary nor desirable for the non-native speaker to use English in the same way as native writers do (Achebe, 1965); the localized variety expresses identity and solidarity (Nur Aida, 2014); the texts written in nativized English facilitate comprehension (Alptekin, 2006; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008); indigenized Englishes are practically appropriate to local contexts (Canagarajah, 1999); and such Englishes are socioculturally determined innovations rather than errors (Kachru, 2011) and are linguistically equal. Patil (2006) opined that Asian English teachers believe that their own acrolect variety of English is easier to use as a model for teaching and testing purposes because most teachers are local; they hold influential positions that allow them to make decisions; and they usually set exam questions and evaluate the answers written by the students. The acrolect English variety is a high or standard variety connected to the top of the social and educational scale, whereas the mesolect variety is an informal variety used by people with a noticeably lower level of proficiency as well as competence in English, and the basilect variety refers to a variety that incorporates various reduced and pidginized forms of English (Mukherjee, 2010). Even in Nepal, Shrestha (1983) argued that it is necessary to avoid the native model entirely and replace it with the

acrolect variety of NE, which will satisfy the needs criteria and be sufficient for the comprehension of classroom lectures and for interpersonal communication. Brett (1999) also claimed that non-standard English does not cause confusion but rather plays an important practical role by compensating for those areas of cultural disparity to facilitate communication. Because of the inappropriateness and impracticality of native varieties in local contexts, non-native English speakers have appropriated English to fulfill their desires, needs, and aspirations (Canagarajah, 1999). Such localized Englishes are as equal and as functional as native varieties of English.

Between the two extreme perspectives, a balanced, or “third way” perspective has come into existence. Widdowson (1993) argued that nativized Englishes and Standard BE / AE “have their proper place in the scheme of things and both are of crucial concern in English language education” (p. 329). He maintained that Standard English can be used for institutional, formal, and international communication, whereas nativized Englishes for intranational communication. Academic institutions should provide a place for both variants, assigning Standard English as “an end of learning” (p. 326) and nativized Englishes as “a means for learning” (p. 327). This third way position balances the use of different varieties of English depending on the contexts and needs. In today’s world, it is not enough to be proficient in one’s own variety of English (Canagarajah et al., 2012). Therefore, it is essential to learn all varieties of English, not just standard BE or AE (Farrell & Martin, 2009), recognize their contextual appropriacy and expose students to different varieties of English (Canagarajah, 1999), and develop competence in multiple varieties of English (Canagarajah et al., 2012) so that they can communicate easily with the speakers of different varieties of English and adapt to any countries. This perspective goes against the ‘either-or’ position and places equal importance on all the varieties of English.

Studies conducted by scholars from home and abroad (e.g., Adhikari, 2018; Brett, 1999; Dewan, 2021; Dewan & Laksamba, 2020; Giri, 2015; Hartford, 1993; Jora, 2019; Karn, 2012; Rai, 2006) indicate that NE has its own distinctly identifiable features at different levels of language. Although scholars claim that NE is one of the South Asian standardizing Englishes (McArthur, 1987), an officially recognized variant (Brett, 1999, p. 85), an established variety of English (Daniloff-Merrill, 2010, cited in Pandey, 2017, p. 39), a separately developing variant of English (Sharma et al., 2015), and a divergent variety of English (Jora, 2019; Karn, 2011), the English language used in Nepal still awaits a detailed empirical description (Mukherjee & Bernaisch, 2020). Since NE is one of the preferred varieties of English in Nepal, it should not be regarded as a subordinate or inferior form of communication (Paudyal, 2019), but rather as a variety of English that is gradually gaining its status (Kamali, 2010). NE has a special place in WEs or (South) Asian English inquiries since three different types of English exist in Nepali society, namely English as a primary language, English as a secondary language, and English as an additional language, which influence the way people negotiate their identities and the way they communicate with the speakers of other Englishes in certain contexts and in which they can find traces of other Englishes locally blended and brewed into NE (Giri,

2020). Such hybrid English reveals linguistic co-existence and the hybrid identities of its speakers, reflects their bilingual creativity, maximizes linguistic economy, and helps to reduce their linguistic anxiety (Dewan & Laksamba, 2020). In this paper, I explore the perspectives of English language teachers on NE.

Literature review

Advocates of WEs hold different perspectives towards Englishes that have developed in different territories. Rao's (1938) *Kanthapura* provided the first conceptualization of his perspective on Indian English. Kachru (2011) described Rao's five perspectives. The first perspective is concerned with how the medium is related to the message. It is inadequate to express one's own spirit in a language that is not their own (Rao, 1938). Therefore, English should be appropriately localized to convey the message effectively. The second perspective focuses on rethinking how appropriate English is as a medium of instruction in various contexts. The third perspective is concerned with the creative vision and innovation as well as the relevance of hybridity. Rao (1938) maintained that "We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us" (p. vii). Therefore, hybridity is a part of life, and only hybridized English can satisfy the English language needs of the present-day world. Rao's fourth perspective is concerned with linguistic appropriateness, the relevance of language variety, and identity. He is optimistic about the Indian variety of English that "will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American" (p. vii). The fifth perspective relates to the stylistic relevance of cultural discourse and its relationship with local parampara. For Rao, "The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression" (p. vii). He attempts to justify the idea that English needs remaking to convey the nuances of Indian cultures and to continue local parampara. All of these perspectives explain why nativized English is more relevant and appropriate in local contexts.

The perspectives on WEs also reside in the intelligibility issue, identity, the nature of standards, practicality, and acceptance (Dewan, 2022; Ferguson, 2006). Advocates of WEs claim that early discussions on intelligibility were one-sided because they focused mostly on native speakers. In the present era, intelligibility is a two-way process - from non-native speakers to native speakers, and vice versa. It means that intelligibility is a joint enterprise. In this context, "intelligibility" was defined by Seidlhofer (2010) as "being intelligible to native speakers, and being able to understand native speakers" (p. 366). Kachru (2011) claimed that local Englishes are mutually intelligible and functionally effective and appropriate to their users. A study by Dewan (2022) indicated that almost all participants agreed that English spoken by NE speakers is more intelligible than that of native English speakers.

Another crucial reason for advocating local Englishes is concerned with identity. The personal, ethnic, social, or national identities of their users are projected by local Englishes (Ferguson, 2006). English was borrowed, recreated, transcreated, stretched,

expanded, and distorted in India in order to project identity and claim English as their own (D'Souza, 2001). The reason for doing so is that the English language, without its changed form in the Indian context, cannot express Indian identity.

Advocates of WEs do not agree with the view that other English varieties are non-standard, and BE or AE is standard. Every variety, including sociolects and registers, will have standards of varying degrees of generality for the respective communities (Canagarajah, 1999). It implies that all English dialects must be treated equally and accepted on a par with Standard English (Mahmood, 2009). Even if we accept that Standard English is proper English, it is appropriate in some contexts only, and other English varieties are appropriate in other contexts (Widdowson, 1993). Since other varieties of English have different sociolinguistic realities, the traditional notion of Standard English ignores them. Similarly, none of the native speakers can claim the ownership of English or declare which varieties of English are non-standard and which are standard. The standards of English are decided and created by the respective speech communities only (Widdowson, 1994). Therefore, the notion of standard is subjective and contextual.

It would be unfair to argue that BE or AE is practically more appropriate than other varieties of English because practicality has to do with context and purpose. In different contexts and purposes, different varieties of English can be appropriate (Fairclough, 1992). To be more specific, the practicality or appropriateness of language is determined by the immediate context in which communication takes place (Baratta, 2019). As BE or AE is practically inappropriate to the local context, English has been appropriated to accommodate local speakers' desires, needs, and values (Canagarajah, 1999). The study by Tan and Tan (2008) revealed a clear appreciation of the value of Standard English; however, Singlish serves a significant social role in the community. The results confirmed that Singlish is not "bad English," but a variety that the pupils value because they prefer to use it regularly. Cavallaro et al. (2020) explained that the high-variety Singapore English and the low-variety Singlish are used in varying contexts with different functional purposes.

The acceptability factor is the ultimate test that determines whether any variety of English is an innovation (Bamgbose, 1998). The acceptability factor is linked to attitudes, beliefs, and confidence. To determine acceptability, it is necessary to determine one's own attitude towards a variety, the perception of others towards the variety, and the attitudinally determined functional allocations of a variety (Kachru, 2011). In his study on the University students and teachers, He (2015) found that teacher participants preferred standardized English, while students showed their positive attitudes towards China English. The findings suggested that the native-speaker-based teaching model should incorporate the well-codified features of China English. In a study by Kamali (2010), the response of most teachers and students was that NE should be developed in Nepal. They showed their positive attitudes towards NE. Another study by Dewan (2022) also showed that most participants preferred NE more than BE or AE.

The studies discussed above were conducted in different countries and focused on the attitudes of teachers and/or students towards different varieties of English. However, no non-linguistic qualitative studies are available on NE. Although some features of NE have been identified at the phonological, lexical, grammatical, and discourse levels (see Adhikari, 2018; Brett, 1999; Dewan & Laksamba, 2020; Jora, 2019; Karn, 2012; Rai, 2006), the perspectives of English language teachers towards NE have not yet been explored. Therefore, I claim that this is a new research area in Nepal.

Research question

The study is primarily aimed at answering the question: How do English language teachers perceive NE in terms of its existence, reasons for its use, promotion, and future prospects?

Methods of study

This study employed a qualitative content analysis, which analyzed perceptions after close reading of texts (Given, 2008), particularly the manifest and latent content or meaning of texts (Bryman, 2016; Schreier, 2013), or the main contents of data and their messages (Cohen et al., 2008). I purposively selected six English language teachers, particularly four from Morang and two from Sunsari district, as the sample because they were experienced English language teachers and were familiar with NE and other varieties of English. Among them, three teachers had the experience of teaching English from the school to masters' level students, and the rest of them had the experience of teaching English from the school to bachelors' level students.

At first, I informed the purpose of the study to the participants and briefed them on how their privacy would be maintained. To ensure anonymity, I used an alpha-numeric identity (T1-T6) for all participants involved in this study. After obtaining their written consent, I conducted semi-structured interviews with them and recorded the interviews by mobile phone. The interviews included open-ended questions about the NE and its existence, the reasons for speaking it, its promotion and prospects, and ways to concretize the NE. After the collection of interview data, I defined the units of analysis; organized the recorded interview data and transcribed them into Nepali first, and then into English; coded the data; made different themes; and analyzed and interpreted the contents of the transcribed data (Cohen et al., 2008; Creswell, 2017). I discuss the findings of the study in the following section.

Findings and discussion

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from six participants, I have explored some findings which have been discussed on the following themes: NE and its existence, reasons for its use, teachers' logic for its promotion, its future prospects, and ways to bring it into a concrete form.

NE and its existence

All the English language teachers in my study agreed that Nepal has its own unique variety of English because of mother tongue influence, hybridization, nativization, and exposure from non-native English speakers. Regarding the mother tongue influence, T2 said, “The influence of Nepali or the mixing of Nepali with English makes Nepali English. The influence can be felt in tone, stress, and words.” Such mixing has created a hybrid English in Nepal (see Dewan & Laksamba, 2020). Similarly, T3 stated, “I think it is not practical to use English exactly like the foreigners because of the influence of our mother tongue.” Consequently, a new variety of English is created through the acquisition of English as a second language by a whole speech community of users (Ferguson, 2006). Similarly, T1 explained:

I don't think we can sound just like native English speakers in our accents. We have our own Nepali way of English. If we try to make it English-like, we can't be successful. Therefore, we should establish our variety of English.

This perspective endorsed Achebe's (1965, p. 28) assertion that “it is impossible for anyone ever to use a second language as effectively as his first.” Both views justify why Received Pronunciation or British Standard have gone out of use in Pakistan while remaining in academic reference (Hashmi, 1989, cited in Kachru, 2011, p. 55), why many countries have started legitimizing the local variety of English (see Canagarajah, 1999; Kachru, 2011), and why the goal of English language teaching has changed from developing native-like pronunciation or competence to communicative competence or intercultural communicative competence (Farrell & Martin, 2009; Sowden, 2007). As Baratta (2019, p. 136) stated, “Importantly, the students' success is not dependent on mimicking American pronunciation (and perhaps by extension, the relevant standard grammar); instead, the goal is for effective communication in a global context.” Therefore, Nepali people have appropriated English to Nepali contexts. In this regard, T4 said, “We are formally using Nepali words in our texts and discourses and making English Nenglish... [.]” The deliberate attempt to make English as Nenglish endorsed Raslan's (2000, as cited in Kachru & Nelson, 2011, p. 181) claim that “We appropriate and reinvent the language to our own ends.” The authors' reasons for appropriating English in their literary texts were to reflect their individual and sociocultural values, to search for identities and dignity in the vast body of WEs literature, to reveal some empathy towards English, and to bring Nepali social values to the outer world (Karn, 2012). Similarly, T5 explained:

Let's see the English language spoken by Nepali speakers in the Nepali context. They don't speak English as native English speakers. They appropriate vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar to their context. They can't pronounce the words like native English speakers, or follow the rules as strictly as native speakers.

This perspective endorsed Canagarajah's (1999) claim that students will “appropriate the language in their own terms, according to their needs, values, and aspirations” (p.

176) by changing their pronunciation, vocabulary, and language structures. They own it, shape it as they desire, and assert themselves through it (Patil, 2006), since only the new or changed English according to the new surroundings can bring out the message best (Achebe, 1965). Therefore, nativization is a natural phenomenon in multilingual environments.

Reasons for speaking NE

All the English language teachers opined that Nepali people speak NE because it is practicable to the Nepali context, it is intelligible/comprehensible, they received exposure to NE, and their English naturally becomes NE when they speak. As for a reason for speaking NE, T1 said, “We produce English words in the Nepali way... [.] If we pronounce them in Standard English, such as /təmpərəʊ/ for “tomorrow” and /bɔ:l/ for “ball,” our students laugh and teachers feel ashamed.” It implies that even if the teachers are aware of Standard BE or AE pronunciation, they may not use it because the students are not accustomed to it due to a lack of exposure. The teachers knowingly adapt their pronunciation to save their faces. In this regard, T3 stated, “As there is the influence of the mother tongue in English, I think it is not practicable to use English just like the native English speakers... [.] We all are using our context-appropriate variety... [.]” The views expressed by T1 and T3 are akin to Fairclough’s (1992) assertion that “Different varieties of English, and different languages, are appropriate for different contexts and purposes, and all varieties have the legitimacy of being appropriate for some contexts and purposes” (p. 36). English in Nepal is learned and used in different contexts and for different purposes. Larsen-Freeman (2007) emphasized, “...what is important is intelligibility, not in perfection in pronunciation, or even in grammar” (p. 70). Therefore, the teachers need to use the kind of English that their students need and understand.

Students in Nepal generally learn English in formal classrooms, with limited exposure from non-native English teachers. In such a context, learning English is very much based on the localized input received from the teachers. It is echoed in T4 view:

I speak Nepali English because I have got exposure to it. When I was a student, I did not receive exposure from native British and American English speakers. We did not have email, the internet, technological facilities, or authentic materials written by the native speakers. We had to learn English based on what our teachers taught us... [.]

This perspective supported Kachru and Nelson’s (2011) claim that English, in Outer and Expanding Circles, is learned through formal instruction without exposure from native speakers and, in some cases, even without materials from the Inner Circle. In such contexts, most learners never get opportunities to interact with a native-variety speaker during their acquisition period and the learners get exposure to English only in the English class at school (Sridhar & Sridhar, 1986). Even the English teacher does not speak English much in the class. T5 claimed, “We did not learn English in [ah]

native-like situations. We were taught by the Nepali English teachers, and so were our teachers.” This viewpoint supported Sridhar and Sridhar’s (1986) claim that indigenized varieties of English are taught by non-native speaker teachers and their teachers were possibly also non-native speakers. Therefore, Nepali people speak NE, not BE or AE. Likewise, T6 explained:

The choice of which variety of English to speak depends on the context. For example, in my classroom, I try my best to simplify my English to help my students understand what I say, so I use Nepali English. When I am exposed to international programmes such as NELTA, IATEFL, and other conferences, I try to speak Standard English.

This perspective is somehow consistent with Bhattarai and Gautam’s (2008) recommendation that teachers should “adopt more flexible approach in the selection and use of English in an eclectic manner rather than being prescriptive” (p. 13). The teachers are the active agents who can use their agency to nativize English according to the needs and levels of the students because the Nepali students comprehend NE better than BE or AE. The perspective of T6 endorsed Baratta’s (2019, p. 45) statement that “...one variety is simply more appropriate than the other, not based on any inherent ‘betterness’ but simply based on the immediate context of communication, largely involving one’s audience” (p. 45). The teachers need to “adjust their speech in order to be intelligible to interlocutors from a wide range of L1 backgrounds” (p. 88). They should use the type of English that their students understand. Likewise, T5 stated, “Even if we think that we are speaking English in the class, it naturally becomes Nenglish... [.] Sometimes I try my best to make it Standard English-like, but it naturally becomes Nenglish.” It validates the fact that cross-linguistic influence is an unavoidable phenomenon in the speech of bilingual and multilingual speakers.

Teachers’ logic for promoting NE

The study indicated that NE should be promoted because it is impossible to follow BE or AE; use of NE gives Nepaliness; students are motivated to read the texts written in NE; NE, compared to other English varieties, is more intelligible/comprehensible; students feel easy to learn it – learning English will not be a burden; use of NE develops their confidence and reduces their anxiety; students are less frustrated from learning English; promoting NE will make the job of a teacher easy; NE promotes their identity; and NE should be promoted to resist the hegemony of BE or AE. As for the logic of promoting NE, T4 stated, “In Nepal, we use neither British English nor American English completely. It can’t be appropriate in our context... [.] The English we speak doesn’t sound English-like.” This view is echoed in Rao (1938) and Achebe (1965). Similarly, T1 explained:

When I asked my B.Ed. first-year students to read the story “Martyr” written by Vishnu Singh Rai, I found them more interested in reading the text than the texts written by English writers because of the use of Nepali words... [.] They responded that they could better understand the content because of the use of some key Nepali words.

The Nepali students can better understand the texts produced in NE because of their background knowledge. Schema theory asserts that comprehension depends upon the activation of readers' previous knowledge to generate meaning (Alptekin, 2006). Research on L2 reading based on schema theory has indicated that "the more the content and/or formal data of a text interact with the reader's culture-specific background knowledge, the better the quality of comprehension" (p. 496). Similarly, T1 further explained:

If we develop Nepali English, our children, our students, and future generations will not take English as a burden or a difficult subject. There will be originality as well as ownership in English. And it will reduce their fear of English.

Once Nepali people promote and own English, they can design their own window to look into the world. Karn (2011, p. 34) claimed, "Owning English that incorporates local values and cultures is the only way to secure the position of English in Nepal... [.]". Furthermore, ownership of English also has to do with proficiency. Widdowson (1994) claimed that "Real proficiency is when you are able to take possession of the language, turn it to your advantage, and make it real for you" (p. 384). In addition to this logic, T4 responded:

If Nepali English is promoted, it makes us easy to teach. Our students can also understand it and become ready to communicate with us. When we use it, students feel relaxed and close.

The promotion of NE benefits both teachers and students. In addition, the speakers of WEs want to show a distinct identity in, and through, their local variety (Ferguson, 2006). A similar view was expressed by T3:

Nepali English should be promoted. It is our identity. It also has two advantages in today's globalized world: the world will recognize it, and learning English will be easier. Nepali students do not have to follow British or American English and get frustrated by learning it.

NE should be promoted to let the world know that Nepali people speak a distinct variety of English, which projects their national identities. T3's perspective endorsed Karn's (2011) claim that Nepali people can invent their identity through NE when they use it, and its recognition can help develop local scholarship in English. Similarly, Daniloff-Merrill (2010, cited in Karn, 2011) argued in favour of NE's recognition since it allows Nepali learners to express their identity. In a similar vein, T2 said, "Promotion of NE is an automatic process. If we recognize our variety, it will develop our confidence level. We will not have any doubts whether we are speaking it correctly or not." However, T5 was a bit sceptical about promoting NE in Nepal because of the lack of codification and publications:

We have not developed the textbooks in Nepal; I mean the Cambridge or Oxford kind of English books. We do not have our own publications. We do not have our own resources. Then how can we promote Nepali English here in Nepal?

Despite these challenges, periphery students have resisted English hegemony by using nativized varieties of English, unique English discourses in post-colonial literature, and the hybridization of languages (Canagarajah, 1999). A similar view was expressed by T6:

If we want to reduce linguistic imperialism, we must accept and promote Nepali English openly. In these days, people are more interested in learning how English has been modified and re-modified in their own way to make it user-friendly than in knowing the strict use of English. Promotion of Nepali English will help reduce the anxiety students have when using English and fight against linguistic imperialism.

I also agree with Baratta (2019) that if we do not accept WEs (e.g., NE), the white supremacy model will be promoted further worldwide. Therefore, promotion of NE is necessary to fight against the hegemony of BE or AE, make English user-friendly, and reduce students' anxiety since speaking BE or AE might be an anxiety-provoking factor for many students.

Prospects of NE

In this study, English language teachers were found to be more positive and optimistic about the future of NE. As the tourism sector, private schools, English medium classes, and educated people are increasing in Nepal, the teachers claimed that NE will be more nativized, developed, established, and accepted as a model or norm. To the prospect of NE, T1 responded, "I guarantee that there is no alternative to Nepali English" since NE is practically advantageous (Brett, 1999). Furthermore, T2 explained:

It will be established in the future, sooner or later... [.] Its usage is increasing in schools and colleges as a medium of instruction and subject. The population of people who speak English has dramatically increased. The number of educated people is increasing who will learn Nepali English. As we have a huge number of educated human resources, Nepali English will remain an established dialect in the future.

The future of NE depends on the number of English speakers and its functional uses in Nepal. Crystal (2003) estimated that 27.6% of people speak English as a second language in Nepal. Similarly, 30% of people, according to current estimates, speak English as a second language (Bolton & Bacon-Shone, 2020). As an anecdote, the estimate of some linguists is that "around 40–50% of urban Nepalese are functionally literate in English" (p. 56). This statistic indicates the increasing number of NE speakers in Nepal. Functionally, English in Nepal serves all the instrumental, regulative, interpersonal, and creative/innovative functions (Giri, 2015, 2020; Pandey, 2020; Shrestha, 1983). These

functions of English have led to the nativization of English in Nepal. T5 explained that the effort to promote NE is not enough:

There are very few scholars who are trying to promote Nepali English. I don't think they can make a big difference, but in the future, there is no doubt we can develop a separate variety in Nepal since we have been promoting our tourism sector and then we have made English, you know, our medium of instruction in many cases. So if we keep on doing such things, the future of English being like Nenglish [ah] is possible.

I agree with T5 that fewer scholars are only making campaigns for the promotion of NE, which cannot guarantee the future of NE. However, the promotion of tourism, the change of medium of instruction from Nepali to English in schools and colleges, an increase in educated people, science and technology, media, and foreign trade will help NE thrive in the future.

Bringing NE into a concrete form

The study indicated that to bring NE into concrete form, more research should be conducted on NE and more corpora on it should be built up; local English teachers should be employed; students' English should be valued; it is necessary to write more articles, conduct workshops, seminars, and conferences, and have more discourses on it; NE needs to be codified; and clear-cut policies should be formulated to standardize it. For example, T3 explained:

First, we should hire or employ local teachers, not foreign ones. Second, we should not discourage the new words spoken by students. We should accept when our cultural words are mixed up since it is a natural process. Furthermore, we need more discourse and research on it.

In addition to discourse and research, the local teachers need to be employed since they speak the localized variety of English and are more positive towards the new variety. Like localizing pedagogy, localizing English is easy for the local teachers because such teachers can “recognize the contextual appropriacy of different Englishes and teach students as many variants as possible” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 181). Similarly, the local English teachers value the kind of English produced by the students as innovations rather than deviations or errors. Besides discourse, research, material development, and publication, T5 stated:

We should accept their pronunciation. We need to value English spoken in the Nepali style. I just want to add the matter of power or power relations – how powerful our nation is in the international arena that matters for the development of the variety of English in Nepal. If we are powerful, if our voice or the voice of our academicians is heard well in the international forum, it will be recognized very quickly ke... [...] No power, no impact. And if there is no impact, we cannot claim ourselves that it is a separate variety of English.

T5 maintained that English spoken in the Nepali style should be accepted and valued, which is akin to Farrell and Martin's (2009) assertion that the learners' own English has its own value even if it is significantly different from what is presented in the class. Therefore, the teachers should value their students' current English usage. T5 agreed with Rai (2006) that it is very difficult to argue that Nenglish is an established variety just like Manglish and Hinglish. The role of power is crucial to bringing NE into concrete form. Some powerful countries like India and Singapore have institutionalized their varieties of English, which are now accepted around the world. It is power that determines what is accepted or rejected, what is right or wrong. This notion of "power" endorsed Kachru's (2011) statement that "A language acquires its value from what it can do for its users, and its spread is accelerated by the power that is beyond it: political, economic, ideological, religious and so on" (p. 232). The clear English language policies and power of the government are necessary to concretize NE. Following and slightly adapting Yano (2001), both military and economic powers are necessary to establish, maintain, and expand NE. Unless Nepal gains all such powers and establishes a clear policy for English, concretizing NE will really be a hard nut to crack.

Conclusion and implications

This study reveals that a Nepali variety of English exists in Nepal which needs to be codified and standardized since Mahmood (2009) pointed out that codification demarcates what errors and deviations are, and systematic deviations will be considered "norms" of this variety. In my study, all the English language teachers are positive towards NE and find some benefits in promoting and concretizing NE. The study reveals that Nepali people, whether they are teachers or students, speak NE; NE is practicable and comprehensible or intelligible; NE is easy to teach and learn; and students are motivated to read the English texts written by the Nepali writers. Such local realities should be duly considered in designing curriculum and syllabus and preparing textbooks and other materials, which will only address the needs and interests of both teachers and students. The textbook writers need to include local texts, that is, poems, essays, stories, novels, plays, and articles written in English by Nepali writers, to a greater extent, which are comprehensible for the students and help them develop their intercultural communicative competence.

The study also reveals that Nepali people feel difficulty following Standard BE/AE pronunciation, which implies that English needs to be nativized or appropriated according to local contexts to own it, to meet the needs and interests of Nepali people, and to resist English hegemony. Such appropriation confirms Nepali people's active role as agents who utilize English in a creative and critical manner rather than in a mechanical and diffident way (Canagarajah, 1999). In addition, more research and discourse on NE need to be conducted to establish the Nepali variety of English, which promotes the Nepali identity, preserves Nepali linguistic and cultural heritages, liberates the users from the so-called standard norms and practices, and empowers its speakers. As this study is only based on the data collected from six English language teachers on some

issues, future researchers can work with a larger sample of English teachers teaching in community and private schools on various aspects of NE. However, the findings of this study can contribute to everything from policymaking to pedagogy. Future studies on NE can involve learners, teacher educators or trainers, and policymakers to explore their perspectives on NE.

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Appendix- I

Semi-structured Interview Guideline Questions

Code:

Participant's name:

Name of institution:

Academic qualification:

Teaching experiences:

1. Have you heard about Nepalese English or Nenglish? What is it?
2. Do you speak English or Nepalese English? Why?
3. Does Nepali variety of English exist in Nepal? If yes, how do you know that it exists?
4. Are we in the position to call Nepalese English or Nenglish, the English used in Nepal? What is your take on it?
5. Do you think we should promote Nepalese English in Nepal? Why?
6. How do you perceive the prospect of Nepalese English?
7. Your suggestions to bring Nepalese English in a concrete form?

Thank you for your co-operation.