

A Comparative Analysis of English Language Education in Nepalese and Finnish Basic Education Curricula

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Abstract

This article explored the objectives, contents, and pedagogical approaches in English language education examining the Finnish and Nepalese basic education curricula. The study aimed to reveal the similarities and differences between two countries' English language curricula and to find out why a big difference occurs between Finland's and Nepal's English proficiency levels. Data were collected from Finland's and Nepal's English language curricula for basic education and the official documents such as acts, decrees, and laws on basic education were also examined to support the data from the curricula. Data were analyzed with the method of thematic document analysis. Overall, the results of the comparative study indicate that both Finland and Nepal aim to increase linguistic and cultural awareness and teach English language for communicative competence. Both countries also would like to encourage pupils to track their English language learning. On the other hand, while the Finnish curriculum offers general guidelines for the instruction of the English language giving flexibility and autonomy to schools, the Nepalese curriculum prevents schools from preparing a flexible plan for English language teaching according to the needs of pupils by offering specific content and testing techniques. The findings reveal that the Finnish curriculum presents guidelines for teachers, students, and local education providers on how to reach educational goals rather than giving specific content for the subjects giving flexibility and autonomy to schools. On the other hand, the Nepalese curriculum provides specific instructions and suggestions for the application of English language teaching with detailed content containing units for each grade and even suggested testing techniques for teachers.

Keywords: English language education, basic education, curriculum of Finland

Introduction

Curriculum is a general concept that involves consideration of the whole complex of philosophical, social, and administrative factors which contribute to the planning of an educational program (CCMDG, 2068). The curriculum is an official and comprehensive document. English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum includes objectives, contents, instructional techniques, and evaluation. According to Nunan (1988), it is concerned with the planning, implementation, evaluation, management, and administration of education programmes. A curriculum provides a list, which

specifies all the things that are to be taught in a course. It provides the items in an ordered way. Principles of selection and gradation are used to arrange the materials in the curriculum.

A language-based curriculum provides well-planned content information that is strategically presented to facilitate learning and enrich the language experiences of the students across all subject areas. Beyond language arts classes, language learning is embedded in all content classes, the arts, and physical education. Content and language come together as teachers carefully consider curriculum requirements as well as the language demands of lessons (Coyle et al., 2010). Teachers not only analyze the content material and reading resources to be used but also identify the importance of speaking, listening, reading comprehension, and writing skills demanded by each lesson. Classroom teachers then incorporate the techniques to facilitate content and language learning by students. Recess and playground activities are also viewed as important contexts for language learning and practice.

English language curriculum is based on language skills and aspects. The curriculum includes competencies, learning outcomes, scope and sequence of the content, learning facilitation process, and students' assessment process. To achieve competencies, specific learning outcomes are formulated under each language skill; listening, reading, speaking, and writing with some elaboration of indicators. The curriculum anticipates a child-friendly learning facilitation and assessment process.

English was introduced in Nepalese education in 1854 when the Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana established a high school in Kathmandu. However, it was not introduced in higher education until 1918 when Tri-Chandra College, the first college in the country, was established. The introduction of ELT in Nepalese education started only in 1971 with the implementation of the National Education System Plan (NESP). Until then English language teachers were not trained. It started only in 1971 when the Institute of Education (IOE) of Tribhuvan University (TU) initiated Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) programme in English education. Earlier education was limited to the members of the royal family and there were not any public schools across the country. After the restoration of social equality in the nation, Tri-Chandra College started teaching English courses under the supervision of Patana University, India in the early fifties.

The situation of ELT has been changed now. Many public and institutional schools in the country use English as a medium of instruction. English is taught as a compulsory subject from grade one to the bachelor level. In the past, English was taught as a compulsory subject only from grade four. But in the academic year 2060, English was introduced from grade one itself as a compulsory subject. English was introduced in grade two in 2061 and grade three in 2062. Universities use English as a medium of instruction for teaching in higher education. Various professional

organizations work in the field of English and English language teaching like the Nepal English Language Teacher's Association (NELTA). The role of British Council Nepal in promoting ELT is also crucial. Even after so many years of English language teacher education programme in operation, there is still a dire need for trained and efficient English teachers in Nepal.

English has had a significant effect on the way Finns regard second language teaching. Indeed, it has affected the way Finns communicate. English words have increasingly found their way into common usage, sometimes being inserted in verbal and written Finnish language communications, which has produced something of a controversy, with many people seeing the incursion of English as a negative phenomenon, the sign of a potential undermining of the Finnish language and culture.

Over the past 20 years, several qualitative studies have been published concerning the position of English in various aspects of Finnish society, including education, business, the media, and more. However, little quantitative research has been carried out regarding English skills among Finns, how they use English, or their attitudes vis a vis the English language. It should be noted that the presence of foreign language speakers is not unusual in Finland.

Finland and Nepal, among many other countries, face the challenge of preserving their culture and language in the face of English-language dominance via the globalization process, which affects everyone. Finland and Nepal are presented with the problem of acceding to the burgeoning influence of English as the new "lingua franca".

Statement of the Problem

There are multiple issues and knowledge gaps in the curriculum of different countries. Different questions have been asked about the effectiveness of the current curriculum in addressing the diversified and heterogeneous learners in the 21st century. Previous studies done on the comparison of curriculum have not fully explored the key factors between Nepal and Finland. There is limited published knowledge on the comparison of curricula of the different countries. Therefore, thinking to contribute in the field of ELT and language teaching, the researcher has selected this very topic.

Research Questions

This study aimed to ascertain similarities and differences in English language education in Nepal and Finland comparing the two countries' curricula in basic education. The study seeks to answer the questions based on general objectives, content, and pedagogical approaches in English language curricula in two countries. The research questions were reformulated several times during the study to explain the findings more precisely. As a result, the following research questions were

formulated to achieve the aim:

What are the general objectives of foreign language education indicated in Nepalese and Finnish basic education curricula?

What is the content of English language education framed in Nepalese and Finnish basic education curricula?

What are the pedagogical approaches in English language education defined in Nepalese and Finnish basic education curricula?

Literature Reviews

The Education System in Finland

The Finnish education system is considered as one of the best education systems in the world and many countries tend to implement the Finnish education system. The fundamental aim of the Finnish education system is to provide free and equal education to all pupils and to promote lifelong learning as well. The Finnish education system consists of early childhood education and care, pre-primary, basic, upper secondary, and higher education. Compulsory schooling in Finland involves one-year pre-primary education for 6-year-olds and nine-year basic education for 7-16-year-olds. Basic education is free for all pupils. Learning materials and daily meals are also free of charge in basic education. The objective of basic education is “to ensure the equality and high quality of education and to create favorable conditions for the pupil’s growth, development and learning” and to build a sustainable future for pupils (FNBE, 2016, p. 10). Furthermore, the aim of basic education is “to provide them with knowledge and skills needed in life” (Basic Education Act, 1998, p. 1).

All schools in Finland pursue the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCCBE) which comprises general objectives, contents, and pedagogical approaches as well as those of different subjects. The NCCBE issued by the FNBE is prepared within the frame of the Basic Education Act and Decree and Government Decrees. The core curriculum aims to support school and educational work and to ensure the delivery of a single equal basic education (FNBE, 2016, p. 10). “Core curriculum in Finland is like a guidebook; it explains the objectives that need to be met instead of giving recipes on how to reach them.” (Irican, 2017, p. 142). The core curriculum traditionally points out criteria for objectives, content, and assessment instructions yet it does not specify certain rules on how to apply them (Niemi, Toom & Kallioniemi, 2012, p. 165). Therefore, local education authorities and schools regulate their curricula according to the national core curriculum which gives them freedom in the organization of education and this freedom is the most important feature that indubitably makes the Finnish education system different from the other education systems in the world.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN FINLAND

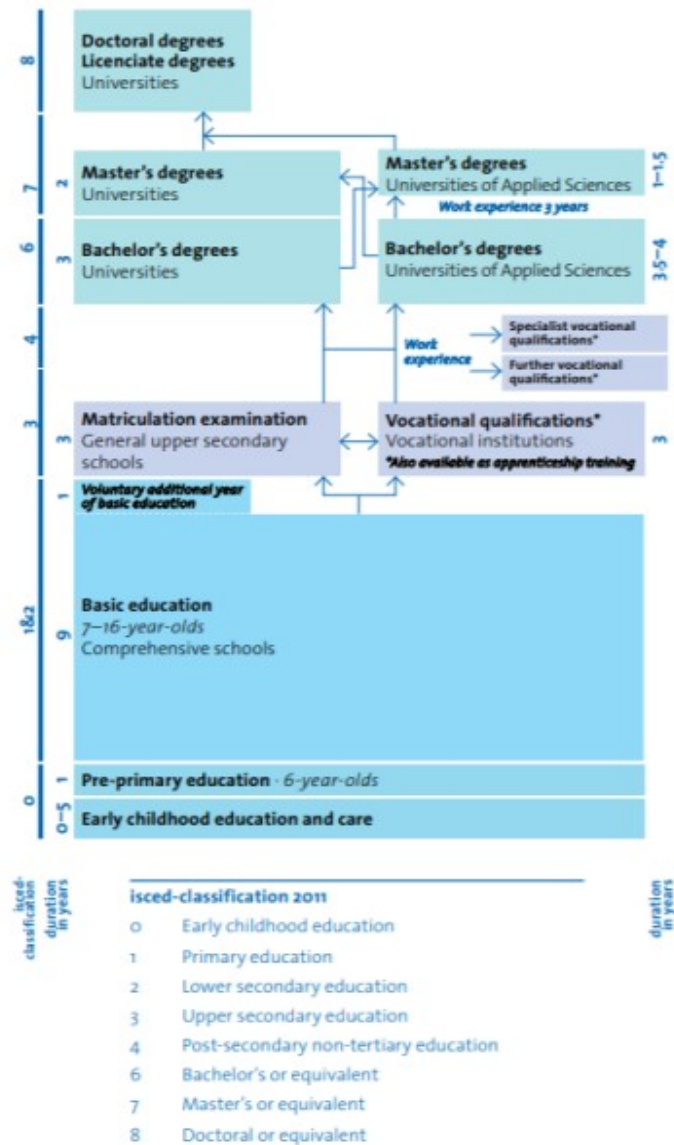


Figure 1. Education system in Finland. (Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), 2017)

Foreign Language Education in Finland

Finland attaches great importance to foreign language learning as the country is aware of the need for intercultural communication in the globalized world. Finnish people need to learn foreign languages to communicate better with other nationalities (Korhonen, 2006). On the other hand, Finland embraces linguistic and cultural diversity as a result of migration which means that Finnish people can be acquainted

with foreign languages. Besides, the fact that Swedish is another national language along with Finnish paves the way for learning a foreign language for Finns and thus prepares them for multilingualism.

English has become the dominant foreign language in Finland recently. The popularity of English increased in Finland after the country became a European Union (EU) member in 1995. And in the 2000s, the role of English grew stronger as a result of economic and cultural globalization and communication technology (Leppänen et al., 2011, p. 19).

English as a school subject has also gained importance in the Finnish educational system. Foreign language teaching had started in grade 3 in Finland. However, in spring 2018, the Finnish government announced that all students would launch their first-grade language studies by January 2020. “The language learning that takes place in grades 1 and 2 will play an essential role in developing pupils’ readiness and willingness to communicate in different languages.” (EDUFI, n. d.). Therefore, a specific curriculum for grades 1-2 regarding the instruction of A1 language as an addition to the latest NCCBE which was published in 2016 since there was a need to reform foreign language teaching in grades 1-2. This additional curriculum with required amendments contains specific objectives, content areas, working methods, and assessment of learning for grades 1-2 to develop a positive attitude towards language learning and to increase pupils’ ability to use languages in daily life (EDUFI, 2020, p. 31).

The NCCBE, English curriculum in particular, basically focuses on the needs of the pupils, the joy of learning, and interaction (FNBE, 2016). Finland is aware of the necessity of “a global, futuristic, and real-world learner” by implementing a free and autonomous curriculum with a great variety of classroom activities (Irican, 2017, p. 138). The English curriculum aims to teach English with a focus on understanding the language and using it communicatively rather than introducing advanced grammar skills.

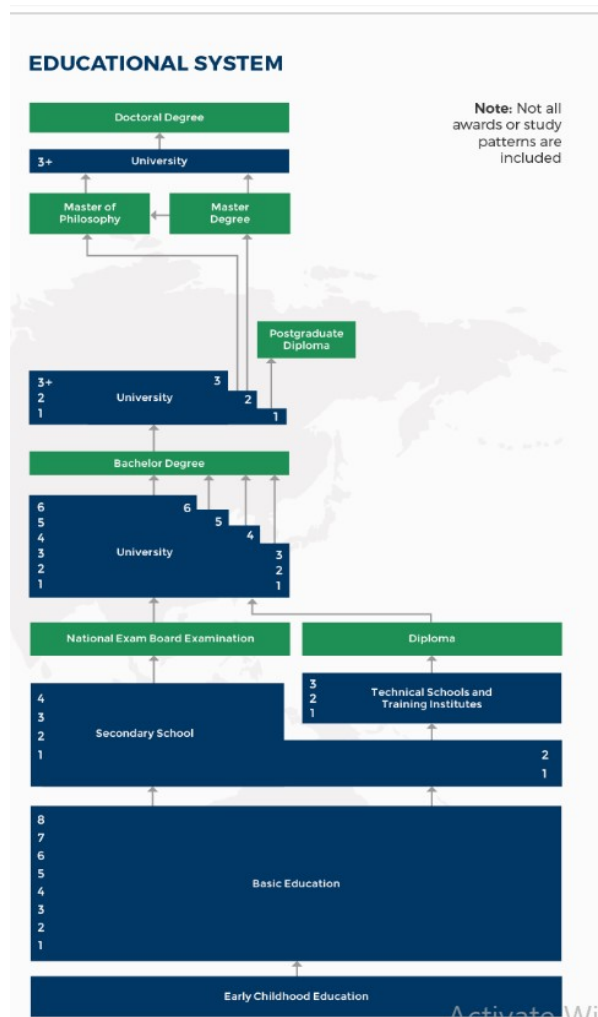
Finland prioritizes children’s mental well-being by implementing a nationwide anti-bullying policy in schools. This policy is rigorously enforced to ensure a safe learning environment. The country is committed to addressing inequality, as it is often connected to bullying and mental health problems. The Finnish school challenges the idea that children from disadvantaged backgrounds will be less successful. Instead, it strives to provide all students with an equal opportunity to excel, regardless of their background (Poon Y.X, 2020).

The Education System in Nepal

The educational system in Nepal was long based on home-schooling and *Gurukul*. This was similar to the former Indian system of education, in

which the pupils would learn either in their homes or with reputed priests or Gurus. Before Nepal was declared a democratic country, the general public had no access to formal education. The first formal school, Durbar High School, established by Jung Bahadur Rana in 1854, was intended for the elite. The birth of Nepalese democracy in 1951 opened its classrooms to a more diverse population. Education in Nepal from the primary school to the university level has been modeled from the very inception of the Indian system, which is in turn the legacy of the old British Raj.

Nepal has two primary types of schools: community and institutional. Community (public) schools receive government grants, and institutional (private) schools are self-funded. Institutional schools are non-profit trusts or companies.



Primary education in Nepal called Basic Education consists of grades one to eight. Secondary levels are grades nine to twelve. Pre-primary education is available in some areas, and students usually begin grade one at age five. A Basic Level

Examination (BLE), previously known as a District Level Examination (DLE), is given in grade eight while a national Secondary Education Exam (SEE), previously known as a School Leaving Certificate (SLC), is an examination is conducted at the end of grade 10 while completing the Grade 12 examination leads to the school leaver's certificate. The National Examinations Board (NEB) supervises all BLE, SEE, and 12th-grade exams.

University education leads successfully to the degrees of bachelor, master, and doctorate in philosophy (Ph. D.). Depending upon the educational stream and degree subject, a bachelor's degree may require as much as three to five years of study, but two years is the typical duration. Some universities offer Master in Philosophy (M.Phil.) and post-graduate diplomas.

English Education in Nepal

The historical record shows that English was in use in Nepal in the early 17th century (Giri, 2015). The Malla kings used the 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 the British military (Levi, 1952, as cited in Poudel, 2016). It was the first contact of English people with Nepalese. In 1816, there was a Sugauli treaty between Nepal and the East India Company that provided legal provisions for British people to settle in Nepal. This provision had a significant effect on the Nepalese linguistic scenario as Elite Nepalese started learning the 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 of craze for learning English as he was much influenced by the British education system. After his visit, he realized the importance of the English language for communication with the outside world and felt that his sons should be given a western education (Sharma, 1990).

Therefore, Jung Bahadur Rana established the Durbar school in 1854. 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 that started teaching English courses under the supervision of Patna University, India (Bista,2011). Gradually English language education began to develop in Nepal, thereafter.

Rana's rule ended in 1950, and then the 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 the Panchayat regime, the role of English was changed from a medium of instruction to a subject of study (ibid).

The report of Nepal National Educational Policy Commission (NNEPC, 1956) advocated Nepali as the sole medium of instruction for national integration purposes. It strongly supported the monolingual policy of promoting the 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 the English curriculum, but the (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 the weightage system of English from 200 to 100 marks (Bista, 2011). After the 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 the development of all languages spoken in Nepal including English.

The Ministry of Education in 2005 via the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) stated that Nepali, English, or both can be the medium of instruction at the school level. It also states that the mother tongue can also be used as a medium of instruction at the elementary level. Later in 2009, School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP), the Ministry of Education (MOE) pressed on the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for grades 1-3 (MOE, 2009). The MOE 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 at 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, the government has implemented English as a compulsory subject from grade one (MOE). The Constitution of Nepal (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 for English learning has added a further dimension with a growing number of English medium schools across nations (Bhattarai & 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 a 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 socioeconomic and educational domains (Giri, 2015). That means, now English is deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of Nepalese people and the need for it cannot be avoided.

The curriculum implementation guideline for the basic level (2075) has been prepared with the aim of supporting the teachers to implement the curriculum and student learning materials effectively in the classroom. The new English curriculum for the basic level is based on a communicative approach to language teaching. This curriculum primarily emphasizes four language skills and also gives priority to language functions. The thrust of the new curriculum is the development of communicative competence in students by providing them with an opportunity to learn English in an integrated way.

Theoretical Underpinning

This analytical study is based on structural theory as it compares the two educational scenarios of two countries. In linguistics and education, structuralism is the theory that elements of human culture must be understood in terms of their relationship to a larger, overarching system or structure. Structuralism addresses the underlying structure determined by the basic and universally applicable elements (Hawkes, 2005).

Methodology

The study is based on a qualitative research design. Under this document study approach was used to carry out this research since the researcher collected the education information of Finland and Nepal through the websites of the MOE of the two countries. The data were gathered through descriptive methods and this formed the basis for the analytical method. Document study method refers to the analysis of documents that contain information about the scenario or event under consideration. It is used to investigate, categorize, and analyze physical sources, most commonly written documents, in the social, public, or digital world.

The researcher has adopted an interpretative research paradigm to conduct this study because it assumes a relativist ontology, a subjective epistemology, and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To find out the similarities and differences between Nepalese and Finnish basic level English curricula, the researcher visited the websites of the MOE several times. The researcher had critically thought before analyzing the educational documents of

both countries. The information regarding the basic level English curriculum was generated by analyzing and interpreting available documents. While interpreting the data, I assumed the multiple truths of social realities. In this sense, this study has been guided by an interpretive research paradigm.

The analytical approach of the data analysis procedure was used in this study. It is because this approach brings together the relationship that exists between the educational system of a country and its social, political, and economic conditions. In any comparative study, we have to use analysis. This is because through analysis one can separate the various elements and understand the importance of each independently. The analytical method is considered useful only when the social and educational organizations are compared. The researcher has used the following four main aspects of analysis:

- Collection of educational data:- The researcher collected the education information of Finland and Nepal through the website of the MOE of the two countries. The data were gathered through descriptive methods and this formed the basis for the analytical method.
- Interpretation of related data:- Collected data were interpreted to understand similarities and differences found in the educational systems of Finland and Nepal.
- Determining standards for comparison:- To compare the educational system of Nepal and Finland fairly, the researcher, in this study had certain standards. These include objectives of the English curricula of both countries; contents included in the English curricula and pedagogical approaches employed to deliver the contents. The analytical method often formulates these standards.
- Interpretation and conclusion:- From the above three aspects of analysis, the researcher was able to interpret the collected data and make certain conclusions based on the various educational systems of Finland and Nepal.

Findings and Discussion

This section reveals the findings of this study that discuss the similarities and differences between English language education in Finnish and Nepalese basic education curricula. According to Cohen et al. (2007), qualitative data analysis requires “organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data” and “noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities” (p. 461). In this sense, the data were organized into four themes with several codes to answer the research questions examining the same case in two different contexts.

General Objectives of Foreign Language Education in Finnish and Nepalese Basic Education Curriculum

According to the Finnish curriculum, the seven transversal competencies aim at improving students' self-awareness and self-respect as well as the creation of a personal identity and a tenable way of life. The school must provide an engaging and supportive environment to the students for a sustainable life. For achieving key competencies, collaboration skills, cultural awareness, communication skills, and students' relationship with nature for a healthy life are all highlighted in the core curriculum. These transversal competencies are presented separately for grades 1-2, grades 3-6, and grades 7-9 progressively. Thinking and learning to learn competence helps students discover different learning strategies by realizing their abilities. They learn how to find various sources to complete tasks and assignments and to assess their work. In other words, students learn how to learn gaining new perspectives on the subject.

Cultural competence, interaction, and self-expression (T2) teach students to understand and respect both their cultural origins and different cultures in the world. They are also guided to use their language skills to interact with others expressing their feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Taking care of oneself and managing daily life (T3) competence encourages students to be responsible for themselves and a healthy and safe everyday life. Multiliteracy (T4) competence motivates students to use a variety of texts in all subjects as well as to produce and interpret information in every area of life. ICT competence (T5) helps students utilize information and communication technology for various assignments and tasks and interact with other countries as well. Working life competence and entrepreneurship (T6) ensures that students are taught to take a positive attitude towards work and are educated based on business life. Participation, involvement, and building a sustainable future (T7) competence teach students to take part in society and maintain a sustainable way of living. As a result, promoting transversal competencies is the cornerstone of all the subjects in the Finnish education system.

Besides, the Finnish curriculum aims to promote the pupils' language-learning skills. The pupils are motivated to take responsibility for their language learning with a focus on learner autonomy. The pupils are guided to discover various ways of learning English and other foreign languages as well and to use them assuredly. The Finnish curriculum also emphasizes that the pupils can evaluate their learning not only in English but also in other foreign languages. Developing the pupils' "linguistic repertoire" for ongoing learning throughout life is another important objective in foreign language education in Finland (Council of Europe, 2020).

Under the Finnish curriculum, prior knowledge is essential in the sense that it improves students' language learning skills. Previous background knowledge in

foreign languages helps students acquire new skills by combining prior and current information to achieve further understanding. Hence, the Finnish curriculum aims at ensuring to improve previous knowledge for future proficiency.

Last but not least, the Finnish curriculum focuses on level and age appropriateness in language learning. It is aimed at students to read texts that are suitable for their level of language proficiency and to reach the knowledge required to study other languages. In addition, teaching in foreign languages is based on the pupil's age factor. In brief, the Finnish curriculum emphasizes that age and level of proficiency are important factors when determining foreign language instruction.

In Nepal, teaching English in schools has two main purposes. Firstly, to enable pupils to exchange ideas with people of any nationality who speak or write English. Secondly, to expose them to the vast treasures of knowledge and pleasure available in both printed and electronic forms. Some of the important features of this revised curriculum are as follows:

The four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing are carefully graded and sequenced.

Common language competencies are set for the basic level.

Language functions are presented with an emphasis on using them for communication.

Additional materials are sought for extensive practice.

Subject matters to practice the language skills are prescribed from a broader spectrum.

Students' evaluation is expected to be based on the objectives of language skills outlined in the curriculum.

A provision is made for alternative test items for differently abled students.

This curriculum presents core competencies at the basic level. The learning outcomes are derived from the core competencies for all grades and presented in sequential order. These learning outcomes are categorized under language skills in gradual progression. The English curriculum of Nepal focuses on communicative competence. Students are encouraged to take part actively in different communicative activities. They are supposed to be involved in different communicative activities to foster communicative activities through role play, information gap activities, and simulation.

Summary and Discussion of General Objectives

In a nutshell, the Finnish and Nepalese basic education curricula have reflected both similar and different objectives regarding foreign language education in basic

education. While the Finnish curriculum sets the objectives for foreign languages in general in the core curriculum, the Nepalese curriculum decides the language competencies for only the English language as a subject. However, only an A (advanced) syllabus was arranged for the English language in the Finnish curriculum.

On one hand, the most common objective in both curricula is improving previous knowledge in language education. To be able to teach new knowledge and skills, it is important to repeat and improve background knowledge in foreign language teaching according to the Finnish and Nepalese curriculum.

On the other hand, the most salient difference in terms of the objectives of foreign language education is level and age appropriateness. While the Finnish curriculum focuses on level and age appropriateness in language learning, the Nepalese curriculum focuses on age appropriateness. When selecting the content for foreign languages, the Finnish curriculum takes the pupils' age and proficiency level into consideration whereas the Nepalese curriculum pays attention to age appropriateness. Moreover, the Finnish curriculum stresses language proficiency in terms of interaction, text interpretation, and text production skills but the Nepalese curriculum broadly emphasizes the communicative competence that aims to use the language confidently in daily lives without any hesitation utilizing real-life practice in schools.

The objectives of foreign language education reflected by both countries' curricula support the cognitive development theory by Jean Piaget which advocates that children go through cognitive processes during their language development. The cognitive development theory is apparent in both countries' approaches towards age appropriateness in the curricula when the objectives of language education are determined. The cognitive-developmental characteristics of the specific age group are taken into consideration in the design of the curricula.

Content of English Language Education in Finnish and Nepalese Basic Education Curriculum

This section provides an answer to the second research question: *What is the content of English language education framed in Finnish and Nepalese basic education curricula?*

Content in curriculum means what is to be taught or studied in an educational context. It is about planning the teaching and learning process. Different content elements are selected for the instruction of the subject in the curriculum. In this study, content refers to skills, attitudes, knowledge, and values to be taught in the Finnish and Nepalese basic education curricula which are under the general objectives of language education.

According to the Finnish curriculum, the use of the language in various

contexts is the fundamental basis of language education. The students are taught to use English in a variety of interactions and knowledge-gathering situations in every area of life even outside the school. Thus, the Finnish curriculum considers improving the multi-functionality of the language in the design of the content related to foreign languages.

In the Finnish curriculum, the content of foreign languages is based on the interdisciplinary utility of language knowledge highlighting the connection between the different subjects. The students use their foreign language skills to aid their learning in a variety of subjects. They learn how to communicate in other foreign languages and understand different texts through the English language knowledge and content and also how to deal with challenges and solve problems in other subjects.

Subject to the key content areas, the Finnish curriculum introduces the notion of growing into cultural diversity and language awareness. The students are educated about linguistic and cultural diversity as well as the dissemination of the English language. They consider their own linguistic and cultural upbringings apart from the other linguistic and cultural diversities in the world. They learn about the importance of language and culture through the content of English language subjects. In interactive environments, they learn using polite words and they compare the words in different languages. In other words, they make connections between the English language and the other languages they study. Moreover, the pupils observe the other cultures and lifestyles of the countries where English is spoken as a mother tongue with the content of the English language.

In the Nepalese curriculum, the English lesson is introduced with the language function and it is followed by reading text and different activities. The grammatical items are introduced and supposed to be taught inductively. The curriculum provides room for practicing different language functions along with several communicative activities like group work, role-play, and so on. The four skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing are presented in sequential order.

The Nepalese curriculum focuses on age appropriateness in English language content defending that the lower grades should be presented with activities based on listening and speaking skills whereas the higher grades are ready to understand more abstract concepts in reading and writing since their language abilities are developed cognitively according to the formal operational stage of the cognitive development theory by Jean Piaget. For this reason, the content is organized using cognates for the lower grades which means that the students are introduced to the foreign terms that are familiar in different languages. Furthermore, the content is selected in evolution from “cognitively demanding” to “cognitively undemanding” (Cummins, 2000, p. 85).

Summary and Discussion of Content

Both curricula focus on encouraging creativity when the content for the English language is selected. They advocate that creativity used while learning a foreign language will be used in other subjects as well. On the other side, both Finnish and Nepalese curricula emphasize evolving language proficiency by employing interaction, text interpretation, and text production skills. The content of the English language helps pupils communicate in different situations, comprehend information, and produce texts in English.

Nepalese curriculum emphasizes communicative competence, as it focuses on language functions with the help of different contexts and meaningful situations whereas, the Finnish curriculum inspires interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary courses. It focuses on cultural diversity and language awareness. Finally, the Nepalese curriculum refers to Piaget's cognitive development theory when the content of the English language is framed with age appropriateness.

Pedagogical Approaches in English Language Education in Finnish and Nepalese Basic Education Curriculum

This section answers the third research question: *What are the pedagogical approaches in English language education defined in Finnish and Nepalese basic education curricula?*

In this study, pedagogical approaches refer to teaching strategies and assessment of learning which are presented and suggested for teachers in the Finnish and Nepalese basic education curriculum for the instruction of the English language. In both curricula, the communicative language teaching approach is adopted in many forms which implies the emphasis to “use language, as opposed to simply studying and analyzing it” (Grenfell, 2000, p. 3).

In the Finnish context, assessment focuses on supporting learning and developing self-assessment. According to the assessment culture in Finland, success motivates students to learn more, but it also teaches them that mistakes are necessary components of the learning process (FNBE, 2016, p. 79). The Finnish core curriculum provides assessment criteria for foreign languages based on the objective of instruction and content areas. In the Nepalese context, teaching, learning, and assessment are identified as an integral part of a whole contributing to teaching methods and learning strategies. It also focuses on students' capability to perform. In addition, it offers suggested testing techniques for the assessment of language skills.

Under the Finnish curriculum, reading guidance is one of the teaching strategies in English language education. The students are taught how to read texts that are suitable for their level of language proficiency and how to gather knowledge for learning in various languages. Reading guidance equips students with better

comprehension and extensive vocabulary which will contribute to their success in foreign language learning.

The Finnish curriculum emphasizes that the students are encouraged to become conscious of their and other people's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The English language teaching also stresses the importance of minority languages and endangered languages. Furthermore, the pupils are also guided to appreciate other foreign languages other than English and to also study them at school. Classrooms can be used to raise understanding of and create plurilingual/pluricultural profiles among students (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 44). This pedagogical approach through guidance for linguistic and cultural awareness supports students to have plurilingual and pluricultural identities in a global world.

The Nepalese curriculum focuses on the learners' centered techniques and strategies. It takes the learners as a whole person. That is to say, the learner is the core center of the learning process. The learners' needs and necessities are regarded, respected, and supported. Learners are encouraged to take part in learning being attentive and active. The curriculum also focuses on soft skills like collaboration, communication, cooperation, problem-solving, and so on. Life skills are taught from the very beginning. The notion of multiple intelligence is also taken into consideration. That is to say, learners' all-round development is tried to flourish.

The student-centered techniques and strategies are incorporated into the curriculum. Some of the activities and techniques that are incorporated and included in the basic level curriculum are answering questions orally, Storytelling/retelling, Roleplay, Demonstration, Pair-work/project work, Group discussion/presentation, Reading aloud/silent reading, Completing sentences, Filling the blanks in a cloze exercise, Matching, copying into answer books, Answering comprehension questions, Matching meanings with words, Dictation, Finding the odd one out, Following instructions, Language games, Answering questions, Describing a given picture, Parallel writing, Listen and carry out different activities.

Each student must have a textbook. Each teacher should consult/refer to the Teacher's Guide. Schools should have access to the audio cassette/CD developed by CDC for listening practice. The provision of additional reading materials, computers, and multi-media projectors will enhance and motivate pupils' learning. The use of visual aids like flashcards, pictures, and the chalkboard should be a part and parcel of teaching.

Summary and Discussion of Pedagogical Approaches

Considering the similarities between the two curricula in terms of teaching strategies, both curricula emphasize the use of the first language in English language instruction. It is important to use the first language when there is a need to give

complex instructions. Moreover, the pupils are encouraged to appreciate their mother tongue as well as English language as a foreign language. In addition, linguistic and cultural awareness is given priority in English language instruction in both curricula to make the pupils respect other languages and cultures. Also, the two curricula underline the importance of a fun and playful approach to English language teaching.

Both the Finnish and the Nepalese education emphasized self-assessment and learner autonomy in the matter of assessment of English language learning in basic education. The students are encouraged to assess their English language abilities and to find various ways of learning the English language. According to the idea of self-efficacy pointed out by Bandura, the pupils are encouraged to measure their English language learning believing in what they can do. The Finnish curriculum expresses that self-assessment can be carried through the European Language Portfolio or equivalent instruments. The Nepalese curriculum explains that each unit has a list of assessment activities. On the other side, both curricula aim at assessing the pupils' appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity which will directly increase their English language proficiency. Furthermore, Finnish and Nepalese education use versatile assessments including formative and summative assessment apart from self-assessment and peer assessment.

As for the differences between the Finnish and Nepalese curricula in terms of teaching strategies, cooperation in teaching and learning is missing in the Nepalese curriculum whereas the Finnish curriculum emphasizes the cooperation between teacher/teacher and student/student. Finally, considering material selection for English subjects, the Finnish curriculum refers to the needs of the pupils in general whereas the Nepalese curriculum expresses particular factors such as the pupils' sociocultural and economic positions. The inclusion of local curriculum is emphasized in the Nepalese curriculum.

Conclusions

The study revealed the similarities and differences between Nepalese and Finnish basic level English curricula. The most remarkable similarities between the Finnish and Nepalese basic education curricula are they focus on increasing pupils' awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, enabling pupils to develop a positive attitude towards English, teaching English for communicative purposes, and encouraging pupils to assess their learning. The most important difference between two countries' curricula is that the Finnish curriculum is a core curriculum including all the subjects and the Nepalese curriculum is a subject-specific curriculum for the English language. The Finnish curriculum presents guidelines for teachers, students, and local education providers on how to reach educational goals rather than giving specific content for the subjects giving flexibility and autonomy to schools. On the other hand, the Nepalese curriculum provides specific instructions and suggestions for

the application of English language teaching with detailed content containing units for each grade and even suggested testing techniques for teachers. Furthermore, the Finnish curriculum focuses on age and level appropriateness in language development taking into account both pupils' age and language proficiency while the Nepalese curriculum only focuses on age appropriateness considering pupils' age referring to the cognitive development theory.

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