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English in Education in Nepal: A Comprehensive Overview

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Abstract

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Education is shaped and directed by the medium of dissemination. It is the language used as the medium of disseminating educational norms and values to the human capital of the nation. In this regard, this article briefly summarises the role and coverage of English in the Nepali education system via curricula of Nepali school to university education. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the review of the related literature and evidence, it was found that the English language has been playing a dominant role in the Nepali education system from school to university level in terms of the medium of teaching and learning, curricula, testing and certification. English serves as the primary language for curricula, textbooks, reference materials, and reading resources mandated for instruction and study across all educational levels in Nepal, starting from nursery through tertiary education. It acts as the medium of instruction in numerous private institutions and certain government-funded public schools. Moreover, it is utilised as the language for conducting final examinations, including the formulation of question papers for most subjects, excluding language-specific courses. In technical fields and some general

subjects, it is also used for answering exam questions.

Keywords: English curriculum, English language teaching, ESL, higher education

Introduction

English is not the native language of Nepali in Nepal. However, it has pervaded nearly all facets of society and is now instructed and acquired as a secondary or foreign language within the country. The prominence of English can be attributed to its widespread usage across various domains including education, media, diplomacy, and tourism, leading to its widespread popularity and recognition as the dominant language (Adhikari, 2018; Shrestha, 2016). In discussing the position of English within Nepal, Shrestha (1983) contends that English cannot be classified as a second language within the country due to its absence as an official language, its lack of status as an international language, and its non-dominant role as a working language (p. 48). English serves as a foreign language or a language of access in day-to-day communication in Nepal, facilitating the acquisition of textbooks, lectures, and journals as it is taught as a subject of study and utilised to some extent as a medium of instruction. Its usage extends to academic, technical, and public spheres within the nation albeit in a limited capacity. Acting as a lingua franca across diverse socioeconomic sectors, English has

significantly contributed to expanding career prospects and economic opportunities in Nepal (Malla, 1977; Shrestha, 1983; Bista, 2011; Khati, 2013; Giri, 2014).

English in Nepal was originally introduced in the mid-seventeenth century. The first English speakers to arrive in the country were Christian missionaries: Father Craybrawl in 1628 and later Father Grover and Father Dorbil in 1661 (Gopinath, 2000, as cited in Sharma, 2006). It took almost another two centuries before the English language was officially introduced in the country. Nepal has a different history than many other countries regarding the introduction of English because it has never been colonised. At this point, it is advisable to mention that English is an imported rather than politically imposed colonial language in Nepal (Adhikari & Poudel, 2024).

The initiation of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal is credited to Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana, who officially introduced it with the establishment of Durbar High School in 1854 (Sharma, 2006, as cited in Aryal et al., 2016). Hence, the official commencement of English language instruction in Nepal can be traced back to Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana's visit to Britain. It was during this visit that Rana initiated English-language education for his own children and immediate family members, marking the formal inception of English-language teaching in Nepal (Eagle, 2000). Historically, English as a foreign language entered the multilingual land of Nepal in the 19th century. Its contact with the Nepali can be traced back "to Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana's visit to England in 1850, and establishment of Durbar High School, the first Western mode school where English was introduced in 1854" (Adhikari, 2017b, as cited in Adhikari, 2020). Nepal's education system which was highly influenced by the ideologies and practices imported from the colonial past in India where English constituted the major medium of academic literary (Adhikari & Poudel, 2024).

Consequently, the inaugural governmental educational institution in Nepal adopted English as its medium of instruction. According to Sharma (1990), the Durbar School, affiliated with Calcutta University, strictly adhered to the university's curriculum, regulations, and language policies, with English serving as both the medium of instruction and examination (p. 4). Similarly, Giri (2014) elaborates that the Nepalese education system mirrored that of British India, where English not only held compulsory status across all educational levels but also served as the sole medium of instruction until the decline of Rana autocracy in the early 1950s (p. 98).

Upon its establishment in 1934, the SLC Board of Examination in Nepal mandated English as both a compulsory subject and the medium for instruction and assessment, while Nepali did not gain compulsory status until 1951. During the 1940s and 1950s, SLC candidates voluntarily chose English as their language of examination (Malla, 1976; Shrestha, 1983). Subsequent revisions in 1953 and 1965 allotted over 20% of total marks to English, contrasting with Nepali's mere 5%. By the 1960s, secondary education utilised both English and Nepali as mediums of instruction (HMG, 1961, pp. 99-101 as cited in Shrestha, 1983). Tri-Chandra College, the pioneer higher education institution founded in 1918, similarly adopted English as its medium of instruction, modelling its educational structure after Patna University, India (Weinberg, 2013; Pandey, 2020).

The implementation of the National Education System Plan (NESP 1971-76) marked the formal introduction of English Language Teaching (ELT) from primary to tertiary education levels in Nepal (Sharma, 2021). Since 1971, both Nepali and English have functioned as mediums of instruction in Nepalese education (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2000 as cited in Joshi, 2020). Furthermore, private schools and higher education institutions have long provided instruction in the English medium (Khadka, 2022). English has been integral to Nepal's education system for over 150 years, spanning from early childhood to tertiary levels, serving as the medium of instruction, assessment, and the content to be

taught and learned. The preference for English medium education, often associated with perceived quality, extends even to government-funded public schools (Poudel & Choi, 2021). Both English and Nepali are not only mediums of instruction, but also compulsory subjects mandated by national education policies (Poudel & Choi, 2021). Thus, English has become an indispensable component of Nepal's educational framework, from primary school to university levels.

Despite its entrenched position, there remains a research gap in understanding the comprehensive implications of English within the Nepali education system. While existing studies recognize its dominance, there's a scarcity of exploring its socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical ramifications within the Nepali context. Specifically, there's a lack of investigation into the evolving nature of English in Nepal, transitioning from a traditional foreign language to a second or additional language, as observed in other studies (Graddol, Karn, Sharma, Rai, Giri, as cited in Adhikari, 2020). By delving into the socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical dimensions of English within the Nepali context, this study aims to offer valuable insights into its implications for educational policy and practice. Understanding the evolving nature of English in Nepal, from a foreign language to a second or additional language, is crucial for informing educational strategies and enhancing language teaching methodologies. Furthermore, addressing this gap in research contributes to a more holistic understanding of the dynamics between language, education, and society in Nepal, ultimately facilitating informed decision-making in educational policy and practice.

Literature Review

Guided by the research questions, I have reviewed the literature available in various resources on English language teaching in Nepal. More specifically, I have reviewed and discussed two broad themes such as English in school education in Nepal and English in higher education in Nepal.

Methodology

This article employs a systematic review methodology to examine the role and coverage of the English language in the Nepalese education system, encompassing both general education and university curricula. The methodology involves an extensive search of electronic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed, ERIC, and JSTOR, as well as manual searches of relevant sources such as academic journals and government reports. For example, Poudel and Choi, (2021); Malla (1976); Shrestha (1983); Shrestha and Gautam (2022); Paudel (2019); Phyak, (2016); Weinberg (2013); Pandey (2020); Duwadi (2018); Seki (2015); Khadka (2022) and many other scholars who contributed for exploring the knowledge and skills in this filed were reviewed. Furthermore, the Curriculum Development Center (2019a; 2018a; 2018b; 2020; 2021; 2022); the Constitution of Nepal (2015); National Curriculum Framework (2019), and many other policy documents were further explored in this article. Data extraction is conducted to systematically collect pertinent information from the selected studies, including objectives, research methods, and key findings. Quality assessment of the included studies is performed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the findings. Thematic analysis is employed to identify patterns and trends in the literature, with a focus on the role of English as a medium of instruction, its integration into curricula, and its impact on testing.

Results and Discussion

Based on the literature found in various sources, I have reviewed the English language teaching in Nepal. I have presented the results with two themes, including English in school education in Nepal and English in higher education in Nepal.

English in School Education in Nepal

From its inception, the education system in Nepal has predominantly used English as the primary language of instruction, spanning from early childhood education through to higher education. Despite strong advocacy within Nepali academia for instruction in native languages at the school level, English remains the preferred medium of teaching. In Nepal, the curriculum at the Basic Level underscores the importance of English, highlighting its role as a key element for connecting with the global community. English is regarded as the global *lingua franca*, vital for Nepal's integration into the international sphere. Its significance extends beyond international communication to include higher education, mass media, information technology, commerce, and tourism, as well as scientific and medical fields (CDC, 2019a, p. 17, as cited in Poudel et al., 2022).

The National Curriculum Framework (2019) outlines a nuanced approach to language instruction in Nepal, prioritising the use of the mother tongue or Nepali language as the primary medium of instruction at the basic level. However, English is designated as the medium of instruction for subjects other than social studies, values/moral education, and topics related to Nepali art, culture, and indigenous identity. This highlights a deliberate effort to balance linguistic and cultural considerations within the educational framework. English education in Nepal extends beyond mere language acquisition; it permeates various educational levels, from basic to advanced, and is increasingly becoming a *de facto* medium of instruction in both private and public schools (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022; Paudel, 2019; Phyak, 2016). Its integration into the curriculum is evident from its compulsory teaching starting as early as grade one in community schools and even earlier in institutional schools, continuing up to grade twelve and as a major subject in higher education (Bhandari, 2020).

Despite occasional policies aimed at promoting indigenous languages in education, English and Nepali have consistently held dominant positions within Nepal's educational system. They have been entrenched as both compulsory subjects and mediums of instruction throughout the nation's educational history (Poudel & Choi, 2021b, as cited in Poudel et al., 2022). This underscores the enduring influence of English and Nepali in shaping the educational landscape of Nepal, reflecting a complex interplay between linguistic, cultural, and educational policies.

English education in Nepal has garnered a reputation, often synonymous with academic struggle, persisting from school to university levels. Despite this perception, parents are actively engaged in fostering English learning environments for their children, spanning from infancy to university education (Sharma, 2022). This dedication is reflected in the enrollment of children in expensive English medium schools, indicating a societal emphasis on English proficiency. The prevalence of English as the medium of instruction extends beyond private schools to encompass technical institutions and, more recently, select public schools over the past five years (Pandey, 2020). Particularly in private schools, there is a staunch advocacy for continuous English language usage.

Analyzing the allocation of teaching hours for English across different grades reveals a nuanced approach within the curriculum. In Grades 1–3, English is allotted four credit hours annually, one-hour fewer than Nepali and the mother tongue. This parity is maintained in Grades 4–10, where English receives five credit hours annually, matching the allocation for Nepali. However, a discrepancy emerges in Grades 11–12, with English reduced to four credit hours annually compared to Nepali's three, indicating a shift in emphasis (Curriculum Development Centre, 2018a, pp. 4–7, as cited in Shrestha & Gautam, 2022). This nuanced distribution reflects the evolving role of English within the educational landscape, balancing its importance with that of other languages.

The English curriculum in schools adopts a communicative approach to English Language Teaching (ELT), emphasising the development of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Shreshtha & Gautam, 2022). At the basic level (grades 1-3), the curriculum prioritizes creating an environment conducive to stress-free English language acquisition. This approach recognizes that children learn English more effectively when exposed to both spoken and written English, with ample opportunities for usage. Consequently, the curriculum places a significant emphasis on language skills development, aiming to equip students to use English proficiently in limited contexts (CDC, 2018a, p. 17).

Moving to grades 4-5, the curriculum aims to foster basic communicative competence, preparing students to utilize English in real-life situations. Here, equal importance is placed on honing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, reflecting a balanced approach to language learning (CDC, 2021, p. 34). Similarly, the curriculum for grades 6-8 seeks to enhance students' ability to engage in exchanges with English speakers and access a wide array of knowledge and enjoyment available in written and spoken English. With a focus on developing communicative competence, this stage of the curriculum continues to prioritize the cultivation of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (CDC, 2020, p. 64). This progressive approach underscores the curriculum's commitment to fostering holistic English language proficiency among students, preparing them for effective communication in diverse contexts.

The English curriculum for grades 9-10 is designed to empower students to express their ideas effectively in English while also exposing them to the wealth of knowledge available in both written and spoken English. This curriculum ensures comprehensive coverage of all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Grammatical competence holds significant importance within this framework, with learners expected to communicate confidently in English (CDC, 2021). In the updated English curriculum for grades 9-12, a communicative approach to language teaching serves as the foundation. With a primary focus on reading and writing skills, the curriculum addresses all four language skills. It emphasizes the types of reading and writing skills essential for students in real-life contexts, aligning with practical language use (CDC, 2022).

Recent revisions to the secondary-level English curriculum (grades 11 & 12) by the government of Nepal reflect a notable shift. The newly developed curriculum integrates all four language skills and recommends the incorporation of grammar instruction within the context of texts, departing from the traditional approach of teaching grammar separately (CDC, 2022). This reflects a progressive move towards a more integrated and contextually relevant English language education approach, aimed at enhancing students' overall language proficiency.

At the school level, textbooks prescribed for English language instruction are developed by the guidelines provided by the Curriculum Development Centre. A brief examination of these textbooks reveals a consistent structure across different grade levels. For Grades 1–5, units typically commence with a 'listen and say' activity, progressing to reading, grammar, writing, and supplementary fun activities (Shreshtha & Gautam, 2022, p. 29). In Grades 6 and 7, units start with conversational activities, followed by reading, grammar, and writing tasks. From Grade 8 onwards, the unit commonly begins with reading exercises, followed by grammar, conversation, writing tasks, and additional exercises. Although the textbooks predominantly emphasize reading texts and comprehension exercises, they often lack sufficient listening and speaking activities, including necessary resources such as audio files. This observation emphasizes a potential gap in addressing comprehensive language skills development within the curriculum.

The formal evaluation of students' English language proficiency within schools commenced with the introduction of the first School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination in English at the culmination of Grade 10 in 1934 (Mathema & Bista, 2006; Shrestha, 2018; Wood, 1965, as cited in Shrestha & Gautam, 2022). Over its 85-year history, the SLC/SEE has undergone several revisions. Originally, the English language subject comprised two papers totalling 200 marks until 1971. Subsequently, it transitioned to a single compulsory English paper, a format that persists to the present day (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

In terms of examination focus, the SLC/SEE English assessment has traditionally leaned towards reading and writing skills. However, a notable shift occurred in 1998 when the examination began to evaluate students' oral communicative proficiency in English, allocating 25 percent of marks for this component (Shrestha, 2018). It's important to note that while oral competence is internally assessed by schools, the reading and writing components are externally evaluated by the National Examination Board. The reading and writing paper constitute 75 marks out of 100, including 11 marks designated for grammar assessment. This timed examination lasts a maximum of two hours and 15 minutes in a controlled local centre, with reading allocated 40 marks and writing 24 marks, indicating a bias towards reading skills (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

The role of English in school education in Nepal has been pivotal since the inception of the education system, with English serving as a *de facto* medium of instruction across all levels of education. Both private and public schools in Nepal increasingly adopt English as a medium of instruction. However, despite policies promoting Indigenous languages, English and Nepali continue to dominate the curriculum. Hence, the English curriculum in Nepal aims to equip students with communicative competence and essential language skills for real-life situations, reflecting the country's aspiration for global connectivity and competitiveness.

English in Higher Education in Nepal

Higher education in Nepal commences upon completion of class 12, with bachelor's programs offered across all universities in the country. This educational journey spans through bachelors, masters, MPhil, and PhD programs. In the realm of English Education, the duration of study varies, with bachelor's programs lasting three years, master's programs two years, MPhil programs one and a half years, and doctoral degrees requiring over four years (Shrestha, 2018). A significant trend in education is the widespread adoption of English as the medium of instruction (EMI), particularly in private K-12 schools. This shift extends to numerous previously Nepali-medium schools, catering primarily to elite and middle-class students (Sah, 2021).

Students in Nepal typically attend either Nepali-medium or English-medium schools from an early age. However, those who attended Nepali medium schools often perceive themselves at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts from English-medium schools (Owen et al., 2021). At the college level, the prevalence of English language usage surpasses that of high school. Kathmandu University serves as an example, where English has become the predominant language for official records, email communications, and student credentials, highlighting its increasing prominence in academic settings (Pandey, 2020).

English holds a compulsory status across various academic programs in nearly all universities and higher education institutions in Nepal. This mandatory inclusion has persisted for over five decades, spanning from elementary school to undergraduate degree levels (Shrestha, 2009). Furthermore, English is offered as a specialized course within faculties of education, humanities, and social sciences, ranging from bachelor's to PhD degree programs in the majority of Nepalese

universities. Bhattarai and Gautam (2010) assert that English serves as the predominant language for academic purposes, including teaching, assessment, and research, across university education, tertiary colleges, and privately-operated academic institutions (p. 33). Moreover, Shrestha (2018) notes that to be eligible for secondary school English teaching positions in Nepal, candidates must hold a bachelor's degree in English Education. Those who have a bachelor's degree in English or Humanities with a concentration in English must complete a one-year Bachelor's in English Education program to qualify for these roles. This requirement highlights the critical importance of English proficiency and proper pedagogical training for secondary education teachers.

In higher education institutions in Nepal, both English and Nepali are used as mediums of instruction, teaching, learning, and assessment. However, English is more prevalent in technical and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. According to Linn et al. (2021), English plays a crucial role in preparing students for higher education and job prospects in Nepal, being a mandatory part of university curricula at least through the undergraduate level. Furthermore, many undergraduate programs, particularly in institutions like Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University, require prospective students to excel in English proficiency tests for admission, especially in STEM and applied science fields such as medicine, veterinary science, and forestry (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

Kathmandu University stands out as the sole English-medium university in Nepal with an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy (Linn et al., 2021). Other universities like Pokhara University, Purbanchal University, and Kathmandu University have prioritized the modernization of education, with English-based curricula as a central focus (Seki, 2015). This emphasizes the pervasive influence of English in higher education, particularly in disciplines that emphasize technical knowledge and scientific inquiry. All universities and higher education institutions in Nepal have structured their curricula in English, with English serving as the primary medium of instruction and examination in most disciplines, excluding those related to language studies. However, in practical application, the Nepali language often functions as a facilitating or alternative medium of communication. Bhattarai and Gautam (2007) assert that English is extensively utilized for all academic activities, including teaching, evaluation, and research, across university education, tertiary colleges, and privately-operated academic institutions.

Similarly, Duwadi (2018) contends that Nepalese universities prioritize the adoption of English as the language of instruction, making it compulsory up to the bachelor's level regardless of students' chosen specializations (p. 180, as cited in Khadka, 2022). Teaching in English as the medium of instruction is prevalent in both universities and colleges throughout Nepal, with English being compulsory up to the degree level and serving as the exclusive medium of instruction in disciplines such as science, engineering, medicine, and technical fields within university settings (Bista, 2011; Shrestha, 2018).

English is mandatory in the curriculum of many universities in Nepal, particularly within undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs offered by the Faculty of Education and Humanities and Social Sciences, where an emphasis on reading-focused courses is evident. According to Duwadi (2018), Tribhuvan University, Nepal's inaugural university established in 1959, has consistently prioritized the adoption of English in its curriculum (p. 180). The language-in-education policy for higher education in Nepal is less defined compared to that of primary and secondary schools. Nonetheless, recent trends at Tribhuvan University suggest a growing inclination towards the English Medium of Instruction (EME), driven by aspirations for internationalization and globalization.

However, in practice, instructors at Tribhuvan University tend to adopt either Nepali Medium of Instruction (NME) or EME based on the discipline they are teaching (Phyak & Ojha, 2019).

Across universities and technical higher education institutions in Nepal, English is not only a compulsory subject but also serves as the primary medium of instruction and examination in various subject areas. Moreover, both Mid-West University (MU) and Far Western Universities offer English as a major subject at both the bachelor's and master's levels within the Faculty of Education and Humanities and Social Sciences. These universities also administer English Language Teaching (ELT) courses within the semester system, consistently updating their curricula to align with evolving educational standards.

Tribhuvan University initiated the transition from annual Master-level programs to the semester system in 2014, starting with the central department and subsequently expanding it to all constituent and affiliated campuses across the Kathmandu Valley, followed by nationwide implementation in 2017 (Paudel, 2019). Across various universities in Nepal, where English is offered as a specialized subject at the bachelor's, master's, MPhil, and PhD levels, there is a concerted effort to update ELT curricula, methods, and techniques to integrate emerging trends and technologies. The focus of these updates tends to revolve around English language, linguistics, and pedagogy within the Faculty of Education, and English Language and Literature within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Poudel and Sharma (2019) delineate this distinction, highlighting English under the Faculty of Education's emphasis on linguistics and language teaching, and the Faculty of Humanities' emphasis on arts and literature (p. 2). This ongoing evolution reflects a commitment to enhancing English language education and pedagogy within Nepal's higher education landscape.

The English language plays an indispensable role in preparing Nepalese students for higher education and employment opportunities (Linn et al., 2021). Students must study English up to at least the undergraduate level in universities. Moreover, in many university undergraduate programs across Nepal, particularly in institutions like Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University, English proficiency is a prerequisite for admission, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields and other applied science disciplines such as medicine, veterinary science, and forestry. Potential students are required to excel in English proficiency tests as part of the admission process, underscoring the significance of English proficiency for academic and career advancement (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

English serves as the predominant language for examinations, curriculum, textbooks, and reference materials in higher education, excluding language-specific courses. Shrestha (2018) notes that apart from English courses, subjects are taught using both English and Nepali, and students have the flexibility to use either language in exams except for English papers at the university level. Tribhuvan University, as a government-funded national institution, adopts a bilingual approach, providing students with the option to answer exam questions in either English or Nepali (excluding exams for language courses). This practice is commonly observed in other government-funded universities, while private colleges typically prioritize English as the primary language of instruction (Pandey, 2020).

Moreover, Shrestha (2008) observes a prevalent trend of English-only instruction, particularly in disciplines such as medicine, engineering, agriculture, veterinary science, and forestry at Tribhuvan University. For instance, in engineering programs, instructors predominantly use English as the medium of classroom instruction, lecture delivery, and demonstrations (Shrestha et al., 2018). Additionally, Nepal's higher education institutions implement a standardized examination system where question papers are in English, allowing students from social sciences and humanities to write

answers in both English and Nepali. However, STEM students are required to respond solely in English (Shah, 2022).

Furthermore, technical institutes, science and medical colleges, and certain faculties/institutes at universities mandate entrance tests conducted exclusively in English, emphasizing a merit-based competition (Shah, 2022). This comprehensive integration of English across various facets of higher education underscores its critical role in academic and professional pursuits, particularly in STEM disciplines and technical fields.

In higher education settings, English is offered as an elective subject within the Faculty of Education (FoE) for Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed.) programs and within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FoHSS) for Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Master of Arts (M.A.) programs. Additionally, English is taught for Specific Purposes (ESP) in specialized fields such as law, medicine, engineering, agriculture, forestry, and banking and financial studies (Sharma, 2021).

Regarding the medium of instruction, learning, and examination, English predominantly serves as the primary language, particularly in technical disciplines like engineering. Shrestha et al. (2016) assert that English is the exclusive medium of communication in examinations within engineering institutes in Nepal. Furthermore, most textbooks used by engineering students to expand their knowledge in specialized fields are imported from foreign countries. The integration of English into the engineering curriculum is extensive and fundamental, reflecting its essential role in engineering education from the outset. This close association between English and engineering education illustrates their inseparable connection in the Nepalese context.

Based on the evidence of English being included as a compulsory subject up to the bachelor's level in engineering curricula, it is evident that English language teaching and learning hold significant importance in engineering education in Nepal (Shrestha et al., 2018). Teaching materials at Tribhuvan University (TU) are accessible in both Nepali and English, though subjects taught in English typically have a greater abundance of English-language materials compared to Nepali. Conversely, materials for most Arts and Humanities subjects are primarily in Nepali, with a growing presence of English-language materials. In contrast, the majority of STEM subjects, along with courses in medicine and business management, feature materials predominantly in English, with some available in Nepali as well (Linn et al., 2021).

Furthermore, assessment questions are provided in both Nepali and English across various subjects, except for language courses such as French and those primarily adopting English Medium of Instruction (EMI). This dual-language provision affords students the flexibility to respond in either English or Nepali, accommodating their linguistic preferences and capabilities (Linn et al., 2021). This comprehensive integration of English and Nepali across teaching materials and assessments reflects the diverse linguistic landscape of higher education in Nepal, catering to the needs of students across different disciplines and language proficiencies.

For many Nepali university students, their academic paths often dictate the language of instruction, with many STEM programs being delivered through English Medium of Instruction (EMI) (Owen et al., 2021). However, mastering English poses significant challenges for many Nepalese students, manifesting in difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Despite advancing to higher grades, learners often struggle with foundational concepts taught in earlier years (Luitel, 2016).

English is not only a subject of study but also serves as the primary medium of instruction and examination across most programs in Nepali universities. Nonetheless, Nepali may also be utilized as a

supplementary or alternative language, particularly in non-language-specific courses. Despite this flexibility, English remains the predominant language for teaching, assessment, and scholarly research in higher education institutions. This emphasis on English integration within higher education curricula reflects Nepal's aspirations for internationalization and globalization. While language-in-education policies for higher education are somewhat ambiguous, there is a discernible trend towards increasing the prominence and utilization of English across various academic disciplines.

English proficiency is essential for students aspiring to higher education and employment opportunities in Nepal. Many undergraduate programs, especially in STEM fields, require students to pass English proficiency tests for admission. English proficiency is particularly crucial in standardized examinations, where STEM students are often required to write exclusively in English. Despite the widespread adoption of English in higher education, challenges persist, particularly regarding students' proficiency levels. Many students struggle with English, facing difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension, highlighting areas for improvement in English language education at all levels of study in Nepal.

English language teaching in Nepali EFL contexts requires a holistic approach that considers the complex socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical dynamics at play. The historical trajectory of English in Nepal's education system underscores the need for informed language policies. Policymakers should draw upon empirical evidence to devise language policies that balance the role of English with the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages. Additionally, policies should address issues such as language medium of instruction, curriculum development, and assessment practices. Given the widespread use of English as a medium of instruction, there is a need for clear guidelines on its implementation. Policymakers should consider factors such as teacher proficiency, instructional resources, and student readiness when determining the medium of instruction. Moreover, policies should support bilingual and multilingual education initiatives to cater to diverse linguistic backgrounds among students.

English language teaching should be integrated into the curriculum coherently and systematically. Curriculum frameworks should articulate clear learning outcomes for English language proficiency across different educational levels. Additionally, curricula should incorporate communicative language teaching methodologies to enhance students' language skills in real-life contexts. Language assessment practices should align with curriculum objectives and focus on evaluating students' communicative competence in English. Policymakers should explore alternative assessment methods, such as performance-based assessments and portfolios, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' language proficiency. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure the fairness and validity of English language assessments for all students, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds.

Since English is the medium of instruction and examination in most higher education programs, EFL curriculum and instruction should focus on academic English skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with an emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. As English is used extensively in STEM fields and other applied sciences, EFL teachers should collaborate with educators in these disciplines to develop language materials and activities that support students' language learning needs within specific academic contexts. Given the increasing emphasis on modernization and globalization in higher education, EFL teachers should integrate technology into their instruction to provide students with access to authentic language materials, online resources, and language learning tools that enhance their English language skills.

Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the trajectory of English in education within the Nepalese context has been dynamic and multifaceted. Despite not being the mother tongue, English has significantly influenced various sectors, becoming deeply embedded in educational practices from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Initially, introduced for political reasons, English gradually evolved into a vital component of the educational landscape, with institutions like Durbar School and Tri-Chandra College playing pivotal roles in its establishment and proliferation.

Over time, English emerged as a compulsory subject and medium of instruction, shaping curricula, evaluation systems, and educational policies. Its dominance expanded from primary to tertiary levels, with private schools and higher education institutions offering instruction predominantly in English. This trend emphasises the perceived association between English medium education and quality, evident in the growing demand even within government-funded schools. Despite its entrenched position, there remains a need for a deeper exploration of English's socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical implications within the Nepalese education system.

The role of English in school education in Nepal has been pivotal since the inception of the education system, with English serving as a de facto medium of instruction across all levels of education. Both private and public schools increasingly adopt English as a medium of instruction, despite policies promoting Indigenous languages. Hence, the English curriculum in Nepal aims to equip students with communicative competence and essential language skills for real-life situations, reflecting the country's aspiration for global connectivity and competitiveness. Similarly, in higher education, English plays a crucial role, being a compulsory subject in almost all programs of universities and higher education institutions. English proficiency is essential for students aspiring to higher education and employment opportunities in Nepal, particularly in STEM fields where English proficiency tests are often required for admission.

Despite its widespread adoption, challenges persist in English language education, highlighting areas for improvement in proficiency levels among students. In essence, English has become an integral part of the educational fabric in Nepal, influencing not only language acquisition but also shaping broader educational paradigms. Moving forward, a nuanced understanding of its role and implications is essential for fostering inclusive and effective educational environments that cater to the diverse needs of Nepali learners.

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