

Better English, Better Job Opportunities in Nepal¹

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Abstract

Globalization paved the way for the rapid expansion of the English language and because of this, its horizons are being expanded day by day. This paper is an attempt to highlight and argue on the importance of the English language in higher education in Nepal in one hand and on the other hand, it tries to shed some light on the vocational zones that the English language has created in the country. The study is argumentative (qualitative) in nature and it has collected pieces of evidence of the English language's popularity and its facilitation in higher education using secondary sources of data. The major findings comprise that the English language has provided an enormous contribution to the vocational zones and because of which all the universities in Nepal have adopted the English language for teaching and learning activities, new and new employment opportunities are facilitated, it is a key component for getting an education in English speaking countries, and an English-speaking person deserves good status in almost all countries in the world.

Keywords: English language, vocational zones, globalization, employment opportunities

Introduction

With the spread of globalization and media, the horizon of the English language is expanding day by day since new opportunities are being created. Learning the English language in the previous era was considered a subject in Nepal but very recently it has been regarded as a language that opens a vast ocean of knowledge (Kandel, 2014). There is not a single country in the world that can keep itself far from globalization and the influence of the English language (Seki, 2015). It means that to make a network in the era of globalization, the role of the English language is paramount (Goethe, 1853) since it is the master key for

all the knowledge being disseminated in most parts of the world. Entering the era of globalization, every individual needs to be competent within the field of communication (Jacquemet, 2005), and in this regard, the role of the English language is required both for mastering communication technology as well as intermingling directly with each other. English is spoken as a second language by more than 112 countries comprising the ASEAN region (Shobikah, 2017) and in Nepal; it is spoken as a foreign language (Shrestha, 2018). Hence, the popularity of the English language is increasing day by day.

Similarly, the world's lingua franca, the English language, is not only as an

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educational requisite but it is required for getting an excellent job in most parts of the world (Jenkins, 2013) and it is the medium of communication in most of the international programs. Due to globalization of English, there is an increase in the adoption of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) among the non-English-speaking countries (Tsou & Kao, 2017). As private English-medium schools always have considerably outclassed the Nepali-medium government schools in the School Level Certificate (SLC) exams, this has led to having the perception of Nepalese that the English medium instruction is the other name given to high-quality education (Sah & Li, 2018). Nepali parents are induced with the English language, even if there are government-funded schools nearby them that deliver free education at the school level, they prefer private schools (Khati, 2013). It shows the power and popularity of English in Nepali schools.

Likewise, after the membership of Nepal with various international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the United Nations Organization, several multinational companies and international non-government organizations are established and they have created job opportunities to Nepalese who are competent in English along with skills required to perform the job (Onta, 2003). Moreover, English has a very significant status in official use as a means of communication in the Nepali scenario as well as it has an important place in journalism, education, science, and technology (Shrestha et al., 2016). The reality is that the children who attended good English-medium schools had

acquired a high-level of linguistic proficiency which facilitated academic performance and opened higher possibilities for the jobs (Sah & Li, 2018). As higher education has been the key to get social prestige and honor in this modern world and highly educated people are respected as compared to low educated ones, but the quality of higher education should be maintained with the English language (Poudel, 2017). Therefore, it is a necessity of the twenty-first century to be equipped with the global language to be able to compete with the world as higher education is linked with the globalization of English.

Methods

The objective of the present study is to find out the status of higher education and its facilitation for a vocational zone in Nepal. To obtain in-depth information, the study employed a qualitative method to conduct the study for making a good argument. It is because, through a qualitative approach, in-depth information on a particular issue can be identified (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), and assuming the same viewpoint this paper has been prepared. The data for the present study have been collected from secondary sources which comprised published journals, periodicals, academic articles, newspaper articles, and reports from different academic organizations. Additionally, the study first puts forward a claim in the form of a theme in each section of the discussion and the same theme has been supported by using different works of literature making relevant context. The study exclusively relied on secondary sources of data for making sound argumentation about the claims. The claims

and their argumentation have been presented in the following sections.

Discussion

English in Nepali Higher Education

The horizon of the English language in Nepali higher education is expanding day by day because of several reasons. English in higher education in Nepal was formally launched after the establishment of Trichandra College in 1918 A.D. (Shrestha, 2018). Awasthi (2010) remarks that English Language Teaching in Nepal began in 1971 after the implementation of National Education System Plan (NESP) and when the B.Ed. program was started by Tribhuvan University. But the Nepalese education system, both the school and higher levels, have been criticized and called as a theoretical, unproductive, exam-centered (Poudel & Sharma, 2019). However, to enhance the status of the English language the government of Nepal, by now, have established nine universities about 1000 constituent and affiliated colleges, 1500 higher secondary schools, and 42100 schools (Sharma, 2021). Likewise, English occupies a significant position in the total education system in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2006).

Talking about the position of English in school and college education, English has been offered as a compulsory subject from the primary level to the Bachelor's level (Sharma, 2010). Likewise, in the case of higher education, English is presented as one of the optional subjects under the Faculty of Education (FoE) in B.Ed. and M.Ed. as well as under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FoHSS) in B.A and M.A (Khatri, 2019). Similarly, English is taught

for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the faculty of law, Institutes of Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Forestry, and Financial Studies (Shrestha, Awasthi, & Pahari, 2019). Similarly, English is the medium of instruction and mode of expression examination in all universities in Nepal except in those subjects which are in the mother tongue (Bista, 2011). These facts establish that the emphasis has been laid on the English language in Nepal. Thus, from the discussion made above it is clear that the status of the English language in Nepal is gradually improving and the use of the English language in higher education has become an obligatory phenomenon, English has been given uttermost prestige in most of the academic institutions in Nepal.

English for Employment Opportunities

It is a very evident fact that with the rapid expansion of the English language, new and new employment opportunities are being created. The globalized economy continues to demand English language proficiency, so English induces its acceptance in higher education (Beacco & Byram, 2003). The English language has been regarded as the language of science to understand science and technology and to get prepared for an international career in the globalizing world (Coleman, 2006). English provides opportunities to study abroad which also guarantees international job placements (Civan & Coskun, 2016). For example, a study (Zein, 2017) in Indonesia found that English was taught from the elementary to a higher level as a foreign language, and because of such initiation, many Indonesians have been employed in multinational companies with good command over the

language. Similarly, another study (Hossain, 2016) in Bangladesh reported that the students were strongly motivated to learn English due to future opportunities like international understanding, academic achievement, and employment. Likewise, most of the European universities have introduced the English language intending to achieve international standards and to improve the employability of their graduates (Wilkins & Urbanovic, 2014). Likewise, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014-15), due to the English language expansion, the employments of interpreters and translators are supposed to grow 29 percent from 2014 to 2024 as compared to other occupations. Similarly, the study of Pinon and Haydon (2010) on 42 companies in five nations— Bangladesh, Cameroon, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Rwanda— found that those companies employed the employees only if they are competent in English (at least intermediate level) and on average the salary of English speakers was higher as compared to the non-English speakers by 25 percent. Likewise, in China Jin and Cortazzi (2002) asserted that English is regarded as the bridge to the future.

Therefore, the English language in higher education has created many opportunities and one of them is employment. For example, it is very difficult to find a university graduate being unemployed in Nepal since s/he gets at least a teaching job in a private boarding school (Baral, 2021). Moreover, due to the modernization and expansion of multinational businesses, newer and newer employment opportunities have been created. For instance, the KFC staff in Durbar Marg,

Kathmandu needs to have good command over the English language to obtain the job. Not only in Nepal but also in almost all countries in the world, the employment opportunity has been intensified for those who have good command over the English language in one hand and on the other who are higher education graduates. In a nutshell, because of the ability to use the English language, employment opportunities in Nepal have been fulfilling day by day because of the reasons mentioned above.

Prospects of English in Higher Education

It has become a fact that the prospect of the English language is good and in every field of study, it is being demanded because of various reasons. The English language has spread worldwide and developed many local varieties, as well as globalization, which has made English an absolute means of international communication (Yano, 2009). The globalized economy continues to demand English language proficiency so English induces its acceptance in higher education rapidly (Beacco & Byram, 2003). The growth of English is flourishing at a high speed in many countries. For example, the educational system in Saudi Arabia considers English as one of the compulsory subjects from grade six to university level (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). In Malaysia, Singapore, and other countries English is also taught from Grade 1 which also supports the claim of the importance of English. Moreover, EFL countries such as China and Korea teach English from Grade 3 onwards and in Japan from Grades 5 and 6 to the higher level (Hino, 2018). Graddol (2006) predicted that English might be a basic skill for all in the future.

In the present context of the world, families are interested in English language education for going abroad, proficiency in English gives individuals social status and enhanced career prospects, both in their home countries and internationally (Wilkins & Urbanovic, 2014). These facts explain why 70% of all Asian students studying abroad are at institutions in Australia, the UK, or the US (Hughes, 2008). However, in many countries such as China (Hu, Li, & Lei, 2014) and South Korea (Jon, Lee, & Byun, 2014) domestic institutions have hurried to familiarize packages that use English as the language of instruction in higher education.

The discussion above proves that the prospect of the English language is good in one hand and on the other it is being increased day by day because of the wish to have a quality education in the countries where English is natively spoken, employment opportunities, and business, international visits (translation and interpretation). More importantly, learning the English language enhanced one's social status, as well as the opportunity to become a global citizen, persuaded many more scholars from developing countries to learn the English language in higher education. Moreover, whenever a child goes to school, s/he starts learning the English language and this evidence clearly exemplifies the importance given to the English language because of globalization, many international seminars and conferences have been taking place and without any doubt, it can be claimed that the medium of communication in such seminars and conferences is the English language. This fact clearly illustrates

the expanding prospect of the English language in Nepal.

Role of English in Higher Education in Nepal

The English language has been enjoying its uttermost prestige in higher education in Nepal. The role of the English language in higher education in world education can hardly be exaggerated since most of the classroom practices are done in the English language (Kerklaan, Moreira, & Boersma, 2008). Because of the command over the English language, Shrestha (2018) asserts that “most of the classes in higher education in Nepal are taught in English language and a university graduate specializing English can get an English teaching job since Nepal is the plethora of private boarding schools” (p. 2). Mostly in the rural part of the country English teaching jobs remain vacant most of the time since an English graduate can teach not only the English language but also other non-English subjects, such as Environment, Population, and Social Studies (Shrestha, 2018). In the same manner, Hu and McKay (2012) asserted that the higher status has been given to countries like China, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Japan, and India.

Not only being graduates but also the status of being able to speak English enables one to have good prestige in academic institutions. For instance, Seki (2015) asserts:

English speaking can be taken synonymously to the education rates in Nepal, with English being introduced as a mandatory subject in high education curricula 1981, though it did make brief, but dominant,

appearances precluding to it . . . English speaking in higher education is growing as a culture and it has been gradually adopted in the grassroots level of education in Nepal (p.17)

Besides, all local universities, and many international universities' affiliated colleges have been established in Nepal for bachelor and master levels that demand exclusive use of the English language. For example, The British College is affiliated to Leeds Beckett University, the UK, Informatics College from London Metropolitan University, Pokhara Lincoln College from the Lincoln University Malaysia, to name a few (Katuwal, 2011) and the medium of instruction in such colleges and universities is the English language. Because of such affiliations from different international universities, the horizon of the English language in Nepal is increasing day by day, and students are persuaded to have good command over the English language. Similarly, Shrestha et al., (2016) advocated that English is a must in the field of engineering since most of the subjects are taught in the English language and the examinations are conducted in the English language as well. In the same way, for measuring proficiency in English, a practical examination of 25 marks is taken which measures students' listening and speaking ability.

Hence, the facts presented above also prove how much emphasis learning English has been given in higher education in Nepal, and in this connection learning the English language can be taken as the skill of using master-key. It is because using the English language students of higher education in

Nepal only can enter the vast pool of knowledge that they want to have in their studies.

Conclusion

Because of global expansion and the use of the English language as the most important language in the world, Nepalese higher educational institutions have also adopted it as the medium of teaching and learning. More importantly, learning English can be regarded as a skill in using the master-key. It is because once one has good command over the English language, s/he can learn anything s/he likes (Khati, 2013). Many studies like, (Phyak, 2013); (Khati, 2013); (Shrestha et al., 2019); and Bhattra (2006) contended the importance of the English language and supported its expansion in Nepalese higher education which, according to them, enabled Nepalese students to be able to compete with other students around the world academically. Additionally, with the rapid expansion of globalization, new job opportunities are being demanded by the multinational companies in which the basic premise remains the competency of the English language. Foreign universities have their affiliated colleges in Nepal which created job opportunities on one side and on the other students got the opportunity to savour world-class education just staying in their own country. Finally, it is very important to conduct teaching and learning activities in the English language as many of the studies reported that English graduates rarely stay unemployed (Shrestha, 2018). Because of this, all the universities in Nepal provisioned English as the exclusive medium of teaching and learning activities and it enabled Nepalese graduates to obtain

lucrative positions in many multinational companies around the world.

Therefore, all concerned need to realize the importance of learning English since in almost all parts of the world a person who has good command over English and

skill in the job gets a job without any reservation, and such people are given more prestige as well. And, those who are higher education graduates have opportunities to obtain new types of jobs in the world of employment.

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