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Changing faces of English: why English is not a foreign language in Nepal

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The use of English in Nepal was first recorded in the seventeenth century. Officially, however, it was adopted as a foreign language into the formal education system only in the first half of the twentieth century. Despite its "foreign" status until now, users of the language and related studies claim that it is anything but foreign. Its current use in all spheres of life makes the language indispensable and at par with Nepali, the only official language for wider communication. As such, its speakers advocate that English in Nepal deserves more veneration than the term offers. The article provides a socio-linguistic analysis of the English language situation in Nepal, and drawing from research and available literature, it assesses to what extent is such a claim justifiable. In the pretext of its growing popularity and dominance, the article examines its role, status and its position in the national language education policy and points out what implications its changing status has on the national curriculum and pedagogic resources.

Keywords: EFL; ESL; World Englishes; English as an international language (EIL); Nepali English

1. Introduction: the importation of English into Nepal

Historical records of the presence of English in Nepal reveal that it was in use in what we call Nepal today in as early as the seventeenth century. The Malla kings, for example, who were said to have trading arrangements with Tibet and North East India, used some form of English as a lingua franca to carry out their business transactions (Hodgson 1974; Morris 1963). As history has it, Pratap Malla, one of the Malla kings, had his literacy in English boastfully inscribed on stone slates as an evidence of his familiarity with the language (Pradhan 1982; Awasthi 1995; Sharma 2001). The early presence of English in Nepal could have been the result of the entry and first settlements of European missionaries, in particular English missionaries in 1661. They trained Nepalis to assist them with their intrastate as well as interstate activities. A landmark of English education, however, was the commencement of recruitment of Gurkha soldiers as a part of the famous Sugauli Treaty in 1815, the training of which took place in English. This was the beginning of English education in Nepal, though at a miniscule level (Giri 2010).

English was formally imported into Nepal during the *Rana* oligarchy and was seen as a linguistic advantage favouring the ruling elites (Manandhar 2002; Vir 1998). The idea that using the language was advantageous was further strengthened with the introduction of English to education in the 1950s when Nepal embarked on planning formal education for the first time. The Government of Nepal appointed Dr Hugh B. Wood (a US Fulbright scholar in India), advisor to Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC)

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in 1954. The report of the Commission has had overarching influence on the Nepalese education. In fact it became the foundation of subsequent language education policies in Nepal in which the Wood's legacy continues, in one form or another, in the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of Nepal's language policy (Awasthi 2004, 2011)

English has been labelled differently at different times in its history in Nepal. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was termed as a link language, a library language or even a reference language. Towards the middle of twentieth century, English was taught and learned as a language of international communication (see Malla 1979; Awasthi 1995; Giri 2009). In official discourses, however, it is still referred to as a "foreign" language. In this article, I argue that English in Nepal is anything but a foreign language.

In contemporary Nepal, English functions as a lingua franca across various socio-economic sectors and domains. It not only has become a language of communication between the sectors or groups but also interacts with the local languages through code-mixing and code-switching. As a result of this interaction, it has displaced or even, in some cases, replaced local languages in various socio-economic domains. In the sections that follow, I explain how the forms and functions of the English language have been expanding and how, together with other languages, it has emerged as a local language. With a view to elucidating its emergence as a local language, I identify English in Nepal as an expanding circle variety, following Kachru's framework. But first, there is a need to look at the terminological complexities associated with the terms that are used to refer to the status of English and their implications for the teaching and learning in the Nepalese context.

1.1 The ENL-ESL-EFL trichotomy

English in non-native contexts is often distinguished in terms of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). This small Himalayan nation had no prior colonial affiliation with an English-speaking country, so English has been officially identified as a foreign language. Kachru's three concentric circles place Nepal in the expanding circle, suggesting that English in the mountainous nation is dependent on exonormatic norms for its teaching and use. In this section, I evaluate the significance of the trichotomy, ENL-ESL-EFL, in the Nepalese socio-political context. In particular, I analyse its past and current roles and statuses and discuss the implications for the future of English language teaching (ELT) in Nepal.

Traditionally, English as a native language (ENL) is the language of those who are born into and raised in one of the inner circle countries. In the English as an international language/World English (EIL/WE) discourses, however, the concept of ENL has been challenged, revised and expanded to apply to any one who is born into or raised in an English-speaking environment. English as a first language (EFL), then, applies to anyone who uses it as a primary language in order to carry out their personal, social and/or professional activities (see Sharifian 2009, 2010). Similarly, ESL is the language spoken in former British colonies and has some sort of official status; whereas EFL refers to English with no specified role except that it is taught as a subject in schools. Scholars assert that defining ESL is more problematic than EFL because its role, status and function cannot be stated with the same level of clarity as EFL. For Christophersen (1960), for example, the distinction is essentially in the attitude and in the use that is made of the language. A foreign language is used for the purpose of absorbing the culture of another nation, whereas a second language is used as an alternative way of expressing one's own culture. For Marckwardt (1963), however, EFL is adopted as a subject solely

for the purpose of giving students competence to enjoy literature and entertainment, while ESL is the language of instruction or a lingua franca of people coming from a diverse language background. Similarly, Strevens (1977) identifies ENL, ESL and EFL with English-speaking, English-using and non-English-using countries, respectively. An ESL country, for him, uses English as the medium of instruction in some important sectors of education and/or is accepted as an official language. An EFL country, on the other hand, holds it as the principal language of higher education but uses it only as a medium of instruction and/or examination. Richards and Tay (1978) summarise the discussion by saying that in an ESL context, English (a) has a status of an official language; (b) is an important language of education; (c) is a dominant working language; (d) is a lingua franca and (e) a language for the expression of identity. In EFL contexts, however, it is taught and learnt as an international language.

Kachru's (1978, 1988, 1991) three concentric circles of WEs: the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle, may be considered as roughly corresponding to ENL, ESL and EFL countries. The ENL countries are norm-providing countries, ESL norm-developing countries and EFL norm-dependent countries. English in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, for example, was termed as ESL, because, at some point in their histories, these countries were colonised by an inner circle country. However, Nepal, which has been heavily influenced by Indian socio-politics and education, has been described as an EFL country simply because it had no prior colonial affiliation whatsoever. The authors of EIL/WE argue that one can achieve and acquire either of these classifications provided one is in the right kind of environment and has the right support for its learning and use (Sharifian 2009). Nayar (1997) suggests that there is a great deal of referential fuzziness in the labels ENL, ESL and EFL, particularly the last two.

The term "English as an international language" (EIL) needs further explanation as it does not necessarily mean a particular variety of English spoken or used internationally. A number of EIL/WE scholars (see Sharifian 2009; McKay 2010; Matsuda 2012; Strevens 1992; Modiano 1999; McArthur 1987) have suggested that EIL should be seen as a continuum with ENL at one end and EFL at the other. Nayar (1997), for example, suggested that the transition from foreign language to second language takes place when the language is used in everyday communication and from second language to native language, when the language is or can be used for all communicative needs and when the wider speech community accepts it. Similarly, for Sharifian (2010), varieties of English or WEs move along the continuum through their uses and the functions they serve.

While the rest of the English-speaking world is engaged in a conversation on the issue of how English is localised and how it becomes one of the local languages, Nepal remains entangled within this terminological confusion. As mentioned earlier, English has, traditionally, been labelled as a foreign language without examination of the socio-political context in which it functions and without understanding or taking into consideration the pedagogical implications. The article maintains that the current state of confusion in the Nepalese ELT academia is the result of terminological complexities and suggests that the ELT academia must first sort out the confusion about the role and status of English in Nepal. In Section 3, I apply Kachru's framework for the purpose of explaining the nativisation of English in Nepal. The article establishes that the emergence of English as a local language should be seen as a continuum in which inner circle English is positioned at one end and Nepali (or Nepalese) English on the other with a range of negotiation and renegotiation processes in between. In order to do so, I look into the two aspects separately – first, the functional aspect, and then, the structural (or formal) aspect of English in Nepal.

2. The functional aspect of Nepali English

Kachru distinguishes four different functions of English in order for it to establish itself as one of the local languages: (a) *instrumental*, (b) *regulative*, (c) *interpersonal* and (d) *imaginative/innovative* (Kachru 1978). The language performs an instrumental purpose if it functions as an instrument of education. It carries out a regulative function when it is used to regulate/communicate commercial, academic and official proceedings in a given context. It achieves an interpersonal function when it is used as a link language for its users and provides a code for symbolic elitism, prestige and modernity. Finally, creative and artistic use of the language in journalism, literary works and the like serves an imaginative/innovative function. These functions together lead to what is known as the nativisation or indigenisation of English (Kachru 1978). English in Nepal serves all the four functions.

2.1 The instrumental function

English has always been an important component of Nepalese education. Education was, and to a large extent still is, equated with English education (Giri 2009). In keeping with its growing importance, the first national education plan of early 1950s and the subsequent ones have allocated up to 30% of the total curricular weightage to English (Khanal 1999; Yadav 1990; Giri 2009). Its dominant place in education can be attributed to the education system of the British India which it closely followed. As indicated earlier, Dr Hugh B. Wood, the architect of the Nepalese language education policy, orchestrated a hegemonic language education policy based on the English education policy of the British India. Therefore, "the curriculum of the schools at present is patterned after that of the English schools in India, which in turn is patterned after the schools of England" (Wood, Pandey, and Upraity 1955, 43). The legacy of Wood's policy continues and shapes the Nepalese language education policy in general and English language education policy in particular.

The significance of English in the Nepalese society is also reflected by the ways in which it has been embraced in the education system. For example, its use as the medium of instruction and examination points to the fact that English in Nepal is, as David Rathbone, a UNESCO education expert, suggests in the following quote, anything but a "foreign" language:

> There are some very important points which must be hammered home. One of them and perhaps the most important of these is that if English is a foreign language in Nepal, it must be taught as a foreign language. . .. This is very important. Because, I am afraid, your present courses, your present methods, your present examinations – all presume, unjustifiably that English is the *first* language. (Rathbone 1969, 9; emphasis mine)

One and a half decades later, a Nepali academic associated with the Department of English of Tribhuvan University expressed a similar view that English was taught not as a foreign language but a second or even first language.

> English continues to be taught in Nepal "not as a foreign language but as a second or even first language. The aim of high scholastic attainment and the teaching materials containing of classics indicate that the ELT was not aimed merely at a foreign language competence". (Shrestha 1983, 51)

As outlined here, the Nepalese education system followed that of the British India. English was not just the only compulsory language throughout the educational system; it was also the only medium of instruction until the autocratic family rule of the Ranas ended in the early 1950s. Despite the controversial elevation of Nepali as the national language and consequently as medium of instruction amidst the nationalistic sentiments in the post-Rana Nepal, English remained as the preferred medium of instruction. In fact, the first ever NNEPC survey of 1954 revealed that nearly half of Nepal's population wanted English to remain as the medium of instruction (Wood, Pandey, and Upraity 1955; Sonntag 1980). Similarly, 30 years later, a survey by a prominent sociolinguist Subhadra Subba at the higher education level affirmed that "English is the preferred medium of instruction in most disciplines at Tribhuvan University" and that English was the second language in Education (Subba 1980, 86). Similarly, Giri (2009) observed that English was the principal language of private schools. Functional literacy and the ability to communicate using English are not only desirable in education, but they are indispensable because almost all academic discourse is carried out in English (Awasthi 1995; Karn 2012).

2.2 The regulative function

The Rana-regime had already established linguistic edge by privileging Nepali as the only official language, English education only contributed to further strengthening this hegemonic policy (Giri 2010).

There are 121 ethnic languages spoken by various ethnic groups in various parts of Nepal today. The number of their speakers ranges from just a few speakers to a few million. Despite Nepal's multiethnic and multilingual character, only Nepali, the language of the ruling elites, has been the official language in Nepal. This phenomenon is known as language hegemony, in which one language is preferred over others for administration, education and media (for detailed discussion on language hegemony in Nepal, see Awasthi 2004; Giri 2010). Language hegemony, as a strategy to control the distribution, learning and use of other local languages in the Nepalese society, was first adopted early in the twentieth century (Vir 1998). In terms of formal education, Wood's "Linguistic Restrictionism theory", a similar strategy, which advocates limiting the use of multiple languages in public domains, was adopted in the early 1950s. Wood was greatly influenced by Macaulay's model of English-only education in British India. The educational ideology of Macaulay thus shaped the Nepalese language education policy which established English as its main language. The concept of a bilingual Nepal was a non-Nepali ideology imposed on it by what Awasthi (2004) suggests was a neocolonial attitude:

> ... the reduction of multilingualism was not an indigenous construct of Nepal. Linguistic restrictionism was an alien concept for the people and polity, and was an importation from the West. The concept of reductionism grew during the British Raj in India and flourished [in Nepal] after the NNEPC report. (Awasthi 2004, 34)

As a result of this policy, combined with the influence of globalisation, there has been an increase in the use of English as the main lingua franca, overtaking Nepali, in crucial sectors like tourism, trade and business, education, science and technology:

> As the process of globalisation ... is in effect all over the world, Nepal cannot withstand it. English has been a language, which seems to be replacing Nepali itself. (Rana, 2006, 6)

Some believe that the ability to use English is a prerequisite for achieving success in life:

> People who know English are more exposed, more knowledgeable and therefore, more successful in life than those who don't. Without English, there is no academic or occupational future. (a professor of English during interview as reported in Giri 2009, 133)

In Nepalese academia, over 85% of academic proceedings take place in English. Likewise, in Nepali mass communication, English has become "one of the most dominant languages in print as well as electronic media" (Khati 2003, 1). Yadav (1990, 24) found that "19% of the total program time of Radio Nepal and 24% of total program time on Nepal TV was given to English language". Similarly, Verma (1996) reported that 25% of news dailies were in English. More recently, Humagain (2001) and Pokharel (2003) reported that "with all print media combined (i.e., dailies, weeklies, and fortnightlies and monthlies), 40 percent of all materials are published in English and the number is increasing" (69). My own research on the advertisements published in the national dailies revealed that 42.5% of all ads were in English. Similarly, a cursory analysis of the English usage on radio – Kantipur FM and Hits FM – during the same period shows that 75–80% of the FM broadcasts were carried out in English (Giri 2011). This is consistent with the observation made by Rana (2006) that code-switching and code-mixing between English and Nepali are commonplace. The growing influence of English has been recognised by the Nepali elites and decision makers making it one of the two languages in which Government papers are to be available online (Giri 2011).

As a consequence, speakers of other languages have been abandoning their languages in favour of English in order to ensure a better future and access to wider socio-educational resources and opportunities. By way of example, a foreign linguist in Kathmandu was stunned to hear a *Newar* mother who said she did not talk *Newari* with her husband in the presence of her children lest they might learn it.

> "Why is that so?" Asked the shocked linguist.

The mother replied, "Well, it's rather nice thing to learn your own language but you know my children will lag behind. English as an international language and Nepali as a communicative language are just fine; another language will make them dull" (Roak 2008). This illustrates the fact that

> . . . in the last few decades English has been filling at least some of the functions of a second language in a country that has several indigenous languages: it dominates the print media and is used by the electronic media and some Nepalese turn to English for their creative writing. (Greenbaum 1996, 242–243)

In the contemporary Nepal, English is spoken and used at all socio-economic levels by most urbanites, the degree of its use may vary from one sector to another and from one place to another (Jha 1989). Its use, however, extends to social and business exchanges making English a primary language of communication in trade, tourism, commerce, mass media, international projects, diplomacy and so on. So much so that, as Yadav (1990) puts it:

> English cannot be considered a foreign language like French or Arabic. In the context of Nepal, it is the only language of education and communication for a majority of people and the number of such people is increasing at a fast rate. It needs, therefore, to be given the recognition of this reality in our national language policy document, and funds should be accordingly allocated to the effective teaching/learning of English in Nepal. (Yadav 1990, 29)

2.3 The interpersonal function

The importance of English for interpersonal communication in Nepal has been widely reported in Wood, Pandey, and Upraity (1955), Malla (1968, 1983), Rathbone (1969), Davies, Maclean, and Glendenning (1984), Jha (1989), Khaniya (1990), Yadav (1990), Awasthi (1995), Eagle (2000), Rana (2006) and Giri (2007, 2009). While English is the principal language of communication in most economic sectors, the government uses it as an alternate medium in administration in a number of portfolios such as tourism, finance, external affairs, education and science and technology. S.R.R. Pandey, the first Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, however, described English in Nepal as not a language through which the culture of another nation is absorbed but a language through which the Nepalese can express their own culture to a wider world:

> … we feel that in order to communicate our very own culture, our own ideas to people of other parts of the world, an international language is absolutely necessary. As you know we are going to launch very shortly a scheme for the study of our Nepalese culture, our Nepalese language and literature, our art and architecture … Now we have to communicate the results of our achievements to the various parts of the world, and for that the English language is absolutely necessary. (Pandey 1968, 1)

English has also been helpful in the development of some local languages, assisting with at two processes of development, that is, codification (choice of script, orthography, pronunciation, grammatical forms, lexical items, etc.) and elaboration of functions (innovation and adaptation of vocabulary in the areas of scientific, imaginative and emotive experience). For example, some English punctuations, such as the comma, colon, semi colon, question mark and quotation marks, have been put to use in Nepali and other Nepalese language scripts. In recent years, the full stop (.), which is equivalent to Nepali (।), can be seen in use. Similarly, instances of wholesale transliteration of English words are commonplace in Nepali. For example the word "dean" is written as equivalent "*dina*" and "campus" as "*kyampas*" (Yadav 1992). The issue of transliteration is further elaborated upon in the next section.

2.4 English in the community

After Nepali, English is the most widely used language in Nepal. As Eagle (2000) notes below:

> …[English] is the second most widespread language in Nepal in terms of popularity, education, and use. It is spoken at all socio-economic levels, by both literate and non-literate people. No statistics are available for the number of people who speak or read English. The general impression is that a large percentage of population speak at least some English with varying levels of accuracy and fluency. (Eagle 2000, 12)

Greenbaum (1996) agrees with Verma (1996) in saying that English is no longer limited to formal academic domains. As he notes below, in recent years, its use outside education is becoming commonplace.

> … in the last few decades English has been filling at least some of the functions of a second language in a country that has several indigenous languages: it dominates the print media and is used by the electronic media and some Nepalese turn to English for their creative writing. (Greenbaum 1996, 242–243)

The spread of English in Nepal across sectors and regions is rapid and systematic. It has, in recent times, reached the lower strata of the population in urban as well as rural regions. According to Acharya (2006), not only do urban elites and politicians mix a great deal of

Table 1. English words by sectors as used by rural Nepal.

English in rural Nepal	
Code-mix classification	Reported number of words in use
Health	90
Family planning	11
Telecom	26
Transport (ground, air and water)	60
Admin	21
Election	21
Agriculture	19
General hardware	68
General homeware	40
Entertainment	28
Profession	15
Education	66
Garments	26
Others	50
Total	541

Source: Research Division, Tribhuvan University (1997).

English into Nepali in their conversations, but also the rural population has also developed a similar practise. A study carried out in the late 1990s on the impact of the language on the rural population found that, consciously or subconsciously, the rural population mix over 500 English words in their everyday conversations (Research Division, TU, 1997) (Table 1).

The study concludes that this could be as a result of (a) people's attraction to and interest in using English expressions, (b) the influence of media, especially TV and radio, and (c) the spread of "English medium" private schools across the country.

2.5 The innovative function

Innovative use of English in Nepal is evident in the "New English Literature". The term "New English Literature" is used to refer to literature or the creative and artistic use of English in WEs. WE literature, thus, represents the culture of the people and contexts in which it is created (Dawson 2011; Karn 2012). While the history of Nepalese English (NE) literature has yet to be more fully documented, nonetheless, it can be traced to as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. It is suggested that in the first half of the twentieth century, Laxmi Prasad Devkota (also known as Maha Kavi, the great poet) and Bal Krishna Sama (the famous poet and dramatist) wrote poems in English (Karn 2012). There are a number of notable NE writers whose works appeared mainly in the second half of the century, viz-à-viz, Renu Lall Singh (of *Fundamental Values* fame), Rishikesh Shaha (*Heroes and Builders of Nepal*), Keshar Lall, Samarat Upadhyay (*Arresting Gods in Kathmandu*) and Kamal Prakash Malla followed by Lil Bahadur Chhetri (*Mountains Painted in Turmeric*), Manjushree Thapa (*the Tutor of History*), Narayan Wagle (*Palpasa Café*), Abhi Subedi and so on. The works of Govinda Bhattarai, D.B. Gurung, Rabi Thapa (*Nothing to Declare*), Vishnu Singh Rai (*Realities*), and Greta Rana have also brought the new NE literature to the forefront as many of the works cited here are unique in their own right and have won national, regional and/or international acclaim. These creative writers in NE, "whether emerging or famous, realist or surrealist, whether their English stems

from living in an English speaking country or through reading books at the British Council library [in Kathmandu], have 'managed to reflect the Nepali experiences through their own particular lenses'" (Joshi 2008 cited in Karn 2012,30).

In addition, there are a number of institutions that are making a significant contribution to the development and spread of English in Nepal. In addition to the English Language Teachers' Association of Nepal (NELTA), founded in 1991, which disseminates English language teaching materials across its numerous branches throughout Nepal, there are at least three other institutional associations that are making a significant contribution to the development and dissemination of creative works in English by NE authors. The first of these is the Literary Association of Nepal. Founded in 1992, the association constitutes a forum for interaction among authors, and for the dissemination of their creative works through its publication of Literary Studies. The second is the Society of English Writers, which was formed in 2000, and apart from holding conferences, it publishes collections of works annually in its magazine – *Of Nepalese Clay*. Finally, the Asian English Language Teachers Creative Writing Group, founded in 2003, features several prominent NE writers. This group not only publishes anthologies of literary works but also provides them a sense of identity for their works by promoting regional/international understanding and cultural exchanges.

3. The formal/structural aspect of Nepali English

Sthapit (1999) points out that the sounds of Nepali have influenced the way Nepalese speak and use English. Verma's (1996) investigation into the English used in the Nepali media discovered Nepaliness in "lexis, grammar and style" in the English used in the media (86). Similarly, Hartford (1996) has noted that Nepali English has "great potential for providing insights which are important to linguistic theory, especially in the domains of language acquisition, language contact and language change" (88). Reporting on the use of phrasal verbs in Nepali English, drawn mainly from the print media, scholarly publications and creative literature, she further suggested that the pervasive patterns employed by educated Nepalese users of English could be accounted for a common set of psycholinguistic principles.

Brett's (1999) comparative study of Standard English and Nepali English identified the following features:

Unusual use of words

Proudy" as in "he's proudy" when the speaker means to say "he's proud" or "he's not helpful

Directress (for director)

Pluralisation of plural form

Childrens, Peoples

Use of honorifics after the name of a person

Ram Sir, Meena Miss (for Mr Ram, Miss Meena) (for a detailed discussion, see Verma 1996; Brett 1999; Rai 2006; Homes 2007)

Rai, a prominent NE writer, has pointed out the following characteristics of Nenglish: (a) Nepalese words are used in English to express local concepts and culture, (b) English

suffixes are being attached to Nepalese words and vice versa, (c) word order of English is changed in Nenglish, (d) transliteration of English words and (e) literal translation of Nepalese proverbs. Rai (2006,39) concludes:

> It is very hard to claim that Nenglish has established itself like Hinglish (Indian English) or Manglish (Malaysian English). There are no enough materials at present to support the claim. But there is no doubt to the fact that a different kind of spoken as well as written English is emerging in Nepal and that could only be Nenglish.

My own study conducted in 2011 in Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal confirms the earlier findings that (a) there is large-scale code-mixing and code-switching between Nepali and English; (b) transliteration of English words into Nepali is a common feature; and (c) standard rules of English are modified in the areas of vocabulary, grammar and writing. A TV program recording during the study (http://www.npvideo.com/Play_It_On_25_June_2011_625) revealed a high percentage of English words mixed into Nepali.

This is in consistent with Sharma's (2006) finding of nearly 50% English mixed in with Nepali:

(1) Announcer of a radio program*: ma aaja popular hero Rajesh Hamalko latest filmko barema interesting kura present gardaichhu ra tapaiharu ko opinion pani request garchu* (30)

Code-switching and code-mixing are found to take place at all levels. Following are several examples:

(2) Husband: *Shopping janalageko. bagharu lyauta*
Wife: *coffee ra biscuit nabirsanuni. Chhoralia euta copy ra pen pani lyaidinui*.

In the aforementioned exchange between husband and wife (2), English words coffee, biscuits, copy and pen are joined by a Nepali conjunction "ra". Similarly, the countable noun copy is modified by a Nepali modifier "euta".

(3) Young adults gossiping:

A: *Jauna marketteera. Snacks khaula and ghumula*
B: *Sorry yaar, maile gift kinera Rameshko birthday partyma januchaa.*
A: *Corner samma jaunata. Timi left lagnu, ma rightteera lagula*.
B: *No thanks. Mero mom ra dadle wait garirakhnubhakochha*
A: *Bye bye tyasobhaye. See you again.* (Sharma 2006, 30)

In (1) and (3), consistent with Rai's (2006) study, we observe Nepali suffixes being used with English words (filmko, marketteera, partyma, rightteera, dadle).

As shown in Figure 1, another important feature that can be found in Nepali variety of English is transliteration. This poem lifted from a blog shows that 9 out of the 24 words are in English whereas those shown in italics in the translation are transliterated.

Figures 2–4 illustrate typical examples of transliteration between English and Nepali. These signboards have been taken from remote parts of Nepal. Given that these signboards are from remote areas, and considering that English is more popular in urban areas, it is likely that urban signboards will have even more English words and transliteration than the ones shown earlier.

Figure 1. Transliteration in social media.

[Translation: A wife is a *mobile set*
A husband is its *simcard*
The relation between them is a *recharge card.*
If they get a son, it's an incoming call
If it's a daughter, that's an outgoing call
If they get none, it's a missed call.]

Figure 2. Transliteration in commercial billboard.

Figure 3. Transliteration in commercial billboard.

Some in Nepalese ELT academia suggest that a local variety of English is in the making:

> The Nepali variety of English, or Nenglish, shows not only remarkable disparity from the native dialects like British, American varieties but also from the Indian English, comically known as Hinglish (as it is influenced immensely by the Hindi language). As a matter of fact,

Figure 4. Transliteration in commercial billboard.

> English spoken in Nepal has considerably changed over the years. It has been observed that the way Nepalis speak English differs from the way other nationals speak, not only in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation but also in structural patterns and tones. (Karn 2006, 75)

There is a disagreement, however, among NE authors about what to call this new variety of English. Rai (2006) and Daniloff-Merrill (2010), for example, call it Nenglish, while Hartford (1996) terms it as Nepali English. Similarly, Neplish (Homes 2007), Nepanlish (Kamali 2010) and Nepalese English (Karn 2012; Karn and Phyak 2010) have also been suggested.

There is considerable opposition to the idea of acknowledging the development of a local variety of English (see, e.g., Duwadi 2006; Kamali 2010; Shrestha 2013).

> Some scholars have been arguing for either Hinglish or Nenglish recently. Their claim is that English being (the) world language allows them to deviate from the standard variety. Doing so I think only brings chaos in our community. (Duwadi 2006, 51)

Similarly, Kamali (2010) reports that despite a favourable attitude towards "Nenglish", the majority of university goers reject the idea of having a local variety of the language and prefer to learn British or American Standard English.

The current discourses, on new Nepali English, though contradictory, are an indication that the Nepalese English language education (ELE) academia is engaged in an interaction on the evolution of New English in Nepal (see also Hartford, 2006). This new English may be in the process of becoming creolised through mixing with Nepali and other local languages. In the process of its evolution, it is naturally nativised or is in the process of nativisation (see Karn 2011, 2012) when the children of the coming generation learn it as their primary language. Figure 5 shows how this developmental process may proceed along the basilect–acrolect continuum.

3.1 Norms and models

The question of normative model for English has not yet become a major issue in the ELT debate. For many, any native English (British, American, Australian or Indian) is fine as long as one has an adequate level of proficiency in it. Prior to the introduction of NESP in 1971, Nepal explicitly followed the classic British English as the norm and model. This was relaxed in post-NESP education but British English remained the preferred model (Shrestha 1983). Some 35 years ago, a leading ELE expert recommended that developing Nepaliness in English be recognised and legitimised:

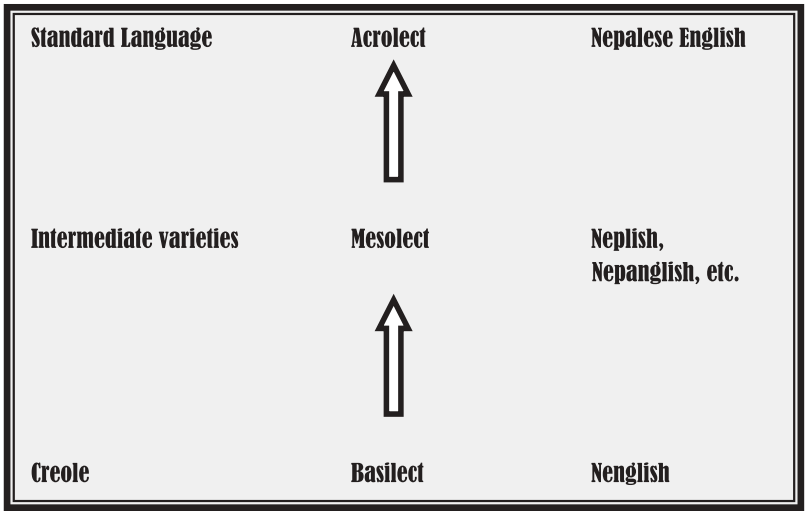

Figure 5. The basilect–acrolect continuum of creole (based on Sharifian 2009).

> I would suggest that the native model be abandoned altogether and be replaced by a more realistic goal of fluency in the ideal Nepali English. The aim should be fluency in the educated Nepali English, the acrolect. This is not setting a new goal, but a legitimisation of what is happening now and will continue to happen in future. (Shrestha 1983, 56)

There is clearly considerable confusion over the extent to which English has established itself as a local language, and consequently, what place it should be accorded in Nepal's educational system (Sharma forthcoming; Giri and Marlina 2014; Karn 2012; Deniloff-Merrill 2010; Kamali 2010; Duwadi 2006). While the role of English as a global language is undeniable, its status in the national education system has yet to be determined. The current debate on language policy, however, has focused on the local ethnic languages, not English. One reason for this is that debating the sensitive and somewhat controversial ELE issue is likely to ignite a whole range of socio-political and educational issues for which some may feel Nepal is not ready, politically speaking.

Despite the policy confusion, the ELT academia collectively agree that today English has been established as a language of power, but more importantly, it has been established as a tool of communication as well as a resource for social mobility, linguistic superiority and educational and economic benefits. English as a language of power and resource manifests its significance in the socio-political, economic and workplace domains.

3.2 The changing face: English in current academic discourses

So what has changed about the situation of English in Nepal since its introduction to the formal education system? Among scholars, there seems to be consensus about the following: Firstly, English has changed from the rulers' language (language of the elite) to everybody's language (Sharma 2006). It is no longer tied to any caste and class or group of people (Sharma forthcoming). Secondly, Englishisation as a process of evolution of English as a local language is taking place at a significant level (Karn 2006). Thirdly, Nepalisation of English as a means of expressing local culture is evident in the works of Nepali writers writing in English, and finally, nativisation or indigenisation of English as

one of the local languages is acknowledged (Karn 2012). The issue of nativisation is often linked with the issue of ownership of English. The Nepali variety of English may not be localised enough for its users to identify themselves with it or to claim ownership. Nonetheless, the concept of ownership seems irrelevant given the role of EIL. English does not belong to us, we belong to English.

To sum up the discussion, the changes may be summarised as follows:

(1) **Change in the attitude:** The attitudinal change among the Nepalese people towards English can be illustrated by the following interview extract. A work-maid in Kathmandu earns barely enough to be able to feed her two children. However, when asked if she would like to send her children to a school that educates children in her own ethnic language (in this case Tharu-Maithili), she replied:

Ma petkatera bhayepani afna chhorachhorilai English schoolma padhauchhu. Afno bhasha ta janekai chhan. Schoolma nayakura po siknuparchta. Hamro bhashako kam panita chhainani. (cited in Giri 2009, 247)

[I would rather skip meals to be able to send my children to an English medium school. They already know their language. The school should to teach new things. Furthermore, there is no use of our language. So, what's the point in learning it?]

(2) **Change in the status of English:** People do not believe that the label of Nepal as an EFL country is relevant any longer. English now serves either as a primary language or as an alternate language in most domains of life.
(3) **Change in the knowledge source:** Knowledge bases and knowledge sources have become multidisciplinary and multiple norm-referenced, replacing priority being given to any particular native speaker model of English.
(4) **Change in the ELE goals:** The target of ELE in the past was to master a native variety of English. This view today has given way to more realistic, locally negotiated goals. Negotiated needs of ELE for students are encouraged.
(5) **From designer methods to negotiated methods:** While communicative language teaching is still in practice, more and more students and teachers work together to negotiate what they need/want to learn and how they want to learn it.

The target for Nepal has to be the ability to shuttle between different varieties of English and different speech communities with a view to serving their different communication and occupational needs. In this sense, the argument over whether to promote the local standards or the inner circle standards becomes irrelevant. One needs the ability to negotiate the varieties in other outer and expanding circle communities (Canagarajah 2006).

3.3 Implications

The implications of the changes taking place in English are as follows: (a) deconstruction and reconstructing of ENL/ESL/EFL trichotomy, (b) recognition of the multiple English language literacies, (c) further inquiry into Nepali English (Nenglish, Neplish) and (d) pedagogic considerations of the changing face of English.

3.3.1 Deconstruction of the ENL/ESL/EFL trichotomy

The trichotomy of ENL/ESL/EFL is irrelevant in the contexts like Nepal. Despite the recent census data reporting the existence of native speakers of English, it is probably

premature to claim that English is a native tongue in Nepal. However, whatever official status is accorded or label attached to English, it is a primary or an alternative language for a growing number of Nepalese people who carry out almost all of their everyday activities – social, educational, occupational and recreational – using English. Similarly, there are millions of Nepalese who use it an alternate or additional language in order to perform their social as well as professional activities.

3.3.2 Recognition of the multiple English language situations

Considering the varying situations and uses of English, Nepal needs to re-assess the roles English plays in the lives of its different groups of people. More importantly, it needs to re-assess its status because the Nepalese users of English are not served well in the existing EFL provisions. Therefore, a new framework for its status, roles, uses and education needs to be constructed which recognises all three types of English literacy situations – English as a primary language, English as an alternative language and English as an additional language. A new approach to its education, based on the need of multiple literacies in English, therefore, should be developed in order to serve the Nepalese population better.

3.3.3 Nepali English and EIL inquiry

Nepali English is an ideal case for EIL inquiry for two reasons. Firstly, all three types of English language situations exist in Nepal each of which shows how people negotiate their identities and their communication with the users of other Englishes in a particular situation. Secondly, one can find traces of most established Englishes brewed and blended locally into a single variety Nepali English. Any Nepalese person's English, therefore, is a blend of a number of Englishes spoken elsewhere. A Nepali professor of English during his talk in 2011 summarised it as follows:

> Take the English I speak, for example. It is what may be termed as Khichdi English. Khichdi is a South Asian dish in which rice, a number of lentils, often some veggies and spices cooked in a way that the ingredients blend together to become one. And I'm not atypical. You may find many rams speaking Khichdi English. The English linguistic hybridity may answer many of the questions of EIL as an international variety of English. (cited in Giri 2011, 15)

3.3.4 Language education policy reconsiderations

As discussed earlier, we need to acknowledge multiple literacies in English. Therefore, awareness and contrastive approaches to proficiency in the language will potentially work better than the existing one-approach-fits-all scheme. The place of English in the Nepalese context is indispensable. Nonetheless, its role in the Nepalese situation is far from clear. It is not clear, for example, how a uniform teaching and learning policy can address the complex population diversity and their diversified English language needs. As people are engaged in different economic activities in different geographic regions, there are surely different needs as regards different levels and types of English proficiency. Therefore, it needs to be ascertained who needs what type and level of English and how this is to be achieved. The current language education policy acknowledges that the place of English in Nepal is unassailable. However, it does not address the fact that different sections of the Nepalese

population require different types/levels of English and, therefore, different teaching packages.

English language education, thus, faces the dilemmas of social equality, social division and its equitable practice. Academics and educational experts agree that ELE has to be based on the reality of the situation, that it must take into account the needs of different sections of populations and that while English is the primary language or "a second language for some in urban areas", it is the third or even fourth language in the rural population. Thus it is imperative that English is treated differently in different parts of the country. This means that there is a need for different literacy targets for different types of population which must be addressed differently. However, fair though it sounds, this creates a social dilemma and policy contradiction as it may seem to deny the same level of opportunity and excess to all. ELT has already been accused of creating a class-based society (Sonntag 2007; Giri 2007; Sharma forthcoming) by setting different targets for different sections of the population. A large-scale research on the multiple English literacy situations, the needs and the resultant education policy is required in order to address the emergent dilemma.

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