

# ELT in Nepal: Exploring the Paradigm Shift

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.9.01.2019.p8597  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.01.2019.p8597>

**Abstract-** This article is an overview of English Language Teaching in Nepal. It tries to explore the situational aspect of teaching and learning language. In the beginning, it has looked into historical aspect under the introductory part. Then it discusses the paradigm shift in teacher education in Nepal. Similarly, major global ELT trends are dealt within it. ELT paradigm shift in Nepal is also discussed. Generally, this article deals with paradigm shift in ELT in Nepal linking with major global ELT trends. Changes in ELT in Nepal such as teaching styles, materials, sources of learning and linking the teaching learning of English with ICT have been revealed in this article. Finally, this article concludes the ELT Paradigm shift in Nepal.

**Index Terms-** English language teaching, paradigm shift, ELT trends

## Introduction

The influence of English language in the education system in Nepal is very great. English language teaching started in Nepal in the Rana regime. When the Ranas came into power, there was initiation of the English language teaching in Nepal (Shrestha, 2008). English was taught to the children of Ranas in Durbar High School then. Frankly speaking, Jung Bahadur Rana started English language in Nepal systematically after returning back from England. In the beginning, it was just limited to Durbar High School. But later on, even the children of commoners in Nepal were allowed to have an access to English education. English was incorporated in the school level as well as college level curriculum. English began to be taught as one of the compulsory subjects upto Bachelor's level. It happened as a result of the realization of the importance of English. It is also studied as an optional subject from Certificate level or +2 level to Master's level.

## Paradigm Shift in Nepal in Teacher Education in Nepal

General teacher training formally started in Nepal in 1951, with the establishment of the College of Education (now the Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University). This was also the beginning of English-language teacher education too, and was mainly for secondary level school teachers. There was no application of technology in the classes. Students had limited sources for reading. For a long time, there was not any use of student centered methods and students had not the access of self-learning strategies for their benevolence. Teachers were not applying the diverse types of materials. If we study and look at the teaching and learning of English language teaching previously existed in Nepal, we do not find the newness and student oriented. Although the government had put the English language in the school syllabuses, there was not availability of

materials and the teachers were not trained and skilled for teaching it earlier. There was not concept of using technology for the effectiveness of teaching and learning English. But the trend has changed. Use of technology has become the integral part of teaching and learning English currently. Regarding this, Bhattarai (2010) has pointed the need of using technology in English language classes. He states that:

Cyber culture is part of our life so technology will create virtual worlds and learning modes are changed abruptly and totally. Teacher education is incomplete without resorting to the use of technology (e.g. radio, mobiles, ICT, etc.). The electronic media has erased the geographical distance and historic time so the modes of teaching and ways of learning are totally different from what they used to be before. An English Language Teacher, like any other should be equipped with this Knowledge.

If we look at the history of English language teaching in Nepal in the respect of government aided schools almost 20 years back, teaching and learning of it used to be from grade 4. But later the trend has got changed, it started to be taught from Nursery level or grade 1. There was no concept of technology-enhanced language learning. There was higher influence of grammar translation in the beginning in Nepal. After that the trend of ELT moved to direct method in it. Then structural language teaching and audio-lingual methods existed. The communicative approach has dominated English language teaching, it has firmly established itself on a worldwide basis and there are good historical reasons for this with purpose of language is communicative competence, and that communicative functions and notions set in situations are an integral aspect of the equation. Language is no longer seen as abstract grammatical rules, but of having applications in social contexts and as such it is not just about 'grammar' but also about functions and notions.

More recently Kumaravadivelu's work (2001) attempts a shift in ELT by identifying limitations associated with CLT methodology and arguing for a focus on particularity, practicality and possibility within a post-method paradigm. This has influenced the English language teaching in Nepal also. The concept of teaching English for specific purposes has got initiation in Nepalese ELT context. Teaching English for academic purposes has also influenced the scenario of ELT in Nepal. The concept of multilingualism is heard. The concept of English as a foreign language is changed as English as an international language. The concept of critical applied linguistics is being started in the pedagogy for dealing with problems emerging in the Nepalese ELT.

Moreover, Jacobs and Farrel (2001) say that some changes come in paradigm shifting of language education. These changes are associated with the shift in the second language education paradigm. The eight changes are learner autonomy, cooperative learning, curricular integration, focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment, and teachers as co-learners. When we talk about paradigm shift in ELT, the following major global trends are better to be connected with it.

### Major Global ELT Trends

In the journey of English language teaching, there are different trends. These trends are changed in the field of teaching and learning English. Different scholars, linguists and researchers have shown different trends and goals of it. Sun (2014) denotes that there are changing perspectives on English teaching and learning, changes in goals of English teaching and learning, changes in approaches to teaching, changes in teaching content, curriculum design, and assessment, expanding the dimension of communicative competence, changing views of an effective English educator, rapid development and integration of information technology in ELT, and changing roles and increasing responsibilities of teachers.

Recently, I have been assigned to deal with major trends in the global ELT field. I think that trends in today's ELT field can be broken down into three major categories: globalization, localization, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The ELT situation in the world is being changed time and again. It depends on needs of learners, goals of language teaching and learning and the pace of time for the consumption of language. For such changes, the following trends are existed in the globe of ELT.

- Changes in perspectives on English language teaching and learning
- Changes in goals of English language teaching and learning
- Changes in teaching approaches
- Changes in teaching content, curriculum design, and assessment
- Expanding the dimension of communicative competence
- Changes in views of an effective English educator
- Early start in learning English
- Rapid development and integration of information technology in ELT
- Changing roles and increasing responsibilities of teachers

Paradigm shift in ELT refers to changes in perspectives on English language teaching and learning. The ELT field is seen dramatic over the last 50 yrs. English is not just the second language anymore of non-native speakers. With this awareness, acronyms for the field have also evolved from ESL (English as a Second Language) to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), TESL to TESOL, Western English to English as an International Language (EIL). Nowadays, more and more research and discussions are focused on the issues of "World Englishes" and ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) rather than simply referring to any English spoken outside of the U.S.,

Canada, the U.K., and Australia as EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

### ELT Paradigm Shift in Nepal

The paradigm shift in second language education has led to many suggested changes in how second language teaching is conducted and conceived. In this section, we consider major changes associated with the shift in ELT. Jacobs and Farrel (2001) state the eight changes in ELT such as learner autonomy, cooperative learning, curricular integration, focus on meaning, diversity, thinking skills, alternative assessment and teachers as co-learners.

Learner autonomy involves learners being aware of their own ways of learning, so as to utilize their strengths and work on their weaknesses (Canagarajah, 1999). Cooperative learning, also known as collaborative language learning, consists of a range of concepts and techniques for enhancing the value of student-student interaction. Curricular integration serves to overcome the phenomenon in which students study one subject in one period, close their textbook and go to another class, open another textbook and study another subject to get opportunities to see the links between subject areas.

Meaningful chunks can be supportive in language learning. In second language, "meaning" should be understood in terms of the meaning of individual words and whole texts, as well as the meaning that particular topics and events have in students' lives (Halliday, & Matthiessen, 1999). Diversity has different meanings. One meaning lies in the fact that different students attach different connotations to the same event or information (Brown, 1994). Another aspect of diversity in second language involves the mix of students we have in our classrooms in terms of backgrounds, e.g., ethnic, religious, social class and first language, sex, achievement levels, learning styles, intelligences and learning strategies.

Today, thinking skills are seen as an essential part of education, because information is easily obtained, so the essential task is now to use that information wisely. Likewise, new assessment instruments are being developed to compliment or replace traditional instruments that use multiple choice, true-false and fill-in-the-blank items (Goodman, Goodman, & Hood, 1989). They are often more time-consuming and costly, as well as less reliable in terms of consistency of scoring. The concept of teachers as co-learners involves teachers learning along with students. Teachers learn more about their subject areas as they teach, as well as learning about how to teach (Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Freeman & Richards, 1996).

ELT in Nepal cannot be different from the paradigm shift which has appeared in the field of language teaching. It is associated with the major trends of English language teaching. Gradually, many changes have influenced the teaching and learning of ELT in Nepal. The textbooks, teaching styles of teachers, learning ways of learners, teaching learning materials and other related sources have tremendously changed. From the perspective of globalization, English as foreign language has transformed as English as an international language (EIL). The learning of language is beyond the wall of classroom. The dependency of learners on teachers has reduced. The concept of multilingual education has been started by the government of

Nepal. There have developed the new concepts of English as EAP, ESP and so forth.

### **Academic Courses**

The academic courses have been leaped from olden type of exercises, materials, methodologies and mechanisms into the functional and communicative ones. If we look at the book of the course 'Our English' of class 9 and 10, for example, drastic changes can be found. The learner sides are focused rather than teachers. Pair work, group work, self- assessment, and so many personal language activities are highly designed in the curriculums. Communicative perspective is truly focused in those books. The main focus of the texts in Nepal is on purpose, content, instruction and assessment. Earlier the texts by native speakers were included in the textbooks in Nepal. Now the trend is changed and many texts from Nepali contexts and texts by Nepali writers have been put in the textbooks in Nepal.

### **The Use of ICT and Technology**

In Nepal, ELT is also being dealt with ICT programs and their uses for language learning. English language is used to breathe and get depth of content by staggering from Google, wikis, blogs and textbooks. There is the concept of creating open source type classroom in which everyone can contribute and the focus on computer assisted learning for enhancing English language learning. In the 21st century, the goals of ELT have changed from focusing solely on developing language skills and mimicking native English speakers to fostering a sense of social responsibility of students. Students should be treated as language users.

ELT cannot be considered successful when students do not know about global issues or care about societal problems, or worse yet, in the future use the language skills they have learned for such destructive activities as participating in global crime networks or damaging the environment (Brown, 2007). In Nepal, the government has focused e-learning centres in different parts to emphasize English language learning and is planning to implement ICT education throughout the country. Cell phone and e-mail systems are used in some of the academic institutions in Nepal for assigning homework and checking with feedback. Teaching English is not simply to prepare students to imitate native English speakers as language learners but to produce fully competent language users, critical thinkers, and constructive social change agents as Crystal (2004), & Brown (2007) noted.

### **Focus on Principled Eclecticism**

ELT in Nepal has to be related to shared workspace, content creation and collaborative learning. Now, ELT discussions are more focused on eclectic approaches rather than on a single method or approach. Larsen-Freeman (2000) has used the term principled eclecticism to describe a coherent and pluralistic approach to language teaching and learning. Likewise, there is need of this method in Nepal for selling our future products in the world market of employment. The main characteristics of principled eclecticism (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) which we also can put in the scenario of English language learning in Nepal are to maximize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiated interaction, encourage learner autonomy, increase language awareness, activate self-discovery to utilize

learning and communication strategies, contextualize language input, integrate language skills, ensure social relevance and raise cultural consciousness.

### **Changes in Teaching Content, Curriculum Design, and Assessment**

**Today**, the use of L1, as well as the use of a variety of accents in listening activities and assessments, is encouraged in teaching and learning. Currently, ELT classroom is interdisciplinary. The hot topics nowadays are CBLI, CLIL, ESP and EAP that we need in Nepal's curriculum. With such changes, now more and more programs require English teachers to use cross-curricular, cross-disciplinary content in teaching. Curriculum designs are more content-based and theme-based with emphases on both language and content knowledge. The learning outcomes or learning standards are much broader and includes not only language skills, but critical thinking, learning strategies and related content knowledge and skills in the real world. Today, standards, accountability, and assessment have become a major focus of the educational reforms in ELT in Nepal.

### **Changes in Views of an Effective English Educator in Nepal**

An English teacher has many roles in terms of teaching English in our country. Rather than just focusing on theoretical part, we need to make teaching learning of English effective and goal oriented. The teacher should focus on effectiveness of learning English. Students have to be oriented towards successful and fruitful learning of English. The content does not have to be imposed as stuff, but as learning tool. The teaching should be effective English educator for the betterment of learners' needs and intentions.

### **Changing Roles and Increasing Responsibilities of Teacher**

The responsibility of English teacher is to be supportive in the ELT classes. The trained and skilled teachers play significant roles to encourage learners for learning the language, but not about it. Activeness and participatory habit of the teacher can arouse learning situation and environment. In the globalized world, most of the communication is done in English, as the medium of teaching. As everyone knows that it is comprehensive or World Wide Language, where the present world is forging ahead by connecting itself to others for carrying out their harmonious relationships. To acquire good communication skills or to excel in communication skills, one has to acquire expertise in all the four skills such as listening, verbal communication, interpretation and inscription skills a student has to develop interest towards the subject or language before acquiring it. In this regard, the teacher plays various roles, for example learner, facilitator, assessor, manager and evaluator in attracting the student's attention by creating interest among the students.

### **Communicative Language Teacher**

Communicative language teaching (CLT), or the communicative approach, is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study (Savignon, 2000). Language learners in environments utilizing CLT techniques, learn and practice the target language through the interaction with one another and the

instructor, the study of "authentic texts" (those written in the target language for purposes other than language learning), and through the use of the language both in class and outside of class. In our ELT classes learners converse about personal experiences with partners, and instructors teach topics outside of the realm of traditional grammar, in order to promote language skills in all types of situations.

In 1966, Dell Hymes developed the concept of communicative competence. Communicative competence redefined what it meant to "know" a language; in addition to speakers having mastery over the structural elements of language, they must also be able to use those structural elements appropriately in a variety of speech domains. This method also claims to encourage learners to incorporate their personal experiences into their language learning environment by focusing on the learning experience in addition to the learning of the target language. For the implementation of this method, the English teachers in Nepal have to apply the materials with the concept of CLT and be aware about the application of participatory approach.

### Conclusion

Although Nepal has a long history of teaching English language, there was no concept teaching English communicatively earlier. There was hegemony of GT method and traditional teaching materials and resources. Day by day new methodologies are being developed and new trends of teaching English have come into existence. With the pace of time, ELT in Nepal has to run for the ease of language learning for learners. ELT has to be up to date, and it has to maintain the needs of the learners. ELT in Nepal is trying to meet the learning goals of learners contemporarily. English language teaching is being accessed with technology enhanced language learning. ELT in Nepal has influence of paradigm shift emerged worldwide. The curriculum, teaching styles, learning styles, materials and sources are in the process of paradigm shift. The shift of ELT in Nepal has moved from grammar translation method to communicative language teaching along with the new concept of computer assisted teaching and ICT usage in the classroom.

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