LANGUAGE PLANING POLICY AND PROBLEM

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(The present article discusses the linguistic scenario of the country. In the present fast changing age of globalization, and technology, English Language promises as the future based alternative to choose. Nepal now cannot afford to be indifferent to equity,inclusion, and social justice. The academicians need to duly acknowledge the need of English for National harmony and development).

Nepal is a country of geographical, cultural, and Linguistic diversity. The 2011 census has identified 123 languages spoken as mother tongue in Nepal. Besides, a number of languages have been reported as unknown languages because of the lack of adequate knowledge and research. Such multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual settings confer Nepal a peculiar position on the linguistic map of the world. Most of the languages are not codified in Nepal. Therefore, there are only for day-to-day communication in spoken form.

Schiffman(1996) observes that South Asia has a rich linguistic tradition. Likewise, Forguson (1996b: 86) notes that “every South Asia Country is multilingual in the sense that two or more languages are in regular use on the national scene of government, politics, education and the military”. According to Ferguson, in most urban centers and at the boundaries of language areas, large numbers of individuals are actively multilingual. In Ferguson’s view, many millions of South Asians daily make use of three or more languages, and in South Asia, there is widespread acceptance of the naturalness of multilingualism. He further adds that owing to the influence of Britain and America, the English Language is part of multilingual repertoire in South Asia. Nonetheless, there are large areas, especially rural ones that are predominantly monolingual. Particularly in Nepal, because of hills and mountains, many minority pocket areas, which are isolated and are cut off from the rest of the country, are monolingual (see CBS 2011). Nepal has a long-standing tradition of linguistic, culture and has placed a great deal of emphasis on the transmission of culture through language (see Schiffman, 1996; Ferguson, 1996b).

It is important to note that the shaping of languages in Nepal attributes to covert policies embedded in the Nepalese linguistic culture. Sanskrit as a classical language and a language of religious stricture has contributed to the construct of language policies in Nepal. Many students in Nepal still learn Sanskrit, codified in ***Panini’s*** (introduced the grammar of Sanskrit) grammar in perhaps 500 BC (see Schiffman, 1996). Students memorize ***Sutras*** by rote learning methods that have been in practice for generations (see 6.1: Local Cosmologies). This is an example of an unbroken linguistic and cultural tradition that still influences people’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors in South Asian including Nepal (see Sanda brahma [eternity of word],2003). The Nepalese linguistic culture recognizes that the spoken words have mystic power to invoke the intervention of the gods. People in Nepal hold the view that the power of the spoken word is irrevocable.The Sanskrit language has been in use for religion and scholastic reasons. Almost all the rituals and ***vedic***rites are performed in Sanskrit. Sanskrit has retained the spiritual value that has been inherited by it for centuries. Thus, there is a clear distinction between the roles of Nepali and Sanskrit. The former serves the purpose of meeting everyday operational needs of people for wider communication at the societal and national levels, whereas, the latter has to do with meeting people’s religious and scholastic needs. Nonetheless, Sanskrit does not have a body of native speakers (see CBS, 2002).

Nepal has four language families: Indo European, Sino-Burma /Tibeto-Burman, Agney and Drabid. It is believed that the Tibeto-Burman languages filtered through the south and the west of the country. Agney and Dravid include language such as Sator/Santhal and Jhagad/Dhagad respectively (see NLPRC, 1993). Since the Gorkha conquest of the Kathmandu valley in 1767, Nepali has maintained the status of the official language in the country (see The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990). Nepali has also succeeded in establishing itself as a link language, and as a language of mass communication (in state and public media) in the country. Yet, there are regional varieties and local dialects in use in Nepali.

It is also important to note that most elite population in the country tends to use English, which may give them an added advantage. By using English, they can gain high social status and can compete in the economic market. Also, the status of English has been high, owing to the fact that Nepal gives high priority to the tourist trade and it needs to meet the demands of development in the country. It has been a means to gain power and retain it. In the local context, in most cases we can see that those who know English are employers (boss) and those who know other languages (even including Nepali) are employees (bossed). The increased use of English has widened the gulf between the boss and the bossed, making the rich-richer and poor-poorer (see Acharaya,2002[Awasthi, Lava Deo,2004]).English has an important role to play in the Nepalese society. As an international language, it is widely in use in education and commerce (see Acharya, 2002). English has been employed in the school curricula as one of the united Nation’ languages (CDC,1972). Yet, English is used more for its symbolic reasons. The British Empire in India has left a colonial legacy of English in the South Asia sub-continent.English Language has been used for different purposes such as medium of communication, sharing knowledge and acquiring knowledge. It is used in business, academic conferences, reports, literature, technology, etc... English Language is supremely valuable for its academic perspective. According to Interim Constitution of Nepal, Nepali is only the official language (article 5, Point 1.). According to article 5, Point 3, all languages are accepted as official languages at the regional level. (Nepal Interim Constitution, 2007).We are living in the world of globalization where English language has been recognized asthe international language. It is most widely used and very important language mainly because it bridges people of the world together. It generally provides a very useful means of communication across the areas of dialect diver. It is an international language in which most of the books, newspapers, journals, reports etc., are published. Likewise, it is used in business, academic conferences, reports, literature, and technology on the global level. Regarding the scope of English, Crystal (1988) says, “English is the mother tongue of more than 300 million people in the world, about 3000 million people use it as a second language and around 200 million speak English as a foreign language in the universe”. Importance of English language is due to its international use. It is a fact that a vast knowledge of the universe has been recorded in this language. In this modern age when electronic media has widely spread all over the world, it is imperative to have the knowledge of this language because it is the medium of communication and a person lacking the knowledge of this language cannot get awareness of the universal knowledge.

National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission (NLPRC 1993), suggests three types of schools at the primary level: (a) Mother Tongue Medium Primary School (b) Bilingual Primary School, and (c) National Language (Nepali) Primary School. The commission recommends opening MTMprimary schools’ in areas where almost all children speak same language other than Nepali. Also, the commission recommends that if there are three or more than three languages in a primary school, the medium of Instruction should be Nepali. In densely populated local language areas in schools with classes 1to 3, there should be teachers who speak local language(s). Where Mother Tongue is the Medium of Instruction, Nepali should be taught as an optional subject in the school from classes two or three. The NLPRC puts languages into three categories on the basis of their written traditions and suggests that Mother Tongue Medium education should follow these. The MTM education can be introduced immediately in these languages (the first category), which have written traditions. Next, the MTM education should be introduced for the languages, which are developing their writing systems (the second category). Instructional materials should be developed in these languages. For the third category languages, without written traditions, the commission suggests to conduct studies for their standardization. Then materials need to be developed for their use in school. The NLPRC also emphasizes the need for teaching Nepali as the second language in the MTM schools.

However the commission does not give encouragement for the use of Mother Tongues at local levels. It fails to provide a model for bi/multilingual education in the country. It doesn’t consider teacher preparation policies, nor does it look at local levels plans for implementing Mother Tongue Medium education.

Keeping in view the forgoing arguments, facts and statements related to the linguistic scenario of Nepal, it is high time for the academicians to provide the foresight and vision on the future language planning and policies of the country. It is also very important to note that the whole energy of the country at present is geared to the election and formation of constitutions assembly that will also be faced with resolving the linguistic debates and conflicts of the country with the very neat and clean language policy.

The public opinion is that there is need of multilingual classes for cognitive development of the students. Where the Medium of Instruction should be broaden according to the global demand.As English Language has its deeper impact all over the world and Nepal gives high priority to the tourism for the economic development.So that, all the citizens should have the good understanding in English Language.MLE is seen as a “two-way” bridge, such that learners gain the ability to move back and forth between their mother tongue and other tongue(s) rather than simply a transitional literacy program where reading through the mother tongue is abandoned at some stage in the education. We should maintain English language rather than Nepali as the language for academic growth and excellences, medium of instructions in the schools, colleges, and universities as well as language to be used as medium of writing in the Competitive Examinations inside and outside the country. We cannot blink to the realities of the globalization and inclusiveness. The CBS reports stand witness to the fact that 90% of the high-officials of Nepal belong to the Nepali language speakers as their mother tongue. This has seriously damaged and threatened the growth and development of non-Nepali speakers’ communities.

In this context Keeping this bitter reality in view, English Language, if used as the only language to be used in the public service commission Examination, will provide equal footing to all the people irrespective of their mother tongues. Only when the multilingual society of Nepal is provided with equity, can the social justice be fulfilled in the changing future scenario of the country.

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