

English Language Learners: Just Job Seekers or Leaders?

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Abstract

People call English a crazy language but research studies have found people are crazy for English language all over the world. Many people speak English and it has been working as a lingua franca in every function in the world where people of different countries/language backgrounds are met. Sometimes people are found roaming for jobs in the market after completion of Master's in English Language Teaching form recognized universities. They are found quite frustrated. In such cases they are to be envisioned with some good opportunities and made optimistic, courageous and risk takers. Some people can have good qualification, skills and desires but they might not have got opportunities. They might have been lacking behind because of the lack of access to information, encouragement and guidance. For them, this article can become a direction, hope of ray, trail for destination and oasis for optimism. English Language Learners can become good entrepreneurs, leaders, counselors, mentors, motivators, administrators and so on. But, not just a job seekers and passive employees in 21st century.

Key Words: Leader, Entrepreneurs, Prestige, Employee, Employer etc.

A type of craze in English language learning is growing every second in the world. The countries which were immensely emphasizing on their own original languages neglecting English in their countries are also running after English language these days. For the purpose of trade and business, education and health, language and communication, science and technology, literature and culture, sharing, caring and romance also English language is openly used where it has been enjoying dominating role in the world. Johnson (2009) writes "It is everywhere. Some 380 million people speak English as their first language...a billion learning it and it is predicted,

half the world will be more or less proficient in it by 2050. It is the language of globalization- of international business, politics and diplomacy” (p. 131).

English has become breathe in business, heart in organizations and mind in management. The people, if they are competent in English with right qualification, they have always the reserved opportunities in the job markets. English in business, English in media, English in discussion and English in decision making has made it more prominent in using it regularly. These days, using or speaking English in a mass or conference (in the middle of other people/language speakers) also adds a type of impression in a person’s personality. On other words, this language represents the source of power in non-native and developing countries (Altbach, 2012). In Nepali TV shows, Hindi TV shows, film awards, most of the anchors use English in the middle of Nepali and Hindi languages. It has also made them well-known program conductor/hosts in the mass. Therefore also, people are more attracted towards English these days in comparison to their own original languages.

Several types of vacancies are seen into the markets (news papers) where we find ‘English is mandatory’. Similarly, different NGOs, INGOs call for employees who are excellent in English. In the world of publication, almost seventy percent of the books are published in English. If we write any article/book in our own language, we get very less readers but if we publish the same article in English then it gets more readers, more credit, more money and more reorganization as well. So, these days not only job hunters and readers, but also the writers are attracted towards English language for new publications. Craze of English is getting high even in the countries where native languages are given more priorities. “People’s mania for English learning has wasted education resources and threatened the study of Chinese” Shuhua, the Dean of Information and Intelligence at the Chinese Academy of Social Science (2013), says.

Altbach (2012) writes, it is estimated that in India, about half of the book titles are published in English, while only 2 percent of the population is literate in English and English is the matter of prestige and power. It clearly shows that those who have good English language they can be adjusted everywhere in the world and they also can go a head of others but those who are lacking on it they remain back in this competitive world. Therefore, here I would like to focus on English for those who want to go a head of all and deserve leadership role among all.

English for School Leaders:

English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music, and advertising (Pun, n. d.). These days English language has become a complimentary language for school leaders. English language and school leaders are completely related to each others. In a sense, those who are leaders in schools in urban areas they become incomplete without a good knowledge of English language for that position. People understand a same thing in different ways if that is presented in different languages. For

example, in Nepal, if one says one thing in Nepali, people do not pay enough attention but if it is said in English they take it seriously considering it as important information. English articles, research papers, professors, speakers and readers are given more authentication than Nepali counterparts (Pun, n.d.).

One day a head teacher of a school came to me and said to translate some statements from Nepali to English. I did it accordingly and asked the reason. That day he said he wanted to show his teachers that he also could speak and write well in English. ‘What happens if he delivers it into Nepali?’ I wanted to know. Then he said, as a principal (Head Teacher) one needs to be good in English. If a head teacher is not good in English then the assistant teachers disrespect him/her. Especially in private schools of Kathmandu Valley head teachers should be well competent in English language otherwise the head teacher can’t deserve/reserve his/her status in the institution.

These statements of the head teacher raised a type of curiosity into my mind. A type of paradigm that was built into my mind was smashed immediately so I wanted to conduct a small research study on this point designing the following research questions:

- A. What is the condition of head teachers/principals in English language in the secondary/higher secondary level schools in Kathmandu valley?
- B. What do head teachers, teachers and students feel regarding English language proficiency of head teachers?
- C. What is the future of English language in the non-native countries like Nepal?

For the purpose of this study, I used hundred schools including both private and public schools of Kathmandu valley, the capital of Nepal. The number of public schools was just nominal i.e. two schools from each district (Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur). All together there were just six schools. For the purpose of data collection, I used quantitative type of tools like questionnaire at first then qualitative tools like; interview, focus group discussion and observation. 20 head teachers; seventeen from private schools and 3 from public schools (four groups), 50 school teachers (in five groups) and 100 students of grade ten (in ten groups) were used for focus group discussion under qualitative part.

Out of one hundred schools, 50 were from Kathmandu, 25 were from Bhaktapur and remaining 25 were from Patan district. Among these hundred principals, 53 were from English major in university degree, 23 were from science, 9 from mathematic, 5 from psychology, 4 from law, 2 from Nepali, 2 from sociology, 1 from Rural Development and 1 from journalism. One interesting thing was found in the data that in almost all the secondary schools the teachers had have master’s degree in their subjects but 27 principals (2 from public and 25 in private) had only Bachelor degree. The bachelor level principals were leading the master’s degree holder teachers through coordinators and in-charges, even though the coordinators were also the master degree holders. These less qualified principals (beside public schools) were the

promoters/investors of the schools so they were ruling upon all through in-charges. No one was there to raise any voice against their qualification and skills even if the teachers were not satisfied with their activities.

For the purpose of monitoring, mentoring and evaluation, the principals use the coordinators so instead of using intuition in decision making the principals listen just the information provided from the coordinators. In such cases, the teachers were found more loyal to the coordinators than the principals. Teachers had an understanding that if they satisfy coordinators through words, works and festive manners then their job is safe and their promotion is granted if any opportunity has come. I found such institutions were going on their own in snail pace. And some of them were just in the miserable condition. Such institutions could have reached to the ground level any time if the principal takes action against the coordinators. Here the principals' leadership skills were in minus.

Regarding the English language proficiency of principals in the schools, 90 percent of head teachers, 86 percent of teachers and 97 percent of students ticked in favour of English language. "Especially the head teachers of private schools must have English accent to impress and influence the teachers, students and guardians. In case of Nepal, private schools means English medium schools so the head teachers should have a good knowledge of English", the teachers said in a mass. "The schools' condition, environment, and rules and regulations can be reflected through the personality of the head teacher. His/her dress code, language accent, communication skills, attitude etc are the part of his/her personality", majority of the students argued. "English language exactly is not compulsory for head teachers to lead the institutions but in the countries like Nepal, English language is taken very differently from other languages. People give more priority for English. We have a trend to listen and believe English people and English books then other sources. Therefore, also a head teacher must have English language proficiency. It doesn't mean that they should have English as a major subject in university level", some other teachers added in the discussion.

Very less head teachers (principals) i.e. 10 percent, teachers (14 percent) and students (3 percent) argued that to be a principal it is not necessary to have an English accent. A principal is a leader. A leader leads with his/her leadership skills not by his/her language. Language is a means of communication. So a means of communication can be a signal as well. If a person is good in leadership skills and speaks in Nepali or Newari language, he/she can be a good leader in to the institution, they said. "Language and skills are not the same things so one should not over emphasized on English in the name of language skill. Accepting only English as a leading language is nothing but just a colonized thought or a slaved argument" some teachers spoke in an argumentative voice recommending me to code these statements into the analysis and discussion parts.

As a researcher, I must present she reality appeared in to the data so here I ought to declare that most of the people (head teachers, teachers and students) like to have a principal /leader with

good English language accent even if he/she doesn't have English major in university degree. Majority of the population wanted to see their principal speaking well in English in to the institutions.

While talking about the future of English language in the non-native countries like Nepal, there was no doubt to anyone about a good future of English. Every organization, NGOs/INGOs, markets and offices are looking for a dynamic manpower with excellent English in speaking and writing. They need to deal with national and international agencies so there is needed a bilingual or multilingual person to understand and reply (communication/dealing). So, an individual must be not only good he/she must be excellent in English in present and future scenario. "In the past good people used to be accepted but now excellent people are necessary", some teachers said in a discussion. "Therefore the private schools are growing day by day focusing on English medium teaching and learning and challenging the government" – a teacher added with a grin criticizing the government.

"Because of progressive nature of business, communication, technology and culture also, the need of English language is growing day by day. In the countries like Nepal, where life is very critical and jobs after good qualification are rare, there the future of excellent English is always bright"- a head teacher spoke with strong voice which others in FGD supported with silent smile. "After all, Nepal is developing labors for other countries for that also they need to know English at least to communicate"- another head teacher added and created satirical humour into the discussion.

These all the statements along with other supporting details make it clear that the future of English is not bad but growing smoothly in the countries like Nepal. It has many positive aspects if it is taken seriously and developed accurately and fluently with good qualification.

English Language Learners as Leaders:

The above given quantitative data have also made it clear that more than 50 percent of the private academic institutions are led by English language learners at present. More than 90 percent of informants accepted that the academic institutions should be led by the principals who are well competent in English. Perhaps because of its high vocabulary, varieties of dialects, register and stylistics, English has been occupying its broad market in the present world. It has been working as a lingua franca among the two non-native speakers of two different languages.

The institutional leaders need to prepare reports, conduct seminars, workshops and trainings, participate in different agencies' meetings and discussions, evaluate varieties of programs and launch them into their organizations, mentor and council for working staffs, monitor and evaluate the performance reports, and take part in performance appraisal so, for these all, the institutional leaders need to have English language competency in the schools. These days, most of the reports are also prepared in English. Similarly the high level organizations conduct

programs in English and they do invite international personalities to evaluate the programs and performance, for them also, English is mandatory otherwise they do not understand the reality.

In today's competitive world, every investor wants to make their companies the multinational companies. Even the government agencies need to have regular interaction to the international co-organizations so that their new information, technologies and working styles can be introduced into their own offices. For these purposes also a good leader with excellent English is necessary. A good leader not only does but also motivates and leads others to do well into the organization as Abbas and Asgar (2010) write, "The role of the leadership is a key while addressing the issues of organizational change and effective leader can bring effective change for an organization" (p.1). In this sense, the leader is a change agent who can take initiative and bring change in organization.

Day by day new articles, research papers, management captions, and technologies are developing into this growing market. These things are to read, apply and instruct to the followers successfully. For this also a good leader with English language competency is necessary into the organizations.

Gradually the horizon of English is expanding day by day. Well managed English is necessary in curriculum designing, text book writing, proposal and research report writing and report writing. Raw data can be collected from every people but they should be filtered, tabulated, analyzed and discussed in systematic order for which a good and competent person is necessary. Here if this person knows English language well then it would become *Sunma sugandha* (Icing on the cake).

Therefore here we see many good areas with superb opportunities for English or English language learners in the countries like Nepal. In the markets, we found that the English Language learners (ELL) are just running after simple and small jobs. They are just thinking that they could do the things that others also do but they rarely think that they could do which others could not do easily. For example leadership skill is one in many.

ELLS have power, style, knowledge and understanding of English which is a required need for a leader in 21st century. So they can be good leaders, they can be good motivators, they can be good operators or they also could become good change agents into the society as well.

Thus in the conclusion I argue that a good ELL should not be worried about his/her career as an employee (job seeker) because he/she could become an entrepreneur, creator, organizer, motivator, leader, and an employer in the market. It is the market of English speakers and dedicated and committed leaders in 21st century.

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