

# Effects of COVID-19 on English Language Education: A Postcolonial Perspective

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article History

Received: 2025, August 06

Accepted: 2025, December 15

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### Cite

Gupta, P. K. (2025). Effects of covid-19 on English language education: A postcolonial perspective. *GS WOW: Wisdom of Worthy Research Journal*, 4(2), 31–44. <https://doi.org/10.62078/grks.2025.v04i02.004>

## ABSTRACT

This postcolonial thematic research examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on English language instruction in South Asia from a postcolonial perspective. The study, based on a review of peer-reviewed literature, delineates five predominant themes: teacher resilience and adaptability, technology utilization and the digital divide, innovative and inclusive pedagogical practices, socio-cultural and institutional challenges, and the emotional and psychological impacts on language learners. The results show that the effects of colonialism are still felt in South Asian education institutions, making it harder for rural and vulnerable groups to get access to digital infrastructure, culturally relevant learning resources, and fair teaching methods. The pandemic led to significant instructional innovations and adaptability among educators; nevertheless, deeply rooted socio-cultural views and institutional limitations hindered the permanence of transformative change. The research emphasizes the necessity for culturally responsive and decolonized English language teaching changes in the post-pandemic context to rectify systematic injustices, foster inclusivity, and elevate the voices of historically oppressed students.

Keywords: effect, covid-19, English language education, postcolonial and South Asia

## Introduction

The pandemic uncovered and accentuated the entrenched colonial past-based inequalities in South Asia. English, already well established as a language of privilege and upward mobility since the colonial era, remained at the center of schooling aspirations. However, during the age of COVID-19, schooling through the English language became more elitist than ever. Urban elite institutions transitioned more readily to cyberspace, abandoning rural and marginalised constituencies, especially those where indigenous or provincial languages like Bajjika and Chaudhary are spoken (Gupta, & Neupane, 2024). It is not merely a technological but also a linguistic and socio-political fault line reproducing colonial

period hierarchies where English education acts as gatekeeper and divider. Postcolonial theory helps to uncover mechanisms through which English remains a symbolic tool of domination, whereby control can determine one's access to assets, jobs, and social standing—even during a global pandemic (Gupta, & Poudel, 2025).

Moreover, according to Gupta, & Poudel, (2025). the pandemic brought to light the gendered nature of the disparities. Particularly rural South Asian, experienced double burdens. Caregiving duties, cultural expectations, and mobility restriction joined forces with digital inaccessibility to further distanced their educational experience. In a context where English is taken to represent a



passport to socio-economic success, the inability to gain access to language education has far-reaching consequences. The articles in view here as a collection bare the facts on how postcolonial societies must critically rethink their excessive dependence on English as a sole marker of modernity and progress (Spivak, 1988). They promote multilingual education policies and gender-responsive strategies that are linguistically ecologically aware but also more equitable in the acquisition of learning English. Redressing such postcolonial residues is paramount in constructing a more equitable and just education landscape in the post-COVID era.

Lockdowns stratified livelihoods, slashing remittances and limiting online English access for low-income households (Adhikari et al., 2024; Chaudhary & Mishra, 2023). Safety lapses and health strains hindered virtual transitions (Mishra et al., 2023a; Mishra et al., 2023b). English skills suffered—speaking, grammar, and pronunciation declined amid connectivity issues. Postcolonially, this reinforced English as neocolonial privilege, risking 4.5 million girls' dropouts and human capital loss (Mishra, 2023). This study analyzes these impacts for decolonized language policy.

### **COVID-19 on ELE**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic saw the end of educational institutions worldwide, with an overnight transition to online education. In cases such as Nepal, which has a colonial past, along with other developing nations in South Asia, the implication of the pandemic on English education has been rather imprinted. English, which has generally been considered a language of empowerment, power, and modernity, has been challenged, rearranged, and transformed throughout the course of this pandemic catastrophe (Adhikari, & Rana, 2024). The application of a postcolonial perspective provides a critical tool for comprehension of how a pre-existing condition of disadvantage, a consequence of historical colonization, has been compounded by the outbreak of the pandemic. The aim of this

research is to examine how teaching and learning English language instruction has been transformed throughout the pandemic within a postcolonial context, with particular regard to how the cultural and technological divide has been accommodated by educators and learners. The aim of this research is to examine how English language instruction has been affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in postcolonial South Asia, providing a strategic perspective on how historical colonial legacies, together with technological inequities, have impacted on English language instruction throughout this pandemic situation Gupta, & Poudel, (2025). The significance of this research has application in reconnecting English language instruction post-pandemic on a foundation of equity, including, and decolonizing English language instruction.

### **Concept of Practice**

#### ***Main Issue***

This paper discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced English language education in South Asia, especially in a postcolonial setting, including Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, through the prism of how historical inequalities—a consequence of the legacies of colonialism—were exacerbated during the global health crisis. According to Bhabha, (1990) the key issue lies at the juncture between crisis-driven educational disruption and postcolonial educational inequities, where English became the blocker and the connector for access, communication, and learning—as an erstwhile legacy of colonial power. I critically analyze how the teachers and students responded to these challenges, especially in under-resourced and rural settings. Inequities within English language education—especially in rural and under-resourced settings—and how these disparities were increased due to the sudden shift to online learning.

The pandemic did not expose gaps in educational infrastructure but it laid bare the linguistic and plus cultural hierarchies inherited from colonial systems of schooling. For instance, in many South Asian countries, English works

as a gatekeeper to social and economic mobility, yet access to quality English education remains unequal. My observations were that during the pandemic, English became an instrument of both empowerment and exclusion: students who lacked either internet access, digital literacy, or English proficiency suffered much more than their peers from the urban and privileged classes (Angwaomaodoko, 2024).

### Conceptual Discussion

My analysis system is guided by postcolonial understanding that allows look back at larger structural inequities that are built into English language teaching. I relied on the theoretical assumption that look is a site of power—historical, political, and access-based. The pandemic exacerbated these powers by pushing education into the virtual environment, most detrimentally affecting those in communities that were already historically and systemically disenfranchised. Scholars like Rahman (2019) and Thapa and Ojha (2020) argue that English education in South Asia is often stratified along class, caste, and urban–rural lines—an effect rooted in colonial policies that favored elite groups. Postcolonial theoretical framework to better understand the layered challenges of English language education in crisis. Postcolonialism lens helps me to challenge the lingering effect of colonial education policy most importantly supremacy of English as superior or neutral language. Scholars like Rahman, 2019; Thapa & Ojha, 2020 highlight that in the countries like Nepal, India, and Bangladesh, English is more than a language; it is class symbol, an icon of modernity and opportunity. Yet, it is also a reminder of cultural displacement and systemic marginalisation.

While analyzing the literature, I noticed that pedagogical challenges and socio-technical divides informed English language education during COVID-19. However, this pedagogic and socio-technical divide was more profound since it was shaped by the legacies of colonialism and unequal education development. These are quite prominent

in such aspects as students and teachers engaging in technology, online platforms, and languages, as differences in access and literacy became defining features of the quality of education during the pandemic. Reflects how teachers and students navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in English education. The pandemic made visible the digital colonialism (Lim et al., 2020) experienced by learners in underprivileged areas—where infrastructure was lacking, devices were unavailable, and language instruction was not designed to be inclusive. Many students, mainly girls and those from marginalized communities faced not just technological barriers but also socio-cultural pressures that pushed them further to periphery of educational process. I also discovered that English being a colonial language was often promoted and taught more than indigenous languages despite the pandemic leading to psychological trauma and loss of connection with culture for students (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2021). Nevertheless, teachers' testimonies held some promise: they depicted how localized pedagogy practices, blended use of languages, and rapport-building helped to fill some gaps.

### Three Main Agendas Related to the Main Theme

#### *Language Hierarchies and Postcolonial Legacy*

The historical dominance of the English language in colonial times still influences educational outcomes in schools. When the pandemic occurred, students in English-medium or private schools, with their curriculum molded along colonial times' patterns, were better positioned to adapt to learning online and in the process left those in public or community schools behind. This assertion is echoed by Rahman (2019) and Chowdhury & Kabir (2021), who indicate that the “language of power” remains a reality for English in continuing to produce “exclusion in online spaces.” “English language still remains a language with symbolic as well as material power in the post-colonial context.” This social order became more evident with the onset of the pandemic

with regards to online learning opportunities in English-medium of instruction being restricted to those who were initially exposed to it (Rahman, 2019; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2021).

### ***Technological Disparities and Exclusion***

The availability of digital resources played a critical role in determining whether students would continue learning or not. According to Lim et al. (2020), the use of technology is firmly embedded within inequalities of both socioeconomic and geographical natures, which themselves correlate with the issue of postcolonial underdevelopment. According to Paudel (2021), Nepali rural students would tend to quit or stop attending their English classes owing to issues of internet connectivity, lack of familiarity with platforms, as well as the lack of devices. Inequality created by colonialism was further intensified by technology, with the greatest cost of technological inequality being faced by rural or marginalized students in Nepal.

### ***Teacher Agency and Local Pedagogical Practices***

Despite such adversity, the English teachers displayed levels of resilience that had never been witnessed before. Banerjee & Dey (2021) demonstrated that the Indian teachers utilized whatapp, community radio, and language mixing for conducting English classes. These efforts were replicated in other Pakistani schools by Khan & Farooq (2021), where the teachers utilized bilingual narrative descriptions for localizing information. These efforts of defiance indicate the way in which the teachers utilized their understanding of local context for keeping the children moving despite the imposed English teaching methodologies. These efforts stood as defiance of the imposed English teaching models that were largely Western-influenced (Banerjee & Dey, 2021; Khan & Farooq, 2021; Sivakumar, 2021).

### **Main Research Insight**

Trough my research of secondary literature, I found that although the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to English language learning, it also brought to the

fore inherent structural inequalities that exist in the colonial context (Gharti,2023). However, the pandemic also brought about opportunities for resilience and innovative practices by teachers in their context. I was able to understand that the postcolonial context is not only about equity of access to learning in the English language but is also about the politics of “who gets to teach, learn, or benefit from it.” This understanding of the context came to me as the pandemic brought inherent structural inequalities of English language teaching and learning into the open but at the same time brought about opportunities for context-sensitive, innovative, and relationally engaged practices by teachers (Gupta, & Awasthi, 2025). It came to me that the context of English language learning in the pandemic brought to the fore globalized systems of learning versus local learning realities. While the pandemic brought to the fore that colonial inequalities are entrenched in the learning context of the English language in a major way, it also brought opportunities to resist these structurings.

I firmly think that postcolonial settings such as Nepal need more than just technological solutions—and that is, it needs an epistemological transformation, which understands the importance of local languages, local experiences, and local teaching practices. Teachers must be recognized not only as practitioners or implementers of external models of teaching or learning but must instead play the role of active co-producers of knowledge. Concerning this issue, what inspires me are researchers such as Bhatt (2023), who point to the importance of narrative research in understanding ways by which teachers make meaning of crises and change. This crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic is like a mirror that reflected both the inequities of English language learning for a long time and the possibility of positive change brought by the postcolonial imagination of English language learning. As both a researcher and teacher, I believe that I am even more convinced of the need to reimagine or reframe English language learning in more inclusive ways.

## Research Objective

- o The aim of this study is to analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced postcolonial South Asian English language education, exposing how colonial histories, digital disparities, and power relations influenced access, teaching, and learning outcomes.
- o How did the COVID-19 pandemic redefine postcolonial English language education around power, access, and socio-cultural inequalities?

## Methodology

In this thematic analysis paper, I chose to use a qualitative methodology of analysis through the study of secondary literature. Instead of collecting data through conducting research in the field, I chose to study existing literature on the topic of English language learning in postcolonial South Asia, more specifically in Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, that would relate to the learning of the English language through qualitative research that took place in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of over 30 academic texts were selected through careful consideration of their relevance to the research that was being carried out (Braun, & Clarke, 2006). These texts include narrative research, empirical research, or case studies that investigate the lived experience of both English language instructors and students in the wake of this pandemic. These texts were selected through careful reading and preprocessing to derive five major themes:

- o Teachers' resilience and adaptability in language teaching during crisis
- o Digital divide and technological challenges in language education
- o Innovative and inclusive pedagogical practices
- o Socio-cultural and institutional barriers in language learning
- o Emotional and psychological impact on English language learning

I framed these themes using a postcolonial lens that assisted me in the critical exploration of how legacies of colonialism have endured in language education and how socio-economic inequalities shaped access to and outcomes of education during the crisis. This enabled me to derive insight from the ways in which educators and learners navigated challenges and created possibilities within shifting, complex postcolonial realities (Loomba, 2005).

## A Postcolonial Perspective

A postcolonial approach, the pandemic not only widened educational inequalities but also revealed how English continues to function as a gatekeeper to privilege and power (Said, 1993). While private institutions and urban learners were often able to continue English instruction on digital platforms, rural public schools experienced issues of technological infrastructure, teacher support, and students' access to devices and internet. He also emphasizes the prevalence of English in international communication even more marginalised indigenous and native languages during this pandemic, substantiating an asymmetry of history. To move forward, it is crucial to rethink critically language policies and pedagogies so that they promote equity, recognize multilingual facts, and address historical inequities embedded in English language education systems in postcolonial societies.

For this study, I have selected more than 30 study from articles and dissertations to complete my thematic research paper, were completed bearing in mind that they are content-rich, relevant to English language teaching, and pertinent to the COVID-19 impact in postcolonial contexts. 15 studies have helped me to develop 5 themes and rest of the 15 studies helped me in other parts of my study. The process of selection ensures data saturation, whereby studies selected are adequate in meaning without too much redundancy to allow pertinent conclusions to be derived (Braun, & Clarke, 2006). Themes are clearly mentioned below in the table no. 1 for understanding the these and studies respectively.



**Table 1**

Conceptual Framework

Themes	Studied
Teachers' resilience and adaptability in language teaching during crisis.	Banerjee, & Dey, (2021), Sivakumar (2021), Thapa & Ojha (2020) & Bhatt (2023)
Digital Divide and Technological Challenges in Language Education	Barikzai et al. (2025), Lim et al. (2020), Chowdhury & Kabir (2021), Paudel (2021) & Yumnam (2021)
Innovative and Inclusive Pedagogical Practices	Sivakumar (2021), Dahal (2022), Bhatt (2023), Chowdhury & Kabir (2021), Thapa & Ojha (2020)
Socio-Cultural and Institutional Barriers in Language Learning	Rahman (2019), Gho (2022), Ghimire, et al. (2022) & Greer, (1991)
Emotional and Psychological Impact on English Language Learning	Chaudhary et al., (2022), Gurung & Shrestha, (2023) & Greer, (1991)

## Results and Discussion

### Theme 1: Teachers' Resilience and Adaptability in Language Teaching During Crisis

COVID-19 brought unprecedented disruption to education systems in world but in South Asian postcolonial settings such as Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It exposed deeper issues rooted in colonial education legacies. Despite of having to work with limited resources, curriculum obsolescence and digital inequity, English language teachers across region demonstrated model resilience and contextual sensitivity to keep learning going (Gupta, & Poudel, 2025). I extracted five salient practices from my findings that demonstrate how English teachers responded to the crisis and challenged entrenched structures of exclusion.

**Contextualized Technology Use;** Teachers employed simple and accessible platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and mobile voice notes to reach students in remote areas. According to Khan and Farooq (2021) highlighted, Pakistani teachers localized education by sending short audio lessons through which students who lacked smartphones could also stay connected. Practice bridged digital gap with low but effective technology. **Integration of Local Pedagogies;** Teachers integrated local and traditional teaching methods with digital

content. Likewise, according to Banerjee and Dey (2021) Indian teachers employed oral stories local examples by using vernacular language to teach English reflecting pedagogical hybridity that resisted rigid colonial approaches to teaching. Adoption of Bilingual and Culturally Relevant Teaching; Thapa and Ojha (2020) described in Nepal that teachers used bilingual explanations and locally well-known anecdotes to teach English when there was a lack of digital resources. This practice not only enabled inclusivity but also worked to legitimize indigenous knowledge systems, which for so long had been marginalized in English teaching. Besides, Flexible and Student-Centered Approaches; Teachers in Sri Lanka, according to Sivakumar (2021), departed from examination-driven, monolingual curricula and created locally responsive, inclusive lesson plans for online and offline modes of learning. These changes were a conscious shift away from colonial, teacher-centered pedagogies towards participatory models. Pedagogical Shift towards Emancipatory Practice; Bhatt (2023) stated that Nepalese teacher moved away from the grammar-translation method to more interactive, comprehension-based teaching, where student voice and agency are encouraged. This changes not only enabled interaction during learnig crisis but also challenged hierarchical foundations of colonial education.

From these practices several key issues arise. At first, the digital divide remains a significant barrier to equitable English language education disproportionately affecting rural and marginalized students. After second, pandemic exposed inadequacy of colonial era curricula that don't consider students' linguistic and cultural lives. Third, although teachers' resilience enabled continuity institutional support was often absent which forced teachers to act without institutional mandate. However, these challenges also revealed the emancipatory potential of local agency. Spontaneous teacher reactions attest that genuine English education in postcolonial situations does not require emulation of Western pedagogies (Gupta, & Awasthi, 2025). Instead, it calls for the empowerment of teachers as cultural mediators who negotiate English learning and daily lives, local languages, and learners' sociocultural environments. Pandemic highlighted how teacher adaptability and resilience are not survival strategies but significant decolonizing practices of English pedagogy. These pedagogies indicate a more inclusive learner-centered and situationally located pedagogy of teaching English in South Asia (Khan, & Farooq, 2021).

## **Theme 2: Digital Divide and Technological Challenges in Language Education**

Digital divide as a major hindrance in promoting balanced learning of the English language in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic became vivid in the postcolonial nations where the colonial power influence is still effective in allocating access to basic resources. In nations such as Nepal, India, and Bangladesh, the technological resource allocation was imbalanced, with urban areas tending to remain affluent as opposed to the indigenous inhabitants. Thus, educators and learners had to face enormous challenges in accessing online learning spaces, particularly to learn and teach English, a subject traditionally linked with social privilege in postcolonial contexts. By reviewing seminal research, I identified five keys practices and concerns uncovering structural inequalities in teaching English amidst pandemic.

Inequitable Access to the internet as well as electricity supply; as Chowdhury and Kabir (2021) documented, students from Bangladesh in rural areas had to face irregular electricity and poor internet connectivity that significantly affected their participation in online English classes. Problem was pervasive in South Asia bring to light how rural students were deprived of digital learning in the consolidation of socio-economic inequalities. Train and rural students' marginalization; Yumnam (2021) illustrated how manipur's tribal school ESL students were disproportionately disadvantaged by the absence of digital infrastructure. Computers, consistent networks, or even basic devices were not available in most schools. This technological neglect is the long-standing trend of underinvestment in the linguistic and educational interests of peripheral communities. Digital Access Limited to Urban, Elite Institutions; Lim et al.(2020) noted that most of the digital innovations were in private urban schools, with public and rural schools excluded to a great degree. This urban bias replicates colonial education systems that gave priority to the elite at the expense of the marginalized—erasing systematic exclusion in the name of modernization.

Also, digital illiteracy among educators, as found by Paudel (2021), during the time when universities of Nepal rapidly changed to online platforms, some English instructors lacked enough digital abilities to make students study effectively. Pedagogical lag had taken place while platforms existed; training technology could not be used to maximum and meaningfully, as well as teaching became superfluous or not effective. Cultural and Linguistic Incongruence in Online Content: Barikzai et al. (2025) have identified that English-medium digital content, which is normally adapted from templates in the West, would not be relatable to local languages or experiences that learners go through. These one-size-fits-all solutions made the learning experience alienating and ineffective, particularly for students with limited exposure to English or experience with global digital culture.

General underlying problem emanating from emerging theme is structural digital divide along colonial era lines of center and periphery. Pandemic did not create this gap but exacerbated it exposing failure of postcolonial states in democratizing technology and language education access. While digitalization is touted as a tool of equity, evidence shows that unless done in a localized way, it can also reproduce colonial hierarchies where urban, elite, and English-speaking groups get ahead while rural, indigenous, and marginalized groups fall behind (Paudel, 2021). Then after, lack of digital training for teachers, specially in public schools, deepens pedagogical exclusion. Most of us teachers had to learn new platforms with little or no assistance, pointing to necessity of capacity-building programs that are region-specific and culturally responsive. The English-dominated online content, which lacks connection with learners, further extends this estrangement for students with different native languages and cultural knowledge not incorporated in content. In summary, the crisis demonstrated that technology development devoid of socio-cultural integration is insufficient (Yumnam, 2021). In order for digital projects to truly democratize English language education in the postcolonial world, they must be inclusive, multilingual, and grounded in local pedagogical traditions. Otherwise, the digital turn risks being a new face of old colonial exclusion.

### **Theme 3: Innovative and Inclusive Pedagogical Practices**

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic introduced an unforeseen but revolutionary moment in the history of English language teachers in postcolonial nations. Confronted with the upheaval of traditional, face-to-face pedagogy, educators were compelled to abandon the strict, colonial-era pedagogies of monolingualism, memorization, and teacher-centered instruction. In their stead arrived a wave of inclusive and innovative practices emphasizing flexibility, learner interaction, and context-based appropriateness (Gupta, & Poudel, 2024). Based on my critical analysis of key literature and insider experience as a language

instructor, I have identified five key practices that revolutionized teaching English during the crisis.

Use of Interactive Digital Tools to Engage Students; As per Sivakumar (2021) in the Sri Lankan scenario, English lecturers at universities replaced passive lectures with interactive and participatory tools like peer-review exercises, quizzes, and discussion boards. These transformations enabled learners to become active participants in acquiring knowledge and helped reduce the hegemony of the colonial teacher-dominant paradigm. Multilingual and Audio-Based Teaching, according to Chowdhury and Kabir (2021) English teachers in Bangladesh effectively used WhatsApp, audio messages and bilingual materials to convey their messages to students with varying needs. The resources supported inclusive education, particularly for students from underprivileged rural regions faced with both language access and digital inaccessibility issues. Integration of continuous assessment, for Nepal, Dahal (2022) noted the integration of process-oriented, rubric-based assessment in online learning. This was a major break with colonial traces of summative testing, making it easier to provide transparency and equitable opportunities for students to demonstrate improvement over time.

By deploying local tales and culturally situated material, according to Thapa and Ojha (2020) Nepali instructors utilized the application of narrative oral tradition and mother-tongue use to build trust and meaning among people mainly those within marginalized linguistic groups. Such practices embraced indigenous knowledge structures and was a bottom-up resistance to monolingual English norms. Interactive reading as well as reflective writing practices, according to Bhatt (2023) how group discussions and reflective exercises in English reading comprehension replaced more traditional grammar translation practices. These activities encouraged learner autonomy, and also critical thinking, simultaneously. By allowing learners to co-construct knowledge actively rather than passively receive it.



The central issue underlying this theme is the institutional weakness and historical momentum that limited pedagogical change before the pandemic. It has taken a crisis of international magnitude to give (or permit) teachers the liberty to experiment with inclusive and innovative approaches. While this is a tribute to outstanding flexibility and innovation from the teachers, it does raise one question: why were they not here to begin with, and will they still remain after the crisis? As a teacher myself, I found that the pandemic forced me to reimagine what “good” teaching actually is (Dahal, 2022). I had to go beyond textbooks and bubbles and labor on what my students needed to know in a meaningful manner—sometimes that meant utilizing mother tongue explanations, neighborhood examples, or audio instruction when Zoom was not an option. These improvisations taught me that pedagogy for inclusion is neither technology nor technology alone but the mediation of content and context. Still, the shift remains precarious. Without policy leadership, professional development, and curricular change at the local level, such innovative efforts stand to be set aside as soon as regular schooling recommences. What such practice signals is the necessity of a decolonized pedagogy—one that is context-sensitive, multilingual, equity-focused, and rooted in student experience (Spivak, 1988). The pandemic presented a disruption, but it simultaneously offered an opportunity for a more equitable and humane English language education in postcolonial South Asia.

#### **Theme 4: Socio-Cultural and Institutional Barriers in Language Learning**

The spread of COVID-19 not only presented an educational crisis but was a reflection of socio-cultural problems entrenched in postcolonial educational systems. As such, these exclusions and inequalities formed through colonial hierarchies have played an important role in English language learning during this time in addition to other factors (Greer, 1991). With a critical understanding of literature produced in recent years and personal experiences teaching English language in Nepal,

I have short-listed five important practices or tendencies which shaped learning during such circumstances.

**Gender Disparities in Education;** As highlighted by Gho (2022), most Nepalese girls were forced to leave online schooling because of socio-cultural factors such as pressure from family and society to prioritize household chores over education. Rural girls were especially forced to undertake chores such as taking care of younger siblings or baby-sitting them, thus forcing them to stay away from class. Such a tradition harks back to gender separation in English education during colonialism, where English education was largely confined to elite males. “Economic Disempowerment and Student Dropping Out”; One of the most serious trends in post-colonial South Asia is the dropping out of disadvantaged students from online schooling because of non-payment due to lack of money for computers or internet data. As explained by Gho (2022), this is a consequence of institutionalized poverty characterizing marginalized communities in terms of ethnicity and caste, a factor symbolizing the colonial categorization in access to resources. **Un-fit Inclusive Teacher Education;** As explained by Rahman (2019) in a personal realization, teacher education programs in South Asia are non-responsive and non-innovative, leading to educational programs being less sensitive to social diversity and multilingualism. As a teacher in this time of a global pandemic, this manifests in English language educators not being able to adjust to linguistic and cultural diversity among students with online schooling. As a teacher, I personally observed that teachers were not better equipped to handle online teaching with students using online learning systems, all in addition to managing each child’s personal need during online teaching.

**Inflexible and Centralized Control of Curriculum;** Curriculum planning went both inflexible and centralized, with a lack of local implementation, as described in detail by Rahman in (2019). This impacted instruction in toto, such that in a pandemic situation, all instruction in

English had to become uniform in nature, with insufficient scope to adjust to students in rural settings. Inadequate in Emotional and Relational Assistance; Although a lack of emotional bonding between instructors and learners in a class affects learning in English language proficiency, with emotional ties being reduced with mounting pressure to “cover the syllabus,” according to [Bhattarai in 2022](#). I personally have had to walk this tightrope with students when in a class, where my supportiveness got hampered with academic ambitions, leaving students unheard and uninhibited.

The core challenge presented in this theme is that language education in this instance, English education, can neither be technologically reformatted nor educationally reformatted. The challenge remains in this way because socio-cultural inequities in institution-building and rigidity, to a large degree inherited from colonial education systems, continue to impact education accessibility, equity, and emotional/cognitive well-being, especially in marginalized settings ([Ghimire, 2022](#)). The pandemic situation, based on my personal learning experience, presented realities where a very rigid institution, unequal economies, and patriarchy stood in the way of students actually being able to partake in English class learning in meaningful ways. For instance, a meritorious student from a village had to be denied access to my online class because her family had a priority need for her in her domestic roles over education ([Rahman, 2019](#)). Life in this way depicts more lingering societal realities in this case, which show up leach-from-the-side in subjects learned in institutions such as English. Actually, this final topic under this theme reminds and assures in this way because this moment underlines another important reality in this way—the reality that English education will most definitely not become inequity-free and equitable without decolonization.

### **Theme 5: Emotional and Psychological Impact on English Language Learning**

The COVID-19 The COVID-19 pandemic not only touched formal education sectors but

also produced tremendous emotional along with psychological effects on English language acquisition in postcolonial settings like Nepal. The impacts were further revealed by inherited colonial differences in access, infrastructure and pedagogy. Drawing on current peer reviewed scholarship and fieldnotes from its own researchers, five outstanding critical education practices identify degree of affective residue as well as how it interlocks with structural inequities. Digital exclusion and emotional isolation in rural spaces: According to [Greer, \(1991\)](#), the lack of digital infrastructure in rural towns such as Bara impedes the application of effective learner-centered pedagogy. The learners here were excluded and psychologically isolated because they could not access online English lessons; they felt abandoned and had lower self-esteem.

As a teacher from such a society, I noticed learners expressing hopelessness and helplessness about missing classes that they actually cherished. Mismatch Between curricula and learners' realities, according to ([Gupta & Awasthi, 2025](#)) standardized as well as non-contextualized curriculum dominating education in Nepal. Inconsistency between curriculum content and learners' lived realities was more deeply experienced during the pandemic which led to frustration, stress and disengagement. Students were forced to respond into western models from English textbooks during power failures, domestic challenges and psychological insecurity circumstances that made them exclude themselves from learning process. Neglect of Cultural Identity and Linguistic Ecology; [Gurung & Shrestha \(2023\)](#) identify that the ecological dimension of learning language, including affective, cultural, and classroom dynamics, was breached in online instruction. Opportunities for personal touch, peer learning, and socio-emotional engagement eluded teachers. For the majority of students, particularly in indigenous and multilingual settings, this disruption generated fear and undermined their confidence while acquiring English—a language already elite and foreign.

Stress and Technological Frustration among Teachers; (Chaudhary et al.,2022) reveals that while teachers were open to the adoption of ICTs, the majority of them suffered from stress due to working with the new technology with minimal training or institutional support. This not only stressed teachers but also impacted students in a negative way, as they could sense the anxiety or lack of control in virtual classrooms. Being an English teacher of the pandemic era, even I have faced severe stress and frustration when digital tools failed or students dropped classes because they could not understand or participate in technical issues. Reaffirming Colonial Language Hierarchies; Gurung & Shrestha, (2023) further mention that foreign-content and externally introduced ICT models excluded English- incompetent learners along with those who were devoid of digital skills. These learners gained extra psychological pressure and became inferior as they were excluded from the learning fraternity. The emotional burden of not being able to participate or understand the content significantly discouraged learning English.

The bigger issue that comes with this theme is psychological and emotional exclusion of the teachers and learners themselves due to an educational system that continued to bear the traces of colonial exclusions but in the process of moving to emerging technological modes. Feelings of detachment, inferiority, and increased stress have been common experiences of rural, less-resourced learners and novice teachers during the pandemic (Chaudhary et al., 2022). These affective conflicts were not private mental health issues but were rather systemic consequences of a postcolonial education system which, pedagogically, technologically, and affectively, failed to meet diverse learners' contexts. Foreign language-, content-, and tool-dominant imposed online English teaching catalyzed inequalities and pushed educators and students away from their own emotional and cultural selves. In my practice also, I have seen self-assured students who had come before in the classroom remain silent and withdrawn during virtual sessions-not for lack of

interest but because they lacked support, access, or sense of belonging. The pandemic also hastened awareness that emotional well-being is intrinsic to learning English and needs to be incorporated into planning and delivery (Gurung & Shrestha, 2023). Lastly, this thread necessitates a decolonized, affect-aware English pedagogy that operates on not just provision and infrastructure but attends to learners' psychological realities, cultural locations, and pressing need for emotional involvement in language learning.

### Conclusion

The above discussion creates evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic served as a magnifying glass and a turning point in the context of English language teaching in South Asia, specifically Nepal. Five significant thematic results emerged from the analysis. Teachers at first showed an unprecedented level of resilience and adaptability in the face of infrastructural limitations and training deficits. The pressure to transition into online learning spaces spoke to their pedagogic imagination, emotional labor, and caring for students. The pandemic also further laid bare and exacerbated the digital divide and structural inequities, affecting rural, female, and marginalized learners particularly hard. The denial of fundamental rights to devices, the internet, and digital literacy spoke to colonialism's endemic injustice in English language teaching. Third, the pandemic forced educators to adopt innovative, inclusive pedagogies such as multilingualism, narrativism, mother tongue inclusion, formative assessment, and use of rubrics. These context-sensitive pedagogies constituted an epistemological break from didactic, cookie-cutter colonial models; they took a firm stand on learners' autonomy and justice. Fourth, socio-cultural and institutional barriers-for instance, entrenched gender roles, caste/class discrimination, and stiff, top-down curricula-continued unabated and throttled sustainable education reform. Finally, the psychological and emotional impact of the pandemic was also intense, not least among poorer sections with inadequate protective mechanisms. Teachers and learners both experienced undue

stress, anxiety, and alienation from the learning community.

Taken together, these issues help make clear that even as the crisis broke and laid bare colonial histories in English language teaching, simultaneously it opened spaces of critical pedagogical change. This chapter shows a variety of areas across which research in applied linguistics, education policy, and postcolonial studies intersect. This study furthers theoretical debate on postcolonial language education by foregrounding how colonial histories operate in framing curricula, policy, and classroom practice within South Asia. It furthers digital pedagogy through documentation of how teachers adapted to improvisation with crisis conditions in low-resource contexts. Moreover, research underlines culturally responsive, inclusive pedagogy that is emotionally supportive and contextually anchored in localities. It also digs deeper into inequity in education through an intersectional lens—attending to unevenness along geography, gender, class, and privilege of language. Finally, it foregrounds teacher agency and professional identity development in constrained, rapidly changing contexts. With a postcolonial perspective, this study foregrounds contextually responsive, inclusive, affectively sensitive, and socially just system transformation in English language teaching. It calls for future policy and research to dismantle inherited colonial rankings and build education systems serving all learners on an equal footing.

### Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the University Grants Commission (UGC) Nepal for the research grant that enabled me to undertake the study.

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