ABSTRACT

The present study entitled A Linguistic Analysis of Errors Committed by Nepali Learners of English is an attempt made to collect, elicit, describe, analyse and evaluate the errors in English made by the Proficiency Certificate level First Year students of Tribhuvan University, Nepal. This effort is made at the juncture of time when there is a growing concern about the deplorable condition of the English language teaching (ELT) on the one hand and a growing attraction of the people towards it on the other. Despite the fact that Nepal has an experience of teaching English for over a century now, the high failure rates in it both at the School Leaving Certificate and the tertiary level examinations are annoying everyone concerned. Thus, the works of the present nature, it is hoped, can measure the level of proficiency of the university intake in English in order to provide an input to the people concerned for bringing about an improvement in the ELT situation at large.

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the CLT situation in Nepal. A concise sketch of the linguistic situation of Nepal is followed by an introductory note on the kingdom. The position of English in Nepal – whether it is a second or a foreign language is also clarified. The teaching of English in the past and its current situation – at both school and campus levels is discussed taking the curriculums, textbooks, teaching and learning methods, teacher training, etc. into consideration. The discussion is supplemented with a few surveys and research works carried out in the country for the improvement of the ELT situation. Quite a few studies of the present nature carried out in the country are also reviewed. Though the study is not a conclusive one, it has been carried out to detect the types of errors that the Nepali learners of English commit; describe them; find out their possible causes or sources, and evaluate them in terms of their acceptability with a view to giving an input to the people concerned in the ELT enterprise in Nepal for the course of action to be taken in future.
The second chapter presents the theoretical foundation of this study. Two areas of linguistics related to the present study, i.e. contrastive analysis and error analysis are discussed with their strength and weaknesses. A procedure of carrying out error analysis research is also given followed by the review of the studies on error gravity.

The third chapter incorporates the research methodology adopted for obtaining the required data. The study includes the students from hills and plains, of middle class social stratum, first year university students belonging to thirteen different language families. A stratified random sampling procedure is applied to select the population of the study. Apart from the general questionnaire, five different types of test viz. listening, grammar, reading comprehension (cloze), word-formation and word meaning, and writing are used to collect data from the subjects. The errors are identified, tabulated and quantified for analysis.

The fourth chapter deals with an analysis and interpretation of the data. Depending upon the nature of tests, the analysis is presented in five sections. Errors on listening are further treated into two sub-sections, e.g. sound discrimination (vowels and consonants) and comprehension. Similarly, errors on grammar are analysed into three sub-sections viz. errors obtained from multiple choice test, error identification test, and translation test. Errors obtained from the word-formation and word meaning test, reading comprehension (cloze) test, and writing test are treated separately.

The fifth chapter deals with error gravity. A questionnaire containing 60 sentences extracted from the data obtained from the students under study is used to this effect. Fifty native English teachers and the same number of Nepali English teachers have evaluated these sentences in terms of their acceptability or
seriousness of errors in them. These sentences have been analysed into 26 different categories in order to present their combined rank order based on the mean of the rank order and the mean of the mean scores of both the groups of evaluators.

The final chapter presents the summary, findings and pedagogical implications. It is found that the Nepali learners of English commit errors due to both interlingual and intralingual influences. At times, they are also found developmental in nature. It is also found that the native English teachers are more lenient in evaluating learners' errors compared to their non-native counterparts. On the basis of these findings some pedagogical suggestions are presented in the end.