Journal of NELTA

2023

Volume 28 | Issue 1 | December 2023

ISSN 2091-0487

Published by:

NELTA

Journal *of* NELTA

Volume 28 Number: 1 December 2023

Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA)
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Journal of NELTA has been indexed in:
Academicindex.net l Journalseek.net l Linguistlist.org

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- The author(s) failed to disclose a major competing interest or conflict of interest that, in the view of the editor, would have unduly affected interpretations of the work or recommendations by editors and peer reviewers.

Message from the President of NELTA

It is my pleasure to write this presidential message for the *Journal of NELTA* Volume 28. NELTA feels privileged to continue this academic journey through one of the most prestigious double-blind peer-reviewed Journal. Now, the Journal has reached new heights as it has initiated an automation process and is soon to be indexed in the Open Journal System (OJS).

Given its paramount significance in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), the ELT Journal serves as a dynamic platform for the dissemination of cutting-edge research, innovative methodologies, and practical insights. This scholarly Journal plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between theory and practice, providing educators, researchers, and practitioners with a valuable resource to stay abreast of the latest developments in language teaching and learning. Through its diverse range of articles, reviews, and case studies, the Journal of NELTA not only fosters a sense of community among professionals but also cultivates a culture of reflective practice and evidence-based pedagogy, ultimately enhancing the quality of language education worldwide.

This volume comprises 15 diverse articles covering various topics such as teachers' identity, teachers' well-being, second language acquisition, English as a medium of instruction, the transition from physical to virtual teaching modes, and rethinking pedagogy in a post-pandemic situation. On behalf of NELTA, I express gratitude to all the reviewers and editors for their dedicated efforts in bringing this Journal to a publishable form. Similarly, I would like the express our sincere thanks to contributors for submitting their articles. I hope for similar support in the days to come. I believe that this compilation will serve as valuable support for the ELT community both at home and abroad, encouraging them to continue their commendable work.

I am pleased to announce that NELTA is organizing its 28th International Conference on 17-19 February 2024. I look forward to the pleasure of meeting you in person at the NELTA International Conference soon.

Motikala Subba Dewan
President
Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA)

ISSN: 2091-0487

Editorial

The year of 2023 marks significant achievements for the Journal of NELTA. Firstly, we have now gone digital. Journal of NELTA will now manage the editorial processes through the digital platform which includes manuscript submission, editorial responses to authors, peer-reviews, manuscript editing and copyediting and then ecopy of the Journal publishing. This significantly boosts our capability of handling the editorial processes and makes us more visible in the cyberworld. We would like to thank the current NELTA leadership for making this happen. Authors and readers of the Journal should visit journal.nelta.org.np to make submissions and read the current as well as archived issues of the Journal. The Journal of NELTA website is still being improved, however the visitor can usse it for their purpose.

In addition, we have strengthened our editorial board by bringing in new and experienced expertise in the team. We are fortunate to welcome three new members, Asst. Prof. Dr. Siddhartha Dhungana (Kathmandu University, Nepal), Dr. Suman Laudari (Charles Darwin University, Australia) and Asst. Prof. Dr. Bharat Prasad Neupane (Kathmandu University, Nepal) in the team. They bring a wide range of publishing expertise to the Journal of NELTA. With their expertise and experience, the Journal is set to reach new heights.

Finally, this year we have had more quality submissions than the previous years. We have had submissions from Japan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, China, USA and Nepal. After a long and rigorous peer-review process, fifteen manuscripts were selected for this issue.

The article of this issue may be roughly divided into four groups. The first group looks into the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of identity of teachers as well as students. Padmini Shankar examines the relationship between emotional factors and teacher identity construction. Prospective teachers, expecting to become good teachers go through enormous emotional investment to develop pedagogic skills and knowledge to transact learning. Ghazi Hossain also explores the relationship between identity and investment, however, the investment, in his case, is of different kind. Drawing from the theory of identity, he investigates how and why Bangladeshi students belonging to indigenous communities invest in second language learning and how their investment in L2 is linked to their agency. Bharat Prasad Neupane and Laxman Gnawali, taking on the blurred dichotomy of narrative analysis and analysis of narratives, clarifies how teachers' professional identity is subject to varying interpretations that occur during the co-construction of stories, transcribing, translating, restorying, and the consumption of the reports by the readers. Surendra Prasad Bhatt suggests that professional wellbeing, i.e., having positive psychology, positive emotion, respect and achievement in the job, and healthy relations among the institutional members, has constructive influence on their professional development.

Arjun Basnet, on the other hand, explores various processes of identity construction of ESL/EFL students studying in English medium secondary schools in Nepal.

Group two articles investigate ideological stances behind EFL pedagogy. While Tek Raj Bhatta looks into the head teachers' ideologies behind starting EMI in Public schools, Kohinoor Akhtar focuses on the reproduction of resistance and the struggle for achieving the equality dynamics of the female learners to participate in classroom discourses.

Five articles form group three which centre around the application of ICT or digital technology before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Lie et al., for example, discuss some of the major contextual changes, local challenges and future directions of digital pedagogy for language learning, Md Sajjad Hossen's systematic review the related literature explores the Bangladeshi teachers' and students' experiences of COVID-19 online education to understand if online education offers any solutions to the challenges that negatively affect the country's secondary-level English education. His article makes a case for blended learning for English language classrooms suggesting that the dual-mode education can address the issues of space, time, and reach that negatively impact the country's English language education.

Similarly, Haris Chandra Adhikari explores undergraduate students' perceptions of online pedagogy (OP) practiced during COVID-19 pandemic and blended pedagogy (BP)/ blended teaching and learning (BTL) currently in practice in the post-pandemic times. His study reveals that both OP and BP/ BTL, despite many transitions, function(ed) only as makeshift pedagogies in the local context, which is not how they are taken in their mainstream uses.

Dammar Singh Saud investigates teacher educators' perspectives and experiences of using ICT in English language teaching in a remote district of Nepal. His study reveals that the application of ICT enhances teaching and learning experiences, fosters student engagement, improves access to learning resources, and establishes dynamic and interactive learning environments. Ranson Paul Lege points out some of the benefits and challenges of using digital and F2F platforms for conducting writing courses. His research process includes stages of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting on the design of each of the learning platforms. He reveals that the digital and F2F platforms both have their positives and negatives.

Group 4 may be termed as a mixed bag as it has at least three different areas of focus in it. Samikshya Bidari and Laxman Gnawali make a valuable trend analysis in the use of Mixed Methods Research (MMR) in English Language Teaching (ELT) research employed by the authors of the Journal of NELTA in the last 15 years. They reveal that the growing trend in applying MMR by the Journal's authors is in adherence to its prevalence in the ELT field at large. Karl Hedberg and Paul Tanner tell us about the creation, implementation, and subsequent development of a Global Leadership course at a national university in Japan whose purpose was to foster leadership and develop relations with other Asian countries using English. Finally, Sharmin Siddique takes on developing a specific language skill – pronunciation. Her article focuses on the strategies English teachers employ to teach the skill and the challenges they face to teach pronunciation at the tertiary level.

We also like to keep our readers up-to-date by providing information about what is happening around the ELT world. For this reason, the Journal has included a number of useful ELT-related

blogs. The readers can benefit just by reading and applying the ideas in their practices or they can get involved in taking part in the conversations therein. With a similar objective, we have included news "From the ELT World," which contains information on regional and international conferences. Many of these organisations have sponsorships for emerging and early-career professionals. Interested NELTA members should contact the organisations directly.

As always, we take this opportunity to thank all the authors for submitting their valuable work and for maintaining patience during the long review process. We thank our reviewers for taking time out of their busy schedules to review the submissions. Their hard work helps us improve the quality of the Journal. We thank Ms. Motikala Subba Dewan, president of NELTA, for her unfailing support.

Happy reading!

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ISSN: 2091-0487

Role of Expectations and Emotions in Pre-service Teacher Identity Construction

Padmini Shankar

Abstract

The construct of Language Teacher Identity has garnered tremendous research interest over the past two decades with teacher affect – the relationship between emotional factors and teacher identity construction – as one of the areas of focus. Pre-service teachers (PSTs) enter the teacher education program (TEP) with expectations of becoming 'good' teachers. These are negotiated and mediated through the practicum experience that entails enormous emotional investment on the part of the PSTs as they experiment with their developing skills and knowledge to transact learning. This paper explores the role of expectations and emotions in the emerging identities of PSTs. It examines: a) PSTs' beliefs about 'good' teachers which translate into expectations, b) teaching events involving pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing the construction of a positive and negative sense of identity as teachers and c) ways in which PSTs negotiate and adjust their emerging identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions. Five PSTs enrolled in a TEP at a Central University in India are the participants of the study. Reflective journals, classroom observation, and oral narratives are used as tools to collect data which is analyzed qualitatively. The findings reveal that PSTs use several coping strategies to combat unpleasant emotions that erode their fragile emerging identities while exercising agency all through to develop positive identities with the help of pleasant emotions.

Keywords: *emotions, language teacher identity, pre-service teachers, imagined identities*

Introduction

Language Teacher Identity has merited research attention in the past decade or two (Varghese et al., 2005; Olsen, 2011; Barkhuzen 2016; Yazan & Lindhal, 2020). De Costa and Norton (2017) discuss three theoretical developments in LTI research: a) the ecological turn, b) teacher socialization and investment, and c) teacher affect Not surprisingly, LTI research has focused, among other things, on the impact of teacher emotions on their identity construction (Yazan & Peercy, 2018; Cheng, 2021; Wang et al., 2021). In fact, teacher efficacy is inextricably linked to the sense of self-worth as teachers' experience. A teacher with a strong and positive professional identity will be self-directed to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for teaching throughout their life. In other words, a teacher's professional identity is always a work in progress; it is dynamic and ongoing.

In the case of pre-service teachers (PSTs), learning to teach during a teaching practicum has often been described as an emotionally charged experience wherein PSTs learn to recognize and accept their inadequacies while also identifying their strengths. They experience a host of positive as well as negative emotions that influence and contribute to their emerging sense of identity as teachers. The construct of language teacher identity thus provides a framework to analyze and theorize the complex ways in which PSTs learn to become teachers.

Language Teacher Identity (LTI)

Within teacher education, the concept of professional identity is regarded as elusive and perplexing. Language teacher identity (LTI) is "hard to articulate, easily misunderstood, and open to interpretation" (Olsen, 2008, p. 4). While no 'unified definition' exists, (Ivanovaa & Skara-Mincane, 2016, p. 530), it can be understood that professional identity is an ongoing process of integration of the 'personal' and the 'professional' sides of becoming and being a teacher (Beijaard et al., 2004). Professional identity is thus dynamic, multifaceted, negotiated, and co-constructed (Edwards & Burns, 2016). While defining beginning teacher identity Danielewicz (2001) remarks, "…every person is composed of multiple, often conflicting, identities, which exist in volatile states of construction or reconstruction, reformation or erosion, addition, or expansion" (p.10). LTI reflects teachers' professional lives which impact teaching quality, job motivation, commitment, resilience, and career decision-making (Day & Hong, 2016). De Costa and Norton (2017) argue that resourceful language teachers "navigate complex identities in classrooms, schools, and communities, with a view to enhancing language learning and teaching" (p. 11).

Identity is context-bound and is constructed within social, cultural, institutional, and political settings (Duff & Uchida, 1997). This underlines the connection between assigned identity—the identity imposed on one by others—and claimed identity, the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). There can be multiple identities of the same person (Gee, 2000): a) natural identity one is born with; this cannot be changed, b) institutional identity accorded by the workplace based on the person's accomplishments; the institution has the power to control this c) discourse identity developed through talk or interaction; this is subjective), and d) affinity identity determined by one's practices within different communities/groups; allegiance, access, and participation are important here (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Varghese et al. (2016) posit that LTI provides the analytical lens for reconceptualizing language teachers' knowledge base and investigating teachers, teaching, and teacher education. Wang et al. (2021) hold that LTI is crucial in language education since it plays an important role in an individual's teaching not only in terms of how they teach but also in how they present themselves and the materials for teaching and learning. The overall aim of a teacher education program is best conceived as the development of professional identity (Van Huizen et al., 2005). The development of language teacher identity has been viewed as a central process in teacher learning practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2020). Teacher agency and initiatives toward continuing professional development result in concurrent changes in their identity; in fact, at the heart of teacher learning is the development of teacher identity (Freeman, 2016).

Schutz and Lee (2014) hold the view that teachers' emotional experiences and the emotional labour invested therein are inextricably linked to their emerging sense of self as teachers. They further argue that social, emotional, and contextual factors have a great impact on teachers' identity development to the extent that they can even influence the decision of staying on or leaving the profession . Lemarchand-Chauvin and Tardieu (2018) state that the impact of emotions on professional identity development in the field of second-language teacher education has been gaining research attention only recently. They hold that in many teacher-training contexts, the construction of a "mainly linguistic and didactic professional identity has long been thought relevant, emotions being considered as a nuisance" (p. 2) They further contend that "pre-service teachers have for a long time looked for support to address the emotional aspects of their work without really being heard by the educational authorities. What to do with the fear of entering the classroom, the anger that may arise due to a disruptive class situation, the happiness of a successful moment or the sadness one may feel when confronted with one's own limits?" (p. 2).

Review of Research

This section presents some seminal research conducted on LTI. Kanno and Stuart (2011) conducted a year-long study of how two pre-service teachers in the US learned to teach and how their sense of themselves as professional language teachers emerged, through interviews, teaching journals, stimulated recalls, classroom observations, and video recording. The findings revealed that the identity transition from pre-service teachers to practising teachers was not automatic. Continued practice played a significant contribution to their emerging identities as evolved identities marked clear changes in their teaching practice in the classroom. Demonstrating the link between identity and practice, this study helped to theorize the teacher identity formation process. In a nine-year longitudinal study in New Zealand, Barkhuizen (2016) investigated how the imagined identities of a pre-service English teacher, Sela, are constructed. He examined her lived stories built from conversations, interviews, written narratives, and multimodal digital stories as they unfold across personal, institutional, and ideological contexts. An in-depth thematic analysis of the content and the context of the stories revealed how she invested in practices and identities that permit both agency and resistance.

Deng et al. (2018) used emotion and dilemmas as a lens to reveal six Chinese student teachers' professional identity construction in the context of practicum through the five stages: beginning, immediately after the beginning, the middle, toward the end, and after the practicum. The findings revealed that participants experienced several dilemmas during their teaching practicum – ethical, political, and pedagogical. Their professional identity construction was a continuous and contextual process that is intertwined with their feelings and emotions and the interpretations of these experiences as they solve dilemmas for themselves. Nilpriom et al. (2019) examined teacher identity development in two student teachers during teaching practicum through classroom observations and life story interviews to explore whether the participants wanted to choose teaching as a profession after the practicum. The findings demonstrate that teacher identity construction depended on "emotions, and resulted from socio-cultural factors and the differences in social construction in the school settings" (p. 209).

Prabjandee (2019) used interviews and shadowing observations to examine teacher identity construction of two Thai English major student teachers enrolled in a one-year teaching practicum. The findings revealed that "practicum contributed to teacher identity development in three ways: (1) emotional responses to the practicum-shaped identity (2) practice-shaped identity and (3) symbolic entity as a reminder of being a teacher-shaped identity" (p.1277). Yang et al. (2022) investigated the relationships between teaching assistants' (TAs) emotions and their attitudes toward inclusive education. They used a 24-item teacher emotion inventory (TEI) as a tool to collect data among 204 TAs from 122 secondary schools with inclusive education in Hong Kong. The findings revealed statistically significant correlations between positive emotions (joy and love) and TAs' attitudes toward inclusive education while negative emotions (anxiety, anger, and stress) correlated negatively with their attitude toward inclusive education. Chen and Chen (2022) undertook a massive review of research on the evolving intellectual structure of teacher emotion over 35 years starting from 1985 until 2019. They identified 812 articles and using a descriptive quantitative analysis approach found that the overall volume of research is relatively low. They conclude that knowledge production in teacher emotion research is either at a late first stage or an emerging second stage.

The present study not only draws from the earlier research presented above but contributes to furthering the research in LTI. To elaborate, while the longitudinal study by Kanno and Stuart (2011) reveals how their teaching practice over two years shaped the identity of pre-service teachers, the current study demonstrates how identity is constructed through negotiating emotions in the practicum. Similarly, two other studies, Deng et al. (2018) and Nilpriom et al. (2019) have guided the present study in terms of the high premium placed on emotions in the construction of LTI. Further, Chen and Chen (2022) highlight the paucity of knowledge construction vis-à-vis teacher affect. The present research is an attempt in that direction.

Context of the Study

The study emerged from my experience of being a mentor for the teaching events organized as part of a course entitled Practicum for the third-semester MA students specializing in English language teaching (ELT). While observing the PSTs through their peer teaching and practice teaching, I noticed that they were going through a turbulent period of coping with a host of emotions that their teaching experience triggered in them and how they were struggling to negotiate their imagined identities as teachers. In addition to the pedagogic support in planning their lessons, they also needed psychological scaffolding to help them make sense of the plethora of emotions that were messing up with their emerging sense of self as teachers. In the post-observation conferences, they narrated how, through consistent self-reflection and appropriate mentor support, they were able to manipulate their emotions.

Aim and Rationale

The study aims to investigate the role of emotions and expectations in the identity construction of pre-service teachers. It further explores how the beliefs and assumptions of PSTs convert into their expectations of themselves as prospective teachers. It argues that teaching events in the practicum can trigger positive as well as negative emotions in the PSTs. These emotions, in turn, can

influence their emerging sense of identity as language teachers. Therefore, it is important to examine how the affect (emotions and feelings) contributes to the sense of becoming teachers among pre-service teachers.

Research Questions

The following questions are addressed in the study:

1. What beliefs do PSTs hold about 'good' teachers that translate into expectations?
2. What teaching events trigger pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing the construction of a positive and negative sense of identity as teachers?
3. How do PSTs negotiate and adjust their emerging identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions?

Methodology

Five PSTs – three female and two male – enrolled in a teacher training program at a Central University in India are the participants of the study. The PSTs had no prior teaching experience. Questionnaires, informal interviews, reflective journals maintained by the PSTs, and field notes made by the researcher are used as tools to collect data which are analyzed qualitatively. The questionnaire gathered information regarding PSTs' beliefs and perceptions about what makes a good teacher. They were encouraged to mention the qualities of good teachers in terms of subject matter knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge, and personality factors. They were asked to share their ideas on how they wish to become good teachers – their apprehensions and challenges and the measures they would take to cope with them. The reflective journal documented the teaching events in the practicum that triggered positive and negative emotions in the PSTs and how these emotions affected their sense of becoming teachers. The data gathered from the reflective journals is enriched and confirmed during the informal interviews wherein PSTs shared specific incidents that contributed to their emerging identity as teachers. The researcher observed the teaching events conducted by the PSTs – two rounds of peer teaching and one round of practice teaching. A total of fifteen events (three per participant) were observed. Extensive field notes were made about classroom episodes and post-observation conference vignettes that had affective value in contributing to the formation of language teacher identity among PSTs.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

The data collected for the study are presented and analyzed in the following sections. The first section presents PSTs' beliefs about 'good' teachers and the conceptions of their imagined identities. The second section details the teaching events that triggered pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing their emerging sense of identity as teachers. The third section discusses how PSTs negotiate and adjust their imagined identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions.

Section 1: Beliefs about 'Good' Teachers and Imagined Identities of PSTs

The beliefs of the PSTs regarding what makes a good teacher span several domains of knowledge and skills such as subject matter knowledge (SMK), pedagogic content knowledge (PCK), and personality factors. According to them, good teachers can tweak the materials and the tasks to suit student needs, levels, and interests. They can make informed decisions and this decision-making ability is of significance since it "influences the way students react towards the target language, and, therefore, their success in learning it." Teachers should be creative and engage learners in meaningful activities. One of the PSTs remarks, "Teaching is more than simply opening a book, doing exercises, and following an outline written by someone else. Teachers should use problem-solving activities, games, songs, etc. to help learners utilize the skills they have already learned."

Good teachers are sensitive to the emotional pulse of the class. They change pace; and add humour and fun which reduces students' inhibitions to participate in class. One of the PSTs affirms, "Teachers should encourage students; they should not give up on their students but should have high expectations from all of them." According to the PSTs, good teachers are genuine, honest, and realistic; they dare to admit that they do not know something and will update their knowledge. PSTs consider fairness and unbiased nature as two important qualities of good teachers. Teachers should be democratic and provide a level ground where all learners are treated alike and provided equal opportunity for class participation. Another quality that merits mention is the ability of good teachers to leave their emotional baggage at the doorstep of the classroom. This is mentioned eloquently by one of the PSTs: "The classroom is a stage and, to be effective, the teacher must be, in some cases, an actor. As a student, I cannot concentrate if I worry about what might be bothering my teacher. At the same time, I do not want a teacher who uses ridicule and sarcasm to sustain the class blocking any learning that might take place." These various beliefs about good teachers form a part of the imagined identities of the PSTs as future teachers.

Section 2: Teaching Events and Emotions and, the Emerging Identity of PSTs

This section narrates the teaching events that triggered negative and positive emotions in the PSTs and how these impacted their emerging sense of identity as language teachers.

A) Teaching Events and Emotions

A total of twenty teaching events – four teaching events for each PST, two that triggered negative emotions and two that triggered positive emotions – are documented in the following sections.

Teaching Events Triggering Negative Emotions

PST 1: In her very first twenty-minute lesson on writing as part of team teaching, PST1 contributed to the lesson design enthusiastically. The lesson plan had all the teacher activities and learner activities described in detail. However, to her surprise and dismay, the objectives of her part of the lesson were not included in the team's lesson

plan. She had to hand-write them before giving them to the supervisor. This 'caused anxiety' since she did not want the supervisor to think that she was not a good planner. PST1 remarks, "I am usually meticulous in planning and this was quite a shock for me. I had to cope with this sense of disappointment." In another thirty-minute lesson on grammar, PST1 aimed to teach meaning, form, and use of first conditionals and help learners practice the topic through the integration of skills. Although the lesson went well, she could not manage time properly and could not do the production task: "I feel that I couldn't achieve one of my objectives and so I wasn't personally satisfied with the lesson. I feel maybe I planned a lot many things for a 30-minute lesson. I could have had a simpler activity for the preparation stage."

PST 2: PST 2 felt that her use of technology was rather limited; she could have enhanced the interest quotient of her lesson with "more technology." There was another aspect of the lesson that caused her dissatisfaction. She invested efforts to make the class inclusive but there were one or two students who neither participated nor were called out in class. They remained outside of the teacher's action zone. Further, she noticed that there were some "more dominating students who tended to speak more than the other students" hijacking class time and teacher attention. This inability to manage the class well "disturbed" PST2. PST 2 experienced tremendous performance pressure in one of the teaching events since it was for the final assessment. This caused "an increase in anxiety and nervousness". She was also "not ready with a plan B" if things did not go as planned. She expressed her desperation, "I needed photocopies, the facility on campus was not open on time …I had to rush to the Basti to get printouts, where again there were technical problems. The biggest challenge was to still conduct class despite the tension. This led to a stiffening of the body."

PST 3 considers proper delivery of instructions as a key to successful task completion and yet he was not able to give instructions clearly in one of the lessons. He remarks, "From the feedback I got from my peers in the post-observation conference, I realize that some of the instructions were not clear and that giving instructions while students are already doing the task is not helpful. I also have to learn to be clear and slow in my speech. I did not offer praise or give positive reinforcement to encourage the learners' participation. I have a long way to go before I put my act as a teacher together." PST 3 chose to use technology in one of the lessons but he was not able to anticipate the problems and hence could not devise an alternative plan if things did not work out in class. He expresses his dissatisfaction: "One problem that I faced was that I couldn't play the video due to a power outage. I realize that things may not go as planned and as a teacher, I need to be ready for alternative options."

PST 4: PST 4 narrates how she struggled to teach in her "first-ever lesson." She could not follow her lesson plan and this caused stress: "I missed out some of the things that I had written in my lesson plan. I was nervous. I did not do the warm-up activity. I forgot to give my learners a follow-up activity. As it was my first experience, I panicked a lot and felt like crying … I have a long way to go before I become a teacher." PST 2 is worried about how to manage her talk in the classroom: "I think the class got boring due to too much teacher-talk time. There was a lot of explaining. I couldn't manage the time and the lesson didn't go too well. The practice stage was a disaster! Teaching is indeed a big deal!"

PST 5: PST 5 had various concerns. While setting up the tasks, she "failed to grasp the attention of the learners." She was confused and was not able to deliver the instructions clearly. The warm-up used to introduce the topic was not carried out as planned: "I should have chosen the activity that was doable and in the classroom. I showed some pictures related to the topic to elicit information from the learners such as structures, rules, and some examples but it did not work. I did not know what to do. I was at a loss!" The problems persisted in another teaching event: "I felt nervous throughout the lesson as it was not going well. In the production stage, I used a video and asked the learners to write passive structures for the actions shown in the video, but it gave very little scope for the learners to use the passive structures. Instead of the video, I could have chosen some other materials. I hope to learn how to select materials that are relevant and interesting since this is something that is expected of a 'good' teacher."

Teaching Events Triggering Positive Emotions

PST 1: PST1 felt happy about her classroom management skills: "My instructions were clear, however, I spoke very fast. My voice was loud and audible, even at the back, learners could hear my instructions. There was a smooth transition throughout my lesson. This gave me a sense of satisfaction and enhanced my confidence that I could become a good teacher. My organisational skills will stand by me." In another teaching event, PST 1 was able to draw up the aims and objectives of the lesson neatly in the lesson plan. She had to sacrifice one of the tasks while teaching the lesson but she was content that "the learners did understand the meaning, form, and use of first conditionals, it's just that they couldn't do one task. I am happy that they understood the topic that I brought to the class and will hopefully retain it for a longer duration of time."

PST 2: while teaching writing, PST2 felt a "sense of achievement at the end of the class" since her students produced descriptive paragraphs modelled after the sample she provided them. She voices her satisfaction, "I felt more relaxed and in control in this lesson. Though I was initially holding something in my hand, (which I do when I'm nervous), I put it on the table in a few minutes. I felt calmer and more confident in this class. I still need to work on my body language but I felt this was the class I enjoyed the most as a teacher." PST 2 was able to handle the reading lesson well, too. Her students demonstrated an understanding of the texts through the tasks set for comprehension: "One of my main objectives in this lesson was to enable the learners to relate the text to their contexts and thereby respond to the text. I was happy, that this objective was met. The class was actively discussing during the last activity, and the responses to the text and this gave me a sense of satisfaction."

PST 3 narrates how he was able to introduce the teaching item, idioms, well and how "he was motivated by the learners' enthusiasm from the word *go*." Both the presentation and the practice stages went well as the learners could give the right answers to all the questions. A lesson well taught can trigger positive emotions and instil confidence in the teachers: "The production activity, which is a group work to compose a poem using the idioms taught, also went well as the learners could come up with a beautiful piece correctly using the idioms taught. I believe that learning has happened and I achieved my objectives. This boosted my confidence. I have the potential to become a good teacher!" In another teaching

event, PST 3 was able to include shy and quiet students in classroom interactions. They were provided with the opportunity to speak as he particularly asked them questions to which he knew they had the answers. His thoughts about his emerging sense of identity as a teacher are articulated in his comments: "The students sitting at the right side of the class are a bit dominant in answering. So sometimes I give a chance to the students seated at the left side of the class. I can see that there was a good learning atmosphere in the class and that I have a good command of the class. I can see myself improving in the way I give feedback to my learners by appreciating them more."

PST 4: PST 4 was able to design tasks that accommodated the various learning styles of the learners. She tried to incorporate different interaction patterns in the lessons. She highlights the strengths of her lessons: "For the less responsive students, I made sure that I asked them individual questions to ensure that they were also involved in the lesson. In taking care of the social development of the learners in the class, I made sure to acknowledge all of their responses and duly provide positive feedback and gentle error correction whenever necessary." PST 4 felt happy that "the lesson was executed as planned for the most. The transition from one stage to the other was smooth. Timing for each stage and activity was appropriate ensuring adequate participation from every learner. I can confidently say that I completed the lesson within the allotted duration. I'm learning being a teacher."

PST 5: PST 5 involved students through "question and answer techniques" which created interest in the lesson. She made them work in pairs and groups which enhanced class rapport: "I was able to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom. All the students were encouraged to participate in the classroom. I'm not a bad teacher!" PST 5 taught passive voice in other lessons. The lesson plan was organized well with the objectives and the stages of the lesson clearly stated. The anticipated problems such as the malfunction of a projector and power-related problems were mentioned. She also managed to select suitable materials. In the practice stage, she used authentic materials such as the description of the monument and an abstract of a research study, which had a lot of passive structures for the learners. She comments, "I figured out how relevant materials can motivate learners and authentic materials indeed enhance the learning in the classroom."

B) Emerging Identity of PSTs

PST1 has a positive image of herself as a "meticulous planner" and yet, there were lacunae in the lesson plan/instances when the lessons did not go as planned. In the informal interview, PST1 shared that these initial glitches made her question her planning abilities and that in the later teaching events, she was extra careful. This highlights the fact that negative emotions (here, anxiety and disappointment), can unsettle PSTs' sense of self-worth as teachers. However, with appropriate corrective measures, they can reaffirm their positive qualities which will contribute to confidence as classroom teachers. Thus, while there were teaching events that triggered negative emotions, there were also abilities and skills that were put to use in class which triggered positive emotions. For instance, PST 1 was able to organize group work efficiently without "chaos or confusion". She was able to deliver instructions for tasks properly. She appreciated learner responses and motivated learners to be more participative which helped create a positive learning environment. She ensured that the

handouts and worksheets were sufficient and distributed them smoothly. Class well-conducted triggered positive emotions and subsequently contributed to the construction of a positive self-image as a prospective teacher who will be able to handle future challenges of classroom teaching.

PST 2 experienced negative emotions when she faced issues with providing equal opportunity for participation for all learners. She also failed to anticipate the problems that might arise in getting the materials ready for the class. However, her sense of self-worth as a teacher was enhanced when she managed to achieve the learning outcomes in the later lessons. PST3 was unhappy at her inability to deliver the instructions. She felt let down when her lesson did not go as planned because of a power outage. Nevertheless, the fact that she was able to involve the quieter learners in classroom interaction and was able to lead her lesson to a logical conclusion boosted her morale and reinforced her faith in herself. For PST 4, dealing with her anxiety and apprehensions was the toughest challenge and this came in the way of a smooth flow of the lesson for her. She felt that she could perhaps not become a 'good' teacher. However, she ensured that transitions from one stage of the lesson to the other were smooth in her later lessons and this made her not to give up hope. The inability to choose suitable teaching materials leads to ineffective teaching events for PST 5. This triggered self-doubt which was overcome in later lessons. The comments of PSTs demonstrate their ability to engage in critical reflection about their lessons and evaluate them with honesty and frankness. Such an exercise is part of the identity construction of teachers.

Section 3: Negotiation of Imagined Identities of PSTs

This section presents how PSTs negotiated their imagined identities throughout the practicum with teaching events that triggered positive and negative emotions as delineated in the earlier section. They have made cognitive, pedagogic, and affective investments in their journey toward becoming (good) teachers. Therefore, their imagined identities and their expectations for themselves in their future careers are discussed in terms of these three dimensions.

The cognitive dimension: PSTs would like to design lessons that would work well when executed in the class. Their lessons should have well-defined aims and objectives. The tasks should be engaging, and challenging and promote collaborative learning for their learners. They wish to explore the possibility of including authentic materials that make language learning relevant to real-life needs. They wish to plan in such a way that the lesson transitions across different stages are smooth and seamless. Reflecting on how she was not able to complete the production task in one of her lessons, the PST remarks, "From this lesson, I understood that we should not try to do everything in one lesson and devote quality time to teaching certain aspects- maybe take up a smaller chunk of a topic and execute it well." This marks the expansion of their cognitive schemas regarding the planning and execution of lessons. One of the PSTs sums up the cognitive gains achieved through the practicum and her future goals: "I have learned a lot of things throughout the three rounds of teaching such as organizing the lesson plan effectively, selecting relevant tasks and making the students interactive. By the end of the third round, I felt very confident. I hope to keep honing my skills and become a teacher that adds value to my students' learning."

Pedagogic dimension: PSTs realize that in addition to subject matter knowledge, a good teacher should also have pedagogic content knowledge, the ability to deliver the content well, and transact learning in the classroom: "I have learned to take planning more seriously as that was one area in which I fell short in. In many little ways, I have learned to modulate my voice to best suit the class. I have also learned to manage time judiciously. The different teaching styles of my peers have greatly expanded my knowledge of teaching in the field of ELT. The tasks, activities, and texts as well as the techniques used by my peers will be things I will incorporate in my future lesson planning. The greatest takeaway from this experience would be the tremendous growth in confidence level." Another PST effectively summarizes the learning that accrued to him during the practicum and how that helped him set his future goals as a teacher: "I learned a lot. Teaching is not an easy job; it needs good planning and a lot of thinking. I was so nervous in the first round but then when the second round came, I have seen a lot of improvement in myself, and I can see that I have the potential to do the job. But I am disappointed in the final round, I still need to learn. I need to sharpen my skills and vocabulary in teaching. In the future, I will reflect on these days and find solutions to my problems."

Affective dimension: An in-depth analysis of PSTs' reflective journals demonstrated that the most significant gains have been achieved in the affective domain. Their growth graph as prospective teachers marks several points of achievement interspersed with disappointments. Some of the comments of the PSTs are presented below:

PST 1: "I got feedback that I was able to plan and present the lesson in a nuanced manner. I am happy that I ended my Practicum course on a high note, with a good lesson in my kitty. I can think of my performance as something that started on a higher note, which later experienced a slight dip but then went to the heights again. I think this whole exercise of presenting lessons to my peers and authentic learners helped me gain practical knowledge about teaching adult ESL learners, it made me more confident and now I feel more prepared to plan a good skills lesson."

PST 2: "The whole experience of teaching throughout this semester was stressful but rewarding. My body language is something that I have to work on. The pace of my speech increases when I'm nervous, so much so that sometimes the person listening can't even understand what I'm saying. This is something I have to consciously work on. To think of the multiplicity of the skills and knowledge a teacher should have is scary but I'm learning."

PST 3: "I can confidently say that I am a completely different person at the end of this practicum course in terms of learning and gaining knowledge of teaching as compared to who I was at the beginning of the course. The constructive criticisms and feedback from my tutors and peers were the main reasons for my improvement as seen by me and others as well."

PST 4: "The second round of teaching is a remarkable experience for me. I left the podium with a sense that I had achieved something and that feeling was so wonderful. Even though I taught real students, I felt that I am more confident and self-contained than the previous teaching with my classmates. I can see the growth... I was not afraid to express myself and had confidence in my language use as compared to the previous round which helped me move smoothly."

PST 5: "The practicum is truly unnerving. I realize now how many things I took for granted when I was a student. It is nerve-wracking to plan and execute a lesson. My high moment was when I instinctively felt that my learners enjoyed my class and learned something. But there were several low moments when things did not go as planned. I guess I have learned to take things in my stride and will keep learning."

The comments presented above underscore the ability of the PSTs to accept the flaws in their teaching with a proper perspective of improving their practice in the future. Despite the negative emotions triggered by some teaching events, the PSTs are able to hold their ground. They demonstrated that they have developed a positive identity of themselves as future teachers with a forward-looking mindset.

Discussion of Findings

The findings are presented in relation to the research questions addressed in the study.

What beliefs do PSTs hold about 'good' teachers that translate into expectations?

PSTs believe that good teachers possess both subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogic content knowledge. They organize lessons well, maximize classroom learning and create a psychologically safe and non-threatening classroom environment where equal opportunity is provided for participation for all learners. They are enablers who push their students to realize their fullest potential. They demonstrate psychological stability and can modify the lesson in consonance with the emotional pulse of the class. These beliefs have guided the practicum experience of the PSTs wherein they have identified their strengths that can be further developed and areas that need improvement. This implies that, through supervisory support, teacher educators can help PSTs build a strong and positive identity as teachers who can make a difference to their students through teaching that reflects their beliefs of being good teachers.

What teaching events trigger pleasant and unpleasant emotions for PSTs influencing the construction of a positive and negative sense of identity as teachers?

The teaching events that triggered pleasant and unpleasant emotions in PSTs span several pedagogic skill areas such as planning lessons that focus on well-defined learning objectives, selecting suitable materials, being inclusive in providing learning opportunities, choosing task-appropriate interaction patterns, using technology, and a host of other issues. When lessons did not go as planned they experienced a sense of disappointment, self-doubt, and a nagging lack of self-confidence. Nevertheless, there were also several bright moments – being able to achieve the lesson goals, use authentic materials, and ensure learner comprehension of complex grammar items – when they experienced confidence and reaffirmed their faith in themselves as prospective teachers. Thus emotions triggered by lesson experiences impact the identity construction of PSTs. This is significant in that it necessitates two things: a) the PSTs accord suitable value to these emotions – neither overreact nor suppress – and b) the practicum supervisors help the PSTs develop appropriate coping mechanisms such that the emotions, even the negative ones, positively impact their identity construction.

How do PSTs negotiate and adjust their emerging identities as language teachers vis-à-vis their expectations and emotions?

PSTs were able to overcome the feelings of inadequacy with personal determination grit and support from their peers and practicum supervisors. In addition, they were engaged in critical reflection about the teaching events which made them realize what went well with the lesson and what did not go well. They were able to analyze the scenarios clinically and arrive at a clear understanding of their emerging identities as language teachers, which underscores the importance of providing opportunities for reflection and scaffolding PSTs 'reflectivity' through appropriate tools. Since the pleasant/ unpleasant emotions triggered by the teaching experiences of practicum have a directly proportionate relationship with the success or otherwise of PSTs as classroom teachers in the future, PSTs must negotiate these emotions towards building a positive and constructive identity as prospective language teachers.

Limitations

- As part of the practicum, the PSTs could do only three rounds of teaching. If they had the opportunity to teach more, they would have perhaps gained a deeper understanding of their teaching which subsequently would have added more dimensions to their identity as teachers. The study is thus constrained to some extent.
- The study focuses on PSTs' perceptions of the learning that they gained through the practicum and how it contributed to their emerging sense of identity as teachers. The perceptions and observations of the practicum supervisors are not considered.
- The PSTs are highly motivated, flexible, and open to criticism. They wanted to gain maximum benefit from the practicum; they were supportive of each other and learned a great deal from their peers. With a different set of participants, the study may not yield similar findings.

Further Research

- A study can investigate the measures that teacher educators take to trigger positive emotions among PSTs about their abilities as prospective teachers – how they can focus not only on building the knowledge and skills required for teaching but also on constructing a positive self-image among PSTs as future classroom teachers.
- Research can be carried out on the impact of the post-observation conference and how the teacher educators and the peers can help reinforce positive emotions and reduce the impact of negative emotions thus contributing to the construction of identity as competent teachers among PSTs.
- A longitudinal study can examine the classroom practice of PSTs when they begin real-time teaching and the ways they cope with emotions triggered by critical moments, for example, students displaying off-task behaviour or the 'best' tasks not working in the class.

Conclusion

Language teacher identity construction entails a huge emotional investment, especially for pre-service teachers as they struggle to cope with short-term and long-term tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas. Appropriate and timely scaffolding by their peers and practicum

supervisors enables them to devise suitable coping mechanisms to face these challenges as they negotiate their identity formation – the kind of teachers that they are shaping themselves into and the kind of teachers they aspire to be.

The Author

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Narrative Analysis in English Language Teachers' Professional Identity Research: A Review

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Abstract

Amidst the escalating emergence of generic methodological articles on narrative inquiry, this article critically reviews different narrative analysis approaches and their application in English language teachers' professional identity research. For this purpose, we reviewed currently available methodological books and articles on narrative inquiry in general and narrative analysis in particular. Additionally, we reviewed twenty purposively selected empirical articles published since 2015 that employed narrative inquiry to explore English teachers' professional identities. A review of methodological articles revealed that the narrative analysis and analysis of narrative dichotomy are blurred as a certain level of interpretation occurs during the co-construction of stories, transcribing, translating, restorying, and finally, the consumption of the reports by the readers. Consequently, many researchers have considered paradigmatic analysis as the first step of narrative analysis. In contrast, research practices showed that the interpretation of stories begins only after story generation. Besides, amongst different narrative analysis approaches, positioning analysis underscores how tellers represent themselves through narratives, whereas the small story approach of Barkhuizen accentuates analyzing content and context; however, narrative forms and linguistic features and their motives are rarely investigated. Though the small stories approach of Georgakopoulou (2007) advocates explicitly for considering ways of telling (linguistic features and communicative how), it is rarely evident in practice. This article, therefore, identifies a need for a comprehensive narrative analysis approach that considers what (content), where and when (context), how (form), and who and why (agency and discourse) of the story.

Keywords: *narrative analysis, review article, teacher identity, English language education*

Introduction

In his research proposal focusing on the identity transformation of English language teachers, the first author of the article proposed to use narrative inquiry as a research methodology. The members of the research committee provided feedback that included making a significant shift to the methodology, particularly the meaning-making process from his proposed paradigmatic analysis of the storied lives of English language teachers from Nepal to explore their projected identities. In other words, the committee recommended

conducting a narrative analysis instead of thematization and crafting the proposal in a narrative mode of presentation. This article is the outcome of the literature review carried out for the research of which the second author was the supervisor.

Considering the questions and feedback, we started exploring methodological articles and came across Barkhuizen (2016), where he presents a short story approach to analyzing teachers' imagined identities. Apart from restorying the longitudinal study of the identity reconstruction of an immigrant named Sela from the Pacific Island of Tonga, Barkhuizen also substantiates why the short story analysis approach is appropriate for identity research in the article. Another study by Mendieta (2013) discusses different directions narrative inquiry can take, for instance, autobiography and life history, the role of researchers in producing narratives, the focus of narrative analysis, and the contribution of narrative inquiry in teaching English to the students of other languages (TESOL). Specifically, he highlights the role of the researcher as a co-constructor in which the researcher actively participates in constructing stories along with participants and the importance of analyzing form, content, and context during narrative analysis. This article can immensely help novice researchers develop a fundamental understanding of narrative inquiry in a broader sense. When Barkhuizen (2016) highlights the appropriateness of a short story analysis framework with three layers of context in teachers' professional identity research, Mendieta's (2013) approach to narrative inquiry is generic.

Another study by Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) reports using narrative frames to explore university English teachers' experiences in China. In the article, they highlight the effectiveness of narrative frames in generating stories from a large number of research participants. They also explicitly confess the potential of narrative frames in depersonalizing the experience of teachers (an atypical feature of narrative inquiry) as its limitation. The article concentrates on co-constructing the narratives from a large number of participants using narrative frames and the limitations of narrative frames instead of presenting a comprehensive picture of narrative analysis.

In contrast to Barkhuizen and Wette (2008), Connelly and Clandinin (1990) outline criteria, methods, and norms related to narrative report development. They describe the criteria in terms of beginning the story, living the story, and selecting the story to construct and reconstruct narrative plots, along with potential risks, dangers, and abuses inherent in narrative inquiry. Similarly, Clandinin and Huber (2010) introduce narrative inquiry as a research method and its importance in educational research. They elucidate the commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place, along with ethical considerations. Likewise, Savin-Baden and Niekerk (2007) offer practical guidance for using narrative inquiry, particularly the ways of exploring and analyzing narratives. They argue that narrative analysis is often undertaken by exploring epiphanies and metaphors inherent in stories. These studies on narrative inquiry offer a multitude of perspectives in terms of story generation, restorying the stories, ethical standards, narrative genres, and limitations of narrative investigations; however, these articles offer generic insights on narrative analysis with no significant contribution made, particularly on narrative analysis in teachers' professional identity research in English language education. With the review of papers on narrative inquiry in general and narrative

analysis in particular, we got acquainted with multiple genres such as autobiographical, biographical, and arts-based narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016) and diverse narrative analysis approaches; however, we were astounded by the paucity of succinct methodological articles particularly on meaning-making processes on identity research in ELT.

In this thematic review, therefore, we present a comparative study of conceptual frameworks of narrative analysis and its use in English language teachers' professional identity research. The study aims to map the narrative analysis approaches prevalent and their application in English language teachers' professional identity research. To this end, it becomes pertinent to answer the following questions:

a. What narrative analysis approaches are currently prevalent in teachers' identity research in ELT?

b. How are such approaches employed to explore English language teachers' professional identities?

To address the first question, we have reviewed currently available methodological books and articles (Barkhuizen, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Kim, 2015; Riessman, 2008, among others) written in the context of education in general and ELT in particular. We selected methodological books and articles purposively considering their relevance to the research questions. A review of purposively selected methodological books and articles has significantly contributed to the discursive construction of the theoretical underpinnings of narrative analysis with due consideration of the evolution of the concept in different phases and subsequently mapping different approaches of narrative analysis prevalent. In addition, to explore the practical application of these approaches, we reviewed empirical articles published after 2015. For this purpose, we employed keywords such as "narrative inquiry," "narrative analysis," "narratives and identities," and "narrative inquiry and English language education research" to surf articles in databases such as *Google Scholar* and *ERIC* and some of the momentous journals related to ELT, for instance, *Language, Identity and Education, Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, Teaching and Teacher Education and TESOL Quarterly* among others. Out of 150 downloaded articles, only 20 of the most relevant research were short-listed to explore how these approaches are employed in research practice. Of those 20 most relevant articles reviewed, we referred to only a few purposively selected papers to substantiate the argument.

This review article presents substantially the diverse narrative analysis approaches relevant to teacher identity research in ELT. The paper contributes immensely to the field by filling the paucity of comprehensive research articles intensively and extensively focused on the narrative analysis of English language teachers' professional identity. Additionally, the article also becomes instrumental in projecting the way forward in terms of the development of an alternative narrative analysis approach. With this, in subsequent sections of the article, we present the historical development of the concept of narrative analysis along with narrative analysis and analysis of narratives debate, different narrative analysis approaches and their development in sociolinguistic research, narrative analysis approaches prevalent in identity research in ELT, their application in research practices, and conclusion and implications. In short, amidst the paucity of

comprehensive methodological articles on narrative analysis and the increasing trend of employing narrative analysis in ELT research in the 21st century, in this article, we present the narrative analysis discourse, its application, and future direction.

Narrative Analysis

A review of primary texts and articles on narrative analysis showed a wide range of conceptual definitions, among which we found the definition of Polkinghorne (1995) significant. He defines narrative analysis as "a configuration of the data into a narrative or narratives that render some explanation, gives meaning to some experience, and offers insights into the motivation and purpose behind a chain of events" (p. 251). Narratives are featured by the components of temporality, sociality, and spatiality that are interwoven so tightly that they cannot be separated from each other without losing the meaning of narratives. More than just the amalgamation of events into a linear sequence, narrative analysis explains how the outcome might come about or how meaning is given to certain aspects of teachers' lives. Providing meanings and insights to the reader about teachers being studied is the purpose of narrative analysis (Oliver, 1998). Narrative analysis of the storied lives of teachers provides us with better insights into their lives, beliefs, values, perceptions, practices, needs, and interests so that we can respond to them accordingly.

It is important to understand narrative analysis and analysis of narrative dichotomy to have a comprehensive understanding of narrative analysis. Polkinghorne (1995) considers narrative analysis as a meaning-making (restorying) process from the diverse range of data sets that consist of actions, events, and stories of experiences whereas in the analysis of narratives, categories, patterns, and themes are developed out of narrative data (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007; Watson, 2012; Demir, 2018). When the analysis of narratives breaks narratives into non-narrative forms, narrative analysis utilizes storytelling to analyze narrative and non-narrative data and present the findings (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2013; Demir, 2018). In short, when narrative analysts focus on the *how* (emphasis added) or discursive construction of the English language teachers' professional identity, thematic analysts exclusively consider the *what* (emphasis added) or the nature of identity (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Vasquez, 2011). This dichotomy is explicitly evident in the methodological literature of the beginning era of narrative inquiry.

However, Kim (2015) blurs this traditional dichotomy when she argues that narrative inquiry is open-ended, emergent, and evolving. She highlights the relational understanding between a researcher and the researched where a researcher engages participants in the research process as co-researchers, co-constructors, and co-storytellers. In narrative construction, researchers are not passive listeners but actively participate in the story construction process as characters and narrators. As characters, they become part of the narrative and shape the form and content of the stories, whereas as narrators, they restory the participants' lived experiences (Barkhuizen, 2011; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Riessman, 2008). In other words, stories are created, interpreted, and re-created at the participants' level first, then during the storying (interview/conversation), and finally during the restorying process (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). As an interpretive epistemology, narrative analysis asserts the co-construction of the knower and the known through interaction (Demir, 2018; Denzin &

Lincoln, 2018). During narrative reporting, researchers are encouraged to be aware of the complexity of the plurivocal nature of narrative and be mindful of whose voice is dominant in restorying the stories through "I" (Barnieh, 1989). Therefore, researchers engage participants in the restorying process to ensure that participants' voice is adequately represented in the research report.

Narratives undergo multiple levels of interpretation before they are produced as data, and what we read as research reports are already interpreted and reinterpreted by the researcher and the participants (Barkhuizen, 2011). As a result, myriads of elements are prevalent in narratives, and hence researchers are encouraged to consider not only what (reality) but also how (process, form, and linguistic features) and why (context) of the research (Mendieta, 2013). Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) argue that form and content are not distinct but lie in a continuum. As noted by Mendieta (2013), analysis of form, to some extent, involves analysis of content and vice versa. Appropriate terminology to define the whole process from story generation to interpretation (analysis) and reporting (restorying), therefore, could be narrative knowledging, as rightly pointed out by Barkhuizen (2016), which blurs narrative analysis and analysis of narratives dichotomy.

With the review of methodological books and articles, we became accustomed to multiple approaches to narrative analysis that range from the psychological model of narrative that includes Bartlett's schemata theory, Kintsch and van Dijk's macro-structure model and story grammar, literary models of narrative; anthropological model of narrative; and sociological and sociolinguistic model of narrative that includes conversational analysis, frame analysis, and Labov's evaluation model of narrative (Cortazzi, 1993) to mention but a few. However, this article mainly focuses on the sociolinguistic models of narrative analysis as these models are paradigmatically compatible with identity research.

Narrative Analysis Approaches in Sociolinguistics

When we trace the historical development of narrative analysis in sociolinguistics, we find its development in three waves. According to Georgakopolou (2007), the first wave emerged with the narratives elicited using the "near-death" experience in which the expression of participants became largely unmonitored, through which Labov's influential structural criteria for defining narratives appeared. According to this classic structure, narratives consist of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result, and coda. In other words, the story consists of a summary of what the story is about (abstract), the scene setting (orientation), the narrative core (complicating action), the significance of the story to the narrator (evaluation), how the situation pans out (result), and how the narrator moves out of the story or how the narrator moves back to the present moment (coda). Researchers following the Labovian tradition always looked at the presence of these functional parts in a fully formed narrative (Franzosi, 1998; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Vasquez, 2011), in which narratives are constructed through sociolinguistic narrative interviews.

The second wave of sociolinguistic research moved away from the classical Labovian model of narrative analysis by incorporating narratives told in a conversational context instead of just focusing on narratives constructed during interviews. According

to Georgakopoulou (2007), it was a move away from the study of "narrative as text" to the study of "narratives in context" (p. 537). However, as pointed out by Georgakopoulou, only the stories that met the Labovian structural criteria were considered worthy of narrative analysis, and any accounts that did not meet these criteria were deemed uncharacteristic and abnormal. Later, Ochs and Capps (2001) contributed immensely to the second wave of sociolinguistic research by accentuating the fact that the Labovian model of the narrative is just a type and that narratives of personal experience can vary along the five-dimensional continuum of narrative, namely tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance. They also stressed that narratives elicited in a research context can vary from those produced in a day-to-day conversational context.

The third wave of sociolinguistic research that emerged in the 21st century highlighting narratives and identity research considers narrative as a social practice that provides special analytic attention to the context in which narratives occur. This development in narrative analysis stresses the co-construction of identities in narratives and equally highlights the multitudes of narrative genres (beyond the Labovian model) as worthy of analysis (Bamberg, 2007). Different approaches to narrative analysis emerged during this stage, ranging from positioning analysis, small stories approach to narrative analysis, and the five-step process to narrative analysis forwarded by Menard-Warwick (2011). The succeeding topic presents a critical outlook on different narrative analysis approaches developed in the third wave.

Narrative Analysis Prevalent in the Discourse of Identity Research in ELT

One significant narrative analysis approach to identity research is positioning analysis, which is based on certain theoretical assumptions worth uncovering before we discuss the positioning analysis approach. Positioning analysis considers that "positions are situated achievements, which do not sum up to a coherent self. Positions give evidence of multiple facets of personal identity. They are potentially contradictory, and they may be fleeting and contested" (Deppermann, 2015, p. 370). This notion of positioning analysis contradicts the essentialist view of identity. It equally rejects the individualized conception of self and identity. Thus "positioning is a non-essentialist and practice-bound concept" and these "practices are routine, habitual ways of speaking and interacting, which are sensitive to situational contingencies" (Deppermann, 2015, pp. 369-370). Positions are made relevant and realized in social actions that can be explored in three levels.

This three-level positioning framework of narrative analysis was mainly developed by Bamberg (1997) and Wortham and Rhodes (2011), among others, to analyze the narratives in interaction. According to Bamberg (1997), in the first level, images of narrators and other characters in the story, projection of narrators as protagonists and antagonists, evaluation of characters' actions, and distribution of responsibilities, among others, are looked at. At the second level, how narrators position themselves to the audience, for example, what the narrator tries to accomplish with the story, the narrative strategies, and interactional approaches, are analyzed. The third level of positioning focuses on how the narrator has

established himself as a certain kind of person (De Fina, 2015; Watson, 2012). This approach seems monolithic as it primarily focuses on the narrators' outlook while analyzing identity construction.

Another narrative analysis approach that is prevalent in teachers' professional identity research is the small story approach to narrative analysis, which is somehow closer to positioning analysis in the sense that it also recognizes pluralism and heterogeneity in terms of the nature of stories and the notion of identity (Georgakopoulou, 2015). Like positioning analysis, small story approaches to narrative analysis are inspired by conversational storytelling or narratives-in-interaction that do not confirm Labov's (1972) classical narrative criteria. Small stories research brings to the fore long-neglected non-canonical and atypical stories as the unit of narrative analysis. When big stories prioritize coherently, settled, and consciously crafted selves and identities, small stories project inconsistency, messiness, fragmentation, and troubled identities (Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2009; Ryan, 2008). Researchers in small story approaches believe that both small and big stories enable researchers to explore the complex process of identity formation. When big coherent life narratives are a priority in the analysis of narrative (narrative inquiry) tradition to explore teachers' professional identity in TESOL, the narrative analysis focuses on small stories to study the situated social identities of language teachers and learners. Freeman (2007) also reiterates that it is high time to pay attention to small stories when the study focuses on individuals' identities.

Georgakopoulou (2007) has developed the heuristic approach to analysing small stories that focus on exploring three separate but interrelated levels of analysis: ways of telling, sites, and tellers. Ways of telling are related to patterns of telling stories or communicative approach that includes verbal choices and socioculturally shaped and conventionalized storytelling, particularly recurrent ways of interacting. Next, analysis of tellers or their roles in participation or as a character in the story is essential. Exploration of tellers' social and cultural groups and biographies, including hopes, desires, beliefs, habits, and fears, is critical (Georgakopoulou, 2015). At the same time, the site refers to a place with socio-cultural and ideological aspects embedded in the story.

Similarly, Barkhuizen (2016) presents a model for short story analysis with three levels of stories that range from the first level of a story (all small letters), the second level of Story (with a capital S), and the third level of STORY (in capital letters) in which the first level includes teachers' immediate contexts that are intimate and personal where teachers have more agency and power. The second level of the Story goes beyond teachers' immediate context, such as assessment practices, language policy, and interpersonal relations among colleagues within the school. Here, teachers have less agency to construct their teaching practices and identities. Lastly, STORY (in capital letters) refers to a broader sociopolitical context that influences teachers' teaching-learning and identity construction. These larger contexts include national curriculum, national language policy, examination modality, teacher education standards, and discourse of race, gender, and other ideologies. This level of the story is related to the macro scale of the context where there is the most negligible influence of teachers' agency. With the interaction of three layers of context (story, Story, STORY) with the three dimensions of story content, namely who (sociality), where (place), and when (temporality), teachers practice, and the construction of identity is realized.

Another significant model forwarded by Menard-Warwick (2011) presents a five-step narrative analysis approach for exploring identity. Referring to Riessman (2008), the author presents thematic analysis as the analytic first step in narrative analysis that is useful in exploring narratives relevant to the study issue. Likewise, structural analysis, particularly the organization of the narrative to achieve the narrators' purpose, is considered an analytic second step. In the third step, he proposes identifying linguistic resources that aid in constructing identity; for instance, one linguistic resource can be the words that provide sensory details. In the fourth analytic step, he proposes to explore the dialogic voicing and performance in which narratives are produced in the interaction between researchers and researched, speaker and setting, and history and culture, among other factors. As the analytical fifth step, he recommends exploring the study's relevance in knowledge construction and the connection between identity and pedagogy. Though these analytical approaches stress analyzing content and context, their focus on communicative how (discourse) and the agency is limited.

Narrative Analysis in Practice

We began this article with the conceptual definition of narrative analysis and methodological debate on narrative analysis and analysis of narratives referring to Polkinghorne (1995). In this section, we elucidate how this debate is reflected in the research practice. A close reading of the selected articles published from 2015 to the present showed that the implementation of narrative analysis and analysis of the narratives debate is rarely evident in actual practice. Nguyen and Dao (2019), for instance, in their exploration of the identity of five prospective teachers doing masters in applied linguistics/ TESOL at an Australian university, explicitly remark that they are doing the analysis of narratives (thematic analysis) elicited from two semi-structured audio-recorded storytelling sessions. They report that analysis was conducted following the general thematic analysis approach called analysis of narratives comprising five main stages: transcribing interview data, constructing narrative texts from transcribed data and field texts, sending stories to the participants for comment, coding individual stories, and grouping codes into categories, and conducting cross-story analyses and identifying emerging themes as proposed by Murray (2009). The article introduces the dichotomy between *narrative analysis* and *analysis* of narratives with their explicit explanations in the methodology section.

Conventionally, scholars such as Ubaidillah et al. (2020) and Charles (2019) explore common themes and patterns to discover the perceived notion of identity. The scholars seemingly ignore the dichotomy and consider paradigmatic analysis as narrative analysis. For instance, Ubaidillah et al. (2020) explored the imagined identity of a male preservice teacher studying at a private university in Indonesia, examining his past learning experiences elicited through semi-structured interviews. The researchers explicitly report the co-construction of storying that they were cautious of not hindering the flow of storytelling, intervening with the participants in between. Most of the narrative analyses (Fan & de Jong, 2019; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Mirzaee & Aliakbari, 2018) involving thematization primarily seem to have concentrated on content and context, except Barkhuizen (2016), who also considers sensory language as a unit of analysis.

Another recurrent feature manifest in the research practice is division among researchers in terms of their perceived notion of meaning-making. Researchers such as Kayi-Aydar (2015), Li (2020), and Sahragard (2017), among others, have not reported the process of story generation, particularly the role of researchers in storying and participants' say in restorying. From this, we could infer that the researchers have conceived meaning-making as a separate process from story generation. In contrast, other researchers such as Barkhuizen (2016) consider the whole process from storying to restorying and consumption of the report by the readers as narrative knowledging (Barkhuizen, 2011) and elaborates the co-construction process from storying to restorying adequately.

Similarly, Xie and Dong (2020), in their exploration of the evolution of identity and contributive factors to the identity crisis of full-time college EFL teachers from China, unveil the interaction between factors relating to an identity crisis and the trajectories of identity evolution through self-reflection journal and in-depth interview where researchers report that they engaged participants in co-construction of narratives and meaning-making from initial sense-making process to final restorying. They report that the researchers first conducted "preliminary exploratory analysis" (Cresswell, 2005, p. 237), reading through narratives several times to develop understanding and then identifying recurring themes and categories through manual coding. These categories were further discussed between researchers and final themes were set that turned out to be three phases of teachers' identity development: the honeymoon, confusion, and dilemma. The application of the micro, meso, and macro perspectives of narrative analysis forwarded by Barkhuizen (2016) made the construction of these phases possible. After manual coding, NVivo 10 was used for final coding. Finally, the story developed after coding and theme development was sent to the participants to check whether the narrative adequately reflected their experiences.

Another interesting fact that emerged from the review of articles published after 2015 is that though the short story analysis approach has been discussed heavily lately, its application is negligible. One such intermittent study is conducted by Barkhuizen (2016), employing a short story analysis approach to explore the imagined identity of an immigrant named Sela. There, he analyzes short stories using the short story analysis framework to see three levels of context and content and considers sensory language used in exploring her identity. Though Georgakopoulou (2007) developed a heuristic for short story analysis that focuses on the three levels of analysis that include tellers, telling, and sites where telling refers to ways of telling stories or communicative approaches such as verbal choices and socioculturally conventionalized ways of story-telling, review of empirical articles showed that researchers have rarely explored the how of the story and its role in shaping the what or content. Still, the examination of the empirical study showed a certain level of analysis of how (sensory language, though not ways of storytelling) but the why (discourse and agency) of the story has remained uncharted.

A review of empirical studies somehow reflects the emerging dimension of methodological development that blurs the traditional dichotomy. For instance, Polkinghorne's (1995) debate on narrative analysis and analysis of narrative is rarely reflected in practice. Nguyen and Dao (2019) are the only researchers who carry forward the discussion

in practice. In contrast, other researchers like Ubaidillah et al. (2020) and Charles (2019), among others, consider paradigmatic analysis as narrative analysis that substantiates Menard-Warwick's (2011) claim of paradigmatic analysis as the analytic first step in narrative analysis. Next, positioning analysis, as proposed by Bamberg (1997) and Wortham (2011), is rarely evident in practice; however, some researchers have used conversation to generate stories. Likewise, though researchers like Barkhuizen (2011) note that meaning-making occurs at different levels, from story generation to transcribing and restorying, very few researchers have acknowledged this and have depicted the whole process in their articles. Most researchers seem to have considered that the interpretation of stories occurs only after the storying process.

Conclusion and Implications

The review of methodological articles on narrative inquiry and its application in practice in education showed mushrooming research trends recently; however, there is a paucity of such articles that reflect the recent methodological trends in English language education in general and teachers' professional identity research in particular. We found Barkhuizen (2008, 2011, 2016) making a noteworthy contribution to teachers' identity research in the context of English language education, both theoretically and practically. Besides, we also reviewed other narrative analysis approaches that include positioning analysis (Bamberg, 1997; Wortham & Rhodes, 2011), the small story analysis approach (Bamberg, 2007; Barkhuizen, 2016; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007), and a five-step process to analyzing identity forwarded by Menard-Warwick (2011). We observed that despite valuable contributions made in identity research, positioning analysis is a one-way approach that unilaterally highlights how the teller (participant) positions themselves and other characters in the story. However, as identity concerns how a teller perceives themselves and how others place them as English language teacher, analysis of identities conducted exploiting this approach seems partial and incomplete. Though positioning analysis somehow considers narrative strategies and interactional processes during the analysis of stories, the approach is monolithic and one-sided as this heuristic only considers the narrator's perspective.

All the analytical approaches discussed above somehow highlight one aspect of the story at the cost of another. For example, the strength of the short story approach to the narrative analysis presented by Barkhuizen (2016) is that it conducts a comprehensive analysis of three layers of context and the commonplaces of narrative inquiry such as temporality, sociality, and place. However, his framework fails to properly address the linguistic/discursive factors affecting identity construction. The approach forwarded by Barkhuizen (2016), in his own words, is a form of "systematic thematic analysis of the content and context" of the short stories (p. 661). This approach remains within the analytic first step, in the words of Riessman (2008). Small story analysis primarily emphasizes content and context instead of forms, though a certain level of analysis of forms, such as sensory language, is embedded in the analysis of the content.

We conclude that none of these approaches adequately appreciates the potential of discourse in constructing teachers' identities and the role of discourse and ideology in exercising power and agency. Now is the time, therefore, to devise a comprehensive eclectic approach as an alternative that incorporates

insight from conversation analysis, discourse analysis, positioning analysis, short story analysis, and five-step narrative analysis approach forwarded by Menard-Warwick (2011) that not only considers what (content) and when and where (context) but also how (communicative how and linguistic features), and who and why (agency and discourse) of the story.

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Exploring Professional Wellbeing of English Language Teachers

Surendra Prasad Bhatt

Abstract

Teacher wellbeing concerns teachers' satisfaction, happiness, and attraction to their profession. It is equally essential in quality education since the attraction to English language in schools is growing gradually. This study aims to discovers perceptions of English language teachers teaching secondary level on their wellbeing in an institutional setting. Using lived stories through in-depth interview and informal communication, the study explores the perception of their wellbeing. The research findings show that teachers teaching English perceive their wellbeing as having positive psychology, positive emotion, respect and achievement in the job, and healthy relations among the institutional members. This study paves the way for a more extensive debate on policy and practice surrounding teachers' wellbeing among educators, academicians, and decision-makers.

Keywords: *wellbeing, happiness, satisfaction, competence, accomplishment*

Introduction

The debate surrounding teacher professional development and quality education at the school level often neglects the concept of teacher wellbeing. Educational policies, practices, and discussions need to focus on teacher wellbeing, particularly in school level. In all-purpose, satisfaction, enjoyment, and commitment to the teaching profession significantly influence teachers' wellbeing (Dreer, 2021). In Nepal, attraction to the English in many educational institutions poses numerous challenges for English language teachers, ranging from content delivery to language skills (Sah & Li, 2018), which might influence their wellbeing. However, teacher wellbeing is always in the shadow in the context of Nepal. Teachers' role is vital in cultivating a positive school culture and developing innovative teaching methods and materials. They also assist other teachers in delivering subject matter in the school using English as the primary medium of teaching learning, making them integral contributors to creating an inclusive environment for English language instruction (Chaudhary, 2011), as schools are increasingly adopting English as a medium of instruction (Ojha, 2018). Competent, dynamic, and dedicated English language teachers are crucial in successfully implementing EMI (Karki, 2021).

Recent studies have pointed out that EMI poses complex challenges for language teachers' wellbeing, including the pressure to maintain high English proficiency (Yuan & Yang, 2022), communication hurdles, and the need to adapt teaching methods (Ismailov et al., 2021). Navigating diverse student backgrounds, managing professional development demands, and achieving work-life balance are crucial factors (Yusuf et al., 2022) for teachers using EMI. Despite their crucial contributions to shaping a positive school culture (Yusofl et al., 2016), many English language teachers experience frustration due to an unfavorable school environment.

English language teachers are pivotal in fostering institutional development and improving student outcomes. Teachers' performance significantly impacts a school's effectiveness (Ozgenel & Mert, 2019), and a positive working environment is crucial for teachers' instructional efforts. Teacher wellbeing is paramount in ensuring their commitment and success in the classroom. Zhu et al. (2011) suggest the pivotal role of institutional goal orientation, shared vision, and formal relationships among staff on wellbeing. A trusting school environment that offers teachers coaching, training, and support is vital (Aelterman et al., 2007) for their overall wellbeing and dedication.

Numerous studies have investigated the factors influencing teacher wellbeing and its impact on education. For instance, Wei and Chen (2009) found that individual traits, peer relationships, and teachers' subjective wellbeing were positively associated with students' attachment to school. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2011) identified personal commitment and goal orientation as significant factors in achieving teachers' wellbeing and organizational commitment. Besides, Bhusal (2015) highlighted challenges, including varying student abilities, large class sizes, and limited use of student-centered techniques that negatively impacted teacher wellbeing. Furthermore, the teacher wellbeing was significantly hampered during pandemic. Dawadi et al. (2020) highlighted the detrimental shadow of COVID-19 on students' learning and wellbeing, potentially exacerbating educational disparities. However, in a related study, Gautam's (2020) study stated teachers developed confidence and knowledge on digital tools online professional development programs. These studies highlighted the contexts related to the teachers' wellbeing issues that signify the need for in-depth research on the field.

Similarly, Mercer (2020) emphasized the crucial role of a supportive work environment and positive interactions in promoting language teachers' wellbeing. Examining the specific impact on Portuguese language teachers, Alves et al. (2021) investigated the pandemic's influence on their perception of professional wellbeing. Additionally, Sulis et al. (2021) explored teacher wellbeing considering various contextual factors. These studies contribute to my understanding of the features shaping teacher wellbeing and the far-reaching implications for education.

In the context of Nepal discussion of entire teacher wellbeing is in the primitive stage. After COVID 19, a few studies have been done on teachers' challenges in ICT integration, pedagogical shift (Gautam, 2020), and learning management, and educational policies (Dawadi et al., 2020). Going to the literature, internet, scholarly journals, and personal contact with ELT practitioners of Nepal, I found a limited number of studies on language teachers' wellbeing. Regarding the English language teacher's wellbeing, K.C.

(2021) reflected on the general introduction and pedagogical success to wellbeing. The issue of language teachers' wellbeing has not been well-explored in ELT discourse, so this article is a step towards addressing the gap. To address these issues, the study aimed to explore the initial awareness of English language teachers on their professional wellbeing.

Conceptualizing Wellbeing

Wellbeing is characterized by contentment with one's current circumstances and striving for progress, encompassing a healthy body, mind, and relationships (Alexander et al., 2021). Wellbeing is commonly understood as a state of health and happiness (Fellmann, 2018). It is subjective and varies among individuals in different professions. Synonymous terms such as happiness, comfort, security, protection, profit, success, prosperity, and success have been used interchangeably with wellbeing. Diener et al. (2002) describe it as satisfaction and love towards one's profession and the people around them, involving joy, fun, and gratification.

Although the term wellbeing received scholarly attention in the 1960s, there is no universally accepted definition (Seligman, 2012). Researchers defined wellbeing as a lifestyle quality, life satisfaction (Deiner & Suh, 1997), negative and positive effects (Deiner & Suh, 1997), goal accomplishment (Felce & Perry, 1995), positive performance (Duckwort et al., 2005), happiness (Pollard & Lee, 2003), and flourishing (Seligman, 2012), looking at the various time-spaces of wellbeing in chronological order (as cited in Birchall, 2021).

Furthermore, wellbeing has been discussed from both eudemonic and hedonic perspectives (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992). The hedonic model of wellbeing, prevalent in social science, assumes that humans have initially malleable bodies (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992). In the same way, the eudemonic perspective focuses on personal meaning, fulfillment, and authenticity, considering wellbeing as the optimal function of an individual (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Mercer (2020) outlines the hedonic perspective of wellbeing, which emphasizes objective happiness derived from personal experiences and an individual's perception of emotions and satisfaction, often influenced by social and cultural practices. In contrast, hedonic wellbeing, as described by Schimmack et al. (2002) and Allen et al. (2016), is a model of subjective wellbeing that segregates measures of negative and positive effects, offering predictions about an individual's overall personal experience. These perspectives differ in their approach, with the hedonic perspective focusing on personal happiness experiences and the hedonic wellbeing model providing a more comprehensive evaluation of wellbeing.

Over time, the concept of wellbeing has evolved, leading to comprehensive definitions by psychologists and researchers. Positive psychological functioning, emphasising positive affect, happiness, and life satisfaction, was referred to as individual wellbeing in the early 21st century (Dodge et al., 2012). It is widely recognized as a multidimensional concept with various components, as different scholars provide distinct definitions and viewpoints. Generally, four types of wellbeing are discussed in the literature: physical, psychological, spiritual, and social (Curtis, 2016; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Livesey et al., 2012; Voigt et al., 2010).

Physical wellbeing pertains to the body's physical state, including maintaining a healthy weight, good posture, the ability to

perform daily tasks, absence of exhaustion or discomfort, and proper organ functioning (Davis, 2019). Psychological wellbeing is associated with the mind and involves the ability to manage stress and experience emotions that contribute to a positive state (Conversano et al., 2010). Social wellbeing relates to external factors within society. According to Davis (2019), it involves the capacity to engage in society, culture, and the environment. Spiritual wellbeing is a deeply personal aspect, focusing on the meaning and purpose of life for an individual (Dhar et al., 2013). Martin, et al. (2021) highlights spiritual wellbeing as the core dimension that provides a profound sense of identity, purpose, direction, and the means to achieve personal goals.

I believe wellbeing is a multifaceted concept characterized by contentment, health, and happiness. While lacking a universally accepted definition, it encompasses various physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. Wellbeing varies among individuals and professions, making it subjective. In essence, it represents a holistic state of wellbeing that involves a balance of body, mind, and relationships.

English Language Teachers' Wellbeing

Teacher wellbeing encompasses teachers' satisfaction with and love for their profession (Diener et al., 2002). It is characterized by their commitment to teaching and positive attitudes towards their work and stakeholders within the school (Engels et al., 2004). This favourable emotional state arises when there is harmony between teachers' individual needs and expectations for the school, considering the unique contextual factors at play (Alterman et al., 2007). Acton and Glasgow (2015). Santro (2011) emphasized that a friendly school environment is crucial in fostering teachers' positive attitudes and love for teaching. Schools significantly influence teacher wellbeing and development. Mercer (2020) asserts that wellbeing is a socially constructed value applicable to all.

Due to the demands of managing intercultural dynamics in the classroom, school, and community, language teachers experience higher stress levels than teachers of other subjects (Mercer et al., 2016). They may encounter difficulties with language self-efficacy when communicating with students (Mousavi, 2007). Teaching a language involves deeper emotional connections as language and self are closely intertwined. Borg (2006) highlights that language teachers are often expected to facilitate student communication and increase participation, which demands significant effort and innovative approaches.

Similarly, English language teachers, particularly those working in private schools, often face high-stress levels and struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Mercer (2020) explains that motivations for teachers is extrinsic rather than inherent which affected the work effort and happiness. The teachers in the Nepalese schools have what has been described as 'the extrinsic motivation' for their profession.

The wellbeing of English language teachers is a multifaceted aspect of their professional lives, influenced by various factors. One crucial element is the connection between language proficiency and happiness in teaching, as highlighted by Sahito et al. (2018). Language teachers often derive joy and positive feelings from their language skills, which can enhance their enthusiasm and effectiveness in the classroom. However, maintaining this positive

mindset towards work, as emphasized by Luthans (2010), is equally vital. Teachers face a delicate balance between positive resources and negative factors, as noted by Babic et al. (2022). Economic stability, as mentioned by Day et al. (2006), plays a significant role in sustaining the teaching profession, reducing the need to seek additional income sources. This stability, coupled with status within the school and society, can serve as a motivator for teachers to remain engaged and content in their roles, aligning with the insights of Babic et al. (2022).

Furthermore, the importance of work-life balance and status is reiterated in Dodge's Model of Wellbeing, which posits that equilibrium between an individual's resources and challenges is essential for wellbeing (Wassell & Dodge, 2015). Achieving this balance is crucial for teachers, as it strengthens their ability to confront professional challenges and promotes their social, emotional, and physical wellbeing, as suggested by Ovenden-Hope and Brimacombe (2018). In addition to personal factors, positive relationships play a pivotal role in teacher wellbeing. Collie et al. (2020) stress the significance of positive relationships with colleagues and support systems in reducing stress and maintaining wellbeing. In addition, Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) emphasize the positive impact of teacher-student relationships on professional satisfaction. These relationships benefit teachers and significantly influence student learning, behavior, and achievement, as noted by Wubbels, et al (2015). Overall, fostering competence, maintaining positive relationships, and achieving a harmonious work-life balance are crucial components of teacher wellbeing and happiness in the English language teaching profession.

The discussion surrounding the overall wellbeing of teachers in Nepal is still in its early stages. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, a few researched are exist focusing on teachers' difficulties, including ICT integration, pedagogical shifts (Gautam, 2020), learning management, and educational policies (Dawadi et al., 2020). However, upon reviewing the existing literature, online sources, scholarly journals, and through personal communication with English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners in Nepal, it became evident that there is a limited study specifically addressing the teachers' wellbeing. While K.C. (2021) provided a general introduction and touched on pedagogical success concerning English language teacher wellbeing, the topic remains underexplored within the ELT discourse. Recognizing the importance of this issue, This study investigates the initial perceptions of English language teachers on their wellbeing.

Methodology

Storytelling and narrative inquiry are powerful tools for understanding the multifaceted and deeply personal aspects of teacher wellbeing. By collecting and analyzing teachers' stories, researchers can uncover important truths about their experiences and gain insights that might be missed through quantitative data alone. This approach not only deepens our understanding but also helps create more empathetic and effective interventions to support teacher wellbeing.

In the same line, narrative inquiry provided a comprehensive framework for investigating how the participants interpret the world through their stories (Mertova & Webster, 2007; Kim, 2015). It allowed us to engage with participants' stories within a holistic framework that fosters meaning making. In

this study, I delved into participants' stories to uncover the realities of their wellbeing experiences (Atkinson, 2007).

Human experiences unfold in a narrative sequence, commonly called a story, and emerge through the collaboration between researchers and participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Barkhuizen, 2011). This collaboration, occurring in various periods, social settings, and contexts, facilitates the process of meaning-making. It amplifies participants' voices as they employ their own words to convey their experiences, ultimately leading to a shared purpose (Flick, 2010). Through storytelling, individuals express their emotions and contribute to the process of meaning-making.

Given the nature of the study, purposive sampling has been employed to select participants. According to Cohen et al. (2007), purposive sampling entails researchers carefully selecting cases for the sample based on the analysis of the narratives/sharing (Hallmark & Ardoin, 2021). To ensure proper data analysis, Creswell (2011) and Kiger and Varpio (2020) suggest including an appropriate number of participants. The selected four participants are from the Kathmandu Valley. This location was chosen for the study as it allowed convenient access to the participants and enabled regular interactions. Stories from experienced secondary English teachers teaching in community schools were collected through interviews. These interviews enabled us to gather detailed information about the lived experiences of the participants (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). The pseudonymous names of the four participants in the study are Dinesh, Shree, Gopi, and Muna.

Dinesh, the first participant, teaches at a community school in the Kathmandu District. After completing his bachelor's degree in Rupandehi district, he pursued higher education in Kathmandu. He later transitioned to a community school, accumulating twenty years of experience in both private and community institutional settings at the lower and secondary levels. I conducted the first-round interview with him at his school and conducted further interviews in different settings.

Similarly, Shree, the second participant, has been teaching at a community school in the heart of the valley for seven years. Originally from Dhading, he moved to Kathmandu after securing a permanent appointment as a secondary-level teacher through the Teacher Service Commission. All interviews with Shree took place at his school. Gopi, the third participant, is a permanent teacher at a community school on the outskirts of the Kathmandu district. He was born in Taplejung in 1971 and possesses over twenty-five years of teaching experience in private and community schools. Gopi teaches English from grades nine to twelve and coordinates extracurricular activities at the school. The only female participant in the study was Muna, who teaches in the western part of the valley. She holds an MPhil degree from Kathmandu University and has taught English to secondary-level students for eleven years. Ms. Muna, born and raised in Terai, demonstrates a dynamic personality. She serves as the +2 coordinator at her school and teaches five periods a day.

The interview was in the Nepali language, which were transcribed and analysed the recorded data after collecting information from secondary-level English language teachers and then put on the table for coding and categorizing. Coding helped us organize

and group into categories of similar characters and patterns (Saldana, 2016). It further helped generate proper discussion and bring novelty to writing. Themes from the research questions and the participants' responses were used as codes, and were further groped and categorised in terms of the commonality and differences. Then those categories helped to create themes and subthemes related to the perception of teacher wellbeing. Patterns for the stories and sub-patterns that linked them to relevant types of literature and theory were created. Finally, based on themes generated from transcribing, coding, categorising, and analysing the themes, the meaning is created.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, I present teachers' experiences and perceptions on teacher wellbeing. I engaged in an in-depth discussion to derive meaning. It became evident that the concept of wellbeing among teachers is relatively underexplored. Following the prolonged engagement with the participants and a comprehensive exploration of their wellbeing narratives, several valuable insights emerged. These insights, gleaned from their stories, were critically examined, shedding light on their understanding of professional wellbeing.

Positive Emotion and Respect in the Profession

English language teachers at the secondary level perceive their wellbeing as closely tied to positive emotions and professional respect within their profession. Positive emotions, such as happiness and enjoyment, are integral to their job satisfaction and dedication. English language proficiency, a valuable skill, brings them recognition and a unique status in their family, society, and school. Furthermore, the adoption of English as a primary language of teaching learning in institution has elevated their importance and garnered them greater respect, contributing to their happiness. The love and appreciation from students, coupled with the pleasure and enjoyment they find in teaching and building strong relationships, play a significant role in their overall wellbeing. This combination of positive emotions, professional recognition, and enjoyment in their profession contributes to their happiness and job satisfaction as English language educators.

Competent, dynamic, and dedicated English language teachers are crucial in successfully implementing EMI (Karki, 2021). As a result, English language teachers in community schools receive heightened respect. Professional respect is another source of happiness. Shree, another participant, highlighted, *"Despite the challenges and responsibilities, we receive high respect in schools. I was treated differently and entrusted with implementing new policies and programmes, despite not holding any official position."* He further narrated a story:

> *It was the story of 2016. I was appointed as an English teacher at the school and offered a class in grade three. I taught four periods a day. Though not assigned any other responsibilities, I started conducting assemblies in English and conducted many English-based programs. My senior English teacher praised the work, and the school administration decided to give me the coordinator position only after three months of joining that school. It is the respect to me I got because of my English.*

English language teachers derive happiness and positive feelings from their language skills (Seligman et al., 2009). They also find

happiness in the love and appreciation they receive from their students and institutions. Muna emphasized the positive energy generated by students' love. Therefore, the student's behaviour and results contribute to teachers' happiness. She shared,

> *The reason that I am sustained here in the school for a long is my English, and I have a unique position in my family, society, and school because of the English language. I am happy because I am an English teacher.*

Similarly, pleasure and enjoyment significantly affect teachers' happiness and wellbeing. Gopi finds fun and enjoyment in building good relationships with students, which contributes to his wellbeing. He added, *"Good relationships with pupils give me fun and enjoyment. It is my wellbeing, My happiness, and my satisfaction."* Dinesh viewed, *"My wellbeing is part of my pleasure in teaching English."* Dinesh connects his wellbeing with the pleasure he derives from teaching English. The experiences of Muna and Shree indicate that pleasure, joy, and happiness derived from their profession are integral to their wellbeing. Pleasure can be manifested in various ways for English teachers, such as engaging in teaching-learning activities, listening to students' concerns, and sharing expectations. The respect they receive also brings them pleasure. Shree shared how being addressed as 'sir' before he even started teaching made him emotional and responsible, creating a pleasant situation.

Balance and Status in the Society

Community school English teachers perceive teacher wellbeing as a delicate equilibrium between various facets of their lives. This balance encompasses personal, professional, and community dimensions, all of which play a significant role in shaping their overall sense of wellbeing. Maintaining harmony between their teaching responsibilities and personal lives is a paramount concern for these educators, as they often experience unique pressures within their community school roles. Balancing the demands of their profession with family and personal time is a shared challenge, with many teachers considering this equilibrium essential for their overall wellbeing. Economic stability also holds a crucial place in their perception of wellbeing, providing them a sense of security and motivation to continue serving their community.

Maintaining wellbeing involves balancing personal and professional aspects of life. This balance encompasses various dimensions, such as personal life, economic stability, and relationships, significantly influencing teacher wellbeing. The terms "balance" and "status" intertwine in teachers' stories as crucial for maintaining wellbeing. According to Babic et al. (2022), teacher wellbeing fluctuates based on the relative weighting of positive resources versus negative factors and demanding challenges. For the participants, maintaining a balance between personal and professional life contributes to their sense of wellbeing. Muna expressed, "Balancing students, parents, and administration is crucial for my wellbeing." Similarly, Gopi shared his early teaching experience, highlighting the need for balance:

> *When I first started teaching, I felt inferior in spoken English, and my grammar was poor. Teaching required much more effort than simply passing an exam. I had to study and prepare five times more than I did for exams. As a bachelor's student, I juggled studying, teaching, and family responsibilities. While preparing for teaching and studying, I had little time for my family. Therefore, after learning about*

positive psychology, I started considering the management of my personal and professional life as a key aspect of my wellbeing.

The aforementioned narration reveals that English language teachers face more pressure in schools than other teachers (Chaudhary, 2011) due to their diverse roles. Consequently, finding time for family becomes a significant challenge, leading teachers to view work-life balance as an essential component of wellbeing. Shree narrated,

I vividly remember the challenges of managing my time when my daughter was born. It was a fortunate coincidence that her birth coincided with me securing a permanent job in Kathmandu. I had to adjust to teaching at a new school while caring for my new family members. Although my mother supported my wife and daughter, my wife always sought my company, which I struggled to provide due to being on school probation. I dedicated more time to my profession because it was a new school with a different culture and students. Managing balance equates to managing wellbeing.

In line with the above, research by Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) indicates that approximately 40% of teachers leave their jobs due to an imbalance between their profession and family life. Furthermore, a national survey on teacher wellbeing conducted by YouGov (2018) reported that 65% of teachers struggle to enjoy quality time with their families and friends. The same report highlighted that 62% of teachers work on weekends, and 60% use their holidays to balance work. Considering the participants' stories and the provided report, it becomes evident that balancing work and family life is a critical measure of wellbeing.

Economic stability and harmonious relationships are additional constituents of wellbeing. Economic stability holds significance for teachers' wellbeing; as Gopi noted, *"A stable economy is a green light for happiness and motivation. Unlike other government professionals, teachers are not provided with extra facilities. In such conditions, managing the needs of one's family and maintaining good relationships contribute to wellbeing."* Muna also emphasized the importance of economic stability for wellbeing. Day et al. (2006) supports this notion, stating that economic stability helps teachers sustain their profession and eliminates the need to seek additional income resources. Economic stability and status within the school and society motivate teachers to remain engaged (Babic et al., 2022).

Achievements and Satisfactions

English teachers view wellbeing as closely linked to achievement and job satisfaction, finding purpose and fulfillment through goal attainment, as per Seligman's perspective. Teachers like Dinesh and Muna exemplify the happiness derived from reaching career goals. They also emphasize the significance of positive relationships and a supportive school culture, highlighting the importance of collaboration, shared experiences, and solutions in reducing challenges and enhancing the joy of successes. These relationships, both with colleagues and students, are seen as crucial for emotional wellbeing.

The concept of achievement and satisfaction was explored during conversations with the participants, similar to Seligman. Seligman (2012) suggests that setting and accomplishing goals enhance our sense of wellbeing, motivating us to set new goals and find our

purpose in life. Dinesh shared his perspective on happiness and its connection to his profession. Despite his family's opposition, he pursued education instead of science, focusing on English studies. He set a goal to become an English teacher and worked hard to achieve it. Dinesh expressed his happiness and satisfaction with his current position, emphasizing that achieving his desired goal brought him joy. He shared,

> *As I already told you, my family was not in favour of sending me to the education sector, they instead wanted me to study science, but I liked education and started studying. Though I failed English in class nine, I joined the English group and completed it in 1988.*

His views align with Adler et al.'s (2016) perspective, which emphasizes the importance of accomplishment and satisfaction as dimensions of optimism and perseverance. When asked about other aspects of satisfaction in his teaching career, Dinesh recalled when he received his first salary and gave it to his mother. Seeing her overwhelmed with happiness motivated him to continue in his profession.Similarly, Muna shared a similar story of achieving job satisfaction and making teaching her career. She shared her initial days as:

> *I was not much interested in teaching. But slowly, I understood the art of teaching and realized how sensitive the profession is. Then I determined to be a good teacher. I spent about 12 years teaching and experiencing pleasure and pain. I am satisfied and could make my family satisfied. I chose it lately, but I achieved it.*

Her journey as a teacher began unintentionally but evolved into a conscious choice as she experienced the pleasure and challenges of the profession. Both of their views aligned with Sahito and Vaisenen (2018) viewed emphasizing the connection between language competence and happiness in teaching. The narratives of Dinesh and Muna further resonate with Gill Windle's perspective, which suggests that job satisfaction positively influences teacher retention and performance. Achieving goals in the profession contributes to lasting happiness. Hill and Together (2020) note that setting and achieving goals enhance our effectiveness and wellbeing, providing meaninig and progress in life.

Positive Relationships and Supportive Culture

English language teacher understands wellbeing as the positive relationships and a supportive school culture. Collaborative problem-solving and a culture of sharing within schools are seen as vital for reducing challenges and amplifying the joy of teaching. Positive associations in school and emotional support, are recognized as key factors in reducing stress and enhancing teacher satisfaction. On the contrary, poor communication and a lack of support are detrimental to teacher wellbeing. In essence, cultivating healthy relationships among educators, students, and school leaders is fundamental to promoting teacher wellbeing.

Teacher wellbeing is closely linked to positive relationships and supportive culture in the workplace. Teachers must create a positive culture within schools to address challenges and make progress (Mercer, 2020). Ekwulugo (2015) supports this idea, stating that a optimistic rapport with the school equips teachers with the skills to handle conflict and tension. Teaching English presents challenges such as unfocused classmates, inadequately

trained English language teachers, and students who need to practice grammar regularly (Al Hosni, 2014). Shree shared an incident that taught him a valuable lesson in managing a problematic student. In this regard, Shree shared:

> *A student, Samir, was notorious in class ten. He never did his work, and only he disturbed the class. I was new to that class; I did not know about him. I started being strict with him. It was the second last class of the day; I inquired about homework and threatened them with punishment if he did not do it again. To my surprise, he stood up with a bag and went out, saying, "Aulas Baira Pakh" (I will see you outside). I was shocked. I shared this incident with a senior colleague, who advised me to be polite and praise him if I wanted to control him. He would love you. Following him, I praised his handwriting, behaviour, and writing habits. He showed positive behaviour and did not disturb us in class. He got 54 on the exam and failed all subjects.*

Shree was advised to be more polite and praise Samir, resulting in a positive change in his behavior. This incident prompted Shree to collaborate with colleagues to solve common classroom problems. Muna and Dinesh shared similar experiences, highlighting the value of a sharing culture in finding solutions and deriving satisfaction from their profession (Mercer, 2020). Muna's story demonstrated how a sharing culture within a school creates a family-like environment where challenges are reduced through shared experiences while joy is amplified through shared successes. She shared:

> *It worked, and now we have a family environment. They helped me as I started helping. They realized that helping and sharing adds joy to the profession. Nowadays, school is like a family where I have Jethi didi (elder sister) and Kaka (uncle) in school. We share our pain and pleasure, which relieves the profession.*

In this line, Collie et al. (2020) emphasize that maintaining teacher wellbeing and reducing stress heavily rely on positive relationships with colleagues and receiving support. Similarly, Gopi reflected, "Positive relationships and student attachment keep the teacher refreshed and happy." Ekwulugo (2015) asserts that ensuring teachers' wellbeing involves cultivating positive and healthy relationships between teachers and students, as these relationships enhance teachers' ability to manage tension and conflict. Additionally, Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) also believe that a good contacts with pupils are related with teacher wellbeing and increased professional satisfaction. As teachers spend significant time with students, fostering positive relationships benefits both teachers and students.

Muna shared that she enjoys working with students and spends her leisure time listening to their ideas, problems, and experiences related to school and teachers. Muna provided an example where a student, Rita, approached her with a serious problem. She said, *"Rita was suffering from a personal psychological problem."* By offering suggestions and support, Muna alleviated Rita's distress and felt a sense of responsibility. This highlights how emotional attachment and fostering open communication can address hidden issues and contribute to personal growth. However, Shree noted that unhealthy relationships with students can be discouraging and lead to extra stress.

Social beings naturally seek connections to fulfil their emotional needs (Seligman, 2012). Gopi emphasized that positive relationships among teachers, students, and school leaders contribute to the wellbeing of everyone involved. He believed, *"One of the most enjoying factors for me in this profession is my student's positive response and sharing that we make during and after class."* Along the same line, Mercer (2020) found in her study that teachers enjoy their profession when they have positive relationships with colleagues and students, work in an encouraging environment, and experience a culture of sharing. Similarly, Le Cornu (2013) views positive collegial interactions as essential for improved teacher wellbeing. They create a sense of community, emotional support, and a safe space for taking risks and voicing concerns.

Competences and Engagements

Shree, an English teacher, exemplifies the relationship between competence and engagement, stating that his competence in English keeps him engaged in his profession. He confidently said, *"My English language competence makes me engage in this profession."* He added, *"You know you are involved when you do not know you don't or observe to learn."* He emphasizes the importance of being involved without realizing it or consciously observing it. Shree's experience highlights that expertise in a particular area sustains prolonged engagement. Hanaysha (2016) emphasizes the importance of employee engagement in retaining talent and increasing productivity. In the context of teaching, prolonged engagement and the resulting competence led to satisfaction, a component of wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012). Thus, the combination of engagement and competence fosters overall happiness and wellness.

Engagement and competence are closely intertwined in the teaching profession. Competence leads to engagement and ensures productive outcomes. According to Danielson (2007), teaching is an art that requires competence to foster deep engagement and engaging in any activity leads to mastery. Similarly, Seligman (2012) defines engagement as *"Flow,"* a state of attachment, concentration, and involvement in activities.

Furthermore, competence encompasses the management of social and emotional experiences and personal abilities, which are fundamental for teacher wellbeing (Collie, 2020). Muna highlights the significance of competence in managing professional challenges as an English teacher. Muna showed determination: *"Competence in content, i.e., English language and engagement in profession give the strength to maintain professional challenges."* She further added:

> *Teaching has many challenges as it is an art. See, the language itself is a challenge for ESL speakers. Similarly, we English language teachers are in the center school where the notion of EMI came. I have many challenges like maintaining English speaking zone, helping co-teachers as they are crawling in EMI, teaching large classes with diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and lacking teaching materials. In such cases, maintaining all these challenges and continuing teaching in a healthy, happy environment, we need competence in managing skills. I need to have the skills to manage my challenges. I can handle professional challenges because of my long engagement in this profession. High engagement and dedication are needed to cope with the challenges so we can be happy and enjoy our profession.*

Her narrative emphasizes that competence is essential for overcoming challenges in teaching-learning, especially for English language teachers at the center of language instruction in schools. Furthermore, competence relates to teacher psychology, enabling them to navigate challenges effectively. Mental and emotional competence helps individuals manage daily life, handle demands and problems, and perform their duties successfully (Birchall, 2021). Dinesh shared, *"Competence develops trust and self-confidence in the classroom, reducing stress. Teachers who have faith in their skills at home and school experience higher levels of wellbeing."* Day et al. (2006) supports the similar idea that competency fosters motivation, autonomy, and trust, benefiting teacher wellbeing.

Gopi emphasizes that teachers with good social and emotional skills, classroom management abilities, personal emotional balance, and an accepting nature enjoy their profession. He shared, *"A teacher with good social and emotional skills, classroom management skills, ability to maintain personal emotion, good social behaviour and accepting nature enjoy this profession."* Competence in content and behavioral skills contributes to happiness and satisfaction. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) also highlight the importance of competence in content, social behavior, classroom management, individual counseling, and personal relationships for teacher happiness and success. Collie et al. (2020) emphasize the mutual relationship between social and emotional intelligence and wellbeing, suggesting that higher wellbeing can be achieved through better social and emotional competence among instructors.

Engagement and competence are intertwined in the teaching profession, with competence fostering prolonged engagement and happiness. Competence enables teachers to overcome challenges and maintain their wellbeing. Positive relationships, supportive cultures, and a sense of accomplishment are significant aspects of teacher wellbeing. By exploring the participants' perceptions, it can be deciphered that the connection between competence, engagement, and overall wellbeing in the teaching profession.

Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the perception of teacher wellbeing among secondary-level English language teachers employing Narrative Theory. The study underlines the significance of multiple factors in shaping the teachers' wellbeing. Firstly, it emphasizes the crucial role of balance, both in personal and professional life, as well as maintaining harmonious relationships. Achieving this equilibrium, economic stability, and societal status emerge as fundamental elements contributing to teacher wellbeing. A teacher's status within the school and society reflects and influences their overall sense of wellbeing. Moreover, the study recognizes the profound impact of achievements and satisfaction on teacher wellbeing. The attainment of set goals, such as becoming an English teacher, brings happiness and fulfillment, motivating teachers to set new objectives and derive purpose from their profession.

Furthermore, the study highlights the pivotal role of positive relationships and a supportive workplace culture. Positive interactions with colleagues, administrators, and the broader school community significantly benefit teachers' wellbeing. This culture of sharing and collaboration aids teachers in addressing challenges and advancing in their careers, ultimately enhancing their overall sense

of wellbeing. In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the perceptions of wellbeing among secondary-level English language teachers. It underscores the importance of fostering positive emotions, maintaining balance, achieving personal and professional goals, cultivating supportive relationships, and nurturing a collaborative culture to promote teachers' happiness and wellbeing in their demanding profession.

As there is limited debate and discussion of teacher wellbeing in Nepal, the study can be a milestone for researchers and wellbeing practitioners. Although this study explored secondary-level English language teachers' perception of wellbeing, the practical aspect needs to be explored by the other study. Using fewer participants from urban areas' stories might not explore the accurate perception of the teachers teaching in remote or other situations. So, further study can be done using a large sample and other research methodologies. Similarly, the study side and particular types of wellbeing can be examined in different situations and places.

Acknowledgement: I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Laxman Gnawali, PhD, for his steady support and guidance throughout my research journey. His invaluable insights have truly shaped and enriched my research. Thank you for being an exceptional mentor and motivator. His support in this paper is valuable. And I am equally thankful to the University Grant Commission (UGC) for providing a research grant for the study.

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Notions of Identity and Investment in Second Language Acquisition: Bangladeshi Indigenous Students' Perspectives

Ghazi Shahadat Hossain

Abstract

Identity and investment are closely related to second language learning in many contexts. Many studies have been done on how second language learning affects the identity and investment of second language learners. Banking on the theory of identity, this article investigates how and why Bangladeshi students, belonging to indigenous communities, invest in second language learning and how their investment in L2 is linked to their agency. The study adopted an interpretative qualitative research paradigm and more precisely, utilized narrative inquiry as a research method to explore the lived experiences situated in a particular time, space and context. The findings exhibit that Bangladeshi ethnic students have made financial, physical, psychological and academic investments to own the linguistic, cultural and symbolic capital of English as a second language and such investment seems to be impacted by factors such as generating new identities (real or imagined), agency, neoliberalism and social justice. The research findings tend to have implications for second language teachers, researchers, SLA curriculum and material designers and other stakeholders in the Bangladeshi context or elsewhere.

Keywords: *SLA, indigenous students, narrative inquiry, Bangladesh, investment, identity.*

Introduction

The connection between language learning and identity is closely intertwined and many experts observe that language learning is a process of identity formation. For example, when learners are engaged in various school practices and activities in the classrooms with a view to learning a second language, it is interesting that those activities and practices influence students' sense of self or identity and how their identities transform across time, space and contexts. Observing the intricate and close link between identity and language learning, more precisely second language learning, many SLA scholars and researchers (Norton, 2000; Norton, 2006; Block, 2007) have become interested to explore and comprehend the link between them and as a result, many vibrant research studies have been conducted in the past to understand the relation between SLA and power, agency, investment and identity. In this article, I have made an attempt to critically explore the relationship between identity and investment and the English language learning experiences

of a group of Bangladeshi tertiary-level indigenous students living in different hilly districts of Bangladesh through the theoretical lens of identity and investment theory.

Background of the Study

English is generally stated as a second language in Bangladesh, although in the strict sense of the term, it is actually a foreign language considering its role and functionality in the context of the country. Like many other South Asian countries, Bangladesh was under British colonial rule for nearly 190 years and its institutional practices have been shaped by the notion of colonial, global and neoliberal influences. So, English is studied rigorously as a subject in various public, private, government and non-government institutions with the goal that the mastery of the language will enable the learners to increase their linguistic capital and will help them to find better opportunities related to careers, education, and to migrate in many developed countries. So, driven by both integrative and instrumental motivations (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), learners reveal a mad rush to learn English and such 'English fever' or 'English mania' is accommodated by various public and private institutions by offering courses on developing fluency in English. Therefore, with the purpose of empowering students, and equipping them with this essential skill, the government of Bangladesh made it a mandatory subject to be studied from primary level to higher secondary level. Besides, many public and private universities also offer graduate programs in English literature to cater for the needs of students. Ironically enough, although universities offer these courses to be specialized in English literature, students' predominant motivation reflects a penchant not for literature but for developing a capacity to have a strong command over English with the aim of participating in the global job market.

Status of Indigenous Students

There are about 45 distinct indigenous communities in Bangladesh living in different parts of Bangladesh and a large portion of them inhabit the districts of Hill Tracts such as Rangamati, Bandarban, and Khagrachhari. Although Bangladesh is primarily a monolingual community, these ethnic minorities are generally characterized by their own distinct languages, cultural practices and living styles. As Bangla is the medium of instruction in most schools and colleges, they use their mother tongues at home and use Bangla in educational settings. So, most students belonging to ethnic minorities complete their primary, secondary and higher secondary education in Bangla medium schools and colleges and then go for higher education at universities (Khanam, 2021). Thus, "indigenous children do not have the opportunity to study in their mother tongues, and are therefore, at risk for language loss" (Khanam, 2021, p. 201). Living far from modern civilizations and amenities, indigenous students in Bangladesh have very limited choices and opportunities as far as their education and careers are concerned. However, driven by global issues such as the commodification of English, globalization, and neoliberalism, they are also enrolling in the English departments of many universities with the objective of building their linguistic capital.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the main learning objective of enabling and equipping undergraduate students with the skills and knowledge of English poems, novels, dramas, and literary terms used in English literature, and comprehending the philosophical forces moulding the Western minds, an increasing

number of students, especially female students enrol in the English department of our university is to build up communicative competence in English. Interestingly enough, in recent times, the number of male and female students belonging to ethnic minorities living in remote areas of Hill Tracts are also on the rise. Despite their poor linguistic and educational background and their evident struggles to actively participate in classroom activities in EMI (English medium instruction) and to fulfil the assessment requirements, the trend of enrolment of indigenous students is on the rise. Such development has triggered the interest of the researcher to explore the reasons behind the interest of students of ethnic origin in the study of English language and literature programs offered by the university. To put it another way, the researcher is interested in finding out and critically examining the factors behind indigenous tertiary students' motivation behind learning English in the post-COVID context.

The Rationale of the Study

This study may provide a better and clearer picture of adult ethnic students' sense of self, identity, agency and the kind of barriers they encounter in their trajectories of second language acquisition. Also, it tends to have implications primarily for institutions such as schools, colleges and universities offering graduate programs in English language and literature. It might help them to conceptualize the new and recent trends in student enrolment and adjust their programs to cater for the needs of diverse students hailing from multiple backgrounds and ethnicities. Besides, it may also provide new insights to the designers of curriculum and syllabus, textbook writers, and material developers to update their relevant texts and documents in conformity with the findings of the study. Finally, it appears to be a humble contribution to the broader global research hub in this area and helps to comprehend and clarify the contextual picture of the issue.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study undertaken are:

(1) to identify the factors impacting indigenous students' choice of English as a subject of graduation,

(2) to explore the nexus between their identities and their second language acquisition,

(3) to reveal the practices they are engaged in to materialize their real or imagined goals,

(4) to bring the challenges they encounter in their pursuit of second language acquisition trajectories to light.

Research Questions

(1) How do indigenous students in Bangladesh invest in second language acquisition?

(2) How does their investment in second language acquisition help to shape their identities and agency?

Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

In this article, the research has used a number of key terms such as identity, agency, capital, and motivation. By identity, he means a second language learner's sense of self in relation to society and its role in shaping his or her identity. And by agency, the researcher points at second language learner's exercise of power s/he holds and their capacity to make a choice and the idea of capital entails that

SLA learners get engaged in many practices at schools or other social settings by investing time, money and energy with the purpose of fulfilling their desires and materializing the plans, actual or imagined. Finally, motivation "refers to the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it …" (Ortega, 2011, p.168). In other words, motivation is the impetus behind doing something, and in this regard, the reason behind learners' engagement in learning a second language.

Theoretical Review

As already pointed out, the issue of identity and second language learning has been one most vibrant research ideas in the wider field of applied linguistics. According to Duff (2012), identity refers to "one's core self (or senses of self)" (p. 415). Occasionally, it is synonymously used to mean subject positions or subjectivities. Traditionally, it is "understood in terms of one's connection or identification with a particular social group, the emotional ties one has with that group, and the meanings that connection has for an individual" (Duff, 2012, p. 415). Identity theory postulates that identity is socially constrained and constructed or constituted. Some of the key relevant terms in the theorization of identity theory are social comparison, social distinctiveness in prevailing intergroup relationships, processes of categorization as self- and -other, realization of social identity. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), Norton (2006) and Block (2007), the three seminal contributors in identity theory, the most relevant and highly preferred lens to study identity in applied linguistics and SLA is the narratives provided by the second language learners and postmodern conceptualization of identity as fluid, dynamic, contradictory and ever-changing. They also characterize identity as socially situated and constructed. Their theoretical postulations imply that individuals are not in a position to choose their identities freely who they aspire to be. Rather, they have to negotiate their identity positioning in the wider "economic, historic, and sociopolitical structures that they inhabit and which inhabit them" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, as cited in Ortega, 2011).

As already identified that researchers in second language acquisition subscribe to a poststructuralist view of identity as ever-shifting, dynamic and as a result, some recurrent terms used in the relevant studies are *fissures, fragmented, shifting, hybrid, gaps, seepage, splits, decentered, and splinterings* to encapsulate poststructuralist notion. Further, most of the research studies on the issue portray society as a setting of struggles or integrate the macro perspective of the context with the implication that society needs transformation and targets social justice for second language learners (Ortega, 2011).

Another two crucial concepts in the second language identity research are investment and agency. Investment is the main element in Norton's (1995) crucial model of identity theory in which he asserts "If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (p.17). Such investment made by the second language learners can only be figured out by taking into consideration his or her desires, identities, and the forces that shape their fluid identities since all these factors fashion the various amounts of investment they make across time, space and context. Related to this investment are the symbolic and affective "affiliations to various communities of practice" (Ortega, 2011, p. 242) and some of them are urgent, and real, sought after by learners immediately while

others are available in the imagination, called 'imagined communities. The last element comprising Norton's model of identity is the conception of the right to speak, and it is held that in the context of second language learning, the agency of second language learners is not equally distributed as they, most often, are positioned as speakers sans that right (Ortega, 2011).

As already hinted in the last line of the last paragraph, an important construct of second language identity study "refers to people's ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation" (Duff, 2012, p. 417). It is also defined as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112). It is this agency that makes people able to imagine or assume new roles of identity and perform new actions to actualize their goals. The agency is linked to power, and situated context of society as learners having the control over their choices, lives and social circumstances are highly likely to succeed in language learning. On the other hand, lack or absence of agency may turn learners passive, reluctant and unmotivated in educational contexts (Duff, 2012).

Empirical Studies

Sacklin (2015) in her PhD research explores the relationship between identity, investment and SLA in the community context of ESL classrooms. Banking on a case study of an ESL adult learner, more precisely a LESLLA (Low-Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition), she investigates the social milieu of the student's life, her identity, and the way classroom space in the ESL class fashions her investment. The ethnographic interviews in her research reveal that the investment made by her in language learning is attached to her identity in contradictory and multifarious ways. For instance, in spite of her huge investment in learning English, she lacked participation in ESL classes and thus the researcher claims that non-participation cannot be identified with non-investment. The study also finds out that the main factors behind her investment in English learning were her self-advocacy and her non-participation in the ESL classes induced by her poor education and obsolete teaching techniques to teach English, her relation with the teachers, and her commitment to the family.

Likewise, Ali (2021) in her case study on the role of investment and identity in language learning of Spanish heritage speakers argues that investment in language learning is also an investment in building identity. More specifically, her research study explores the investment of ten participants' language learning experiences, who enrolled in HL (Heritage Language) Spanish course. Employing narrative analysis as a research strategy, the study shows the differing degrees of investment in the HL and the identity related to heritage plays a crucial role in the investment. Although in a different context like China, Teng (2019) also conducted a similar research study to gain insight into the nexus between identity, investment, agency and learning of English as a second language. His findings reveal the changing patterns of identity across and within various communities. Interestingly, it shows while the investment in language learning shapes the identity of learners, learner identity also impacts investment in learning English. Furthermore, Teng's study informs identity as a socially situated, negotiated, constructed, complex and dynamic entity integrating four factors, such as learners' agency, the gap between the learners' imagined community and practised community, their ideology

and cognitive awareness, and perception of capacity building of English language learning community.

Norton and Williams (2012) identify the role of digital tools and the way they shape social meanings in diverse economic and sociopolitical contexts impacting the investments of teachers and learners and find out that they take up different identities by sometimes embracing digital devices or sometimes rejecting them. Some of the remarkable research studies centring around the relationship between language and investment across diverse global contexts focus on the linguistic, social and cognitive investment made by Chinese students in EMI (English Medium Instruction), (Arkoudis & Davison, 2008), comprehending how and why Chinese language learners are interested in standard English in Singapore to be academically sound (De Costa, 2010), investments of English language teachers in South America to have imagined identities for various affordances such as virtual and face-to-face interaction with international communities (Reeves, 2009; Sanches Silva, 2013; Carazzai, 2013).

Finally, Afreen and Norton (2022) investigate the investment and identity of teacher of Bangla as a heritage language in the context of Canada and find out the subject's identity and investment is closely linked with her ideological perception "in the importance of HL maintenance for cultural continuity" between Bangla and English (p.152). The study also reveals that HL teachers may function as cultural collaborators, mentors, community members and innovators.

Thus, the relationship between learning English as a second language and learners' investment and agency is impacted by a plethora of crucial factors such as learners' improved images in the communities they belong to, their negotiation of identity in the greater social, economic and socio-political realities, the increase of capital in the real or imagined communities, their transformation in the context of fluid identities, and the diverse affordances the investment in SLA yields against the backdrop of a virtual culture of the globalized world. In other words, the studies conducted on the nexus between second language learning and learners' investment, agency and identity show that SLA learners have a variety of reasons such as acquiring material and symbolic resources shaped by learners' desires and dreams, self-regulation, self-advocacy, building identity and linguistic, social and cognitive capacity building.

In spite of identity being a crucial concern in second language learning, like many other settings, research on language learner identity and investment in Bangladesh has received very little attention and the researcher could not find any research conducted in the context of indigenous language learners living in the Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. Thus, a research gap has been sighted and through this study, he had attempted to fulfil this gap.

Methodology

The constructivist paradigm has aligned better with my research topic. Social constructivism is an approach to qualitative research and is often linked with the interpretivist paradigm. In this paradigm, people or individuals try to explore and figure out the world in which they work and live and the subjective meanings they or the researchers dig out are often varied and multiple. Here the objective of the research is to understand the complex and situated surroundings and the views of the participants about the situation are to be studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In my endeavour to set up the nexus between the constructivist paradigm and my research topic, I constructed meanings as I have interacted with indigenous students studying at my university and have come to know their perceptions and observations about second language learning experiences, their motivating factors, their fluid identities, the kind of future they envision, and the challenges they encounter while going through studies and the initiatives they have taken to address them. Through the narration of their lived experiences and the use of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews, I have made attempts to delve into their perspectives, systems of beliefs, and observations which are constructed culturally, socially, intellectually and historically. The inductive and interpretive nature of my research has enabled me to generate meanings out of the data culled in the field. The socially situated and negotiated perspectives coming out of the meaningful interaction have helped me to perceive the varied, multiple, value-loaded contextual realities underlying the dialogues between the participants and me, the researcher.

Narrative Inquiry as my Method of Inquiry

In this study on the identity and investment of second language learners, I have utilized narrative inquiry as a research method because it allowed me to elicit the lived experiences of minoritized students, their struggles and challenges related to language learning, and their language learning practices as a form of investment. Similarly, the stories narrated by students from one particular ethnicity have provided me with another perspective to triangulate the validity and credibility of stories narrated by another student belonging to a different ethnicity. Webster and Mertova (2007) argue that "narrative inquiry is set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories" (p.1). Further, they reiterate that it is suitable for capturing the subtleties and complexities of human experiences in learning and teaching.

The argument in support of using narrative inquiry as a research method in the discipline of education is also echoed by Chase (2018) as she contends that the idea of narrative entails the study of the narratives of institutions, which contain many materials and discourse generated by many diverse organizations and entities. She observes:

> *…when official speeches, reports, websites, or everyday talk in schools, courtrooms, workplaces, social media, and political hearings express who "we" are (e.g., as an organization, profession, or nation), what we're doing, where we've been, where we're going, and why, we can explore the institutional narratives the express. (p. 948)*

Therefore, the socially or institutionally situated narrative texts of indigenous students representing social or institutional performance have supplied ample foundation to delve into the practice of the second language acquisition process in the various layers of tertiary educational institutions in Bangladesh and have allowed me to know the stories so far unheard of.

Research Tools

For data collection, the researcher obtained written reflections of eleven indigenous students (S1-S11) studying at a private university of Chittagong as this way of data

elicitation enabled the research participants to "record (primarily by writing or typing, but potentially also by audio or video recording) their experiences or views in relation to a series of questions or prompts" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 134). The participants were selected purposively based on their availability, their uniqueness as a member of a particular ethnicity, and their willingness to participate in the research. Then the data were analyzed for coding and development of themes in conformity with the thematic analysis guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Findings

A number of themes have appeared from the data culled from the research participants and keeping the theoretical postulations and literature reviewed in the earlier sections, the findings have been organized into their sections, viz. investment, identity and agency.

Investment

The collected data show that the indigenous students have invested their time, money, energy and merit in using a number of resources for learning English as a second language. To begin with, the institution in which they study is far from their original habitat and many of them have to leave their parents and near and dear ones and live in the city in which their university is located. Further, the institution in which they have studied is relatively expensive since it is a private university and they have to pay for each semester as a tuition fee. Also, to build up their linguistic capital in English, they were engaged in many diverse learning activities with the aim of improving their skills in the second language. For example, S11 articulates his investment in this way:

> *Secondly, in my Secondary and Higher Secondary study life, I went through many grammatical errors. Later, I improved my grammatical errors through a lot of practice. The last one is my pronunciation and still struggling with it. I hope I will solve this problem immediately.*

Similarly, S7, who is doing a BA (Hons) in English at a private university in Chittagong, observes that accomplishing his studies is his highest priority. He is paying his own tuition fee by tutoring students privately. He is also planning to invest in his society by writing a book on language teaching and setting up a school in his area to empower his community. He maintains that *"also apart from all this, there are barely some English teachers out there in the villages. I would like to be one of those who would make countless efforts for all those people"*.

Further, S6 shares her thoughts about the practical necessity of learning English and justifies the investment in learning English. She reiterates that without knowing English, it is not possible to communicate with the global world and to be successful in her career, which is why she wants to work hard to have an excellent command of the language. She states, *"I think that it's very necessary to learn in English or everyone in the digital or Dynamic era. Personally, I like to learn in English very sincerely and cordially from my breach of heart"*. To participate in global communication, she is ready to invest more as she adds, *"I am now trying to improve myself by reading more English books, movies, newspapers and have improved a lot"*. S1 echoes almost similar opinion stating that she has enrolled in the English department as the command of the English language will enable her to communicate with a global audience. She also shares that she has a love for the English language and literature and she wants

to share these thoughts with her community. Furthermore, S5 reports that she had engaged herself in building her linguistic capital since her childhood by reading fables, and novels, and watching English series and movies in the classrooms, she was involved in reading, writing, discussing with her classmates textbooks, participating in class lectures, critical and close reading of many books.

Identity

Most of the reflection write-ups by students belonging to the minoritized communities exhibit that learning English is connected to their formation of new identities, real or imagined. For instance, S5 says that she wants to be a polyglot and observes that the acquisition of English is her dream because it will enable her to create a new identity. She shares that it will help her to travel abroad and communicate with people from diverse cultures and know about their customs and traditions. She is also planning to go abroad for higher education and her English skills will enable her to actualize her plan. More importantly, she articulates her excellent command of English will enable her a new social identity because she will be able to contribute to society by teaching English to youngsters. She shares:

> *I am determined to continue learning English, and now this is my goal: to graduate from this subject so that I could be a qualified person to help the youngsters and motivate them to learn more about the outside world. This way, I will develop my identity in my society and country.*

Likewise, S4 thinks that learning English will empower her and bring career opportunities for her. Besides, it will add to her prestige in society and she will be considered as a property for the society and the country. She states, *"There is a saying, that language is power, and as English is our international language it becomes a more demanding and more acceptable language to every country".* She also observes that knowing English guarantees a job and "if a student like me can get a good job, the family members will be proud, the society people will also show respect to that family, that person will be considered a property to the country". Furthermore, S1 relates her identity to her community and is interested in bringing about changes in her society by teaching English language and English literature.

In the similar manner, S10 and S11 reflect how they struggled while she enrolled in the English department, in terms of understanding lectures while writing and speaking grammatically correct sentences and pronunciation. And she had to work hard to overcome those challenges and ultimately, her hard work has paid off and now she has a changed identity as she states, *"In my opinion, this achievement boosts my personality and capability. Now it makes me sure I can do anything staying here or in a foreign country".* Another student (S7) belonging to a different ethnicity envisions another identity for him as an English teacher, setting up a school in his locality and making enormous efforts to teach English to the community children. Not unlike S7, S3 also shares that she has harboured the dream of becoming an English teacher since her childhood and she is desirous of improving her skills in English to materialize her dream and ensure proper learning opportunities for the community children.

In addition, S8 also points out that his investment in the English language and literature is related to his imagined identity as regarded as an educated and respectable man in his community. He imagines that as an educated person, he will reform his society

by increasing the literacy rate and providing counselling or mentoring services. He shares his imagined identity in the following way:

> *They know me in society as a great person So, it is a great identity to me, getting enough love and respect from the general people in society. They like me to attend any important functions and allow me to deliver speeches in society programmes, and culture programmes.*

Then, S9 also acknowledges the contribution of the English language and literature in shaping her identity as a globally informed individual as she states, *"the study of English literature helps us understand the world in all its social, political, economic, and cultural aspects through stories, novels, poems, and plays".*

Agency

Some of the students in their reflection have expressed that being engaged in the learning of English language and literature has empowered them and now they are able to exercise their agency while making decisions on their careers and other important issues of life. For example, S2 shares how learning English and doing an MA in English helped her in her decision-making about her future career:

> *Since it is an important language having a Master's degree in (ELT)has benefited me in many ways. It has helped me to decide my profession and also gave me the opportunity to learn about teaching. In future, I want to become a professor so it has definitely boosted my career opportunities.*

Knowing English as a global skill has given her an opportunity to communicate with foreigners improved her socialization skills and confidence and widened her opportunities in the job market. She further adds that her degree in English language and literature provided her with many learning opportunities and supplied a kind agency for setting her goals and getting stronger both mentally and professionally. Next, another male student(S8) from a different ethnic community thinks that having English at his disposal will give him a sort of agentive power to expand his knowledge and life internationally, and also to contribute to the intellectual growth of his society as he maintains, *"It is impossible to expand our life internationally, besides I want to be higher educated. To be highly educated, English knowledge must be needed in real life. So, i enrolled in BA (Hons) English"*

The agentive role played by English can also be traced in the reflection write-up by another indigenous student (S3) as she transfers her English skills in her job preparation and enjoys an added advantage in PowerPoint presentation, free handwriting, and spoken English. Reflecting in the same vein, S5 also talks about the empowering role of English in helping her to make decisions:

> *... determined to continue learning English, and now this is my goal: to graduate from this subject so that I could be a qualified person to help youngsters and motivate them to learn more about the outside world. This way, I will develop my identity in my society and country.*

It is obvious the nexus between the development of her agentive power, decision-making capacity and her command over English as a second language.

Discussion and Implications

The data analysis of Bangladeshi indigenous students appears to disclose that their second language learning experiences seem to have been influenced by a number of factors related to identity, investment, agency and the idea of social justice.

The first factor that surfaces in the data reveals that minoritized students' motivation for second language learning is closely linked to their changing or fluid identity and they want to take advantage of second language learning to reshape their identities. Such penchants for taking up new identities with a view to effectively participate in global communication and grab global career opportunities have been evident in the reflection of S4 and S5. Such findings tend to corroborate the theoretical postulations of Norton (2006), Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) and Block (2007) as they term identity as dynamic, fluid and always in the process of transformation across place and time.

Another trait that appears to be visible in write-ups of students of ethnic origin is that their identities are socially situated or socially constructed. Rather than choosing their identity positionings freely, these students tend to negotiate them in the larger economic, sociopolitical and historical contexts in which they find themselves. Despite their upbringings in the remote rural hilly areas of Chittagong, the students came into contact with English as a second language, realized its potentialities, negotiated their identities in the context of the new milieu of the classroom and ended up taking up new identities in real or imagined spaces. Consequently, some of them aspired to be English language teachers and decided to contribute to the social development of the communities while others imbibed the spirit of neoliberalism and have planned to go abroad to harness more skills or for better career opportunities. Therefore, their transformed identities, fashioned by the experiences of learning English as a second language, are likely to conform to the tenets of identity theory by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004).

A further feature that has come up from the data analysis is that the minoritized students have all invested in second language acquisition by leaving their usual dwelling places in Hill Tracts and staying in cities, spending money for university tuition fees, getting engaged in discussion and critical thinking on various academic topics, participating in classes, making efforts in improving their grammatical and lexical skills, the receptive and the productive skills. Clearly, such investment made by them reveals their desire to acquire a range of skills related to their linguistic and cultural capital. In other words, their increased confidence, ambition and other psychological factors, as well as their desire to be successful professionals and members of imagined communities or changing societies, all have determined their degree of investment in L2 learning. Thus, such investment made by these students lends support to the implications of identity.

Finally, the other two key findings in this study are agency and the concept of social justice. Some students (S2, S5, S8) have expressed that having participated in English classes, achieving fluency in English empowered them, improved their mental capabilities and as a result, they were able to make a choice or decision with regard to their future career plan. In conformity with the concept of Duff (2012) and Ahearn (2001), some indigenous students, equipped with the global skill of English, have shown agency to take control of their goals assume new identity roles and pursue actions to materialize their dreams.

Last but not least, some of the students' ambition to become English teachers and then contribute to their communities for literacy and social development is linked to the idea of social justice. It appears that these indigenous students want to use their education for moral development and social transformation of their communities and this imagined aspiration echoes the idea of Dewey (1963) who asserts that education is a kind of preparation for life and "education is essentially a social process" (p. 58). At the same time, Frere's concept of social justice tends to be reflected in the dreams of these minoritized students since they tend to believe in "emancipatory and liberatory education" and initiate "social transformation through education" (Freire as cited in Troudi & Riyami, 2020, p. 264). It is likely that they regard teaching as a calling and want to utilize their English education as a means of making a difference in the world in which they live.

This article may have significant implications for SLA researchers, educators, policy makers at the policy level and more importantly for TESOL or ELT teachers and educators at the practice level. The concerned stakeholders are likely to derive some pieces of evidence regarding the factors influencing the investment of indigenous students in second language learning and thus design and develop materials, resources, syllabi and curriculum addressing and accommodating some findings in this article. Thus, the results of the study might help design and develop more focused materials and books catering for the global and local needs of students keeping their investment, capital and agency in focus. Further, the research issues addressed in this article might benefit global researchers by providing the contextual picture of second language learning and its impact on investment, identity and agency. Finally, the study may influence the language education policy in Bangladesh and help to plan and streamline the policies to make them more relevant, updated, and inclusive.

Conclusion

This research critically explored the nexus between Bangladeshi indigenous students' second language learning and the concepts of identity, investment and agency. In other words, it has attempted to investigate how and why ethnic students invested their time, money, and energy and become engaged in diverse intellectual and academic activities to develop their proficiency in English. To accomplish this purpose, the article has made use of the theory of identity and its relevant constructs such as identity, investment and agency.

The findings of the study communicate that Bangladeshi students belonging to minoritized groups have invested in the learning of L2 for the construction of new identities which will enable them to respond to local and global challenges. It further manifests their desires and ambition to master English as a symbol of linguistic and cultural capital to take part and access global and local career opportunities and knowledge hubs.

This study investigated the investment and identity issue of indigenous students living in the Hill Tracts of Chittagong and studying only at a certain private university of Chittagong and thus provides a limited picture of the issue. In other words, the limitation of the study lies in the fact that it does not give a representative picture as there are many other indigenous communities and students living in other parts of Bangladesh. Future researchers may focus on how and why the ethnic students living in other parts of Bangladesh get engaged in learning English as L2 and what is the role of investment, identity and agency in it.

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Student Identity in the EFL Classrooms

Arjun Basnet

Abstract

This paper explores various processes of identity construction of the students studying in English medium secondary schools in Nepal while learning English as a second /foreign language. The students in English medium schools actively participate in various classroom interactions, engage mutually in the learning process and share their feelings through which they make sense of themselves and construct various identities. By collecting information from interviews with eight participants, this qualitative study showcases that the EFL students construct multiple identities through the process of positioning, opportunity and transformation. Due to positioning, i.e., how the students situate themselves through their discursive practices and how they are situated by others, the students construct a number of identities namely, discourse identity, social identity, institution identity, authored identity, affinity identity and L1 identity, becoming and being as identity, learner identity and inner circle identity. Some of these identities, especially the former ones are constructed by virtue of opportunity whereas the later one is constructed due to transformation. These identities, however, were not found going parallel because the identities constructed in one field infused their identities in other fields.

Keywords: *student identity, English medium positioning, opportunity, transformation,*

Introduction

Identity is a social construct of 'being' co-constructed by 'self' and 'others' to explore how they see their life based on interactional practices. In the condition that SLA has not adequately addressed socially situated learning, identity hovers around locating central in the process of L2 learning (Norton & Mckenny, 2011). The students interlace between local culture and society and find their new existence into 'being' (Shields, 2015). While learning English, the teacher (re)tells the stories of personal experiences, the classroom as a learning community thrives, the students as an agency (Martin & Daiute, 2013 as cited in Shields, 2015) mimic the teacher and the identity is constructed in the classroom through their learning community as mastering a tool (Weinstein, 2004). Therefore, identity is a reference to social situations to generate meaning.

According to Wenger (1998), identity is temporary, constructed in a social setting, constant in process, containing historical, present and future experiences of a person. This shapes a pattern of thinking, speaking, behaving, and interacting skills that is socially, culturally

and historically constructed. In English medium schools, the students do not autonomously construct their identities in a social, cultural and political vacuum; rather with socio-cultural and socio-political discourses. While participating in the class, they construct multiple identities in one or the other way either by being a member of groups (as their social identities) or having certain roles (role identities), or being the unique biological entities that they are (personal identities) and so on (Basnet, 2021). As a researcher, I studied the processes of identity construction of English medium secondary level students in the context of Nepal to gain an L2 self in their natural EFL setting. This study therefore looks into the processes of identity construction of those students in English medium secondary level English classrooms in Nepal.

As an English professional teaching English in private schools in Kathmandu Valley, I found my students having diverse abilities, skills, attitudes, and behaviours. Some of them were good orators, while others were good writers. Similarly, a few students were less than proactive, while some others were highly competitive. A few of them may also be termed as slow learners. In this way, they constructed distinct identities like 'a good orator,' 'the School Head Boy,' 'a good writer,' 'the best speaker,' 'the slow learners' among other. In this regard, I thought that students' identity is 'an issue' (MacLure, 1993) found in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class while participating in different EFL activities (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). I believe that each learner constructs learner identity in L2 learning variously engaging in classroom interactions. The students who are good at study have second language (L2) identities (Block, 2007) and who are not competent enough are marginalized (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Each learner in the class is an active agent who constructs communicative identity in L2 learning. Learners, thus, may be situated as subconsciously legitimate members (Wenger, 1998) or as incompetent members in the class (Toohey, 2000) in terms of how active agents they are in the classrooms.

It has been observed that the students of English medium secondary schools engage more in classroom interaction, role play, dialogues, English speech, story/ essay writing competition, elocution, extempore, spell bee contest etc., make their learning meaningful negotiating with those activities and construct multiple identities. Their negotiation can be silent (Wenger, 1998), however, they gradually learn new cultural and linguistic norms, and experience a process of identity construction throughout their language learning trajectory.

Student identity is a fundamental notion that originated from the interest in the individual's subjective experience of being a learner. It looks at how the students understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how they understand possibilities for the future (Norton, 2013). In second/foreign language learning, students' identity is how the students see themselves and how they enact their roles within different EFL settings depending on the activities they actively participate in self and group. At the onset of learning English, their new experience of learning English shapes individual learners and other members of the classroom community construct learner identity.

The identity of a student is constructed throughout life from both formal and informal experiences of becoming a student as a part of the worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourses and practices (Basnet, 2021). Therefore, this helps to establish a dynamic, changing and context-

dependent nature to link between the individual experience of the learner and the analysis of the learning environment. The students construct their identities by understanding themselves, their actions and their mind based on time and space. It is possible by negotiating experience, community membership, nexus of multi-membership and relationship between local and global. They form identity based on their works, social discourses, grades, communicative power, narratives etc. and create their existence in the classroom through mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998).

In Nepal, English medium schools are being restructured into more personalized environments by making their small English learning communities and offering possibilities for interactions. Such interactions construct learner identity. Block (2007) perceives learner identity as an encompassing process of being active participants in their classroom and showing their relationship among the members constitutive of and constituted by the social environment. The multiple identities are constructed through discourse (Gee, 2001) to thrive importance of discourse in identity formation or identity in discourse (Varghese et al, 2005) of the students who are taken as agentive beings to search for linguistic resources (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). By engaging with my participants for a considerable length of time, studying of relevant literatures and issues prompted to formulate the research question for this study 'How do EFL learners contribute to various processes of identity construction?'

Review of Previous Studies

Student identity in L2 learning is found autonomous body of experiencing students' subjective experience. Different scholars carried out research substantially in this area. For instance, Li (2014) focused on students' constant (re)construction of their multiple identities by situating them within their immediate and imagined learning communities. Similarly, Falsafi (2010) found student identity as an analytical tool and a symbolic artefact in the construction of meaning about oneself and the other as a learner. He found that the subjective experience of the learners and their extrinsic forces shape learner identity in the classroom. Likewise, Shin (2015) concluded that learners' experiences influenced their identity development and their identity shift influenced by multiple socio-cultural contexts. In a similar vein, Shields (2015) shed light on the impact of students' classroom learning process and their culture supported to construct student identity. Teng (2019) focused that student identity is historically and socially formed and influences EFL learning of the students participating in practiced and imagined communities. While constructing student identity in EFL classrooms, Fatmawati (2021) stressed that the students do not only construct identity in EFL classroom but also learn English cultures, beliefs and values. In Nepal, Skinner (1990) pinpointed traditional ethnic and cast identity, social identity, gender identity and distinct identity (one-way students characterize themselves and others in their social world is based on the basis of a traditional-modern continuum) in her study investigating children's identity construction in and around formal schooling. More importantly, there is almost no research that has explored on the processes of students' identity construction in the Nepalese EFL classroom. It is, therefore, important to explore how EFL students learning English in English medium secondary schools construct multiple identities in their classroom practices.

Methodology

This qualitative research adopted an interpretive paradigm to explore students' identity by taking reference to the local classroom community and their live stories through narratives about everyday lives and their actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In my study context, an EFL classroom of an English medium secondary school is a natural setting for learning with multiple realities of social constructions. The process of identity construction in L2 learning is viewed in relation to local, temporal and specific settings to examine the students' identity in their own Community of Practice (CoP). I chose interpretivism for perceiving and understanding the processes of identity construction in English medium secondary schools in Nepal (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The identity of the students was explored through their narratives of experience which are culturally derived and historically situated (Blaxter et al., 2008). The meaning is generated from the subjective reference that is relational to time, space and context (Taylor, 2014) and the classroom cultures of students from English medium secondary schools in Nepal. This helped me to make meaning from students' narratives about how they constructed their second language identity from classroom participation and learning activities (Chen, Shek, & Bu, 2011). This interpreted classroom reality from multiple perspectives about their views, their background and experiences of EFL class (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2011). Furthermore, this helped to understand how students constructed identity through classroom interactions made in natural surroundings (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, Taylor, 2014) as social agents and members of particular groups. This made sense of the real classroom pedagogy of those students and their ascribed identity in real-life situations by approaching into the reality and (hi) stories beyond rigid and permanent identity. In this respect, the interpretive paradigm helped me to document physical, social and cultural context carefully and shaped students' classroom interactions, thereby generating the context of dynamics of teaching and learning.

To explore student identity, I incorporated Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) as a theoretical framework to view English language learning as a situated process comprising community, practice, meaning, and identity. The members of the community engage in joint activities and discussions, share information and build relationships to construct identity. Learning takes place within mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire through which they define and negotiate their identity based on their learning experiences and observations. As identity is a process of meaning-making, a process of negotiating meaning through continuous interaction, gradual achievement and give and take, this theory generates meaning through students' experience of how they perceive the world. Wenger (1998) states that "we make sense of ourselves and our actions through participation, engagement and interaction in the classroom community (p. 56)." As the students enter into learning CoP, they develop their identity through the negotiation of learning as learning trajectories. Each student in CoP finds his/her classroom as a unique place and gains a unique identity through engagement. They construct learner identity by interconnecting individual students with the classroom community and therefore claim that the focus of identity should be on the process of their social, cultural and historical perspectives. Membership in CoP transforms into identity as a form of learning competence. Thus, the learners in the classroom tags their identity as a learner constructed through overall activities.

I took narrative inquiry as a method to explore personal experiences, events and narratives of

English medium secondary level students to understand how they construct identities through their content and make meaning from their classroom activities. This helped to probe their both lived and told stories (Clandinin, 2006) about the English language learning situation and reveal multiplicity of selves. The narratives supported me to live with my students in the classroom and provide personal investments in language learning (Murphey & Carpenter, 2008) and meaningful aspects of learning from the perspectives of students themselves. This method delved into the inner world of English medium secondary level students to examine English learning experiences in their complexity and richness as "narratives arise from experience" (Menezes et. al., 2008, p. 225). This method supported probing personal and social growths (Clandinin & Conelley, 2000) of learning English, treating their narratives as socially situated interactive performances (Gee, 2001) and viewing their stories as a range of social resources and circumstances. It helped to enrich segments with narrative details, reported speech, appealed to the audience and paralinguistic features (Riessman, 2008). To look for the classroom activities of the students about their past, present and future doings/ happenings as internalized and evolving life stories and explore their temporal, personal and social identity through their narratives, I adopted narrative inquiry as a method.

The participants of this research were eight students studying in classes IX and X in English medium secondary schools of Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. I chose four English medium secondary schools (two from Kathmandu and two from Lalitpur) as a research site. I first took four participants choosing one from each school based on purposive sampling. I didn't find what I wanted to explore. I therefore added four more participants choosing one from each school as I was flexible in sample size. While selecting the participants, I tried to make it more inclusive maintaining gender balance in both districts thinking that the words 'male' and 'female' themselves are the words tracing identity. Not to be biased in gender equality, I kept four boys and four girls in this study.

Student narratives were used as information-generating approach thinking that the student narratives were the real stories of the students studying in English medium secondary schools (grades IX and X) about their lived experiences of learning English. Some of the major ideas were noted down in a diary. The narrative interviews were taken after formulating different probing questions to match their background and introduction section. I probed various questions in student narratives starting from introducing questions, elaborative questions, focused questions, and follow-up and less probing questions to lead to the main theme and the sub-themes. The information generated from students' narratives was audio recorded using a high digital interface recording system. The participants were informed that the transcribed text of narratives would be given to them to verify their responses. The recorded audio narratives were transcribed exactly maintaining their clichés and simple grammar mistakes and then the transcribed texts were given to the participants to verify their audio in the form of hard or soft copy, as per the convenience of the participants. The process led me to maintain the authenticity of data. Necessary addition and edition were made further from their original information.

The collected from students' narratives, and important written and other required information, were triangulated to ensure their real meanings captured. Furthermore, I listened to audio recordings repeatedly and read the transcribed text to match whether the

information was exactly transcribed or not. The information was transcribed maintaining general ethos and omitting the clichés. I made some sort of coding. The transcription of audio narratives was revised, analyzed and subjected to slight revision. Thereafter, themes were established on the processes of identity construction and categorized into positioning, opportunity and transformation to understand how these processes support to construct multiple identities of the students in their EFL classroom. After developing themes and sub-themes, the data was analyzed them based on thematic and structural analysis of Riessman's (2008) narrative inquiry analysis method. The content of what the students said with their intact stories helped in the thematic analysis whereas the referential meaning of interviews based on classroom context, their discursive patterns and structures helped in the structural narrative analysis.

Findings

Based on my research question and prolonged engagement with eight students, I have drawn several insights related to the processes of students' identity construction in English medium secondary schools in Nepal. The insights, particularly focused on how positioning, opportunity and transformation supported to construct discourse identity, affinity identity, social identity, L1 identity, authored identity, being and becoming, student identity and inner circle identity in the Nepalese EFL context.

Positioning in Students' Identity

The students in English medium secondary schools ascribe different positions in their EFL classrooms. The position is constructed from their discursive practices whereby they are located in conversations and their constant on-going negotiations of how they relate to the classroom world (Pennycook, 2001). Students' positioning holds a minimal identity work in a foreign language classroom (Block, 2007) and gain mastery of communicative competence as the classroom itself is a rich environment for academic and social orientations.

While engaging in the classroom discourses, the students were found constructing ***Discourse Identity*** in their EFL classroom constructed through the pattern of thinking, speaking, behaving and interacting (Miller & Marsh, 2003 as cited in Clarke, 2008). While listening to the discourses, I found Sulav a fluent speaker having native-like pronunciation as;

> *I improved my English from sixth grade when one of my friends suggested me to listen to English songs, native speakers' voice and watch English movies from the YouTube. I did so and started reading novels, prose and fiction which gradually helped my English.*

I situated meaning from his discourse as a tool of inquiry (Gee, 2005) to understand his discourse positioning as a 'native-like fellow'. Discourse identity was developed by listening to English songs, native speaker's voices and reading books. Like Sulav, Supriya's verbal ethos projected her as a fluid actor and thinker (Gee, 2005) as she said *'Ah, I see myself as an average learner, though I am better than others in the class.'* The excerpt of Supriya positioned herself as 'a medium learner' who can speak English better. Similarly, Sanjeev's discourse constructed that he was from an elite class in *'Yeah, there are my father, an engineer and brother, an MBBS doctor support me in difficult vocabularies, grammar and writing patterns.'*

In the same line, the students were found constructing their ***Social Identity*** through social positions established by the students based on classroom norms, cultures, interactions and conversations. Supriya's expression *'I actively take part in classroom interaction with the teacher and students'* reflected her active classroom participation (Dreier, 2003 as cited in Wortham, 2004) because the class is her social CoP from where she learnt trajectories of learning among the students. She constructed her social identity by actively participating in interaction actively in social identification process (Bakhtin, 1981 as cited in Wortham, 2004) which involved the use of classroom resources to construct her social identity. My participants constructed social identity by participating in practice (asking question and responding) done in the class improve their speaking skills. Her consistent involvement in reading, role pay, participation and reflection constituted her classroom culture. Utsukta constructed social identity through interaction as she claimed *'Students in the school must speak English compulsorily. Even the slow learners speak whatever they know. This improves their habit of learning English.'* Her response to student's compulsory participation in the class was a claimed processor (Wenger, 1998) which gave a certain experience of participation, interaction and communication in the classroom. Interestingly, Sulav improved his English only after participating in reciting the dialogues of Harry Porter when he was in class two as he shared his experience *'My English teacher told me to recite the dialogues of Harry Porter in the school annual function. At that time, he forced me to take part by telling me that my English was better.'* Among his friends, he was ascribed the role by his English teacher and his social positioning *'his English is good'* was constructed by social interactions he had taken part. For him, playing the role was an event performed in the social setting of a classroom that ascribed his individual identity *'person having good English'.* The identity ascribed as *'I am good, yeah good among the friends, and I am the best'* positioned him to construct his social identity in the classroom. His understanding of himself as 'good' (Norton, 2013) and being self-recognized as 'the best' (Gee, 2001) about other friends constructed him a certain identity ascribed from social values and positioning brought in his class among other students. Sulav's understanding of looking at 'self' as 'good' is his identity and his academic relationship to others as the best infers the future possibilities that constructed him a separate recognition.

Institution Identity is the next identity the students constructed in the EFL classroom. Sulav's identity as 'the School Head Boy', Supriya's 'the School Prefect', and Utsukta's 'the School Vice-Prefect' were 'institution identities' (Gee, 2001) proposed by their principal considering their command over the English language. The institution empowered them to construct an institution identity looking at his language propensity. Therefore, they were handed over such responsibilities. The institution identity was constructed for Sulav due to his self-reflection of 'who he is' (Gee, 2005). It was a very powerful tool to look at the 'self' of Supriya because she was appointed 'the Head Girl' due to her English proficiency demonstrated at school. Likewise, Utsukta took the position of Vice - Prefect officially as she revealed;

> *This is my second year of being nominated as the school vice-prefect. The school evaluated my performance and handed over the responsibility again for this year, perhaps looking at my English language. I try my best to discharge my duties and responsibilities and try to promote my school.*

Utsukta's institutional identity was valued by evaluating how actively she fulfilled the role of vice-prefect in her school and the duty endorsed upon her. The same case was there with Andeela, as she expressed; *I am the secretary of School Child Club. My school and teacher handed me this opportunity thinking that I can promote English Zone, conduct various extra-curricular activities in English and assist fellow students to speak in English.* This shows that her school assigned the responsibility of secretary of school child club.

Sometimes, the students make their perfect plan of what they want to be in future based on their present performances. They are the sole 'self' constructing meaning, addressing answers of their life and creating their world (Torfing, 1999 as cited in Clarke, 2008) far beyond knowledge and capacity to construct **Authored Identity.** Supriya wanted to be a social worker. She worked on improving her English to tackle future obstacles. She did not like to be confused in her dream as she revealed *'I want to be a social worker in future. I am working on my vocabularies to support my career. My English helps me to talk to the people found in the society as this is a place of a diverse world'.* Likewise, Sulav authored his future world and said *'I am clear in my way. After passing grade X, I join +2 in science. I go abroad to be a nuclear physicist after my +2. I will be successful because I am good at English to communicate with others around the world.'* Sulav, at this point, authored himself to be a nuclear physicist. He was an individual agentive being constantly searching new social and linguistic resources to allow him to resist his present identity of a learner posited him undesirable ways' (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). He was confident to substantiate his world in the expression *"I am pretty sure to be in my dream"* as a part of the process of agentive improvisation to posit the self.

Many students were found arranging their fixed seats and close friends were sitting together based on their interests, demands, age factors and nature. Their seats are arranged either by themselves or by their teachers. Such activities in the class construct ***Affinity Identity*** (Gee, 2001). Such affinity relation was made up of people who might be dispersed across a large space from different linguistic and ethnic background. The affinity relation was not limited only to a close circle of limited friends; it was limited to a large space with people having common cultures and norms.

Most of the students were found talking in the Nepali language despite strict rules in English medium schools and constructed ***L1 Identity*** as a native fallacy. Despite strict school rules, the students were found speaking the Nepali language as a crude identity marker (Block, 2007). Regarding L1 identity, Sanjeev mentioned that *'All the students in the class (except a few) speak Nepali when there is no teacher. I also speak Nepali with my friends because I can be more open up in Nepali than in English'.* From this excerpt, I found that the students constructed L1 identity automatically. The main reason for speaking L1 was to open up among the friends easily. I found Sanjeev speaking English only with certain groups and Nepali with most of their friends. I called it as a native fallacy; perhaps speaking English all the time was doing ridiculous (Block, 2007). He constructed his L1 identity not because of a lack of English proficiency but because of his L1 identity as deep abiding pride. Likewise, Shikha constructed her L1 identity in her class as; *I speak English in front of teachers and some students. The school nominates a spy to continue the English-speaking trend. I often talk to my friends in Nepali because I can express my feelings openly.* In English language learning, the participants use their native language as a linguistic input to switch along with the target

language. They switch to L1 identity all of a sudden because L1 is their first representation of discourse communication. Such a native fallacy was a linguistic and cultural baggage (Block, 2007) carried out along with the target language while learning English as a second/foreign language.

Opportunity in Students' Identity

Students' equal participation in learning is an opportunity for the students of English medium secondary schools and their joint engagement in having interaction is supplementary. Such opportunities were learning situations and provided a foundation for student identity. The family, parents and schools were the sources of getting new opportunities which differ from individual to individual, time to time and context to context due to which different identities are formed.

From (pre)primary to secondary education, I found that the identity of the students was not "static and one dimensional, but multiple and changing" (Norton & Toohey, 2002, p.116). Learning English in (pre)primary level was found to be a site of struggle (Norton, 2013) for all my participants which later on shifted as an opportunity to their secondary level to become a learner (Supriya, Sulav, Utsukat, Sanjeev). Deepak's ups and downs, Sulav's inclination towards English and Supriya's attraction to English were the output of becoming learners. Let me put forth Sulav's revealing ideas here as;

> *I am from Gulmi. My parents took me to Kathmandu from there and enrolled in Himalaya Higher Secondary School up to class five. In class six, I was enrolled in this school. My English is now good, yeah… good, better than others'. I can speak English fluently and express my feelings better... My English teacher is supportive and he encourages me to do better in English. When I was in sixth grade, one of my friends suggested that I should listen to English songs and watch English films and so did I. I found English films and movies original, and they helped with pronunciation, grammar structures and vocabulary.*

Sulav's stories indicated that identity is a process of 'becoming'. His present condition as 'a better learner' is his 'Being' or existence. To construct the identity of 'being', the students practice English a lot by listening to English songs, watching English movies, reading English novels and watching English channels. During the practice session, they exercised 'becoming'. All the participants got the opportunity to learn English at school and constructed their 'being'. Sometimes 'becoming' remains as a site of struggle as Deepak revealed;

> *I am from a remote part of Gorkha. After getting a donation from one of the British citizens, I came to Kathmandu, enrolled in a private school and started learning English. Learning English was chewing iron in early grade. So, I learnt English and Nepali simultaneously. I learnt English translating into Nepali to Gurung language. I improved my English from class six by listening to English songs, watching movies, and interacting with friends and teachers. Now, I can express my feelings.*

Deepak shaped his being with the help of friends, teachers, English movies and songs. I did not find his visible identity in learning (Cummins, 2006); rather a way of crisis, assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable by the experience of doubt and uncertainty (Mercer, 1990 as cited in Block, 2007).

The students in the class possessed ***Learner Identity.*** Sulav's sense of self-recognition as a medium learner, Deepak's site of struggle, Andeela and Bishal's gradual improvement, and Utsukta's participation in scholastic and non-scholastic activities inside and outside the school reveal their learner identity. The classroom culture of providing equal opportunity in participation shaped their learner identity. This made them competent to interact in the class among with friends. This was their sense of recognition as a learner from their overall learning spectrum to shape them a learner as Supriya shared;

> *I am good at writing essays and poems for which I am seeking new words from the dictionary. I pick up new words used by my teacher, note them down and pronounce them phonetically. All the friends participate in the learning process collaboratively. Learning English is never completed. Of course, We engage in various activities.*

Supriya constructed her student identity and showed her avid interest in writing essays and poems. She noted down new words used by the teachers and students and used other similar contexts. She used conscientious knowledge to pick up new vocabularies and using them in daily life. Deepak' frequent visits to the British library to read English books for future benefit to take IELTS and TOEFL tests and his regular seat planning in Maths, English and Science periods constructed his distinct identity as a student. Similarly, Sanjeev's expression *'whenever I get time, I listen to BBC and native speaker's voice on YouTube and read English novels'* also revealed his learner identity. It was found that the students were social agents who actively joined in learning activities through which they constructed student identity.

Transformation in Students' Identity

The students were found to shift their position in learning English and transformed their academic performance. Sulav's identity as a native-like fellow, Supriya's nimble social worker and Utsukata's obsessive orator were not transformed overnight, rather took a process of transformation in language capability and thinking power. Coming from a rural area, Deepak learnt the English language as a symbol of transformation to accomplish his dream of gaining an ***Inner Circle Identity*** (Kachru, 1983) . Deepak's interpretation *'I am making my English better to be a British citizen'* constructed inner circle identity from his complex participative experience and reificative projection (Wenger, 1998) to get native-like orientation in his linguistic performance. All the students were found to get mastery of native-like English. This clearly showed distinction between 'us and them' division with 'inner, outer' and expanding circle' (Kachru, 1983) and central and periphery (Philipson, 1992). Deepak wanted to be in 'inner circle' (powerful Western countries where English language as a native language) from the peripheral dichotomy (Underdeveloped country where English is a second or foreign language) looking at the possibility that 'centre' has high stakes in maintaining his operation.

The excerpt above clearly illustrates Deepak's interest in constructing inner circle identity by going to the UK, the powerful western country where English is their native language. Sulav substantiated his idea as; *'I need to have good English to go abroad to be a nuclear physicist in future. I, therefore, want to make native-like English to be an international citizen going everywhere around the world and communicating with the global citizen.'*

Sulav would like to be an international citizen by making his native-like English and communicating with global citizens. Like Sulav, Andeela transformed her outer circle identity into inner circle learning from English movies, songs, newspapers and books.

The students were interested to go UK to venture into their imagined community, their ideal world, so that they can have access to practice and develop language skills, and they realize their identity as ***Imagined Identity.*** Sulav's interest to be an international citizen, Deepak's British citizen, Supriya's Social worker, Utsukta's Radio Jockey and Shikha's MBBS doctor are their imagined identity. They expected to construct imagined identities by learning English, viewing themselves as their current identities and looking at themselves as becoming. Going abroad and talking with people around the world was Sulav's imagined community and his wish to be a 'nuclear physicist' is his imagined identity. He assumed 'abroad' as an 'imagined community' accepting Anderson's (1991) concept of the nation as an "imagined community …imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know their fellow-members, meet them, and even hear for their communion" (p. 6). Let me put here Shikha's narrative experiences as she shared;

> *I want to be a doctor. I want to serve the patients who are suffering from disease. I need English to write prescriptions, follow instruction from other doctors and prescribe medicine to foreign patients. Therefore, I am making my English better.*

Shikha's imagined community was a 'hospital' where she constructed her imagined identity i.e. a 'doctor'. Imagined community refers to groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination (Norton, 2013). She constructed her imagined identity transcending her present identity as a student by improving English in English medium schools. In this sense, Shikha's imagined identity was like 'looking at apple and seed and seeing a tree' (Block, 2007). Sometimes, imagined imagined community is affiliated with an imagined identity that extends beyond local sets of relationships (Warriner, 2007 as cited in Norton, 2013). An imagined community is no less than a real community to all my participants where they had daily engagement and a strong impact on their current actions. To improve English, Deepak frequently visited the British Library to fulfill his dream of improving his English and go to Britain with his donor.

Conclusion

Students' identity arises from classroom interactions that is associated with prominent school roles that results from a desire to shape their surroundings and social bonds. Students in English medium schools develop complex identities influenced by positioning, opportunity, and transformation, which intersect in the classroom, ultimately contributing to their academic success. This study explores how students in English medium schools develop diverse identities through positioning, opportunity, and transformation. These identities include discourse, social, institutional, authored, affinity, and L1 identities, all primarily influenced by positioning. Opportunity, mainly within the classroom, leads to learner and inner circle identities, while transformation is linked to inner circle and imagined identities. These

[1]Basnet, A. (2021, May). Construction of student identity in the Nepali EFL classroom. Retrieved from ELT CHOUTARI: http://eltchoutari.com/2021/04/identity-construction-of-the-nepali-eflstudents/

identities intermingle across various aspects of students' lives. Discourse identity is shaped by linguistic patterns, reflecting a power/knowledge system and attributing societal values to actions. L1 identity often comes from a connection to the native language, Nepali. 'Becoming and being' and learner identities are tied to educational opportunities. English medium students also cultivate inner circle identities to become proficient in English. These identities can be attributed through the school or self-constructed endeavours.

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Head Teachers' Ideologies Behind English Medium Instruction in the Community Schools

Tek Raj Bhatta

Abstract

English, a global lingua franca, is neither a second nor an official language in Nepal. However, several community schools existing in Nepal have implemented English Medium Instruction (EMI, hereafter). Therefore, this study examines the ideologies of community schools' head teachers behind starting EMI. In addition to this, it aims to discover implementational challenges during the initial days of EMI adoption. I have adopted narrative inquiry approach of qualitative research to bring out the ideologies of the head teachers behind starting EMI in community schools in Dhangadhi. I purposively selected three head teachers and conducted semi-structured interviews with them to elicit stories. Interpretation of the stories revealed various ideologies of head teachers behind starting EMI in community schools. The study concludes that EMI in community schools is adopted to assist them in enrolling and increasing the number of students. Moreover, it has challenged the stereotyping of the public towards community schools. Likewise, the study reveals several legal challenges, like the admission of preschool-aged children to primary schools and tuition fees charged to the students, which is against the Constitution of Nepal 2015 faced by community schools in the initial days of EMI adoption. The study's findings present the adoption of EMI in community schools in the form of neoprivatisation. Finally, the study provides insights to stakeholders willing to initiate EMI community schools in Nepal.

Keywords: *EMI, neoprivatisation, stereotype, community schools.*

Introduction

I vividly recall the day I organized a focus group discussion involving Bachelor-level students for one of my research projects entitled "Challenges Faced by Nepali Learners in Speaking Skills." The discussion was focused on the English language environment experienced by students during their school days. Meanwhile, a student raised a question, *"Sir, why does everyone nowadays talk about the English language? Even government-funded schools started English Medium Instruction (EMI), and the students are being taught in English. Why is this happening?"* The question by the student inspired me to think about the phenomenon and I thought it is better to discover the head teachers' ideologies behind starting EMI in community schools because they are the executive bodies of the school. Ideology can be termed as specific ideas, views, beliefs, and values. Fowler (1986)

explains ideology as worldviews or mindsets that mean the way an individual interprets the world. Here, I explore the views and values of the head teachers behind initiating EMI in their schools. In the context of Nepal, flexible language policies seem significant stimulators to initiate EMI as described by Macaro (2015) as an "unstoppable train" (p. 7). It shows that the trend of EMI adoption in academia is growing rapidly. About the English language, Jaelani and Zabidi (2020) assert it as the world's common language. Command over English has become necessary for people worldwide to adjust to a multilingual society. On top of this, Hamid and Nguyen (2016) point out its emergence as a lingua franca in Asian countries. Similarly, Sharma (2022) describes that it is used in various areas, including education, media, and business. Regarding its use in education, Aizawa and Rose (2019) opine that EMI is widely adopted in the various regions of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East where English is not a first language. It means its use is spreading fast. Moreover, it has a significant role in media, academia, and trade.

Bista (2011) claims that the trend of teaching English language in Nepal has been enriched over the past three decades and several changes in the education system and pedagogies have been noticed. In Nepal, English does not have the status of a second language (Shrestha, 1983; Shrestha, 2008). Moreover, it is not a common language for broader social groups. Similarly, it is not a means of communication for wider social groups. However, several community schools have accepted it as a medium of instruction. Therefore, I wondered why the use of English is spreading so fast in educational institutions. At the same time, Dewan and Saud (2022) encouraged me to work more on the growing craze of English in public schools.

The Government of Nepal mandated English as a compulsory subject in class one from the academic session 2061 BS (2004 AD) and has a similar position in higher education. However, it is being used as an instructional medium in several community schools. In this regard, Bourdieu (1977) says that leading languages enforce diverse ideologies. Signs of similar practices are seen in EMI adoption behind community schools in Nepal. Therefore, the study seeks to reveal head teachers' ideologies in initiating EMI in Community schools. It further explores implementational challenges during the initial days of EMI adoption. The following research questions guide the study:

- Why did the head teachers initiate EMI in community schools?
- What challenges did community schools face in the initial days of EMI adoption?

Literature Review

Spread of English Language

English is a widely used language, spreading very fast globally. Political and economic power has contributed a lot to its widespread use. Likewise, the advanced development of science and technology has broadened its use (Crystal, 2003). English is a powerful language in the entire world. In present scenario, it is a demanding language in several areas, such as "education, administration, politics, trade, tourism, and diplomacy" (Sharma, 2022, p. 324). Correspondingly, Phyak (2015) asserts that English has created a significant space in a multilingual world to access global socioeconomic and educational resources as a language of international trade, business, and academia. It has assisted English speakers to

grab various global opportunities in media, academia, and trade in the international market. Widespread extension of English also has an infinite influence on teaching framework of Nepal. Khati (2016) asserts a growing attraction for EMI in educational institutions. In the current state, numerous community schools have shown a keen interest in EMI.

EMI in Nepal

This history of teaching English in Nepal goes back to the time of former Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana. He initiated teaching English in Nepal in 1951 at Durbar High School. The initiation taken by Jung Bahadur Rana stimulated others to follow the tendency of educating their children in English medium instruction. He said, *"Aruka Kura Chhadideu afna chhoralai angreji padhau"* "[Turn deaf to what others say, teach English to your son(s)]" (Sharma, 2011, p.39, as cited in Poudel, 2019). Since then, a gradual interest in English language teaching has been seen in Nepal. "The establishment of democracy can also be interpreted as a continuation of the path of public education that started 50 years ago rather than the establishment of comprehensive schools in Nepal" (Sharma, 2022, p. 329). Furthermore, according to Bista (2011), choice of parents to admit their children to English medium (privately owned) school has a significant role in drawing attention to EMI in public schools. Parents' attraction to English medium schools has an instrumental role in adopting EMI in public schooling in Nepal.

Growing interest and accommodation of EMI in public educational institutions of Nepal is seen vividly through scholarly lenses. According to Saud (2020), "Public schools in Nepal have been adopting EMI as a new linguistic market in education in recent years" (p. 320). This is considered a significant aspect of the global economy. Since language is a powerful tool for communication, a linguistically skilled individual has the potential to deserve the possible opportunities in the global village.

Alternatively, Phyak and Sharma (2020) suggest seeing the growing use of English language as an inseparable component of global neoliberal dominance in less developed countries like Nepal. Both scholars express concern over the rapid expansion of EMI. Furthermore, Piller and Cho (2013) claim, "In addition to the human cost of high levels of social suffering, the spread of English MoI must be understood as a means of suppressing critical inquiry" (p. 25). It means it can have negative consequences beyond immediate human suffering, including overshadowing students' linguistic and cultural identity.

In the case of Nepal, Poudel (2019) explains, "the current Nepali medium of instruction has been sandwiched by the discourses of EMI and other mother tongue-based instructions" (p. 108). He further points out the superior social image established by EMI over other national and local/indigenous languages. This discourse creates room for critical reflection on language policies. Likewise, Ghimire and Koirala (2019) introduce a new term, neo-privatisation, for the trend of the adoption of EMI in public schools. Community schools have started adopting similar strategies to private schools to lure the parents and the students, which is reflected as neoprivatisation. Community schools in Nepal are following the same path as a strategy to enroll many students. Moreover, it is also to get the preferences of the parents.

Linguistic Multiplicity and Language Policy in Nepal

Nepal is a "multi-lingual, multiethnic, and multicultural nation" (Constitution of Nepal, 2015) where 142 ethnic groups speak 124 languages as their mother tongue (National Population and Housing Census, 2021). Nepal is a linguistically and culturally diverse country where Nepali language is the national language. The keen interest in English medium has been started after the establishment of Durbar High School in 1854. It has played a foundational role in initiating English medium in Nepal. During the period, education was only constricted to the elite social groups and it has become accessible to the common people only after the downfall of the Rana Regime. Then the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC, 1956) played a praiseworthy role in promoting national integrity in Nepal. Similarly, All Round National Education Committee (ARNEC, 1962) and National Education System Plan (NESP, 1971) exhibited a compatible policy trend. Then, (NESP, 1971) introduced a concept of schools including both private and public sectors. After that, Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990) promoted mother tongue-based education. Then, during the Panchayat system in Nepal, there was a "one-nation-one-language ideology" (Phyak & Ojha, 2019, p. 344). However, Democratic Period (1990-2007) followed the multilingual education system. Likewise, Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) adopted a market-driven ideology in education. It has animated the privatization with English medium. In addition, the NCF (2007) and the Constitution of Nepal (2015) promoted mother tongue-based education. SSRP (2009) clearly mentions teaching English from grade one as a subject however in practice it can be seen that it is being instructed as a non-native language. Saud (2020) has viewed the scenario discussed above as "political motives rather than academic needs and foundations from the very beginning of formal education" (p. 321). Dhakal (2015) also opines similar ideas to Saud (2020) regarding the policy. It shows that political movements and motives are important in shaping language policy and education. It is seen as a conflict of interest in the political movement.

Globalization in Education as a Theoretical Premise

This study has adopted the theory of globalization in education. Green (1999) asserts that it is a fairly new concept in educational research. Furthermore, Green discusses the tendency of globalization where he presents several factors such as economic, technological, and cultural aspects as its determinants, whereas this kind of perception depends upon the personal standpoint (Parjanadze, 2009). Likewise, based on Appelbaum and Robinson (2005), the adaptation of the new way of operating business, the start of new multinational organizations, disparities in society, and the diverse patterns of migration around the globe contributed to the emergence of globalization. In the same way, Giddens (1990) views it as a universalization of modernity. It involves the concept of capitalization and the matter of commodification. From these scholarly ideas, the spread and adaptation of the English language in teaching-learning is seen as the impact of globalization. Since English is a global lingua franca, people from various countries witnessed the global opportunities and started replicating it. As a result of globalization, numerous countries have started adopting the English language. Moreover, it is commodified and also adopted in teaching-learning systems. The trend of adopting

English as a medium of instruction in various countries like Nepal is a result of globalization, which is growing very fast. Though several debates exist, English mania is spreading very quickly. It shows that the community schools in Nepal and Nepal's education system are also influenced by globalization.

Methods

This qualitative research adopted narrative approach to explore the head teachers' ideologies behind adopting EMI in Community schools. Ford (2020) illustrates that narrative approach enables researchers to explore "human experience through life story interviews, oral histories, or other human experiences" (p. 237). In this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with three head teachers of different community schools in Dhangadhi to gather the participants' personal experiences, beliefs, and ideologies (Morgan, 1996).

Participants Selection

I selected three head teachers from different community schools in Dhangadhi (Kailali district) purposively. I interviewed them individually at different times, places, and settings. I conducted in-person interviews with all the participants. Every participant had over twenty years of teaching experience. All of them are the initiator of EMI in their schools. Similarly, they have more than four years of experience in adopting EMI in their schools. In addition to this, the selected schools had a good number of students at the secondary level. However, the number was in descending order at the primary level. Two of the head teachers belong to English education background.

Data Collection and Analysis

At first, I telephoned them and detailed the purpose and process of the interview. Then, at their convenient time, I got an oral appointment to interview them. Likewise, to collect their ideologies behind starting EMI, I conducted semi-structured interviews. After their permission, I took short notes and recorded the interviews. I frequently listened to the audio to interpret the data. Then, I transcribed the tape record in non-verbatim form. I organized, elaborated, classified, and interpreted the data. I worked sincerely to maintain the quality standards of the study.

Findings and Discussion

English is accepted as a worldwide language of international importance. "The trend of using English as a Medium of Instruction has been growing in the global phenomenon of present day world academia" (Poudel, 2021, p.48). The tendency to use English as a means of communication is also rapidly proliferating. This study reveals that in Nepali academia, the interest in English medium of instruction is growing rapidly. Within this section, I have categorized the study's findings into five different themes. The findings include the differences in students' numbers before and after EMI adoption, challenges at the implementational level, the school's role in teacher professional development, and implementation of EMI in community schools in the form of privatization.

Differences in Students' Number before and after EMI Adoption

The findings reveal that community schools became successful to enroll a good number of students after adopting the English medium.

In this regard, the Head Teacher (HT1) admitted, *there came several students to admit even in the first session of EMI adoption. Only in nursery class, seventy-eight students got enrolled in the first year.* Similarly, HT2 confessed that the number of students in the primary level was in descending order before the EMI, and a good number (thirty-plus) new students were admitted after adopting the EMI in the first session. HT3 also reported a similar kind of record of the students after implementing EMI at school. In addition, HT2 stated that the good academic performance of the students and free DIWA KHAJA [lunch] program by the government have allured the students towards community schools. It shows that EMI has attracted the community to admit their children to community schools. The finding is aligned with Phyak (2016) whose finding also agrees that public schools adopt EMI to maintain student enrollment and address parents' demand for English medium instruction. Likewise, Khati (2016) agreed that EMI in public schools is similar to strategies of private schools (EMI-based schools) previously.

Challenges at the Implementation Level

The study depicts that community schools faced various challenges at the implementation level. The challenges are related to legal and behavioural aspects. In this regard, HT1 asserted that EMI in public schools attracted parents, and they started admitting their children under five years old to the schools, which is against the legal document (Education Act, 2028). According to the Article 2, clause A, of Education Act (2028), "Pre-Primary School means those schools that provide one year's pre-primary education to those children that have completed four years of their age" (p.3). However, the admission of pre-primary school-aged children in class one (Primary level) became a major issue. To sort out this issue, they have the BAL SIKSHYA program in the present day.

Another common challenge that all the head teachers (HT1, HT2, and HT3) faced was the fee structure they charged. Based on Article 31, Clause 2 of the Constitution of Nepal (2015), "every citizen shall have the right to get compulsory and free education up to basic level and free education up to the secondary level from the state" (p.20). On the contrary, community schools charged fees from the students, which is a kind of ignorance of the Constitution. HT2 pointed out that the government is responsible for regulating this all.

According to the head teachers (interviewed for this study), teacher recruitment is another challenge. Public schools need to follow a long process to recruit new teachers, and it becomes more problematic to hire new teachers due to the dissolution of the school management committee since it is a responsible body for the recruitment process. In this way, they face some procedural and behavioural challenges while recruiting teachers.

Teacher Professional Development Program

Teacher professional development helps teachers make their teaching-learning activities well organized and systematic. Based on the study's result, all head teachers accept the need for teacher professional development programs. HT1 expressed, *We have hired some teachers from school's financial source because the number of permanent teachers is not enough. To manage teaching learning activities, we have some*

temporary teachers. To organize trainings for them, there is no concerned authority. The school manages some kind of training related to ICT and others. Similarly, available resource persons in schools also train those teachers sometimes. The response by the HT1 indicates that none of the governmental bodies are accountable for teachers' training programs in English medium. However, HT2 mentioned the opposite point of view. He added, "The school conducts Teacher Professional Development (TPD) training every session." Similarly, the school has distributed twenty-two laptops to twenty-two teachers for better teaching-learning activities, and HT2 claims that it has assisted teachers in better teaching-learning activities. Moreover, the school is committed to conducting various teacher-training programs in association with the education office. HT3 also opined similar kinds of ideas regarding TPD training for the teachers. It shows that the head teachers believe that teacher professional development programs assist in teaching-learning activities and are working on it. The study indicates that head teachers are responsible for effectively implementing EMI in their schools. However, several schools have introduced EMI without any training, workshops, or exposure to the teachers (Poudel, 2021). Consequently, those schools are encountering difficulties in effectively implementing EMI.

Are the Community Schools Adopting Privatization?

No head teachers admitted that they are adopting privatization in the public domain, but the way the English medium is initiated in public schools raises this issue. HT1 does not agree with the statement that public schools are adopting privatization and said, *"No, it is not so. We have just shifted working principles by giving more care and attention to the students using English medium."* On the other hand, HT2 pointed out the irresponsible functioning of the local government to regulate it. He further said, *"We (Community schools) should not adopt privatization in the public domain. If we do so, it is against the spirit of the constitution."* Head teachers' ideology behind English medium is seen to fulfill the demand of contemporary society. HT2 added, *"It is to help the students compete in the international market."* I noticed the neoliberal ideology of head teachers, as Harvey (2005) states. He explains it as a market-driven transformation. Reisigl and Wodak (2009) also opine a similar idea. They mention that it is an international language that helps students access international opportunities in the global market.

EMI for the Survival of Community Schools

The study explored that EMI in community schools significantly contributes to their survival. HT2 and HT3 agreed that the number of students in the primary level was in descending order before the introduction of EMI. It means it could endanger the existence of community schools if head teachers did not initiate it. EMI has changed the stereotype of society towards community schools and has stopped the high dropout ratio of students at the primary level. Moreover, EMI in community schools has assisted them in chain-breaking the decreasing number of students in primary classes. The wave of new enrollment of students after EMI has a significant role in their survival. It minimized the dropped-out students and attracted the community people towards community schools. Ghimire and Koirala (2019) present similar kind of findings. Their findings indicate that declining student number and less parental preference have influenced community schools to adopt

English as the instructional medium. Similarly, Phyak (2013) points out that to safeguard the survival of public schools, numerous public schools are obliged to shift from Nepali to English as the instructional medium.

The findings portray that head teachers have started EMI in public schools to attract students and parents. Similarly, their ideology seems to have challenged the public stereotype towards the community schools. Since the head teachers (interviewed for the study) are found sensitive to the proper implementation of EMI, schools are running EMI smoothly. Otherwise, the experience of EMI can fail in public schools, as HT1 faced in the first attempt. The school initiated EMI without proper planning and they had to bear the loss during that attempt. Likewise, the study presents various legal and behavioural challenges while starting EMI in Public schools. Moreover, it has become an integral part of survival for public schools by attracting students, parents, and community people.

Ideologies Influencing the Adoption of EMI

The study has explored various ideologies of head teachers behind starting EMI in public schools. English is an international and powerful language. Community schools in Nepal have adopted it as an instructional medium. Bourdieu (1977) opines that influential language enforces diverse viewpoints, and signs of similar practices are seen in the implementation of EMI in public schools. The head teacher's ideologies in the findings reveal that they have adopted EMI to attract students, parents, and community people to public schools. Bourdieu's (1977) notion is seen as equivalent to the head teachers' ideologies. Similarly, the response of HT2 that the adoption of EMI *helps the students compete in the international market* signals that introduction of EMI in community schools in Nepal is an indicator of neoliberal educational ideology (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). As it is a global language, English has a significant role for Nepali students to get global opportunities and adjust in an international market.

Likewise, the study's findings highlight the necessity of teacher professional development programs to ensure better academic results (Noom-Ura, 2013). It assists both teachers and students in nurturing the best teaching-learning activities. Furthermore, adoption of instruction in English language in public schools is understood as a "neoprivatisation" (Ghimire & Koirala, 2019). However, the head teachers (interviewed for the study) did not agree on the neoprivatisation of public schools. Ghimire and Koirala (2019) point out that declining students' number in community schools and lesser preference by parents for those schools incorporated community schools to adopt the English medium as the private schools adopted it. Similar strategies adopted by the community schools as private schools did are viewed as neoprivatisation. Moreover, it can be considered as commodification and commercialization in education. The findings and discussion suggest that English as an instructional medium is a matter of serious concern. Influential language has given birth to the diverse ideologies of the head teachers. Moreover, it has kindly assisted community schools in enrolling a good number of students.

Conclusions and Implications

As a worldwide common language, English has an influential position in the globe. Despite Nepal being a "multiethnic, multilingual, multireligious, multicultural" nation (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p.3),

community schools in Nepal are adopting English as an instructional medium. This study explored various ideologies of head teachers behind starting EMI in community schools. This study concludes that EMI in community schools has supported them in escalating the number of students. Moreover, it has challenged the stereotyping of the community people towards community schools. Likewise, it has taken the preferences of parents as well. Though numerous behavioural and legal challenges exist, community schools are eager to implement EMI. In the same way, it can be drawn that public schools are also noticed as sensitive to teacher development programs. The study's findings figure out the adoption of EMI in community schools in the form of neoprivatisation, which reaffirms the literature on neoprivatisation of education. Likewise, it is perceived as transforming education into a commodity and promoting commercial interests.

The study is anticipated to be a valuable resource for stakeholders: head teachers willing to start EMI, policymakers, and researchers. The study can make them aware of the challenges at the implementation level and other peripheral aspects. Similarly, it will be useful for the researchers and the policymakers by helping them identify the head teachers' various ideologies. Since this is a small-scale research, it has dealt only with the ideologies of the head teachers. The research indicates a need of further research in various areas such as linguistic imperialism in the public domain and denial of the mother tongue in English medium schools.

The Author

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Resistance and Gender in an EFL Classroom Interaction: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Kohinoor Akther

Abstract

A classroom is not only a place for female learners' learning and growth but also a place for enacting their knowledge, power, positioning, and resistance in their classroom interaction. As important social members, these learners bring the society-approved discourses that restrict their gendered roles in their classroom participation. Female learners, dominated by their social-historical-cognitive selves, mostly do not try to initiate a conversation or participate in that as they have to contest the status quo of male learners who particularly dominate the conversation process. Hence, they have to struggle to negotiate their position and identity by resisting the 'boy discourses' that delimit their equal participation. This study focuses on the reproduction of resistance and the struggle for achieving the equality dynamics of the female learners to participate in classroom discourses. Six female learners and two teachers were the research participants at a private university in Chattogram, Bangladesh. Kumaravadivelue's (1999) critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA), van Dijk's (2003; 2016) socio-cognitive and Wodak's (2009) historical-cognitive model and Braun and Clerk's (2006) thematic analysis approach had been used here as an analytical framework and for data analysis tool. Structured focus group interviews and classroom observation were the tools used for generating data that gave the impression that female learners use both active and passive resistance that happens due to the existing micro and macro factors surrounding them. Moreover, their historical, social, and cognitive positioning and struggle for negotiating power and identity gave them the insight that the classroom served both as a learning and growing space for them. This study contributes to the budding research on female learners' being and becoming an identity in a powerful classroom interaction that can influence them beyond the classroom.

Keywords: *resistance, identity, power, equity, dominant discourses*

Introduction

Schools position learners as subjects to assume their roles in a class structure (Levinson & Holland, 1996). According to critical scholars, schools respond less to popular urges of empowerment and advancement than discipline and conformity. Therefore, schools in a broader sense play the role of aggravating or preserving social inequalities. Hence, they closely draw an individual to a close vicinity of class, gender, and racial inequality through the 'instructional register' and 'regulative register' of the accepted norms and styles

of the broader society. Thus, they provide a valuable site for the cultural production and reproduction of a particular society's values, norms, and ideologies. Ideally, schools encourage equitable access to genders, castes, classes, ethnicities, and ages. But in reality, due to the restrictions to equal definitions of an educated and less/uneducated, vocal and silent makes the classroom picture different. Thus, resistance takes place as an opposing factor to the changes that like to promote equity and inclusivity inside a classroom.

Resistance particularly refers to the opposition to the change that implementation of gender equality policy promotes. A change is taken like a stone tossed into a still pond, which causes ripples to radiate in all directions with unpredictable consequences. Resistance is well-thought-out as an outcome of unpredictable consequences, constraints imposed to maintain the status quo of the power actors against the change strategies to the equal participation of the female learners in EFL classroom interactions (Festa, 2016; Kreitner, 1992; Mckay, 2011; Hassaskhah & Zamir, 2013). Thus, as the powerful actor of any hegemonic authority education serves, according to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), the purpose of reproducing the existing social system is to fix the learners in their respective social positions.

As an important actor of education and educational reform, female learners remain the voiceless objects who are always dominated by the powerful group and by the 'hegemonic definitions of an educated person' (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Moreover, the 'symbolic violence' that schools and classrooms produce on the non-elites significantly affects the development of their social position and limits. These limits are inscribed in their 'habitus' which makes them learn to self-censor and self-silence in the presence of those with greater social standing. So, their struggles become submerged, invisible with occasional visibility and clarity. But most of the time they become dramatically erupted by some cultural politics and priority games of the national over local, particularly over common vision and ideology of a society (ibid).

Since the 1980s schools and classrooms have become the topics of critical survey, literature, experiments, and investigation. This critical perspective has always tried to be committed to the ideals of equity and inclusivity in education in place of perpetual social inequalities (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Instead of providing equality, 'distributive' and 'curricular' justice, equal educational access, knowledge, and representation, as described by scholars like Althusser (1971), Bernstein (1973), Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), Giroux (1983) classrooms serve/d the purpose of the requirements of domination, conformity and discipline of the dominant liberal ideology. In their opinion, schools served the purpose of powerful 'ideological state apparatuses' as great leveling instruments for the learners to strengthen the unequal social order. Classrooms, according to Bourdieu, thus legitimize and validate the dominant groups and their activities to maintain their power and privileges. In an EFL classroom, this is more acute as the learning and growth of the female learners correspond to their knowledge, positioning, resistance, and power in the classroom as nonnative learners and speakers (Crystal, 2013; Kramsch, 2014; Tong & Cheung, 2011). According to Norton (2001) learning English not only impacts learners' perspectives of who they are, and who they desire to become in a particular social setup, but also shapes their identities in a dynamic learning community where power relations work among them.

Despite these resisting facts, the participation of female learners in higher education to 'become somebody' as breaking the shackles of oppression changes the educational landscape in Bangladesh. Under the dominant discourses, their voices were unheard and kept silent for centuries. Through the power actors' different production and reproduction of laws and amendments, this silent group has been given an equal share or at least chances to equally share the benefits of the same offered to all citizens. But in practice, there is a tension among the power actors, policymakers, and the learners themselves to maintain equality in the classroom setting (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). So, equality is maintained in the formal texts only which does not ensure the equal participation of the individual female learners in the classroom discourses. This study critically attempted to analyze the inequality that female EFL learners suffer/ed due to the resistance both in micro and macro levels that impact as Kumaravadivelu (1999) mentioned their construction of identity and hence the learning and using of the target language in a classroom interaction. Based on van Dijk's (2003, 2016) socio-cognitive approach, popularly known as the 'discourse-society-cognition triangle' this study focuses on the mental representation of discourse as society mediated, that society influences the production and comprehension of discourse. It develops an individual's shared knowledge and ideologies as a social group. This knowledge, as scholars (Wodak, 2009; Resigil, 2017) claim, does not exist in a single timespan, instead, it continues as the past, present, and future vision in society among its social actors. It is argued that discourse is historical, that any available knowledge, discourse or language is historically constituted and constitutive—they are happening at the same time or had happened before as a continuation of the social and political activity (Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). Along with the line of discourse-historical approach of Wodak (2009) and van Dijk (2003; 2016), this study also used the critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA) of Kumaravadivelu (1999), which explores classroom discourse as socially formulated, politically motivated and historically determined reality of the learners. This triangulation privileged the study to observe the situation from different perspectives to make it holistic to understand the scenario of resistance in higher education EFL settings.

Popular literature claims that power and identity are two important factors to create resistance to equality. Women's participation and advancement in both public and private levels threaten the prevailing masculine norms and their position as a strong, privileged one due to gender differences. Added to this 'the patriarchal norms and conservative attitude towards women's roles' towards her family simultaneously work concerning the debate of their equal rights. The lack of opportunities, low returns of education to the job market, and the confinement of female labor in the household chores have positioned female learners and their education in a protected view in the South Asian context. So it is commonly observed that the benefits of educating a female child are less rewarding for her parents in their old age or needs—these traditional norms keep many parents away from investing in a girl's education. Also in most cases here, as a social demand, girls need to show 'appropriate' behavior by maintaining 'shyness' in their interaction with others that refrains them from speaking in front of others, especially of the elders and the outsiders. In many parts of South Asia including Bangladesh, it remains a suffocating fact that 'higher education is thought to liberate girls to such an extent that they would have problems

adjusting to their marital home'(Blunch & Das, 2015). So, resistance to her equal rights is visible both in the micro and macro levels of society in a developing country. The three –gender, power, and patriarchy are primarily taken as the contributing actors in the production, reproduction, positioning, identity construction, and thus in classroom interactions of a female learner in an EFL context.

Since the norms and power of hegemonic groups in an institution facilitate specific (male) behaviors, they simultaneously obstruct or oppose the change that gender initiatives try to encourage (Kenny, 2011; Mackay, 2011). Moreover, it is observed that resistance to change is mostly related to men's feeling of losing position and privilege. According to Dent and Goldberg (1999) what individuals resist may not be the change itself but the possibility of losing position, loss of ease, comfort, or the idea of the unfamiliar which makes them feel anxious. On this ground, Connel (2005) argued and concluded that the causes of men's resistance to gender equality are due to the feeling of being bereft of the benefits that patriarchy previously granted men because of gender differences. Either in a family, institutional, or organizational setup, the patriarchal hegemony expects care and services from women which is at the forefront position of gender equality.

Moreover, resistance appears with identity dilemmas that are linked with masculinity where man is anticipated to be the strong provider for a family or an institution. This masculine norm threatens all attempts at gender equality and women's advancements in the both public and private spheres (Kimmel et al., 2004; Hearn, 2011). However, it is not the changes that are problematic, but the modifications of the age-old habits to the changes that create problems for the power actors. As Benschop and Varloo (2006) argued organizational resistance to the changes is the primary challenge to the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Gender disparity is reproduced in an organization due to the practices of several patterns of social interaction and the meaning they bring with them. In a gendered organization, males work in an exclusionary way by sharing information with their male partners excluding women to create a 'men's club' network and homosociality (Morley, 2013a; Morley, 2013b; O'Connor, 2011). Above all these, according to van Baarle et al. (2019), power is an inevitable element to creates tension in an attempt to empower initiative.

Also, it becomes evident that gender mainstreaming faces resistance as it challenges the norms, practices, and assumptions regarding the men-women relationships in the individual and organizational landscapes. According to these scholars, 'organizational resistance to change' is the main reason for the ineffective implementation of gender initiatives (Dìaz Gonzáles, 2001; Venschop & Verloo, 2006). So, the distinction between discourse and practice regarding equality, which is even brought to classroom interaction in an EFL setting, seldom reaches the level of actualization.

Although research on resistance regarding gender equality is confined within the organizational, and political context or taken as the structural phenomenon in any organizational decision document, it rarely looks at the social world of the EFL classroom and its impacts on the individual's classroom interaction and participation. So far, few studies have been done on the impacts of power, positioning, and resistance in EFL classroom interactions, particularly

in Bangladesh. Female learners seem to have achieved equal access and participation in classroom interactions, but a closer observation reveals their struggles to continue and control that role due to several factors (Bergval & Remlinger, 1996; Hassaskhah & Zamir, 2013). Since classrooms enculturate participants according to the 'roles and styles sanctioned by the greater society', they try to depersonalize individuals in different ideological or organizational settings and contexts. So resistance to gender equality is the illustration of hegemonic masculinity, reproduced by the existing ideologies of the power actors of a particular society (Connell, 2005).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify how the female learner's aspiration to the equal self gets obstructed. It also tried to find out how the old form of submerge continues in the new form. Along with these, it tried to sort out the ways that both appropriation and resistance lead one to self-silencing strategies. This study ventured, finally, to analyze the steps to make one liberated and empowered in this changed negotiated educational landscape. On these grounds, the research questions are:

1. How do memory, mind, and social cognition resist female learners from negotiating their position in classroom interaction?
2. What can help a learner follow the steps to the equal share of achievement of the voiced and the voiceless?
3. How does resistance create an alternative space for a female learner?

Relationships among the classrooms, cultural traditions, constituent groups, and powerful political actors need to be understood through critical lenses. For making education democratic and empowering this critical lens can make directions for changes that had been so far addressed but could not come to a very significant realization. Critical lens and the perceptions towards the system and the light of education as a change-maker and transforming agent need new consideration in educational research.

A number of studies have tried to explain the concept of resistance in language learning particularly when learners try to negotiate their participation in the classroom interaction (Wassel et al., 2010; Dufva & Aro, 2014). As mentioned by van Lier (2008) classroom interaction depends to some extent on the nature of the subject or content being taught or learned and the classroom context where the interaction takes place. 'This may result in different ways of recognizing the 'inequality', 'neutrality' or 'equality' of power relations as well as learners' agency' (Tian & Dumalo, 2020). What is more, scholars (i.e. Tananuraksakul, 2011; Edwards, 1991) further stated that resistance may increase or decrease language production at the interaction point. Consequently, learners' resistance to classroom interactions and the classroom as a space for gender construction has become a basic topic of investigation in the arena of CCDA (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

Discontented with previous models of classroom interaction analysis, Kumaravadivelu (1999) criticized the existing classroom interaction and discourse analysis approaches, of their definition, scopes, and methods. Kumaravadivelu critically proposed CCDA to explore classroom discourses as socially, politically, and historically determined, motivated, and constituted, although he does not underscore power

circulations in classroom interactions. His perception of power is similar to that of Foucault (1972) who argues that power and knowledge are socially constructed through human interactions. It is argued that female learners can be empowered or disempowered either with privileges or marginalization during the social discourse process. The discourse process or classroom interaction allows us to recognize that there can be multiple sources of power and to understand that power is not always oppressive (Foucault, 1980). This means that power relations are pervasive in human interactions and always involve an element of resistance (Rau, 2004). For classroom interaction, teachers need to motivate learners to deconstruct dominant discourses as well as counter discourses by posing questions at the boundaries of ideology, power, knowledge, class, race and gender (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

Research Context

Since the inception of Bangladesh and its constitution, maintaining equal rights to education for both male and female learners has been the highest priority. Despite this fact, there lies the 'boy discourse' and 'gender equality discourse' in education highlighting the gender gap made popular through media in classroom interaction, school achievement, attainment, and behavior (Lahelma, 2014). Despite continuous efforts, sustainable changes have not been achieved because of the categorization of genders as two different species. Resistance to gender equality and legitimization of 'boy discourse' has made the scenario still a gulf apart that needs to be abridged.

With equal concern, it is perceived that equal rights do not ensure equal participation of female learners in classroom discourses. Although in many cases girls outnumber and outperform boys, very few of them can accommodate their voices inside the classroom. The strong prevailing norm in society is that girls should be less accomplished, (Blunch & Das, 2015) less voice is brought to the classroom, and that continues outside the classroom also. In addition, it is suggested that discursive formations do not allow an individual to think outside of them and that let one understand that resistance is a strongly deterministic understanding of power relations. Accordingly, Wiseman (2012) conveyed that when male learners insist on their opinions in the middle of an interaction, they assertively impose power on others, especially on the female learners who for patterned, normative, and expected rituals of classroom keep silent (Brooks, 2016). This results in resistance (active or passive) for the female learners of the classroom community. Hence, the study tried to bring forth the scenario and reflect on several steps that can address the problem with significant solutions in a higher education EFL context.

Methodology

This qualitative study used structured focus group interviews and naturalistic classroom observation (Crasewell, 2014; Angrosino, 2016) as data generation tools that used purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2018). Kumaravadivelu's (1999) critical discourse analysis and two other critical discourse analysis frameworks of van Dijk (2003; 2016) and Wodak (2009) were used in this research in line with Braun and Clerk's (2006) thematic analysis model for analyzing the collected data. Interview data were collected in Bangla, translated, and transcribed by the researcher (available in the appendix).

Research Site

The research setting of this study is a very prominent private university located in the urban center of the port city of Bangladesh. Among the research participants, there were six female learners and two (one male and one female) teachers. The learners are mostly toppers and are aware of their position and contribution to classroom interactions and participation. These learners are also aware of the resistance that they face in their everyday classroom interactions and beyond that.

The classroom observed was few of the classes under the course of fundamentals of linguistics, particularly about the 'role of English to marginalize the local and standard Bangla language', where the researcher was the course instructor. In the natural classroom setting, the researcher in no way biased the participants. The structured FGD interview focusing on the research questions was held in another setting outside the classroom that consisted of 40-50 minutes in 2/3 settings. These research tools helped the researcher observe the classroom interaction patterns, processes, and language use from the participants' dynamic perspectives.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of data falls into three sub-themes: a) the role of memory, mind, and socio-cultural-historical-political cognition of the self: at the micro and macro level, b) language ideology, use and power of it to minimize the gender gap, and c) creating alternative space to the resistance.

The Role of Memory, Mind and Social-Cultural-Historical-Political Cognition of the Self: The Micro and Macro Level

Most learners pointed to the fact that resisting their participation and classroom interaction was initiated mostly by their families—a lesson learned and taught from the families, where mostly mothers played the role of resisting themselves to participate equally inside the classroom. The same is true for outside classroom interaction, in real life situations-- 'Not only having interaction or using language and its tone but also they select the dress code for us to go out of the houses' –S1—S6 all pointed that mothers feel fear of the environment outside the home where multiple discourses are practiced, so they feel fear about their safety and ask them to talk as less as possible. The position of discourse in a broader society and that of a classroom is culturally-historically and politically situated (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; van Dijk, 2003; 2016; Wodak & Ludwig, 1999). So the reflection of that is visible in both contexts. As a result, female learners mostly show/ed passive resistance to participate and interact in their classroom dialogues with few prevailing active voices.

Pincus (2000) refers to passive resistance as the act of 'being silent', the behavior of non-doing weakening the change or implementation that results in non-cooperativeness and ignorance. On the other, active resistance is related to 'subversive action' to prevent an implementation or change, fault finding, vocal, being critical, blocking and raising objections, etc. From classroom observation, it was perceived that these learners (S2 and S5 are different) agreed verbally with everything, but did not follow through, mostly on the track of withdrawal to prevent the change and

thus failed to participate in the dialogues and debates on the given topic. They mentioned (S2) that 'my mother enjoyed freedom a lot at her in-law's house, but she is not willing to give that to me, because her parents did not like to do that to her before marriage'. The learner lamented that her mother was educated, but still, she projected narrow perspectives regarding the changes her daughter wanted to negotiate.

The critical frameworks used in this study emphasized the practice-related discourses and the interactions female learners made inside the classroom. It also emphasized the fact that the content, context, structure, and construction of discourses were the authentic data of the micro and macro phenomena, following the inter-textual and inter-discursive relationships. Also, these were associated with the social, historical, political, economic, psychological, and other factors relating to the verbal and non-verbal phenomena of communication (Datondji & Amousou, 2019) that privileged or marginalized the learners to participate or not to participate in classroom interaction. The political-historical- social and cultural knowledge of the growth of a female self could not stop the mothers (although teachers encouraged) from resisting their daughters to be the change makers in their educational enterprises.

The Ideological Stand of the Female Learners

As the female learners belonged to the EFL classes that were already empowering for them, they felt unwilling to discuss the negative role of English in marginalizing the local or standard Bangla. To them using L1 or code-switching was bad or unwanted which greatly impacted their, according to them, capacity to speak in English inside the classroom. But during interview time they frequently switched to the L1, although the majority did not like to use English as the mode of communication. 'I think if I speak better English during classroom interaction, my fellow mates will take me seriously. Because I think English is the language of the powerful people of the world'— S1, S3, and S5. These learners' ideological standing prohibited them from presenting anything in L1 that the researcher as the course instructor made mandatory to all as an assignment, although flexibility of choice was given to them. They took the English language as their strong power to minimize the gender gap that is/ had existed for a long in society, country, and the world.

Creating Alternative Space to the Resistance

In response to the question 'what do you do when you can't resist the imposition of your mother at home or male learners' domination inside the classroom'?—the focus group discussed their creation of alternative spaces that gave them the freedom to overcome that temporary negativity of the situation. 'We passively agree with our parents, I think the mother talks with the father's tone or language as I somewhere read in the South Asian Literature course that wives/ mothers/sisters/ daughters in this part of the world execute patriarchal decisions and dominations' – S1, S2, and S4 reflected on their limitations when they had to comply with the rules of withdrawal or non-acting that their previous generations did. 'But I don't think this is the end of the day, rather I think this gives me the power to be ready for the near future when I can change the norms and sanctions of society about limiting women's roles in the four walls of the domestic world'. They took a number of idols who were interrupted at one phase of

life but got more power from those inhibiting situations. They also responded on the issue that not their male classmates or teachers, but female classmates or family members were creating silencing processes for them. At the same time, they could not ignore that this present situation is the continuation of the historical–social cognition of the female individual self who suffered as the 'other' from the beginning of civilization.

In the interview with the male teacher, the fact came out that 'I do not find the dominant discourses go with favoring the boys, it is rather for the girls all discourses are directed….as many changes took place after the liberation of the country regarding girls' rights and emancipation. Now it's not boys' or girls' rights, instead, it is called human rights. The increasing number of female learners in the department showed the changes in the scenario, although some steps were yet to be taken by the dominant classes—the teacher reflected. This echoed the following:

> *According to the Feminist Institutionalization approach (Lombardo & Margaert, 2014), institutions are formal and informal gendered structures and norms that can reproduce but also counteract gender inequalities (Chappell, 2006, Mackay et al., 2009). There have been many attempts to find a solution for the resistance to change in gendered organizational cultures. Implementing new ideas and building up relationships, rather than merely focusing on individual needs (Beer et al., 1990), channeling resistance into more constructive aspects (Weisbord, 1987) focusing on targeted action and taking certain steps to overcome any loss of status on the side of the employees after the change (Dent & Goldberg, 1999) are some of the proposed strategies (cited in FESTA, 2016).*

Like this teacher, some successful experienced ones did not like to use words i.e. 'equity' or 'women' in their work environments since that created a gender-sensitive agenda with a particular tone in the program that offered benefits for all (FESTA, 2016). In this regard, Liff and Cameron (1997) claimed that institutions should also extend their privileges to men as well rather than merely focusing on women's interests. If the situation is gender neutral with the consideration for common benefits, this can be persuaded in more efficient ways. Moreover, according to experts, the categorization of issues as 'male' and 'female', compartmentalizes the coexistence of them as the essential factors in the broader ecological landscape.

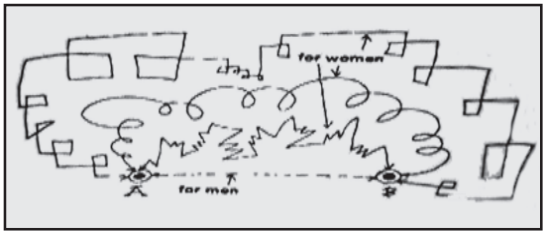

Figure 1: FESTA, 2016: compartmentalization of gender

Also, resistance towards change is/was in some cases taken as a structural problem, as there is a structure that inclines individuals to the status quo. So those situations are/were suggested to actualize gender skills in place of gender neutrality or gender blindness (Lombardo & Mergaert, 2013). However, awareness raising among men and women for benefiting the common interest needs to be stressed although in most cases common good arguments may not work very well. Academic culture is based on the knowledge and understanding of promoting competition on the individual or group level. Consequently, the picture shows that 'the more women enjoy the same privileges as men do, the more success the institution as a whole will gain'.

Conclusion and Implications

Through structured interviews and classroom observation, this study tried to explore the resisting factors that obstruct female learners' classroom participation. By using Kumaravadivelu's critical classroom discourse analysis, Wodak's historical-cognitive, and van Dijk's socio-cognitive theories, this study highlighted issues that female learners bring/bring inside the classroom regarding resistance and classroom participation. It has been opined, along with gender dynamics, that female learners resist them when they do not find:

> *classrooms are decontextualised from the learners' point of view when the learners' feelings, their beliefs about what is important, their reasoning and their experience are not part of the assumed context of the teacher's communication (Young, 1992).*

As Kumaravadivelu(1999) mentions classrooms are the crucibles that bring forth the prime elements of education. They include ideologies and ideas, plans and policies, methods and materials, the learners, and the teachers. When they mix together in the right proportion, they can be both exclusive and explosive to support or hinder each other to the successful fruition of the purpose of a desired learning outcome and a serious educational enterprise. Also, CCDA takes classroom events as social events as mini-society where individual-subjective and collective-intersubjective experiences work together with their own rules, regulations, and rituals. Moreover, it says that classroom discourses are socially constructed, historically determined, and politically motivated. So, the EFL classroom reveals many forms of resistance that need to include an analysis of those for a purposeful outcome of learning and teaching. Both learners and teachers ('I do not find any form of resistance that girls are facing in our campus) manifest in this study their own articulated and unarticulated forms of resistance that they ideologically belong to. So, approaches are needed to address those that do not try to separate the EFL classroom from its socio-cultural setups. Rather this classroom needs to accommodate multiple perspectives so that female learners can negotiate their identities with their expectations, voices, beliefs, fears, and anxieties.

The UN has declared sustainable development goals (SDGs) and its seventeen goals where equality declares 'leave no one behind'. The fifth goal declares gender equality and the achievement of women's and girls' empowerment at all levels. Along with the declaration, emphasis is given to ensuring equal opportunity for women for effective participation and leadership in the dialogues of every sector of political, economic, educational, and public life. Scholars, like (Lahelma, 2011; Brunila, 2009; Vidén & Naskali, 2010) in gender research and feminist studies have opined for gender equality policies in education to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes to enhance the representation of women in decision-making bodies. Gender-sensitive curricula and teaching methods are requested to address the structural and cultural causes of disparity against women. Giving teachers training regarding the issue is also emphasized. More pedagogical interventions regarding this are highlighted. Rather than continuing the passive selves of the female learners and sending them back to the same social space from where they started, researchers seek to take necessary steps to break the reproductive, restrictive, traditional patterns of classroom talk (Freire, 1983, cited in Bergval & Remlinger, 1996).

Female learners' participation can be ensured if classroom pedagogy can make them enact in classroom problem-solving interaction by keeping the open forum of discussion on any burning discourses of the day.

It is necessary to claim emancipation and to criticize discursively constituted power abuse, injustice, and social discrimination to make epistemic claims of revelation or enlightenment (Reisigl, 2017). According to Fairclough (1989), power is the capacity to control orders of discourse where language has become the primary medium of social control and power expressed through grammatical forms as well as a person's political, judicial, educational, religious, and social occasions. In this regard classrooms, and texts are taken as the sites/habitats of social struggle as channels of power legitimization (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008). According to these critical discourse analysts, language is not powerful on its own, but it is made so by the use of powerful people to gain and maintain their power.

Critiquing one's position helps female learners transform the discriminatory situation into an emancipatory and enlightening one with the know-how of the solution to that. Moreover, it helps one come out from the web of fear of freedom for accomplishing her human soul and the self. Freedom is not a gift, it needs to be acquired and conquered and needs constant and responsible pursuits. Also, it is not a myth living outside in an ideal world, it is within, an indispensable condition of the quest for human completion. Shutting eyes to the natural rights of a female learner is synonymous with ignoring her own true self (Hossain, 1905).

This study is an attempt to explore the repressive and resisting fact that can be overcome by promoting gender awareness in educational practices provided with the fact that gender is not an alien but an integral part of the broader ecological system. Based on several studies, this study also explored the issues that obstruct/ed, submerge/d, self-sabotage/d a female learner in liberating herself from the age-old chains of habitus and the social perceptions to promote her participation at all levels of life. Thus, this study contributes to the growing field of inquiry of female learners' resistance to the changes in classroom participation and interactions in an EFL setting.

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Appendix: the semi structured focus group interview (The transcription)

Researcher: Do you feel any inhibition to participate in classroom discussion?

S1, S2: Yes, I feel problem. Sometimes I feel problem to arrange the full sentence because I think if I utter any wrong, my fellow mates would laugh at me.

S3, S4, S5: Yes, sometimes I feel problem, coz I feel I have less knowledge on the rules of English language, so I speak less for that.

Researcher: Is there any external issue that resists you to participate in classroom interaction?

S3, S5: Yes, at home my mother always dictates me what to say, how to say and what not to? I feel sometime agree with her, sometime not. She says, 'girls should not be like this or that, they should keep their voice low, less audible'. She always gives me dress code for outside home movement, this I do not like. She used to enjoy freedom on that but unwilling to allow me that. I do not make any argument on that, because I believe she is anxious about me every time. She says that, time is different, one should take care of one's own self by accepting the norms and standards of the society instead of voicing them in front of others.

Researcher: Don't you feel bad about that?

S1, S5: yes, most of the time. But I resist myself instead of resisting her. Because, my grandfather (S5) was an alternative space for me. He used to make everything okay for me. He never told that as a female member of the society I am no more a helpless one. He taught me lessons by going outside home, usually motivated me to learn something in a way that one day I could make the changes, so that nobody would like to resist me. Instead I can become a source of inspiration for others. He used to tell me that changing something is not easy, it takes time. One should wait till the right time knocks at the door. Feeling inside that you are some body, some identifiable one in the society can take you to the first step of freedom, emancipation.

As this negativity, I should say it a negative force, had been running in our society for a long long time, to change that will take more time than that. Because we have become easy with that, happy with that. Then I understand my mother clearly and then getting back home I give her a hug.

S1, however I do not feel any resistance from my male classmates, because as a good student I like to help my all classmates including male or female. And they obviously like to take support from me, like to have group discussion with them, like to copy from my copy where I take classnotes. One day I became annoyed with one of them for taking my copy from my table without asking

for it as I was outside classroom. He felt sorry for that and we started discussion again. My classrooms are my best places that give my resisted mind space to share my voice on the issues that teachers raise inside classroom. Although I feel sad when many of my fellow female mates do not participate the dialogue, I like to motivate them to do so as I do. They say that as I am English medium background student I can talk easily on any issue what they feel different to. I want to say here in front of you that background is not the major issue, your knowledge and understanding of the topic is the most important thing to participate inside classroom interaction. Still my fellow mates take it for guaranteed that they are studying for getting a good in-laws, good marriage more than to change themselves to an identity. To them marriage is the ultimate identity for a female self in our society that many of our predecessor's had taken that way. For them creating identity is a very hard job to be chased.

Researcher to the teacher: Do you find your female students participate in classroom interactions more than the boys?

The teacher: Yes, sometimes. If the topic is familiar to them, or interesting, they like to talk. But very interestingly some few learners always talk inside classroom and other participate less, they are same every time, less or no talking.

But now in my classroom I find more female students in contrast to the numbers of the male students. But their number increases, not their voices.

Although in some classes girls talk more than the boys or vice versa, in some cases teachers talk more to make the interaction take place positively. It is good that now girls are trying to make the move inside classroom, but till that is less. They need to be more participatory and interactive.

I think, sometimes English language creates some problem to make participation inside classroom although they belong to the department of English language and literature. Sometimes I think they have some other social-cultural issue of talking less, it depends. As they are given equal rights for everything, they should come out from that age old customs and belief systems and create their own space in broader ecology of society and the world. At the same time, I can say that things are getting changed although at a slower pace. We need to change ourselves, means our inner selves also, without always looking for the structural, legal changes from the dominant power classes. That can make a difference and that's more beneficial.

Rethinking English Classroom Practices in the Post-COVID Bangladesh: Making a Case for Blended-learning

Mohammad Sajjad Hossen

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused large-scale disruption to education worldwide and forced educational institutions to switch to online education. During this pandemic, Bangladeshi educational institutions also transitioned to online teaching. While most teachers and students felt immensely challenged by this new mode of education because of a lack of training and infrastructural limitations, some English language teachers were found to exploit this opportunity to teach online using accessible technologies. The teachers who successfully integrated technology in the classroom recommended continuing online education in the post-COVID period because of the benefits this mode of education offers. However, they did not suggest online education as a substitute for in-person education. This systematic review critically examined the literature that explored Bangladeshi teachers' and students' experiences of COVID-19 online education to understand if online education offers any solutions to the challenges that negatively affect the country's secondary-level English education. Based on the meta-analysis of data, this review paper makes a case for blended learning for English language classrooms in Bangladesh, as research on blended learning shows that this dual-mode education can address the issues of space, time, and reach that negatively impact the country's English language education. More importantly, the blended approach can reduce inequities that characterize the current English language classrooms in the country and can, consequently, increase inclusion. Accordingly, drawing on global and local scholarship, this paper sheds light on various features of blended education.

Keywords: *Online education, blended learning, flipped classroom, English language teaching, the substitution, and technological pedagogical content knowledge.*

Introduction

The education sector was immensely affected worldwide by the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ryan, 2023). The spread of the virus required the authorities to close down schools in Global South and Global North as an initial response to contain the virus, which marked the most extensive disruption in the delivery of education in history (UNESCO, 2020). School closures affected over 94 per cent of learners across the world (McCarthy & Richter, 2020). To restrict the spread of the virus, educational

institutions transitioned to the online format. However, the pandemic did not deliver a single educational experience worldwide (Breslin, 2020). Research on COVID-19 educational experiences suggests that Global North relatively smoothly transitioned to online education as an alternative to face-to-face (f2f) instruction while Global South struggled. The reason, perhaps, is that developed countries already had flipped classrooms, that is, technology-supported components. Accordingly, the matter of the digital divide between countries became obvious. Notably, COVID-19 online education exposed the digital divide within countries as well, as private and public institutions in many countries responded to the pandemic differently (Khan et al., 2021a; Rafiq, 2023; Ryan, 2023). For instance, Bangladeshi private educational institutions adapted to online education more efficiently than public ones. This public-private difference within the country can be attributed to the better technological infrastructures in private institutions, revealing an inherent inequality between these two educational streams.

Bangladesh, a developing economy, responded to the pandemic by closing educational institutions at all levels in March 2020. Initially, the government utilized broadcasting media to continue primary and secondary education (Ahmed, 2021). Later, educational institutions were directed to continue education online so far as their technological capacities allowed (Ahmed, 2021; Bashir et al., 2021). However, this temporary transition to an alternative mode of education in place of f2f instruction exposed Bangladeshi teachers' and students' lack of training and experience regarding technology integration in education (Bashir et al., 2021; Biswas et al., 2020; Das, 2021; Emon et al., 2020). Public educational institutions were found to lack technological infrastructures, such as learning management systems (LMS) and educational technologies, to enact online education (Khan et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2023). In addition, device ownership and internet connectivity issues negatively impacted online education (Khan et al., 2023; Rafique, 2013). Notably, English language teaching that usually demands teacher-student and student-student interaction for learning to occur suffered the most during the Pandemic-related cancellation of f2f instruction (Rouf & Rashed, 2020).

This paper aimed to conduct a systematic review of the body of research that explored teachers' and students' experiences of online education in Bangladesh during the COVID period to develop an understanding of what possibilities this experience holds for the country's education, especially for English language classrooms. With that aim, this paper sought to answer the following two research questions:

1. What are the experiences of Bangladeshi teachers and learners regarding the online education that was enacted in the country during the COVID period?

2. In light of COVID-19 online education in Bangladesh, what are the prospects of complementing the secondary-level English language classrooms with online components to extend the reach and increase contact hours?

Motivation of the Study

My experience of working as an English language teacher in Bangladeshi public colleges for two decades has made me aware of some significant challenges—such as large class sizes, fewer contact hours, and

inauthentic learning resources—that affect English language classrooms in the country's public education. As a result, I was keen to find feasible solutions to these challenges to make my teaching more effective and to enhance learning outcomes. Macaro (2020) argues that systematic reviews of educational studies allow researchers to generate insights into a particular educational phenomenon to inform major educational stakeholders, such as teachers, educational leaders and policymakers. Thus, my chief motivation behind undertaking this meta-analysis is to find ways to deal with the problems that negatively impact secondary-level English language education in Bangladesh.

Methodology

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) provided directions for this paper. As a set of guidelines for educational research, PRISMA emphasizes the need for clear research questions, offers a robust screening process and allows the researcher to explore a vast database of relevant literature. For searching relevant papers, the Peer-reviewed Instrumental Materials Online Database (PRIMO), Scopus, and Google Scholar were used, as these search tools facilitate the search of a wide range of empirical studies and scholarly articles from various sources (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Accordingly, searches were made to identify the literature on pandemic-related online education or emergency remote teaching (ERT) worldwide published between 2020 and early 2023, with a particular focus on Bangladesh. Limiting the search to this particular period can be justified because educational intuitions began to be affected by COVID-19 and went online between early and mid-2020. A combination of the following keywords was used for the search: online education, emergency remote learning, COVID-19, COVID-time online education, transition to online education, English language learning, English language teaching, Bangladeshi teachers, Bangladeshi students, and Bangladesh.

The search primarily found 112 papers that explored different aspects of online education or ERT during the COVID period in different countries, including Bangladesh. Upon reading the titles and abstracts of these papers, twenty-six (26) papers were found to be relevant to this study. Of these, 20 studies were directly related to the Bangladeshi context. The rest were from international backgrounds. All articles that explored the Bangladeshi experiences of the COVID-19 transition to online education, whether or not published in peer-reviewed journals, were selected for review because of the paucity of research in this particular context. As for studies from international contexts, only peer-reviewed articles and seminal book chapters that provided a holistic view of pandemic-time online education were selected. In total, six (6) papers were selected from international contexts. In addition, some seminal books, book chapters, and peer-reviewed articles on online education, blended learning, and technology integration in education were selected—regardless of their publication date and contexts—to form a general understanding of these pedagogical concepts to inform this research, with a particular focus on English language learning and teaching. The major themes identified by this meta-analysis have been presented in the sections that follow.

Findings

The Pandemic: Global Experience

As stated earlier, the pandemic caused large-scale disruption of f2f instruction worldwide. The closures of schools negatively impacted education in all countries. Klein (2020) showed that the management of teaching and learning involved significant challenges all across the world, as the pandemic "ushered in a new era for teaching and learning in general for all countries worldwide" (Upor, 2023, p. 163). According to Ryan (2023), the major challenges were: a) having a device to attend online classes; b) access to the Internet; c) stability of broadband connections; d) having a suitable place to study; e) having in-person resources; and f) having the required linguistic, educational, and cultural capital for online education. It was found that countries with advanced technological set-ups in educational institutions fared much better than low-tech developing countries (Khan et al., 2023; Upor, 2023).

Ryan (2023) further argued that the affluent section of society having adequate digital access also experienced fewer challenges in each country. Thus, digital access and literacy were two defining factors in enacting the COVID-19 emergency remote learning (Corsi & Ryan, 2022). Accordingly, one crucial issue was equity: equity of digital access and equity of environment (Smith et al., 2020). Depending on digital access and digital literacy, Breslin (2023) put the lockdown stakeholders into three categories: lockdown thrivers, survivors, and strugglers. According to him (2023), lockdown thrivers had a relatively positive experience during the pandemic because of their adequate access to technology, stable connections, and digital literacy. In contrast, lockdown strugglers grappled with the lack of technological access and economic struggles. Lockdown survivors fall between these two groups, who somehow could manage to get by regarding accessing and using technologies.

The Pandemic: Bangladeshi Experience

In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected education (UNESCO, 2021), as the government was required to implement a country-wide lockdown from mid-March 2020 to implement social distancing (Ahmed, 2021; Dewan et al., 2022). As an initial response, the government temporarily used the national broadcasting service to continue primary and secondary education (Ahmed, 2021). Then educational institutions were asked to continue online teaching and learning with whatever technological support was available. However, scholars argue that such an alternative mode of education to continue education during a crisis does not fit the definition of online education (see Ryan, 2023). In this regard, Hodges et al. (2020) think that emergency remote teaching (ERT) is a more suitable term. Notably, ERT cannot prepare students and teachers for digitally-mediated education in a well-planned way because it is usually a stop-gap solution to a crisis, not a permanent arrangement (Hodges et al., 2020; Ryan, 2023). Thus, it differs from regular online education and impacts institutions and stakeholders varyingly (Smith et al., 2023). The Bangladesh experience attests to this observation. In light of Breslin's (2023) typology, most Bangladeshi teachers and students can be identified as lockdown strugglers.

Infrastructural Issues and Pedagogical Challenges

It was found that Bangladeshi teachers and educational leaders were unaware of the affordances of educational technologies (Ahmed, 2021; Das, 2021; Tabassum et al., 2021). Their online teaching was limited to uploading videos and teaching materials on the institutional website or YouTube for students to continue their education (see Rouf & Rashed, 2021). Teachers who conducted synchronous classes using video technologies, such as Google Meet and Zoom, needed to familiarize themselves with various features of these technologies. While students were found to be relatively more comfortable with technologies, they were unable to educationally benefit from using them because they lacked training (Biswas et al., 2020). However, some teachers demonstrated high familiarity with emerging educational technologies and exploited their affordances to continue teaching effectively online (see Rafique, 2023).

Studies on COVID-19 ERT in Bangladesh revealed that the major impediment to teaching online was inadequate infrastructural support required for virtual classrooms (Ahmed, 2021; Bashir et al., 2021; Dewan et al., 2022; Farhana et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020, 2021, 2021a, 2023; Mannan et al., 2020; Rafique, 2023). These challenges included: a lack of access to devices and technologies, lack of access to the Internet, unstable and unreliable connections, and high Internet data costs. Thus, in most cases, ERT appeared to be a mere tokenism while waiting for in-person classes to resume (Ahmed, 2021; Shrestha et al., 2021; Dewan et al., 2022). Many students cannot take advantage of synchronous online video classes because of not owning required devices, the high costs of broadband connections, and unstable connections (Farhana et al., 2020; Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2021a; Khan et al., 2023). Accordingly, studies that explored teachers' and students' COVID-19 experiences found low learner engagement, reduced classroom interactions, reduced classroom discussions, and low learning outcomes (Ahmed, 2021; Bashir et al., 2021; Biswas, 2020; Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2020, 2021, 2021a, 2023; Rafique, 2023; Rouf & Rashed, 2021). Students were also found to have suffered from not having any training for online education (Ahmed, 2021; Farhana et al., 2020; Rouf & Rashid, 2021). Notably, online education created opportunities for students to take control of their own learning with reduced control of teachers over the classroom; however, few students could utilize this autonomy (Rouf & Rashid, 2021).

Assessment was one of the most vulnerable areas of education during ERT (Kabir & Hasnat, 2021). Research findings revealed that teachers could not design appropriate, reliable, and valid online assessments because of their lack of technical skills and experience ((Al-Maqbali & Raja Hussain, 2022; Bashir et al., 2021; Carrillo & Flores, 2020; Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2021a, 2023). First, designing assessments for virtual classrooms requires teachers' specific technological skills, which many teachers lack (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). Consequently, such assessments cannot ensure learning outcomes. Second, developing appropriate virtual assessment instruments is time-consuming and, thus, significantly increases teachers' workload (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). Worse still, it becomes tough for educators to maintain academic integrity through online assessments designed for virtual environments, as monitoring virtual exam halls per se is a challenge (Al-Maqbali & Raja Hussain, 2022). Accordingly, online assignments often allow students to plagiarise

and adopt unfair means during exams and, thus, demotivate students who strictly adhere to academic integrity.

In this regard, researchers in Bangladesh (Bashir et al., 2021; Kabir & Hasnat, 2021; Khan et al., 2020) identified increased occurrences of plagiarism and cheating in COVID-19 online education due to a lack of monitoring. Consequently, many Bangladeshi students expressed concerns that assessments could not ensure justice (Bashir et al., 2021). However, private educational institutions were found to experience fewer challenges as they already had technological infrastructures, such as Blackboard, required for online education (Khan et al., 2021a; Rafique, 2023). Thus, inequities of access and educational environment were two significant issues in the Bangladeshi experience of ERT during the pandemic situation.

ERT and English Language Teaching in Bangladesh

Research suggests that integrating technology in the English language classroom can create unique opportunities for learners to learn and practice the target language by enabling them to access authentic materials and enhancing exposure to the target language (Hockly, 206, 2018; King, 2016). However, Bangladeshi public education has yet to capitalize on the affordances of educational technologies (Khan & Abdou, 2021). The COVID-19 ERT allowed the country's English language teachers to use and experiment with technology as a substitute for f2f instruction (see Munni & Hassan, 2020; Rafique, 2023; Rouf & Rashed, 2021). However, teachers' lack of experience and competence did not allow them to take full advantage of this opportunity (Rouf & Rashed, 2021). Curiously, the impact of ERT on English language learning did not receive adequate scholarly attention in Bangladesh. While the majority of the researchers who explored teachers' and students' education-related experiences during COVID-19 ERT in the country were practising English language teachers, their empirical studies primarily focused on ERT's impact on education in general rather than on English language education in particular (see Bashir et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2020, 2021, 2021a; 2023). However, three studies could be traced that solely focused on the impact of ERT on English language classrooms during the crisis period.

To begin with, Munni and Hassan (2020) reported creating a Facebook group to develop the listening and speaking skills of a cohort of 52 undergraduate students in English. They reported that the online arrangement allowed them to use authentic materials from YouTube and BBC to develop speaking and listening skills, in which learner satisfaction and motivation were found to be high. They argued that Facebook or similar social media could be useful in teaching English in Bangladesh if teachers were trained for the job. Rouf and Rashed's (2021) case study on secondary and higher secondary English education explored teachers' experiences of implementing ERT in English classes. The study found that teachers used institutional Facebook to upload recorded content-based videos to teach English. Unsurprisingly, such non-interactional and asynchronous lessons were found to have low learner engagement. The researchers argued that these video lessons could not significantly contribute to developing any of the four skills of English. The authors also mentioned that teachers' inadequate training and digital literacy did not allow them to design appropriate online assessments. They concluded that the instruction was primarily ineffective. Despite these limitations, Rouf

and Rashed (2021) see the immense potential of flipped classrooms for teaching and learning English in Bangladesh and advocate for continuing technology-integrated English teaching in the post-COVID period alongside f2f instruction.

Finally, Rafique (2023) conducted her action research with undergraduate students who took "Functional English" and "Academic Writing" courses with her between November 2020 and April 2021 at a premier public university in Bangladesh. After a thorough needs analysis, she designed instructional activities to build an online learning community. Her methodologically rigorous qualitative study explored learner engagement, interaction and collaboration in a technology-mediated online environment by encouraging students to practice writing and providing feedback online. The researcher used Google Classroom as LMS, Zoom for synchronous online classes, Google Jamboard for brainstorming, and Google Docs for writing practices. While typical technological issues and lack of context-specific training posed challenges for teaching online in this particular context, the researcher reported increased learner participation, interaction, and collaboration among her students. Based on her experience, she recommended the continuation of online teaching in the post-COVID period because of the affordances such technology-supported online teaching offers. Notably, these three researchers stressed the need to adequately train teachers before enacting online classes.

Lessons from COVID Experiences

Despite various challenges that characterized emergency remote teaching in Bangladesh, this crisis-time stop-gap solution allowed Bangladeshi educators to use and experiment with various educational tools. A general consensus is that teachers could ensure higher learning outcomes with adequate training and preparation. During this period, English teaching professionals in Bangladesh also became aware of many free and inexpensive educational technologies that significantly facilitate learning. While the literature on technology-mediated language learning finds a positive link between technology use and second language acquisition (Hockly, 2016, 2018; King, 2016), Bangladeshi English language teachers are yet to learn to integrate technologies in teaching. However, Rafique's (2023) theoretically informed technology-mediated English language courses set an example of exploiting technological innovations to make teaching and learning more effective. She mainly relied on accessible educational technologies for her initiative, which points to the feasibility of integrating such technologies to address the challenges that impede effective teaching in English language classrooms in Bangladesh, especially at the secondary level. In this regard, studies on secondary-level English language teaching in the country identified three crucial impediments: a need for more authentic and rich input, overcrowded class size and limited contact hours (Al Amin, 2022; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Rahman et al., 2019; Rahmatuzzaman, 2018).

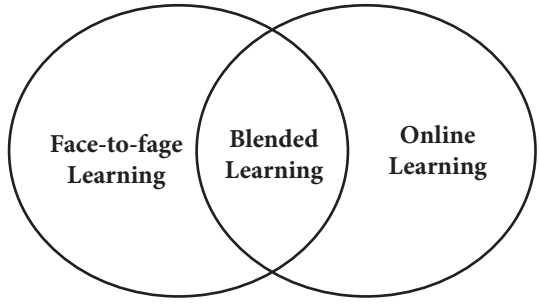
Munni and Hassan (2020), Rafique (2023) and Rashed and Rouf (2021) recommend continuing technology-supported teaching to complement f2f classes to make ELT more effective and ensure learning outcomes. Motivated by their initiatives, this author argues that the blended learning approach to language learning might revolutionize the learning and teaching of English in the country's English language education at all levels. This approach will enable teachers to address the issues of time and space (King,

2016) that negatively affect the country's English language education (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Rahman et al., 2019). Moreover, the approach will also contribute to minimizing the digital divide that creates inequities between public and private education concerning English (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014; Hamid & Erling, 2016). As a developing economy aiming at becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2031 (Gupta & Liton, 2023), Bangladesh prioritizes learning English to produce English-proficient graduates to exploit the opportunities created by the global open market (Roshid & Sultana, 2023). Such an English acquisition plan requires restructuring the learning environment to decrease inequities and increase inclusion. Based on global and local experiences, this paper makes a case for blending virtual components with f2f instruction in English language classrooms in Bangladesh to extend the reach and increase effectiveness. Rafique (2023), Khan and Abdou (2021), and Munni and Hassan (2020) showed that there are affordable and accessible educational technologies, such as Facebook and Google Classroom, that can be used as LMS and supportive learning tools to enact blended learning in English education. Accordingly, the following sections shed light on blended learning and issues closely related to such technology-mediated education for policy consideration.

The Blended Approach: The Best of both Worlds

Blended learning is a bridge between online and F2F education, although scholars have yet to reach a consensus regarding the definition of this new mode of education (Saichaie, 2020; Sharpe et al., 2006; Sharma & Barrett, 2008). Consequently, it is understood differently in different contexts (Graham, 2013). The general understanding is that it is a blend of f2f instruction and online instruction and a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous deliveries (Graham & Dziuban, 2008; Hockly, 2016). However, disagreements exist about the right blend (Whittaker, 2013).

Figure 1: *Blended Learning*



(Adapted from Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019)

According to King (2016), blending occurs whenever a teacher uses technologies as media, such as audio or video. In contrast, Dziuban et al. (2018) argue that at least 30 per cent of classroom instruction should be in an online format to qualify as blended. However, Whittaker (2013) argues that "any combination of face-to-face teaching and computer technology" (p. 12) should be considered blended. Singh and Reed (2001) argue that what is important is having more than one delivery mode, not a virtual-physical ratio, that aims to optimize delivery cost and learning outcomes. It is important to note that blended learning does not intend to replace seat time with full-time online instruction but aims to redefine the learning process (Strayer, 2012).

Why Blended Learning for English Language Learning?

From Chomsky's (1965) theory of competence and performance to Hyme's (1972)

communicative competence to Halliday and Hassan's (1976) discourse competence to Holec's (1981) theory of learner autonomy, a significant number of theories have informed the field of applied linguistics during the last five decades, reshaping language classroom practices globally. These theoretical orientations have encouraged classroom practitioners to move from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness with two main aims: allowing more learner autonomy and greater learner responsibility. In short, these conceptualizations have also motivated teachers to look at the learning process from the learner's perspective (King, 2016). As a result, the teacher's role has expanded, requiring them to facilitate, monitor, and observe learning, standing aside to intervene only when necessary (King, 2016). In this new paradigm, teachers are less interested in the passive transmission of knowledge (King, 2016). In addition, social, cultural, economic and political changes also call for a more flexible and cost-effective learning environment (Nicolson et al., 2011). The new realities demand methodological reorientations of the curriculum. The concept of blended learning can be seen as the desired methodological innovation because it allows flexibility (King, 2016; Sharpe et al., 2006) and personal agency (Osgurthorpe & Graham, 2003). This hybrid mode also economises costs, space and time (Dewar & Whittington, 2004; Osgurthorpe & Graham, 2003; Singh & Reed, 2001), increases access (Graham, 2004; Hockly, 2018; King, 2016; Singh & Reed, 2001), enriches pedagogy (Graham, 2004; Hockly, 2018; King, 2016), enhances effectiveness (Hockly, 2018; King, 2016; Singh & Reed, 2001), and support diversity (Sharpe et al., 2006).

In this regard, King (2016) identifies some key benefits of blended learning for teachers and learners of English, which are as follows: 1) accommodating diverse learning styles, 2) providing individual attention, 3) maximizing interaction, 4) enhancing learner confidence and motivation, 5) facilitating rich input, and 6) fostering autonomy. Notably, the blended mode offers several benefits for institutions as well. First, this educational approach allows the authorities to make the best use of resources. Second, it allows institutions to reach a large number of learners, which increases its scalability (Thanekar, 2013). Moreover, the approach enables authorities to leverage learning by allowing students to use devices they already own, such as cell phones (Thanekar, 2013).

Modern English classrooms aim to develop students' communicative competence through developing four skills of English. Research indicates that blended learning plays a crucial role in developing four macro-skills by engaging students in diverse ways. For instance, Shih (2010) introduced video-based blogs in a traditional English class to develop students' speaking skills and found that students' speaking abilities significantly improved because of the blending. In an experimental study, Adas and Bakir (2013) found that their EFL students improved in different areas of writing, such as coherence, cohesion, and grammar, because of adopting a blended mode. Similarly, Banditvilai (2016), Ghazizadeh and Fatemipour (2017), and Tosun (2015) found EFL students' improvement in listening, reading, and vocabulary development, respectively as a result of adopting a blended approach.

Critical Considerations

While blended language classrooms have significant benefits, as stated above, it is not an educational panacea. Before adopting this

mode, policymakers and teachers need to consider some related issues. As global and Bangladeshi experiences suggested, teacher training is essential for technology integration in education for two reasons. First, teachers' digital literacy and subject knowledge must be developed simultaneously to exploit the benefits offered by educational technologies (the following section discusses the issue in greater detail). Second, teachers' mindsets need to be changed. For instance, teachers habituated to teacher-fronted classrooms might face challenges with this learner-fronted approach. Thus, teachers' mental preparation is crucial. Then, choosing an appropriate combination of in-person and online components is essential.

Regarding the appropriate blend of physical and virtual components, King (2016) thinks that the blend must be determined by course objectives and aims, not by teachers' personal choices. Costs are also an essential factor to consider. For example, affordability and accessibility of technologies are two crucial factors for low-resource contexts (Twig, 2006), such as Bangladesh. Another relevant issue that needs attention is learner motivation. Learners' lack of interest in the blended mode might cause student attrition (King, 2016). High difficulty levels of materials or assignments, time pressures, and increased workload may demotivate learners about blended education (Picciano, 2016). Finally, peer support, a useful motivator in any learning environment (Hughes, 2007), is essential in blended learning. Accordingly, students must be trained to foster the mindset to help their peers before adopting blended education.

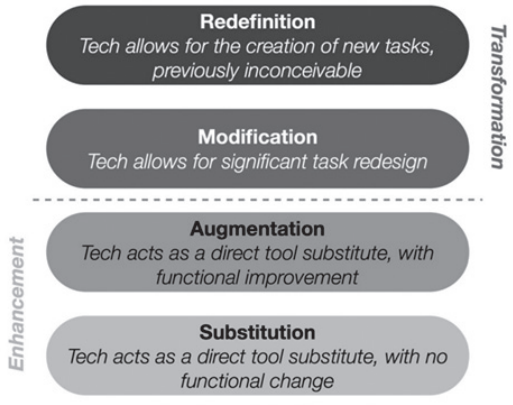
Issues Related to Technology Integration in Education

It has been argued that technology-mediated learning can transform the traditional classroom into a vibrant, learner-friendly, and more inclusive learning space. However, technologies can do more harm than good if they are integrated without proper planning and appropriate design. First, teachers' mindsets concerning technology use must be changed by informing them of its potential. Then they should be adequately trained to feel comfortable with technologies by developing their digital literacy. Finally, they should be made aware of the principles that inform the field. In this regard, two models are instrumental in developing teachers' competence in using technologies for educational purposes: the SAMR (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition) model and TPACK (technological, pedagogical, content knowledge). The following two sub-sections briefly introduce these two models.

The SAMR Model

The acronym SAMR stands for substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition. Puentedura (2006) designed this model to provide secondary-level teachers with guidelines regarding technology integration in education. The model has four levels (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition), which fall into two higher levels: enhancement (includes substitution and augmentation) and transformation (includes modification and redefinition).

Figure 2: *The SAMR model.*



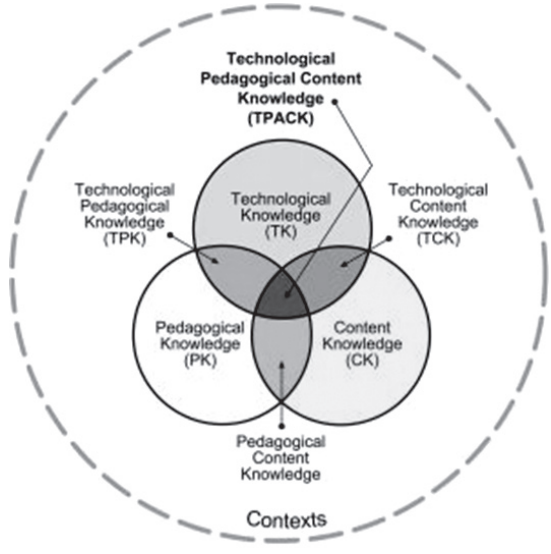
(Adapted from Hamilton et al., 2016)

The enhancement level allows teachers to enrich input through technical support to foster lower-order thinking skills. In contrast, the transformation level can enable teachers to transform the learning environment to foster higher-order thinking skills. For instance, a piece of printed text can be substituted with a similar text in the electronic format, which can be further augmented with colours and illustrations. However, an electronic format of the exact text with interactive features can further modify the text to increase its functionality. The fourth level, redefinition, is the highest level in which a task can be innovatively redesigned. For example, instead of assigning an ESL student to write a dialogue between a salesperson and a customer, s/he can be asked to visit a nearby shop, record her/his real-life transaction with the salesperson, and then submit the assignment in the audio format.

TPACK

Teachers' content knowledge is undeniably an important factor so far as teaching is concerned. However, Shulman (1987) contends that mere content knowledge cannot make an effective teacher. According to him, effective teaching requires a teacher to have pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), that is, the ability to make lectures comprehensible. When a teacher is required to use technology for educational purposes, his role becomes more complex and challenging, as it evidently involves three distinct but overlapping knowledge bases: content-related, pedagogical, and technological. Drawing on Shulman's (1987) theory of PCK, Mishra and Koehler (2006) developed the TPACK framework. The framework aims to enable teachers to integrate technologies in education effectively.

Figure 3. *The TPCK Framework*



(Adapted from Mishra & Koehler, 2008)

According to Mishra and Koehler (2006), the domains of content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK) become intricately intertwined during the process of integrating technology for pedagogical purposes and lead to four new domains: 1) pedagogical knowledge (PK), 2)

technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK), 3) technological content knowledge (TCK), and 4) technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK). The main argument is that teachers must be able to separate the intertwined bases of knowledge and understand their interactions at the same time (Zhang & Fang, 2022). According to Koehler and Mishra (2006), TPACK provides teachers with guidelines that enable them to observe and reflect on actions about technology integration in education to inform their teaching practices. It is important to note that uninformed use of technology in education can, in the best-case scenario, develop students' lower-order thinking (Tseng et al., 2020). In contrast, TPACK can foster students' higher-order thinking (Wang, 2022). In this regard, the recent trend in EFL education encourages teachers to aim at developing students' higher-order thinking skills while teaching the target language.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The pandemic required Bangladeshi educational institutions to switch to online education temporarily. The experience was marked by various infrastructural and pedagogical challenges. However, the silver lining to this COVID cloud is that the pandemic initiated Bangladeshi educators into virtual classrooms. Some English language teachers exploited this opportunity to their advantage. They explored available technological resources to teach online, enhance learner engagement and motivation, and increase learning outcomes. Their initiatives can be motivational for the country's English language teachers to explore further the possibilities that educational technologies offer. It is time for English language teachers to take it one step further by envisioning blended English language classrooms to extend the reach, increase effectiveness, enrich learning experiences, and minimize inequities.

Based on the learners' and teachers' experiences of pandemic-time online education in Bangladesh as well as other contexts, this author recommends considering the adoption of the blended learning approach to English language teaching (ELT) in Bangladeshi public education for several reasons. First, the blended approach will enable teachers and administrators to respond more efficiently to future natural or artificial disasters disrupting f2f instruction. Second, the approach can be enacted using accessible educational technologies, such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Facebook, and WhatsApp, to help English language teachers address the challenges of time and space that negatively impact language classrooms in Bangladesh (see Khan & Abdou, 2021; Munni & Hassan, 2020; Rafique; 2023). Third, the right blend of f2f and online components will enable students to access authentic learning materials and enhance their exposure to the target language, which is critical for second/foreign language learners. Finally, blending in-person and virtual classrooms can be expected to help English language learners construct knowledge autonomously by taking control of their own learning. However, teachers and students must be adequately trained and prepared to use useful educational technologies to achieve the desired goals.

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Transition to Online Pedagogy in the Nepalese Universities during and after COVID-19: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study explores undergraduate students' perceptions of online pedagogy (OP) practiced during COVID-19 pandemic and blended pedagogy (BP)/ blended teaching and learning (BTL) currently in practice in the post-pandemic times in ESP courses at Kathmandu University School of Law (KUSL), Nepal. While essentially a study of two case studies, it also develops as embedded informal action research (Beck, 2017). The study reveals that both OP and BP/ BTL, despite many transitions, function(ed) only as makeshift pedagogies in the local context, which is not how they are taken in their mainstream uses. It first highlights the majority voice for continuing using helpful elements from OP (with improvements) in the conventional mode, diagnoses numerous problems associated with the pedagogy, and identifies spaces to bring about improvements in. It then examines the transitions, including BP/ BTL, which reveal that OP has been instrumental in encouraging the practitioners to increasingly embrace BP/ BTL for its immense usefulness. However, (collective) institutional readiness in investing in major OP and BP/ BTL resources and technologies seriously lacked/ lacks. These findings, with the (local) literature aside, also help to successively build and refine the conceptual framework used.

Keywords: *COVID-19, makeshift pedagogies, pedagogic transitions, student perceptions*

Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic posed unforeseen challenges all over the world and seriously affected all social systems, including education (Allain-Dupré et al., 2020). This was true also in Nepal (Shrestha et al., 2020). Globally, under the threats of the pandemic, both teachers and learners practiced different types of alternative pedagogies (e.g., online, on-air, and other media forms), but with various ensuing hurdles, especially in online medium (Koh & Daniel, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). In Nepal's case, because proper planning and technological infrastructures seriously lacked (Dawadi et al., 2020; Paudel, 2021), what posed protuberant challenges were, among others, recurrent power outage, no or slow internet connection, lack of online teaching skills and resources, and lack of learning devices (laptops, etc.)—mostly in case of young learners (Khati & Bhatta, 2020;

Khatiwada, 2020; Sah, 2021). These problems, with the pandemic threats in the background, significantly contributed to temporary or indefinite closures of most schools and universities in the country during 2020 – 2021 (Dawadi et al., 2020; Karki et al., 2021). As per UNESCO (2020), nearly nine million students were affected during the pandemic and it was school education that was affected more severely (as cited in Adhikari, 2023, p. 2). The case of public schools is best explained by the data from Central Bureau of Statistics 2019: Out of 29, 707 public schools in Nepal, only 8, 366 had computers and much less-3, 776 offered IT-based study with internet connectivity. Against this backdrop, even radio and television were (and are) not widely accessible and affordable in the country (as cited in Thapaliya & Pradhan, 2021).

However, according to Dawadi et al. (2020), independently well-equipped stakeholders (private and community schools, colleges, and universities plus their teachers and students), except in situations of power cuts and internet disconnections, benefitted from the shift to online teaching-learning (OTL). This was more so in higher education (Sah, 2021). These findings are also backed up by the sudden increase in internet penetration (by 3 million) in the country, mostly through mobile connections (Kemp, 2020). Besides, there was an increase in the use of other means of remote education such as radio, TV, newspapers, and telephone in this emergency shift widely identified as pandemic pedagogy (PP). UNESCO (2020) stated that the country's mountainous landscape and its remote hard-to-reach communities made distance learning through radio a suitable way to maximize continuity of learning. *Radio Pathshala,* a UNESCO-supported pilot radio broadcast with live call-in support, and *Hamro Ghar: Hamro Paathshala,* another educational radio program, proved effective for students up to secondary levels (UNESCO, 2020; World Vision, 2020). And so did the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's 2020 development of an e-learning portal for school students, mostly when not disturbed by power outage and internet disconnection.

Despite these efforts, educational stakeholders, including unprivileged students and teachers from schools and universities, faced digital divide. This led to increased inequality in access to education, adverse impacts on assessment, and chances of loose gatekeeping, the last of which potentially aggravated the already deteriorating standards of education (Dawadi, 2019; Dawadi et al., 2020). On the other hand, teachers' and students' lack of digital literacy, followed by lack of administrative support and proper assessment designs, constrained technology use in higher education (Laudari, 2019; Laudari & Maher, 2019). Also, large classroom sizes, low quality teaching environments, and lack of training or adequately trained professionals (Aryal et al., 2016; Dawadi, 2019) posed even more challenges. However, from mid-2020, the recurrent problem of power outage was slowly resolved (Subedi, 2020) and teachers and students enjoyed comparatively better teaching-learning situations.

The initial paucity of literature on teachers' and students' experiences of OTL (by using mobile, Google Meet, YouTube, etc.) gradually gave way to new literature. Teachers pictured OTL both as fruitfully productive or participatory and not as effective as in physical classes (Shrestha et al., 2020) whereas students took online classes as comparatively problematic and less effective than physical classes (Manandhar et al., 2021). More importantly, a few studies (Dangal & Bajracharya, 2020; Shrestha et al., 2022; Singh & Shrestha, 2021)

reported that practices and aspects associated with OTL, following the pandemic-caused anxieties, negatively affected the mental well-being of students and teachers. Amid this, the issue of collective, cyclical, and gradual pedagogic improvements in the OP mode was also stressed (Dawadi et al., 2020; Rauniyar, 2020), that relates to the issue of this study.

The present study first explores undergraduate students' perceptions of OP practiced in ESP teaching-learning during the pandemic and then of BP/ BTL in the post-pandemic times at KUSL, Nepal. The critical issues of OP being reported by my students and colleagues at this institution made me embark on this project—also with an intention to individually and collectively address them with proper reflections and actions while learning from the pedagogic transitions. This purpose was also backed up by what was going on in my community of practice: Confusions about or questions of relevance of emergency education, including OP, in the context of Nepal (Kafle, 2020; Khatiwada, 2020; Paudel, 2021), vested motives in this new practice (Kafle, 2020), and urgent need for critical reflections on stressful pedagogic practices affecting students not only in learning but also in life (Rauniyar, 2020; Vahid, 2020). According to Dawadi et al. (2020), the latter issue was highly important to be guided by in online teaching (p. 9).

With all these impetuses, my objectives in this study are to identify (1) what works for or better facilitates students in OP/ PP and BP/ BTL, (2) what hinders fruitful learning in OP/ PP and BP/ BTL, (3) what particular spaces in OP/ PP and BP/ BTL, in connection with cyclic reflections and actions following students' inputs, help bring about pedagogic changes and transitions, (4) which one—OP/ PP or BP/ BTL—is perceived better and for what particular reasons, and (5) what conceptual understanding/ misunderstanding about the interconnections among different types of pedagogies (conventional, OP, PP during the pandemic, and BP/ BTL in the post-pandemic times) are revealed.

Conceptual Framework

Amid the local confusions regarding what the OP being practiced during the pandemic was and was not, it was necessary for this study to develop a conceptual framework alongside so that the act of locating oneself in the local pedagogic practices would be well-informed. The framework developed here has been successively refined with the help of the review of local literature on (ELT) pedagogic practices during the pandemic, global literature on interrelated concepts of pedagogies, and participants' perceptions of PP (OP during the pandemic), BP/ BTL (practiced in the post-pandemic times), and their (inter-)connections to other pedagogies, in particular OP and conventional one.

Intersecting Concepts from the Local Literature

Educational stakeholders practiced emergency education and its various means, including OP, in complete tracklessness, anxieties, and frustrations, with learning losses in majority cases of school and university closures, primarily because of the lack of practical policies, planning, and technological readiness, mostly at the governmental and institutional levels, and this was followed by chaos and confusions regarding what the makeshift teaching-learning was (Gyawali & Bhatta, 2021; Khati & Bhatta, 2020; Shrestha et al., 2022). However, there were some strengths in MoE's responses to COVID-19

despite the fact that its plans and policies were formulated with little examination of diverse situations and without clear directions for implementing them into actions (Shrestha & Gnawali, 2021, p. 178).

Sangroula (2021) wrote that COVID -19 pandemic created the largest disruption of education system in the country, primarily because of traditional approach of teaching and learning. Teachers lacked knowledge and skills needed for OP (Shrestha et al., 2022) and students became clueless, feeling "a lack of strong pedagogic support." This was more so for "students from disadvantaged/ marginalized spaces" (Devkota, 2021, p. 145). According to Kunwar et al. (2020), there were challenges regarding technology integration, support for students, equity, curriculum and pedagogy, access to OTL, and stakeholders' attitudes. Public campuses, lacking clear policies and infrastructures, were unwilling to implement online classes. And there were limited motivating factors for faculties and students (Panthee, 2020). In addition, pedagogic practices were identified as giving rise to health issues such as depression, which underscored urgent need for psychological counseling for students (Shrestha et al., 2022). Considering these problems, Paudel (2021) wrote that online education was not yet a necessity in Nepal. Amid this, issues of academic misconduct, such as cheating or plagiarism, also increased (Pandey, 2021; Sangroula, 2021); and this seriously called for ethics or netiquettes in OTL and assessments.

Against this backdrop, OP during the pandemic was taken in a number of ways. Initially, it was identified as a new (Paudel, 2021) or recent phenomenon (Gurung et al., 2022); and therefore a challenge, considering unpreparedness and lack of necessary technologies at all levels of education, excluding well-equipped institutions and stakeholders (Chaudhary et al., 2022; Thagunna, 2020). Alongside, it was a forceful shift/ paradigm that lacked proper course designs, suitable pedagogies, and sound ICT infrastructure (Baral, 2022; Kunwar et al., 2022). Gradually, it became a new normal and game changer in teaching-learning and assessments (Acharya et al., 2021; Gautam & Gautam, 2021). Dawadi et al. (2020) viewed education during COVID-19 and beyond as needing to be reimagined as a community-embedded practice (p. 3). Later, it emerged as a new field of inquiry that sought seriousness in many fronts (Gautam & Gautam, 2021; Shrestha et al., 2020) while many stakeholders were taking it as heavily influenced by conventional teaching-learning or pedagogies, also in ELT (Laudari & Maher, 2019; Shrestha et al., 2022), or as essentially not different from conventional modes and systems in several aspects of education (Sangroula, 2021). These intersecting local aspects, issues, and perceptions, including OTL's makeshift nature and reliance on conventional measures of education and pedagogy, helped me see OP as being more or less (cyclically) affected by PP and conventional modes. This further led me to global literature on OP or OTL and other pedagogic influences from the past and the COVID situation, for they also helped shape the cycle of local pedagogic practices and discourses during the pandemic.

Intersecting Concepts from the West/ Global Literature

In the global literature also, OTL or OP has dynamically enriching cyclical relations, either directly or indirectly, with PP and conventional pedagogic principles or

measures of education. Yet it is not pictured as a makeshift in global practices. Broadly, it is part of online education and involves Web 2.0 technologies, their uses, and the knowledge and skills associated with them. A range of online tools and apps, both simple and complex, are used in it; and its practice is influenced by how it is used in the connected society, with newer innovations (Anderson, 2007). To effectively practice it, users "must be able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of all the tools available" to them so that they can match "the appropriate tool and activity" to achieve their learning or teaching objectives (Dawley, 2007, p. 3). Similarly, proper planning and policies, reliable technology, strong connectivity, suitable ICT-based course design and assessment, and time management, among others, contribute greatly to it, to its being effective and manageable (Cross & Pollk, 2018).

Of late, it has been enriched with Web 3.0 technologies, such as intelligent search engines and 3D visualization; and with platforms like 'Deschool', Web 3.0 technologies have drastically decentralized learning environment where students are no longer bound by the formal constraints imposed by school or university administrators (Driscoll, 2022). However, according to Ko and Rossen (2004), it has to be taken as involving both synchronous and asynchronous modes (as cited in Dawley, 2007, p. 3) and cannot be severed from asynchronous learning environment, particularly from human resources, learning/ enabling resources (e.g., books/ e-books and their content knowledge, followed by pedagogical knowledge and skills received and developed from the past) and technological resources (Anastasiades, 2008) or newer innovations, such as the free promotional Google Meet.

More importantly, the rising over-reliance on technology in online education/ OP has been critiqued as detrimental to quality teaching-learning. Nichols (2011) observes that "an overall educational framework is still missing" in online education, which calls for "a synergy between pedagogy and technology" (pp. 322-323). This reminds of Postman's (1993) warning that we are increasingly inclining to be "tools of our tools," to blindly take orders from technology (pp. 3-5). Therefore, OP's effectiveness is a towering concern (Pelz, 2010, p. 103), which should now place importance also on inventive abilities, ethics, use of sixth sense, and prompt thinking (Tirri & Toom, 2020, p. 1-7). Similarly, Serdyukova and Serdyukov (2014) caution that in the name of embracing new educational format and technologies we should not undermine fundamental pedagogic research.

This brings us to what the term 'pedagogy' actually stands for. Its concept has been defined variously. Shulman (1987) takes it as a vitally associated factor in his "categories of the knowledge base" that involve "content knowledge," "general pedagogical knowledge," "curriculum knowledge," "pedagogical content knowledge," "knowledge of learners," "knowledge of educational contexts," and "knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds" (p. 8). Similarly, a trio of "knowledge about subject matter, students, and self" is what McDonald (1992) emphasizes, implying that there should be a harmony between teaching pedagogy and learning pedagogy. Teachers, according to van Manen (1999), need to be reflexively aware of what influences they are exerting upon their students (p. 19). Therefore, pedagogy is the combination of what, how, and why instructors/ learners do what they do, which also involves assessments (CEI - UM, n. d.).

Further, scholars of pedagogy suggest practicing (situated) praxes. Watkins and Mortimore (1999) put it as "any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another" (p. 3), while Alexander (2001) goes a little beyond this, yet only from teachers' point of view: "Pedagogy is the domain of discourse with which one needs to engage if one is to make sense of the act of teaching" (p. 513). Drawing on Freire's radical model of education, Leach and Moon (2008) highlight the dynamic process in it, which is informed by critical theories, beliefs, and dialogues (as cited in Niemi, 2018), and Kumaravadivelu (2001) stresses more on context-sensitivity in pedagogic explorations.

Apart from its links to the above dimensions of 'pedagogy', online education/ OP also has its important share in PP. PP, a makeshift way of teaching and learning dating back to the times of Spanish Flu, involves various means of education such as radio, telephone, TV, and newspapers (McCracken, 2020). During the pandemic, it became part of OP or vice versa and involved "developing an understanding of ourselves and how we teach" and/ or learn in times of crisis (Smith & Hornsby, 2020, pp. 1-2). However, OP was not identified so much as PP in developed countries, primarily because of their long-established online programs (Gentles & Leask, 2021; SEHS-KU, 2020). But in certain cases, say of England, remote online education during the pandemic was "a partial substitute" (Stokes & Lewis, 2021, p. 2). In the US also, access to distance learning was not uniform for a few reasons (SHES-KU, 2020). Yet OTL or OP in developed countries did not appear as a forceful phenomenon. However, like in Nepal, global experiences of these crisis pedagogies (including OP) do highlight the increased need for (1) more student-centered, interactive, reflective, and healthful teaching-learning (Li, 2022), (2) building futuristically needful infrastructures, and (3) improving professional development of teachers and teacher educators (Martin AO, 2020).

Clearly, the above forms of pedagogies mutually inform one another and are more or less interdependent, cyclically and/ or dynamically, both in practice and discourse—more so in times of educational crisis. Evidently, PP was (heavily) supported by OP. Both PP and OP were also seen in relation to principles of and discourses on (conventional) pedagogies. In Nepal's case, PP (as part of OP) also revealed the makeshift nature of OP. Their relations can be visualized as presented in Figure 1.

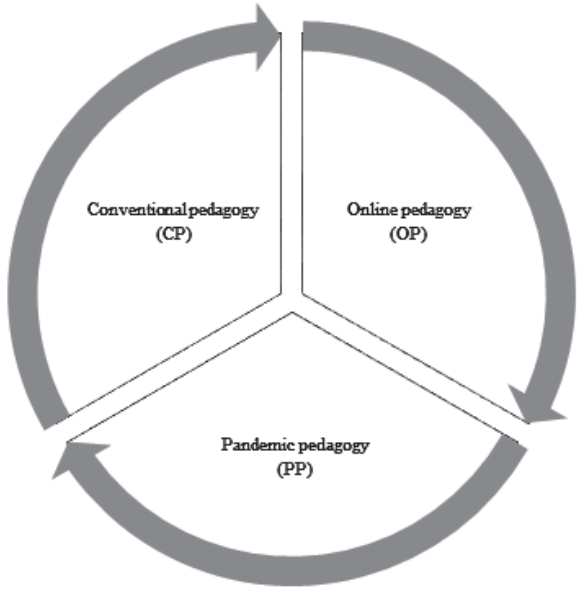


Figure 1: *Cyclic influences on different forms of pedagogies as seen in the initial phase of the present research*

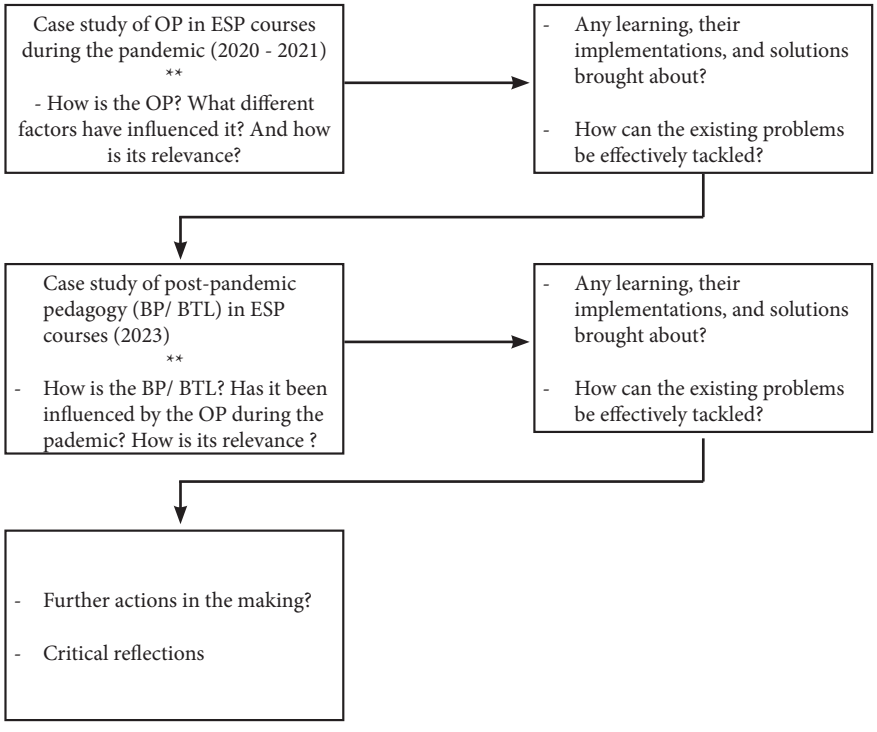
Research Design

This study is inspired by constructivist and social constructionist paradigms. I employ a combination of two case studies (pandemic and post-pandemic pedagogic practices) and action research (AR), for such approach effectively helps solve a classroom problem with extending critical issues by first helping to explore, describe and/ or understand it in greater detail (Bondía & Gracia, 2021). For methodological clarity regarding the use of AR, I lean against informal AR (Beck, 2017), which broadly meets—as realized in this research in embedded ways—three criteria of AR: dialogical and cyclical nature [via (re-)reflections and refinement of thoughts, decisions, and actions, etc.], agentic criticality, and improvement of (ongoing) practice. The reasons behind using this very form of AR is that it supported our situations: We were facing one after another emerging problem in the pedagogic shifts and transitions, and we, as teachers, had to either immediately decide and act on pressing pedagogic problems or collectively (mostly with students) decide and act— to effect immediate or future pedagogic improvements.

This blended approach draws on the aims of both case studies (CS) and AR, which are mutually helpful. CS aims for in-depth understanding of a "contemporary phenomenon" in real-life context/s (Yin, 2009, p. 2) or holistic description and analysis of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1985, p. 206) while AR aims for, among others, helping teachers improve educational contexts (Chen et al., 2018; Elliott, 1991) or pedagogic practices (Niemi, 2018), by encouraging them to practically promote long-term, responsible, and reflective teaching (Burns, 1998). With two cases to study, this also draws on Stake's (1995) collective-instrumental case study approach—to see "multiple realities" by probing into "issues dominant" (pp. 16, 64). Such an amalgam of interrelated concepts of CS with no epistemological clash is well-justified by Yazan (2015, pp. 135, 141).

By design, the inquiry does not involve large-scale case studies and is informed by McDonough and McDonough's (2014) observation that "it is particularly at the more 'micro' end of the spectrum" that case studies "are arguably most appropriate for teacher-generated research" (p. 203). In particular, I follow Yin's (1984) suggestion, ensuring that I carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset pertinent research issues and boundaries of the case/s— to make the study focused, detailed and rigorous (as cited in Tobin, 2010). Together, I employ Bassey's (1999) story-telling and picture-drawing approach, which involves "narrative stories and descriptive accounts" of educational events or programs with "careful analysis" (p. 58). I follow this blend because even narrative case studies inescapably involve descriptions (McDonough & McDonough, 2014, pp. 60, 230). To show relational coherence involved in these two case studies that have housed informal AR, I present each CS findings in succession, with outcomes of AR embedded within.

Figure 2: *Blend of case studies and action research: Design, process, and concerns*



As is clear from the chart above, each CS did not simply exist, were never fully static. They also involved evolving chains and/ or cycles of events and actions typical of informal AR. In particular, the functional aspects—if not the nature—of these pedagogies variously involved individual and collective efforts and actions for pedagogic improvements, which is both palpable and visible (in embedded, implicit, and, in some cases, explicit ways) in the findings section.

Context, Setting and Participants

In November 2020, I, as a teacher of undergraduate level first semester General English (GE) course at KUSL, came to know that several of my students experienced challenges in the OP being practiced. I discussed this to my colleague, who taught Managerial Communication (MC) in the third semester. He also shared similar experiences reported by his students. This drove me to embark on this inquiry, taking participants from these two classes. First started as a case study, this inquiry later embraced AR in the process, following our reflections on teaching-learning, the data received, and subsequent individual and collective efforts for improvements in our pedagogic practices.

There were 21 female and 19 male students in the class of GE (intercultural communication plus academic writing) and there were 20 female and 21 male students in my colleague's class of MC. The semester started in September 2020 and lasted until February 2021. During this time, these students took their classes online, mainly through Google

Meet, Google Class, and Moodle, from their respective homes in different districts. Other tools that were mostly used were phone calls, Facebook Messenger, Gmail, and Moodle.

The data for the first CS were collected from December 2020 to February 2021. For the second CS (conducted also as a step and follow-up in AR—primarily to see pedagogical transitions and critical needs as perceived by students), data were collected in January 2023—from among the students taking the same subjects (as above) in the first and the third semesters (October 2022 – March 2023) at the same institution. The school, during this post-pandemic time, was gradually shifting to BP/ BTL. The first semester class had 23 female and 20 male students and the third semester class had 22 female and 19 male students.

Table 1: *First CS participants*

Details	Participants
- Survey participants	36 (GE) + 29 (MC) = 65
- Email interview participants (P1 to P5 from GE and P6 to P10 from MC) / with multiple follow-ups	4 + 1 (GE) + 4 + 1 (MC) = 10
- Teacher triangulation	1

Table 2: *Second CS participants*

Details	Participants
- FGDs participants (fgdP1–fgdP6 and fgdP13–fgdP17 from GE and others from MC)	12 + 10 = 22
- Teacher triangulation	2

Instrumentation, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

Initially, after briefing about the research issue via Google Meet, I conducted a virtual survey (see Table 1) to see whether or not the students saw the relevance of OP and wanted it as part of the conventional mode. This also helped me frame interview questions. 'Email interview' proved most appropriate, providing the participants with sufficient time to reflect and respond in a risk-free manner (Bampton & Cowton, 2002). Later, whenever in doubt or confusion, follow-ups (through phone, Google Meet, etc.) were also conducted. Similarly, to corroborate certain data from the participants, triangulations (one over phone; two in person) with their English teachers were also conducted. And, all the triangulations and FGDs (1 + 1 hours) were recorded and safely stored.

For data analysis, I used the six steps in Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis (TA), which is an appropriate and powerful method to use when seeking to understand a set of experiences, thoughts, or behaviors across a data set (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). For data coding, I relied on Ryan and Bernard's (2003) suggestions by using the following four techniques: repetitions, similarities and differences, transitions, and missing data (What is missing here? Why? Power relations, etc.).

Findings

Initial Tracklessness

Amid the clamor of educational disruption following confirmations of COVID positive cases in Nepal, majority of the participants, like their friends, felt anxious and saw unpreparedness

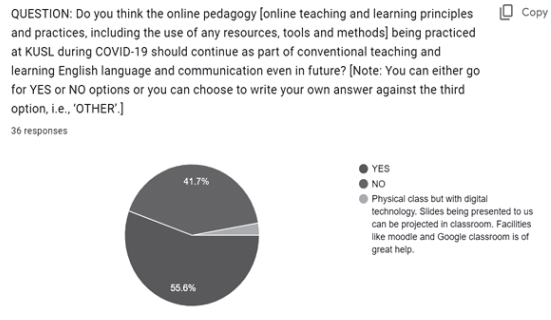
and makeshift mentality in many fronts of their university environment. To begin with, initially they did not receive timely informational updates from the institution and teachers, which made them feel confused and trackless. Following the announcement of the first lockdown and university closure, many students packed their bags in rush and stress and headed towards their respective hometowns; whereas others stayed back in dilemmas. Meanwhile, they received the first notice for online class, which most of the participants described as entirely new for both teachers and students. So they talked to their friends and teachers about how they could proceed further with this unusual mode of learning. Initially, though full of curiosities, they found the OP mode quite clumsy, irritating (primarily because of recurrent power outage and/ or weak internet connectivity), and time and effort demanding—also in GE and MC classes. They, like their teachers, were curiously figuring out what in the OP mode was similar to and different from conventional teaching and learning. They noted their teachers' long pauses, wonders, such as "why it's not working…" (P9) or gestures of frustration. Three participants noted that some of their older teachers were navigating the new space with difficulty, lacking certain ICT skills and sometimes exhibiting lack of preparation, and most teachers were still equipped with lecturing method and discussions. Yet some presented pdf books, navigating highlighted sections in them. But this was not easy for many of them to follow and was stressful. It was only after a couple of weeks or so that teachers gradually shifted to PowerPoint, with ample preparations and suitable presentation of contents, and to activities and collaborative projects.

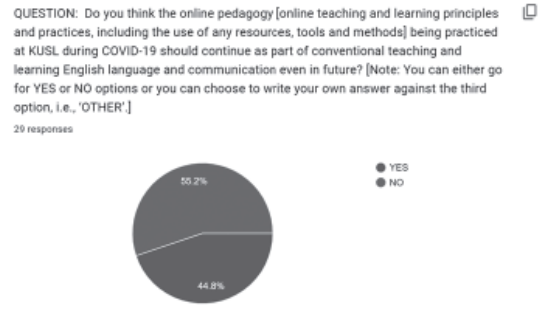
OP's Relevance

> *"Personally, I have found the switch to online mode not only time-relevant but also required for innovative and autonomous learning…" (P5)*

The initial surveys showed the respondents' mixed responses regarding whether they saw OP's usefulness and liked it to continue as part of conventional mode in future. In class of GE, out of 40 students, 20 voted for 'Yes', 15 voted for 'No', and 1 went for 'Other' option. However, in class of MC, out of 41 students, 16 voted for 'No', 13 voted for 'Yes', and no one went for 'Other' (see the second chart below). However, as time passed, especially after power cuts were significantly reduced in the later part of 2020, their preference for it further grew.

Figures 3 and 4: *Initial survey responses from the classes of GE and MC*





Of course, the new space of learning had other problems too. Yet the majority of students, including the email participants, found OP's

relevance. The participants projected this through two categories: *pandemic scenario* and *suitability*. The first category involved threats of Corona viruses, which caused fear, health consciousness, and carefulness in them. The second one highlighted OP's necessity for age-suitable education. OP, according to 7 participants, involved not only more liberal space but also more practical approach with much emphasis on ICT skills development. Also, 5 participants preferred incorporation of OP's beneficial elements in physical mode in future, which stood as a sub-theme in this branch of abstraction. They also realized that it can be highly useful in times of bandas/ political strikes, which are commonplace in Nepal.

Facilitating Factors

> *"The links to articles and audiovisuals provided to us saved my time. They were written so cogently and to the point. Earlier, I used to randomly search on Google. Now I know about some good online platforms and have understood the value of authentic reading materials." - P5*

With its problems aside, OP had many factors that augmented better teaching and learning and other pedagogic practices during the pandemic. Within this theme, four sub-themes, namely, (a) empathy, flexibility, and social support (primarily from teachers, friends and family, and marginally from the institution), (b) supportive features and qualities associated with online technologies, (c) learners' own excitement, and (d) increased (re-)sources of learning stood prominent. Similarly, there were four categories of codes related to OP: (a) (improving) human aspect, (b) institutional support, (c) economic aspect, and (d) technology-enhanced and enabling experiences.

Within human aspect in OP, the participants found a number of easing qualities. To begin with, empathy, flexibility, and social support towards them gradually increased when immediate human agencies (teachers, friends, family members, etc.) realized how technological barriers (such as recurrent power outages), fatigue resulting from technology use, and academic workloads, among others, created in them a range of stressors such as restlessness, tension, anxieties, and sickness. Often, their friends and teachers provided them with quick help when sought, even in late hours, and when necessary, deadlines were extended. Similarly, as 5 participants noted, they, like their classmates, benefited from collaborative and/ or collective learning—more so when faced with their lack of multimedia skills. Care and support from family members also played an important role in their learning experiences. Besides, teachers, after listening to the students, cyclically tried to improve other pedagogic practices and communication (to avoid confusions resulting from their short text messages via informal means). For example, they actively supported the students' concerns for more liberal exams for the end-semester assessments, which previously were worth of 50% marks. They helped bring this percentage down to 30% with complete teacher-autonomy over preparing questions and administering exams in multiple ways, such as in forms of home assignments, collaborative (online) projects and flexible online exams (for which students got 20 minutes more time than usual). Even in class, they practiced, alongside lecturing, learner autonomy-supportive teaching, because of which the students increasingly got to choose projects of their interests. Further, their classes were more planned and organized and involved descriptive teaching, discussions, experience sharing, fun-filled activities, and group collaborations. "Collaboration among

friends comparatively increased and in a way eased our anxieties," wrote P2. Similarly, P7 wrote: "Visual representation of ideas/ contents made learning much easier, helped in better understanding..." 6 other participants noted that they both benefitted from and increasingly resorted to this approach. Even the initial orientation they received from the teachers on ethical use of virtual academic space and its contents was practically helpful, as per 3 participants. On another front, their own excitements in the newer platforms of the virtual space significantly contributed to their actively focused, engaged, and curious learning. And, most of these qualities more or less helped reduce the stress they were going through.

Second, though amid some rigidity resulting from authority, institutional support involved more autonomy for teachers for flexible semester plans, classroom activities, and assessment designs, some free Internet data packages, and some technical orientation on OP (first for teachers, and for students via teachers). The institution was more rigid on maintaining the conventional end-semester assessment initially. Third, OP economically stood favorable. There was no need for the students to travel to school, which saved their 2 to 4 hours per day, apart from travel cost. This also made it hassle free. P1 connected this to learning situations when he was able to have "peaceful composure." 6 other participants noted that it offered cost effective online tools and educational resources such as books, papers, and audiovisuals.

Finally, technology-enhanced and enabling experiences made OP a promoter of better teaching and learning. According to 6 participants, different online tools, such as the promotional Google Meet, its recording facility, and Google Classroom, not only afforded them much needed flexibility in the learning environment, which came with numerous helpful features and teachers' and students' agentic qualities, but also reduced their stresses—via their user-friendly features and the ease of use and quick collaboration supported by them. In this flexibility, as put by 6 participants, the students did not have to follow rigid schedules, and this augmented self-paced teaching and learning, the latter of which was long-lasting and more enabling, as put by P6.

When not disrupted, OP made it possible to have easy and quick access to numerous online contents and resources and provided easy storage and retrieval. For example, as per 4 participants, the recorded classes were a big relief. They did not have to fear about losing anything, and this interestingly made "undivided attention in class" possible, as put by P2.

More importantly, by supporting both synchronous and asynchronous learning, both lecturing and discussions/ reflective interactions, OP's tools and practices increasingly and beneficially promoted the following learning types: visual/ descriptive, independent/ autonomous, personalized, creative, collaborative, practical, and customized. This was something unique about OP, for it significantly differed from conventional one-way lecturing. Further, as per 4 participants, the exposure to some multimedia-supported learning had the effect of encouraging them to improve their multimedia skills, leading them to better documentations/ presentations and growing self-confidence. With its evolving nature and local needs, OP also proved itself as futuristically empowering.

Hindering Factors

"I feel the university's role in the pedagogy is very limited, if not next to nil.

Professors are doing what they can, but the institution also must have its presence in making

this mode a bit more effective... For example, we need an online library that can cater to ourneeds." – P3

"Though a great relief, the pedagogy is not as flexible as is being talked about. For example, we do not get to choose assignments." – P2

Like in any pedagogy, OP also had its drawbacks, and the participants experienced a number of barriers and difficulties, which, as seen in the previous theme, were tackled differently. Within this theme, there were three sub-themes: (a) problems in/ with educational technologies and teaching/ learning environment, (b) 'health front' issues, and (c) self -limitations.

Teaching and learning environment, together with OP's technologies, covered the following five categories: In *technological/ state-level barriers,* issues of irritatingly recurrent power outages, weak Internet/ Wi-Fi, old and slow devices, app-related fatigue/ glitches, and noise/ screeches did not support smooth learning. In particular, the first two reasons made it difficult for the students to collaborate. As per 3 participants, these issues also resulted in monotony or boredom. In *institutional barriers,* lack of proper infrastructures and (continued) makeshift/ ritualistic mentality and practices stood recurrently prominent. With insufficient internet data package and lack of online library, it was hard to manage for some participants. Similarly, lack of timely information, training and orientation, unsuitable/ traditional course design with no inclusion of multimedia skills, and conventional assessment modality posed further difficulties or confusions. Further, this was followed by nagging and negotiations in some cases. The third category—*issues at home*—involved occasional or intermittently noisy environment at home and lack of proper space for online class, as per 3 participants. 2 other participants noted that they could not go outside (frequently) for exercise or refreshment, for fear of the viruses, and felt "stale" or "sick." The fourth category—*barriers/ issues in/ posed by virtual classes/ teachers*—included the following sub-categories: (a) nature of teaching/ teachers' makeshift attitudes and practices and (b) connections among approaches/ in-class actions and consequences. According to 5 participants, initially there was a lot of one-way teaching/ communication in which teachers did not/ could not integrate ICT skills or lacked preparations. Though two-way communication was also practiced, its use was repeatedly limited to interactions among a few students and the teacher. "Students' hesitation or shyness should also be counted in this regard," wrote P4. Further, OP involved some lingering as to deciding on switching from summative approach to more and more of formative learning (including process pedagogy) and assessments, which were the real need of the pandemic times, according to P9. Lack of timely update of information or reading materials was another problem, and so was the case with sending (or uploading) reading materials via multiple platforms, such as email, Google Class, and Moodle, because doing so caused distractions. Teachers' short and informal messages via different means such as mobile texts or Facebook Messenger, on the other hand, caused confusions. Further, there was schedule pressure, followed by lack of time, that resulted from a number of things

such as workloads and class postponements. Similarly, according to 5 participants, repeated teaching approaches and activities, such as lecturing and collaborative/ relay writing on Google Docs, caused monotony. P6 wrote, "Mentimeter quizzes are fun-filled but feel below our age, and when repeatedly used, really irritate us." He further observed that repeated use of fun activities via Google Docs, blogging or YouTube videos cannot help make classes interactive in real sense, because "they block the real human interaction, especially with the teacher." 2 participants co-related marks reduction for citation mistakes to lack of 'ample' orientation to citation rules. The final category—*peer level barriers,* as per 4 participants, included two issues: taking extra burden in helping friends out or taking the whole responsibility in collaborative works when technology did not support and the fact that a few students could not learn (much) when smart collaborators rushed to complete the projects.

Second and third sub-themes also stood prominent. Within *health front issues,* 5 participants noted cases of fatigue/ stress resulting from heavy/ prolonged exposure to technologies/ on-screen reading and writing. Other issues lack of rest (owing to classes in unusual hours), personal time, lack of psychological help/ scaffolding, and irritation, which further added to the already existing anxieties. Third sub-theme revealed that learners themselves can be barriers to desirable/ fruitful online learning. Their reflections included the following: (a) lack of proper or ample knowledge and skills of ICT and online technologies, as revealed by 4 participants, (b) OP as "easy meal" (meaning that they did not have to work hard/ could pretend to work hard), (c) self-caused distractions on the Internet, (d) carelessness about plagiarism and lessons learned, (e) laziness resulting from disordered state of life, overdependence on teachers' slides and lecturing, and/ or lack of stimuli, (f) and making excuses and procrastination. Interestingly, non-graded assignments caused laziness in P8.

(Continuity of) Transitions and Spaces for Improvement

Changing perceptions of and preference for OP were caused by a number of favorable transitions brought about in OP's different dimensions, including technologies, teaching-learning approaches and practices, and assessments. Some of these transitions are already clear from the embedded/ referential treatments under different themes and their categories above. These transitions, as seen by the participants, primarily resulted from the levels of or from (a) learners and teachers, (b) social/ moral support (from friends and teachers), (c) family, (d) state-managed technology, and (e) the institution. However, learners' agencies, advocacies, and negotiations with teachers and the institution (via teachers) stood out in this regard.

First, following the solution of recurrent power outage, online classes were less disturbed and students enjoyed teaching and learning and collaborative works fairly more. These collaborations (and other social support from their teachers, friends and relatives) helped them (further) refine, among others, their writing and ICT skills. Second, after realizing what barriers and stressors the students were going through, teachers, according to 6 participants, became increasingly empathetic and flexible and promptly guided them when approached even in late hours and often offered extra classes to compensate postponed classes and learning loss. Flexibility further increased when students' voices regarding the lack of institutional facilities, lack of OP-suitable

audiovisual contents, traditional assessment modality, and the issues of monotony in teaching and learning were heard, first by teachers, and then, to some extent, by the institution. This resulted in, among others, teachers' initiative for free internet data package (initially 8GB; later 10GB), unofficial inclusion of some audiovisual contents, more graded assignments/ 70% internal evaluation (from 50%), removal of scores (5 points) for attendance (owing to impracticality; replaced with individual or collaborative creative assignments), and variety in teaching and learning approaches and activities. As noted by 6 participants, the teachers gradually shifted from lecturing to various kinds of learning, including descriptive, collaborative, and autonomously agentic, as dealt with in the *'facilitating factors'* above. In/ for the descriptive kind, they also emphasized not missing out key steps or ideas in the name of decoration, primarily to address the issue of 'contents lost in decoration' that was observed by both teachers and students. This combined shift gave them not only a sense of better learning but also practical ideas for preparing presentations. Also, the teachers increasingly cared for students' agency and autonomy. P9 wrote, "Autonomy for students fairly increased." Further, the teachers also shifted from repeating assigning the same types of activities (particularly Mentimeter quizzes and collaborative writing and editing on Google Docs) or assignments (particularly essay writing) to allowing them to do something different, autonomously desirable, and/ or contextually suitable. Their planning and preparation, on the other hand, made classes more organized and structured, which marked a clear transition from the initial "lackadaisical"/ "make-do" classes. Teachers' and students' cyclic reflections over how they could improve teaching-learning in the OP mode also consequently helped shape or foresee important concerns in BP/ BTL. On another front, teachers also practiced strictness or controlling measures. They penalized for plagiarized contents and some cases of fake excuses regarding assignment completion. They did not always provide slides to discourage students' overreliance on them, but provided inputs for revision prior to presentation and/ or evaluation. This, as per P1, was new and helpful move.

What followed these transitions were *'spaces for improvement',* the final theme that emerged from (a) technological, (b) institutional, and (c) 'for / in-class' spaces for improvement. As 4 participants noted, the on-going pedagogic practices were not exploiting the full potential of what OP's technologies could actually offer. Following the solution of recurrent power outage, what remained long-lasting problems were poor/ fluctuating internet connectivity, insufficient internet data package, the dire need of online library and other suitable subscriptions (such as JSTOR), and the need of plagiarism checking tools for teachers. Institutional investments in these areas, including multimedia training and orientation, also remained more or less overlooked. After the unofficial (but suitable) inclusion of some audiovisual contents in the syllabi, the subject committee (SC) members, even when informed of the need to revise the syllabi, could not do anything throughout the pandemic, blaming the slow process between SC and the Academic Council. On another front, while clarity in communication (from the institution and teachers) was fairly improving (also with timely updates of educational materials), there was still the need of "more of two-way interaction" (P6). Regarding this, P1, like 2 other participants, suggested including more "ice-breakers" (fun activities) and both individual (which was lacking) and group attention/ interactions to

ensure fruitful engagement. But in a follow-up, these participants agreed that the vary size of their class and the wall of the screen prevented individual attention and interactions in OP. Yet they, like few other participants, stressed on introducing further use of variety in teaching approaches and activities, in-class/ app-use netiquettes (to avoid unnecessary noise, confusion, unethical behavior, etc.), and a bit longer break time (from 5 minutes to 10-15 minutes) in their classes that ran for two hours. Interestingly, 3 participants noted that OP needed to have equal flexibility also for students, as for teachers, and 2 other participants wrote that there was a need for more scheduled activities—also to avoid pretexts/ procrastinations from teachers. More importantly, what 6 participants noted was the need for including in learning contents and empowering both teachers and students with necessary multimedia skills.

The Case of BP/ BTL

The collective realization of OP's usefulness took us to see how it could be useful in/ as part of BP/ BTL and how it actually influenced BP/ BTL. The FGD participants' perceptions of BP/ BTL involved the following themes: (a) relevance of BP/ BTL, (b) (continuity of) transitions, and (c) spaces for improvement.

Relevance

This theme was suggested by two categories of codes: suitability and helpful experiences. Most participants, even amid makeshift practices, saw BP/ BTL as age-and-modern education suitable, found it useful for promoting beneficial aspects of learning from OP, lived its usefulness (by switching to OP) in between or in times of long vacations (Dashain and Tihar) and difficult situations, saw more practicality and interesting qualities (see below) in each of its sides (face-to-face and online), and preferred it more—when compared to OP/ PP and conventional pedagogic practices.

(Continuity of) Transitions

> *"Even older teachers who mostly gave lectures in the online mode during the pandemic have now fully adapted themselves to visual teaching and learning, which is great." — fgdP10*

As per most participants, BP/ BTL, propelled by the post-pandemic times, has brought with it some sudden changes. It has significantly helped recover learners' mental wellbeing that suffered under the stressful teaching-learning and monotony during the pandemic. Comparatively, OP involved less interactions because of several issues, including technological ones, learners' personal nature, "unwillingness to disturb" (P6) or even "it's so easy meal" (P10) attitude. In contrast, BP/ BTL is affording more interactions. This is because, to quote fgdP17, "we all, including teachers, open up more in physical classes. We joke, we laugh, we make fun, and this was often not the case in ritualistic online classes." According to fgdP8, such environment eases her speaking anxieties and encourages her to interact more and contribute to classroom discussions. Further, fgdP18 experienced "increased attention and eagerness to have one's say" in physical classes and fgdP15 experienced "the university premise" as having "full of real learning stimuli" and "fun". Similarly, fgdP2 and fgdP11 found the physical side of BP/ BTL more empowering, for it provided "real" space that worked far better for collaborative discussions with their friends. However, fgdP16, an "introvert by nature," found online communication—the other side of BP/ BTL—more easing and enabling, for he could/ can

open up more in online communications. According to majority of the participants, the online side of BP/ BTL is particularly useful for safe and reliable storage, quick retrieval and communication, online collaboration/ help, and online classes in difficult situations. Similarly, most participants said they are now friends with their teachers on social media, because of which it has been quite easier and quicker for them to seek help from their teachers, who, as most of them described, are often helpful.

Employing OP's features (e.g., of online tools and their practical functions) and qualities (e.g., positive or curious teaching-learning attitudes, agentic presence, empathetic care) in BP/ BTL has immensely helped both learners and teachers in a number of ways, according to most FGD participants, and later as per teacher triangulations. Now with the (continuity of) various helpful shifts, teaching-learning, including planning, organization and preparation for classes, has been much more structured and easy-to-go. As per 9 participants, their English teachers first, as before, provide them with reading/ watching materials, such as papers, YouTube videos, notes, and model questions, via email or Google Class, and ask them to come prepared for discussions in the physical class. In terms of storing and retrieving these materials also, it has been far easier—unlike in conventional physical classes in which, if missed to note down from the board, everything would be lost, according to fgdP22. Also, students can submit certain assignments online. fgdP10 said that he had not seen teachers using PowerPoint prior to the pandemic, and now they (including the older ones who were slow to adapt to OP during the pandemic) are using it professionally in most classes. Another continuity of shift—that of reading and referring to up-to-date academic and other contents published online—was highlighted by 7 participants. Interestingly, a majority of participants noted that their prior experiences from OP and their teachers' inputs, followed by their careful practices, helped them cite materials with proper or increased understanding of citations. Last but not the least, most teaching-learning types and methods practiced in OP still continue, according to 6 participants, and this continuity "values the worth of different needs and spaces (Teacher3) and "variety" in teaching-learning and assessments (fgdP1). However, fgdP1, along with 4 others, also noted that lecturing method, together with group discussions and interactions, is also slowly gaining momentum, as until the first few months in the practices of OP.

Spaces for Improvement

> *"We are saying we have shifted to blended mode. However, we are practicing it even more as a makeshift when compared to OP during the pandemic, for it barely involves 10 to 15 percent online teaching-learning and is way behind its standard global practices. So, there is a strong need for practicing it in its mainstream form." – fgdP4*

Within this theme, two sub-themes emerged: (a) makeshift attitudes to and ritualistic practices of BP/ BTL and (b) need for gradual improvements and caution in/ for online educational/ pedagogic practices at different levels (teachers, students, and institution, plus technological). To begin with, according to 16 participants, institutional role/ investment is minimum in BP/ BTL. Though the institution has recently introduced Digital Boards in one of its new buildings, following occasional use of *Moodle* in the pre-pandemic times, most FGD participants mentioned that there is no clear long-term vision regarding development

of online resources. For example, there is still no online library, and the lack of which makes it difficult to find certain new and important books that are not available in print. However, the institution has provided access to *LexisNexis* and *EBSCO Host.* But this access works only within the university premise, where the Internet connectivity is often slow and down. Similarly, 10 out of 22 FGD participants mentioned that they seriously need advanced multimedia skills, not only in ESP courses but also in other legal/ managerial subjects. According to these participants, revising curricula/ courses (including that of ESP subjects) in time—by incorporating these skills—is a must—also for better practices of BP/ BTL; and, as per fgdP5, lack of care in this regard reflects sheer continuity of makeshift/ ritualistic practices. Further, 3 participants did not like the school's reversion to conventionally rigid end-semester exams. They maintained that in-semester evaluation should carry at least up to 70 percent scores. Interestingly, 2 participants in the second FGD expressed their experiences-informed doubts about the institution's readiness as well as willingness to utilize the knowledge generated from the present research for practical changes in immediate future. Participants also saw spaces for improvements in both teachers' and students' levels: 4 participants noted that regular in-class critical reflections on pedagogic practices is slowly and unfavorably decreasing in BP/ BTL—when compared to practices in OP. Similarly, teachers and students, according to 7 participants, also need to individually further hone their ICT skills needed for BP/ BTL. 5 other participants noted that they now feel like addicted to Internet use (mostly at home), and this has caused a decrease in in-depth reading or learning or has given way to increased reliance on easily accessible online tips and answers. This decrease in serious reading was what fgdP13 further revealed thus: "I took snapshots of the slides presented in class. I read the main points and neglected doing further research and making notes, as suggested by the teacher. And consequently, I could not do well in the exam." Lack of feedforwarding and easing/ uplifting classroom environment is another problem, as expressed in the following quote.

> *"Even in BP/ BTL, teachers are not seen encouraging the silent (not weaker!) students to participate in interactions. On the other hand, there is generally a looming fear of feedback/ criticism or fun-making, mostly from students. This should give way to feedforwarding." – fgdP17*

Triangulations: Teachers' Reflections

Remaining in constant contact, we the teachers regularly discussed the challenges faced by our students and ourselves in the OP mode, developing agreeable ways that could help us improve our pedagogic practices. One of our repeated concerns involved how we could make our students beat the monotony they experienced (as reported by some) in our classroom practices or collaborative works they did. Teacher2 noted that his students, however, had not spoken about the issue of monotony directly with him. He guessed that perhaps they feared getting low grades later or something. The collaborative works he assigned primarily involved the use of Google Docs. He said that perhaps those who had not tried out Google Docs for group works might have found it not so very interesting, for the nature of this kind of collaborative work generally expects each student to answer one question in a list of questions, finally taking the group to a collective answer which may sometimes lack overall coherence in it. "Reading such writing might have been boring

for them. In fact, its purpose is to make them write collaboratively and do the necessary editing together, learning from one another in the process, before receiving feedback from my side," he observed.

Teacher1: OP during the pandemic gradually forced us—both teachers and students—to be more descriptive in our teaching-learning practices previously dominated by lecturing and discussions. Personally speaking, employing descriptive teaching through finely prepared slides helped me see how important 'coherently projected ideas' and 'takeaways' are for my students. My students became increasingly organized in their reading, writing and presentations. Another important benefit of it is that it helped me rescue my students from the zone of monotony… This practice is what I still cherish in BP/ BTL.

Teacher2: I also have observed this interesting shift. My students were quite interactive in the physical mode, which was not the case in OP for a number of reasons, one being the screen functioning as a big wall in between myself and 40+ students—the screen hid what the students were doing, how they were feeling or coping… The obligation to complete the course in time—amid disturbances created by technological and other issues—also pressurized and this had the effect of having less interactions. Nonetheless, we did try to reflectively cover important issues, and this has been significantly transferred to the ongoing BP/ BTL practices now. Now my students interact more often.

Teacher3: The issues raised by the student participants are all valid… As in OP, there is a lot of room in BP/ BTL where we can collaboratively bring about much improvement. This said, institutional role/ investment will have to be greater while we are trying to upgrade BP/ BTL—from the current makeshift practices to its standard form practiced in the West.

Discussion

This study of OP and BP/ BTL, with AR embedded within, revealed a number of factors that either facilitated or obstructed favorable/ desirable teaching-learning and associated pedagogical practices during the pandemic and after and simultaneously helped see the influences of different pedagogies on OP and BP/ BTL and vice versa. Majority of the students and participants increasingly favored OP as its practices gradually improved. This also had its effects over their preference for BP/ BTL later. Comparatively, BP/ BTL became a more desirable shift for them, as for teachers. And, as is evident in the 'findings' section, this preference for both OP and BP/ BTL grew, first because of their relevance in language teaching-learning in times of crisis and modern education, and second, because of teachers' and students' critical initiatives and pedagogic improvements—which were also backed up by the ongoing social/ educational discourses and activisms at the local level. This shows that teachers' and students' agencies, especially during difficult times and in the face of institutional lingering or rigidities, can play an instrumental role in bringing about pedagogic improvements. More importantly, what stand out are the empathetic and critical negotiations between teachers and students, for they gradually helped improve teaching-learning and assessments.

Evidently, the institutional system was slow to change, both in OP and BP/ BTL; and this was so even after sharing with school authorities our experiences of teaching-learning during the pandemic and after and the unfolding findings from the present research.

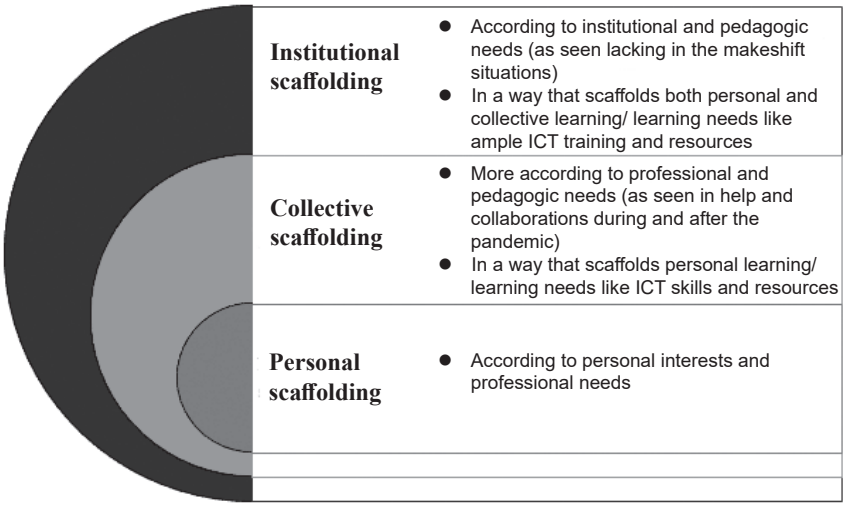
Its infrastructural state (particularly lack of online library, lack of ample subscriptions to academic (re-)sources online, and lack of access to software like *Turnitin*) did not change much. So was its makeshift/ ritualistic attitude toward issues of multimedia training for teachers and students and pedagogic needs such as curricula revision. All of these resonated with the broader local scenario of institutional lingering and/ or unwillingness to develop suitable capacities, resources, and contents (Aryal et al., 2016; Laudari & Maher, 2019; Shrestha et al., 2021). And this was not something that had to do only with the pandemic or post-pandemic times. Historically also, teaching-learning, including ELT, in Nepal is burdened with "low quality teaching environments, large classroom sizes, lack of adequate infrastructure and inadequately trained professionals," alongside lack of "proper research, documentation, funding and appropriate directions" (Aryal et al., 2016, p. 141), and this more or less applies even to KUSL scenario. This confirms that educational institutions are comparatively "sturdy, stable and fairly rigid" when it comes to substantial educational change (Jónasson, 2016, p. 2). However, this is quite understandable when it comes to most of the state-run campuses in the country that are themselves in need of more funding, unlike those that are autonomously and profitably managed.

In addition, there were four other major barriers, namely, state or province-level power supply (later resolved), quality of internet, teachers' and students' makeshift/ ritualistic attitudes and pedagogic practices (often influenced by institutional system or teachers and students themselves), and lack of ample ICT skills in teachers and students. However, because we the teachers and the students took cyclically reflective, empathetic, flexible, and critical initiatives to break the monotony and difficulties created by some of these barriers, we were able to bring about desirable pedagogic changes in certain spaces of teaching-learning and assessments. For example, we the teachers, after listening to our students' difficulties and pedagogic concerns, became increasingly flexible in/ about teaching contents and methods and assessment modalities. We unofficially introduced some new contents, shifted to more engaging (particularly descriptive and collaborative) ways of teaching-learning while making efforts to increase both individual and group participations, and practiced varieties of assessments that were compatible with online and blended modes. But from institutional and discoursal perspectives (Dawadi, 2019; Dawadi et al., 2020), some of these changes did not come without certain compromises concerning conventional concepts of quality, such as rigid time-frame assessments. However, as we switched to BP/ BTL, the school reverted to conventionally rigid end-semester exams that carry 50 percent weightage, which, despite our agentic voices, remained/ remains officially effective and mars the spirit of blended teaching-learning and assessments.

Moreover, we (teachers and students), in this flexibility, comparatively practiced more autonomy on the one hand, and, on the other, strongly realized that collective learning (or scaffolding), alongside personal learning, is also important and is more useful in times of educational crises. Collective learning was, in fact, one of the most dominant modes of learning during and after the pandemic, for we (teachers and students) often relied on peers or one another, particularly for ICT related help and/ or resources unavailable to us. Similarly, we realized that institutional scaffolding is all the more imperative to boost the spirit of change at different levels in educational

settings in crisis situations, which, as noted above, disconcertingly lacked in several areas. The institution was either unprepared or partially prepared or unwilling to fully support the pedagogic shifts and their contextually inherent needs. This interrelated trio of scaffolding can be visualized as follows:

Figure 5: *Relationship among personal, collective, and institutional scaffoldings*



Clearly, both institutional and in-class ritualistic/ makeshift practices undermined the value of fully embracing the mainstream modes of OP and BP/ BTL, which were not new and therefore comparatively smoother in the West (Muñoz-Najar et al., 2021, p. 4; Winter et al., 2021, p. 242). Even futuristic preparations—for both OP and BP/ BTL—seriously lacked. These issues made majority of the students and participants vocal about the need for renouncing ritualism (reflected in/ from unsuitable contents, delivery, attitude, etc.) and investing in developing ample online resources and multimedia skills (both in teachers and students) and their inclusion in the ESP courses/ curricula that themselves demand(ed) revisions—for them to become suitable in online and blended modes. Going online without being able to exploit certain complex tools and features, such as animation, video editing and graphic designing, in fact, hindered effective delivery of 'content knowledge', which mirrored serious needs for scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) in necessary forms of training for teachers and ample orientations for students, particularly from the institution. But despite our critical reflections, agentic voices, and interventions/ negotiations, we were not able to fully meet our pedagogic needs. So, it was natural for the students and participants to caution that the experiential lessons from the emergency education, OP, and BP/ BTL should not go astray but should rather direct what needs to be done or changed—particularly as regards unhelpful educational policies and make-do environments that house/ housed ritualistic practices. Working toward this will simultaneously help redefine and (further) improve the ongoing and future pedagogic principles, dimensions, and practices; and the immediate benefits of which will go to BP/ BTL being practiced, helping it to transform from its ritualistic status quo to a one that is more parallel to standard blended teaching-learning in advanced countries.

In this interconnected relationship of these makeshift pedagogies and the critical issues involved, we (teachers and students), on the one hand, saw how conventional and/ or innovative pedagogies affect the ongoing practices in the local context and, on the

other, collectively realized certain (combined) potentials of these pedagogies while filling the gaps in our (initial) understanding of them. Abruptly adopted as part of PP, OP was seen in different ways, mostly in light of local challenges and benefits. BP/ BTL was also practiced largely as a makeshift. Our learning from the live classes, change-oriented efforts and activism, or the emerging problems and discourses, followed by some flexible/ empathetic measures we embraced, however, helped us tailor their use to some of our immediate needs. This helped us mature also as pedagogical consultants. Below are some transitionally prominent aspects of these pedagogies that directly or indirectly highlight their future potentials to cyclically inspire newer pedagogic refinements/ innovations.

1. Learners and teachers were the primary change agents in OP and BP/ BTL practiced as liminal pedagogic stages. These agents collectively played critical roles and effected some important changes, by questioning or redefining (conventional) pedagogic principles, dimensions, measures, practices, and some ongoing discourses. This foregrounds how essential and instrumental in-class activism is, particularly in times of educational crisis.

2. In the practices of OP, there was less of 'moral pressure' and more of 'issues of flexible adjustments and empathy'; whereas in BP/ BTL, there was/ is more of 'moral pressure' to practice innovative ESP teaching-learning and assessments. Whatever ICT skills were developed while practicing OP proved helpful for this. Also, learning in BP/ BTL became more interactive, fun-filled, easing, and engaging.

3. Practicing standard forms of OP and BP/ BTL is possible given that educational institutions do not practice ritualism of any kind, which is not happening as expected.

4. Pedagogic practices are heavily/ perniciously influenced more by local constraints and conventions, as revealed in the conceptual framework and the findings (e.g., reversion to conventional assessment in BP/ BTL, which the students objected to). However, educational crises and crisis pedagogies are liminal in nature and are increasingly receptive to standard methods and practices, such as descriptive teaching-learning, flexible projects/ portfolios, and collaborative assignments practiced in OP and BP/ BTL. In such changes/ transitions, students' and teachers' agentic initiatives and activism, among others, evidently play significant roles.

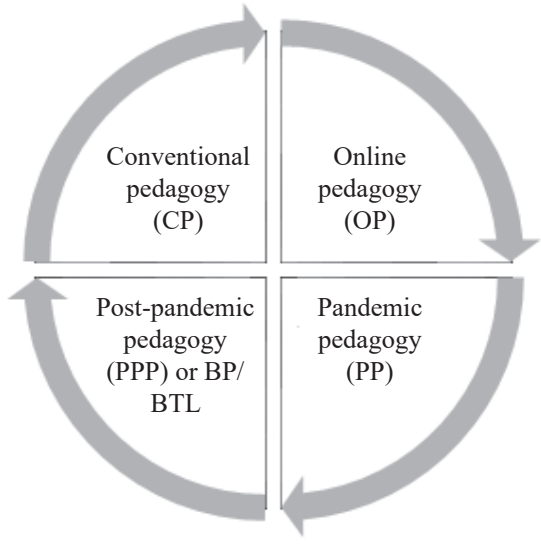
5. Experimental pedagogies, under accommodating crisis situations, have more potentials to contextually (re-) generate and/ or utilize important pedagogic concepts, reflective realizations, educational philosophies, and methods. Three examples: Different online facilities in OP proved more effective in transferring knowledge and skills and added new dimensions to teaching-learning and assessments. Second, the learners' demands for more flexibility in OP and BP/ BTL nudged us to cyclically redefine conventional notions

of pedagogy and evaluation, as did their suggestions for incorporating multimedia skills and interdisciplinary knowledge in the existing curricula/ syllabi. Third, OP and BP/ BTL afforded newer, greater or easier spaces, particularly for learner autonomy, instant collaborations and feedback circles, emotional support, access to online training, and students' research skills to some extent. Clearly, being able to utilize more of the latest inventions in areas of OP and BP/ BTL will give fresh impetus to ESP teaching-learning in future, further helping to see pedagogic concerns in cyclically/ dynamically newer light.

6. Nevertheless, some critical issues concerning OP and BP/ BTL may still be raised. Among others, lack of technology support (e.g., lack of plagiarism checking tools), large classroom sizes, issues of 'flexibility' as a weaker pedagogic measure, and harms of technology overuse posed challenges in our practices. But we learned that sensitively balanced, mutually ethical, and institutionally supported practices can, however, help mitigate these challenges. Teacher-student reflective conversations, which reportedly decreased in BP/ BTL, may also significantly help to ward off 'academic misconducts' and improve teaching-learning and assessment practices.

7. Considering all the dynamic relations involved in these makeshift pedagogies, the previous framework is modified thus:

Figure 6: *Cyclic influences on different forms of pedagogies as seen in BP/ BTL in the post-pandemic times*



Implications and Suggestions

Practicing mainstream forms of OP and BP/ BTL in ESP teaching-learning and assessments in Nepali contexts still remains challenging for a number of reasons discussed above. Changes in attitudes and practices through empathic and reflective critical agency only at the level of in-class practitioners will not suffice to genuinely practice these pedagogies; i.e., institutions must step in with futuristic plans and preparations. Most importantly, reliable solutions to technological problems, development of ample online resources (such as online library— a regional one in collective investments?) and training programs on ICT skills, and readiness to implement/ integrate pedagogic learning and research knowledge (e.g., inclusion of multimedia knowledge/ skills in curricula revision), among others, can help augment the usefulness of these pedagogies.

On the part of in-class practitioners, maintaining variety in the uses of teaching-learning methods, delivery, assessments, and types of communication (with students' active participation and two-way communication) is highly important in OP and BP/ BTL. Alongside, it is important to promote learner autonomy, with proper orientation and facilitation, for doing so supports agentic and fruitful learning, which corroborates that OTL, more specifically BP/ BTL, can increase the learning potential of students (Megahed & Ghoneim, 2022, p. 2). But for this, as implicated by majority voice, a number of problematic issues in OP and BP/ BTL needs to be resolved while giving almost equal importance to multimedia skills and content knowledge. Also, cyclic learning and pedagogic research should be part of making these efforts, for they help improve pedagogic practices.

Acknowledgements:

I express my gratitude to **Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi,** for his inputs on the initial draft of this paper (which was only a single case study), to Prof. **Laxman Gnawali,** for his suggestion to bring in more clarity concerning the use of AR in this work, and to **Dr. Khagendra Acharya,** for his suggestion to reconsider my choice for blending different concepts coming from different scholars of case studies in this research.

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English Language Teachers' Experiences of Using ICT in ELT

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Abstract

While technologies have penetrated all regions and states in Nepal – a developing country with challenging terrains – teacher educators' practices, especially those in remote areas, are still unexplored. Integrating innovative technologies into English language education, in this context, has become essential as their affordances help to enhance teaching and learning. This hermeneutic phenomenological research paper, hence, explores the perspectives and experiences of using ICT in English language teaching by four English language teacher educators in Darchula, a remote district located in the Sudurpaschim Province of Nepal. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed thematically. The findings indicate positive attitudes among English language teacher educators towards incorporating ICT in ELT, as it enhances learning and teaching experiences, fosters student engagement, improves access to learning resources, and establishes dynamic and interactive learning environments. This study emphasises the importance of effectively integrating ICT in English language teaching while addressing technical obstacles and striking a balance between online resources to maximise benefits and mitigate drawbacks.

Keywords: *information and communication technology; English language teaching; lived experiences; teacher educators; hermeneutic phenomenology.*

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) integration in education has gained significant traction, particularly in English Language Teaching. As defined by UNESCO (2010), ICT encompasses various technological tools and systems for transmitting, processing, storing, creating, displaying, sharing, and exchanging information electronically. Its multifaceted components encompass hardware, software, networks, data storage, security, communication tools, multimedia, and the Internet of Things. This definition underscores ICT's dynamic and evolving nature as novel technological innovations persist in their ongoing emergence while highlighting the prominence of digital mediums within the modern global landscape.

Numerous studies, as exemplified by Poudel (2022) and Saud (2023), have underscored the prospective benefits of incorporating ICT within the domain of English Language Teaching. This integration is envisioned to not

only augment the overall language learning experiences of students but also elevate their English proficiency. Nevertheless, the effective incorporation of ICT into the realm of ELT is contingent upon several critical factors. These determinants include the attitudes and perceptions of educators regarding technology, the availability of requisite resources, and the level of technical support provided by educational institutions. Notably, in the context of Nepal, where English is imparted as a foreign language, as noted by Shrestha (2015), the strategic application of ICT within ELT exhibits the potential to significantly expand the horizons of students' language learning opportunities and promote notable enhancements in their English language skills.

Context of the Study

Effective integration of ICT in ELT has emerged as a significant concern, particularly in developing nations like Nepal, where financial resources are limited, and difficult terrain often hinders educational advancements. The country is characterised by diverse landscapes, including remote areas such as Darchula, a district in the Sudurpaschim Province. This district is geographically challenging and located remotely. Its remoteness poses unique challenges in teaching English, including limited access to educational resources and infrastructure. Existing research has underscored the beneficial impact of technology on student learning in English Language Teaching, as demonstrated by the works of Panagiotidis et al. (2023), Gao (2021), and Paudel (2021). Unfortunately, only a limited number of recent studies conducted by Rana (2023), Shrestha et al. (2021), and Laudari & Maher (2019) have explored the integration of technology in English language education, with a notable absence of research specific to the higher educational institutions in remote regions of Nepal. Given the challenging and isolated nature of areas like Darchula, it is imperative to gain insights into the perceptions and experiences of English language teachers regarding the use of Information and Communication Technology in ELT. Such an understanding is crucial for informing educational practices and addressing the unique needs of this region. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of ELT teacher educators concerning the utilisation of ICT in English language instruction at university campuses in Nepal, with a particular focus on the Darchula district.

Through an exploration of the experiences and viewpoints of teacher educators, the objective of this study is to enhance our comprehension of the proficient incorporation of technology in English Language Teaching at higher education institutions situated in remote areas. This, in turn, can serve as a valuable resource for shaping educational policies and methodologies in the national education system. This study addresses the research question, how do ELT teacher educators describe and interpret their lived experiences and perceptions concerning the integration of ICT in ELT?

Benefits of ICT Integration in Language Teaching

Technology integration in language education, particularly in English language teaching, has become essential in fostering students' language development, improving accessibility, and enhancing the quality of learning. Numerous studies have demonstrated the potential benefits of integrating ICT into language teaching practices. Sabiri (2020)

observes that ICT enhances language skills, student-centred classrooms, access to online resources, personalised feedback, increased motivation and engagement, flexible learning, collaborative knowledge sharing, improved critical thinking and research skills, and reduced barriers to education. Similar findings were reported by Cakici (2016) and Hidayati (2016), who demonstrated that ICT use enhances the efficacy of language teaching, increases student engagement and facilitates access to authentic learning materials. Likewise, Jha (2020) underscores the inherent significance of integrating information and communication technologies into advanced online and remote education in Nepal, as it augments the abilities of learners and ameliorates their overall well-being. Correspondingly, Pangeni's research in 2017 offers additional empirical validation for the effectiveness of online education in Nepalese educational establishments, a success stemming from proactive endeavours geared toward the assimilation of ICTs into pedagogical methods. These investigations accentuate the pivotal function of digital proficiency and the amalgamation of ICTs in nurturing educational excellence and broadening educational accessibility in Nepal.

Challenges of ICT Integration in Language Teaching

Despite the potential advantages associated with the incorporation of Information and Communication Technology in educational contexts, there exist notable hindrances in the form of educators' limited digital proficiency and disparities in the accessibility of digital tools and resources within educational establishments (Bashyal, 2022; Rana, 2023; Laudari & Maher, 2019; Acharya, 2014; Ramorola, 2010). The eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the necessity for infrastructural enhancements that would facilitate the widespread adoption of online education. Nonetheless, this transition has brought about substantial impediments, notably the deficient digital competencies of educators, subpar internet connectivity, and a lack of institutional backing for the integration of ICT into pedagogical methods (Shrestha et al., 2021). To surmount these obstacles and optimally leverage the potential advantages of ICT in education, educational institutions must accord high priority to the cultivation of educators' digital skills and ensure equitable access to digital tools and resources.

Empowering Teachers with Digital Literacy and ICT Skills

In response to the challenges associated with the integration of Information and Communication Technology in English language education, scholars have emphasized the significance of delivering tailored support and professional development initiatives that are context-specific, aimed at equipping educators with the necessary skills to effectively incorporate technology into their instructional methods (Caena & Redecker, 2019; Monteiro & Leite, 2021; Zhao et al., 2020). A study conducted by Gnawali (2020) investigating the integration of ICT in language classrooms at Kathmandu University revealed notable advancements in students' digital competencies. Moreover, the study observed that these skills were transferred to future students after graduation, suggesting that when educators are empowered to integrate technology into teaching and learning, it has the potential to bring about transformative changes in English language teaching practices in the Nepalese educational context.

Overcoming Challenges to Successful ICT Integration

Studies conducted in Nepal and other developing countries emphasise the criticality of acknowledging contextual nuances and overcoming obstacles to optimize the benefits of ICT integration in educational settings (Paudel, 2021; Laudari, 2019; Rana, 2018). These challenges encompass a need for more specialised ICT educators, inadequate familiarity with ICT tools, insufficient backing from educational authorities, and an acute scarcity of technological resources. By the findings of Muslem et al. (2018), it has been observed that English educators in Indonesia face several obstacles when attempting to incorporate Information and Communication Technologies into their teaching practices. These challenges encompass limitations in allocated time, inadequate internet connectivity, and a deficiency in training and expertise. Moreover, Wright (2014) underscores the necessity of addressing pivotal factors, including the availability of infrastructure, initiatives for instructor training, motivation levels, and the sustainability of interventions, to effectively leverage the transformative potential of ICTs in the field of education. Consequently, policymakers and stakeholders must recognize, confront, and overcome these impediments to foster the successful integration of ICTs into educational contexts.

The incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies within educational environments has the potential to promote equitable access to learning opportunities, facilitate tailored learning experiences, offer immediate feedback and evaluation mechanisms, support adaptable and pervasive learning, and bolster communication and administrative functions (UNESCO, 2013). A multitude of scholarly investigations has corroborated the favourable influence of digital technologies on educational achievements and student engagement within the learning context (Barak et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2015; Barrs, 2012; Blattner & Fiori, 2009). As a result, ICTs have progressively made inroads into language classrooms in both industrialized and developing nations.

Research Method

This study is undergirded by a hermeneutic phenomenological research method because the subjective reality of the world is based on people's subjective experiences, relativist ontology, and value-laden axiology (Taylor & Medina, 2013; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The hermeneutic phenomenological research method was a good fit for exploring reality through participants sharing their lived experiences, feelings, and perceptions, providing deeper insights into the phenomenon (Yuksel & Yidirim, 2015; van Manen, 2014). The interpretative research paradigm enabled a thorough exploration of English language teacher educators' experiences and perspectives on ICT usage in ELT.

Data Collection

To delve into the lived experiences and perceptions of English language teacher educators regarding the use of ICT in ELT, four teacher educators (TEs) were selected purposively from different higher educational institutions in Darchula based on their rich and relevant experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with those TEs to record their lived experiences with the phenomenon. Reflection on lived experience is a process of recollecting past experiences with a particular phenomenon (van Manen 1997, as cited in Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated from Nepali to English for subsequent analysis. To protect the privacy of the respondents, alpha-numeric pseudonyms were assigned, and any reference to information that could reveal their identities was removed. In addition to interviews, field notes and reflective writings were also used to generate information related to the phenomena.

Data Analysis

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The process involved immersing in the data, assigning labels to meaningful units, identifying patterns and connections, and refining themes for validity and coherence. Clear definitions for each theme were provided to accurately represent the data. The analysis was compiled into a coherent narrative, highlighting the main themes and their significance in addressing my research objectives (Creswell, 2014; Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis (Creswell, 2012), member checking and peer debriefing were conducted. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and adherence to ethical principles, were upheld throughout the research process.

Findings and Discussions

This section discloses the outcomes of a hermeneutic phenomenological study exploring how English language teachers in Darchula perceive and experience the utilization of ICT in ELT. The data analysis addresses the research question and provides valuable insights into their attitudes and experiences with ICT in ELT, including potential benefits and challenges associated with its implementation.

Attitudes Towards the Use of ICT in ELT

The findings of the exploration indicate that English language teacher educators in the Darchula region exhibit favourable attitudes regarding the incorporation of Information and Communication Technology into the realm of English Language Teaching. The study involved the participation of all teacher educators, specifically, TE1, TE2, TE3, and TE4, whose collective contributions significantly substantiated this observation. In the initial instance, the teacher educators conveyed their optimism in ICT's capacity to augment the educational experience and facilitate the cultivation of essential digital competencies, as articulated by TE1. They acknowledged that the utilization of multimedia and interactive educational materials could effectively cater to the diverse learning requirements and preferences of students, rendering the educational process more engaging, particularly noted by TE1. Furthermore, these teacher educators underscored the critical need for the provision of resources and support geared toward ICT professional development, to enhance the quality of education and adequately equip students for the demands of the future, an emphasis made by TE1. TE1 mentioned, *"As an ELT educator, I wholeheartedly embrace the integration of ICT in my teaching practice. I firmly believe that technology has the power to enhance the learning experience and equip students with essential digital skills. By incorporating multimedia and interactive content, I have witnessed a remarkable transformation in my classroom. Students*

are more engaged and motivated as they explore language concepts through videos, interactive games, and virtual simulations".

The integration of ICT in ELT was perceived as a positive experience by the teacher educators (TE2). They firmly believed that ICT could significantly contribute to effective language teaching and learning by providing opportunities for interaction, autonomy, and creativity and promoting student-centred approaches (TE2). The utilisation of online platforms, digital resources, and multimedia was regarded as beneficial for creating engaging and interactive lessons, as well as providing opportunities for authentic language use (TE2). TE2 stated, *"Ever since I embarked on the journey of integrating ICT in ELT as a teacher educator, it has been an overwhelmingly positive and transformative experience. From the outset, I firmly believe that technology is not just an optional add-on but an essential tool for providing quality education to students. As I incorporated online platforms, digital resources, and multimedia into my teaching, I witnessed firsthand the tremendous impact it had on my students' learning journey. The interactive and engaging lessons I designed fostered authentic language use, promoted student-centred approaches, and unleashed their creativity. Throughout the past two years, particularly during the challenging times of the pandemic, my perceptions of ICT in ELT have evolved, realising its indispensable role in facilitating remote learning and empowering students to take charge of their language learning".*

Moreover, the teacher educators highlighted the impact of ICT on their teaching practices. They acknowledged that the incorporation of ICT in ELT classrooms had influenced their teaching practices in various ways (TE1). Notably, the rapid adoption of ICT tools during the pandemic played a particularly influential role, opening new possibilities for online learning and facilitating stronger connections with students (TE1). Integrating ICT necessitated staying updated with the latest technologies and adapting teaching practices to meet the evolving needs and expectations of students (TE1).

The data also revealed that the teacher educators recognised the significance of ICT skills for teachers (TE1, TE3). They emphasised that possessing basic ICT skills is essential in today's digital age, as it enables teachers to effectively integrate technology into their teaching, create engaging and interactive lessons, and provide students with a comprehensive learning experience (TE1). The availability and quality of ICT resources were acknowledged as influential factors affecting teaching practices (TE4).

Additionally, the teacher educators expressed positive perceptions of using ICT in ELT, with some noting changes in their perceptions after experiencing the impact of the pandemic (TE3, TE4). They believed that integrating ICT technologies had enhanced their students' learning experiences, making the content more engaging and interactive and providing various resources for self-learning (TE2, TE3). The benefits of using ICT in language teaching were seen to outweigh the drawbacks (TE3).

However, it is important to note that some teacher educators recognised the importance of considering the context and the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods alongside ICT integration (TE4). They acknowledged that there may be situations where traditional methods are more effective, while in other cases, ICT can be more efficient and engaging (TE4).

The findings demonstrate that English language teacher educators in Darchula hold positive attitudes towards the integration of ICT in ELT. They believe that it has the potential to enhance the learning experience, develop students' digital skills, and create an interactive and engaging learning environment. The integration of ICT is seen as beneficial for promoting student-centred learning, increasing student motivation, and supporting self-learning (Jha, 2020; Pangeni, 2017; Cakici, 2016). Acquiring ICT skills is considered essential for teachers to effectively incorporate technology into their teaching practices.

These findings provide significant contributions to our understanding of the perspectives held by instructors of the English language regarding the incorporation of ICT in ELT. These insights can serve as a foundation for the development of educational policies and programs aimed at fostering the proficient amalgamation of ICT in ELT. As a result, this can lead to improvements in the overall calibre of language education.

Benefits of Using ICT in ELT

The four teacher educators' findings provide significant insights into the benefits of integrating ICT in ELT classrooms. All TEs emphasised the positive impact of ICT on student engagement, learning experience, and motivation.

TE1 highlighted the efficacy of ICT tools, such as interactive whiteboards and online quizzes, in enhancing student engagement and making classes more interesting. The use of video conferencing software during the pandemic supported remote teaching and yielded rewarding experiences. Moreover, the usage of ICT created a dynamic and interactive learning environment that catered to diverse learning styles, resulting in more effective classes. Access to online resources, dictionaries, and translation tools improved students' language skills and stimulated discussions, ultimately enhancing their motivation to learn.

Similarly, TE2 reported that ICT simplified teaching and learning processes by providing quick access to information and enabling the creation of dynamic and interactive lessons. Gamified learning platforms and educational apps were found to motivate students, while digital tools streamlined administrative tasks and improved personalised feedback and collaboration. Consequently, the incorporation of ICT led to improved student engagement, better retention of material, and enhanced learning experiences.

TE3 emphasised that ICT played a crucial role in maintaining student engagement and motivation, thereby contributing to more effective teaching and active participation. TE3 mentioned, *"Integrating ICT in ELT has brought a multitude of benefits to my teaching practice, and I have witnessed its positive impact on my students' engagement and motivation. Using ICT tools and platforms, such as messaging apps and online search engines, my students can access and share course materials effortlessly, both in and out of the classroom. This seamless integration of ICT has made teaching and learning more engaging and effective, resulting in a happier and more active classroom environment. The interactive nature of ICT has resonated with my students, as it allows them to participate actively and access a wide range of resources and materials that were previously inaccessible. By using ICT in my lessons, I have been able to deliver content interactively, capturing my students' attention and fostering their understanding*

of the lesson. The incorporation of ICT has made my classes more dynamic, interesting, and interactive, thus enabling my students to grasp the content more effectively and become active and motivated learners". Students found ICT practical and enjoyable, utilising it for searching and sharing course materials. The interactive and engaging nature of ICT facilitated comprehension, rendering lessons more effective and enjoyable. The availability of diverse resources and authentic materials promoted student-centred learning and positively influenced learning outcomes.

TE4 acknowledged that ICT facilitated the creation of interactive and engaging learning experiences for students. Tools such as MS Teams, Google Classroom, and Google Forms garnered positive responses from students, fostering collaboration and providing immediate feedback. Furthermore, the use of ICT resulted in improved writing skills, high-quality essays, and increased student motivation. TE4 stated, *"Incorporating ICT into my ELT practice has been a game-changer, enabling me to create interactive and engaging learning experiences for my students. Using various digital tools such as MS Teams, Google Classroom, and Google Forms, I have witnessed firsthand the positive response from my students. They find these platforms engaging and motivating, as they can actively participate, collaborate, and receive immediate feedback. One notable project involved using ICT to enhance student writing skills. By utilising online resources, peer editing features, and real-time collaboration, my students produced high-quality essays that showcased significant improvement".* However, it is important to note that while ICT offered additional practice materials and immediate feedback, traditional teaching methods were still preferred in certain situations.

The results demonstrate the multifaceted benefits of integrating ICT in ELT. Teachers reported enhanced student engagement, motivation, and learning experiences. ICT facilitates the delivery of interactive and dynamic lessons, accommodating diverse learning styles and providing access to a vast array of resources and authentic materials (Gnawali, 2020; Hidayati, 2016). Tools like interactive whiteboards, video conferencing software, and educational apps promoted student-centred learning, improved collaboration, and stimulated discussions.

Additionally, the availability of online resources, dictionaries, and translation tools empowered students to assume responsibility for their educational endeavours and practice language skills independently. The positive impact of ICT on student engagement, comprehension, and retention of material was evident, leading to improved learning outcomes. Moreover, ICT facilitates communication and collaboration among students, both in physical classrooms and during remote teaching.

The findings also underscored the benefits of ICT for teachers, streamlining administrative tasks, facilitating streamlined feedback, and aiding in lesson planning. The flexibility and adaptability of ICT allowed for creativity in designing and delivering lessons, resulting in more authentic and engaging learning experiences.

While most teacher educators expressed positive views regarding the use of ICT in ELT, it is important to acknowledge that some TEs still preferred traditional teaching methods in certain situations. However, the consensus among the participants highlighted the effectiveness and advantages of ICT in creating interactive, engaging, and effective learning environments.

The discussions based on the results provide support for the notion that embedding ICT in ELT enhances teaching practices and improves the overall quality of education. The use of ICT aligns with student-centred approaches, fosters collaboration, and provides access to a wide range of resources, ultimately preparing students for the digital age and equipping them with essential digital literacy skills.

Challenges of Using ICT in ELT

The data collected from the four teacher educators (TEs) shed light on a range of challenges that arise from the use of ICT in ELT classrooms. These challenges can be categorised into technical issues, concerns about misuse or addiction, inadequate infrastructure and connectivity, financial barriers, the absence of adequate training and the insufficiency of supportive mechanisms. TE1 identified technical issues as a primary challenge when integrating ICT in the classroom. These issues encompassed poor internet connectivity, equipment malfunctions, compatibility problems, and power outages, resulting in delays, disruptions, and frustration for both teachers and students. TE1 also expressed concerns about students excessively relying on online resources, potentially leading to a decline in creativity in problem-solving and assignment completion. The overuse of ICT and its potential consequences, such as addiction and reduced productivity, were highlighted. Additionally, TE1 mentioned the potential dangers associated with ICT, including cybercrime and bullying, underscoring the importance of promoting responsible and safe technology use.

TE2 emphasised the need for continuous adaptation to new software and troubleshooting technical issues during class. The expenses associated with certain ICT tools were identified as a barrier, particularly for universities and teachers with limited funding. Inadequate internet speed and infrastructure were also noted as challenges, along with the negative influence of politically appointed academic leaders, which could impede the adoption of ICT in teaching. TE2 complained, *"As an educator passionate about integrating ICT in ELT, I have personally experienced the challenges that arise due to the influence of politically appointed academic leaders. It is disheartening to witness the impact of their decisions on creating a conducive academic environment for promoting ICT in teaching. Often, these leaders may lack the expertise or understanding needed to fully grasp the potential of ICT and its benefits in the classroom. This lack of understanding can hinder the adoption and implementation of technology-driven approaches, limiting the opportunities for innovation and growth".* The lack of practical and effective teacher training in the latest technology was recognised as an obstacle, resulting in reluctance or ineffective use of ICT in the classroom. TE2 further highlighted challenges such as unpredictable internet shutdowns, outdated software, and lack of expertise.

TE3 highlighted challenges stemming from frequent power cuts, low internet speeds, and inadequate availability of ICT devices. TE3 stated, *"Integrating ICT in ELT has been an exciting journey for me as an educator, although it hasn't been without its challenges. One of the major obstacles I've faced is the frequent occurrence of power cuts and the unreliable nature of internet connections. These technical limitations have disrupted the smooth implementation of ICT in my classroom, causing frustrations for both me and my students. It has been disheartening to witness the enthusiasm of my students wane due to these interruptions".* Some

students faced difficulties with ICT use due to limited access to digital devices or the internet. Student motivation was identified as a challenge, as not all students may be equally interested or comfortable with technology, particularly those who lack digital facilities at home. The potential misuse of ICT, leading to distractions and reduced productivity, was also acknowledged. Furthermore, unstable internet connections during online lessons, particularly during the pandemic, were mentioned as a challenge faced by TE3.

TE4 echoed concerns about technical difficulties and glitches that disrupted the flow of lessons. Slow internet connections and difficulties in loading videos during classes were mentioned. The time-consuming nature of preparing and delivering lessons using ICT was highlighted, including tasks such as creating or adapting materials, learning new software, and troubleshooting technical issues. Inequities in access to technology among students, with some lacking computers or internet at home, were identified as a challenge. The need for training, support, and the potential for distractions was also mentioned by TE4.

The results indicate the existence of several challenges associated with the use of ICT in ELT. Technical issues, including poor internet connectivity, equipment malfunctions, and power outages, can disrupt teaching and learning processes, causing frustration for teachers and students alike. Concerns about excessive reliance on online resources and the potential loss of student creativity were also highlighted.

Inadequate infrastructure and connectivity present significant challenges, as slow internet speeds and power cuts can hinder the effective use of ICT in the classroom. Insufficient funding may further limit access to necessary tools and resources, creating barriers for universities and teachers. The influence of political factors and the need for a collaborative and innovative culture within academic institutions can impede the promotion and integration of ICT in teaching practices.

The findings emphasize the significance of providing teachers with proper training and support to proficiently incorporate ICT into their instructional practices. Hindrances such as a deficiency in technical proficiency, utilization of obsolete software, and a hesitancy to adopt technology stemming from insufficient training have been recognized as notable impediments in this regard. Moreover, the unequal access to technology among students creates disparities in the classroom, as some may lack the necessary devices or internet access to fully participate in ICT activities.

Addressing these challenges requires attention from various stakeholders, including educational institutions, policymakers, and teacher training programs. To overcome technical issues, it is essential to provide reliable infrastructure, including stable internet connections and up-to-date ICT devices. Adequate funding should be allocated to ensure that campuses and teachers have access to the necessary tools and resources.

Educational institutions must initiate comprehensive training and professional development initiatives aimed at endowing educators with the requisite expertise and competencies essential for the proficient assimilation of ICT within their pedagogical practices. This imperative is substantiated by the research conducted by Caena and Redecker (2019), Monteiro and Leite (2021),

and Zhao et al. (2020). This training should encompass troubleshooting technical issues, utilising educational software and tools, and promoting responsible and safe technology use among students. By enhancing teachers' confidence and competence in using ICT, they can overcome barriers and make the most of the available resources.

Efforts should be made to create a supportive and collaborative culture within educational institutions. This involves removing political influences that hinder decision-making and promoting a culture of innovation and collaboration. Encouraging the sharing of best practices and providing platforms for teachers to exchange ideas and experiences can foster a positive environment for the integration of ICT in ELT.

Furthermore, raising awareness among students about the responsible and effective use of ICT is crucial. Educating them about technology's potential risks and benefits, promoting digital literacy, and teaching them how to navigate online resources safely are vital aspects of their ICT education.

Overall, while the challenges associated with using ICT in ELT are evident, they can be overcome through a concerted effort from educational stakeholders. By addressing technical issues, providing training and support, ensuring equitable access to technology, and promoting a collaborative culture, the potential benefits of ICT in enhancing teaching and learning experiences can be fully realized. This would ultimately contribute to a more effective and engaging educational environment that prepares students for the demands of the digital age and equips them with essential digital literacy skills.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study highlights the multifaceted nature of integrating information and communication technology into English language teaching as perceived by teacher educators. The findings suggested that the participating teachers held positive attitudes towards the use of ICT in ELT and acknowledged its potential in making language learning more interactive, engaging, and tailored to individual student needs. Teachers reported that using digital tools enhanced their teaching practices, increased student engagement and motivation, and created dynamic and interactive learning environments, catering to different learning styles, and improving the effectiveness of ELT.

However, challenges associated with technical issues, funding limitations, and training needs were identified despite the benefits. Collaboration among stakeholders is essential to fully harness ICT's benefits in ELT. We recommend that educational institutions should invest in reliable infrastructure, provide necessary funding and resources, and establish supportive cultures that foster innovation and collaboration and support teachers' professional development. The professional development should incorporate ICT skills, and teachers should be supported in overcoming technical challenges. Furthermore, raising awareness among students about the responsible and effective use of ICT is crucial for maximising its potential in the language learning process. By addressing these concerns, English language teachers can leverage the advantages of ICT to create dynamic, engaging, and effective learning environments in ELT, ultimately evolving and adapting to the ever-changing needs and demands of 21st-century learners.

The study acknowledges limitations such as a small sample size, context-specificity, and potential biases in self-reported data. However, it provides valuable insights into ICT in ELT from English language teacher educators in Darchula.

Disclaimer: No funding was received to conduct this study.

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Comparing Hybrid and Flipped Modalities in Remote and Face-to-Face Learning in a Japanese University L2 Academic Writing Course

Ranson Paul Lege

Abstract

Teachers throughout the world are interested in the effectiveness of online and flipped class methods of instruction. During the Covid-19 pandemic, these platforms went from cutting edge to becoming the central teaching platform. Online classes in particular can be effective in teaching reading and writing. In 2013, a hybrid online class was introduced into the academic writing program at the Graduate School of Law at Nagoya University as a way to assist Master's students with their writing needs. Between 2012 – 2023, the same writing courses underwent three phases of development: hybrid, flipped, and fully remote. As part of an action research study, the process included stages of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting on the design of each of the learning platforms. For the planning and implementing phases, the paper compares the quality measures of the instructional designs. Surveys on student perspectives were used to help with the observing and reflecting phases. Student survey results indicated that, even during the peak of the pandemic, learners were satisfied with all three platforms as they developed.

Keywords: *Hybrid, flipped class, remote, L2 academic writing, graduate students*

Introduction

The Graduate School of Law (GSL) at Nagoya University faces numerous problems regarding the intake of students from abroad. At present, approximately 85% of the students come from other countries, primarily Southeast Asia and China. While some of these learners are recent graduates from their respective colleges, others have been in legal practice or worked for various governmental agencies or ministries. Most of these gifted individuals endeavor to study comparative law on either a Japanese or English track program, which means they take classes and write their theses in one or the other targeted languages.

Three serious constraints restrict the design of an effective academic writing program for such students. First, many of these learners are unprepared for the rigors of thesis writing; in fact, most have never written anything in either language. Second, most are on very restrictive two-year scholarship plans, which places stress on both the student and supervisor to complete work in a limited time frame. Third, many content-based faculty members, who use English as a second language (L2), feel overwhelmed by the experience of trying to

communicate writing expectations, especially in advanced degree programs (Suzuki, 2016).

Before 2012, the story of a Master's candidate entering the GSL law program from abroad was a whirlwind of confusion. The L2 student entered the program, met sporadically with a supervisor, had limited instructional writing, wrote as best they could, and then expected to have their work fixed by a foreign "checker" (Matsuda & Hammill, 2014) so that the final judging committee might find some evidence of mutual understanding in their final product. Essentially, the writing skills did not match the high expectations of the degree requirements (Lege, 2022).

In 2012, the suggestion was made that the law faculty negotiate a comprehensive set of writing guidelines that would be integrated into a newly revised set of classes for those on the English track. The aim of the guidelines was two-fold. The first aim was to provide a mutually understood framework as to what was expected in the writing for the student, supervisor, and final examiner. The second aim was to relieve class time of some of the issues related to basic form (grammar, syntax) so that more time could be spent on functional moves needed to write in such a discourse.

The idea to include a hybrid online learning platform *(Pearson, MyLab Writing)* into the program emerged out of two immediate concerns. First, the introduction of a diagnostic for student writing found that student deficiencies were more profound than earlier believed. Second, the department originally allotted only 65 contact hours (22 required) in academic writing that students could take over two years. This was only a fraction of the time compared to the 400 hours of Japanese language instruction that all learners participated in over the same period. To better facilitate this need, the writing courses underwent three phases of development: hybrid classes that mixed online and F2F learning, a blended course that added flipped class methods, and fully remote. The remainder of this paper looks at the quality measures and student perceptions of each of these phases.

Literature Review

Academic Writing and the L2 Student

Research has begun to look at issues that students from abroad face while in the context of experiencing higher education in Japan (Laurence, 2016, Lee 2017). However, such studies primarily focus on the hardships these students encounter rather than meeting and clarifying their learning needs, especially during the recent pandemic. While the field is replete with texts on the problems that L2 students face in trying to express ideas through written text (Nation, 2009; Bailey, 2011; Ferris & Hedgecock, 2014; and Matsuda & Hammill, 2014), such literature addresses the relationship between L2 students attempting to share knowledge with an L1 instructor in an English speaking country (Seloni & Lee, 2020). More is needed to investigate the problems associated with those L2 students struggling to learn and write in English, in a non-English setting such as Japan, where readers or instructors are generally not L1 proficient.

Online Writing and Student-Centered Learning

A plethora of literature exists on the positive effects of online learning, which includes such things as increases in student engagement and

collaboration, faster feedback time, as well as personalized learning (Crockett, Jukes & McCain, 2010; Twigg, 2013; Pstoka, 2022). Woolner and Clark (2015) studied various forms of web-based or digital courses that have a positive impact on self-directed learning and classroom bonding between student cohorts and instructors. In turn, Al-Jarf (2004) noted a positive relationship between web-based learning and struggling L2 college writers. During the pandemic, many schools were compelled to go to some form of hybrid or direct online learning platform and the results were mixed (Nambiar, 2020; Hen & Sol, 2021).

Meanwhile, critics have contended that many quality issues such as high start-up costs, time, and energy are invested in learning to use digital technologies which deter both students and teachers from such platforms (Lewin, 2013; Straumsheim, 2017). While not critical of such technologies, He (2014) concurred that such costs and the feeling of unpreparedness deter teachers from joining in on such learning environments. Stine (2010) argued that demands of learning technology and academic rules and practices can result in mental stress and overload for students, which were even more serious during the Covid period (Sharin, 2021). In general, while some of these issues were ameliorated before the pandemic, the loss of community remained a problem in designing courses for online platforms (Brown et al. 2023). Many of these issues were true for Japan where educational institutions at all levels were slow to adapt to online learning until Covid hit in 2018 (Wang & Cheng, 2021).

Flipped Class Methods

Instructors can design and employ flipped class methods in either face-to-face (F2F) learning or online platforms. As with online education, the flipped class model has as many advocates (Bergman & Sams, 2014; Talbert, 2017) as detractors (Lewin, 2013; Taylor, 2015). A study conducted by Vanderbilt University found that flipped classes had a positive impact on student learning before COVID-19 (Brame, 2013). Hsiu (2015) stated that flipped learning could increase the active participation of second language learners which in turn affected their language learning. Engin (2014), meanwhile, found that student writing might be enhanced when instructors made their videos rather than using external video sources. Tang et al. (2020) found that an online course designed with flipped class methods saw improved student evaluations compared to those that did not.

Skeptical of the positive use of flipped class methods, Jensen, Krummer, and Godoy (2015) studied classes that used the same type of constructive activities and concluded there were no differences between flipped and non-flipped class settings. Chung and Khe (2017) reviewed various studies and surmised that the efficacy of such a method is affected when students do not understand the rationale for such classes. Korkmaz and Mirici (2021) found that while their students provided a favorable view of online classes that used the flipped method, such learners saw little difference between such an approach and the F2F classes concerning such things as instructional practices and activities. In Japan, the idea of using flipped class methods began to gain some attraction in 2014, Loucky (2017) investigated its application in this country and found that this approach was useful to motivate students in EFL language classes.

Methodology

According to McTaggart (1996), "Action research is not a 'method or procedure' for research but a series of commitments to observe and problematize through practice a series of principles for conducting a social inquiry" (p. 248). Stringer (1999) described the method as a research spiral in which an observer identifies a problem, scours for solutions, plans, takes action, evaluates, revises the original plan, and takes further action. Stringer also explained that an action research study can include a comparative look at either quantitative or qualitative data to help elucidate the different phases. Essentially, the process for this research paper underwent planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting phases for each of the platforms described here.

As such, this paper describes the procedures that I undertook to design writing classes that evolved with the use of three different learning platforms. Each one of these platforms underwent various phases of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The first platform combined typical face-to-face learning (F2F) with online educational software to reflect a hybrid approach from 2012 to 2016. In 2017, upon reflection, I decided to experiment with converting the F2F segment into flipped classes while continuing to use elements of the educational software in the previous period (essentially a blended class). In 2019, due to the pandemic, we were forced to switch to a synchronous remote platform; as such, the third platform consisted of moving the blended model from F2F to remote until mid-2023.

For purposes of brevity, the study presents two forms of evaluations for the four phases of planning, implementing, observing, and reflection which occurred in overlapping cycles of effort. The first form of evaluation compares the "usability indicators" of the hybrid and flipped classes. Such a comparison was not done for the remote classes because for this platform it was simply a matter of providing a Zoom link to students in the Learning Management System (LMS). Students already had computers and access to the LMS while working with the hybrid platform so while some adjustments were made these were minor compared to developing the other two phases of instructional design (hybrid and flipped). The second form of evaluation presents data from student evaluations which helped in the observation and reflection phases in developing these classes.

The discussion includes a look at some of the quality measures (such as time and money) that go into the planning and implementing phases of such an instructional design. Such a discussion is important because Taylor (2015) and Jensen, Krummer, and Godoy (2015) criticized that many studies concerning the use of technology in education often do not clarify what it takes to plan and implement such learning platforms. Thus, this paper includes a heuristic comparison of the actual "usability indicators" related to such things as costs, instructor learning time, student learning time, and accessibility. Critics of such new teaching methods often argue that research showing the success of a particular approach does not include the actual expense or inputs in adapting technology to the classroom. In contrast, research showing mixed or negative results is often judged as not having been designed in "the right way." Therefore, a comparison of the "usability indicators" helps to offset such criticism from either side.

For the observing and reflection phases of this action research, this paper will provide results

from descriptive quantitative data from student evaluations of these three different educational delivery approaches. This article includes data culled from general student surveys between 2012 – 2017 on the hybrid classes and surveys conducted between 2017 – 2023 on the flipped classes and the classes that were conducted remotely during COVID-19. The surveys include data in which the students evaluated the main design element (online software and the flipped class materials) and how they rated the overall class delivery relative to other courses they took.

Evaluation of the Three Platforms 2012-2023

This section will describe the GSL academic writing courses with the usability indicators and provide results from student evaluations on the effectiveness of the hybrid, flipped class approaches in the F2F and remote instructional settings. A clear understanding of the usability indicators of the online lab and the flipped class model satisfies the criticism that such data is necessary to gain a full picture of such learning environments. Such a comparison is useful as a matter of transparency and helps those interested in the practical aspects of committing to such learning venues (He, 2014). While seemingly expensive at first, the educational institution or program should consider that such costs represent a long-term investment in students (Twigg, 2013). Moreover, faculty should never underestimate the value of student evaluations in designing both present and future course needs (Hadid et al., 2020).

The Hybrid Class

The designing of an English writing program or curriculum can depend on several key factors such as departmental demands, time constraints, and the pedagogical views of the instructors (Frodesen, 1995). Furthermore, an instructor must consider the needs of the student as well as their skills, habits, and motivation when designing a learning course or program (Dirksen, 2016). As mentioned above, the GSL faculty's demands for improving the form, function, and usage of student writing to satisfy the expectations of an advanced thesis were difficult to meet given the limited class times that students could take writing courses. Students needed time to learn, develop, and apply skills that would help in this endeavor.

In 2012, as a way to stretch that time frame, grant funds were provided to subscribe MyLab Writing, which is a curative software program developed by Pearson Education that is accessed via specially purchased codes. This product is customizable and includes various scaffolding modules, writing exercises, and a class chat room that can be used according to instructional needs. The use of such a tool can be applied either synchronously or asynchronously to a course design as the access codes allow students accessibility from anywhere at any time.

In 2013, the lab was fully integrated into the GSL academic writing courses whereby the instructor could manage, supervise, and assess the learners as they went through the modules. The essential idea was to have students self-manage many of the issues related to form (grammar, syntax) so that the class time could be used to concentrate on more of the functional aspects of writing (organization, meaning) related to a genre-based approach. That is, the courses were designed to focus on the elaborative elements needed to write a thesis or dissertation in comparative law.

As this was integrated into the regular on-campus F2F course, it represented a hybrid

class according to Warnock's (2009) definition whereby any class that was half onsite and half online was deemed a blended learning environment. According to Merriam (2008), such a hybrid class offers remedial students of writing a better learning environment than a direct online course because there is a mix of class community and interaction that develops with the instructor and other members of a class. Essentially, the lab operated as a textbook to meet the needs of L2 graduate students with limited writing experience in English.

Usability Indicators for the Hybrid Course

The data collected for the information in Figure 1 below came partly from student evaluations and personal observations by the instructor over the period 2012-2023. The institution had to pay an initial start-up or licensing fee of $2,500 to Pearson Education. As shown in the figure, students paid nothing for access to the course because the department funded the yearly costs of $32 per student (the cost of a textbook). The students need assistance with access as the steps are not easy. For the instructor, the learning curve can be long because much of it depends upon the personal abilities of each person to manipulate the technology. After feeling comfortable with the lab program, students rated things such as mobility, interaction, and tech support as relatively good.

In addition, students found the instructional material helpful, the assessment feedback productive, and the general design very good. On average, the learners reported spending about 60 – 90 minutes per week, some longer, as the program offered extra practice. As long as supervision provided substantive feedback and assistance with the tech, students seemed satisfied with the software program. In general, the instructor could expect to spend about 6 –7 hours supervising, discussing, and feedback on written assignments per week. But, over time, the instructor could cut down on some of this time by becoming proficient and knowledgeable with the software program.

Figure 1. *Usability indicators for hybrid class, 2012-2013*

Quality factors	Instructor view	Student view
Costs	Subscription $2,500 Access code fee $32/ student	0
Accessibility	Requires access code, nitial access is not easy	Difficult
ILearning curve	Long	Not easy
Mobile ready	Good	Very good
Interaction	Good	Good
Tech Support	Good	Fair
Instructional Material	Good	Very Good
Assessment	Good	Excellent
Design	Very good	Very good
Time factor/ week	6-7 hours	60–90 minutes

Student Evaluation of the Hybrid Course

Initially, the lab was open to all students in the department and was to be used as a reference source in which learners would have asynchronous participation on demand. This essentially meant that in 2012 all students (n=83) in the department and not

just those in my class (n=24) would have independent access without much oversight or accountability. As Table 1 below shows, both participation (12% of total students) and evaluation in 2012 were low as 74% of students rated the software as low. As a result, I quickly requested that we integrate the software into the course and make it part of the class requirement. In addition, it was available only to those learners taking the course. As the table shows, both participation and evaluation of the lab improved dramatically. From 2012 to 2017, the number of students fully engaging in the software rose to 92% and favorable ratings improved as well. Though not shown, data from 2017 – 2023 would largely maintain a positive approval rating.

Table 1. *Participation and Evaluation of the MYWRITINGLAB, 2012-2017*

Year	# Students	Partici-pat ion	High Rating	Mod. Rating	Low rating
2012	83	12%	1%	25%	74%
2013	22	83%	37%	40%	23%
2014	34	87%	39%	46%	15%
2015	26	90%	40%	48%	12%
2016	26	90%	45%	48%	7%
2017	28	92%	51%	41%	8%

There were several reasons for this change. First, integrating the software into the course content incentivized student interest. Second, by making it part of the course, the instructor had to manage its operation but also hold students accountable for the work. This meant instructor presence was important to ensure that students used the tool. Third, narrowing access to the lab to a limited number of students meant the instructor could direct more attention to those with immediate needs. In general, these results were in line with research that showed that while initial costs in time and money in any digital program can be high (Battaglino, Haldeman, & Laurans, 2012), the investment in the outcomes can pay off in the end (Talbert, 2017).

As shown, the design of the hybrid class underwent several phases of development. The planning phase involved matching the needs of the students with the potential use of an accessible software program. The implementation and observation phases helped to decide how the software should be used within the class context. From the observations and student evaluations, I was able to reflect on additional ways to improve and refine the instructional design of the writing courses. Table 2 below provides collected data on how well the students rated the overall hybrid class approach relative to other courses they took in their program.

Table 2 *Student Comparison of hybrid class to all other courses, 2012-2016*

Year	Students	Comparison with other classes	Difficulty	Improved writing skills	Social Interaction	Instructor Presence
2012	24	Slightly Hi	Higher	Moderate	High	Moderate
2013	22	Slightly Hi	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate
2014	34	High	Higher	Moderate	Moderate	High
2015	26	High	Moderate	High	High	High
2016	26	High	Moderate	High	High	High

As Table 2 above shows, students rated the hybrid course higher relative to all the other courses they attended in the program even though it was more difficult. However, as I tweaked the design and improved the course, students felt it was less difficult while also helping them to improve their writing skills. One of the important aspects culled from the data was that students evaluated a higher sense of social interaction in this course relative to what would occur later in the remote classes.

The Flipped Class Method

While outcomes over these same years indicated that student writing was improving on prescriptive things such as grammar and basic organization, there remained issues with the elaborative aspects of their writing, for example, how to write a thesis statement or abstract. In 2016, I decided to consider the use of a flipped class model to possibly boost the opportunities for learners to work on these elaborative moves needed to write their theses and dissertations. This experiment with the flipped class, then, represents the next stage of the action plan.

The actual implementation of the flipped class occurred in conjunction with the continued use of the My Writing Lab. The flipped class simply reduced the amount of "lecturing" that occurred in the previous F2F hybrid class. The main point of experimenting with the flipped class approach was to help find ways to extend the amount of "writing" time or practice that students might need to improve their skills. Since actual contact time was limited, a flipped class approach would allow students to have a library of information that they could access before they came to class so that we could practice the skills in class. To properly use this approach, some costs and learning time were essential to ensuring its success because it requires developing a high delivery of lessons.

Usability Indicators for the Flipped Class

As with the online lab, the students paid no direct costs for flipped class learning; however, the initial costs on the program side were rather pricey because it involved teacher training as well as the purchasing of equipment and software to develop videos. Our budget allowed me to attend a few conferences and online courses to better prepare and deal with some of the micro issues related to developing a flipped class. However, as Figure 2 below shows, a person could easily spend $250 – $3,000 on learning how to be proficient with such a delivery system. There are ways around some of these costs but some investment in professional development may still be necessary to learn how to use technology effectively; for example, we initially purchased Camtasia to help with editing of videos when GoogleForm can be used at no cost. The initial step of producing a video can take 3-5 hours (preparing, shooting, editing), but after completion, the lesson is set for future use and thus a library of lessons can quickly accumulate.

While the learning for the instructor can be very steep, students pay nothing as long as the program has a solid Learning Management System (LMS) in which they can access the instructional videos. Access can be complicated by distance, and unlike the pre-packaged lab, the instructor is responsible for the tech issues. Thus, an instructor that is well-trained in making their videos will most likely provide quality and manageable content that students will find appealing. In general, Students rated all other quality aspects as good to excellent and found that they only needed about 20 minutes to watch and complete the quizzes on the video. Inserting small quizzes into such videos is optional, but important for instructors concerned with student accountability.

Figure 2. *Usability Indicators for the flipped classes, 2017*

Quality factors	Instructor view	Student view
Costs	Training ($250-3,000) Lightboard ($100-$700) Software, camera, lighting ($150-$1,000) Our investment; $5,000	0
Accessibility	Shared via URL	Good
Learning curve	Can be very long	(depends on link)
Mobile ready	Excellent	Excellent
Interaction	Good	Good
Tech Support	Depends on instructor	Good
Instructional Material	Good	Very Good
Assessment	Good	Excellent
Design	Very good	Very good
Time factor/ week	3-5 hrs making a lesson. 1 hr assessment	20 minutes

Student Evaluations between 2017 – 2023

In general, students in the GSL program had become accustomed to and satisfied with both the hybrid and flipped class methods relative to many of their other courses up to 2017. From 2017 to 2019, the classes were conducted F2F using the flipped class as the primary mode of delivery, but after the onset of Covid, all classes shifted to remote access only. With improvements in the flipped class method, the students would come to evaluate the approach more highly as it was integrated more regularly into the remote writing courses. Thus, Table 3 below presents data from surveys collected between 2017 – 2023 that asked about student perceptions regarding the combination of the flipped class methods in these writing courses compared to other courses they took in their program.

Table 3. *Comparison of the flipped class AW course with all other courses, 2017-2023*

Year	Students	Comparison with other classes	Difficulty	Improved writing skills	Social Interaction	Instructor Presence
2017 (F2F)	27	Slightly Hi	Higher	Moderate	Low	Moderate
2018 (F2F)	25	Slightly Hi	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
2019 (F2F)	21	High	Higher	Moderate	Same	High
2020 (R)	20	High	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate
2021 (R)	19	High	Moderate	High	Same	High
2022 (R)	19	High	Higher	High	Moderate	High
2023 (R)	17	High	Moderate	High	Moderate	High

The table above reflects the perceptions of students in the third stage of the action plan, which would eventually include full integration of both and flipped class methods first into F2F (2017-2019) and then remote (R) writing courses (2020-2023). In addition, elements of the educational software were still required for use because the material covered much of the form of writing (grammar and punctuation), while the flipped lessons guided students on the elaborative aspects of writing a thesis (such as how to write an abstract). Because students were already set up with an LMS, the instructor only needed to send out a Zoom link to conduct the remote class, there was no need to evaluate the "usability indicators" for this latter phase of the study.

As the data above indicates, in the period between 2017 and 2023 the number of students participating in the GSL academic writing classes declined. This was primarily the result of the pandemic which impacted an assortment of issues related to recruitment, scholarships, and even things such as acquiring visas. As the table shows, students evaluated the combined approach in the AW class as higher relative to their other graduate courses, especially during the COVID-19 period in which all classes were conducted remotely (2020 – 2023).

However, the results indicated both positive and negative attitudes toward the flipped class approach, especially during the period when classes went remote. On the positive side, students found that this combined approach helped to improve their writing, which was related to the importance of feedback (Teng & Zheng, 2020). In addition, students evaluated the instructor's presence in this specific course as more favorable compared to their other courses. Instructor presence is a critical element that can make or break the effectiveness of a remote course (Stewart, 2021). Ways to improve instructor presence include activities that build rapport with students and make videos on how the tech works as well as on the substantive material of a course.

Meanwhile, on the negative side, students found the AW courses moderately more difficult relative to their other classes and bemoaned the lack of social interaction in such a class setting. The reasons they found the writing classes more difficult, however, was that it required them to take more responsibility for their learning compared to typical F2F classes, and included overcoming anxieties related to using technology. Again, developing friendly user videos that explain the technology can help alleviate some of the concerns students have about an online course.

In terms of social interaction, the students found it lower compared to some of their other F2F classes, but nearly the same or slightly better compared to other online classes that were mandatory during the Covid period. Improving the sense of community in a remote class continues to be a problem for online courses (Kebritchi et al., 2017; Rasheed et al.2020). But, as Table 3 suggests, strong instructor presence may have had a positive effect on social interaction (Rapanta, 2020), though more study in this area is needed. However, during this period, the instructor was able to reflect and adjust to this problem by building more of a rapport with the students and finding ways to encourage social interaction.

Discussion: Comparing the Two Approaches in the Two Different Settings

Usability indicators are a major concern for any online design scheme (Hewett, 2015). Teachers with few resources in time and

money could find it difficult to undertake either of these modalities. But, with recent developments with platforms such as Google Classrooms, instructors can reduce some of the costs. For the flipped class approach, the instructor will need more initial time to learn and develop lessons and videos as well as manage technological issues, but this could pay off with less time needed in lesson planning and grading later. For the hybrid class that uses a subscribed software (ie paid license), the instructor will have less of a learning curve, and fewer technological worries but may invest more time in supervising and grading.

Overall, the students in our program perceived the online lab as better than the flipped class but mainly because they had become accustomed to the structure and design of the lab and because of the lack of social interaction when going remote. Following Chung and Khe's (2017) research, the rationale of the flipped classes for the GSL may not have been fully understood at first but would change over time. Some of the students felt more pressure to perform at higher levels with the flipped classes (Stine 2010), while the online lab gave them more time to revise their work. In addition, the feedback and discussion that occurred with the instructor online afforded more direct and private interaction than with flipped classes in only the F2F platform, which matched the research by Merriam (2008). Unlike Taylor (2015), tech issues were not seen as a major stumbling block to using either of these modalities, and students preferred both of these methods over traditional classroom lecturing.

In general, if both modalities are well designed and instructor presence is strong, then student attitudes toward either modalities (hybrid or flipped) in F2F or remote platforms should be fairly equal. However, the loss of a sense of community or student social interaction that occurs with remote learning tends to decrease the appeal of such learning approaches. During the Covid period, the instructor was able to observe and reflect on this issue and make some adjustments to improve learner satisfaction especially compared to the other classes that students took at this time (see Table 2).

Conclusion

As part of action research, this paper aimed to provide data and analysis of an academic writing course that underwent various phases of development between 2012 – 2023. The design of these courses aimed at meeting the needs of L2 students in the Graduate School of Law at Nagoya University who required additional time to learn the skills and habits to write a satisfactory thesis or dissertation. The instructional design for the academic writing classes evolved with the use of the three learning platforms: a hybrid class that met F2F (2012-2017), a F2F class that used both hybrid and flipped class modalities (2017-2019), and a remote class that employed both of the same modalities (2019-2023). The action plan for each of the platforms included a planning, implementing, observation, and reflection phase. The paper provided data on "usability indicators" and student surveys to help describe the process of the development of these writing classes.

While developing and using licensed software or learning to make personal videos for flipped class perhaps can be expensive and time-consuming, this does not have to be the case. With the help of grant money, our program was able to make the expenditure to ensure that we could optimize the chances of success. However, as the evaluations in each phase indicate, the students found that

the investment in designing these approaches was relatively effective compared to a typical F2F and more importantly in helping them to improve their writing skills. While students initially evaluated the flipped class as moderately effective in the F2F phase, their attitudes were increasingly positive as adjustments were made when classes went remote. Since students became accustomed to working online (phase 1) and in the use of flipped classes (phase 2), it may have affected more positive feelings about such a remote class (phase 3) relative to many of their other remote courses in the program. While concerns about social interaction continue to be a problem for all remote classes, a strong instructor presence that can deal with the tech needs of students while delivering interactive lessons can reduce some of these concerns.

The Author

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The Trend of Mixed Methods Research Employed in the *Journal of NELTA* (2009-2022)

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Abstract

This research trend analysis aims to understand the prevalence of Mixed Methods Research (MMR) in English language teaching (ELT) research within the *Journal of NELTA* from 2009 to 2021, identifying the extent to which MMR is employed in the ELT field and assessing adherence to the International Journal of Mixed Methods Research (IJMMR, 2018) guidelines. A two-stage screening process was conducted, initially involving the manual screening of 176 articles and subsequently assessing 20 shortlisted articles against the checklist of IJMMR. The analysis confirms a limited utilization of MMR in ELT research, with only 20 (approximately 11%) of the 176 reviewed articles incorporating MMR, while qualitative and quantitative methodologies take precedence. Adherence to the International Community of Practice guidelines, as established by IJMMR, is lacking in most articles, emphasizing the need for better alignment with established guidelines to enhance MMR quality in ELT research. This study highlights a substantial gap in the adoption of MMR in ELT research, possibly due to methodological conservatism and a lack of awareness and training within the ELT community, presenting an opportunity for scholars to explore MMR's potential to bridge gaps in traditional ELT research and enhance the understanding of language teaching and learning processes.

Keywords: *Trend analysis, mixed methods research in ELT, research methodologies, NELTA*

Introduction

The Nepal English Language Teaching Association *(NELTA)* has been a prominent name in advancing English language teaching and learning since its establishment in 1992. Collaborating with the government of Nepal and an array of national and international organizations, it has also established itself as a reliable source for sharing pedagogical success through research in English language teaching (ELT), both within Nepal and globally. With the primary goal to enhance the teaching and learning of English in both private and public schools in Nepal, NELTA serves as an essential platform for educators to exchange knowledge and best practices in ELT. While the Journal has made significant contributions, it is noteworthy to explore research trends and invite innovative pedagogical approaches and methodologies. Informed by the pragmatist perspective to comprehend the world of knowledge, this study specifically focuses on analyzing the practice of Mixed Methods

Research (MMR) within the context of ELT research and thereby identifying room for alternative effective research, teaching strategies, and interventions enhancing the quality of language education both in Nepal and globally. Hence, to examine the research trends followed by contributors of the NELTA Journal, this study analyzes and highlights the ongoing trend in research approaches.

The Emergence of the Third School of Thought: Mixed Methods Research

There are three widely acknowledged types of research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The most prominent difference between quantitative and qualitative research is that the former employs numbers to test hypotheses involves huge populations, and uses statistics to analyze its results, which may then be generalized to even larger populations. In contrast, qualitative research is concerned with the type and quality of the researched subject and often works with smaller sample sizes. The researcher attempts to comprehend the participants and the subject of their study in depth before presenting their findings in narrative descriptions, allowing the audience to understand their research experience.

The history of mixed methods research can be traced back to the 1800s. According to Hesse-Biber (2010), quantitative and qualitative methods of research were already employed in the 1850s when studying poverty throughout European families (Le Play, 1855, as cited by Beaver, 1962). The term 'mixed methods' was first coined by Greene et al. in 1989, highlighting the explicit amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single research endeavor. Since then, mixed methods research has been firmly established and widely accepted in sociology as an important approach to studying intricate social phenomena and tackling research inquiries that benefit from the integration of qualitative and quantitative perspectives (Morgan, 2017). DuBois (1899) emphasized the importance of combining statistical and observational data in his influential work, *The Philadelphia Negro.* Campbell and Fiske (1959) furthered the advancement of mixed methods research by proposing the multitrait, multimethod matrix, which recommended the integration of diverse quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach aimed to achieve a comprehensive and robust understanding of research findings while enhancing their validity.

Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Qualitative research provides researchers with a unique opportunity to engage closely with participants and gain an intimate understanding of the community under study. This insight allows researchers to delve deeper into the participants' perspectives, beliefs, and underlying assumptions, thereby enriching their comprehension of the topic. Because of the contact participants have with the researcher and the use of broad questions, more topics can be raised than expected, and the researcher has an immediate opportunity to ask follow-up questions (Choy, 2014). Since the data cannot be objectively verified, ensuring reliability and validity are the biggest challenges in qualitative research. Furthermore, the rapport between the researchers and participants could raise the question of participant anonymity and confidentiality, which may generate ethical concerns (Burns, 2000). According to Harwell (2011), the major strength of quantitative research is the ability to replicate and generalize quantitative research findings.

When conducting research, following appropriate methods ensures the measurement of study findings and ensuring the reliability

as well as the validity of the research as stressed by Jang et al. (2014). However, they also argued that researchers should go beyond hypothetico-deductive or inductive reasoning alone and recover flexibility in human reasoning through multi-method designs. Multi-methods research requires explicit reasoning based on practical dialectical argumentation, including the consideration of potential counterarguments (Jang et al., 2014).

While it may be challenging to make absolute claims due to opposing opinions, *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* emphasize that statements about validity be specific to particular interpretations and uses, cautioning against using the unqualified phrase 'the validity of the test' (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014).

Although appropriate sampling and research design can provide some level of control, it is crucial to acknowledge the boundaries when dealing with the human component, as it is impossible to account for all factors (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014). In quantitative research, bias and objectivity are of less concern since the researcher has minimal involvement with the participants. However, this limited involvement also means that the researcher may miss out on valuable contextual and background knowledge that could aid in interpreting the data more accurately (Burns, 2000).

Professional Advancement and the Emergence of Advocates for Mixed Methods Research

Significant progressions have been evident in the mixed methods in recent decades. In 1997, the National Science Foundation published the "User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Methods Evaluation" written by Frechtling and Sharp (1997). This handbook was released alongside Greene and Carcelli's publication on mixed methods in the journal "New Directions for Evaluation". Subsequent editions of the Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research were published in 2003 and 2010, edited by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, 2010). Another notable contribution was the publication of the second *"New Directions for Evaluation"* in 2013, which focused on enhancing the credibility of evidence through mixed methods, authored by Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2013).

Organizationally, *The Journal of Mixed Methods Research,* a peer-reviewed journal, was also launched in 2007. Oxford University Press also contributed to the field by publishing a handbook on mixed methods edited by Hesse-Biber and Johnson in 2015. In 1997, the National Science Foundation published the "User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Methods Evaluation" by Frechtling and Sharp, which coincided with the publication of Greene and Caracelli's work on mixed methods in the journal New Directions for Evaluation (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997; Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

In 2013, the Mixed Methods International Research Association (MMIRA) was officially founded. Annual conferences have been held since 2005 in the UK and the US, with regional conferences extended to other continents, fostering a network of researchers and evaluators interested in mixed methods, leading to the creation of MMIRA. Similarly, within the realm of ELT, there is an evident inclination toward embracing diverse methodologies and broadening research viewpoints (Manchón & Matsuda, 2016). This motivation has spurred our investigation into the application of MMR within the context of ELT research in Nepal.

Mixed Methods Research in Social Sciences

Norman Denzin's contributions to social science research have been instrumental in advancing the development of mixed methods research. One significant contribution is his work on triangulation which has further contributed to developing mixed methods research in social science. By comparing results obtained from different methods, Denzin recognized the value of integrating diverse approaches to enhance the credibility and comprehensiveness of research findings. This expansion led to the development of typologies by Greene et al. and other researchers, which categorized the motivations behind MMR (Denzin, 1970; Greene et al., 1989). Since the early 2000s, mixed methods research has experienced significant growth and recognition within sociology. Textbooks and handbooks dedicated to mixed methods have provided guidance and support for researchers interested in adopting this approach (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003;). The establishment of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* and the organization of international conferences focused on mixed methods have solidified their place within the discipline (Morgan, 2017). As a result, MMR has become an integral part of the sociological research landscape, offering a powerful means to explore social phenomena comprehensively.

Mixed Methods Research in Education

Mixed methods research (MMR) has gained significant recognition for its valuable contribution by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). Researchers increasingly opt for the use of multiple research strategies instead of relying solely on one method due to the benefits of methodological pluralism and the provision of higher-quality data (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). This approach is gaining popularity across various academic fields, including linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT). MMR acknowledges the complexities inherent in the research and compensates for the limitations of relying solely on qualitative or quantitative approaches, providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of language teaching and learning (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

In the social and behavioral sciences, MMR has emerged as a powerful approach to comprehending complex human behavior (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). By incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers can triangulate data from multiple sources, leading to a more holistic understanding of the intricacies involved in language education (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The application of MMR in language education offers valuable insights into the behavior, perspective, and attitude of learners, teachers, and policymakers (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Moreover, it allows for a thorough comprehension of the social and cultural contexts that influence language learning and usage, thereby informing the development of more impactful instructional practices (Norton, 2013; Pennycook, 2010).

In the realm of STEM education, MMR has gained attention for its potential to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods. Researchers like Smajic et al. (2022) conducted studies on the mixed methodology of scientific research in healthcare, highlighting the relevance of mixed methods in STEM fields.

Similarly, Guetterman et al. (2015) explored the integration of quantitative and qualitative results in health science mixed methods research. These studies demonstrate the value of combining different research approaches to understand complex phenomena in STEM disciplines comprehensively.

Johnstone (2004) discussed the application of mixed methods in health services research, providing insights into how mixed methods can be effectively employed in STEM-related studies. Additionally, Creswell et al. (2011) offered valuable guidance on best practices for conducting mixed-methods research in the health sciences. Their recommendations encompass the rigorous design and implementation of mixed methods studies in STEM fields, ensuring the validity and reliability of research findings.

Mixed Methods Research in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Within the field of language education, understanding the complexities of language learning and human behavior is crucial for researchers. Scholars such as Johnson and Golombek (2011) and Norton (2013) emphasize the importance of exploring variables such as attitudes, beliefs, prior knowledge, and language proficiency among teachers and students through mixed methods research. This multidisciplinary approach employs research methods derived from both (post)positivist and constructivist paradigms to investigate language teaching and learning (Riazi & Candlin, 2014).

Prominent reviews and discussions have contributed to the understanding of research methods in applied linguistics, including language teaching and learning. Davis (1995) and Lazaraton (1995, 2000, 2005) have published notable reviews on research methods in applied linguistics. Ortega and Iberri-Shea (2005) and Richards (2009) have also contributed to the understanding of research methods in the field of applied linguistics, including language teaching and learning. Cumming (1994) and Yihong et al. (2001) have provided broader discussions on research methods in applied linguistics, encompassing various subfields within the discipline. Riazi and Candlin's (2014) review specifically examined the trends, issues, and opportunities related to mixed-methods and quantitative and qualitative approaches in ELT research from 2002 to 2011, adding to the existing literature.

Acknowledging the importance of mixed methods research in the field of ELT and its potential to enhance language teaching and learning outcomes, researchers have increasingly recognized the value of incorporating diverse perspectives and approaches in understanding the complexities of language education (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, researchers can understand the challenges and opportunities in language teaching and learning, allowing for the development of more effective teaching approaches tailored to individual needs and learning styles (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Despite the growing recognition of the benefits of mixed methods research, there is a noticeable gap in the ELT research field. While research on methodological trends and analytical gaps in ELT has been conducted in various contexts worldwide, limited information specifically focuses on the Nepalese ELT context or has been published in the *Journal of NELTA.* The

insights gained from the existing literature on trends in ELT and classroom discourse (Awasthi, 2021) provide a foundation for further exploration of the methodological trend gap. Given the widespread acceptance of mixed methods research in social science, it is pertinent to determine its standing within the specific field of ELT. Hence, the question to be addressed is: What is the prevalence of mixed-methods research in ELT research published in the *Journal of NELTA,* a community-oriented journal dedicated to ELT practices from 2009 to 2021, and is there any potential gap between the research and the guidelines for mixed-methods research in the *Journal of NELTA* compared to the established practices within the broader community of mixed research? By addressing these gaps, this research contributes to the discourse on the application of MMR in the context of ELT, fostering advancements in methodological rigor and innovation within the ELT research.

Review Process

This research trend analysis involved 176 journal articles, encompassing the total number of articles published in the *Journal of NELTA* from 2009 to 2021. To conduct this study, we initiated the process by gathering the PDFs of journal issues accessible through NepJol and the NELTA website. Throughout this phase, we undertook a manual examination to identify quantitative and qualitative research trends, shortlisting articles that incorporated both methods. Setting aside time each week, we reviewed around four articles, maintaining this pace consistently for about 44 to 48 weeks. This dedicated manual effort to scrutinize articles spanned over nearly a year. The decision to focus exclusively on a particular journal was purposeful, aiming to ensure a precise and unbiased exploration of the specific research methodology utilized within this particular context. The objective of centralizing the analysis on a singular journal was to mitigate any potential publication bias, a concern highlighted by Molina-Azorin (2012). This approach diverges from the more prevalent practice where researchers typically consider multiple journals. The selection of the J*ournal of NELTA* as the subject of investigation was an intentional choice, designed to lend validation to the study to add credibility as a double-blind peer-reviewed, refereed, ISI-accredited publication. Notably, it has a high impact factor, placing it in the top 25 percent of international journals and earning recognition through citations in 95 journals globally. Only double-blind peer-reviewed articles published in the *Journal of NELTA* after 2009 were chosen for analysis from NepJOL, ensuring the highest level of scientific rigor by confirming that these articles had undergone external evaluation.

Proceeding to the next phase, we adhered to the guidelines provided in the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research (IJMMR)* to identify the prevalence of mixed methods studies within the identified shortlist of 25 articles. A study is technically classified as a mixed methods study if it involves both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. However, recognizing such studies can present challenges because authors do not label their work as mixed methods. To determine whether a study fits this category, specific attributes were examined following the guidelines outlined in the leading resource on mixed methods, the *IJMMR,* renowned for its presentation of impactful studies. Adhering to these transparent guidelines can significantly impact the author selection process for submissions to their respective subject-focused journal, including ELT, encouraging inventive methodological approaches or applications that enhance the publication of impactful mixed methods studies across various fields.

Building on these guidelines, it is essential to conduct a study that measures the rigor of mixed methods research published in the *Journal of NELTA* annually, using a checklist to ensure that the research meets the highest quality standards and contributes to the growing body of rigorous mixed methods research. This study has the potential to promote the use of rigorous mixed-methods research in various fields and contribute to advancing the methodology as a whole.

First, the title, then the abstract, with summaries, followed by keywords, were reviewed to see if they explicitly used words like 'quantitative and qualitative, mixed methods,' or other related words to signify the analysis and collection of quantitative as well as qualitative data. Next, the introduction section was reviewed to understand the purpose, research questions, or other phrases indicating whether the researchers intended to gather quantitative and qualitative data during the study. Finally, the methodology section was evaluated to determine how the data collection and analysis were carried out. This section usually provided the most insight into the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, and most mixed methods studies were identified in this part. This validated methodology, adopted from Molina-Azorín and Font (2015), effectively identified mixed-method studies.

Results

The results of the analysis, which breakdown the research methodologies employed in papers published in the *Journal of NELTA* during the period from 2009 to 2021, offering insights into the prevalent approaches within the ELT research community, are presented in *Table 1.*

Table 1: Number of Research Articles

Number of Research Article					
Year	Reviews Articles	Quali-tative	Quanti-tative	Mixed Methods Research	Total Articles
2009	9	5	3	0	17
2010	9	4	3	1	17
2011	6	1	2	3	12
2012	3	2	4	1	10
2013	1	5	6	0	12
2014	1	6	4	2	13
2015	3	3	2	1	9
2016	5	5	5	0	15
2017	8	3	1	4	16
2018	5	5	1	3	14
2019	1	9	1	2	13
2020	0	10	1	0	11
2021	1	13	0	3	17
Total	52	71	33	20	176

From Table 1, it can be analyzed that between 2009 and 2021, the *Journal of NELTA* published a total of 176 articles encompassing various research methodologies (Table 1). Among these publications, qualitative articles made up the largest category (n=71), followed by review-based, book reviews, and practical pedagogical articles (n=52). Quantitative articles also found reasonable representation with 33 published pieces. However, mixed methods research was markedly underrepresented, accounting for only 20 articles over the 13 years might greatly benefit from a more diversified methodological approach.

Table 2. IJMMR Guidelines, (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2019, p. 416)

Questions	Frequency	Percentage
Title		
Does the title directly indicate or sufficiently allude to the methodological contribution of the article?	0	0.0
Abstract		
Does the abstract include an explicit statement about a methodological challenge or issue in the field that will be addressed in the article?	11	55.0
Does the abstract indicate the methodological/theoretical contribution of the article to the field of mixed methods research?	8	40.0
Main Text of the article		
Does the article have a clear writing style with sufficient headers and sub-headers such that the reader can readily follow the flow and argumentation?	7	35.0
Does the text in the background reiterate and expand upon the methodological challenge or issue as identified in the abstract?	5	25.0
Does the background contain a rigorous review and citations of relevant and recent mixed methods literature to support examining the methodological aim?	3	15.0
Does the background include an explicit methodological aim?	1	5.0
Does the background contain an explication of the article's structure and methodological points that will be addressed?	10	50.0
In the body of article, are each of the methodological points identified in #8addressed persuasively in the order specified?	11	55.0
Does the article include a strategy to convey the overall complexity of the topic or study phenomenon such as a figure or illustration?	1	5.0
In the discussion, are the explicit points made in #8 synthesized together to logically support the overarching methodological aim?	2	10.0
Does the discussion section include a specific subsection "Contribution to the Field of Mixed Methods Research" that reviews the points made and extant literature to articulate the articles novel contribution(s) to mixed methods?	12	60.0
Does the article have a discussion of the methodological limitations?	8	40.0
Does the discussion section include recommendations for future mixed methods inquiry based on the paper's unique contribution or limitations?	5	25.0
Have the references been cited according to the current American Psychological Association style?		
Additional elements for empirical methodological articles only	1	5.0
Does the background of the article include explicit statements of both the methodological aim and purpose of the empirical study separately?	8	40.0
Does the description of the methods include sufficient detail about the procedures used and present these in a logical order?	7	35.0
Does the submission include a procedural diagram of the data collection and analysis procedures as a figure?	0	0.0
Does the submission include a table, matrix or visual structure, e.g., joint display, to illustrate integration and interpretation of the qualitative and quantitative findings?	2	35.0
Does the discussion articulate how the use of a mixed methods approach advanced a greater understanding of the substantive topic compared to using a monomethod approach?	0	0.0

Table 1 serves as an extensive checklist, delineating various crucial components for assessing the methodological advancements in submissions aimed at propelling the domain of mixed methods research forward. This checklist, adapted from the guidelines outlined by the International Association of Mixed Methods (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2019, p. 416), offers a systematic framework for evaluating the quality and rigor of mixed methods studies. The criteria outlined in this study provide valuable insights into the methodological dimensions of mixed methods research within the ELT field. These insights offer a clearer understanding of areas that require improvement and further development in ELT research. Researchers and practitioners can use these findings as a guide to enhance the quality and effectiveness of mixed methods research in the context of English Language Teaching.

Concerning the title and abstract section, it's worth noting that none of the titles directly convey or sufficiently allude to the article's methodological contributions. However, 55% of the abstracts explicitly mention a methodological challenge or issue within the field that the article will address. Additionally, 15% of the abstracts published indicate the article's methodological or theoretical contributions to mixed methods research.

Shifting the focus to the main text of the articles, 40% exhibit a clear writing style, complete with ample headers and sub-headers, making it easier for readers to follow the flow of arguments. Furthermore, 25% of the articles delve deeper into methodological challenges within their background sections, with 15% providing a rigorous review of related literature and citations. Interestingly, only 5% explicitly state the methodological aim in their background.

In the additional elements section, 50% of the articles elucidate their structure within the background. Moreover, 55% of the articles actively address various methodological aspects within the body of the text. In the discussion section, 10% of the articles synthesize methodological points, while an impressive 60% feature a dedicated 'Contribution to Mixed Methods' section. Additionally, 40% of the articles discuss methodological limitations and 25% offer recommendations for future research inquiries.

These findings underscore areas where improvement is needed in the assessed articles. In particular, there's a need for greater clarity in titles and abstracts regarding methodological contributions. Articles should also focus more on discussing methodological limitations and providing suggestions for future research. Including a 'Contribution to Mixed Methods' section in the discussion could further enhance the visibility of their methodological contributions.

Discussion

Over the past decades, numerous articles have been published in the *Journal of NELTA,* covering various aspects of language teaching and learning, exploring pedagogical approaches, and examining the attitudes of teachers and learners. From 2010 to 2015, Khang (2010) investigated EFL teachers' perceptions of text readability and modification in the Vietnamese context. Joshi (2011) explored Master level students' attitudes toward autonomous learning activities in Nepal. Sijali (2017) evaluated the effectiveness of cooperative learning in improving English language proficiency in Nepal, while Sah (2017) examined perspectives on using the first language as a resource in EFL classrooms among Nepali university teachers and students.

Between 2016 and 2021, there has been a notable shift toward innovative and alternative teaching and learning methods. Adhikari (2017) examined student teachers' views on grammar and communication with their students. Mahmud (2018) explored the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. Le (2018) investigated the use of voice recording to practice speaking skills outside the classroom, and Ullah and Farzana (2018) focused on the impact of technology on teaching and learning English at the secondary level. Adhikari (2019) examined the status of teaching English in secondary schools in West Bengal, India, and Dawadi (2021) reported on the impact of high-stakes tests on Nepali EFL learners. These articles collectively underscore the importance of considering contextual factors in language teaching curricula and addressing test-related anxiety.

A common trend among these articles is the increasing use of mixed-methods research, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively understand language teaching and learning processes. However, there is still untapped potential for more studies in this field that incorporate mixed methods, given its effectiveness in exploring complex phenomena and contextual factors. Additionally, there is a need for more research that delves into learners' experiences, well-being, and perspectives. Globally, mixed methods research has gained significant prominence in recent years. Timans et al. (2019) reported a substantial increase in the normalized share of the term "mixed methods research" in academic databases. Creswell (2012) identified a significant rise in the citation of 'mixed methods' in theses and dissertations.

While initially designed to enhance the quality of submissions to JMMR, the checklist outlined by Fetters and Molina-Azorin (2019) serves as a versatile tool for evaluating and improving any mixed methods research (MMR) article, irrespective of the intended publication venue. Researchers in diverse fields can leverage this checklist to ensure adherence to rigorous standards and encompass key methodological elements (Bazeley, 2015). Journals with a focus on English Language Teaching and related fields stand to benefit significantly from this checklist. It assists authors in crafting titles that effectively convey methodological contributions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Clear abstracts with explicit statements regarding methodological challenges and contributions become even more critical in interdisciplinary contexts like language education (Cheek, 2015).

The checklist's emphasis on structured and clear writing, including headers and subheaders, enhances the readability and coherence of articles (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2008). Additionally, it encourages rigorous literature reviews, essential in disciplines emphasizing methodological innovation (Mertens, 2011). Furthermore, the checklist's call for transparent discussions of methodological limitations and recommendations for future inquiry can enhance the quality of MMR articles published in diverse domains (O'Cathain, 2010). It prompts authors to reflect on broader implications, making research relevant across fields (Onwuegbuzie & Poth, 2016).

The IJMMR checklist transcends disciplinary boundaries, empowering researchers worldwide to produce high-quality MMR articles. Whether published in NELTA or any other journal, scholars can utilize this checklist to enhance the rigor and impact of their mixed methods research.

Low Prevalence of MMR in ELT Research

The analysis of ELT research within the *Journal of NELTA* reveals a notably low prevalence of mixed methods research (MMR) adoption, with only approximately 11% of the 176 reviewed articles incorporating MMR as their chosen research methodology. This finding is remarkable and unexpected, given the recognized benefits and advantages of employing mixed methods in educational research. While MMR offers the potential to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of complex educational phenomena, its limited integration within ELT research in the *Journal of NELTA* raises questions about the factors influencing researchers' preferences for research methodologies.

The observed low prevalence of MMR in ELT research prompts critical inquiry into the factors contributing to this limited adoption. Researchers and stakeholders in the field may benefit from exploring the specific challenges or constraints that impact the choice of research methods. Additionally, opportunities exist for raising awareness and providing resources to facilitate the incorporation of mixed methods in future ELT studies, potentially yielding new insights and enhancing the quality of research within the discipline. This limited incorporation of MMR in ELT research underscores the need for a more robust examination of the barriers and facilitators that shape researchers' methodological choices in language teaching and learning investigations.

Preference for Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

The prevalence of traditional qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in ELT studies published in the NELTA Journal aligns with a broader trend in educational research. Qualitative methods, including interviews, surveys, and content analysis, were frequently used in NELTA Journal articles, often in isolation. Similarly, quantitative approaches involving statistical analysis, experiments, and surveys constituted a significant portion of the research methods employed. This preference for singular qualitative or quantitative methods in the context of NELTA Journal's publications suggests a potential reluctance among ELT researchers to explore mixed methods. The underutilization of mixed methods in NELTA Journal and ELT research generally reflects a methodological conservatism within the field (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). While recent theoretical developments emphasize the importance of adopting research methods that account for the complexity of language development, ELT research in the NELTA Journal predominantly adheres to traditional paradigms. Researchers may need further exposure to the benefits of mixed methods, and the potential for nuanced insights into language teaching and learning processes to encourage a shift toward more diversified research approaches (Granott & Parziale, 2009).

Lack of Adherence to IJMMR Guidelines

Much like rubrics are essential in ensuring the components in students' writing, a checklist such as the one proposed by IJMMR can be beneficial to authors across disciplines, providing valuable guidance and promoting

a cohesive research community (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2019). This analysis brought to light a significant revelation regarding the limited adherence to the International Community of Practice guidelines, as established by IJMMR, within the ELT research community. These guidelines are designed to promote the rigorous application of mixed methods in research, advocating for the integration of qualitative and quantitative components and comprehensive reporting of methodological details. However, it appears that many ELT researchers may not be fully aligned with these guidelines, potentially due to a sense of comfort with traditional research approaches. This discrepancy underscores the need for additional training and awareness within the ELT community regarding the benefits and practicalities of MMR. Moreover, a lack of exposure to successful MMR studies within the ELT field could deter researchers from adopting this methodology.

In recognizing this potential dilemma faced by both authors and readers within the ELT research community, we propose the introduction of a checklist that aligns with established MMR guidelines. Rather than imposing restrictions, this checklist serves as a supportive tool, aiding authors in enhancing the rigor and quality of their research articles. The guidelines practiced within the MMR community have demonstrated their effectiveness in elevating research standards. By extending these guidelines to the ELT community, we aim to foster collaboration, enrich methodological diversity, and contribute to a deeper understanding of language teaching and learning processes. Embracing such guidelines could potentially enhance research quality and influences future researchers, promoting a culture of methodological rigor and collaboration within the ELT research community (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

Potential Risks and Limitations

Implementing a structured checklist like the one proposed in this study could raise concerns within the NELTA journal and the broader ELT community. There's a potential risk of imposing rigid structures that might stifle the creative expression of authors submitting papers (Bazeley, 2015). Authors may fear losing the opportunity to present innovative methodological contributions that need to fit into predefined categories neatly. However, it is essential to note that the checklist intends to guide and enhance methodological rigor rather than becoming a barrier to novel ideas. Context matters and the checklist's applicability to the NELTA journal should be considered, considering the diverse research approaches in ELT (Cheek, 2015). While this research focuses on mixed methods, it's crucial to acknowledge that other research methods also have their place within the ELT community. This study does not aim to prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach but instead suggests a valuable tool for those who find it beneficial while recognizing the diversity of research practices and constraints faced by researchers in ELT.

Conclusion

The analysis highlighted a significant gap in meeting the International Community of Practice of Mixed Methods Research's criteria within the *Journal of NELTA* publications from 2009 to 2022. The recent introduction of the checklist in 2019 presents an encouraging opportunity for future researchers like yourselves to address the observed gap. By embracing the recommendations of

the international mixed methods research community, the full potential of mixed methods research in English language teaching and learning can be realized, leading to significant advancements in knowledge. Valuable contributions by the authors to the ELT are pivotal in promoting methodological rigor and innovation within the field. Throughout the review, notable challenges emerged, such as inadequate abstract summaries and incoherent article presentations with weak headings, affecting overall argument strength. Methodological complexities and key points could have been better addressed with visual aids like figures. Synthesizing methodological issues in the discussion to support the aim needed improvement, along with specific subsections discussing method contributions and limitations. Addressing these challenges and integrating the recommendations proposed by the international mixed methods research community will undoubtedly bolster the quality and rigor of future mixed methods research studies in English language teaching and learning. Acknowledging its limitations, this study lays the groundwork for further research to enhance mixed methods research practices in ELT.

Implications

Researchers and Authors

To elevate the caliber and impact of forthcoming ELT research articles employing the mixed methods research approach, authors have the opportunity to refine various elements. Primarily, incorporating essential methodological details into article titles is recommended. Furthermore, abstracts have the potential to transparently outline methodological challenges and contributions. Achieving alignment between abstracts and background sections, supported by thorough literature reviews in the latter, contributes to a coherent structure. Authors may employ clear writing styles, utilizing appropriate headers and sub-headers for systematic organization, effectively encapsulating pivotal points within sections. Visual aids like illustrations or figures can elucidate intricate study components. Synthesizing methodological insights within the discussion section substantiates the study's objectives. The incorporation of dedicated subsections can elaborate on contributions and methodological limitations.

Moreover, the endeavor to enhance the caliber and impact of mixed methods research articles necessitates addressing specific research methodology dimensions. Initiate titles with essential research methodology specifics to ensure upfront clarity. When abstracts overtly delineate methodological challenges and contributions, they foster reader comprehension of the research's core facets and significance. Maintaining coherence between abstracts and background sections sustains overall consistency.

Editors and Reviewers of Journals

Based on the research trends analyzed in this report, it is suggested that journal editors and reviewers could benefit from engaging in specialized orientation programs. These programs, centered on the effective implementation and standardization of MMR, have the potential to deepen their understanding of MMR's complex and rigorous nature. Furthermore, such training could help standardize the application of these methods across various articles. While maintaining high methodological standards is crucial, there is also a need to be receptive to innovative and creative research methods. A balanced approach that blends the established rigor of MMR with emerging methodological

innovations could significantly enrich the journal's academic contributions. Such an alignment would not only bolster the journal's academic impact but also ensure its continued relevance in the face of evolving global research trends.

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Teaching Pronunciation at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

Sharmin Siddique

Abstract

Pronunciation is the way to give a word an oral or aural shape which is measured as one of the most significant skills of language. For non-native speakers, English pronunciation is considered one of the most tough problems. At the same time, in Bangladesh, teaching English pronunciation is measured one of the most difficult parts of ELT. This paper focuses on the challenges confronted by English teachers at the tertiary level to teach pronunciation. This research also tries to focus on the teaching strategies for teaching pronunciation. For collecting data, a survey was conducted and a set of questionnaires was used for teachers. In this survey, 22 English language and literature teachers from various universities took part. Finally, some contextual solutions have been suggested to solve problems of teaching pronunciation in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: *Pronunciation, tertiary level teaching challenges, teaching strategies.*

Introduction

The English language is known as a global lingua franca which is growing into gradually significant all over the world (Panggabean, 2015). Pronunciation is considered as a fundamental component of communicative ability. Moreover, successful communication takes place only through correct pronunciation (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Besides, for second language learning, pronunciation is measured as an integrated and integral element (Maniruzzaman, 2008). One of the elementary requirements of learners' competence is intelligible pronunciation that is also considered one of the most significant characteristics of language instruction. Fraser (2000) mentions that "With good pronunciation, a speaker is intelligible despite other errors; with poor pronunciation, understanding a speaker will be very difficult, despite accuracy in other areas" (p. 7). In Bangladesh, English stands as a second language; thus, it is not expected that native-like speaking will be achieved by a non-native speaker. Still, non-native speakers of Bangladesh should be looked forward to produce comprehensible pronunciation (Howlader, 2011). However, most of the tertiary EFL learners do not have the proper sense of pronouncing English correctly. Thus, for English teachers, teaching correct pronunciation is also problematic.

Problem Statement

In communicative language teaching, all four language skills: reading, writing. Speaking and listening are equally important. Among the four skills of the English language, speaking is the most neglected one in Bangladesh and inside and outside the classroom in Bangladesh this is a less practised. In this regard Tehreen (2015) argued:

> *At primary (class 1-5), secondary (class 6-10) and higher secondary level (class 11-12), speaking and listening have never been the focus to be taught and tested. Therefore, emphasis on pronunciation never comes explicitly or implicitly at these levels. Consequently, teachers at the tertiary level find it challenging while dealing with these students who have no experience in practising speaking and listening (p. 9).*

Literature Review

The Importance of Teaching English Pronunciation

Pronunciation plays a significant role in ELT in Bangladesh. In this regard, Howlader (2011) says "Foreign learners studying in English-speaking countries, international businesspeople, diplomats, immigrants, tourist guides, and EFL/ESL teachers teaching in different countries need a high level of intelligible pronunciation" (p. 274). In the current digital world, one must perform a lot of presentations with intelligibility of pronunciation to deliver the message correctly (Ahasan, 2016). People are often judged by the way they speak, thus, learners with poor pronunciation skill could be measured as incompetent, uneducated, or lacking in knowledge. Besides, good language skills can be masked by poor pronunciation, learners can be condemned to less than their deserved social, academic, and work development (Barman & Basu,2013).

English has an internationally accepted standard form of pronunciation which is traditionally called the King's or Queen's English or BBC English that is also referred to as RP (Received Pronunciation). Australian or US standard English may be slightly different (Barman & Basu,2013). Nonetheless, apart from Australia and the USA, English is now prominently used in many other countries of the world. At present, English consists of an unlimited number of accents or varieties. Although, some specific models of pronunciation were recommended by many linguists in the past, at present, comprehensibility and intelligibility are given much focus rather than "perfect pronunciation". As a matter of fact, the near-native pronunciation is nearly unachievable for many ESL learners in the world (Tehreen,2015).

Challenges of Teaching Pronunciation

Teaching reading, writing, listening, and to some extent, general oral skills are more comfortable to teachers but in the case of teaching pronunciation, the elementary knowledge of articulatory phonetics are lacked by them (Maniruzzaman,2008). According to Harmer (2001), to the importance of English pronunciation much attention is not paid by many teachers. Instead of emphasizing teaching pronunciation, they pay more attention to teaching vocabulary and grammar. In teaching pronunciation in Bangladesh, teachers face a lot of challenges. Some of them have been discussed in the following points.

Interference of Native Language

According to Mostafa (2010), in pronouncing certain phonemes of English, it is very natural to face problems for Bangladeshi learners. The reason is Bangla is a syllable-timed language, on the other hand, English is a stressed-timed language. It has been identified that; finding two languages with identical sound patterns is very occasional. Thus, it is very tough to teach students the sound patterns of the target language(L2) by the teachers of foreign languages. As a matter of fact, each language possesses its own characteristics and interrelated mouth positions. In the case of pronouncing L2, students attempt to produce the sound keeping their mouths formed and their tongues positioned like similar sounds in their native language. In English, length distinguishes vowel sounds of /i: i, ə: ə, u: u/. Bengali speakers do not distinguish between long and short vowels. For instance, Bengali speakers pronounce /ful / and /fu: l/ in the same way. On the other hand, if the sound patterns have similarities with the L2, pronunciation gets easier (Barman & Basu, 2013).

For Bengali speakers, pronouncing different sounds of the English language is problematic. For example, there is no equivalent of the Bengali /o/ sound in English. Thus, the English diphthong /əʊ/is usually pronounced by the Bengali speakers as Bengali /o/ (Kabir et al., 2011).

In the Bengali language, there are eighteen diphthongs which are shorter than eight English diphthongs. Thus, Bangladeshi learners cannot utter English diphthongs with proper length.

Interference of Dialects

Interference of dialects also creates barriers to pronunciation learning. In Bangladesh, by non-native English speakers, various local dialects with different pronunciations and intonation are used. For the interference of local pronunciation, Bengali speakers from diverse local backgrounds pronounce words with dialects. For example, the people of Barisal often make mistakes in pronouncing words beginning with 'B' and 'V', both in English and Bengali. For Example: They pronounce 'bery good' instead of 'very good'. Again, In the Noakhali dialect, a fricative sound like English /f/ substitutes the bilabial plosive /p/ . For example, They pronounce 'fious' instead of 'pious', 'fure' instead of 'pure'. At the same time, in Chittagong and Sylhet the unvoiced velar aspirated plosive /kh/ is pronounced as a fricative sound. (Hoque,2010). For example, they pronounce 'khite' instead of pronouncing 'kite', 'khidney' instead of 'kidney' and so on.

Hearing Problem

Listening and speaking are interrelated. A good listener is a good speaker. If the listeners cannot hear English well, they do not understand it easily, and they are cut off from conversation. Thus, they cannot pronounce some sounds in English. For instance, there is no equivalent of /o/ in English. Therefore, Bengali speakers generally pronounce Bengali/o/ in the place of English Diphthong/ (Hasan, 1997).

Overlooking the Significance of Incorporating Teaching Pronunciation by the Curriculum / Syllabus Designer

The curriculum/ syllabus designer has knowingly or unconsciously overlooked the

exclusion of EFL pronunciation from the curriculum/ syllabus. Thus, the curriculum or syllabus designer's qualifications, expertise, and integrity could be questioned (Maniruzzaman, 2008). The correlated sub-skills of pronunciation: listening skill and speaking skill get very little importance in the syllabus and curriculum which is the major cause behind the challenge of teaching pronunciation (Howlader, 2011). Thus, in the education system of Bangladesh speaking, listening, and pronunciation are always getting ignored in the education system of Bangladesh (Haque & Baki, 2012).

Fossilization

While teaching pronunciation, some teachers face the problem of fossilization. Fossilization occurs when learners' progress is stuck at a point, and it becomes difficult to make further progress. In this case, Tehreen (2015) states that the influence of local accents affects learners' English pronunciation. As a result, learners develop wrong pronunciation practice for a long time. For example, students pronounce finger as /finjər/ not /finggər/ even after knowing that /finjər/ is wrong. It is very difficult for them to change their habit (Grandyna, 2018).

Lack of Teacher Training

Most of the time, EFL/ESL teachers are inadequately trained in teaching pronunciation pedagogy which reduces their confidence. According to Derwing and Munro (2015, p. 390) "teachers may develop some teaching strategies that actually have little or no value or that may be counterproductive". In the case of teaching EFL pronunciation, most teachers do not know appropriate strategies and techniques to meet specific problems. According to Baker (2011), in order to become resourceful pronunciation instructors a single pronunciation training course may have a great impact that enhances teachers' knowledge and self-confidence.

Age Factor

According to Lenneberg's (1967), (as cited in Habib 2011). after the critical period hypothesis (CPH) which is up to the age of 12, attaining total mastery of a second language gets difficult, specifically pronunciation. Second learners start to lose their capability to attain native-like pronunciation after puberty (Barman & Basu, 2013). According to Lenneberg's (1967), (as cited in Habib 2011), Critical Period Hypothesis, adults are not capable to attain native-like fluency. This hypothesis is strengthened by the Communicative Language Teaching methodology. Therefore, the age factor becomes a very challenging task for the teachers to teach pronunciation.

Strategies to Solve Pronunciation Problems

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is an easy and common strategy for EFL learners to identify mistakes in pronunciation and develop intelligible pronunciation. A writing piece including tough sounds for Bengali learners is a good source as material (Ali, 2019). Teachers can ask the students to focus on stress, timing, and intonation. Teachers may give students different genres like, speeches, poems, plays, or dialogues for practicing pronunciation. After hearing the general mistakes in the students' pronunciation, oral corrective feedback can be given by the teachers, in order to progress EFL learners' pronunciation. Teachers can

utter the pronunciation correctly and ask the students to pronounce the mispronounced words repeatedly.

Using Dictionaries and Smartphones

Using dictionaries helps students to check the accurate pronunciation if they know phonetic transcription. By using this strategy, students see the visual shape of pronunciation (Grandyna, 2018). Besides, by using smartphones tertiary level students can be allowed to listen and check their pronunciation by downloading numerous software (BoldVoice: Learn Pronunciation. ELSA Speak, Say it: English Pronunciation, English Pronunciation) on their smartphones (Tehereen, 2015).

Communication Activities

Teachers can design communication tasks and activities for tertiary EFL learners, for example, dialogue, situational conversations, role play, and debate according to their linguistic level. Rehearsing drama and debate gives learners a varied scope to practice and correct pronunciation (Tahereen,2015).

Computer Assisted Language Learning

Computer Assisted Language Learning or CALL permits learners to listen their own pronunciation to identify errors and mistakes and identify segmental and suprasegmental graphic representations. CALL also aids the learners in studying at their own pace and permits the instructors to monitor learners' improvement in EFL pronunciation. Furthermore, teachers can visually display speech patterns to teach intonation, stress, and phonemes to learners (Maniruzzaman, 2008). Teachers can also suggest students' pronunciation checking software where devices and the internet are available (Tahereen, 2015).

Visual Aids

isual aids enhance teachers' report of how sounds are shaped by audio-visual aids for example: sound-color charts, Field wall charts, rods, pictures, mirrors, props, realia etc. Besides, to learn pronunciation, students can watch videos which also help them to learn body language and gestures. Students can watch movies with subtitles to learn pronunciation. Students can also watch YouTube to serve this purpose (Barman and Basu,2013).

Working with Sounds and Spellings

According to Ur (1991), teachers can dictate the words with similar spelling problems of complete sentences. Teachers can also have a set of pairs of words differ from each other. Moreover, teachers can show the students the phonemic chart to highlight the links between the alphabetical spelling of words with pronunciation.

Methodology

In order to collect data, this research uses a survey method. The research is a mixed study being a combination of qualitative and quantitative. Therefore, a mixed method (both qualitative and quantitative) has been employed. Primary and secondary data have been collected to conduct the study. In order to collect primary data , a questionnaire survey has been adopted. The source of secondary data will be research publications, journals, articles, thesis, books etc. Three private

universities (Stamford University Bangladesh, East West University, and Green University Bangladesh) have been selected for the survey. After analysing the data, the responses have been calculated in percentages. The aim of the research is to recognize the problems challenged by teachers with students teaching pronunciation. This study also intends to identify some solutions to solve pronunciation problems.

Data Collection Methods and Tools

For collecting data, a set of questionnaires has been prepared for teachers. The questionnaires for teachers contain 4 fixed alternatives and one open-ended question. In the open-ended question, the teachers have been requested to deliver their valuable recommendations. After the survey results have been collected, the calculated responses are converted into percentages and shown in a table.

The Respondents

In order to conduct the questionnaire survey, twenty-two undergraduate teachers from the Department of English of Stamford University Bangladesh, East West University, and Green University Bangladesh were randomly selected.

Instruments

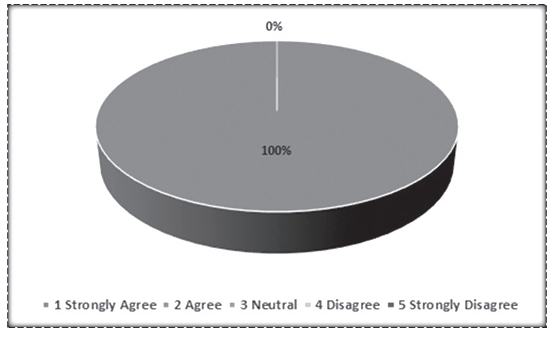
To collect quantitative data, a questionnaire methodology has been implemented for the teachers. The questionnaire has been intended for the teachers and contains 4 fixed alternate questions to elicit teaching pronunciation at the Tertiary Level in Bangladesh and one open-ended question where teachers are requested to provide their valuable remarks and recommendations. Two tables a few pie charts and bar charts have been used to explain the collected data.

Findings

The primary purpose of the study is to observe the responses from the questionnaire designed for teachers.

The first question is set to determine whether tertiary-level students face problems in pronouncing English words correctly. In reply, it has been found that 100% (22) of teachers think that tertiary-level students face problems while pronouncing English words correctly.

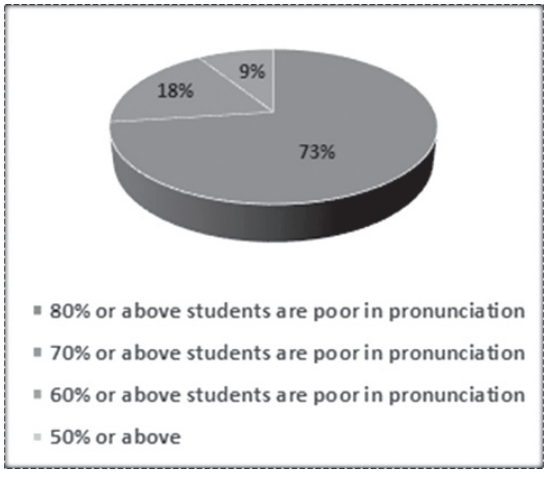
Figure 1: *Whether tertiary level students face problems in pronouncing English words correctly.*



The second question is set to find out if the percentage of students in the class are really poor in pronunciation. In reply, it has been identified that 72.73% (16) teachers have opined that 80% or above students are poor in pronunciation, 18.18% (4) teachers have replied that 70% or above students are poor in pronunciation, and 9.09% (2) teachers think that 60% or above students are poor in pronunciation.

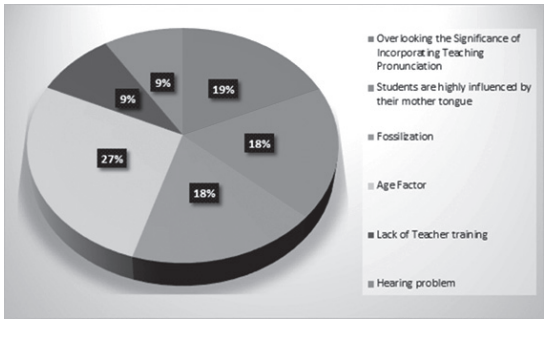
Figure 2: *The percentage of students in the class with really poor pronunciation*

In the third question the teachers are inquires to know what the problems they face in teaching pronunciation. In reply it has been



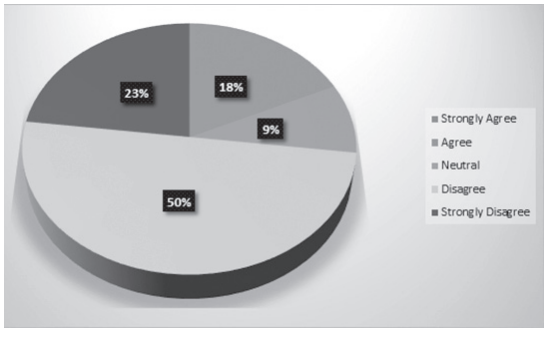
identified that 18.18%(4) teachers think that overlooking the significance of incorporating teaching pronunciation by the Curriculum / Syllabus Designer, 18.18% (4) teachers have selected that students are highly influenced by their mother tongue, 18.18%(4) teachers have opined that fossilization,27.27%(6) teachers have identified that age factor,9.09% (2)teachers have replied that lack of teacher training, 9.09%(2) teachers have identified that hearing problem is the barriers teachers face in teaching pronunciation.

Figure 3: *Problems faced by the teachers in teaching pronunciation*



The following question is prepared to know whether teachers get enough logistic support for teaching pronunciation. In reply, 18.18% (4) teachers have agreed,9.09% (2) teachers have remained neutral,50% (11) teachers have disagreed, and (22.72%)5 teachers have strongly disagreed about getting enough logistic support for teaching pronunciation.

Figure 4: *Whether teachers get enough logistic support for teaching pronunciation*



The last question is asked to get the valuable suggestions of tertiary teachers to improve the English pronunciation of Tertiary students in Bangladesh. In reply, few teachers have replied that students require to practice English consonants and vowel sounds properly. Besides, students need to learn when they have to put stress on words. Moreover, students have to listen to Native English speakers' conversations through audio, video, news, and movies. One teacher has suggested teaching learners' vocabulary and grammar. A number of teachers have said to incorporate teaching pronunciation in the curriculum and enable teachers to acquire the necessary skills in teaching pronunciation. Besides, some teachers have suggested emphasizing the usage of technology in teaching pronunciation. Few teachers have suggested using the facility of the language centre to improve students' pronunciation. Some teachers have recommended that students enact dramas and

practice more pronunciation sessions. One teacher has suggested that both the teachers and students need to create an English-speaking environment to enhance the English-speaking environment. Another teacher has opined that students need to practice English consonants and vowel sounds and when stress should be given to words.

The following table shows the questions asked to the teachers and their responses:

Question Topic	Responses				
1. Whether tertiary-level students face problems in pronouncing English words correctly	Yes 100%		No 0%		
2. The percentage of students in the class really poor in pronunciation	80% or above students are poor in pronunciation 73%		70% or above students are poor in pronunciation 18%	60% or above students are poor in pronunciation 9%	
3. Problems faced by the teachers in teaching pronunciation	overlooking the significance of incorporating teaching pronunciation by the Curriculum / Syllabus Designer 18%	students are highly influenced by their mother tongue 18%	Age factor 27% Fossilization 18%	Lack of teacher training 9%	Hearing problem 9%
4. Whether teachers get enough logistic support for teaching pronunciation	Agree 18%	Neutral 9%	Disagree 50%	Strongly Disagree 23%	

Recommendations

Based on the findings, and the open-ended question designed for the teachers, the next recommendations can be suggested. The implementation of these recommendations may help to bring about some optimistic changes while teaching pronunciation at the tertiary level in Bangladesh.

Teaching pronunciation in the curriculum should be incorporated. At the same time, teachers should be enabled to acquire the necessary skills in teaching pronunciation. Teacher training is essential to teacher development. In Bangladesh, our teachers are rarely trained in teaching, let alone pronunciation. Conditions in the rural and remote areas are terrible.

While teaching a particular topic, teachers can spend a few extra minutes teaching pronunciation with difficult vocabulary. Students should practice the sound with the teachers repeatedly to correct the pronunciation.

Teachers should pronounce the sound clearly and slowly so that all the students comprehend the articulation. If required, teachers have to repeat the pronunciation several times.

Teachers should primarily identify the needs and problems of the students. Then, based on the requirements of the students, teachers should provide appropriate learning materials to help them to recover students' pronunciation problems.

Students need to practice English consonants and vowel sounds properly. Simultaneously, students need to learn when to give stress on words. In order to develop this practice students, have to listen to Native English speakers' conversations through audio, video, and movies.

There should be enough logistic support given to the teachers to operate the classes smoothly. Audio and visual technology should be incorporated into teaching pronunciation. At the same time, more technological equipment should be used in the classroom.

In order to improve speaking skills, teachers should focus on teaching slow speech with correct English pronunciation. Moreover, more importance should be given to teaching pronunciation by giving proper attention to phonetics. In order to improve English pronunciation, all the universities should have the facility of a language centre to improve students' pronunciation.

Teachers should engage the students in sufficient pronunciation tasks and activities. More pronunciation practice can be incorporated in the classroom. Teachers should identify the pronunciation problems and correct them.

Conclusion

This research tries to find out the difficulties teachers experience in teaching pronunciation at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. It also aims to identify some remedial measures and feedback to solve pronunciation problems. While teaching pronunciation, teachers should give more emphasis on selecting appropriate teaching materials, giving required directions, and creating consciousness among the learners about speech production. All the educational stakeholders- teachers, students, syllabus designers, material developers, and education policymakers should deliberately work together to solve the problems with pronunciation. Furthermore, in teaching pronunciation, a teacher must perform the role of a guide and facilitator in order to make students involved.

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Lessons Learned in Establishing a University Global Course

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Abstract

This paper outlines the creation, implementation, and subsequent development of a Global Leadership course at a national university in Japan. In 2014, our university in central Japan, with the encouragement of Japan's Ministry of Education, established a Global Leadership course for elite students. The purpose was to foster leadership and develop relations with other Asian countries using English. Students accepted into the program take supplementary English classes and participate in a foreign internship. The application was open to all matriculated graduates. Since the establishment of the Global Course, adjustments have been made to improve the application procedure, academic rigor, and assessment. The authors address the adaptations that have been made to improve the Global Course program, particularly the application process and method of selection as well as some changes made to the curriculum.

Keywords: *global leadership, intercultural communication, language proficiency, motivation.*

Introduction

In 2014, our university was encouraged to create a Global Leadership course by the Japanese Ministry of Education. The program involves supplementary classes including courses in English culminating in an overseas internship. In the first year, 15 Japanese students were selected to take these courses along with foreign students from China, Vietnam, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and Taiwan. Among many objectives, the university hoped that these students would develop intercultural communication skills and a deeper knowledge of each other's cultures. For this paper, the English instructors who have been with the program since its inception will reflect on the development of the program with a focus on the English language component. The challenges of the selection process, administrative obstacles, and the presentation and academic writing components of the course will be examined in more detail. Finally, there will be a reflection on the experience, a look at the future of the program, and some advice concerning starting a global course.

There was a basic agreement among Global Course committee members about what courses should entail and what type of students to admit. Everyone agreed the ideal candidates should have motivation, maturity, and English ability. Questions remained about how to evaluate candidates while keeping the procedure open to

all students. A secondary issue was the content and objectives of the new English courses.

It was readily apparent to the committee members that this was a long-term project and that changes and adjustments would have to be made. As Graves (2006, 2007) posits, curriculum, and course design are dynamic. The English instructors knew that for this course to improve some sort of monitoring was necessary. We were aware that embarking on a new course would inevitably entail encountering errors. As English language educators, our main duties revolved around two key aspects: the careful selection of students and the creation and maintenance of the English curriculum. Given the uncertain proficiency levels of the students, we found it necessary to make ongoing adjustments as the course progressed.

Employing Markee's (1997) linkage model, we considered bottom–up feedback from our students, consultation with other instructors, and our own observations and experiences to help make adjustments to the course but remain committed to the general principles set by the university. This practical approach provided a useful framework to help guide the changes needed to improve the course.

The Selection Process

The initial major challenge was determining the selection process for the Japanese students. All incoming first-year students in the Faculty of Economics were eligible to apply. Shortly after the students were enrolled, they were sent an explanation of the program and were offered an introduction orientation conducted bilingually by the Dean of the Faculty of Economics. Surprisingly over one hundred students applied and attended the orientation in each of the first two years of the program.

The selection process was complicated by the fact that there were only a few days before the start of the semester to screen the would-be participants. The program was unable to rely on traditional methods of evaluation (Turner & Phillips, 2007) since the students would be evaluated in both Japanese and English. The applicants were asked to write essays in Japanese to explain why they should be considered for the Global Course. Later, group interviews were conducted in both English and Japanese and each faculty member evaluated the students based on their responses. As there were over 100 applicants, it was decided to conduct interviews in groups of five students at a time. In the end, 15 students were selected for the initial cohort of students after much deliberation as each faculty member had different criteria for selection. Of less debate were the classes to be conducted in English. In the first year, students were to take Essay Writing I and II and Presentation I and II. In the second year, those same students would take Academic Writing I and II and Modern Presentation and Debate.

The results after the first year were mixed. The English proficiency level of the students varied greatly. There were also issues with motivation and life-balance choices. In the end, four students dropped out of the course. While the true reasons for dropping the course will never be known, three of the students claimed they were confused or dissatisfied with foreign internship arrangements.

The following year, some changes were made in the selection process. First, the course and its additional workload were explained in greater detail. Second, a timed English essay writing activity was introduced. Essay writing has been known as an accurate indicator of English proficiency (Jacobs et al., 1981). From over 100 essays, readers chose the best 30, and those candidates were interviewed.

This in turn provided more time to screen the applicants during the interview process. In general, the committee thought that this helped us select the most suitable and qualified students. There were fewer dropouts, and the academic performance of the students was noticeably better.

Selection has evolved since then. One major change was to have the selection of the students occur after the first semester. The idea was that instructors would be more familiar with the students from working with them in their introductory English classes and we could recommend outstanding students to apply for the program. Unfortunately, there were negative results from this decision. In earlier years, there was a larger pool of applicants, but after this change was made, the number of initial applicants was reduced by roughly half. We theorized that students had gotten into a regular routine in their college lives meaning that they had become busy with after-school activities, part-time jobs, and joining school clubs and circles. Many students did not wish to make their lives significantly busier. Despite this, the performance level of the course members remained high (possibly due to strong motivation and a better understanding of what was expected of them).

Also, because the course now starts in the second semester, students would get three semesters of G-Course English coursework instead of four. This is a 25% cut in classroom time. As a result, a debate course and a writing course were dropped. To overcome the lost classroom time, the English instructors decided to increase the workload in the remaining classes to compensate for the hours lost due to the cuts.

Further changes occurred in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interview portion of the application process was halted. Instead, students wrote essays in Japanese and took the CASEC test. CASEC is a standardized English language proficiency test that gives an equivalent TOEIC score. Fortunately, we screened and selected students to continue the Global Course. We repeated this process for the selection in 2021, again due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Presentation Classes

There have been some changes to the content of the presentation component of the courses. Initially, the courses were set up to have the students advance from giving standard PowerPoint-style presentations to more modern dynamic presentations. In Presentation II and Modern Presentation, students were asked to give presentations on self-selected topics. The idea was to prepare them for the Debate class in the final semester of the course. Students researched and presented on current events or other "hot topics" in the news. They were encouraged to become more knowledgeable about the topics they would later be asked to debate. With the debate course eliminated, students were asked to give response presentations to be exposed to more than one view on any given topic. In addition, the amount of homework was increased. Students were now asked to write summaries and be prepared to talk about 45 TED Talks instead of 30. While some students balked at the increase, others exceeded expectations and did more than was required as they began to recognize the benefits of this task.

The most significant change was the addition of another presentation instructor. The addition of another teacher allowed for the class to be split in half which therefore allowed more time for students to present. As a bonus, the teacher who joined the course was a TED Talk veteran. His skills as a public speaker

added another voice to provide feedback and advice. Another significant change is that some students now have opportunities to give presentations outside the classroom. In the past two years, selected students from the course have given presentations to wider audiences, mostly at regularly held PechaKucha events hosted by another university in Japan. In addition, Global Course students have had the opportunity to volunteer at a TED Talk event and learn more presentation skills firsthand.

Essay Writing and Academic Writing Classes

Writing has evolved since the first year of the Global Course in 2014. Students are doing more and longer essays. The classes have added more communicative activities, such as peer review and group writing activities. Reading skills are also a focus. Intensive reading of newspaper articles and summarizing, explaining, and reporting are also now part of the essay writing courses. Various genres of essays are explored and practiced. Special emphasis is placed on the persuasive essay, including refutations and concessions. Some of these activities share the content taught in the presentation classes. Timed writings of ten minutes on various topics are important to have students process the topic in English and focus on content and speed over form for these imperfect writings. In response to student needs, the writing courses include some essay writing in the style of the TOEFL and IELTS standardized tests. Most of the Global Course students take these tests in order to apply to programs abroad.

Additional Challenges

There have been several other challenges that we still must continue to address. These include but are not limited to faculty member changes, number of students, dropout/ failure rate, and also the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Retirement, job transfers, and new hires have resulted in a regular change in the makeup of the Global Course committee members. With each change comes a different set of ideas. This has caused some minor differences in opinion and productive debate. About half the original members have been involved from the beginning (including the authors of this paper). Some of the core economics and business classes taught at the university are now taught in English, so new members have been recruited from faculty who have overseas experience and are essentially bilingual.

Another problem we are monitoring is the dropout/ failure rate. Almost every year since the course was established, at least one student has dropped out or failed to meet the requirements of the program. When we switched to a second-semester start, we thought this would help us separate the students who have difficulty living alone, adapting to university life, or are struggling academically. Unfortunately, even after the change, other problems arose. While most of the Global Students become close friends and spend time together, students sometimes isolate themselves. This could be for a myriad of reasons, but ultimately, we would like to see a 100% success rate.

Conclusion

After examining some of the challenges and adaptations made to the university's Global Course, the overall results are positive. Many of the students who have completed the Global Course have been very successful. Almost all the students have either studied abroad and/or

experienced overseas internships. Many have gone on to attend graduate schools including the London School of Economics and UC-Berkley. Some graduates have been employed by top global corporations, while others have gone into public service. For example, two G-Course students have been hired by JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), which is one of the most competitive jobs to acquire. We recognize the need to do more detailed qualitative research on the students who have completed the course. The success of our students has helped raise the profile of the course as well as the university. Just as importantly, the students have made friends from around the world and have indeed become more globally aware, achieving one of the main objectives of the program.

Three megatrends that will increase the demand for global leaders have been identified by Gundling et al. (2011). These trends include the significant and ongoing population growth in developing countries, shifts in GDP between developing and developed countries, and the rapid urbanization occurring in Africa and Asia. Meeting this demand is crucial, and the college classroom serves as an excellent starting point, considering that language acquisition and intercultural understanding require a significant amount of time. We would strongly encourage other universities to offer a Global Course. Such a program has the potential to attract more ambitious, potential global leaders. It also improves the reputation of the university, as the high-achieving students boost the profile of the university within the community, with employers, and with other universities. It takes a committed effort from faculty and staff as well as extra work for instructors, but the rewards and satisfaction can make that effort worthwhile for students and faculty.

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Language Learning and Teaching in Digital Environment

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Abstract:

The impetus for this conceptual article was derived from the panel discussion on "Language Learning and Teaching in Digital Environment" in the 27th NELTA International Conference 2023 and the authors' reflections on their experiences as teachers and teacher educators in Indonesia, particularly after the unprecedented lock-down. The recent school closure has offered lessons learned on the need for digital pedagogy and led to the new awareness of the challenges and opportunities in the inevitable digital environment. This article discusses some of the major contextual changes and the future directions of digital pedagogy for language learning

Keywords: *hybrid learning; blended learning; student engagement; digital literacy; TPACK; community of inquiry; future directions*

Introduction

The sudden lock-down from the beginning of 2020 through 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic compelled all educational institutions to enact the emergency remote teaching (ERT) with hardly any preparation in terms of internet infrastructure, teacher technological capability, and home situation to welcome the learning-from-home mode. Since then, teachers have adapted to the new mode and the pandemic has accelerated the use of technology in language learning. Teachers are using digital tools such as video conferencing software, learning management systems, and digital learning resources to deliver instruction and facilitate learning (Barry et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021; Silva et al, 2022). Even when schools have resumed the onsite learning, some of the skills and tools teachers and students employed during the emergency remote teaching (ERT) have been retained and used to enrich the language learning in the classrooms (Lie et al., in press). Learning in schools has had a big shift after the COVID 19 pandemic. The pandemic has brought about significant changes in language learning and digital pedagogy in schools and universities across the world. This article focuses on some of the major contextual changes: the use of hybrid or blended learning, new challenges for teachers and students, and a need for digital literacy. The article concludes with the future directions of digital pedagogy for language learning

Readiness for Hybrid and Blended Learning

With the closure of schools and universities due to the pandemic, there has been a massive shift towards emergency remote learning. Teachers and students have had to adapt to new digital tools and technologies for teaching and learning. In the case of teachers, their skill at integrating technology into teaching is commonly measured by the TPACK (Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Briefly put, the framework gauges teachers' competence in 7 (seven) subdomains, namely Technological Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK), Content Knowledge (CK), as well as the resulting intersections of Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK), Technological Content Knowledge (TCK), Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), and Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK).

A case study of 18 teachers from different regions in Indonesia (Lie et al., 2020) revealed that irrespective of the teacher participants' previous experience with technology, the majority of them were able to quickly improve their Technological Knowledge (TK). This study identified an interaction between five interrelated factors of online learning processes and five engagement levels. These five factors consist of students, teachers' prior experience with online learning, technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and the support system. The first one is the students factor while the last one is support system including internet data plan for teachers. The other three factors relate to teachers: prior exposure, technological knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. All five factors affect the online learning engagement and reinforce one another either positively or negatively. Given the growing awareness of the inadequacy of their remote teaching delivery, the study found that teachers may need to relearn their knowledge of pedagogical approaches, strategies, and methods, classroom management, and assessment, and re-adapt their PK in an effort to integrate technology with pedagogy and content knowledge, thereby making their teaching process more effective.

Two years after the sudden shift to remote learning, teachers in the previous study (Lie, et al., 2020) were re-contacted and invited to participate in a longitudinal case study aiming to explore teachers' progression and stagnation in their TPACK appropriation levels of online learning engagement against the five degrees of appropriation (Grossman et al., 1999). The recent study (Lie et al., in press) found that some teachers had, within a twenty-month period of ERT, appropriated their TPACK while some were still striving to transform their role. In addition, teachers demonstrated different levels of progression and readiness for hybrid or blended learning and of sustaining their TPACK skills. Progression is not narrowly measured by the number of technological tools they have used but by how they synergized the technology use with their contextual learning environments to support their pedagogy and content mastery. Teachers who showed growth had a consistent perception of their own abilities on both the cognitive and affective sides of incorporating technology into their classrooms. According to their students' feedback and the researchers' observations of their online classes, they implemented this optimistic attitude into their approaches for teaching online. Furthermore, compared to teachers who stayed at the same level, these teachers showed greater readiness to participate in hybrid learning. In short, teachers' development is correlated

with their capacity to maintain their TPACK competencies in hybrid learning.

Furthermore, another study involving 137 language (English and Bahasa Indonesia) teachers from various parts of Indonesia revealed that the teachers considered themselves to improve in all aspects of the TPACK domains after about a year of online learning. The quantitative data exhibited the greatest rise in the Technological Knowledge (TK) domain and the smallest in the Content Knowledge (CK). Besides, the participants were also asked to rate themselves in the skills of incorporating critical thinking into their classes. As mandated by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, teachers are expected to instill critical thinking as embodied by the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), understood as the students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and create in the subject of the course (Krathwohl, 2002). In this study, the teachers perceived a rise in their HOTS after implementing online learning), and the interview result manifested their general belief that the TPACK skill is instrumental in infusing HOTS in their lessons. (Gozali et al., 2023)

New Challenges for Teachers and Students

The shift to language learning in digital environment has brought new challenges for both teachers and students. Digital pedagogy involves the use of technology and digital tools to support teaching and learning. Online learning has brought more flexibility in learning. Teachers can exercise more autonomy and creativity in designing and delivering their lessons while students can access course materials at their own pace and at times that suit them. They can also attend classes from anywhere, as long as they have access to a computer and internet. While digital pedagogy offers several benefits, it also presents some challenges for both teachers and students. Teachers have had to learn new digital skills and adjust their teaching strategies to suit the online environment. Students have had to adapt to new modes of learning and cope with limited access to technology and internet connectivity.

Challenges for teachers in digital language learning include adaptation to new technologies, student engagement, and balance of online and onsite instruction. The first challenge for teachers involves technical issues such as software malfunctions, internet connectivity problems, and hardware issues that may disrupt the learning process. Teachers need to adapt to new technologies and tools, which may require additional training and support. Furthermore, teachers also need to ensure that all students have equal access to digital technologies and resources, regardless of their socio-economic status. The recent pandemic crisis has increased awareness of the importance of technological connectivity. Different levels of professional development opportunities and consequently Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) exist in numerous nations for educators. The learn-at-home mandate has served as a touchstone revealing instructors' varying levels of competence and unequal learning opportunities for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Overall, the disruption caused by the pandemic has uncovered the digital chasm, which will have severe consequences for human capital development. On the other hand, the digital learning environment can be a window of opportunity for countries to pioneer a new education paradigm and movement that would eliminate the prevalent quality disparities in many nations.

The second challenge is maintaining student engagement: Teachers need to find ways to keep students engaged in the learning process, despite the potential distractions of digital devices and online platforms. In online learning, students and teachers may not have the same level of face-to-face interaction as in traditional classrooms. This can make it difficult for teachers to read students' body language and respond to their needs. Therefore, teachers may have limited opportunities to know students' needs and provide feedback, which can leave students feeling unsupported. Moreover, students may become distracted by the technology they are using, such as social media, email, or messaging apps, which can divert their attention away from the learning content. Online learning may limit opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers on group projects, which can make learning feel impersonal and isolating. In brief, online learning may not cater to all students' learning styles and preferences, making it challenging for teachers to keep all students engaged.

The last challenge is balancing online and offline instruction. Teachers need to find the right balance between online and offline instruction and ensure that both modes of learning are integrated effectively. Providing interactive and multimedia learning materials, such as videos, animations, and interactive simulations through learning management systems and video-conferences should be combined with designing peer-to-peer interaction and group work in offline learning activities. Creating a supportive online learning community requires that teachers foster a sense of belonging among students, show sincere concern, and build a community of inquiry (Gozali et al., 2022). Prijambodo and Lie (2022) investigated 116 Indonesian students from two private high schools to examine their readiness and motivation to learn English through synchronous video conferences as viewed through the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 1999; Garrison et al., 2010). The study discovered that Teacher Presence is essential in augmenting Cognitive Presence and helping students experience Social Presence. Consequently, the roles of teachers in designing and providing meaningful learning activities, serving as a model to engage students in online and offline discussion, employing effective strategies to engage students, providing regular feedback and promptly responding to students' questions, and managing class, must be fulfilled in full. Briefly, online learning can be effective if instructors improve their technical and pedagogical skills.

Need for Digital Literacy

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital literacy for both teachers and students. In general, teachers need to be proficient in using digital tools and technologies to deliver effective instruction. Students need to be able to navigate digital platforms and resources to facilitate their learning. In the field of language learning, the use of digital tools and technologies presents both issues and opportunities for teachers and students. Issues include authenticity of language input, challenge in establishing the Community of Inquiry, technical challenges, and pedagogical challenge.

First, digital tools and technologies may not always provide appropriate and authentic language input. Therefore, teachers need to invest their time and energy by curating and selecting digital resources to ensure that they provide relevant and accurate language input. Second, the lack of personal interaction in online learning may hamper the Teacher

Presence, Social Presence and hence the Cognitive Presence as modelled in the Community of Inquiry (Garrison et al.,1999; Garrison et al., 2010). The use of digital tools and technologies can limit personal interaction between teachers and students, which may be essential for language learning. Teachers need to carefully design activities that promote personal interaction and language practice. Third, the use of digital tools and technologies can be challenging for some teachers and students who may not be techno-savvy. Technical issues such as software malfunctions, internet connectivity problems, and hardware issues can disrupt the learning process. Finally, the use of digital tools and technologies requires teachers to adapt their pedagogical approaches. Teachers need to develop new skills and strategies to effectively integrate digital tools and technologies into their teaching.

Despite the issues, the use of digital tools and technologies offers several opportunities for teachers and learners of languages. First, digital tools and technologies provide teachers and students with access to a plethora of authentic language input, such as videos, audio recordings, and online language resources. Second, digital learning provides personalization of learning. Digital tools and technologies can facilitate personalized language learning experiences, allowing teachers to design differentiated language instruction to meet individual students' needs and preferences. Third, digital tools and technologies enable teachers and students to collaborate and communicate with each other more easily, regardless of their location. This can facilitate language practice and cultural exchange between students from different countries. Fourth, digital tools and technologies offer greater flexibility in terms of when, where, and how language learning takes place. Finally, the use of digital tools and technologies can trigger teachers to be more creative through new possibilities for teaching and learning, such as gamification, virtual and augmented reality, and adaptive learning.

Future Directions of Digital Pedagogy for Language Learning

Teachers, course designers, and curriculum-materials developers of language learning should gain insights from lessons learned out of the recent swift changes in digital learning environment and anticipate further possibilities to prepare for the unprecedented future. Overall, the future of digital pedagogy for language learning is likely to involve the integration of new technologies and approaches that enhance differentiated instruction and personalized learning experiences, increase engagement and motivation, and facilitate language practice and cultural exchange. Teachers will need to adapt their approaches, modify teaching strategies, and acquire new skills to effectively incorporate these technologies in their language classrooms.

The future directions of digital pedagogy for language learning are likely to focus on the following areas:

1. Social media and online communities have been widely used for social interactions. They can further provide opportunities for language learners to interact with other learners around the world. Instagram, Facebook, and Tik Tok have been used to facilitate language practices and cultural exchanges.

2. The widespread use of mobile devices presents opportunities for language

learning outside the traditional classroom setting. Mobile apps and platforms can provide language learners with www (whatever, whenever, wherever) access to learning resources and opportunities for practice on-the-go. Resources such as digital library https://literacycloud.org/ offer opportunities for extensive reading.

3. Language learners are able to learn and practice language skills in a more enjoyable manner through virtual and augmented reality technologies, which allow for immersive experience that mirrors situations in the real world and environment. Museum virtual tours https://museumnasional.iheritage-virtual.id/ can provide learners with learning experiences beyond the classrooms.

4. Gamification is popular particularly among young people. The use of game-based learning can increase engagement and motivation among language learners. Gamification strategies can be used to create interactive and engaging language learning activities. Games such as Kahoot and Wordwall are very popular among teachers.

5. The use of digital tools and technologies can enhance learning management systems. In addition, it can facilitate more efficient and effective language course design, assessment and feedback. Digital tools can provide automated feedback on language performance, and teachers can use digital tools to track student progress and provide individualized feedback. Moodle, Schoology, and Microsoft Teams have continued to be used even after schools have resumed their onsite learning post-pandemic.

6. Recently, educators have been caught up in the frenzy of artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT. Rather than avoiding its use, teachers may as well capitalize on artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to facilitate personalized language learning experiences by adapting instruction to the individual needs and abilities of each learner.

Overall, digital pedagogy for language learning is likely to become even more advanced and personalized in the next 10 years. Advancements in AI and ML will allow for more engaging, sophisticated, and adaptive learning technologies that can provide personalized instruction to individual learners based on their needs, abilities and progress levels. These innovations will hopefully increase engagement and motivation, and provide learners with opportunities for authentic language practices and cultural exchanges.

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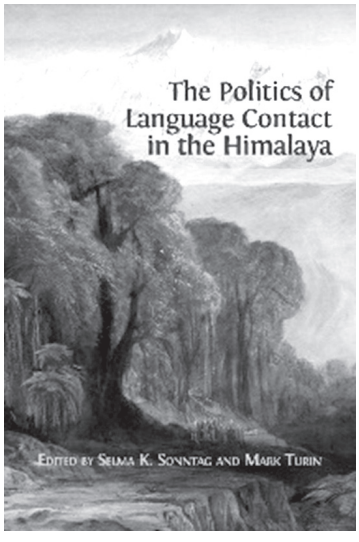
BOOK REVIEWS

Book Reviews

The Politics of Language Contact in the Himalaya by Selma Sonntag and Mark Turin (Eds.) (2019). Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, pp. 181 + XIII. ISBN 9781783747047



Few language researchers would deny that studying language contacts and their impacts on the respective languages is complex. Exploring the politics therein and its role in shaping up language contacts is extremely convoluted. Despite the acknowledged importance of the politics of language contacts, particularly in the regions that are geographically varied and linguistically richly diversified, this area remains largely underexplored. The pioneering attempt of the editors to bring the much needed scholarships together is highly commendable.

The editors of the volume are celebrated scholars in the field. Therefore, readers would not expect anything less than fresh, original and theoretically grounded materials from them. And this is exactly what they deliver. They deliver an interdisciplinary collection of linguistically and historically grounded contributions. The contributing authors employ a rare interdisciplinary approach to delineate issues from across the Himalayan region that are common to different disciplines of social science in search of solutions to the general problems these regions are currently experiencing. Five notable authors' rigorous research from three socio-politically sensitive regions from both sides of the Himalayas – Tibet, Assam and Nepal, draw socio-political issues that shape up the language contacts in the region.

The volume consists of an introduction and six chapters, including the concluding chapters, each of which is written ingeniously by reputed researchers. The Introduction points out the interdisciplinary and often contested nature of language politics. Articulating the dearth of empirical scholarship on the politics of language contacts in the regions which are generally geographically untenable, nonetheless linguistically expansive, the author provides an overview of the volume, briefly sets the context for the respective chapters and outlines the approach(es) the researchers have adapted in developing their chapters.

I begin in the Southern side of the Himalayas. Chapter 2 takes us several centuries back to the *Ahom* kingdom established in what is today known as Assam to demonstrate that the elite

hierarchy of Assamese that was introduced through language contacts into the Ahom language had had a hegemonic influence on it. The hegemony continues even today though in a different form. Starting from the present, The Himalaya, in particular Assam and North East India is, once again, at the centre of political storm (Alzajeera.com, 13 Dec. 2019).The federal Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) of India is the root cause of this. The CAB is inclusionary in its objective but exclusionary in its intent and discriminatory in its structure. It excludes Muslims, Tamils and Tibetan, but makes Hindus and related sub-sects eligible for naturalisation in India. The CAB which is widely seen as a part of Hindu supremacy agenda and a strategy of protecting and promoting its Hindu identity, is a political attempt to convince the Assamese Hindus that their loyalty should be with Bengali speaking Hindus migrated from Bangladesh rather than the Assamese speaking Muslims. The indigenous Assamese are worried that the federal Hinduisation tactics will one day destroy their distinct linguistic and cultural heritage.

This is politics of Hinduisation at its best. And historically, it was Hinduisation that led to the introduction of hierarchy to the apparent hierarchy-less Ahom community. As the chapter demonstrates, when the Chinese clans and dynasties started establishing their kingdoms and strengthening their territorial power, one of the fleeing groups of (Tai) Ahom people under the leadership of *Su-ka-pha* crossed the *Patkai* hills in Eastern India and entered what is today known as Assam. *Su-ka-pha,* after empowering the local aborigines, established their own kingdom. And along with them, they brought their language, culture and non-hierarchical socio-political systems. The Ahom language, with its own elaborate writing system and rich in its historical accounts, forms the grandeur of Assamese literature and has contributed to the lexicon of the Assamese language.

The chapter is perceptive and conceptually germane for the volume. Employing a theoretical framework which is known as a historical-institutionalist approach in comparative politics, the author elucidates how language shift resulting from language contacts between a *Tai-Kodai* language and Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language in Assam (North-eastern India) changed the local language dynamics in the *Ahom* kingdom, leading to the abandonment and eventual death of the language. The arguments skilfully explore the theme of the volume – politics of language contacts in a historic context. The chapter is insightful and brilliantly written. The theoretical standpoints are expertly situated into the sociocultural conceptualisations as well as the practices and policies of the socio-political complexities of *Ahom* Kingdom. The strength of the chapter is the analysis of the theme – the politics of language contacts, which is witty, compelling and thought provoking.

The title of the chapter "What happened to …." is catchy which builds interest right from the start. A reader is captured in the vivid accounts of the rise and fall of the Ahom dynasty. In her attempt to answer the somewhat mystical question, the author provides many explanations based on the historical artefacts. Three explanations are worthy of mentioning here. First of these, though not reiterated explicitly in the chapter, is the Hinduisation of the existing culture and therefore of language. The Ahom language, which had a strong influence on Assam during the reign of the first four Ahom kings, started to change and fade away as it came into contact with Hindus and their languages (Buragohain, 2011). The change, writes Grierson (1905), *"can be traced clearly.*

The earlier Ahom copperplate inscriptions were in the Ahom language and character. Next, they appear … in Assamese or Sanskrit. When the kings began to take Hindu officials, the court language at first continued to Ahom, but it was gradually supplanted (p. 129)" and eventually replaced by Assamese. Second, the change in the language contact also began when the locals enter the lives of *Tai* people. The historical accounts have it, the migrating Tai *Ahom* people were mainly men, who later married local women to settle down. Their children, bilingual though they were initially, their proficiency in *Ahom* declined over time. Finally, the Ahom kings, in their six hundred years of reign, never tried to impose their language on the local people. *Su-ka-pha*, the founder of the *Ahom* kingdom was an assimilationist and built his vast kingdom by assimilating aborigines. While some experts consider this approach as his political brilliance, others take this as a reason for the language shift during the Ahom dynasty. The chapter implicitly outlines the above mentions to suggest that language contact, inspired by Hinduisation, is the principal reason for the extinction of the *Ahom* language (see also Buragohain, 2011). The revivalists believe that as *Ahom* has been the principal source for the development of the Assamese languages and "invaluable historical artefacts glorifying the ancient Assam, the language, in conjunction of other Assamese languages, may be revitalised and revived (Khubchandani, 1997). In other words, language contact was the cause of the demise of the *Ahom* language, language contacts could be a source of its revival.

Moving to neighbouring Nepal, three themes bring the chapters three and four together – (a) language as a marker of ethnic identity and a sense of belonging (p. 130), (b) spatial dynamics in choosing from variations to maintain their existence, distinctive identity and group cohesion (p.109) and (c) the politics behind language maintenance. I myself grew up in one of the Eastern *Terai Tharu* community. Though my home language was different from that of the community, I had some proficiency in the community language as most of my playmates were from the Tharu community. At a distance of a few miles, there lived a *Dhangaura basti* (settlement) of a few hundred people migrated possibly from the Western Nepal. These two *Tharu* groups did not identify with each other ethnically, and their distinctive languages played the main part in it. The variants of *Tharu*, like those of many other *Tharu* groups settled in various parts of Nepal, are different from the one reported in chapter three, and like the *Dhangaura Tharu,* face the challenge of spatial politics when it comes to choosing one for the donor-driven multi-lingual education (MLE) program in Nepal. MLE as a theoretical framework of language contact in education in contemporary Nepal is at a 'critical juncture'. The program, which follows the UNESCO philosophy of 'the first language first' (p. 83), faces the challenges of establishing linguistic authority and authenticity through language maintenance of making corrections and systematising it for legitimacy and social acceptance. These processes and practices of sanitising (transforming, reshaping) indigenous languages for the purpose of making them adequate for school education, is in fact imposing language hierarchy. What makes these chapters significant is the discussion of space at the lower level of the linguistic hierarchy as the battleground where authority that the higher hierarchies exercise to perpetuate it can reshape the power dynamics of negotiating their linguistic authority. Notwithstanding, the advocates of uniqueness of these languages would argue that achieving the *ramropan* (goodness) through the visual contacts/ transformations may well be the cause of the loss of their uniqueness and a way of exercising language dominance or authority (see also p. 9).

In the other side of the Himalayas, in Tibet, recognition of minority languages has been an issue throughout its history. These languages, which have been misrecognised as 'bizarre dialects', 'enclaved languages' or 'extraterritorial languages' are declining as a result of the Chinese 'encroachments'. Speakers of many local languages which include rTa'u have to prove their Tibetan identity by speaking standard Tibetan.

These labels of non-recognition or mis-recognition of minority languages in the socio-political domains entails not only the politics of language but also the language of politics. Taking on the vertical (as apposed to horizontal) approach to analysing the politics of language contacts, the authors of Chapter 1 argue that the somewhat hard-line categorisation of languages such as rTa'u as a substandard language is a misrecognition and misrepresentation of their identity making them of a lesser Tibetan or 'non-Tibetan inhabitant of Tibet (p. 29) simply because they do not speak the 'pure father tongue' (p. 32). In other words, their Tibetanness (or Tibetan identity) is being questioned on the ground of the fact that they speak a minority language. There is parallelism of non-recognition or misrecognition in the Nepalese context where people speaking indigenous languages are considered to be non-Nepali whereas Nepali-speaking Indians are regarded as Nepalis (Tiwari, 2019, social media). The chapter provides an exemplary explanation of the vertical hierarchy in the politics of language contact in Tibet. However, the chapter leaves the readers wondering about the likely horizontal relationship between the *rTa'u*, other indigenous languages and standard Tibetan. Also not clear is the reason why the two chapters on Tibet are not presented one after another.

The last chapter, chapter 5, of the volume, also on the Tibetan linguistic context, introduces 'duel hegemonies' as an approach to analysing the complex hierarchy in the Tibetan politics of language contact which the authors argue are established through coercion and consent. Presenting the Chinese state position as well as the position of the Amdo Tibetan, the authors present three-tiered linguistic hierarchy in which the two positions exercise their dominant attitude over minority languages. As a consequence, scores of minority languages of Tibet, both misrecognised or non-recognised, are at the verge of extinction. These languages need, the chapter purports, recognition of the fact that they exist, that they have unique needs, that they have value, and that they deserve respect (Roche, 2017).

The author of the concluding chapter outlines the complex process of language shift that is taking place across the Himalayas. The author argues that in the process of language shift, both langue and parole, generally through the language contacts in non-elite communities, are simplified or reshaped. He points out that as language revitalisation is being energised in most Himalayan contexts, language and culture are used for social exclusion and political disenfranchisement (the cases of Nepali in Bhutan, *Rohingya* in Myanmar, see also page 166). Taking Nepal as a case study, the author has rightly raised three questions of critical importance. Two of these questions have been slightly rephrased here with a view to offering my own views on them: (a) should the Nepalese polity, in the emerging new federal configuration, resource and support scores of other languages than the dominant ones? (b) are there other appropriate language-of and language-in-education formulas than the much hyped three (and in practice also 1 or 2) language formula?

The current configuration of federalism in Nepal, in fact, promotes the hierarchy of language contacts by adapting the traditional method of promoting the three-language multilingual education policy (MLEP). This policy, which in practice is 'duel hegemony', is problematic in several respects. Firstly, the proposal to allow a state or a community to select a language in which to teach does not take into account the fact that children may have competence, though of varying degree, in more than one language. Second, MLEP is based on the belief that the mother tongue (or the selected language) is the only language children know. It does recognise the value of L1 or education through L1, but what it rejects is that if one's mother language is not the chosen language or if one knows other languages along with the chosen L1, it is not state's problem. Thirdly, it assumes that each school community or locality is linguistically homogenous. That is to say, it does not accept the fact that different children of a class may speak different languages. Finally, and most importantly, the policy validates that other languages of the state or locality (than the chosen one) are subordinate, and therefore, unfit for use within social/academic contexts. In practice, therefore, the policy is set to create mini-Nepals within Nepal. In order not to repeat the troubled history, Nepal will have to work out a better formula for languages of- and languages-in-education.

To sum up, the politics of the language contacts across the Himalayas can be summarised by this story in Swapnil Smriti's poem, 'The Kavra Tree at the *Chautari*'. The poem describes the scene of a *chautari* (an elevated place) under the *pipal* (a symbolic, sacred tree representing the dominant language and/or tribe) where the travellers, trekkers or grass/wood collectors rest their loads before they continue their journey. One of such travellers tells the story of once a giant kavra tree (symbolic to represent indigenous *Kiranti* culture/ language). The story unfolds with the description of the *Kavra* tree and its significance to the villagers:

Three long, long ropes couldn't encircle its trunk
No mad raging storm could shake it
Neither could floods or landslides take it with them:
That giant, that kavra tree –
It was the dignity of the village life
It was the source or pillar of power of the settlements.

The story continues:

'The *kavra* tree was the heart of the local whose roots were fragrant with the scent of local communalism and its top was the Shangri-La of singing cranes. But things do not remain the same forever. In the years that followed, a three-leaf sapling of a *pipal* sprang like a thunderbolt. And, as the *pipal* bore its roots into the *kavra*, and grows bigger and bigger, the *kavra* gradually becomes just a hollow heart and flaky bark and meets its slow death. The death of the *kavra* tree has a huge impact on the villagers' life'

Listen, now – once the old *kavra* fell, they say –
The heads of young men and women fell

The children became lifeless, like well-stitched dolls

The *popular dharma* of the wise old fell –

The hearts fell and the country fell.

'And as the *pipal* grows bigger and its branches spread wider, the "Shangri-La" is gradually taken over by misery, hunger and thirst, oppression and exploitation, envy and grudge, hatred, rage and war'.

The Story Ends with the Extraordinary Heartrending Finale

'Planting a pipal and a bar tree and erecting a chautari underneath their shade (and, sometimes accompanied by stone water tap and a watering hole nearby) was considered to be one of the most common religious acts among the ***Hindus of the Nepali hills*** until recently'.

(Translated by Prawin Adhikary)

The short extracts above tell the story of language contact, resulting language shift, language hierarchy and hegemony therein, non-recognition of indigenous languages and consequential loss of languages and ethnic identities. These are some of the major theses addressed in the contributions of the volume. The volume, though needs some background knowledge of language planning and policy theory is an essential read and a valuable resource for all those who have interest in language politics, language contacts, and languages of- and languages-in-education.

The major themes addressed in this collection have to do with contact and shift, with hierarchy and hegemony, with mis-recognition and non-recognition, and with the loss of ethnocultural identities. While the book presumes some knowledge of language planning and policy, it is an essential read and a valuable resource for all those concerned with matters of linguistic contact and politics, especially within educational settings.

(Reviewed by the Editorial Board for a sample)

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POPULAR ELT BLOGS

A. ELLII

As we approach the end of the year, now is a good time to ponder English language teaching (ELT) trends for 2023. When Ellii asked me to write this post, I started noting some of my own ideas. However, ELT is a huge industry. I wanted to make sure that my post truly reflected trends across the industry. It would be all too easy to be blinkered by my own echo chamber, so I posted my question on social media.

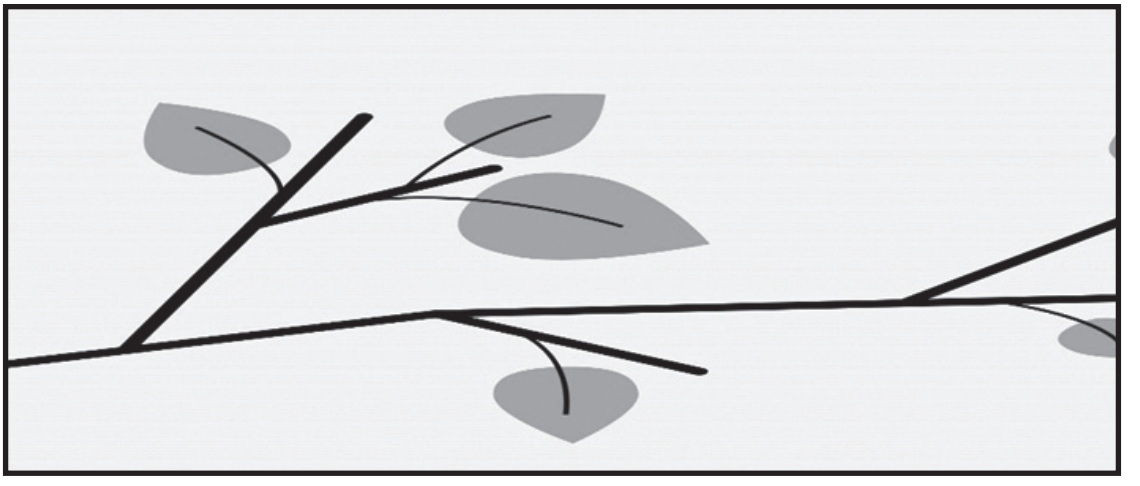
The responses were both reassuringly similar to my own, but also rich in diverse and innovative teaching and learning methodologies.

Here are six English language teaching trends you can expect to see more of in 2023.

1. Green ELT

As the climate crisis accelerates, so does the interest in environmental topics in the ELT classroom. In 2019, Dan Barber declared a climate emergency at the closing plenary of the Innovate ELT conference. Following that, Barber, Ceri Jones, Katherine Bilsborough, and Christopher Graham founded ELT Footprint, an ELTon-winning collaboration focused on making ELT more sustainable. Since then, there's been a growing number of green ELT organizations and industry leaders getting involved: Renewable English, Green Action ELT, and Colm Downes who published this informative Twitter thread.

The appetite for green discussions, carbon-neutral conferences, and more environmentally focused resources in ELT is growing. I'm also noticing more integration and reference to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.



The Environment Collection

From heat waves to ecotherapy, Ellii's Environment collection is an excellent way to teach green in 2023.

2. DEIB: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) will continue to play an important part in the ELT industry in 2023. English language teaching, by its very nature, is beautifully multicultural and diverse. Our learners represent all ages, races, genders, (dis)abilities, religions, sexual orientations, marital statuses, family backgrounds, etc.

The pursuit of equity for all is not new, but it will continue into 2023 and beyond. There are ever-growing discussions, webinars, and resources on making the world a fairer place.

This includes topics like:

- creating accessible learning materials
- supporting learners with special educational needs
- multicultural inclusion
- LGBTQ+ rights
- native-speakerism (an ideology characterized by the belief that people whose first language is English are best-suited to teach ELT)

Meri Maroutian set up her business, The Non-Native Speaker, to advocate against native-speakerism in the ELT industry. English is a global language used internationally as a *lingua-franca* (i.e., common language). 80% of its users speak English as a second language. The pursuit of equity for teachers whose first language is not English and for learners to embrace their accents and own style of English usage continues. Lottie Galpin, a DEIB specialist who helps editors, writers, and publishers create outstanding, inclusive materials, had this to say:

To join the discussion and learn more about diversity and inclusion, the Reflecting Reality: Diverse and Inclusive ELT Materials Facebook group is a great place to start.

Related articles on inclusive English language teaching

- Accessibility: Supporting English Learners with Dyslexia
- 6 Ways to Support English Learners from Refugee Backgrounds
- 5 Ways to Promote Mental Health in the English Language Classroom
- 8 Tips for Developing Students' Digital Literacy

3. Virtual Reality

Talking about virtual reality (VR) feels like a moment when you realize you're living in the future! VR wasn't something I identified as an ELT trend for 2023, but it was suggested twice in the comments and has made me realize just how much I've been noticing it more and more on my social feeds.

Research has found the following benefits of VR:

- Students spoke at a higher level after using VR (B1 instead of A2).
- Vocabulary retention is higher with VR.
- VR supports the use of positional language (e.g., "up there").
- Students retained emergent language while using VR.
- Anxious students were more confident when using VR rather than in class.

VR-related materials for the classroom

- Virtual Reality
- The Metaverse

4. Mediation

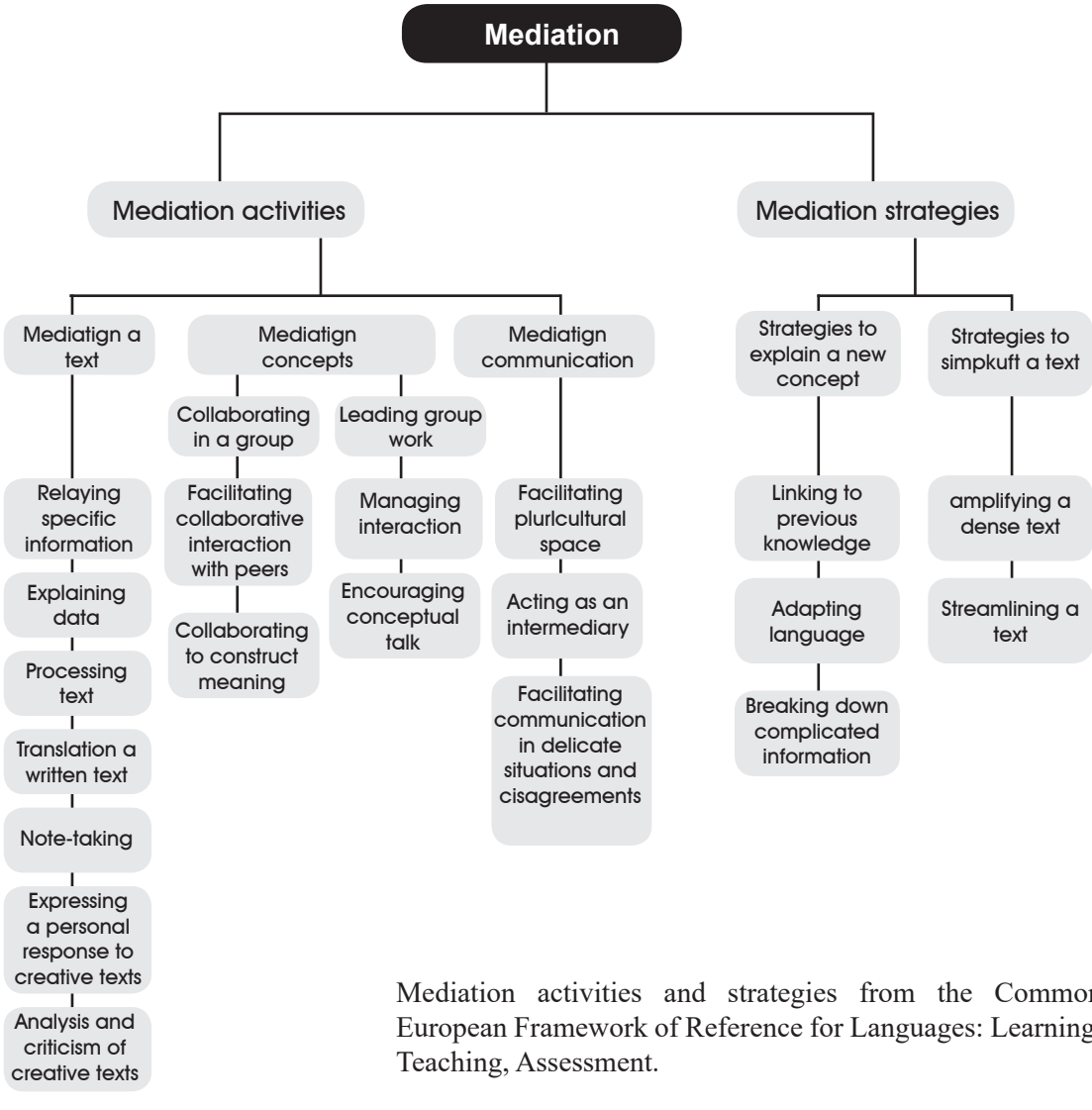
In an ELT context, mediation refers to the ability to convey meaning. Essentially, it's explaining concepts, knowledge, or understanding to others in a way that supports learning.

For example:

- relaying the information from a text
- describing a visual, graph, or chart
- summarizing a source of information (e.g., an infographic/video)
- translating and sharing key points

Including mediation activities in the classroom supports learners' development of real-world skills, such as communication and note-taking.

Figure 14- Mediation activities and strategies



Mediation activities and strategies from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.

5. Life Skills

As language teachers, we want our learners to succeed in the real world as well as in the classroom. This involves incorporating life skills into our classes. Life skills are often referred to as "soft skills," "21st-century skills," or "transferable skills." They include skills such as communication, social, academic, critical thinking, problem-solving, digital, and work. Their importance to student success is what will keep them trending in the ELT industry throughout 2023.

Boost your students' life skills with these lessons

- Socializing
- Resolving Work Conflicts
- How to Write an Opinion

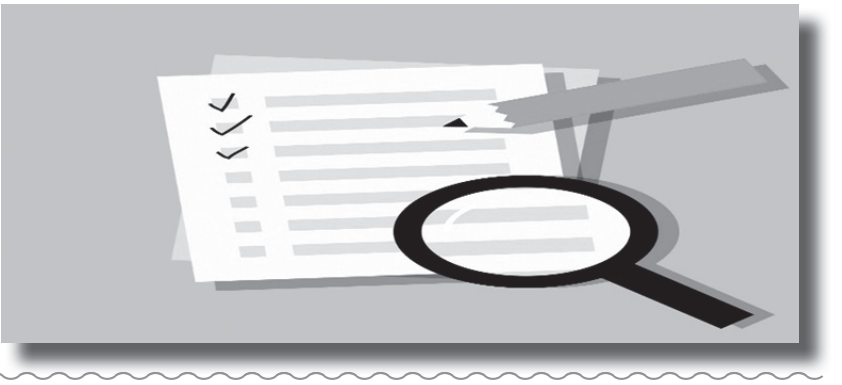
6. Task-Based teaching, Learning, and Assessment

Task-based learning (TBL) has been around for years and will continue its popularity in 2023.

The approach is based on giving students a task to complete and allowing the language to emerge naturally throughout the course of the lesson. A favorite task-based activity of mine is giving students a pile of scrap materials and asking them to work together to build a bridge. Students then collaborate in groups to construct something that is stable and can hold the weight of a toy car. Throughout the lesson, language such as "I think we should fold this paper," "Pass the sticky tape" and "Wouldn't it be stronger if we…" emerges.

Task-based learning offers a natural way for students to use and develop their language skills. It's also a great way to incorporate life skills and real-world tasks into the classroom. From an assessment perspective, it's beneficial in ensuring that assessments become part of the learning process. Project-based learning is similar to TBL in that it gives learners a task to complete over a period of time.

Lesson Category



Group Projects

These project-based learning modules are intended as group projects that can be completed within a two- to four-week time period along with other coursework. The projects include research tasks and presentations that are useful for individual, peer, and group assessment.

B. EFL Blogs All Teachers Should Check Out

There is a whole world of information on the Internet about how to become an English language teacher or how to get better at it once you become one. A quick Google search will bring up a multitude of web pages jockeying for a readership, and through all that online 'noise' it can be difficult to figure out which are worth a closer look. Many English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers blog about their experiences to share tips and tricks with other teachers or to speak directly to current and potential students. There is a lot that other EFL teachers can learn from reading the good blogs, but which ones are worth your time?

To draw up a list, BridgeUniverse spoke to seasoned EFL teachers to ask them about their favorite ELT blogs and looked at blogs that already have a big audience as well as other more recent ELT blogs that are still growing. From those, we selected six best EFL blogs that we think teachers should check out. We interviewed the teacher-bloggers responsible for writing them to give you a rundown of what their blogs are focused on, what kind of EFL teachers should read them, and why.

If you're new to teaching, you'll want to get initial training and qualification with a TEFL certificate. You can explore our online TEFL courses to get started!

Best EFL Blog for Teachers who are Starting out

Who should read it? Recently qualified ESL teachers who want to challenge their students to become more efficient learners and themselves to become better educators.

Tennessee-based teacher blogger and podcaster Millie Williams has been teaching for seven years and mostly focuses on middle school English language learners (ELLs) who have English as a second language. However, many of her blog posts and related podcasts provide solid advice

for teachers who have recently started their careers in TEFL/TESOL.

"My Adventures in ESL is a blog for educators who truly believe that their ELLs can access a rigorous curriculum," says Williams on her website. "If you believe that something is 'too hard' or 'they can't do it,' then this is not the blog for you. We should all believe that our ELLs can achieve!" she says.

The focus of the blog is not just on challenging students, however. Williams also makes a point of challenging teachers to be the best possible version of themselves, through posts focused on teacher development, gaining confidence, tips on how to reflect on teaching practices, and learning from more senior professionals. Williams, who only started blogging two years ago but has a prolific output, writes with a warm tone and offers practical tips that make it feel like she is a more experienced teacher that is talking directly to you.

Her post and podcast "How to Prepare for Your Teacher Interview," for example, gives some great personal insights into what it feels like to be interviewed by a teacher panel and goes into detail about each of the panel interviews she had and the mistakes she made before getting hired. It is exactly the kind of detailed advice about making the best first impression that you would expect to get from a good and very knowledgeable friend. Other posts and podcasts in a similar tone include "The New School Year Is Approaching (What You Can Do to Prepare)," and "Developing Confidence as an Educator."

The blog is updated on a weekly basis, and for any teacher looking for help with teaching 6th to 9th grade ESL students, Williams also provides lots of tips and resources. The blog, podcast, and associated Facebook community of approximately 2,000 teachers also support her self-authored curriculum materials, which she sells in digital format on a site called Teachers Pay Teachers.

"The blog has opened doors, and maybe the podcast will too," Williams told BridgeUniverse. "It's taken some time to then make Teachers Pay Teachers work, as there are so many ESL resources online, but finding high quality and relevant ones for this age group is more niche," she said.

Best Blog for ELT thought Leadership

Who should read it? *ESL teachers interested in keeping up with the latest conversations happening in ELT, including information about using technological resources, book reviews, Delta resources, news about conferences, and more.*

Sandy Millin is currently the Director of Studies of an English academy in Poland but has taught English all over the world, including in Borneo, Paraguay, Czech Republic, Crimea, and the UK. On top of that, she has trained teachers all over the world, spoken at numerous international TEFL conferences, and is the author of several TEFL/TESOL books. All of this makes for a very experienced teacher with a lot to pass on to others in the profession.

Millin's blog covers a wide variety of topics. "The blog has evolved over time, but it is mostly activities I have tried out in my lessons [and] thoughts on teaching, training, or management. I have also had reviews of books I've read and other materials or tools I've tried out," she told BridgeUniverse, adding, "There is a lot of content related to the Cambridge Delta, too." Millin also shares content related to her life as a foreigner and a language learner and occasionally has guest posts and interviews with other teachers.

All in all, Millin's blog is a great stop for anyone looking to keep on top of what is happening in the world of EFL. The more personal content, such as *"A Long Time Ago, in a Country Far, Far Away,"* also provides an insight into life as a teacher working in a foreign country and the challenges and benefits that it brings. Her tone ranges from friendly and approachable when she is writing about her own life to deeply insightful and academic when touching on educational theory (read "Group Dynamics," for example). Her blog is regularly updated, usually once a week but occasionally more.

The blog, as well as being a repository of information for other EFL teachers, has had a big effect on Millin's career by giving her greater visibility in the EFL world. "It's helped me hugely," she said. "It's created an outlet for my reflection and helped me to start and participate in discussions about many different aspects of teaching, training, and management." She added that she has been invited to take part in webinars and workshops and to be involved in writing projects as a direct result of her blog.

"It's also led me to start out with self-publishing," she explained, and is a great conversation starter at conferences because people often come up and introduce themselves because they have read her blog. "I can't imagine my life without it," she said. "I will be going fully freelance in October 2021, partly thanks to the opportunities my blog has brought my way and the way it has raised my profile in ELT."

Best Blog for a Refreshing Approach to Business English

English With a Twist

Who should read it? *Business English teachers interested in a different approach to teaching and talking to business English students.*

When she first started blogging in 2013, Shanthi Cumaraswamy Streat's blog posts focused on a more conventional style of posts about English language teaching (ELT). Her ELT niche is business professionals and she regularly posted the usual tips about phrasal verbs, business idioms, and providing free resources for other language teachers. The blog quickly became popular with other teachers, but this did not get her many more students for her fledgling business.

"Traffic was phenomenal," she told BridgeUniverse, "But it never actually brought me any money in terms of my business." She then decided to change her focus. "I have always worked with business professionals because of my business background," she explained. "It's allowed me to narrow my target audience, identify my ideal client and their pain points, and offer them solutions through my content. You have to niche down if you're to thrive in the online world and help people find you."

This new approach led her to start the English With a Twist blog, focusing on speaking directly to her ideal students and discussing the specific difficulties they face with speaking English in a professional context.

Traditional grammar and vocabulary tips have made way for twice-monthly posts focused on changing business ESL speakers' mindsets and boosting their confidence about the skills they already have. These include, "Why You Should Stop Apologizing for Your Poor English (and What to do Instead)," "5 Simple Tricks That Will Transform You From Grammar-Obsessed to Confident Business Communicator in English," and "How to Pitch Your Proposal Confidently in English (Even if You're Terrified)."

Streat's approach to teaching is unique because rather than trying to get her students to speak 'perfect English,' she focuses on building their confidence about the English they already have and improving their communication skills in English. "I moved away from being an English teacher to becoming a business communications coach," she said, "because that's what my clients needed to become confident communicators. They didn't need more English, and with this new approach I've seen my clients thrive."

The English With a Twist blog posts reflect the new methodology so that potential students can get a taste of how Streat works in her classes, and her tone is exactly like that of a professional coach. "The consistent message in my blog helps people build a picture, trust, and awareness of the change I seek to make," Streat said. "Blogging is a platform to showcase your message and expertise. You need to share your posts on social media and above all, use your blog to encourage people to join your email community.

Streat now has around 100,000 followers on Facebook, sends out a monthly newsletter, and writes what she calls "micro-posts" on LinkedIn.

This non-traditional approach to teaching business English and Streat's blogging about it has also seen positive reactions from other teachers, and she now runs masterclasses on how to implement her method.

"It was much easier to write language tips but that wasn't going to inspire change in anyone," Streat said. "I could have lost a lot of readers by changing the approach, but I think the less is more concept has brought me a much more meaningful community."

Best EFL Blog for Classroom Tips and Digital Tools

A Journey in TEFL

Who should read it: *Prospective and early career EFL teachers seeking classroom resources and tips on how to use digital tools.*

Eva Buyuksimkesyan, an Istanbul-based English language teacher who has been teaching English for 32 years, started blogging as a way of reflecting on her teaching practice and sharing tips and resources with less experienced teachers.

She attended a course in digital storytelling in 2009, started her A Journey in TEFL blog soon after, and learned about several digital tools she could use in the classroom. "At that time, Twitter started to be popular among educators using those tools," she told BridgeUniverse in an interview, "And there were teachers blogging about their experiences, and I also started my blog to learn, share, and grow then. Since then, I've been writing about my journey of lesson plans, ideas, and tools."

Buyuksimkesyan's approach to blogging is very practical, and her posts focus on useful resources and tools that her teacher readers can implement immediately. "My main audience is teachers around the world," she said. "I also know from the comments that my blog is listed as a resource for student teachers by their instructors at university, and this also encourages me to keep going."

Although she covers a range of topics of interest to teachers, more recently, Buyuksimkesyan's blog posts have provided specific activities for teachers to help students practice grammar points, such as *"Songs to Teach and Revise Present Simple Tense"* and *"Two Past Simple Activities."* Her other focus is to introduce teachers to useful digital tools and give tips on how to use them in the classroom and online. Examples of posts like this include *"Error Correction on Jamboard," "A Tool You'll Use A Lot: Thinkio,"* and a post on using Blooket for revision with young learners.

The blog is not monetized despite Buyuksimkesyan having received several offers to advertise on it. The exposure her blog has given her has, however, resulted in opportunities to speak at conferences and build her reputation as an expert in the EFL field. "Blogging is a way of continuous professional development for me," she explained. "I have met great educators; I became friends with them online, and then I even met them in real life at conferences. Blogging has opened some other doors, and since 2010 I've been presenting at conferences both in Turkey and abroad."

Her current classes and students are most often Buyuksimkesyan's source of inspiration for blog posts she told BridgeUniverse, although she has no regular publishing schedule. *"Usually, it's my students who give me ideas for the content I'm sharing,"* she said. *"When I create something interesting for them, I also write about it. If I have a group of students who challenge me more, I write more often, or if I come across a new tool and find it useful, I write a post. If not, I try to update the blog at least once a month."*

Best EFL Blog for Lesson Plans and Pronunciation Tips

Side Notes on ELT

Who should read it? *EFL teachers looking for ready-made lesson plans and tips on teaching pronunciation to intermediate-level students.*

Oslo-based freelance EFL teacher Lina Gordyshevskaya has been teaching and blogging since 2015 and in her own words mostly shares, "reflections, lesson plans, and brief overviews of some teaching tools." More recently, she has been posting about teaching pronunciation, which is her area of specialization.

Gordyshevskaya's blog posts come across as practical and sincere. She lays out her lesson planning process and fully discloses any difficulties she faced when trying to implement those plans.

"I never write about something I have not tried myself when it comes to tools, so all my recommendations are genuine," she told BridgeUniverse in an interview. *"All the lesson plans I publish are those I have used with students, and I always add some notes on how these lessons went so that teachers can adjust accordingly."*

Many of the lesson plans provided are based on Gordyshevskaya's preferred method of using authentic materials in her classes. Some examples include *"Teaching Reading: Lesson Plan," "Travel Guide: What to Do In…,"* and *"What's in Your Kitchen? TPR for Adult Learners."* All of them focus on using real-world vocabulary and scenarios that are part of each student's actual experiences.

Pronunciation posts include *"My Top 10 Resources for Teaching Pronunciation Physically and Visually"* and *"Banana? Banana!"* which is a fun lesson to raise students' awareness of intonation by asking them to identify the emotions behind different ways of saying the word 'banana.'

Despite the main focus of the blog being lesson plans and pronunciation tips, Gordyshevskaya admits, "My most popular posts are those on Delta modules 1 and 3." She received a pass with merit for both modules, and the posts share what teachers should expect when taking the Delta exams and a list of tips on how to prepare for them. "Many teachers find them extremely helpful, and one teacher recently messaged me saying they were a goldmine, and I think that's just wonderful," she said.

Blog for Teachers with Migrant ESL Students

Englishy Things

Who should read it? EFL teachers looking for ESL resources to use with immigrant and refugee ESL students as well as reflection on how to better understand the unique needs of these students.

Clare Harris, a Perth, Australia-based teacher and author, mainly uses her Englishy Things blog to write about ESL books and other teaching materials, whilst occasionally also promoting her own books and publications.

Harris' teaching work focuses on teaching English to adult immigrants and refugees, and the books she writes, including ESL graded readers, have the unique needs of these students in mind. Her reviews of books and interviews with other Australian ESL authors often focus on the specific needs of migrants learning English as a foreign language.

Early in her career, Harris spent three years in Thailand working in refugee camps but admits on her website that she "never managed to learn to read or write Thai. It all seemed too hard, and I felt like a child again when I had to ask for help with street signs or get a bank clerk to fill in forms for me." This experience informed her understanding of what it is like to be immersed in a different language and culture and drove her to teach beginner-level English to newcomers in Australia. "I'm always interested in English for beginners," she said, "or ways to help people learn to read."

In 2018, Harris spent time as a volunteer teaching English to refugees and displaced people in Athens, Greece. Some of Harris' subsequent posts, including *"Reflections on Being a Language Learner,"* are eye-opening accounts of the unique experiences of learning a language as a refugee, which anyone teaching English to people with a similar profile can learn from.

It is clear from her blog posts that Harris has an in-depth understanding of what needs to be considered when teaching migrant and refugee students. One blog post, in particular, *"Trauma-Informed Adult TESOL,"* based on an interview with the head of a TESOL International Special Interest Group highlights how past, recent, or even ongoing trauma can affect adult students' ability to learn and process a new language. It also points out how activities and resources in the EFL classroom need to be chosen carefully so as not to "inadvertently distress students."

A regular category of posts features interviews with other authors. For example, the post *"New Australian EAL Readers!"* highlights the author of readers for young learners telling stories based on the real-life experiences of immigrants to Australia and their families. Another post entitled "The Sea, the Sea! A new Australian ESOL Resource" interviews co-author Hazel Davidson about her book to teach what to expect from a day at the beach in Australia, with a focus on sea and beach safety for people not used to swimming in Australian waters.

"We do it mostly for love because it's not a great commercial proposition," Harris told BridgeUniverse about why she and the other authors featured on her blog write their ESL books. "I think the writing led to the blogging, rather than the other way around, but then people did respond to me with suggestions and ideas," she said, adding that she enjoys the feedback that the blog brings as well as the support it has raised from the wider teaching community.

ELT NEWS AND CONFERENCES

1. 

2. **AILA 2024: The 60th Anniversary World Congress**

   Linguistic Diversity, Inclusion, & Sustainability

   August 11-16, 2024; Hybrid (Online & Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

   Web: https://aila2024.com/

3. **AsiaTEFL 2024: The 22nd AsiaTEFL International Conference**

   Multi-ethnicity in ELT: Inclusivity and Diversity

   November 15-17, 2024; Chiang Rai, Thailand

   Web: https://www.asiatefl.org

4. **JALT2024**

   Event: 50th Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Exhibition

   Where: Shizuoka Granship, Shizuoka, Japan

   When: November 15 – November 18, 2024

   https://jalt.org/main/conference

Information About Journal *of* NELTA

A. About Journal of NELTA

First published in 1996, the **Journal of NELTA,** a double blind, peer-reviewed journal, is a premiere publication of **Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA).** The journal, an integral part of NELTA's mission of enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning through professional networking, supporting ELT practitioners and collaborating with ELE institutions and organisations, is a means of achieving Association's goal of providing a 'forum for exchanges of ideas and experiences at national, regional and international levels'.

Journal of NELTA as a peer-refereed journal is devoted to publication of quality materials on the theory and practice of English language teaching (ELT) in developed as well as under-resourced contexts. It publishes articles, research reports, practical teaching ideas, book reviews and other useful materials which have local, regional and global relevance. As the premium publication of **Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA),** the Journal particularly welcomes contributions that add to the contemporary discourses on ELT practices. Contributions that deal with ELT theories and methods will serve the professional community only when they are situated in the authors' own practices and/or in the contemporary educational and social contexts. Therefore, materials published in the Journal of NELTA are relevant to and situated in local, national, regional, and/or contexts.

The Journal considers contributions on any aspect of the ELT theory and practice, including but not limited to the following:

- **ELT theory:** works that discuss or interpret ELT theory critically from local/regional perspectives
- **Innovative teaching and/or research practices:** works that describe and explore how authors have developed or adapted any innovative methods or practices in ELT
- **Professional development practices:** works that raise new issues of ELT that deserve the attention of the professional community, government, or society (e.g. 'reconceptualising teacher education)
- **Success stories:** scholarly articles that narrate and reflect on successful implementation of ELT theory, method, or practice,
- **Any other ELT related issues/subjects** that is relevant to ELT professional community.

B. Submission Categories

Contributions may be submitted for one of the following categories

Full Length Feature Articles/Reports (5000-6000 words):

- **Empirical studies:** full length articles based on the fieldwork on issues of ELT, language education, teacher development or training, language testing and other relevant issues of language teaching. Because local practices have been relatively little researched outside the university context, submissions that represent this area will get high priority for the publication.

- **Knowledge-based perspectives:** articles that articulate a comprehensive and critical discussion of innovative ELT concepts. Such articles must present the author's clear voice on the perspective that is of interest to the readers of the Journal.

- **Classroom research and teacher reflections:** articles coming directly out of the classroom teaching or teacher's own reflection of his/her teaching. These can be stories in the form of narrative descriptions or they can follow the typical format of cyclical action research reports.

Action Research Reports (3000-5000-words)

- This new section of the Journal of NELTA includes well-written action research report. The report may be 3000 word long and should include succinct description of (a) the research context, (b) brief literature review (a) research methodology (d) Data collection, (e) data analysis and interpretation, (f) discussion of findings and implication, and (g) references. These reports are not peer reviewed; however, they will be reviewed and edited by the editors.

Journal of NELTA Forum

- The Journal of NELTA is also a platform for its readers to interact and share their ideas and opinions. For this reason, the Journal publishes an opinion-based article and invites its readers to send comments, responses, or critiques of the position of the author, which may be published, in the following issue of the Journal. The requirements for this article are the same as the full-length article but it may be shorter in length.

Book reviews (1500 words):

- Reviews of recently published ELT books that are of professional significance to the readers. Reviews should generally provide a short introduction of the author and the

purpose of the book, its descriptive summary, followed by its evaluative comments and its significance to the researchers and practitioners in Nepal. Reviews should not exceed 1,500 words including references.

C. Submission Guidelines

Submissions must follow the guidelines provided by NELTA. To access submission guidelines, authors should visit the Journal of NELTA website under www.nelta.org.np. Manuscripts must be submitted as an email attachment accompanied by a well-written cover letter to the editorial address: neltaeditorialboard@gmail.com. The cover letter email should include author's full name, institutional affiliation, title of the paper, and any other pertinent information

D. Copyright Policy © and Ethics Guidelines

Ethics Guidelines

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Handling Complaints and Appeal Process: NELTA in consultation with the NELTA Editorial Board will review and approve any amendments to published articles (retractions, withdrawals, expressions of concern), advise on publication ethics issues, establish and implement ethical policies, and support investigations of ethical concerns affecting the Journal. In case of complaints, a team of 2-3 members is formed and made responsible for investigating or supporting the investigation and resolution of ethical issues in assigned areas. The team is accountable and provides advice to the Central Committee of NELTA.

E. Submission Review (Policy) Process

Submissions received for Journal of NELTA undergo through a rigorous three-stage review process. In the first stage, the editorial board screens submissions which meet the requirements of originality, and appropriateness, and follow the Journal of NELTA style and format for the second stage. In the second stage, the articles are sent to two external reviewers for their blind reviews. Depending upon the review reports, articles are either rejected or selected for the next stage which may involve revisions. In the third stage, the re-assigned reviewers and the editorial board decide if the submissions meet all the Journal of NELTA requirements. All selected submissions are edited for language clarity and space. All short-listed articles go through a plagiarism check before they are considered for acceptance.

E. General Information

(i) Frequency: Currently, Journal of NELTA is published once a year.

(ii) Rates and subscription: Its Owner decides the subscription rate of the Journal on the yearly basis. Readers interested in subscribing the Journal should write to the Central Committee of NELTA or its editorial board.

(iii) Ownership: The Journal of NELTA is owned and published by Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA).

Please visit the NELTA website for more information about the Journal: www.nelta.org.np

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