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Editorial

The Journal of NELTA Gandaki (JoNG) is a prominent publication in English language teaching (ELT), teacher development, and teacher education. It is a valuable platform for EFL teachers from home and abroad to share their research and pedagogical skills through academic writing. We are delighted to present the seventh volume of the JoNG, a one-star rated peer-reviewed journal indexed in NepJOL published by the NELTA Gandaki Province Committee. The JoNG offers a diverse range of empirical and theoretical articles on EFL pedagogy, the integration of ICT and technology in ELT, and varied areas of English language and literature. We encourage readers to critically read the published manuscripts, gain fresh insights and contribute to the ongoing dialogues by sharing their experiences, skills, and expertise.

This issue includes twelve articles from various fields of applied linguistics, ELT situations, classroom management, ICT in EFL classrooms, and classroom-based research. The first article explores the strategies to manage EFL classrooms in Nepalese schools. Following the interpretative qualitative research, the second article explores secondary-level students' experiences and strategies for learning English in multicultural contexts of classrooms and communities. Similarly, the third article investigates the English language teachers' experiences of using ICTs in their classrooms in rural Nepal focusing on the way how they integrate ICT in teaching and their challenges in EFL classrooms. Likewise, the fourth article summarises the role and coverage of English in Nepal's education system from school to university level in terms of the medium of teaching and learning, curricula, testing and certification.

The fifth article explores the provisions and practices of teaching listening skills in EFL classrooms in the secondary school curriculum in Nepal. Similarly, the sixth article reconnoitres how human self-centeredness and indifference to the ecological balance bring human existence into crisis inviting different apocalypses; and examines the post-pandemic possibilities in Emile St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven*. The seventh article explores secondary-level students' lived experience of using smartphones to support content and language learning; especially, socio-psychological pressures experienced by learners in using smartphones, particularly in schools. The next article analyses the current policies and pedagogies of English language teacher education, the social inequalities associated with English language teaching and their challenges to mitigate those problems.

The ninth article investigates the English teachers' reflective practices and their roles in their professional development. Likewise, the tenth article presents an overview of the significance of AI applications, their role in education, and the practitioners' concurrent situation of applying AI in teaching and learning the English language. Similarly, the eleventh article analyses how students use strategies while reading English texts. Highlighting the growing use of AI tools, the final article examines the impact of ChatGPT on ELTL practices, centring on the experiences of five English teachers.

We anticipate that this volume will inspire and guide educators and researchers in cultivating a research-oriented culture. We extend our gratitude to the authors, reviewers, and the entire NELTA family for their support and encouragement in bringing this issue to fruition. The JoNG will continue to serve as a platform for innovative ideas, exemplary practices, and insightful research in the EFL field.

The articles published in this journal are the property of NELTA Gandaki Province; however, the authors hold full responsibility for the accuracy and liability of the opinions and knowledge expressed in them. We welcome constructive feedback from valued readers and well-wishers to enhance the quality and standards of the JoNG.

- Editors

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ELT Classroom Management Strategies: A Case of Grade Eight in Nepalese Schools

Pitri Raj Banstola, PhD

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Abstract

Managing the classroom is one of the responsibilities of a school teacher. A well-managed classroom enhances English language teaching and learning. However, the trend of ELT classroom management in Nepalese schools is still unresearched. Therefore, the paper aims to explore the ELT classroom management strategies in grade eight of Neplease Schools. Following an ethnographical design under a qualitative research approach and involving students and teachers of nine English classes of grade eight from eight schools in Pokhara city as the participants, I collected qualitative information through observation, interview, and FGD. The findings reveal that teachers attempt to manage their classrooms variously. However, classroom management is still incomplete. Instead of formulating new strategies, the rooms are traditionally organised, and the seats are arranged in orderly rows. The teachers follow unauthentic materials as the textbooks, use usual materials and apply lecture techniques for all the lessons. Teachers, educators, school administration, and policymakers should formulate new strategies for managing English classrooms.

Keywords: Classroom, English language teaching, classroom management, strategies

Introduction

The classroom is a learning platform significantly different from other learning places where students and teachers interact to generate knowledge. This statement comprises the abridgement of the definitions of the classroom by Holliday (1994), Wright (2005), Coetzee et al. (2008) and Tudor (2001).

The classroom is the centre of the interaction. Holliday (1994) and Wright (2005) mention that classroom interactions are somewhat distinctive. And Law and Eckes (2010) write that students need a classroom where they are valued for their contribution. They should feel stress-free while using their new language. Therefore, the language classroom should be student-friendly, where students can practice language without hesitation.

Classrooms vary in terms of students' backgrounds. The ideas of Hes (2001) and Jones (2007) support the idea that the school is heterogeneous, and students are all different. It shows that the background of every individual student varies, and this variation influences classroom activities.

In addition to the students' quality, the school schedule, classroom space, quality of furniture, and teaching aids greatly influence classroom interactions. McCarthy (1991) explains that teachers ask predetermined questions in limited numbers in the classrooms, and students answer questions as if they already know the answer. They are not accessible to answer the questions.

Class size also influences the effectiveness of classroom activities; however, there are no uniform ideas regarding class size. Class sizes in schools in Nepal vary greatly, from one-to-one classes to huge classes consisting of around 100 students. Both, too large and one-to-one classes hinder classroom activities. Classes with few students become highly informal, as Harmer (2008) calls them dull and boring. Therefore, learning can be effective in classrooms with a moderate number of students.

At this juncture, managing the classroom is one of the significant roles of a teacher. Combining, 'classroom' and 'management' creates a broader term, 'classroom management' (CM). In this paper, despite its vast area, CM includes only the classroom organisation and its seating arrangement, balancing the behaviour of the teachers and students, planning lessons, constructing and using teaching materials and decorating the classroom.

Despite innumerable studies in this area, questions such as Are the ELT classrooms well managed? And What strategies do the teachers apply for the management of ELT classrooms in schools in Nepal? were unanswered. Since it was crucial to explore and examine the strategies adopted to manage ELT classrooms in schools in Nepal, collecting qualitative data through observation, interview and FGD, the results were analysed and discussed. It concluded that ELT classrooms are not completely managed, they need to be managed appropriately.

Review of Literature

Beginning with managing themselves, the teachers should organise the classroom, arrange the seats effectively, manage the students' behaviour, plan lessons daily, construct and use teaching materials and decorate the classroom.

Scholars define the CM variously. To Harmer (2007a), using the voice situationally, instructing students, managing the time of students and teacher, using students' mother tongue, creating lesson stages, arranging seats and grouping the students means CM. For Wright (2005), managing time, using students' mother tongue and the behaviour of students and teachers is CM. In the words of Lewis (2002) motivating students, managing constraints and managing the teacher's role is CM. Therefore, managing the classroom is managing all the classroom phenomena and making it suitable for learning.

Garrett (2014) discusses five components of CW where the physical design of the classroom including the arrangement of the desk comes first. Establishing rules and routines, developing a caring relationship, and engaging instruction that increases students' motivation and interest in learning and discipline are the second, third, fourth, and final components.

Classroom Organisation

Classroom structure determines the seating arrangement of the classroom and it also influences the classroom activities. Guidelines for Developing Type Designs for School Buildings in Nepal (GDTDSBN) (2016) declares an average of 0.9 sq. m per student space for primary schools with an absolute minimum of 0.75 sq. m required per student. The 1.2 sq. m per student space is recommended for secondary schools, while the minimum required space is 1.0 sq. m per student. Likewise, it prescribes a seven-meter distance between the board and the last row of benches, and the minimum distance between the board and the first row of benches is two meters. The minimum floor-to-ceiling height should be 2.75 meters in the mountain. The classroom size should be based on the

number of students, and there should be two doors in a classroom with more than 50 students. The doors should be open towards the nearest exit, and at least one door needs to be wider for wheelchair access. Natural daylight should be exploited to minimise the dependence on artificial lighting. North-facing windows are preferable to the windows facing in other directions.

Seating Arrangement

Seats should be arranged based on the classroom size, student number, and furniture quality. The seating arrangement highly influences classroom activities. Scholars have introduced various seating arrangements, including their strengths and weaknesses. Jones (2007) observes that mobile furniture supports classroom interaction. However, it is hard to manage large classrooms with such furniture. Fixed sets of furniture hinder interactions in the classrooms. In a crowded classroom, teachers hardly reach some students. Introducing seating arrangements such as Orderly Rows, Circles, Horseshoes, and Separate Tables, Harmer (2007a) says that in orderly rows seating arrangement, the teacher views all the students. Lecturing is more straightforward, and the teacher can easily walk up and down.

Behaviour of the Teacher and Students

Managing participants' behaviour in the classroom is one of the teacher's significant tasks. A teacher's physical presence in the classroom can have various meanings in various contexts. Harmer (2007a) describes the presence of the teacher in the classroom in four terms: proximity, appropriacy, movement, and awareness and, he suggests teachers to be simple and logical. For Harmer (2008), preparation, keeping records, and being reliable are the significant tasks of a teacher.

Harmer (2007a) suggests teachers minimise teacher talking time (TTT) to increase students' talking time (STT). After managing themself, the teacher should manage students' behaviour, which can be a challenging task for the teachers, however, some students would be cooperative and laborious (Coetzee et al., 2008). The teacher should also deal with various authorised and non-authorized groups in the classroom, as Holliday (1994) speculates there can be groups and pairs. Each pair and group will have its own culture and may have non-pedagogic functions such as playing, passing messages, taunting, supporting the teacher and forming relationships. Every member of this group will have pressure, power, and gang groups. The teacher forms formal groups for interaction, and the students form informal groups for various non-academic purposes. Therefore, the teacher should manage all these groups.

For Coetzee et al. (2008), educators dealing with all students in the same way is not appropriate. However, dealing with every student individually in a multilevel classroom is not only a challenge but also a controversial task for teachers. In common sense, dealing with the students individually is an appropriate approach.

Classroom Interaction

The classroom interaction generates knowledge. The more the students interact, the better they learn the language. The nature and types of classroom interaction and students' participation in such interactions depend on classroom context, including the experience of the teacher and the background of students as Tudor (2001) discloses, "….for another student, the same activity may be a stressful and unwelcomed experience …" (p. 12). Students enjoy interactive context; however, sometimes, the same context becomes stressful and unwelcoming for some other students.

Teachers should focus more on student-student interaction than teacher-student and student-teacher interactions. For Allwright and Bailey (1991) the significant challenges are participants' turn distribution, matching tasks and groups, tone, and code while organising the interactions. Brown (2010) announces that the benefit of classroom interaction is that the students talk more than the

teacher. Ensuring successful learning during interaction in the classroom becomes a significant issue, and every individual should entertain the best possible learning opportunities.

The proper use of techniques makes language teaching interactive. Regarding the use of technique in ELT classrooms, Banstola (2018) and Banstola and Steve (2023) found that by conducting techniques such as role-plays, discussions, group works, pair works, translations, question and answer, storytelling, essay writing, language quiz contests, eloquence, and drilling, the student teachers promoted interactions in ELT classrooms during their teaching practice. However, Thakuri (2012) found that most teachers started their lessons without warm-up activities and many of them promoted teacher-centred activities in their classrooms. Only a few teachers were found encouraging students to interact. Panta (2019) found that teachers and technology were inseparable components. Inadequate resources and orderly rows hinder classroom interactions.

Number of students in the classroom determines the effectiveness of classroom interaction. Too many and a few students may be problematic to make the context interactive. The large number of students in an English classroom can be both a challenge and an opportunity for teachers. Banstola (2023) concludes that the teacher never gets bored in a large class. The teacher can empower some leading students with the roles of a teacher if there are many students in a class. However, sometimes, the teacher feels outnumbered in the class. The teacher may feel frustrated by the overloaded task. It is also a challenge to pay attention to all the students. Managing appropriate topics, assigning equal tasks for all students, creating a proper atmosphere, and selecting suitable language are the key elements to keep in mind for effective interactions.

Using students' mother tongue in the classroom is a debatable issue. On this issue, Edward (2010) writes that teaching through two languages is a permanent or semi-permanent feature in bilingual classrooms. In monolingual classes, students may be more tempted to speak in their shared native language than English when working together in pairs or groups (Jones, 2007). Davies and Pearse (2008) state that the possible uses of English in the classroom include greetings, farewells, instructions, inquires, feedback and chat. Teachers use English only for limited purposes. The use of English also depends on the planning and preparation of the teacher.

Hence, for successful interactions in the English classroom, the teacher should choose an appropriate topic, assign equal tasks to all students or groups, create a suitable atmosphere, and promote the English language.

Planning, Materials and ELT Technology

Focusing on the importance of lesson planning, Davies and Pearse (2008) write that it avoids potential problems in the material, exploits strengths, and converts the material into lively classroom activities**.** Similarly, Farrel (2010) opines that a clear plan maximises students' time and minimises their confusion. Farrel (2010) suggests considering students' backgrounds while planning the lesson. However, Thakuri (2012) found that none of the teachers used written daily lesson plans.

While planning the lesson, the teacher should manage the teaching materials based on the lesson, in addition to daily use materials such as textbooks, boards, markers, and erasers. Gnawali (2018) found that teachers only use chalk sticks, markers, boards, textbooks, curriculums, and teacher guides.

Appropriate use of an attractive material makes ELT more effective. Besides the daily used materials, a teacher should manage lesson-specific materials. The teacher should also be skilled at operating ELT devices such as radio, television, speakers, computers, photocopiers, multimedia projectors, language laboratories, interactive boards, the Internet and supplementary materials as per the demands of the lesson.

Various scholars have argued for and against using and not using a textbook. According to Harmer (2007b), a good textbook offers a syllabus, language, content, audio cassettes, methodologies, and other accessories; however, if misused, it imposes learning styles and content on students and teachers, follows an unrelenting format, and sometimes, it is found culturally inappropriate. Regarding it, Harmer (2007a) critically writes that teachers must use the provided textbooks creatively as proposals for action rather than obligatory instructional manuals. However, using textbooks only can be boring and inappropriate. Therefore, it needs more variety. For Harmer (2008) regarding textbook use, the teacher has four alternatives: ' omit,' 'add,' 'adapt' and 'replace. 'Therefore, the teacher should select a textbook carefully and use it appropriately. However, using a textbook is not mandatory.

The growing trend of using ICT in ELT classrooms in Nepal is forcing teachers to be techno-literate. However, some schools may need to be well-equipped with these technologies. In this regard, Holland and Skinner (2009) found no electricity in schools. Metsämuuronen and Ilic's (2018) findings revealed that despite a high concentration of resources, infrastructure, and development aid in urban centres, this was not reflected in an uneven distribution of high-performing schools. Laudari and Maher's (2019) significant finding was that factors related to ICT policies, lack of ICT-related teacher training, and lack of resources hindered the use of technology. Panta (2019) reported that teachers and technology were inseparable parts of English teaching and learning. Saud and Laudari (2023) found that the challenges of using ICT in ELT classrooms were misuse or addiction, inadequate infrastructure and poor connectivity, financial barriers, lack of adequate training, and insufficient supportive mechanisms. Hence, properly managing the ICT in the ELT classroom has been a great challenge for teachers. Nevertheless, the teacher can perform better without using ICTs. As Harmer (2007b) shares, "There is a lot you can do with minimal or even no resources" (p. 175).

Classroom Decoration

Regarding classroom decoration, Garrett (2014) writes that the classroom should be made a welcoming and comfortable place by arranging various materials such as posters, students' creations, calendars, routines, and famous quotations. Decorating the classroom walls is a common way to do this.

This review broadened the knowledge of the topic, clarified the problem, improved the methodology, and determined the procedures for information collection and analysis. It also identified a gap that none of the previous studies has answered: What strategies do the teachers apply for managing ELT classrooms in schools in Nepal? Therefore, this study was carried out to explore and examine the strategies adopted for ELT classroom management.

Methodology

The paper is part of a large-scale qualitative study guided by the philosophy of relativism, which believes in multiple realities. Purposively selecting grade eight of eight schools namely Greenland, Padama, Children Home, Vedanta, Jupiter, Pravat, Janata NM, Janata EM, and Riverside out of 271 schools of Pokhara City, students of these classes and English teachers teaching in those classes as samples, the information was collected through unstructured tools such as observation, interview, and FGD. The information was collected through class observation for more than six months. I noted some useful points, took photographs and made audio and video recordings during observation. I interviewed the teachers frequently and conducted FGDs with the students. I avoided being judgemental by creating an appropriate atmosphere where the participants could share their ideas, feelings and experiences (Cohen et al., 2010). Transcribing the recordings and following Kumar (2011) to identify the main themes of the collected information, I analysed the information by quoting the informants' views. The collection of consent before informants' involvement in the study, the use of

debriefing and member-check techniques, and the use of pseudonyms ensure the study's trustworthiness.

Results

The paper primarily focuses on the significant components of ELT CM, including classroom organization, seating arrangements and planning, materials and ELT technology, student and teacher behaviour and interaction in the classroom, and classroom decoration. The results are presented under five themes in the following sections.

Classroom Organization

The Greenland classroom, which measured 5.58 m long, 4.57 m wide, and 3.35m high, was found on the second floor of the two-story concrete building. The floor was cemented, and the walls and ceiling were plastered; however, they were not coloured correctly. A single door, a pair of windows, and ventilation made the classroom bright and airy. The incomplete electric wiring with only a bare frame, seemed messy.

Likewise, Padma's classroom was on the second floor of a two-story concrete building with a length of 7.84 m, a width of 5.05 m, and a height of 2.92 m. The whitewashed walls of the rectangular classroom were full of students' handwriting. The slightly raised front part of the classroom under the board comforted the teacher while writing on the board. Though only the door remained closed during class, the fixed ventilation and two backside windows brightened the classroom. The back side of the classroom was brighter than the front part.

In the same way, the classroom, which measured 6.4 m long, 7.69m wide, and 3.20 m high, was located on the ground floor of a two-story concrete building of Children's Home. The walls and ceiling were plastered, and the floor was cemented; however, the yellow walls had a long yellowish tinge. Though one of the two doors was permanently closed, two windows, one on each side, made the classroom bright.

Similarly, a medium-sized classroom with 5.54m, 4.75m, and 2.29m in length, breadth, and height was on the ground floor of a two-story building of Vadenta. The floor of the room was roughly cemented. The walls and the ceiling were plastered but were not coloured correctly. The eco of side classes dominated over the spontaneous chirping of birds and insects from the jungle. A whiteboard was placed over the much larger blackboard. The classroom was bright with daylight because of a door, window and ventilation.

Likewise, the classroom, which measured 7.16 m long, 4.93m wide, and 2.69m high, was located on Jupiter's third floor of a four-story concrete building. The stone-textured lower halves of the walls, the whitewashed upper walls and ceiling, the smoothly cemented floor, a door with ventilation over it, and the windows made the classroom bright and attractive.

The classroom was located at the centre of a one-story building of Pravat with 7.49m length, 5.08m breadth, and 2.69m height. The walls and ceiling of the classroom were plastered and painted, and the floor was tiled. The walls' lower halves were painted sky blue, and the upper halves and the ceiling were whitewashed. The room was damp and brightened by the electric light because only the door of the room was closed, and red curtains covered the three windows.

The classroom was on the ground floor of the two-story old building of Janata, NM, which was 6.60 m long, 4.27m wide, and 2.48m high. The walls were roughly plastered, and the floor was cemented; however, the walls and ceiling needed to be washed properly. Despite the door, three windows, and several ventilations, the room was dark and damp because the windows were closed, and the ventilations were fixed.

The grade eight classroom was on the second floor of a two-story old building, 6.01m, 5.02m, and 2.69 m in length, breadth, and height, respectively. A door and a window on each side made the classroom bright. The walls and ceiling were smooth and well-coloured, and the floor was cemented.

The classroom for class eight was located in a temporarily constructed building in Riverside. It was square and 4.95m long, 2.72m wide, and 4.11m high. The room was made of concrete blocks, and the tin roof was bright because of a door and one window on both sides.

The average space per student was 0.944 sq.m in Greenland, 0.989 sq. m in the Padma, 0.984 in Children Homes and 1.687 in Vedanta. In the same way, 1.60 sq. m in Jupiter, 0.928 sq. m in Pravat, 0.599 sq. m in Janata NM, 1.00 sq. m in Janata EM and 1.22 sq. m in Riverside.

Seating Arrangements

In all classrooms, the furniture sets were arranged in orderly rows facing the board. Twenty-seven students were placed in two rows of wooden furniture on metal frames in Greenland. Boys were found changing their seats frequently during sessions. A medium-sized whiteboard with a big tear at the centre, scaffolded by an old wooden desk, was placed on a cemented blackboard in front of the class.

On the front wall of the class, a medium-sized whiteboard was placed on a big blackboard in Padma. The two fixed wooden furniture sets on metal frames were arranged in two rows for forty-seven students.

A whiteboard donated by a club was hung on the front wall of the class in Children Homes. Fifty students were arranged in three rows of wooden fixed furniture sets on metal frames. Male and female students were together in a row but on separate benches. An old wooden podium was at the front of the class to comfort the teacher.

Fifteen boys were arranged in seven sets of faded wooden furniture, ordered in two rows in Vedanta. Likewise, the sets of green plastic and metal furniture were arranged in two rows, with enough space between the rows at the front for 22 students in Jupiter. A podium was at the front of the class, and the whiteboard was hung on the front wall.

The fixed sets of plastic and metal furniture were arranged in three rows, with enough space in front and between the rows in Pravat. Each desk had a drawer under it that was wide enough to write comfortably. The students were arranged by gender specifically. The furniture sets were arranged in two rows with enough space in front and between the rows in Janata NM. The female students were mainly on the right side, and the male students were on the other. However, there was no gender-wise separation.

In Janata EM, the long sets of well-polished wooden furniture fixed on metal frames were arranged in two rows with enough space between them. A donated whiteboard was hung on a blackboard.

Five fixed sets of simple furniture with enough space to walk around were arranged in two rows in Riverside. A whiteboard was placed on a blackboard on the front wall.

Behaviour and Interaction of the Participants

Some students, curiously, initiated the interaction on current issues. In Uma's class, one of the male students asked, "Miss, Nepal ma pani CORONA virus aako ho ra? Manipal ma eutaa patient layaako cha re ke" (Miss, is there CORONA virus even in Nepal? As I heard a Corona infected patient has been admitted to Manipal). She responded, "Malai tes sambandhi tha chaina" (I do not know this). The student again added, "Birat sir le sabia lai mask lagayera aaija vaneko cha re ke" (Birat sir has asked everyone to wear a mask while coming to school). Instead of addressing the student's curiosity,

Uma shifted the students' attention to the lesson saying, “aba two minutes hai” (Now, you have only two minutes to complete the task). This discourse showed that the student wanted to discuss the contemporary issue of CORONA in the classroom; however, the teacher ignored it. Despite the sincerity of the issue, Uma refused to continue the discourse because the students raised the issue when their lesson started.

Pointing at a crack at the centre of the whiteboard, one of the students said, "Miss, ramrod dekhauna ko lagi to pani me tidings na” while Uma was cleaning the board. (Miss, please erase even that crack to beautify the board). In the same way, one of the students having low vision complained: “Maile aankha dekheko chaina kya miss, problem bhairachha”. (I have not seen it, Miss. I am having a low vision problem). The teacher responded to the studentas, “Agaadi gayera basna ta ja problem bhaya”. (If you have a problem, go to the front row). When Uma’s mobile rang, one of her students said, “Miss, keep your mobile in a silent mood”. Uma responded, “Sorry”. On the same issue, another student added in Hindi, “Galati sab se hoti hain." (Everybody commits mistakes.) Uma used the Nepali language to instruct, warn and evaluate her students such as, "Padhne belaa maa bahira gayera basne” (You bunked your class while I was teaching). Students were interacting in Nepali. The teachers and students were found using English only for greetings. There was no practice of taking turns. However, while Padam was writing on the board, one of the students said, “Sir, spelling wrong”. Padam thanked the student for pointing out his error.

Likewise, Ramesh introduced the topic "Federalism in Nepal" and initiated an interactive lesson. Despite several attempts, he failed to engage his students in the lesson. Similarly, while remaining silent in class, Dip encouraged his students to practice anything of their interest; however, they remained passive.

Showing much dissatisfaction with her job, Uma complained to the school administration for not supporting her in creating an English environment. Regarding the level of students, she said, "In community schools, students are weak. If I speak English, they complain. The administration does nothing.” These words show the conflict between Uma and the school administration. Padam’s students complained, “He does not let us go to the washroom even in the emergency of menstruation. Many of us go home getting permission from our class teacher."

Planning, Materials and ELT Technology

The effectiveness of classroom activities depends on the teacher's lesson planning. None of the teachers planned their lessons daily. However, one teacher was found using a chart in only one lesson, and he was also found using the multimedia projector with the support of an IT teacher for one lesson. Uma replaced the textbook with an unauthorised practice book.

All teachers asked the same questions: " What lesson will we discuss today"? "Do you have a red pen"? Uma was found asking for time repeatedly in her class as, “kati chha time”? (how much time do we have now?) She also used her mobile phone frequently to check the time. Some teachers used students’ books and asked for paper to erase the board. All the practices showed that teachers need daily lesson plans to enter their classes.

Responding to the question, "How often do you use ICT in your classroom"? Padan said, "Such materials can be used. It is not done by now... If we use the computer and the projector, they will learn more". Likewise, responding to another question, “How often does your teacher use Mobile Phone, Internet, Computer and other devices in your English classroom”? One student in FGD answered, “We go to the computer lab in computer period”. Hence, it shows that the teacher does not use the computer laboratory to teach English.

Well-decorated Classrooms Promote English Learning

Many of the classrooms were undecorated and some walls needed to be better decorated because a few faded posters, pictures, charts and students' paintings made it unattractive. Other materials I found on the walls were class routines, wall clocks, calendars, frames of gods and goddesses, school calendars, a timetable, a name list of students and empty wooden pinboards with green falatin cloth.

The playthings and some rough sheets of paper spread on the tin box at the top of a steel cupboard at the backside of the class the two frames of the gods and goddesses on the wooden rack in the right corner of the classroom and a half-filled dustbin with a broom at the right corner unbeautified the classroom of Padma. Likewise, a corner bookcase with some coursebooks, dirty sheets of paper, and a small white plate for students' presence was placed at the door but not in use in Janata NM and did not contribute to English learning. The room had a ceiling fan with twisted and crumpled blades in Jupiter.

A jar of drinking water on a metal frame with a red plastic jug, a wooden bookcase with a few dirty sheets of paper and two ceiling fans installed in the Janata NM and Janata EM contributed nothing to the English learning. However, some students' drawings, charts and flowers, 'English Speaking Zone' on A4 size white paper, a chart of fundamental rights and a students' name list, a map of Nepal and a human anatomy chart on the wall of Janata EM assisted English learning to some extent. However, the cassette player, the multimedia projector in Janata NM and Janata EM, and a corner library were set up to promote English learning. Besides these practices, no new strategy was used to decorate the classrooms.

Discussion

Appropriate seating arrangement in a well-organized classroom promotes interactions where students learn English successfully. The organization of the room influences the seating arrangement in the school. However, the result shows that only the classrooms of Vedanta, Janata EM, and Riverside meet the minimum criteria of GDTDSBN (2016), which is 0.9 sq.m. per student for primary schools and an absolute minimum of 0.75 sq.m per student for secondary-level students.

None of the classrooms meets the minimum length and height requirement of GDTDSBV (2016) which is 7 meters and 2.75 meters, respectively, in the mountains. In the small and dark classroom, the teacher and students hardly interact. Only the five classrooms have direct access to the outdoors and the arrangement of permanently fixed sets of furniture in all the classrooms contrasts with the provision of GDTDSBN (2016) "classroom should have direct access to the outdoor for multiple learning opportunities… furniture layout should be considered to have several flexible layout options…." (p. 16).

Likewise, opposing GDTDSBN (2016) guidelines, "Two doors shall be provided if the number of students exceeds 50. All doors should open towards the nearest exit, and at least one door needs to be wider for wheelchair access". Only one classroom with 50 students had two doors; however, the back door was fixed. Neither did the doors open outwards towards the nearest exit, nor were the doors wide enough for easy access for wheelchairs in the classrooms.

All the classrooms, except two, lack natural brightness. In Pravat, despite the well-painted walls and ceiling and the beautifully tiled floor, the classroom was found damp and dark because the door and windows were closed, and the windows were covered by red curtains blocking the sunlight and air. Therefore, the students suffer from the glare on the whiteboard in the Pravat classroom, which contrasts with the provision of GDTDSBN (2016). Natural daylight should be exploited, and the glare

must be avoided. Though the classrooms are not as bright as they should have been, no case has been reported as hypothesised by GDTDSBN (2016) as "all the rooms and facilities should have visibilities, so that the pupils can have protection from abuse by teachers or older students, particularly during after school hours" (p. 1). Hence, as Khaniya and Williams. (2009) concluded, “classroom conditions remained less than ideal in many schools” (p. 202). The condition of the classrooms could have been better.

The primary and significant components of CM, organisation, and seating arrangement determine the type and quality of classroom activities, as Wright (2005) focuses on managing 'space' while discussing classroom management. However, the teachers can only support the school authority in classroom management because monetary decisions go beyond the teacher’s capacity. The findings show that the seats in all the classrooms are arranged in orderly rows where approximately five students are accommodated on each set facing the action zone, which resembles the findings of Gnawali (2018). It is also supported by Thakuri (2012) that the seatings were arranged in rows and columns with very little use of classroom space by the teacher.

For Harmer (2007a) the orderly row is a more appropriate seating arrangement for a large class where the teacher has a clear view of all the students, and the students see their teacher. It enables the teacher to lecture by maintaining eye contact with the students. The teacher quickly walks up and down and deals with the whole class by making personal contact with individual students**.** The teachers need not arrange and rearrange the seats. A slightly raised platform at the front of the class comforts the teacher when viewing the students' behaviour. However, it hampers communicative activities. The backbenchers hardly hear the frontbenchers and the teacher. All this means that interactive activities are less effective in this arrangement. As Holland and Skinner (2009) and Khaniya and Willams (2009) found, there was no problem with furniture and electricity.

In the same way, Banstola’s (2022) findings that some teachers struggle to engage their students in their lessons are reflected in Ramesh's failure to engage his students while introducing the new topic 'Federalism in Nepal' and Dip's inability to promote autonomy in one of his lessons. It contrasts with the idea of Law and Eckes (2010) that the students should be wanted and respected for themselves and their contribution, as stress-free as possible, where they feel free to attempt to use their new language without fear of correction, ridicule and punishment. The finding contrasts Garrett's (2014) idea that a productive learning environment can often be noisy because learning is not passive.

As Holliday (1994) supposes, multiple complex interactions take place in the classroom … one of the students’ curiosities about the COVID- 19 was ignored by Uma because of her limitations, however, considering Holliday’s (1994) view that the purpose of education is not only to teach language skills but also to take students through a complex process in preparation for life in their society, the teacher should have managed time for the discussion on COVID-19 in the classroom so that students would be informed about the infection, symptoms, effects, and precautions. They would make themselves ready to avoid the virus.

Jivan’s experience, "They have their groups and gangs. When a gang member is punished, the other gang members laugh at the punished one", matches with Padma FGD members’ disclosure, “There are three groups and different gangs." Both classroom trends reflect Holliday's (1994) assumptions that informal groups within the classroom will also have non-pedagogic functions. Therefore, teachers need more strategies despite calling parents and punishing students.

Asking a piece of paper to erase the writing on the board, erasing the writing with their hands, repeatedly checking the time on their mobile, and conforming it with students during the lesson shows their inconsistent, unplanned, unskilled, and unprepared classroom teaching practices. This finding is

supported by the report of Thakuri (2012) that instead of planning the lesson, the teachers entered the classroom with a marker ignoring the students' greetings and asking for homework and the page number of the lesson to be taught. Both the findings opposed the idea of Davies and Pearse (2008) that the teachers should have planned their lessons to avoid potential problems with the material

The inartistic decoration and bare walls made the classroom unwelcoming which goes against the principles of Garrett (2014) that there should be an aesthetically pleasing classroom environment. Bare walls may make the classroom like a cold and impersonal institution.

In addition to the required number of furniture sets for students and a whiteboard in each classroom, a few additional materials, such as plastic at the corner, a steel cupboard with some dirty paper and a tin box at the top, exhibit the untidy management of the classroom in Padma, the old wooden stand for the teacher and a small and unmaintained whiteboard placed right outside the door for students' presence in the Children Home, a wooden teacher's stand in front of the classroom in Jupiter, the jar of drinking water on a metal frame with a red plastic jug on it and the wooden bookcase in the right corner of the room with few pieces of dirty papers in Janata NM and EM exhibit the untidy management of the classroom. A corner library in a donated cupboard in the left corner of the room consisting of sixteen books in Riverside shows a clear picture of the decoration of the ELT classroom in the schools.

The handwritten charts of grammar rules and structure, a class routine and small pieces of students' faded paintings pasted on the blackboard in Greenland closely resemble Garrett's (2014) view on classroom decoration. Likewise, Padma's three small paintings pasted on the uncovered part of the blackboard, handwritten charts pasted on the wall and frames of gods and goddesses neither decorated the classroom nor enhanced the ELT because they were tedious. The English language written in the paintings needed to be complete, and there needed to be language in the frames. However, spread playthings and some rough sheets of paper on the tin box at the top of a steel cupboard at the backside of the class, the frames of the god and the goddess on the wooden rack in the right corner of the classroom, and a half-filled dustbin with a broom at the right corner evidence the ugly atmosphere of the school, which in Garrett's (2014) words, is congested and trafficked. The condition of all these classrooms displays the teachers' deco-illiteracy because neither these materials decorate the classroom nor promote English learning.

The permanently installed multimedia projector, some small drawings of the student, the wall clock and a bookcase with some course books, charts and flowers, 'English Speaking Zone' on A4 size white paper, a cassette player, the map of Nepal and the human anatomy chart in Janata EM and Janata NM demonstrate the teacher's passion for the classroom decoration. Likewise, the Corner Library, four charts of numerical tables on A4 size paper, and the half-hung faded painting of students show the teacher's ignorance and negligence towards classroom decoration in Riverside. Hence, the classrooms need to be appropriately decorated. A few areas of some classrooms are decorated unskillfully and unattractively with old, deemed, and faded materials with little, inaccurate, or no language. Coetzee et al. (2008) report, "It has often been observed that educators do not manage classrooms according to what they have learned in educator preparation programs. Rather, they manage as their classrooms were managed when they were students" (p. 163); the teachers do not use any strategies to manage their classrooms in better ways.

Conclusion and Implications

The way of CM depends on the teacher's skills and the condition of the school. The quality of the CM influences the whole classroom activities. The CM includes the classroom organisation and arrangement of seats, managing the behaviour of students and teachers, classroom interaction, lesson

planning, managing teaching materials and ELT technologies, and classroom decoration. After analysing the qualitative data, it was found that the English classrooms are managed variously, however, they need to be managed more adequately. Classrooms are managed traditionally without applying any specific strategies. The classrooms must be better organised, and the seats must be arranged appropriately. In all the classrooms, the seats are arranged traditionally, and this arrangement needs to be fully exploited. Teachers and students need to behave appropriately. Neither the teachers plan their lessons nor decorate their classes.

Therefore, the ELT classrooms should be organised to ensure 0.9 sq. m per student space with an absolute minimum of 0.75 sq. m per student for the primary level. There should be 1.2 sq.m per student for the secondary level, while the minimum space required is 1.0 sq. m per student. The distance between the board and the last rows of the benches should be seven meters, and the minimum distance between the board and the first row of the benches should be 2 meters. The minimum floor-to-ceiling height should be 2.75 meters in the mountain. The concerned authority should replace the Orderly Rows seating arrangement with Circles or Horsehoes, or Separate Tables, or Solo seating arrangements based on context of the school. If Orderly Rows is chosen, it should be exploited fully. The School Management Committee and school administration should organise the classroom and manage the furniture quality. Arranging seats, planning lessons, and using attractive teaching materials appropriately promote an interactive atmosphere in the school. The teachers should be student-friendly by developing cordial relationships with the students and sustaining the relationship. The classroom should be made a pleasant and welcoming place by decorating the classroom with attractive materials.

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Learning English in Multicultural Contexts: Experiences and Strategies of Secondary Level Students in Rural Nepal

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Abstract

How an additional language can be learned effectively has become an issue of interest among scholars of second language acquisition research. This study intended to explore secondary-level students' experiences and strategies for learning English in multicultural contexts of classrooms and communities. This is a qualitative interpretive research based on a case study design, where five cases from different cultural groups were purposively selected from the students of Grade 11 studying at two different secondary schools in Kapilvastu. The information was collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation, which was thematically analysed to report the findings. The study findings revealed that students generated self-learning strategies to fit their situations which tended to be influenced by their socio-cultural and economic realities. Based on the research findings, it is suggested for the adoption of culturally informed pedagogy to value students' socio-cultural realities including the local languages in practice which provide useful learning resources to enhance proficiency in English.

***Keywords*:** Multicultural context, learning strategies, language ecology, self-learning, English learning.

Introduction

Researchers in the last few decades have shown growing interest to discover why some language learners become more successful than the other learners (Przybył & Pawlak, 2023) despite instruction being the same. In particular, an investigation of how learners in multicultural contexts experience learning English and what techniques effective learners employ for efficient learning (Graham, 1997) can be expected to improve classroom learning. As such, this paper intends to explore learners' experiences of English learning in a multicultural classroom context focusing on the strategy choice for learning various aspects and skills of the English language.

Although learning strategies and learning skills are often taken synonymously, a distinction is made between the two. Learning strategies are generally taken as higher order skills which tend to represent abstract mental processes learners execute to learn something, while learning skills are considered as concrete techniques executed by learners particularly to facilitate their learning, which constitutes a part of a broader language learning process (Graham, 1997). Learning strategies are the

consciously selected procedures undertaken by the learners in a specific learning context to achieve learning goals by being aware of needs, preferences, goals and problems (White, 2008). Learning strategies research and learning strategy instruction can be beneficial to develop a better understanding of how learning of language takes place in different contexts (White, 2008) including multicultural community contexts. Studies on learning strategies and experiences provide teachers with relevant knowledge on learners' preference for strategy use in language learning and help them design appropriate classroom activities to fit learners' characteristics (Przybył & Pawlak, 2023).

This research intended to investigate the experience and strategies of secondary students learning English as a foreign language in multicultural contexts of Nepal Tarai. As students' learning strategies could be socio-culturally situated, it has explored how secondary students in multicultural settings perceived English learning and practised through various activities to develop competency in using English. The study has the following research questions:

1 How is secondary students' experience of learning English in a multicultural community contexts?
2 What strategies do secondary students adopt to learn English as a foreign language in multicultural community contexts?

Linguistic Ecology and Language Learning Strategies

Learning experience and strategies of second language learners have tended to be influenced by the socio-linguistic contexts where a second language is used. Language learning can be influenced by multiple ecological factors including classroom contexts, socio-cultural belief systems, socio-linguistic realities, institutional decision making and policies (Gopalakrishnan, 2022). Presenting an ecological view of second language learning, Ushioda (2015) argued that learners tend to be in a dynamic interaction with their physical, social, psychological, linguistic and cultural contexts, where one influences the other constituting an ecosystem. Indicating problems in treating context and learners as distinct entities, he described the learner-context relationship as 'mutually constitutive and co-adaptive' thereby creating a wider learning situation incorporating physical, psychological and socio-cultural contexts.

While Ushioda used an ecological perspective to explain the interconnectedness between learner motivation and learner context, Oxford (2017) extended the concept to learning strategies as she believed that learners can utilise strategic tactics such as goals, motives and intentions, the basic characteristics of learners, to further enhance their learning through interaction in the context. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner (2005), Oxford (2017) explained a connection of learning strategies with learner-contexts, which include (i) the learners and their immediate physical and social contexts which include peer group, home, school and community, providing a resource for learning strategies (microsystems); (ii) the learners and parents, the learners and the school/teachers, the learners and the religious institution, the learners' families and teachers (mesosystem); (iii) the larger social systems such as politics, policies and decisions (exosystem); (iv) the broader culture and subcultures including shared beliefs systems and socio-psychological tendencies on religion, science, family, education and politics (macrosystem); and (v) time-based situations such as the times of war, pandemic, and natural disasters (chronosystem). Oxford (2017) described how these five broader systems, which formulate a learner-context ecosystem, influence the learning strategies of a learner. For example, the traits of peer group, family and school can influence learner motivation to use language learning strategies, and successful learning strategy use can generate further motivation. Even culture in the classroom and family, the parts of microsystems, can influence the use of learning strategies. The components of the mesosystem such as peers, the family, the community and the school can influence the learning strategy choice of

second language learners. For example, teaching techniques of religious institutions (temples, mosque) practising certain cultures are likely to influence the use of learning strategies by students. The components of the ecosystem including politics and policies can influence the learning strategy choice of L2 learners. For example, the use of a selected language as a medium of instruction or explanation can lead the learners to prefer a certain learning strategy. Macrosystems, which include broader cultures and sub-cultures shaping specific belief systems, tend to approve students' certain learning strategies over others thereby strengthening or weakening them. From the ecological perspective, Oxford (2017) argued that while cultural beliefs shape learning strategy choices by students, the practice of certain strategies over time can reshape cultural beliefs and ideologies. Chronosystem, which is operable at every system mentioned above can be influential in the selection of learning strategies. For example, during Covid-19 Pandemic, students in rural Nepal practiced learning English through radio, gathering at a *Chautaro* in small groups, Facebook Messenger and Zoom meeting thereby promoting a virtual learning culture. The influence of teaching-learning culture developed in the ancient education system can be observed even today. In Nepal's ancient education system, learners needed to read the selected texts such as Veda, Mimamsa, Sahitya, Jyotish and Byakaran repeatedly to learn by heart without necessarily comprehending meaning and teachers emphasised practice, rote learning and lecturing (Nepal National Educational Planning Commission, 1956). Repeated practice and rote learning strategies can be observed even in English classroom, where teachers encourage their students to recite texts for content learning.

Language Learner Language in Multicultural Context

Multilingual learners' strategic choice of language seems to vary in multicultural contexts when they try to learn certain language aspects or skills. In this regard, Cohen (2014) argues that educators need to value the role of learners' strategic use of their mother tongue which supports in learning a target language. His focus is that by investigating the learners' strategies of using multiple languages to learn English as a target language, a set of strategy preferences of learners can be discovered that can account for cognitive operations used for learning grammar, vocabulary and language skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing. Moreover, as language and culture are closely connected, the linguistic background of the students appears to determine their ways of thinking and behaving in particular sociocultural settings (Grenfell & Harris, 2017). When the home language and the language of school and community differ, learners in multicultural contexts might learn to operate different learning strategies in their attempts to develop competency in an additional language.

Students' cultural background has tended to influence their choice of strategies to learn an additional language. For example, comparing Chinese and British cultural contexts of teaching and learning English, Gu (2010) identified that the sociocultural background of teachers and students along with ideological, emotional, economic and political factors influenced the teaching and learning of English and suggested the adoption of culturally sensitive contextual pedagogy for effective learning. Oxford (1996) reported that Japanese students preferred to work alone, use analytic strategies, search for minute details, and use reasoning to achieve accuracy instead of engaging in personal interactions. However, many Korean and Arabic students seemed to prefer memorization unlike Hispanics, the ethnic students from Mexico, Cuba and South or Central America, who prefer to use the strategies of inferring, predicting and collaborating with others. Reflecting on his experiences of learning English, Canagarajah (2015) argued that multilingual students are engaged in the translingual practice of shifting across languages, which is regarded as a socially situated process of meaning-making that involves contextual and ecological affordances. Student engagement and participation is also likely to

be affected by the culture where they have grown up. Therefore, it is reasonable to investigate how students from different cultural contexts experience and learn English as a foreign language.

Culture and Strategy Choice

In the context of Taiwan, (Huang, 2018) university students' primary goal tended to pass the examination and get a university degree, which motivated them to adopt the cognitive strategy of learning through repeated practice of learning material. This supported them to develop declarative knowledge through memorization of vocabulary, grammar and language content that supported them to develop test-taking skills and the use of self-learning strategies. Even the students intending to learn English for communication experienced difficulty in learning English due to the foreign language context that limited input of English depriving them of using strategies of interaction. An earlier study (Lee & Heinz, 2016) in South Korea revealed that self-regulated learning strategies tended to be more effective in learning English in EFL context and students preferred to use metacognitive strategies for monitoring progress and cognitive strategies such as analysing texts.

Investigating the relationship between language learning strategies and cultural-educational factors in Israel and Russia, Levine et al. (1996) reported different learning strategies used by participants from different cultural contexts where new immigrants from the former Soviet Union to Israel used the strategies such as rote learning of rules, sentences and grammar exercises to learn grammar and tended to learn vocabulary list by heart and preferred to be tested what they had memorised. However, old-timers, those living in Israel for longer than five years, preferred to use strategies such as paraphrasing and making sentences of their own using a new vocabulary to learn grammar, and strategies of seeking collocation and association to learn new vocabulary. Indeed, learners from different cultural contexts brought the ideologically influenced strategies of their home contexts to learn language in new contexts. Later, Jang and Jiménez (2011) claimed that learners' linguistic and cultural background led them to adopt specific strategies such as remaining silent in the classroom to resist teacher behaviour when they felt marginalised due to the distinct characteristics of their culture, language or ethnicity. However, Grenfell and Harris (2013) in Britain discovered that home culture influenced learners' learning strategy selection as they learned to use them from family members and suggested that schools should value the role of a second language in learning an additional language because bilinguals learning French were found more benefitted than monolinguals learning French. Moreover, instruction on language learning strategy was found effective as it supported minimising students' learning pressure. An earlier study by Wharton (2000) suggested that the bilingual experience of learners was more influential than gender or ethnicity in learning strategy use.

It is visible that students' learning goals, home culture and teacher instruction on learning strategy use directed students' choice of learning strategies. Moreover, students adopted the strategy of using local languages to minimise psychological pressure generated in course of learning English.

Experiences of Learning English in Multicultural Contexts

Learners in multicultural contexts experience various challenges in learning English. For example, Chouari (2016) reported how teachers' ethnic backgrounds produced specific teacher behaviour and produced ethnicity-generated student perception towards them with a consequential effect on learning achievement and motivation. He identified that multicultural classroom context created challenges for teachers concerning interaction, learning management, communication and assessment, and suggested the need to adopt culturally informed pedagogy that values linguistic and cultural diversities of students in multicultural classrooms. A Canadian study by Abu-Rabia (1995)

suggested that second language learners' cultural background influenced how they generated motivation towards learning English. For example, Arab background students found the Canadian social context supportive of learning English because the multicultural Canadian context was more democratic and open and valued other cultures where Arab background students could easily integrate into Canadian society. Similarly, an Israeli study (Bensoussan, 2015) found that students from a Hebrew background generated a higher level of motivation towards learning English compared to minority students because they regarded English to be powerful and useful for finding socio-economic opportunities. However, in the context of Australia, Sharifian (2014) suggested the need to adopt a critical perspective to value students' mother tongue while teaching English so that intercultural communicative competence can be developed while preserving linguistic diversity.

Learning English vocabulary and grammar has received higher value among learners of English as a second language. As reported by Graham (1997) many second language learners viewed accumulating sound knowledge of grammar and vocabulary would supporting language learning although some students could not concentrate on monotonous grammatical explanations and gave up learning them and blamed them for their self-discipline. They believed that self-learning and self-assessment strategies would support them to find their position in learning and generate self-motivation for learning. Second language learners are likely to experience various psychological pressures too. Szyszka (2017) identified that learners were apprehensive of the fear of miscommunication and mispronunciation, fear of being laughed at, and being unsuccessful in the examination, leading them to adopt a silencing strategy thereby limiting their communication opportunities.

The above literature indicated that multicultural classroom context created challenges for effective learning of English necessitating culturally-informed pedagogy to value socio-cultural diversities in the classroom. Literature also showed that students generate specific strategies such as using the locally available linguistic resources to promote self-learning.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research intended to explore secondary-level students' experiences of learning strategies use to learn English, particularly in the multicultural contexts of Nepal Tarai. Following Neuman (2006), I have explored the secondary-level students' experiences of learning English in the cultural complexities of their classrooms and communities, where they have already learned at least two languages except English. I have investigated the strategies utilised by students from different cultural groups to enhance their proficiency in English. Using a case study research design informed by Yin (2018), I have studied how multilingual learners tried to construct knowledge of English as a foreign language. I conducted data through semi-structured interviews in the Nepali language and observed classroom activities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). However, before conducting interviews, I familiarised myself with the participants having some informal talks and explaining the purpose of the study so that they could share their feelings without hesitation.

I purposively selected five participants from Grade 11 from two community schools in Kapilvastu district. These students belonged to five different cultural groups viz Indigenous Tharu, Majhi, Madheshi, Brahmin and Chhetri. Among them, three were the girls belonging to Tharu, Majhi and Madheshi communities and the other two were the boys from Brahmin and Chhetri communities. I obtained informed consent from the school authorities and English teachers for classroom observation and from the participants to take interviews. They were given pseudonyms to screen their original identities for ethical causes.

I used a six-step thematic analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the information generated through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. The procedure included transcribing audio records and translating them into English, organising the information into initial codes through NVivo 11, minute examination and analysis of the initial codes to generate wider themes, refining the themes in the lines of research questions, critically examining the themes for their refinement, and constructing meaningful and logical stories to convey the findings.

Results and Discussion

The following section thematically presents the research findings about how learners from different cultural contexts experience and use strategies for learning English.

Strategies for Accessing Learning Resources

The participants in the interviews shared how they tried to access learning materials to enhance their learning of English. The interviews revealed that the participant students did not have equal access to learning resources, which created different learning situations. In particular, the Indigenous students experienced more challenges in accessing learning resources which tended to influence their learning achievement. For example:

> I have got some grammar books at home. I use them. To prepare for exams and to learn I use YouTube also. The exam comes repeatedly in three to four months. I read and read, and things come to my memory. (Tikaram from Brahmin community)

> I ask my friends or hit the search bar on Google. Mainly, I search on the google. (Sapana from the Indigenous Majhi community)

The remark from Tikaram, a learner from the Brahmin community, and Sapana from the minority Majhi community, indicate how learners utilise learning resources available through the internet to develop competency in English. The access to the online and offline materials retrievable through the internet seems to have worked as a capsule to minimise the learning stress of examination as learning material could be accessed and used at any time. This also indicated that the learners consulted the selected materials frequently which supported him to develop proficiency in English with improved confidence to face the examination. The strategy of accessing online materials through Google and YouTube can be related to the teacher-promoted culture (Oxford, 2017) of smartphone use to support English learning. However, Shanta, a student from the Indigenous Tharu community, shared why she was facing problems in learning English:

> I don’t know (English) Sir. I have no idea how I can improve my English. I don't know anything. I don’t care much in my study. I have a brother. He could help me, but he’s been abroad. I fail in English. I don’t have a smartphone either. I watch television but don’t watch much. (Shanta from the Indigenous Tharu community)

Shanta’s remarks indicated the frustration of not being able to learn English effectively. In particular, Indigenous students could not access reading materials from the Internet because they could not afford the required expenses. Their inability to afford the internet and smartphone limited their possibility of exploring content, thereby restricting them to classroom exposure only. Moreover, the heavy workload exerted on Shanta in the family, which can be related to low educational sensitivity and economic compulsion, seems to have reduced her study hours with consequential havoc in

learning achievement. It indicates an English learning ecology in the Indigenous families with low socio-economic status, where Indigenous learners like Shanta with poor economic background and insufficient material support experience a cyclical process leading to poor learning. It is reflected that the sociocultural background of learners including economic, ideological and emotional factors can influence English learning, which calls for the need to adopt culturally sensitive contextual pedagogy to enhance English learning (Gu, 2010). Indeed, poor socio-economic condition seems to cause an increased workload on learners reducing their study hours, ultimately increasing anxiety and frustration for learning failure (Szyszka, 2017) resulting in reduced motivation and confidence to learn English.

Strategies for Comprehending Meaning

Participants in the interviews shared their experiences of learning English in classrooms situated in multicultural contexts. In particular, they emphasised the importance of comprehending the meaning of learning English. Most of the participants highlighted the central role of translation strategy to construct meaning expressed in English. They tended to translate words and expressions in English into Nepali, the most dominant language in school, which supported them to grasp the ideas from the text and generate a cognitive base for learning English (Huang, 2018). For example:

> When I am reading a story, I try to understand it in Nepali and I don't forget. Instead of just memorizing, I can create and compose in English. What I understand in Nepali, lasts for a long into the memory. Summarising is also helpful. I think converting into Nepali is necessary. I can remember in Nepali and say or write in English in my way. (Tikaram from Brahmin community)

> I find it difficult to understand the meaning of new words. Meaning is the main thing and if I don't know meaning I cannot learn anything. If I speak English, people will think that I'm proud and showy. Therefore, I try to learn at home. For example, I write meanings and write what I have searched in Google if some new thing comes up, that also I write. First, I listen on YouTube and then write the meanings. New things cannot be learned at once, so I try simply from the initial stage. (Sapana from the Indigenous Majhi community)

Despite belonging to different ethnicities, Tikaram from the Pahadi Brahmin community and Sapana from the Indigenous Majhi community shared a common language Nepali and studied in the same school. Their remarks indicate how important it is to comprehend the meaning of expressions they encounter in English. Although they used different strategies such as searching for meaning in Google and asking peers to sense the text in English, the tendency to translate the text into Nepali, particularly the bilingual experience (Wharton, 2000), has become phenomenal for them. However, they have tended to prioritise different strategies to learn vocabulary. For example, Tikaram from the Pahadi Brahmin community believed that meaning comprehension would support him to express creatively and relied much on his ability to understand the target text in his mother tongue. This reminded me of the findings of Grenfell and Harris (2013) which discovered that bilingual learners were more beneficial compared to monolingual learners learning French. However, Sapana from the Indigenous Majhi community, a minority group in Tarai, who was sitting alone on the first bench of her class during my observation trusted much on self-practice, particularly through writing to memorise the meaning of new vocabulary. This seems to be an examination-oriented cognitive strategy for

developing formal knowledge of vocabulary and grammar (Huang, 2018). However, Karan from the Chettri community used different strategies for comprehension and retention of vocabulary as he said:

> I try to learn in different ways. For example, I connect to something in the real world. I translate and connect the word with Nepali meaning. I consider how I can learn it. I connect the new word with already learned ideas. That is how I can remember. When I memorise, I will forget one day, but if I connect to things I have learned already, I can remember for a long time. I ask my teacher. Or, I search on the internet on my mobile phone. Learning separately occurring new vocabulary is difficult. Therefore, I consult multiple sources such as Google, YouTube, and apps. When simple and understandable text is discovered, it will be easier to recall. Question answers will be easier if the text can be understood. New vocabulary makes text complex, so it is necessary to understand meaning. Therefore, I consult multiple sources and try to locate an option that suits my level.

The multilingual participants in the interviews reported how they could utilise their knowledge base of different languages and cultures to support English learning. The participants reported that the knowledge of different languages became more effective for meaning comprehension and retention although they tended to face difficulty in seeking connection across different languages. Pramila, ethnically Madheshi and linguistically Tharu as the first language, reported:

> My language is Awadhi, but I speak Tharu because we live in Tharu village. I try to learn the meaning of words in Nepali. If I don't know I think for a while. I think in Tharu as well. I don't forget easily because I can think in three languages. I think in Nepali. I think the same thing in Tharu. Then, I try to link it to English, but it is difficult. This is good if I can do so. Otherwise, I give up.

The above remarks revealed how the learners used different strategies to comprehend the meaning of new vocabulary to support English learning. In particular, he used multiple strategies such as seeking scaffolding from the learned others, self-initiation like searching for meaning in the online resources, using the first language as a learning resource and reflecting on their learning. Indeed, the participants in the interviews emphasised the importance of vocabulary learning for learning English and appreciated the role of their first language for meaning comprehension and retention, with which they could construct the knowledge of the target language. It is also evident that multilingualism, a significant characteristic of a multicultural community, benefitted the learners to seek meaningful interconnection across languages (Canagarajah, 2015) strengthening multilingual competence in the learners. This finding corroborates with Grenfell and Harris (2017) who argued that the linguistic and cultural background of learners determined thinking patterns with a consequential influence on learning achievement. However, the inability to establish a connection of English vocabulary with their equivalent concept in the mother tongue tended to increase frustration and unwillingness to learn English.

Strategies to Cope with Learning Challenges

The participants in the interviews reported the problems experienced in learning English. The majority of learners seemed panicked because they could not get the expected scaffolded support from the other experienced language users in their contexts. The learners from the Tharu and Madhesi

backgrounds tended to experience the challenges of accessing required material support and family support, increasing their frustration for being unable to learn English as expected. For example:

> I find it difficult to learn English compared to other subjects. I try to learn but there is no one to support me. Mother has managed English books for me. Sometimes, I learn English lessons from YouTube. But I don't know much. I have a problem in reading English. I don't study much at home either. I have to do a lot of work to support my family. I don't have to do much work in the morning and I do homework. In the evening I have to do household chores such as cooking, feeding, cleaning and so on. So, I don't have time to do homework. Sometimes, I do homework in the morning and go to school. I enjoy both reading (other subjects) and doing household work. My brother also suggests that I should learn English. But I have no interest in learning English. (Shanta from the Indigenous Tharu community)

Shanta's remarks provide an indication of the pressures she experienced in her attempts of learning English. Indeed, the learners from Indigenous backgrounds needed to support their families with daily household work which deprived them of the opportunities to practice at home leading them to take withdrawal strategies from learning English. Indigenous learners were compelled to distance themselves from learning English due to their socio-economic compulsions ultimately leading them to develop apathy towards learning English. This reminds me of Gopalakrishnan (2022) who indicated how multiple factors such as people's belief systems, economic realities and institutional decision-making of family and school can affect students' learning. Moreover, an unfavourable family environment has tended to be more responsible for generating severe frustration in the learners. For example:

> This time I failed the English test. I felt too bad. I was a bit unwell too. I have made a routine. I reach home at 12: 30. I have lunch and take rest for a while. Then, I begin to study at about 1:30 pm and study for about 3 hours. Then, I have to prepare food and finish up kitchen work. Then, I study after 8 pm. I intend to study until midnight, but I cannot because I get so tired. I have to do household work alone. I've got a sister too. But she is learning Japanese and so doesn't help me. I have to do all the work. I get tired. I study for a while in the evening, but I feel sleepy. So, I cannot follow my routine. My mother has got a problem with backache. She cannot work. My father drinks alcohol and shouts. My exam is coming, and he shouts. I cannot study well because of the stress and noise. I don't have a favourable environment to study at home. I feel bad and don't feel like studying. The quarrel between my father and mother makes me cry. (Pramila from Madheshi community)

Pramila's remarks provide evidence of hurdles learners are likely to experience in families from poor and marginalised communities. In such family contexts, workload and uncooperative behaviour of parents have tended to create stressful circumstance for learning English thereby pushing them backward in terms of learning achievement too. This indicates that learners are likely to experience anxiety and pressure for fear of committing mistakes and failing examinations (Szyszka, 2017). Apart from the psychological problem created due to uncooperative family behaviour, some learners reported how they had to struggle alone for not receiving assistance from the learned other:

> For me, the main problem is how I learn, and whom I ask. Here is no one speaking English in my community. I feel that I don't know much English. If someone with good English would help me when I ask, tell me in Nepali that this means this and support me, and tell me some new things, then my English would be better. (Sapana from the Indigenous Majhi community)

The above comments pictured out how learners from different cultural contexts experience socio-economic complexities influencing their learning of English. In particular, the students from Indigenous Tharu and Madheshi backgrounds had to experience the problems of accessing learning resources, time management and creating a conducive environment for learning English. Heavy work load, noisy and disturbing environment, and unavailability of scaffolded support from the others in the family or community further distressed the learners which created apathy in them towards learning English pushing them further backward. When learners' expectations of necessary family support for learning English are not met, they are likely to develop strategies of avoidance and distancing from the learning tasks (Graham, 1997) further weakening their learning achievement.

Collaboration and Self-learning Strategies in Multicultural Classroom

Most of the participants in the interviews emphasised the need for collaboration to enhance their learning of English in multicultural classroom contexts. However, they tended to adopt different strategies for collaboration in the classroom. Particularly, the learners belonging to Brahmin and Chhetri cultures seemed to be proactive as they displayed a strong culture of sharing and collaborating among peers (Oxford, 2017). During classroom observation, I saw their active participation in the activities and they often proactively answered teachers' questions and often responded to teacher talk to indicate that they were listening. This can be equated with the family and community culture in which they were grown up. Moreover, the teachers provided with more opportunities for the proactive learners to respond during their classes. Karan, a learner from the Chhetri community, and Tikaram from the Brahmin community explained how they collaborated to learn English as they said:

> I am poor in English. So, I consult my friends. They are better in English. I discuss this with Gayatri and Bipin. I don't hesitate to consult my friends whether they are girls or boys. Even if they are girls, I go to their benches and discuss what I don't know. I learn English with them and I help them with Accounts. (Karan from the Chhetri community)

> I share with my friends what I have learned. First, I learn myself and later I share with my peers, but I don't encourage them for discuss. (Tikaram from Brahmin community)

These comments provide an image of peer collaboration in a multicultural classroom although the learners from Chhetri and Brahmin communities were observed proactive to collaborate with peers and teachers, which supported them to improve their English. However, the peer collaboration tended to loosely concentrate within cultural boundaries of the learners. On the other hand, as observed in the classroom, the learners from Tharu and Majhi cultures tended to share less among their peers despite their claim for sharing in the interviews:

> The one who sits with me, most of them are from the Tharu community to which I belong. Binita, Asha, Nisha all are Tharus. One Tamang is there. All of us are poor in English. We all don't know English. Asha knows some English. I don't

> ask other friends. They do their homework. I get afraid of teachers. I can't ask questions in English. I get confused about what to ask and what not to ask as there so many things I don't know. (Shanta from the Tharu community)
>
> My close friend was absent today. But she doesn't know much English. I ask knowledgeable friends and teachers to learn what I don't know. My friends are not good at English. So, I don't ask them much. Learning will be better if I talk and share with friends. I feel comfortable with friends to ask and learn from them rather than with teachers. I feel that talking and using practically will help improve my English. (Sapana from Majhi community)

Shanta's remarks indicated how Indigenous learners constructed ethnicity-based cultural groups in the classroom which shaped the modality of classroom interaction. Indigenous learners with low academic achievement tended to interact less in the classroom particularly due to fear of making errors and teacher authority. Although Sapana appreciated the role of peer collaboration in learning English, similar to Korean and Arabic students' habit of learning through practice (Oxford, 1996), classroom observation revealed her tendency to work alone to learn vocabulary and grammar through repeated practice, giving less preference for teacher collaboration. The learners from the Indigenous communities tended to construct collaborative teams from within their ethnic communities, which restricted them from the opportunities to interact with peers belonging to other cultures and ethnicities. Indigenous learners' tendency of limiting collaboration with the members of particular culture and avoiding interaction with teachers and learners from other cultural communities might have arisen due to their shared mother tongue and culture. These findings reminded me of Levine et al. (1996), who established the connection of learning strategies such as rote learning and seeking collaboration with learners' cultural traits. Moreover, the strategy of remaining silent and avoiding interaction with teachers and other knowledgeable friends can be equated with an outcome of learners' family and community culture (Jang & Jiménez, 2011), which would deprive them from receiving corrective feedback for further improvement. When the learners adopt an avoidance strategy, this is likely to reduce learning motivation and loosen their confidence to participate in classroom interaction with teachers and peers pushing them further backwards in learning English.

The participants in the interviews shared how they were engaged in self-learning activities to promote their learning of English. Particularly, the learners from Brahmin and Chhetri communities used the strategies of searching learning resources from the internet, using the learning material multiple times, establishing a connection with previously learned concepts and generating self-motivation for learning. For example:

> Sometimes I listen to online materials multiple times. Looking at the shapes and letters of words also, I can establish concept in mind. To memorise words, I write as far as possible. Then I read them once or twice. I try to recite too. But it is likely to be forgotten soon. So, I frequently consult the reading material, and this helps me remember for a long. (Karan from the Chhetri community)
>
> I enjoy learning grammar. Grammar is involved in our speech, but we don't notice. For example, when we say, "May I come in Sir", a modal verb is involved. When I reflect on my grammar lesson in class, I find grammar like tense and modal verbs used in my speech. I give much time to learn those grammatical aspects that are more useful in speech. I analyse what grammar has

> been used in people's speech and give priority to learn that. More focused attention is needed to learn grammar. (Tikaram from Brahmin community)

While Karan adopted the strategy of consulting supplementary learning materials and using them frequently until meaning is conceptualised, presumably a value system developed with an influence of home culture (Grenfell & Harris, 2013), Tikaram developed self-awareness of seeking how grammar is actualised in the language of everyday communication. Through self-reflection, they seem to have learned to assess what strategy would become effective to learn an intended aspect of language. Indeed, self-reflection and assessment, which tended to be effective in learning a second language (Lee & Heinz, 2016) provided self-feedback which provided useful support to enhance English learning.

Conclusion and Implications

The research findings produced evidence to claim the influence of socio-cultural traits on learning English, particularly in multicultural classroom contexts of rural Nepal Tarai. The socioeconomic realities of students from Indigenous Tharu and Madheshi cultures experienced psychological pressures arising from their low performance in English, which seems to have resulted from heavy workload in the family, and low participation in classroom interaction resulted from the community of practice constructed around cultural affinity, which seems to have limited their opportunities to learn from the learners of other cultural groups. However, the learners from Brahmin and Chhetri cultural communities, the so-called mainstream cultures, depicted a proactive nature of being actively engaged in the classroom, being involved in wider communities of practice and accessing learning materials from versatile sources provided them with more opportunities to learn and practice English in the classroom. Such traits are supported to minimise their learning stress and the pressure of examination.

The findings also visualised that multicultural classroom contexts can have some positive effects in learning. For example, a multicultural context can provide learners with opportunities to learn from each other with a higher level of motivation, develop intercultural communicative competence and support the development of linguistic, cognitive and social skills. Indeed, learners with multilingual backgrounds could utilise the linguistic repertoire and cultural knowledge resource by shifting back and forth in the process of learning to conceptualise meaning to support retention and recalling. Multicultural contexts also provided the learners with the opportunities to share and learn from each other although learners' sharing culture could be roughly attributed to their cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the learners' strategies of peer collaboration, self-reflection and self-awareness, observed in the learners from mainstream cultural communities, provided them with more opportunities to practice and access learning resources from their language, which supported them to enhance their linguistic proficiency in English. Learners' avoidance strategy, mostly observed in the poor learners from Indigenous Tharu and Madheshi communities, is likely to reduce learning motivation and loosen their confidence to participate in classroom interaction with teachers and peers pushing them further backwards in learning English.

This research has identified how learners from different cultural groups practise strategies for language development in their contexts which influence their motivation for learning English. By understanding ecological factors influencing learning strategy use in multicultural contexts, perhaps we can develop culturally informed pedagogical practices to enhance English learning. As language learning can be influenced by ecological factors including classroom contexts, socio-cultural belief systems, socio-linguistic realities, institutional decision-making and policies (Gopalakrishnan, 2022),

in-depth exploration of learners' experiences of learning English and their choice of learning strategies in multicultural contexts can be useful to understand how English learning takes place in the sociocultural complexities of Nepali classroom and community contexts.

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Teachers' Experiences and Challenges of Integrating ICTs in English Language Classrooms in Rural Schools of Nepal

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Abstract

This study explored the English language teachers' experiences of using Information Communication Tools (ICTs) in the rural schools' classrooms of Ramechhap district, Nepal. It mainly focused on three aspects: the exploration of the tools used by the teachers; the challenges in implementing ICTs; and the possible solutions to cope with the situations from the perspectives based on the teachers' experiences. Using a qualitative approach, through narrative inquiry, the research involved a series of unstructured interviews with five purposively selected participants. We have analysed the information descriptively and thematically. The findings indicate that the teachers utilised various ICTs including laptops, mobiles, multimedia projectors, websites, Facebook groups, PowerPoints, and printers to enhance the teaching/learning. However, several challenges were identified, such as heavy workloads, time constraints, maintenance issues, erratic electricity supply, inadequate ICT resources and financial limitations. To handle the situations, the teachers employed various strategies like selective ICT use, use of personal computers, advocacy with higher authorities, workshop organisation, and ensuring reliable electricity and internet connectivity. To integrate ICTs in teaching and mitigate those barriers, the study recommends focusing on teacher training programs, ensuring consistent and reliable internet access, maintaining an uninterrupted power supply, providing adequate financial support, and implementing systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. By addressing these recommendations, educators in rural Nepal can potentially enhance their teaching effectiveness through improved ICT integration, thereby, facilitating better learning experiences for the students in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms.

Keywords: Digital, ELT, ICT, ICT policies, inquiry, narrative

Introduction

The 21st century is dominated by science and technology, widely utilised across various sectors such as business, health, trade and education. Both developed and developing countries are trying to make maximum use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning for both students and teachers. Unwin (2009) suggests that "ICT can be a catalyst by providing tools that teachers use to improve

teaching and by giving learners access to electronic media that make concepts clearer and more accessible."

The term ICT broadly encompasses all forms of technology used to create, store, process, and use information in various forms (data, voice, image, multimedia presentations, and any other forms), enabling and supporting communication. ICT is employed for capacity development and citizen empowerment, ultimately enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for students, including those with intellectual disabilities (Anderson, 2009). Specifically, ICT refers to the convergence of micro-electronics, computers, and telecommunications, enabling the transmission of data, including text and video signals, anywhere in the world where digital signals can be received. This includes networks such as fixed, wireless, and satellite telecommunications, broadcasting networks, and applications like the Internet, database management systems, and multimedia tools (Lundall & Howell, 2000).

The use of ICT has significantly increased and become an inseparable part of today's teaching and learning activities. Every country is focused on developing global human resources based on e-learning. Governments, researchers, school leaders, teachers, parents, and learners all consider technology to be a crucial part of education. In Nepal, it is recognised that technological advancement influences how people create, share, use, and develop information in society, provided that young people need to be highly skilled in ICT use. English teachers exhibit great interest and motivation in using ICT in their classrooms and professional development.

The ICT Policy of Nepal (2015) aims to enhance educational quality and institutional capacity regarding infrastructure and human resources in public and private educational institutions, including schools and universities that offer ICT courses and use it for pedagogical purposes. According to this policy, appropriate measures will be taken to facilitate and promote ICT integration across the entire Nepali educational system to support administration, pedagogy, learning, and research, to improve education quality and training at all levels and to enhance access to education. The policy also aims to launch nationwide e-schools and related initiatives to promote e-learning, e-education, and lifelong learning.

Various initiatives have been undertaken as a part of the information and communication policy, giving ICT a significant role in classrooms. This has led to a paradigm shift in education, introducing a new wave of learning and teaching, revisiting the educational landscape, and fostering digital literacy. Teachers and students are increasingly using ICT as both a tool and a medium, facilitating personal growth and teaching-learning activities. However, the reality is that rural schools in Nepal still lag in digital integration. Numerous challenges prevent teachers from using ICT, and the tools are often limited to a narrow range of applications, mainly for personal use. Many schools have lower than the necessary facilities for ICT use, and even when available, most teachers use computers for basic tasks like word processing, lesson planning, creating worksheets, assessment tests, grade registration, or retrieving information from the internet (Jimoyiannis & Komis, 2007, p. 149-173). As ICT becomes an increasingly powerful tool for education and economic development; it was crucial to investigate whether teachers used ICT in their classrooms and identify the challenges of integrating ICT in language teaching in rural areas. Therefore, this study recognised the need to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the challenges of integrating ICT in ELT classrooms in rural Nepal. Specifically, the study chose this issue to examine the core barriers preventing teachers from using ICT in their classrooms.

Motivation for the Study

National Educational and ICT policies, such as the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009), ICT Masterplan (2013), ICT Policy of Nepal (2015), School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016), National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2076), and Digital Nepal Framework (2076), as well as several studies, advocate for the use of ICT in language teaching to achieve better outcomes. However, numerous ICT-related issues continue to hinder teachers from incorporating ICT into their teaching. Most schools and colleges either lack internet access or have very limited access.

ICT in school education is considered a crucial tool for making education more learner-centred and for reducing the digital divide. The government of Nepal is implementing policies to encourage schools to adopt ICT and integrate it into the curriculum. However, rural schools still face significant challenges in using ICT. During the visits to multiple community schools in rural areas of Nepal, a lack of adequate infrastructure was observed. In some schools, ICTs are avail, but only in offices, not in classrooms.

There is a scarcity of research on ICT practices in the Nepalese context, and only a few studies have specifically focused on the challenges of integrating ICT in government schools in rural areas, particularly at the secondary school level. Given this gap, this study aimed to uncover the true state of ICT integration and the obstacles that rural schools and teachers currently face guided by the following research questions:

i. What ICT tools were used by the English language teachers while teaching English in their classrooms?
ii. What challenges were the teachers facing during the integration of ICTs in the English classes in the rural areas?
iii. What could be the possible solutions to cope with the problematic situations?

Literature Review

The theoretical review of literature here includes topics such as information and communication technology (ICT), the impact of ICT on English language teaching (ELT), the digital divide in the Nepalese ELT, policies related to ICT in education in Nepal, the Digital Nepal Framework (2076), ICT in the School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023), computer-assisted language learning, the need for ICT in ELT, and issues of integrating ICT in rural ELT contexts.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

ICT is a crucial tool for more effective teaching and learning practices in the modern era. Advancements in technology have revolutionised educational practices today. The scope of ICT in education is expanding, with ICT literacy becoming a key component of teachers' professionalism. In this post-modern era, ICT enables learners to access a wide range of information and perspectives, making technology a powerful educational tool. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2003) defines ICTs as the tools used to produce, store, process, distribute, and exchange information. De Jong (2010) adds that ICTs encompass a range of hardware (computers, projectors, calculators, digital recording equipment), software applications (generic software, multimedia resources), and communication systems.

Impact of ICT in English Language Teaching

ICT has significantly impacted education by introducing new teaching strategies and re-conceptualizing globalisation. In Nepal, the use of various ICT tools (e.g. laptops, multimedia projectors, digital recording, mobile phones, and internet applications like; Facebook, Twitter and PowerPoint) has transformed teaching methods to meet learners' needs. ICT provides students with

opportunities to practice English both inside and outside the classroom, supporting significant changes in pedagogical approaches. According to Ibrahim (2010), modern technology is essential for effective English language teaching, fostering self-initiated learning and learner autonomy through diverse content in audio, video, and pictorial forms. Thus, ICT enhances concentration, understanding, and long-term learning, offering multiple benefits such as browsing materials, increasing student motivation, promoting learner autonomy, providing authentic learning environments, and aiding educators in preparing and retrieving teaching materials.

Digital Divide in Nepalese ELT

The digital divide refers to the gap between those with ready access to computers and the internet and those without. This divide is significant in Nepal, where rural community schools struggle to incorporate ICT. Harmer (2007) notes the disparity between well-equipped classrooms in urban areas and under-resourced rural schools. Despite government initiatives, such as the establishment of the Computer Association of Nepal (1992) and the Internet User Group (1997), and efforts to improve ICT infrastructure; rural schools still face significant challenges. To reduce the significant digital divide across the country, the government of Nepal has undertaken several initiatives. Although challenging, this obstacle can be overcome by breaking it down into specific tasks. There remains a substantial gap between rural and urban areas in Nepal, with rural community schools still striving to incorporate ICT. This is a mere example of a digital dive in the country.

Policies Related to the Use of ICT in Education in Nepal

Nepal's ICT policies aim to digitalise education and integrate ICT into the educational system. The ICT in Education Master Plan (2013-2017) identifies critical infrastructures like internet availability, skilled workforce, content development, and system enhancement as fundamental components. The ICT Policy (2015) emphasises public-private partnerships to provide ICT infrastructure in government schools. Key initiatives include promoting e-learning and e-education, enhancing ICT capacities in tertiary institutions, ensuring effective implementation of ICT plans, and establishing a national ICT research and development fund. The policy also ensured the establishment of an open university in the country which has now been established in 2016.

Digital Nepal Framework (2019)

The Digital Nepal Framework outlines how digital initiatives can contribute to economic growth and address societal challenges. In education, it targets a 20% annual investment, universal school enrollment within two years, nationwide literacy within five years, compulsory ICT usage in schools, and the establishment of e-libraries with modern educational materials (Ministry of Communication & Information Technology, 2019).

ICT in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP 2016–2023)

The Government of Nepal has developed an education sector plan for 2016-2023, known as the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP). Concerning education and ICT, the SSDP has set the targets for providing ICT teaching-learning materials to enhance interactive teaching methods; establishing ICT learning centres at model schools; preparing ICT teaching and learning materials for Science, Maths, and English; providing ICT infrastructure and teaching-learning materials; implementing the unified computerised government accounting system (CGAS) within the Ministry of Education system; and introducing a school-based integrated IEMIS, including an Equity Index, school profiles, and unique student IDs to improve governance and management effectiveness (CEHRD, 2016).

Issues and Challenges of Integrating ICT in ELT in Rural Context

Several barriers hinder ICT integration in ELT, including individual challenges (such as lack of confidence, time, and resistance to change); and school-level challenges such as lack of infrastructure, technical support and access to resources. Nepal's underdeveloped ICT infrastructure, geographic diversity, and lack of basic resources exacerbate these issues. Teachers in rural areas face challenges such as insufficient buildings, stable power supply, low-skilled teachers, and little security (Rana et al., 2022). Despite some progress, many rural schools still lack internet access, limiting their ability to update digital content regularly. Additional challenges include the availability of equipment, little or low ICT knowledge, cultural barriers, insufficient funds, limited time, difficulties in adjusting to the rapid technological changes, and a shortage of trained teachers (Poudel, 2020). Addressing both individual and institutional challenges is crucial for effective ICT integration in ELT.

The above literature indicates the growing use of ICT in English language classrooms in schools in rural Nepal. However, limited studies are focusing on the teachers' experiences and the challenges of using ICT in rural community schools in Nepal. This study has bridged the gap in this area and raised the voices of the teachers based on their experiences.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research method, specifically a narrative inquiry (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007) research design. To elicit the data, five English teachers from various secondary community schools in Rammechap district of Nepal were selected using a purposive non-random sampling strategy. The primary tools for data collection were in-depth interviews. The qualitative data were gathered through participants' live stories which were collected in a relaxed and natural setting.

The systematically collected data have been descriptively analysed and interpreted using a thematic analysis approach. Themes have been developed to directly address the research questions, with some sub-themes created, analysed and interpreted qualitatively

Results and Discussion

Seven exclusive major themes have been developed subsuming numerous subthemes, based on data collected from five English educators. These themes have addressed the tools implemented, challenges faced, and potential solutions for integrating ICT in secondary schools of rural Ramechhap. This study uses the pseudo-names for all the participants in all the cases of data presentation, discussion and interpretation.

ICTs Utilised by the Teachers in Classroom Teaching

Participants involved in the study reported that many teachers used ICT tools such as smartphones, laptops, multimedia projectors and some social media such as Facebook and YouTube in their classrooms. Regarding the practices of ICTs in the research field, one of the respondents, Bandre said, "We mainly use laptops, projectors, smartphones, Facebook closed groups and television." Similarly, another participant, T4 noted of using various tools based on availability, affordability, usability, effectiveness, and appropriateness. They included YouTube videos and printers to capture students' attention. As Bhoj articulated:

> Yes, I utilise a range of tools considering their availability, cost-effectiveness, ease of use, effectiveness, and suitability. Commonly used ICT tools include television, laptops, smartphones, projectors, and slides. Additionally, I

> incorporate YouTube videos and printers to engage students effectively. I also motivate students to utilise these resources to enrich their learning experience.

From the snippets, it is evident that the educators utilised a variety of ICT tools that were accessible, adaptable, pertinent and beneficial for their teaching and learning endeavours. Summing up all the responses, the teachers employed diverse ICT resources such as laptops, digital recording devices, mobile gadgets, multimedia projectors, internet connectivity, Facebook groups, speakers, PowerPoint presentations, pen drives, printers, and televisions. ICT tools play a crucial role in contemporary education, introducing new methods of English language teaching (ICT Policy of Nepal, 2015). Common ICT tools in Nepal include slides, scanners, printers, digital boards, audio tapes, films and videos, digital books, TV broadcasts, email, internet, and cell phones (Shahi, 2022).

ICT Implementation Environment

A conducive educational environment significantly improves students' learning. For ICT to be effectively integrated, the School Management Committee (SMC) must be active and supportive. Talking about the environment of ICT practices in the school, Santu expressed,

> In managing the ICT environment in schools, the School Management Committee (SMC) should take a proactive role. However, in our school, the head teacher, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), and SMC chairperson often engage in political struggles. This political dynamic prevents the effective utilisation of available resources.

Similarly, another respondent, Bhoj emphasised the need for proper training and skills among teachers to effectively use ICT tools. Thus, an encouraging environment, coupled with adequate training and resources, is mentioned to be essential for successful ICT integration. The school authorities, teacher groups, students, their guardians and the school management committee together are responsible for it. The effectiveness of ICT in education heavily depends on the school's environment and management (MoE, 2013).

Factors Motivating in the Use of ICT

Regarding the motivating factors in the use of ICT, Bandre noted that ICT materials are clearer and more effective than handmade ones. One of the excerpts from Min reported,

> I use ICT because my students enjoy it. When I asked them if they liked it, they expressed that they were more interested and found the lessons clearer when ICT was used in the classroom. Teachers also utilise ICT because they believe it helps in better managing classroom materials…...

The teachers believed that using ICT improves material presentation and saves time, thereby, encouraging student participation. Factors such as computer skills, attitudes towards technology, institutional goals, and well-equipped classrooms further enhance motivation. In this concern, Bhole said, "It saves teachers' time and encourages students a lot". Likewise, colleagues' and friends' encouragement, curriculum requirements, contextual factors, previous research findings, and personal interests were mentioned as significant sources of motivation. Additionally, computer proficiency, positive attitudes towards technology, institutional objectives, personal needs, and well-equipped classrooms further boost motivation. Motivation is crucial for effective ESL/EFL teaching and learning using ICT in classrooms. ICT-based materials make lessons more creative, critical, precise and explicit (Joshi & Poudel, 2019).

Challenges Faced While Integrating ICT in ELT Classroom

Integrating ICT into teaching and learning is complex and fraught with challenges. The challenges mentioned by the participants are concerned with the teachers, students, and schools. They have been more specifically discussed and interpreted in the following sections.

Challenges for the Teachers

The teachers reported that they were facing several personal challenges in using ICT tools which have been specifically mentioned in the subsequent discussions under more specific subthemes.

Loaded Works

Explaining their own experience, Bhoj explained that teaching six periods a day, extended library duties, prevented regular use of ICT tools. Here is an excerpt of what he reported:

> I have to teach six periods a day. In such a situation how can I design my slides and prepare for the next day? Not only this, but I am also the library in charge and I have to look after the library also. I am almost busy in the school hours. And, in my leisure period, I have to maintain library records. How could I design my slides and prepare for the classes in such a critical situation?

This snippet is enough to speak of the challenges of teaching in rural and traditional classes. The teachers mentioned that they were often overloaded with teaching periods and additional responsibilities, leaving little time (Salehi & Salehi, 2012) to prepare ICT-based materials

Lack of Time

The teachers involved in this study highlighted the difficulties of balancing school duties and personal responsibilities, limiting the use of ICT to once a week. As Bhoj explained,

> I teach six periods a day, and in addition to this, I am responsible for managing the library as well. This keeps me occupied throughout the school hours. During my free periods, I must also maintain library records. As a result of my heavy workload, I am compelled to rely on traditional lecturing methods.

Similar is the experience of Santu who reported,

> I understand the benefits of using ICT tools for both students and teachers, but due to time constraints, I am unable to use them regularly in all classes. Coming from a rural area and a family of farmers, I need to assist with farm work after school. This leaves me with little time at school and at home to design slides and prepare for my classes.

These excerpts portray that due to the busy schedule teachers even couldn't celebrate their personal lives. Their use of the available technology once a week obviously could not result in a better technological atmosphere in education. Another of the challenges reported by all the teachers was that the teachers, despite understanding the benefits of ICT, had to struggle to find some time to integrate it into their classrooms (Salehi & Salehi, 2012).

Difficult Geographical Setting

They had to walk for hours to reach the schools through the geographically complicated paths. It becomes clear from how Bhole described saying, "The main difficulty I face is the distance to the school. It takes me an hour to walk there, which leaves me little time to prepare for my classes. The route is narrow and slippery, posing a safety hazard." An incident illustrates this challenge when he further adds,

> Initially, I used my laptop, slides, videos, audio, and web sources in class. One day, while walking to school, I slipped and broke the school-provided laptop. Since then, I had to repair the laptop myself, and since then, I rarely bring it to school anymore.

The experiences were consistent across other participants too. It indicates that the geographical terrain and distance of the school negatively impacted the teaching and learning environment. Walking to and from school every day, except on Saturdays, left them fatigued and less motivated to integrate digital tools into their classes. Rural school teachers face challenges related to distance and terrain (Rana et al., 2022).

Heavy Reliance on the Mobile Networks

In rural areas, the lack of reliable internet access forced the teachers to rely on slow mobile data. They did not have other ways or options available at the schools for using ICTs. As Santu said,

> I also believe that teachers should utilise modern ICT tools. However, it's much more challenging in rural areas compared to urban settings. In cities, there's access to broadband and high-speed internet, whereas here, we rely on mobile data to search for materials. We receive no financial assistance to explore the internet, and the connectivity is so slow that it can take hours to download just one video or other materials.

This is supported by what Bandre expressed, "We are burdened with a heavy class schedule, and our school lacks Wi-Fi, as a result, we rely solely on mobile data to access the internet. However, the mobile network is unreliable and often doesn't work inside the classrooms." It can be interpreted that they had a greater dependence on the use of mobile data as only one partially available internet connection. Also, due to poor connection, they had the challenges of using mobile data to search for materials, leading to limited ICT integration.

Low Technical Confidence

Many Nepalese educators face a significant skills gap either due to little knowledge or low confidence. Related to this case, Bhoj shared,

> Although the school has installed projectors and provided laptops, I struggle to use them effectively in class due to my limited knowledge. Once, during a power cut, I couldn't restart a slide show, even with students' help and had to seek assistance from colleagues. Since then, I've found it challenging to confidently utilise ICT tools.

The similarities were the other's experiences. It shows that the challenge of adapting to online learning and technology in classrooms has become widespread in the district. Despite technological advancements in education systems, educators in rural Nepalese schools are still learning to use technology. In the current era of teaching and learning, information and technology need to be deeply integrated (Poudel, 2020).

Low or No Motivation

In this regard, Min lamented reporting,

> I used ICT tools initially, but I felt discouraged when the school administration failed to acknowledge or differentiate between teachers using ICT tools and those

who don't. If there's no recognition for my efforts, why should I invest in using ICT tools and designing innovative classes?

These types of scenarios were common in the schools. This discouraged the teachers from adopting ICT tools, as they would see little benefit in doing so due to no or low professional recognition. If ICT tools are to be adopted, everyone must use them; or those who do should be encouraged and acknowledged. Like in other sectors, performance appraisal is crucial in motivating teachers. However, this was lacking in the rural schools (Rana et al., 2022).

Unrepaired Devices

Proper repairmen are essential for prolonging the life of ICT tools, but this was not seriously taken (which may be due to other reasons too e.g. financial or else) in the rural schools of Ramechhap. It is obvious from the snippet taken from Bhole which was noted as, "In the past, I used projectors and laptops in teaching, but now they are not in good condition and haven't been repaired. We lack local technicians, so repairs often require sending equipment to Kathmandu, with long delays". Other participants share similar experiences. The reality is, that in comparison to urban schools, rural schools face challenges in promptly maintaining ICT tools. Delays in repairs lead to irregular use of ICT tools- they could only be used when functioning properly.

Challenges for Students

Teachers who participated in the interviews reported that many students faced ICT-related challenges in English language classrooms. For example, insufficient ICT tools, lack of adequate knowledge of ICT skills, and the challenges related to socio-economic barriers.

Insufficient ICT Tools

One of the major challenges for the students in the implementation of ICT was due to the insufficiency of ICT tools. The absence of essential tools like laptops and computers at home and school lessened the students' ability to engage with technology. As Bhole reported, "Students cannot complete assignments or presentations because they lack access to computers at home and school. This disparity in access affects their ability to utilise technology effectively." This indicates that the lack of ICT tools at home and school prevented the students from becoming proficient in technology, hindering their educational experience.

Little Knowledge of ICT Skills

Both the students and teachers in rural areas have low abilities in digital skills to fully utilise ICT tools. An excerpt from Bhoj in this regard is, "Students struggle to join online groups or use digital platforms due to their unfamiliarity with modern technology. This gap in digital literacy poses a challenge for teachers trying to introduce new ICT tools." Thus, insufficient digital skills among students and teachers hindered the adoption of ICT tools in rural education (Bax, 2003).

Socio-Economic Challenges

Students from low socio-economic backgrounds face additional challenges in accessing technology. Indeed, this was the reality with the students of the schools selected in the study. This becomes clearer from the saying of Bandre as "Many students must manage household responsibilities due to parents working outside the village. This limits their time and opportunities to engage with ICT tools." This shows that the students also had to take social and economic responsibilities at their homes which directly influenced their access to and engagement with technology, also affecting their educational outcomes.

Challenges for the Schools

The challenges of the schools are generic and common in the rural areas. Despite the enthusiasm for using ICT tools in teaching and learning, the schools were facing numerous challenges

that hindered the effective implementation of ICS, some of the major ones are analysed and interpreted here.

Low Investment.

The schools were struggling due to limited funds allocated for ICT management from the concerned stakeholders. This becomes obvious when Bandre said,

> Our school lacks adequate funds because some staff salaries are paid by the school itself, and we cannot charge fees due to government policies on free education. Local authorities also provide insufficient funds, making it nearly impossible to purchase new ICT tools.

Thus, the lack of funding from the governments (local and central) restricted the scope of ICT implementation in secondary schools in rural areas, severely impacting both financial and human resources as many schools had low investment in ICTs (Shahi, 2022).

Inconsistent Electricity Supply

Reliable electricity is crucial for ICT use, but rural Ramechhap experienced frequent power cuts. For example, Bhoj complained, "Frequent power cuts prevent us from using projectors and other devices effectively. While we have solar power, it's insufficient, forcing us to revert to traditional teaching methods during outages." The unreliable electricity supply in rural areas disrupted ICT integration in classrooms. It resulted in the low attention of the schools in the implementation of ICTs.

Inadequate Manpower

Teacher shortages (Das, 2019) further complicated the ICT integration in those schools. This is what Bandre mentioned in this regard, "Our school has only 16 staff members, including non-teaching roles. We need at least four additional staff members to operate smoothly." Rural schools first had low manpower, and second, they lacked skilled ones which was responsible in making it challenging to manage the implementation of modern technologies and ICT tools effectively.

Prevailing Illiteracy

Despite the benefits of digital technologies, such as smartphones and computers, in education, parents in rural Ramechhap often resisted these innovations. They were less conscious of those devices. Related to this context, Santu shares, "Parents oppose modern tools, believing that they distract children and hinder learning. They prefer traditional teaching methods and raise concerns during parent-teacher meetings." This resistance from parents and society impeded teachers' efforts to adopt ICT tools in education. From the parents' perspectives, the content-based traditional classes were more needed than the use of ICTs- which from their perspectives were spoiling the reading habits of their children.

Way-outs Sought to Overcome the Challenges

The integration of ICTs in schools presents both explicit and implicit challenges. Such issues in education cannot be tackled in isolation. The data reveals interconnected levels of challenges, prompting teachers to adopt various strategies to overcome them. Some major way-outs or the strategies that the schools, teachers and students sought are as follows.

Restricted Use of ICTs

Teachers, facing time constraints and skill limitations strategically deploy ICT for specific content areas such as grammar, pronunciation, and visual descriptions. Support from peers and administration aids in navigating ICT tools effectively despite skill gaps. Due to the challenges mentioned in the earlier sections, the teachers would make limited use of ICTs. As Santu explained,

> Due to my time constraints, I only use ICT for topics that students find challenging, such as grammar, pronunciation, and picture/map descriptions. Additionally, I rely on support from peers, the administration, and others to operate tools and devices, as my ICT skills are not strong. Preparing materials takes me a lot of time.

Similarly, Bhole added, "In grade nine, we have a well-functioning projector. When needed, we move the students to that classroom." This indicates how the teachers were compelled to limit the use of ICT tools in and outside their classes either due to the low availability of the materials or due to poor skills or little support from others and so on (Das, 2019).

Self-developed Materials

In the absence of internet access, teachers created learning materials themselves, including vocabulary lists, model answers, posters, and slides enriched with relevant photographs. This self-development of digital materials was crucial for tailored language teaching. As Bandre stated,

> Even though our school lacks internet access, I can create my materials. I carefully develop learning resources myself, such as vocabulary lists, model answers, posters, and vacancy notices, typing them into non-authentic materials. I also take relevant photographs and include them in slides. Developing digital materials is a relatively new area for language learning and teaching. Creating e-learning materials involves several components and requires thoughtful consideration. Once the content is created, it needs to be managed, delivered, and standardised.

Creating digital materials is a relatively new aspect of developing resources for language learning and teaching. It requires careful planning and involves multiple components. After the content is created, it must be effectively managed, delivered, and standardised.

Exploring Online Materials

Teachers enhance their ICT skills by accessing online tutorials and videos, particularly on platforms like YouTube. This approach empowers them to troubleshoot minor issues independently and discover new teaching methods. As Bhoj shared, "Through experience, I've realised that with internet access, we can master any challenge we encounter in teaching and learning. By consulting YouTube, I have enhanced my ICT skills, learned to create slides, and resolved minor ICT issues." In this way, the data also revealed that teachers would find relevant materials and videos online when the internet would be available. This boosted their computer skills and helped them develop practical ICT abilities for using technologies.

Use of Personal Devices

The teachers supplemented school-provided ICTs with their personal computers, facilitating content delivery through audio clips and videos. However, limitations in displaying text and images in large classrooms persisted. This is what Min shared for this context, "I utilise ICT at home to gather necessary information and develop required materials, which I then use to facilitate student learning. I use my laptop to show audio clips and videos related to the content, but it is not feasible to display text and pictures in a large classroom setting." In today's world, technology is an essential part of life. In education, it has become a new avenue for guiding students, teachers, methodologies, and the overall educational process. In this context, teachers are found to be using their personal computers and other devices in instruction.

Engaging Higher Authorities

Teachers would advocate for improved ICT infrastructure (Education Master Plan, 2013-2017), urging school administrations and local government bodies to procure necessary tools like computers and printers. This collaboration is vital for enhancing educational practices aligned with modern pedagogy. Appealing to higher authorities, the data revealed that teachers frequently requested essential ICT tools for their schools. They also asked their head teacher and School Management Committee (SMC) to relay this demand to their local government. For example, Min expressed,

> We are continuously trying to raise parents' awareness on this matter. The headteacher informed us that he has requested the rural municipality chairperson to provide some computers and a printer. Last year, we received a computer and a printer, and this year we are expecting more computers from them.

The educational requirements of the 21st-century demand deliberate integration with current pedagogical practices to enhance learning outcomes. Unfortunately, the local stakeholders appeared to overlook this aspect of ICT deployment. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts and support from local governments, not only in this region but also in others.

Workshops

To address skill gaps among students, workshops are organised, sometimes replacing extracurricular activities, to impart essential ICT skills. These workshops cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring holistic development among students and teachers alike. Bhole explained, "In class eight, we have a computer class where we teach students how to use ICT tools." Min also added, "Teachers possess considerable ICT skills, and we attend workshops organised by the schools. Our school administration encourages teachers, students, and guardians to adopt modern teaching and learning methods and makes the necessary arrangements." Thus, to challenge the ‘one size fits all approach’, to enhance the quality and bring variation in teaching; the teachers would share and receive new experiences for teaching through workshops.

Potential Way-outs to Tackle the Challenges

Every challenge presents an opportunity for a solution. Based on the participants' insights, some probable solutions to address the challenges are mentioned in this section.

Availability of Adequate Tools and Software

Ensuring sufficient ICT tools, devices, and software in rural schools encourages teachers to integrate ICTs effectively into teaching practices (SSDP 2016–2023)**.** To address this issue, one of the respondents, Bandre said, "The school administration, local government, and other relevant authorities must ensure the availability of adequate tools and necessary software to encourage teachers to use them." This indicates that schools must be equipped with adequate tools and software for both teachers and students. This could be the basic solution to implement ICTS in schools.

Prompt Repair

Prompt repair and maintenance of ICT tools prevent prolonged downtime, ensuring continuous functionality and usability for teachers and students alike. As Bhole said, "I believe that the schools should have basic items like cartridges, cables, and other easily replaceable parts readily available. This way, teachers wouldn't have to wait weeks for a cable to be replaced." To sum up, for the effective implementation of the ICTs, the tools should be well repaired on time after they are damaged.

Stable Electricity and Internet

Establishing reliable power sources and high-speed internet connections in schools enables seamless ICT integration, facilitating real-time access to information and enhancing learning experiences. To address this issue, Min suggested, "The school should enlist help from different organisations to set up a solar power system and high-speed Wi-Fi. This setup would allow teachers to efficiently access and distribute essential information to students in real-time during classes." Summing up this response, it can be easily said that the electricity and internet should be made stable and well managed by the concerned authorities and stakeholders.

Training and Lowering the Workload

Addressing teacher workload by hiring adequate staff and providing regular training on ICT tools promotes effective use and adoption in classrooms. T3 added to this by saying. "The school should obtain essential funding and hire an adequate number of staffs, enabling us to have dedicated periods to plan our lessons." Similarly, another respondent, Santu shared, "The school should offer training sessions for teachers on how to use different tools effectively." As the teachers reported workload as one of the major hindrances in the ICT-based quality education; it is necessary to reduce their loads and provide more effective training.

Motivation and Supervision

Instituting mechanisms for teacher motivation including recognition and rewards for ICT integration, coupled with regular monitoring, supervision and support, fosters sustained engagement and innovation in teaching practices. To address this issue, Bhoj suggested, "The school administration, SMC, and local bodies should encourage teachers to utilize ICT tools while also implementing monitoring. Furthermore, they should recognise and reward teachers who integrate these innovative tools effectively into their classes."

As one of the problems mentioned by the teachers was low motivation in the use of ICTs, this needs to be seriously rethought. Further, once they are provided with the training, the whether it is transformed into classrooms or not should kept under the monitoring and supervision (Salehi & Salehi, 2012).

Parental Awareness

Making parents aware of the benefits of modern ICT tools (Shahi, 2022) in education and dispelling misconceptions encourages supportive attitudes and participation in their children's digital learning journey. Parents should understand that mobile phones, laptops, videos, projectors, and other digital tools can also be used for teaching and learning. As T5 said, "They shouldn't believe that teachers should only use textbooks and speak loudly in front of the class. Similarly, Bhole explained, "Parents should recognise the importance of modern ICT tools and ensure these tools are available at home for their children." In conclusion, only a school environment is insufficient to produce efficient learners. Equally important is the role of family. As such, the concerned parents should also be made aware of what positive impacts ICTs could have in education despite some drawbacks. Good education depends on all the stakeholders from schools, families and communities.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on the entire data, its discussion and interpretation, this study has come up with some important findings. The teachers in rural schools like the ones selected in this study are making use of some common tools like laptops, digital recordings, mobile gadgets, multimedia projectors, the Internet, Facebook groups, PowerPoint, printers, YouTube, and television in their ELT classrooms. Yet, they are facing different kinds of challenges in ICT use due to investment issues, their skills, motivation (Salehi & Salehi, 2012), power supplies and so on. Hence, to improve the education sector,

all the people concerned with school should have a feeling of responsibility. Further, the local and central governments should increase investment, training packages and monitoring. In the globalised technocratic world today, there is no alternative to integrating ICTs into education. In the context of Nepal in general, and rural areas, there is a need for changing the mindset of teachers and parents to bring ICTs into schools. Moreover, the existing policies should be revisited for more effective implementation; and, the ICT-based pedagogy should be promoted everywhere (ICT Policy, 2015). Only the adoption of recent technology can ensure quality education by enhancing the more creatively and critically engaged teacher-learner roles.

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English in Education in Nepal: A Comprehensive Overview

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Abstract

Education is shaped and directed by the medium of dissemination. It is the language used as the medium of disseminating educational norms and values to the human capital of the nation. In this regard, this article briefly summarises the role and coverage of English in the Nepali education system via curricula of Nepali school to university education. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the review of the related literature and evidence, it was found that the English language has been playing a dominant role in the Nepali education system from school to university level in terms of the medium of teaching and learning, curricula, testing and certification. English serves as the primary language for curricula, textbooks, reference materials, and reading resources mandated for instruction and study across all educational levels in Nepal, starting from nursery through tertiary education. It acts as the medium of instruction in numerous private institutions and certain government-funded public schools. Moreover, it is utilised as the language for conducting final examinations, including the formulation of question papers for most subjects, excluding language-specific courses. In technical fields and some general subjects, it is also used for answering exam questions.

Keywords: English curriculum, English language teaching, ESL, higher education

Introduction

English is not the native language of Nepali in Nepal. However, it has pervaded nearly all facets of society and is now instructed and acquired as a secondary or foreign language within the country. The prominence of English can be attributed to its widespread usage across various domains including education, media, diplomacy, and tourism, leading to its widespread popularity and recognition as the dominant language (Adhikari, 2018; Shrestha, 2016). In discussing the position of English within Nepal, Shrestha (1983) contends that English cannot be classified as a second language within the country due to its absence as an official language, its lack of status as an international language, and its non-dominant role as a working language (p. 48). English serves as a foreign language or a language of access in day-to-day communication in Nepal, facilitating the acquisition of textbooks, lectures, and journals as it is taught as a subject of study and utilised to some extent as a medium of instruction. Its usage extends to academic, technical, and public spheres within the nation albeit in a limited capacity. Acting as a lingua franca across diverse socioeconomic sectors, English has

significantly contributed to expanding career prospects and economic opportunities in Nepal (Malla, 1977; Shrestha, 1983; Bista, 2011; Khati, 2013; Giri, 2014).

English in Nepal was originally introduced in the mid-seventeenth century. The first English speakers to arrive in the country were Christian missionaries: Father Craybrawl in 1628 and later Father Grover and Father Dorbil in 1661 (Gopinath, 2000, as cited in Sharma, 2006). It took almost another two centuries before the English language was officially introduced in the country. Nepal has a different history than many other countries regarding the introduction of English because it has never been colonised. At this point, it is advisable to mention that English is an imported rather than politically imposed colonial language in Nepal (Adhikari & Poudel, 2024).

The initiation of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal is credited to Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana, who officially introduced it with the establishment of Durbar High School in 1854 (Sharma, 2006, as cited in Aryal et al., 2016). Hence, the official commencement of English language instruction in Nepal can be traced back to Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana's visit to Britain. It was during this visit that Rana initiated English-language education for his own children and immediate family members, marking the formal inception of English-language teaching in Nepal (Eagle, 2000). Historically, English as a foreign language entered the multilingual land of Nepal in the 19th century. Its contact with the Nepali can be traced back "to Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana's visit to England in 1850, and establishment of Durbar High School, the first Western mode school where English was introduced in 1854" (Adhikari, 2017b, as cited in Adhikari, 2020). Nepal's education system which was highly influenced by the ideologies and practices imported from the colonial past in India where English constituted the major medium of academic literary (Adhikari & Poudel, 2024).

Consequently, the inaugural governmental educational institution in Nepal adopted English as its medium of instruction. According to Sharma (1990), the Durbar School, affiliated with Calcutta University, strictly adhered to the university's curriculum, regulations, and language policies, with English serving as both the medium of instruction and examination (p. 4). Similarly, Giri (2014) elaborates that the Nepalese education system mirrored that of British India, where English not only held compulsory status across all educational levels but also served as the sole medium of instruction until the decline of Rana autocracy in the early 1950s (p. 98).

Upon its establishment in 1934, the SLC Board of Examination in Nepal mandated English as both a compulsory subject and the medium for instruction and assessment, while Nepali did not gain compulsory status until 1951. During the 1940s and 1950s, SLC candidates voluntarily chose English as their language of examination (Malla, 1976; Shrestha, 1983). Subsequent revisions in 1953 and 1965 allotted over 20% of total marks to English, contrasting with Nepali's mere 5%. By the 1960s, secondary education utilised both English and Nepali as mediums of instruction (HMG, 1961, pp. 99-101 as cited in Shrestha, 1983). Tri-Chandra College, the pioneer higher education institution founded in 1918, similarly adopted English as its medium of instruction, modelling its educational structure after Patna University, India (Weinberg, 2013; Pandey, 2020).

The implementation of the National Education System Plan (NESP 1971-76) marked the formal introduction of English Language Teaching (ELT) from primary to tertiary education levels in Nepal (Sharma, 2021). Since 1971, both Nepali and English have functioned as mediums of instruction in Nepalese education (Baldauf & Kaplan, 2000 as cited in Joshi, 2020). Furthermore, private schools and higher education institutions have long provided instruction in the English medium (Khadka, 2022). English has been integral to Nepal's education system for over 150 years, spanning from early childhood to tertiary levels, serving as the medium of instruction, assessment, and the content to be

taught and learned. The preference for English medium education, often associated with perceived quality, extends even to government-funded public schools (Poudel & Choi, 2021). Both English and Nepali are not only mediums of instruction, but also compulsory subjects mandated by national education policies (Poudel & Choi, 2021). Thus, English has become an indispensable component of Nepal's educational framework, from primary school to university levels.

Despite its entrenched position, there remains a research gap in understanding the comprehensive implications of English within the Nepali education system. While existing studies recognize its dominance, there's a scarcity of exploring its socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical ramifications within the Nepali context. Specifically, there's a lack of investigation into the evolving nature of English in Nepal, transitioning from a traditional foreign language to a second or additional language, as observed in other studies (Graddol, Karn, Sharma, Rai, Giri, as cited in Adhikari, 2020). By delving into the socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical dimensions of English within the Nepali context, this study aims to offer valuable insights into its implications for educational policy and practice. Understanding the evolving nature of English in Nepal, from a foreign language to a second or additional language, is crucial for informing educational strategies and enhancing language teaching methodologies. Furthermore, addressing this gap in research contributes to a more holistic understanding of the dynamics between language, education, and society in Nepal, ultimately facilitating informed decision-making in educational policy and practice.

Literature Review

Guided by the research questions, I have reviewed the literature available in various resources on English language teaching in Nepal. More specifically, I have reviewed and discussed two broad themes such as English in school education in Nepal and English in higher education in Nepal.

Methodology

This article employs a systematic review methodology to examine the role and coverage of the English language in the Nepalese education system, encompassing both general education and university curricula. The methodology involves an extensive search of electronic databases, including Google Scholar, PubMed, ERIC, and JSTOR, as well as manual searches of relevant sources such as academic journals and government reports. For example, Poudel and Choi, (2021); Malla (1976); Shrestha (1983); Shrestha and Gautam (2022); Paudel (2019); Phyak, (2016); Weinberg (2013); Pandey (2020); Duwadi (2018); Seki (2015); Khadka (2022) and many other scholars who contributed for exploring the knowledge and skills in this filed were reviewed. Furthermore, the Curriculum Development Center (2019a; 2018a; 2018b; 2020; 2021; 2022); the Constitution of Nepal (2015); National Curriculum Framework (2019), and many other policy documents were further explored in this article. Data extraction is conducted to systematically collect pertinent information from the selected studies, including objectives, research methods, and key findings. Quality assessment of the included studies is performed to evaluate the reliability and validity of the findings. Thematic analysis is employed to identify patterns and trends in the literature, with a focus on the role of English as a medium of instruction, its integration into curricula, and its impact on testing.

Results and Discussion

Based on the literature found in various sources, I have reviewed the English language teaching in Nepal. I have presented the results with two themes, including English in school education in Nepal and English in higher education in Nepal.

English in School Education in Nepal

From its inception, the education system in Nepal has predominantly used English as the primary language of instruction, spanning from early childhood education through to higher education. Despite strong advocacy within Nepali academia for instruction in native languages at the school level, English remains the preferred medium of teaching. In Nepal, the curriculum at the Basic Level underscores the importance of English, highlighting its role as a key element for connecting with the global community. English is regarded as the global lingua franca, vital for Nepal's integration into the international sphere. Its significance extends beyond international communication to include higher education, mass media, information technology, commerce, and tourism, as well as scientific and medical fields (CDC, 2019a, p. 17, as cited in Poudel et al., 2022).

The National Curriculum Framework (2019) outlines a nuanced approach to language instruction in Nepal, prioritising the use of the mother tongue or Nepali language as the primary medium of instruction at the basic level. However, English is designated as the medium of instruction for subjects other than social studies, values/moral education, and topics related to Nepali art, culture, and indigenous identity. This highlights a deliberate effort to balance linguistic and cultural considerations within the educational framework. English education in Nepal extends beyond mere language acquisition; it permeates various educational levels, from basic to advanced, and is increasingly becoming a de facto medium of instruction in both private and public schools (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022; Paudel, 2019; Phyak, 2016). Its integration into the curriculum is evident from its compulsory teaching starting as early as grade one in community schools and even earlier in institutional schools, continuing up to grade twelve and as a major subject in higher education (Bhandari, 2020).

Despite occasional policies aimed at promoting indigenous languages in education, English and Nepali have consistently held dominant positions within Nepal's educational system. They have been entrenched as both compulsory subjects and mediums of instruction throughout the nation's educational history (Poudel & Choi, 2021b, as cited in Poudel et al., 2022). This underscores the enduring influence of English and Nepali in shaping the educational landscape of Nepal, reflecting a complex interplay between linguistic, cultural, and educational policies.

English education in Nepal has garnered a reputation, often synonymous with academic struggle, persisting from school to university levels. Despite this perception, parents are actively engaged in fostering English learning environments for their children, spanning from infancy to university education (Sharma, 2022). This dedication is reflected in the enrollment of children in expensive English medium schools, indicating a societal emphasis on English proficiency. The prevalence of English as the medium of instruction extends beyond private schools to encompass technical institutions and, more recently, select public schools over the past five years (Pandey, 2020). Particularly in private schools, there is a staunch advocacy for continuous English language usage.

Analyzing the allocation of teaching hours for English across different grades reveals a nuanced approach within the curriculum. In Grades 1–3, English is allotted four credit hours annually, one-hour fewer than Nepali and the mother tongue. This parity is maintained in Grades 4–10, where English receives five credit hours annually, matching the allocation for Nepali. However, a discrepancy emerges in Grades 11–12, with English reduced to four credit hours annually compared to Nepali's three, indicating a shift in emphasis (Curriculum Development Centre, 2018a, pp. 4–7, as cited in Shrestha & Gautam, 2022). This nuanced distribution reflects the evolving role of English within the educational landscape, balancing its importance with that of other languages.

The English curriculum in schools adopts a communicative approach to English Language Teaching (ELT), emphasising the development of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Shreshtha & Gautam, 2022). At the basic level (grades 1-3), the curriculum prioritizes creating an environment conducive to stress-free English language acquisition. This approach recognizes that children learn English more effectively when exposed to both spoken and written English, with ample opportunities for usage. Consequently, the curriculum places a significant emphasis on language skills development, aiming to equip students to use English proficiently in limited contexts (CDC, 2018a, p. 17).

Moving to grades 4-5, the curriculum aims to foster basic communicative competence, preparing students to utilize English in real-life situations. Here, equal importance is placed on honing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, reflecting a balanced approach to language learning (CDC, 2021, p. 34). Similarly, the curriculum for grades 6-8 seeks to enhance students' ability to engage in exchanges with English speakers and access a wide array of knowledge and enjoyment available in written and spoken English. With a focus on developing communicative competence, this stage of the curriculum continues to prioritize the cultivation of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (CDC, 2020, p. 64). This progressive approach underscores the curriculum's commitment to fostering holistic English language proficiency among students, preparing them for effective communication in diverse contexts.

The English curriculum for grades 9-10 is designed to empower students to express their ideas effectively in English while also exposing them to the wealth of knowledge available in both written and spoken English. This curriculum ensures comprehensive coverage of all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Grammatical competence holds significant importance within this framework, with learners expected to communicate confidently in English (CDC, 2021). In the updated English curriculum for grades 9-12, a communicative approach to language teaching serves as the foundation. With a primary focus on reading and writing skills, the curriculum addresses all four language skills. It emphasizes the types of reading and writing skills essential for students in real-life contexts, aligning with practical language use (CDC, 2022).

Recent revisions to the secondary-level English curriculum (grades 11 & 12) by the government of Nepal reflect a notable shift. The newly developed curriculum integrates all four language skills and recommends the incorporation of grammar instruction within the context of texts, departing from the traditional approach of teaching grammar separately (CDC, 2022). This reflects a progressive move towards a more integrated and contextually relevant English language education approach, aimed at enhancing students' overall language proficiency.

At the school level, textbooks prescribed for English language instruction are developed by the guidelines provided by the Curriculum Development Centre. A brief examination of these textbooks reveals a consistent structure across different grade levels. For Grades 1–5, units typically commence with a 'listen and say' activity, progressing to reading, grammar, writing, and supplementary fun activities (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022, p. 29). In Grades 6 and 7, units start with conversational activities, followed by reading, grammar, and writing tasks. From Grade 8 onwards, the unit commonly begins with reading exercises, followed by grammar, conversation, writing tasks, and additional exercises. Although the textbooks predominantly emphasize reading texts and comprehension exercises, they often lack sufficient listening and speaking activities, including necessary resources such as audio files. This observation emphasizes a potential gap in addressing comprehensive language skills development within the curriculum.

The formal evaluation of students' English language proficiency within schools commenced with the introduction of the first School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination in English at the culmination of Grade 10 in 1934 (Mathema & Bista, 2006; Shrestha, 2018; Wood, 1965, as cited in Shrestha & Gautam, 2022). Over its 85-year history, the SLC/SEE has undergone several revisions. Originally, the English language subject comprised two papers totalling 200 marks until 1971. Subsequently, it transitioned to a single compulsory English paper, a format that persists to the present day (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

In terms of examination focus, the SLC/SEE English assessment has traditionally leaned towards reading and writing skills. However, a notable shift occurred in 1998 when the examination began to evaluate students' oral communicative proficiency in English, allocating 25 percent of marks for this component (Shrestha, 2018). It's important to note that while oral competence is internally assessed by schools, the reading and writing components are externally evaluated by the National Examination Board. The reading and writing paper constitute 75 marks out of 100, including 11 marks designated for grammar assessment. This timed examination lasts a maximum of two hours and 15 minutes in a controlled local centre, with reading allocated 40 marks and writing 24 marks, indicating a bias towards reading skills (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

The role of English in school education in Nepal has been pivotal since the inception of the education system, with English serving as a de facto medium of instruction across all levels of education. Both private and public schools in Nepal increasingly adopt English as a medium of instruction. However, despite policies promoting Indigenous languages, English and Nepali continue to dominate the curriculum. Hence, the English curriculum in Nepal aims to equip students with communicative competence and essential language skills for real-life situations, reflecting the country's aspiration for global connectivity and competitiveness.

English in Higher Education in Nepal

Higher education in Nepal commences upon completion of class 12, with bachelor's programs offered across all universities in the country. This educational journey spans through bachelors, masters, MPhil, and PhD programs. In the realm of English Education, the duration of study varies, with bachelor's programs lasting three years, master's programs two years, MPhil programs one and a half years, and doctoral degrees requiring over four years (Shreshtha, 2018). A significant trend in education is the widespread adoption of English as the medium of instruction (EMI), particularly in private K-12 schools. This shift extends to numerous previously Nepali-medium schools, catering primarily to elite and middle-class students (Sah, 2021).

Students in Nepal typically attend either Nepali-medium or English-medium schools from an early age. However, those who attended Nepali medium schools often perceive themselves at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts from English-medium schools (Owen et al., 2021). At the college level, the prevalence of English language usage surpasses that of high school. Kathmandu University serves as an example, where English has become the predominant language for official records, email communications, and student credentials, highlighting its increasing prominence in academic settings (Pandey, 2020).

English holds a compulsory status across various academic programs in nearly all universities and higher education institutions in Nepal. This mandatory inclusion has persisted for over five decades, spanning from elementary school to undergraduate degree levels (Shrestha, 2009). Furthermore, English is offered as a specialized course within faculties of education, humanities, and social sciences, ranging from bachelor's to PhD degree programs in the majority of Nepalese

universities. Bhattarai and Gautam (2010) assert that English serves as the predominant language for academic purposes, including teaching, assessment, and research, across university education, tertiary colleges, and privately-operated academic institutions (p. 33). Moreover, Shrestha (2018) notes that to be eligible for secondary school English teaching positions in Nepal, candidates must hold a bachelor's degree in English Education. Those who have a bachelor's degree in English or Humanities with a concentration in English must complete a one-year Bachelor's in English Education program to qualify for these roles. This requirement highlights the critical importance of English proficiency and proper pedagogical training for secondary education teachers.

In higher education institutions in Nepal, both English and Nepali are used as mediums of instruction, teaching, learning, and assessment. However, English is more prevalent in technical and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. According to Linn et al. (2021), English plays a crucial role in preparing students for higher education and job prospects in Nepal, being a mandatory part of university curricula at least through the undergraduate level. Furthermore, many undergraduate programs, particularly in institutions like Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University, require prospective students to excel in English proficiency tests for admission, especially in STEM and applied science fields such as medicine, veterinary science, and forestry (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

Kathmandu University stands out as the sole English-medium university in Nepal with an English Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy (Linn et al., 2021). Other universities like Pokhara University, Purbanchal University, and Kathmandu University have prioritized the modernization of education, with English-based curricula as a central focus (Seki, 2015). This emphasizes the pervasive influence of English in higher education, particularly in disciplines that emphasize technical knowledge and scientific inquiry. All universities and higher education institutions in Nepal have structured their curricula in English, with English serving as the primary medium of instruction and examination in most disciplines, excluding those related to language studies. However, in practical application, the Nepali language often functions as a facilitating or alternative medium of communication. Bhattarai and Gautam (2007) assert that English is extensively utilized for all academic activities, including teaching, evaluation, and research, across university education, tertiary colleges, and privately-operated academic institutions.

Similarly, Duwadi (2018) contends that Nepalese universities prioritize the adoption of English as the language of instruction, making it compulsory up to the bachelor's level regardless of students' chosen specializations (p. 180, as cited in Khadka, 2022). Teaching in English as the medium of instruction is prevalent in both universities and colleges throughout Nepal, with English being compulsory up to the degree level and serving as the exclusive medium of instruction in disciplines such as science, engineering, medicine, and technical fields within university settings (Bista, 2011; Shreshtha, 2018).

English is mandatory in the curriculum of many universities in Nepal, particularly within undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs offered by the Faculty of Education and Humanities and Social Sciences, where an emphasis on reading-focused courses is evident. According to Duwadi (2018), Tribhuvan University, Nepal's inaugural university established in 1959, has consistently prioritized the adoption of English in its curriculum (p. 180). The language-in-education policy for higher education in Nepal is less defined compared to that of primary and secondary schools. Nonetheless, recent trends at Tribhuvan University suggest a growing inclination towards the English Medium of Instruction (EME), driven by aspirations for internationalization and globalization.

However, in practice, instructors at Tribhuvan University tend to adopt either Nepali Medium of Instruction (NME) or EME based on the discipline they are teaching (Phyak & Ojha, 2019).

Across universities and technical higher education institutions in Nepal, English is not only a compulsory subject but also serves as the primary medium of instruction and examination in various subject areas. Moreover, both Mid-West University (MU) and Far Western Universities offer English as a major subject at both the bachelor's and master's levels within the Faculty of Education and Humanities and Social Sciences. These universities also administer English Language Teaching (ELT) courses within the semester system, consistently updating their curricula to align with evolving educational standards.

Tribhuvan University initiated the transition from annual Master-level programs to the semester system in 2014, starting with the central department and subsequently expanding it to all constituent and affiliated campuses across the Kathmandu Valley, followed by nationwide implementation in 2017 (Paudel, 2019). Across various universities in Nepal, where English is offered as a specialized subject at the bachelor's, master's, MPhil, and PhD levels, there is a concerted effort to update ELT curricula, methods, and techniques to integrate emerging trends and technologies. The focus of these updates tends to revolve around English language, linguistics, and pedagogy within the Faculty of Education, and English Language and Literature within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Poudel and Sharma (2019) delineate this distinction, highlighting English under the Faculty of Education's emphasis on linguistics and language teaching, and the Faculty of Humanities' emphasis on arts and literature (p. 2). This ongoing evolution reflects a commitment to enhancing English language education and pedagogy within Nepal's higher education landscape.

The English language plays an indispensable role in preparing Nepalese students for higher education and employment opportunities (Linn et al., 2021). Students must study English up to at least the undergraduate level in universities. Moreover, in many university undergraduate programs across Nepal, particularly in institutions like Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University, English proficiency is a prerequisite for admission, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields and other applied science disciplines such as medicine, veterinary science, and forestry. Potential students are required to excel in English proficiency tests as part of the admission process, underscoring the significance of English proficiency for academic and career advancement (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022).

English serves as the predominant language for examinations, curriculum, textbooks, and reference materials in higher education, excluding language-specific courses. Shreshtha (2018) notes that apart from English courses, subjects are taught using both English and Nepali, and students have the flexibility to use either language in exams except for English papers at the university level. Tribhuvan University, as a government-funded national institution, adopts a bilingual approach, providing students with the option to answer exam questions in either English or Nepali (excluding exams for language courses). This practice is commonly observed in other government-funded universities, while private colleges typically prioritize English as the primary language of instruction (Pandey, 2020).

Moreover, Shrestha (2008) observes a prevalent trend of English-only instruction, particularly in disciplines such as medicine, engineering, agriculture, veterinary science, and forestry at Tribhuvan University. For instance, in engineering programs, instructors predominantly use English as the medium of classroom instruction, lecture delivery, and demonstrations (Shrestha et al., 2018). Additionally, Nepal's higher education institutions implement a standardized examination system where question papers are in English, allowing students from social sciences and humanities to write

answers in both English and Nepali. However, STEM students are required to respond solely in English (Shah, 2022).

Furthermore, technical institutes, science and medical colleges, and certain faculties/institutes at universities mandate entrance tests conducted exclusively in English, emphasizing a merit-based competition (Shah, 2022). This comprehensive integration of English across various facets of higher education underscores its critical role in academic and professional pursuits, particularly in STEM disciplines and technical fields.

In higher education settings, English is offered as an elective subject within the Faculty of Education (FoE) for Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed.) programs and within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FoHSS) for Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Master of Arts (M.A.) programs. Additionally, English is taught for Specific Purposes (ESP) in specialized fields such as law, medicine, engineering, agriculture, forestry, and banking and financial studies (Sharma, 2021).

Regarding the medium of instruction, learning, and examination, English predominantly serves as the primary language, particularly in technical disciplines like engineering. Shrestha et al. (2016) assert that English is the exclusive medium of communication in examinations within engineering institutes in Nepal. Furthermore, most textbooks used by engineering students to expand their knowledge in specialized fields are imported from foreign countries. The integration of English into the engineering curriculum is extensive and fundamental, reflecting its essential role in engineering education from the outset. This close association between English and engineering education illustrates their inseparable connection in the Nepalese context.

Based on the evidence of English being included as a compulsory subject up to the bachelor's level in engineering curricula, it is evident that English language teaching and learning hold significant importance in engineering education in Nepal (Shrestha et al., 2018). Teaching materials at Tribhuvan University (TU) are accessible in both Nepali and English, though subjects taught in English typically have a greater abundance of English-language materials compared to Nepali. Conversely, materials for most Arts and Humanities subjects are primarily in Nepali, with a growing presence of English-language materials. In contrast, the majority of STEM subjects, along with courses in medicine and business management, feature materials predominantly in English, with some available in Nepali as well (Linn et al., 2021).

Furthermore, assessment questions are provided in both Nepali and English across various subjects, except for language courses such as French and those primarily adopting English Medium of Instruction (EME). This dual-language provision affords students the flexibility to respond in either English or Nepali, accommodating their linguistic preferences and capabilities (Linn et al., 2021). This comprehensive integration of English and Nepali across teaching materials and assessments reflects the diverse linguistic landscape of higher education in Nepal, catering to the needs of students across different disciplines and language proficiencies.

For many Nepali university students, their academic paths often dictate the language of instruction, with many STEM programs being delivered through English Medium of Instruction (EMI) (Owen et al., 2021). However, mastering English poses significant challenges for many Nepalese students, manifesting in difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Despite advancing to higher grades, learners often struggle with foundational concepts taught in earlier years (Luitel, 2016).

English is not only a subject of study but also serves as the primary medium of instruction and examination across most programs in Nepali universities. Nonetheless, Nepali may also be utilized as a

supplementary or alternative language, particularly in non-language-specific courses. Despite this flexibility, English remains the predominant language for teaching, assessment, and scholarly research in higher education institutions. This emphasis on English integration within higher education curricula reflects Nepal's aspirations for internationalization and globalization. While language-in-education policies for higher education are somewhat ambiguous, there is a discernible trend towards increasing the prominence and utilization of English across various academic disciplines.

English proficiency is essential for students aspiring to higher education and employment opportunities in Nepal. Many undergraduate programs, especially in STEM fields, require students to pass English proficiency tests for admission. English proficiency is particularly crucial in standardized examinations, where STEM students are often required to write exclusively in English. Despite the widespread adoption of English in higher education, challenges persist, particularly regarding students' proficiency levels. Many students struggle with English, facing difficulties in vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension, highlighting areas for improvement in English language education at all levels of study in Nepal.

English language teaching in Nepali EFL contexts requires a holistic approach that considers the complex socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical dynamics at play. The historical trajectory of English in Nepal's education system underscores the need for informed language policies. Policymakers should draw upon empirical evidence to devise language policies that balance the role of English with the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages. Additionally, policies should address issues such as language medium of instruction, curriculum development, and assessment practices. Given the widespread use of English as a medium of instruction, there is a need for clear guidelines on its implementation. Policymakers should consider factors such as teacher proficiency, instructional resources, and student readiness when determining the medium of instruction. Moreover, policies should support bilingual and multilingual education initiatives to cater to diverse linguistic backgrounds among students.

English language teaching should be integrated into the curriculum coherently and systematically. Curriculum frameworks should articulate clear learning outcomes for English language proficiency across different educational levels. Additionally, curricula should incorporate communicative language teaching methodologies to enhance students' language skills in real-life contexts. Language assessment practices should align with curriculum objectives and focus on evaluating students' communicative competence in English. Policymakers should explore alternative assessment methods, such as performance-based assessments and portfolios, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' language proficiency. Additionally, efforts should be made to ensure the fairness and validity of English language assessments for all students, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds.

Since English is the medium of instruction and examination in most higher education programs, EFL curriculum and instruction should focus on academic English skills, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with an emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. As English is used extensively in STEM fields and other applied sciences, EFL teachers should collaborate with educators in these disciplines to develop language materials and activities that support students' language learning needs within specific academic contexts. Given the increasing emphasis on modernization and globalization in higher education, EFL teachers should integrate technology into their instruction to provide students with access to authentic language materials, online resources, and language learning tools that enhance their English language skills.

Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the trajectory of English in education within the Nepalese context has been dynamic and multifaceted. Despite not being the mother tongue, English has significantly influenced various sectors, becoming deeply embedded in educational practices from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Initially, introduced for political reasons, English gradually evolved into a vital component of the educational landscape, with institutions like Durbar School and Tri-Chandra College playing pivotal roles in its establishment and proliferation.

Over time, English emerged as a compulsory subject and medium of instruction, shaping curricula, evaluation systems, and educational policies. Its dominance expanded from primary to tertiary levels, with private schools and higher education institutions offering instruction predominantly in English. This trend emphasises the perceived association between English medium education and quality, evident in the growing demand even within government-funded schools. Despite its entrenched position, there remains a need for a deeper exploration of English's socio-cultural, economic, and pedagogical implications within the Nepalese education system.

The role of English in school education in Nepal has been pivotal since the inception of the education system, with English serving as a de facto medium of instruction across all levels of education. Both private and public schools increasingly adopt English as a medium of instruction, despite policies promoting Indigenous languages. Hence, the English curriculum in Nepal aims to equip students with communicative competence and essential language skills for real-life situations, reflecting the country's aspiration for global connectivity and competitiveness. Similarly, in higher education, English plays a crucial role, being a compulsory subject in almost all programs of universities and higher education institutions. English proficiency is essential for students aspiring to higher education and employment opportunities in Nepal, particularly in STEM fields where English proficiency tests are often required for admission.

Despite its widespread adoption, challenges persist in English language education, highlighting areas for improvement in proficiency levels among students. In essence, English has become an integral part of the educational fabric in Nepal, influencing not only language acquisition but also shaping broader educational paradigms. Moving forward, a nuanced understanding of its role and implications is essential for fostering inclusive and effective educational environments that cater to the diverse needs of Nepali learners.

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Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching Listening Skills in Secondary Level English Language Classes

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Abstract

Language proficiency involves mastering four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening is one of the most essential and intimate skills in teaching and learning English. The purpose of the study was to explore ELT teachers' perspectives of secondary-level English language teachers on teaching listening skills. The study tried to explore the provisions and practices of teaching English listening skills in the secondary school curriculum in Nepal. It was basic qualitative research that used in-depth interviews and document study methods to collect the data. The participants of the study were three secondary-level ELT teachers from three schools in Sainamaina Municipality. Thematic discursive analysis was used in the analysis of the data. The finding of this study revealed that proficient listening contributes to the development of positive relationships, encourages confidence, facilitates meaningful communication, and improves problem-solving skills. Non-techno-friendly classrooms, untrained teachers, and the predominant use of the mother tongue were major challenges in teaching English in community schools in Nepal. The study focused on the need to improve the technological infrastructure in schools. This could involve integrating audio-visual aids and other technology-enhanced learning tools to facilitate better listening practices.

Keywords: ELT, language proficiency, listening skill, listening comprehension, teachers' perception

Introduction

The four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are essential components of language proficiency. Listening is the ability to understand spoken language. It involves hearing and comprehending the words, phrases, and meanings conveyed by the speaker. Listening is one of the most fundamental and inseparable skills in both teaching and learning English. It plays a crucial role in language acquisition, especially for foreign language learners. Listening allows learners to understand spoken language, which is essential for communication in real-life situations.

Listening is an interpretive process and a way of learning a language (Richards, 2008). By developing good listening skills, learners can comprehend conversations, lectures, instructions, and other forms of oral communication. So, teaching listening is a critical dimension of language learning

(Anderson & Lynch, 1988, Osada, 2004). Regular exposure to spoken English helps learners understand the correct sounds and rhythms of the language, enabling them to produce more accurate and natural speech (Graham, 2006). So, teaching listening strategies to second language learners is essential because it enhances their listening comprehension skills, promotes effective communication, aids in language acquisition, and cultivates cultural understanding (Krivosheyeva, Zuparova & Shodiyeva, 2020). Teaching listening skills is crucial for second language learners as it exposes them to authentic language, enhances comprehension abilities, improves communication effectiveness, aids in vocabulary and grammar acquisition, fosters cultural and sociolinguistic awareness, develops critical thinking skills, and boosts confidence and motivation (Nunan & Miller, 1995). Teaching listening skills plays a vital role in effective communication, comprehension, language acquisition, cultural understanding, critical thinking, professional success, personal development, and overall well-being of second language learners.

Listening skills play a crucial role in the effective teaching and learning of English. Respecting the vital role of listening there has been the inclusion of listening activities since the implementation National Educational System Plan (1971 - 1974). The National Curriculum Framework (2019) emphasises the importance of developing listening skills among students as an essential component of language learning. The National Curriculum Framework (2019) incorporates listening activities within the language subjects, such as Nepali, English, and other optional foreign languages. These subjects usually have dedicated sections or units focusing on listening comprehension. The curriculum emphasizes the teaching of various listening strategies to help students become active listeners and develop a range of listening resources, such as audio recordings, videos, dialogues, speeches, and interviews The National Curriculum Framework (2019). However, secondary schools in Nepal face significant challenges in developing and enhancing listening skills among students. The existing teaching methodologies and strategies employed in secondary schools may not adequately address the specific needs and learning preferences of students about listening skills. Despite the recognised importance of listening skills in language learning, there is a lack of comprehensive strategies and approaches tailored specifically for teaching listening skills in secondary schools in Nepal. The current teaching practices may not effectively engage students, promote active listening, and address individual learning differences.

However, realising the importance of listening skills for language learning, it has now been integrated with other language skills in the course in the recent past. The curriculum in Nepal emphasises the development of listening skills as part of the overall language-learning process. The curricular goal of teaching listening in classes 9 and 10 is to ensure that by the end of Grade 10, students can listen to and respond to a variety of spoken English with reasonable accuracy, fluency, and coherence, and understand the main points and extract essential information from clear standard speech Curriculum Development Center (2021). Although it is included in the curriculum, it has not been considered seriously by the concerned stakeholders. Neither teachers nor students pay attention to listening skills because of limited access to technology and audiovisual resources, large class sizes, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, and a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers. Because of these limitations in teaching listening skills, our students are weak in English in our schools. The existing research on language teaching in Nepal focuses on broader aspects of language skills, such as speaking and writing. I felt the research gap in specifically addressing the teaching and learning of listening skills. Therefore, I felt the necessity for a study that specifically investigates perspectives on teaching listening skills in secondary-level English language classes in Nepal.

This research served as the pilot study for my PhD study. This research tried to identify the key challenges and explore effective strategies for teaching listening skills in secondary schools in Nepal, ultimately bridging the gap between existing practices and optimal methodologies. By focusing on strategies for teaching listening skills, this research acknowledged the significance of this skill in the educational context and aims to enhance its instruction in secondary schools in Nepal. The study specifically targeted secondary school classes 9 and 10 in Nepal, recognizing the importance of considering the unique cultural, linguistic, and educational factors that influence teaching and learning practices in this context. By exploring strategies within the Nepalese context, the research offers practical insights and recommendations tailored to the needs of local schools and students. By shedding light on the existing difficulties of teaching listening, the study can help inform policy, curriculum development, and professional development initiatives to improve listening skills instruction in secondary schools. This study intended to identify the challenges and problems faced by teachers in the process of teaching listening skills to students in Grades 9 and 10 at the secondary level. So given the importance of listening skills, this study sought to explore the specific instructional activities employed by teachers in the teaching of listening skills in English to students in Grades 9 and 10 at the secondary level of Nepal. This research aimed to provide valuable insights into the current practices of teaching listening skills in English language classes at the secondary level in Nepal. This study was based on the following research questions:

i. To what extent do the provisions and practice of teaching English listening skills in secondary school curriculum in Nepal differ?
ii. What instructional activities do the teachers conduct when teaching listening skills in English at the secondary level (Grades 9 and 10)?
iii. What difficulties do teachers encounter while teaching listening skills in English to students in Grades 9 and 10 at the secondary level?
iv. How do secondary school teachers perceive their role in teaching listening skills?

Literature Review

Listening is the process of receiving and understanding spoken language. Teaching listening is the process of developing and improving a person's ability to understand and comprehend spoken language.

Listening as Language Skills

Listening is a fundamental language skill that is essential for effective communication. It is the primary way that language learners are exposed to the new language. Brown (2006) states that listening in a second language is a hard job and a complex activity, and we can help students comprehend what they hear by activating their prior knowledge. Development of listening skills is significant for second language learning (Kajiura, et al., 2021). Listening is an essential element of active communication. Richards (2008) considers listening from two different perspectives: listening as comprehension and listening as acquisition. The first perspective assumes that the main function of listening in second language learning is to facilitate understanding of spoken discourse. The second perspective considers how listening can provide input that triggers the further development of second-language proficiency (Richards, 2008). By developing listening skills, students can better understand spoken English, enabling them to engage in meaningful conversations with others. Strong listening skills also enhance their ability to comprehend various accents, intonations, and speech patterns, which are valuable in a globalised world. Listening plays a dynamic role, particularly in learning a language

for communicative purposes, as it helps the language learner to obtain pronunciation, word stress, vocabulary, and syntax and the comprehension of messages conveyed can be based solely on tone of voice, pitch and accent (Renukadevi, 2014). Engaging in listening activities adds variety and interest to language learning.

Rost (2013) presents four perspectives of listening: receptive, constructive, collaborative, and transformative. Receptive listening is about understanding the speaker's message, constructive listening is about understanding the speaker's thoughts and intentions, collaborative listening is about negotiating shared meaning, and transformative listening is about being open to being changed by the communication process Rost (2013).

Listening is a fundamental language skill indispensable for effective communication and second language acquisition. The complexity of listening in a second language underscores its challenging nature, emphasising the value of activating prior knowledge to aid comprehension. The development of listening skills emerges as a pivotal aspect of second language learning, contributing not only to comprehension but also to active communication. The dual perspectives of listening as comprehension and acquisition, as well as the dynamic role it plays in language learning, emphasise its multifaceted nature.

Teaching English Listening

Listening in English as a second and foreign language is vital for fostering effective communication, language acquisition, comprehension skills, cultural awareness, real-life application, test preparation, and an enhanced learning experience. By developing strong listening skills, students in Nepal can improve their overall English proficiency and confidently engage with the global community. Listening is important in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner and through listening students receive information and gain insights (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016). By emphasising listening skills in ELT, students can better navigate real-life situations where English is spoken, such as education, travel, work and media. Shariyevna and Israilova, (2020) state listening as the medium through which students increase a large proportion of their education, information, understanding of the world and human affairs, ideas, and sense of values. Sabina, (2018) believes that it is important for learners to have the chance to practice listening to English in real-world settings to improve their English skills.

Enhancing listening skills in English language teaching in Nepal is essential for a holistic language education. Beyond facilitating effective communication and language acquisition, strong listening skills contribute to cultural awareness, real-life applicability, and improved performance in various contexts, including testing and global engagement. Emphasizing listening in English Language Teaching not only equips students with practical language skills but also empowers them to navigate diverse real-world situations, fostering a comprehensive and enriched learning experience.

Provisions and Practices of Teaching Listening in Secondary Level Education in Nepal

Listening is a fundamental skill that enables students to understand spoken language, which is essential for communication and learning. The listening-first approach is a sound and effective way to learn a new language (Stephen, 2014). By focusing on listening comprehension, learners can develop a strong foundation for developing other language skills. The English curriculum for secondary-level education in Nepal is based on the communicative approach to language teaching, which emphasises the development of all four language skills, including listening. The curriculum and syllabus in Nepal typically include listening comprehension as a part of the language education program. The National Curriculum Framework (2019) outlines the general objectives and guidelines for teaching listening

skills. Curriculum Development Center (2021) formulated the learning outcomes of teaching listening for the grades of 9 and 10. The intended outcomes of teaching listening to grade 9 are to understand listening text meaning, following standard talks, speeches, speeches, news bulletins, and instructions, and following multi-step instructions and detailed directions to comprehend and respond to textual (Curriculum Development Center, 2021). In the same way, the intended outcomes of grade 10 are to understand listening texts, follow standard talks, speeches, and extended discussion points, extract specific information from spoken English, identify main ideas from audio materials, and follow multi-step instructions and detailed directions (Curriculum Development Center, 2021).

Recognising listening as an essential skill crucial for communication and learning, the review emphasized the effectiveness of a listening-first approach in language acquisition. In the context of Nepal's secondary-level English curriculum, the emphasis on the communicative approach aligns with the recognition of listening as a vital language skill. The inclusion of listening comprehension in the curriculum, guided by the National Curriculum Framework and specific learning outcomes for grades 9 and 10, illustrates a comprehensive strategy aimed at developing students' ability to understand, interpret, and respond to spoken English across various contexts.

However, many schools lack adequate audio-visual equipment and resources, which can make it difficult for teachers to implement the curriculum effectively. Teachers in Nepal are also increasingly using authentic materials, such as songs, movies, and news broadcasts, to teach listening skills. Authentic materials provide students with exposure to real-world English and help them develop the skills they need to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts. Teaching listening skills in secondary-level education in Nepal requires a combination of effective pedagogical strategies, resources, and professional development for educators. It is an essential component of language education and plays a significant role in helping students become proficient in both understanding and speaking the language.

Methodology

I applied the basic qualitative research which views reality as subjective and socially constructed, meaning that people create their understanding of the world through their interactions with others (Merriam & Tisdell 2015). I used in-depth interviews, observation and document study methods to collect the data. I assumed that meanings and understandings that develop socially and experientially intersubjective construct reality (Merriam, 2009). I used a basic qualitative research design for this study because it entails inquiring with participants about their personal experiences and how they perceive events in their lives (Austin, & Sutton, 2014). It also sought to understand how people construct meaning and give significance to their lives. Basic qualitative research focuses on exploring how individuals interpret their experiences, how they shape their perceptions of the world and the significance they assign to these experiences (Merriam & Tisdell 2015). Basic qualitative research aims to explore and comprehend people's interpretations of their experiences and the world around them (Austin, & Sutton, 2014). This approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of what it's like to step into another person's shoes and grasp the world through their unique perspective.

I selected three secondary schools from the Sainamaina Municipality of Rupandehi which lies in the semi-urban territory of Rupandehi district in Lumbini, Province. Then I also selected three secondary-level ELT teachers from the selected schools purposively. The guideline questions related to the topic were the primary research tools for this study. I applied different qualitative research tools for the collection of the data like in-depth interviews and document study.

Thematic discursive analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) was used in the analysis of the data based on in-depth interviews, all interviews were first audio-recorded by the researcher after obtaining the informants' permission. Secondly, data were transcribed for the analysis process. Thirdly, content analysis was utilised based on the assigned codes in the text. Finally, the main themes were defined in terms of the codes given. I used multiple sources of data for triangulation and cross-checking the findings and increasing the validity of the results. The revision activities were done with the government documents, participants' engagement, and students' perception of new strategies.

Results and Discussion

The study sought to provide an in-depth analysis of the current state of listening skills instruction within the secondary school curriculum, focusing on Grades 9 and 10. This section presents the findings of the analysis of the information collected from the participants. Similarly, I have discussed the results associated with literature in various contexts to verify my research findings.

Teachers' Perception of Teaching Listening Skills

Teachers' perceptions of teaching listening skills play a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of listening instruction. Listening skills are crucial for nurturing positive relationships and boosting students' confidence. They are integral to shaping the nature and quality of listening instruction and consequently the learning experiences of their students. Good listening fosters meaningful communication and effective problem-solving by enabling individuals to accurately comprehend the speaker's message and respond thoughtfully.

Concerning the perception of listening participant P1 shared

> In my view, listening skill is a basic, primary, and fundamental skill of communication as we cannot detach other skills ignoring listening skills. Listening skills are before developing other skills as no listening so no speaking. In my opinion, listening skills are a must because it builds relationships and develops confidence in students. It helps in meaningful communication and problem-solving. It enhances productivity in using the English language without proper listening students can't develop their comprehension of language (Interview Transcription P1).

The data stresses the significance of listening skills in fostering positive relationships and building confidence in students. When individuals feel genuinely heard and understood, it strengthens connections and enhances self-assurance. Additionally, effective listening promotes meaningful communication and problem-solving, as it allows individuals to grasp the speaker's message accurately and respond thoughtfully. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding learners through the process of teaching and learning listening, enabling them to accomplish more than they would independently (Nushi & Orouji, 2020). In this regard, Participant p2 stated

> Listening plays a vital role in our academic context and daily life. Without listening neither the students can understand properly nor, can they do the required tasks. Listening is a road to other skills (Interview transcription P2).

The quotation emphasizes the crucial role of listening in both academic and daily life settings. It highlights that effective listening is essential for students to grasp concepts, comprehend instructions, and complete assignments successfully. Without strong listening skills, students face challenges in understanding information, participating effectively in discussions, and achieving academic success. Participant P3 further underscored his perception of listening as a foundation for developing other skills. He stated that

> *Listening has an important role both in daily life and in academic contexts. It is a crucial thing for effective communication. Listening has its importance in the communication of development of communicative and cognitive skills and exposes students to a wide range of vocabulary, and correct grammar usage. If a student's listening ability is good, she/he can comprehend the lectures by the teachers and can improve his/her education (Interview Transcription P3).*

This data takes listening as a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in both daily interactions and academic pursuits. It is essential for effective communication and contributes significantly to the development of communicative and cognitive abilities. Proficient listening also enhances vocabulary acquisition and strengthens grammar usage. In the classroom, strong listening skills enable students to comprehend lectures more effectively, enriching the overall educational experience.

Curriculum Provisions and Teaching Practices for Teaching Listening Skills

The current English curriculum for the secondary level is designed to teach English through a communicative approach to language teaching. It includes four language skills and functions. To enhance students' listening abilities, the textbook incorporates a dedicated listening lesson within each unit (Curriculum Development Center, 2017). The English curriculum for the secondary level in Nepal prioritizes developing students' communicative abilities which implies that the curriculum follows a communicative approach to language instruction. Despite its significance, listening skill training has been overlooked in practice, receiving less attention than other language teaching skills. In his study, Ghimire (2019) claimed that listening skills are a neglected skill in our school education. Consequently, teachers at this level are responsible for teaching listening skills according to the curriculum's goals. In this concern, participant P1 stated,

> In the Secondary level (9 and 10) curriculum, teaching listening has been neglected though it has been given due focus. In the English curriculum six learning outcomes have been listed in each grade for listening skills Along with these eight marks have been separated to assess the listening competency of the students. Moreover, some activities like listening to audio clips, conversations, etc. have been pointed to develop listening skills among students. Besides, the listening skill is just emphasised to develop other skills in the present curriculum (Interview transcription P1).

The above data suggests that while the secondary level (9 and 10) curriculum emphasises developing students' listening skills, the implementation might not be providing the necessary attention to this aspect. Despite having six learning outcomes and eight assessment marks dedicated to listening, the curriculum's focus on using listening to enhance other skills like reading and writing might be overshadowing the development of listening skills as a standalone competency. A similar result was found in a study in Bangladesh as Patwary, (2019) found that the importance of listening skills is recognized in theory by secondary-level institutions in Bangladesh, but there is a lack of practical implementation in EFL classrooms. In this vain participant, P3 stated that

> Listening is allocated under practical examination. It carries only eight marks. Listening activities are given at the end of the lesson through dialogue, drama, interviews, games, drills, and so on. However, it is given less importance in

> teaching due to the impact of the examination system and the lack of devices used for it (Interview Transcription P3).

The data suggests that listening is not a major focus in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the secondary level in Nepal. This is likely due to several factors, including the fact that listening is only worth eight marks on the practical examination, and the lack of devices used for teaching listening. As a result, listening activities are often given at the end of lessons, and are not given as much importance as other skills such as reading and writing. Participant P2 claimed that listening was neglected, and teaching-learning of English was only based on exams. She declared that the gap between provisions and practices of teaching listening at the secondary level. The teaching of listening is not prioritised in the secondary school curriculum of Nepal due to its lack of emphasis on examinations. This neglect is impaired by the scarcity of audio-visual equipment, the lack of technological integration in classrooms, the inadequate training and dedication of teachers, and the ineffective monitoring strategies implemented by concerned authorities (Ghimire, 2019). Listening is not a key emphasis in the teaching of English as a foreign language at the secondary level in Nepal.

Activities for Teaching Listening Skills in English at the Secondary Level

Teaching listening skills to secondary-level students requires engaging and interactive activities. Engaging listening lessons can be achieved through diverse interactive activities and authentic materials like English films, songs, stories, and media programs Ghimire (2019). Wah, (2019) presented different strategies for teaching and learning listening skills including cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. In this regard, participant P1 stated that

> We can use various methods, and activities to teach listening skills. I deal with teaching listening skills with step-wise threefold activities pre-listening while listening and post-listening teaching sequence (Interview Transcription P1).

This data claimed that the step-wise three-fold activities pre-listening, while listening and post-listening teaching sequence is a structured approach to teaching listening that can be used to develop a wide range of listening skills. Pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening exercises can be very effective in helping EFL learners improve their listening skills. This is because these activities provide learners with the opportunity to practice different aspects of listening skills. However, respondent P3 neglects to teach listening he stated

> Listening activities in the class are more difficult than reading, speaking and writing activities. I provide very little time for listening activities because it is not given priority from the examination point of view, whenever I conduct activities to teach listening skills, I generally include exposure to the texts in the book's interactive activities, vocabulary and pronunciation, technology integration, etc. (Interview Transcription P3).

The data shows that listening activities are more difficult for students than reading, speaking, and writing activities. The teachers provide very little time for listening activities because they are not given priority from the examination point of view. However, the teachers apply interactive activities, vocabulary and pronunciation, and technology integration when conducting activities to teach listening skills. Ineffective teaching methods and a lack of engaging learning materials hinder students' ability to grasp listening skills and the use of unrealistic classes, an unsuitable learning environment, and the absence of supplementary materials contribute to these difficulties (Djabbarova, 2020). Students find

listening activities more challenging than reading, speaking, and writing. Due to a lack of priority in exams, teachers allocate minimal time to listening activities.

Issues and Challenges Experienced by Teachers While Teaching Listening

Teachers face a variety of issues and challenges when teaching listening in Nepal. One of the participants P1 mentioned the problems and challenges of teaching listening in his class as

> Teachers and students' ignorance of listening, difficulty in discriminating sounds and syllables, less priority and ignorance of listening Skills, lack of infrastructure like scientific and manageable language labs, low-level competencies of students in listening, Insufficient materials for teaching listening, students' less involvement in listening activities and inadequate proficiency of teachers as they skip listening (Interview Transcription P1).

The data suggests a multi-layered set of challenges, encompassing awareness, infrastructure, material availability, and proficiency levels among both teachers and students. Several issues contribute to the challenges of teaching listening in Nepal. These factors include a lack of awareness of the importance of listening skills, difficulty in discriminating sounds and syllables, a lack of emphasis on listening skills in the curriculum, a lack of infrastructure, low student proficiency, and a lack of teaching materials Rana & Rana, 2019; Ghimire, 2019). A similar result was found in Yogyakarta Indonesia, a study by Yasmine, (2019) found four challenges in teaching listening skills: media use, vocabulary learning, creating a conducive classroom environment, and correct pronunciation. While presenting issues and challenges of teaching listening at the secondary level participant P3 explained

> English is taught as a subject, not as a language, less focus is given to teaching and testing of listening skills, lack of trained language teachers, classrooms are not techno-friendly, Teachers are not dedicated and trained to teach listening, students are not to learn listening skills and maximum use of mother tongue in community schools (Interview transcription P3).

The data reveal that teaching English as a subject, less emphasis on listening skills, lack of trained teachers, non-techno-friendly classrooms and maximum use of the mother tongue are key challenges of teaching listening at the secondary level. Effective listening instruction faces significant challenges, including teacher motivation, problem complexity, teaching method difficulty, and teacher expertise (Alrawashdeh, and Al-zayed, 2017; Karademir, & Gorgoz, 2019). In the same way (Nushi & Orouji, 2020) stated three main types of listening challenges: pronunciation-related, individual-related, and content-related. Teaching listening at the secondary level faces several challenges, including limited exposure to authentic material, lack of resources and infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, large class sizes, and a focus on grammar and vocabulary. Students also face challenges due to limited English proficiency, lack of listening strategies, low motivation, and inadequate curriculum and assessment practices. Sociocultural factors, such as the use of the mother tongue in the classroom and the cultural context of Nepal, can also influence students' engagement in listening activities.

Conclusion and Implications

Listening is important in both academic and daily life contexts, contributing to communicative and cognitive skill development, exposure to vocabulary, and grammar usage. This research served as the pilot study for my PhD study which focused on the perspectives of teaching listening skills in secondary school classes 9 and 10 in Nepal. It examined the provisions and practices of teaching English listening skills within the secondary school curriculum. The study identified the instructional activities employed by teachers and the challenges they face in teaching listening skills to students in these grades. The research was based on a basic qualitative approach and was limited to three secondary-level English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers from three different schools in Sainamaina Municipality, Rupandehi district.

The study indicated that the current provisions and practices in the curriculum may not adequately support the development of listening skills. However, the existing teaching methodologies

and strategies in secondary schools may not adequately address the specific needs and preferences of students regarding listening skills. There is a lack of comprehensive strategies and approaches tailored specifically for teaching listening skills, leading to ineffective engagement, limited promotion of active listening, and insufficient consideration of individual learning differences. The study identified challenges of teaching listening as a deficiency in prioritizing listening skills in examinations, a scarcity of tools for teaching listening, insufficient emphasis on listening in the curriculum, a disconnect between prescribed curriculum content and actual teaching methods, inadequate training for teachers in instructing listening, the tendency to teach English as a subject rather than a language, and the prevalent use of the mother tongue in community schools.

There is a need for the development and implementation of targeted strategies for teaching listening at the secondary level. This requires a comprehensive approach that includes the provision of resources and a strong emphasis on professional development for teachers to address the challenges related to teaching and learning listening skills. It is crucial to enhance the importance of listening skills in regular teaching-learning activities and exams. It is necessary to provide authentic resources for teaching listening effectively. It is also essential to increase the focus on listening skills in the curriculum, convert the implementation of the curriculum into practical classroom methods, improve teacher preparation for teaching listening skills, change the teaching methodology to view English as a language rather than just a subject and encourages the use of English outside of the classroom.

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Post-Pandemic Possibilities in Mandel's *Station Eleven*

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Abstract

This paper explores how human self-centeredness and indifference to the ecological balance bring human existence into crisis inviting different apocalypses; and examines the post-pandemic possibilities in Emile St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven*. The text discusses the crisis caused by a pandemic killing ninety percent of the human population. This study concentrates on the hectic life of the characters before the pandemic, the critical life during the pandemic and the post-apocalyptic life freed from machines and material greed. It analyses how people's material greed and negligence on harmonious human-nonhuman relations result in the crisis. To bring the crisis of the pandemic into normality, the writer uses art in different forms. In other words, this study examines human experiences in the face of extreme loss and shows the importance of art in adversity. The focus of the study is to show how bleakness, pessimism and adversity dominate the narrative and simultaneously unfold certain events and situations that signal optimism in the novel. This research is based on the library study and uses data from both primary and secondary sources. The critical insights of Lawrence Buell and Val Plumwood about human self-centeredness and interdependence between the biotic and abiotic world are the theoretical ideas for textual analysis of the primary text. It concludes that the presentation of the horrific situation in the novel is for creating eco-consciousness and the situations of possibilities are for the generation of hope in crisis. This research work promotes eco-consciousness and sustains hope even in critical situations.

***Keywords**:* Destruction, harmony, pandemic, possibility, self-centeredness

Introduction

Environmental degradation is a major threat to modern human civilization and the ecosphere. We encounter direct and indirect impacts of such degradation. As a direct impact, we are facing problems like landslides, floods, desertification, uneven rain, pollution of many kinds etc. As indirect impact, human society is facing the problems of different diseases and pandemics. They are also the products of human insensitivity to the autonomy of nature. Among many of such pandemics, recent COVID-19 pandemic is the worst situation this generation faced. The novel *Station Eleven* by Emil St John Mandel talks about an imaginative pandemic caused by Georgia Flue. This paper incorporates both the devastating effects of the Georgia Flu and the post-pandemic possibilities that are represented

in the novel. The 'pandemic' that is the contagion affecting the whole world, creates such chaos where survival becomes challenging. Within such a bleak world, the writer presents certain events and situations that indicate positive possibilities. Art in the form like theatrical performance, music and comic books plays a crucial role for creating the situation of optimism. More than others, the town with the electric light and the idea of a sailing ship, that the writer presents in the last part of the novel, indicate the continuity of human civilization in the post-pandemic era.

Station Eleven presents the world devastated by a plague called Georgian Flue and conveys to the reader the full gravity of losing power and living like a pre-industrial age. Twenty years after the flu, many changes have taken place. For instance, the population of the world is massively reduced, and technological advancement has gone to dust. The accessories have become the materials of the collection. The whole world struggles in darkness in the absence of energy. The novel presents the experience of different characters before, during and after the outbreak of the disease. Multiple moments are presented in alternative ways: leading up to the outbreak, immediately following it and time twenty years later. The narrative moves among the past in Los Angeles, years zero in Toronto and years twenty in the Great Lake Region and Seven City Airport.

During the pre-apocalyptic stages, Mandel exposes the relentless pressure within modern society to use work-life success as a means of direction in life. In such a context, the disease destroys the normality of previous life and leads to a terrific situation. Characters do suicide with the fear of future crises. That apocalyptic event kills about ninety percent of the human population leading to the life of the pre-technological age. In such chaotic world of the narrative, this research work attempts to identify the elements that signal post-pandemic- possibilities. At the end of the novel, the characters see a town with electric light signaling the revival of previous human civilization. This evidence indicates the hope for a better future. For the analysis of the situation of optimism and pessimism presented in the novel, the critical ideas of Lawrence Buell and Val Plumwood are employed. Their ideas that emphasise the interdependence between the biotic and abiotic world are used for the interpretation of the primary text to expose how the novel creates eco-conscious and optimism in the readers.

Literature Review

The novel *Station Eleven* has the potentiality of multiple interpretations that have attracted numerous critics. The success of the novel to evoke both terror and empathy; is discussed by Gilbert (2014) in her book review. She praises, "Mandel displays the impressive skill of evoking both terror and empathy which I credit to her background as mystery author" (p. 1). This is the quality of post-apocalyptic fiction. In the novel, many of the events and situations generate both terror and empathy. Similarly, Hunter (2014) compliments the novel with the issue of advocating the value of art in times of crisis in her essay. Even in a crisis, the performers and singers are continuing their work to make the world better. Highlighting the value of art, she mentions, "In *Station Eleven* the plague reveals a world that still, despite its collapse, holds on to the importance of arts" (p. 2). Hunter is concerned with showing the value of art in critical situations. This study agrees with him and explores more about the value of art in the regenerating spirit of hope in critical moments.

Caracciolo (2018) argues that the novel presents both worlds: pre- and post-apocalyptic to create eagerness for the pre-apocalyptic world. He focuses on the use of negative strategies by the author in his interpretation, "The narrator's insistence on the monochromatic landscape is the main route through which negation operates in the novel: while *Station Eleven* focuses on the denial of objects, technologies, and practices of pre-world" (p. 231). Showing the absence of technological advancements in the pre-apocalyptic world in the post-apocalyptic world, the writer creates a longing

for that world. This research is not limited to the negative strategies for positive results, moreover explores the hidden positive aspects that generate hope in the readers.

De Cristofaro (2018) discusses the challenge that the novel poses to apocalyptic tradition, western modernity and its metanarratives. He states, "*Station Eleven* self-reflexively emphasizes this difference between traditional and contemporary apocalyptic imagination." (p. 4). Cristofaro's focus is to depict how contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction like this novel are different from theological tradition. Recent post-apocalyptic fiction is more contemporary problem oriented. This research agrees with him regarding his view on recent post-apocalyptic fiction and its contemporary problem orientation. It further explores the presentation of the dialectics of optimism and pessimism in the novel.

Bellamy (2021) discusses the novel as an energy apocalypse and shows how in the absence of energy the world becomes static. He asserts, "*Station Eleven* is a novel useful for thinking about energy precisely because it takes other stories as its less focus: the exploration of abandoned homes, the litany of lost experience, and the people who make a home out of an airport" (p. 189-90). This crisis makes even normal human activities impossible. Bellamy is right in his idea of the energy crisis, but his only concern is to highlight the problem of the loss. This study focuses on the positive aspects and their indication of better possibilities.

The above literature reviews indicate that the novel has been analyzed from multiple perspectives. Gilbert praises Mandel's skill to evoke both terror and empathy and Carcasio points out the reason for presenting both: pre and post-apocalyptic worlds. Hunter highlights the issue concerning the value of art in the time of crisis whereas Cristofero points out how the novel differs from traditional apocalyptic imagination as a modern one. Bellamy asserts its ability to show the critical situation in the absence of energy. However, these critics have paid less attention to the crisis caused by human self-centeredness as well as the negative consequences of human indifference to the autonomy of nature. Moreover, they have failed to pay serious attention to the indications of the post-pandemic possibilities of the human civilization's revival. This is the research gap this study aims to fulfil.

Methodology

This research work follows the qualitative research design and uses textual analysis method accessing data from both primary and secondary sources. Selected primary text *Station Eleven* by St, John Mandel is the primary data under scrutiny. Including this text, other books, academic journals and different internet sources have been used to support the claim. Textual data from the primary text are critically analyzed using critical insight into ecocriticism with a special focus on the critical ideas of Lawrence Buell and Val Plumwood.

Theoretical Modality

Environmental literature aims to generate the idea of intimacy and essentiality of the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. The essentiality of interconnectedness is expressed as, "The universe must be unified, interconnected and interpenetrated. Everything interconnects and affects everything else, which is why the notion of macrocosm and microcosm is so essential to cosmology" (Tucker, 1991, p. 62). Tucker is praised for his view that things of the world, whether living or nonliving, are interdependent to each other. Disturbance in one part affects the whole chain. But people disregard this web of interdependence, taking human beings as superior and masters of the world. Reorientation in our perspective is to look at the relationship between humans and nature. Buell (2011) argues, "I continue to believe that reorientation of human attention and value according to stronger ethics of care for the human environment would make the world a better place for humans and nonhumans" (6). If humans fail to care about the ecological balance, the world will not be an

appropriate place to live. Only mutual care of the whole ecology can make the world a better place to live.

Lawrence Buell, the leading thinker of the environmental apocalypse trend, presents the literary vision of environmental catastrophe in his essay, "Environmental Apocalypticism". Among the master metaphors he relates to the whole order of nature, the metaphor of the web is very crucial to talking about the interdependence of plants and animals. "Plants and animals are after all bound together; bodies and the world are caught in a network of dependence" (Buell, 1995, p. 283). To prophesy the unintended consequences of human interventions to nature and its worldwide disaster, Buell brings the reference of the two writers who have used web metaphors. He claims that Rachael Carson in *Silent Spring* and Leslie Marmon Silko in *Ceremony* present the disaster caused by the introduction of DDT in the food chain and the release of the atomic energy of uranium in bombs that collapsed the whole web of life.

Buell (1995) defines 'apocalypse' as a master metaphor that is haunting environmentalists. He states, "Apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (p. 285). This metaphor has become an important part of modern fiction. Though critics like Jem Bendell argue that environmental apocalypse never happens, it is still significant to warn people. Indicating the purpose of apocalyptic literature Buell (1995) argues, "We create an image of doom to avert doom" (p. 295). It means apocalyptic literature creates dystopian events to avert such events compelling people to think seriously.

Plumwood (2002) in her essay "The Blind Spots of Centrism and Human Self-Enclosure" sees problems in human rationality that denies ecological crisis. In her words, "Dominant policies of ecological denial add to the evidence that the ecological crisis is not just or even primarily a crisis of technology, but is rather a crisis of rationality, morality, and imagination" (p. 97). The more we deny the problem, the more it becomes critical. Because of that, the world faces unforeseen critical catastrophes. The better way is to accept the crisis, think seriously and make our behaviour eco-friendly. According to Plumwood rationalist culture has fostered a version of human-self enclosure and human-centeredness. This anthropocentrism promotes various damaging forms of epistemic remoteness that walls us off from nature in order to exploit it. Plumwood also talks about the techniques that rationalist culture uses to impose anthropocentrism up on nature. These techniques are otherization, homogenization, backgrounding, instrumentalization and incorporation.

This dystopian situation is the result of anthropocentrism that denies the interspecies justice principle that stresses the equal rights of other species on the earth. As marked by Plumwood (2002), "Distributive injustice to non-human fostered by the Othering framework includes the use of so much of the earth for exclusively human purposes that non-human cannot survive or reproduce their kind" (p. 117). Such injustice to nonhuman existence leads to the exploitation of nature and the extinction of species. The outcome of such evil deeds is the apocalypses that threaten the human world and ecosphere

The above-discussed theoretical insights are the analytical tools for the critical analysis of the primary text to see how it presents both pandemic destruction and post-pandemic possibilities. The analysis tries to link the chaos caused by the pandemic as the outcome of human negligence of the symbiotic relation between the biotic and abiotic world.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study in three themes. They are chaotic situations: outcomes of human self-centeredness, electric light and sailing ship: milestones for future possibilities, and art in different forms: mediums to generate hope in crisis.

Chaotic Situation: Outcome of Human Self-centeredness

Loneliness, emptiness and silence characterize the post-apocalyptic world of the novel *Station Eleven*. The most contagious and highly killing Georgia flu creates a situation of horror and terror among people. They fear to come out of their houses and meet anyone else. Human beings are social animals but the same habit of living in a group becomes a danger for survival. Because of the pandemic, every individual feel fear of being exposed to another suspected contamination. The flu spreads so fast that the whole world suffers in a short time. The writer compares its speed with the explosion of the neutron bomb, "There was the flu that exploded like a neutron bomb over the surface of the earth and the shock of the collapse that followed, the first unspeakable years when everyone was travelling, everyone caught on that there was no place they could walk" (Mandel, p. 37). The highly contagious disease affects the world so quickly that all the human systems collapse. It collapses the government, economic and social structures, and the complete human network.

The big towns turn into deserted places. No vehicle, no crowd but just deadly silence and emptiness dominate the world. The writer presents the post-pandemic world, as Jeevan perceives it:

> The world had emptied since he'd seen it. There was no movement on the plaza or the street, or the distant expressway. A smell of smoke in the air, with a chemical tinge that smokes a burning office and house fire. But most striking was the absolute absence of electric light. Every sound might mean the end of everything; every shadow could be hiding someone with a gun who wanted his backpack. (Mandel, p. 90)

In addition to silence, the smell of fire burning with a chemical tinge exposes the next step of destruction. Both silence and sound torture people: silence with loneliness and sound with the threat of killing. They are compelled to live under the shadow of death and robbery. The situation becomes so critical that characters like Frank do suicide frightened to face the terrible future.

The cause of the disease proves to be the anthropocentric behaviour of people and their material greed. The people are so selfish that they take marriage just as very simple matter as if it is done for divorce. Arthur's name and fame-seeking tendency have made him like a machine. He never attempts to realize the emotions of his wife and children. No expectation of proper dealing with the abiotic world from such emotionless people. Jeevan is another character who is totally guided by the material ambition in the beginning. However, his change is remarkable. Their interference in the natural course invites many ecological problems. Unplanned industrialization, unnecessary attachment with name, fame, power and property; and carelessness to nature are the parts of the modern world that are responsible for the disaster. They cause different problems in public health. Highlighting industrial pollution and its consequences Carson (1964) in *Silent Spring* explains, "As the tide of chemicals born of the industrial age has arisen to engulf our environment, a drastic change has come about like the most public health problem" (p. 186). The acts of human beings altering natural course for benefit have invited different devastations.

Different types of pollution are causes of the diseases and pandemics in modern times. The Georgia flu cannot be out of these causes. It must be the outcome of human interference in the web of interdependence. In association with this issue Buell (1995) states, "Human intervention into the natural system unintentionally makes a point about the unintended consequences" (p. 382). The consequence is the pandemic affecting the whole of humanity. Our realization of the value of ecological balance and eco-friendly behaviours only can protect us from such devastating consequences.

In the anthropocentric present world, human encroachment is seen everywhere. The natural world is limited to the reservations and national parks. In the words of Shiva (1997) expressed in *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge,* "The land, the forest, the river, the ocean and the atmosphere have all been colonised, eroded and polluted" (p. 45). The great problem of the modern world is the exploitation of natural resources. The crisis that is presented in the novel is the result of the over exploitation of nature for greed guided capitalistic motive. The benefit motive is so strong that it neglects the autonomy of the natural world and leads to overexploitation. This ultimately invites the apocalypses that threaten human civilization.

Art in Different Forms: Medium to Generate Hope in Crisis

Concerning the issue of generating positive possibilities in the bleak world of *Station Eleven*, the writer presents the vital role of art in different forms. The stage performance of the travelling symphony with the musicians is an important part of the novel. Their slogan 'just survival is insufficient' (Mandel, p. 119) creates a positive situation to regenerate optimism among the survivors. The role of the comic book *Dr. Eleven* is very crucial to provide an outlet of the pain and suffering of the characters and enhance the positive possibility of human civilization in a post-pandemic world. Miranda transforms her life's pain into something beautiful and sustained art. It becomes the token of the pre-pandemic world to the post-pandemic world. Hunter (2017) highlights this aspect in "Seeing the Hopeful Sides of Post-Apocalyptic Fictions" and explains this novel as an example to show the value of art in critical situations. He mentions, "As ever, dystopian and utopian visions are closer together than we might imagine: in Station Eleven the plague reveals a world that still depicts its collapse and holds on to the importance of art" (p. 2). Hunter reveals that even in the nearly collapsed world, the writer presents the importance of art. Different forms of art play roles in making the post-pandemic world worthy of living.

Travelling symphony aims to encourage the surviving communities. It is a group of actors and musicians, who travel from place to place performing Shakespeare's plays and music. They help to reduce the stress of the pandemic and entertain survivors, imparting the message that there is still beauty in the world despite the loss. Mandel writes, "Twenty years after the end of air travel, the caravans of the Travelling Symphony moved slowly under a white-hot sky" (Mandel, p. 35). They travel all the times, as they are sure that only their movement is valuable. "Keep walking. Keep walking. Keep walking" (Mandel, p. 194). The suffering caused by the pandemic is extreme, and unbearable in a normal way. The combination of strong friendship and art makes life worth living. They do not limit this medicine of the pandemic crisis within them but share it with other living human communities. "But what made it bearable were the friendship, of course, the camaraderie and the music and the Shakespeare, the moment of transcendental beauty and joy" (Mandel, p. 47). Their performance and music give the idea of love, loss and human struggle. The post-apocalyptic world is bleak and desolate. In such a world of suffering, the role of art is very crucial; it helps to create beauty and joy. Scholars Abdull et al. (2021) reflect on the value of art to ease the suffering of the pandemic. They write, "Art is a highly engaging tool that promotes positive well-being and increases community engagement and participation" (p. 1). This idea of the value of art really interacts with the performance of the Travelling Symphony and their attempts to bring joy in the world devastated by the Georgian Flu.

Art cannot fulfil the physical needs of the people; it has its value. It teaches people about the way of solving problems. More than this, it prepares them psychologically with the thought that pain and pleasure both are parts of human life. Even in trouble, it encourages struggle. The theatrical activities and music remind us that these experiences are universal and enduring. These performances

are important for the members of the travelling symphony to create self-satisfaction. “Sometimes the travelling symphony thought that what they were doing was noble. There were moments around the campfire when someone would say something invigorating about the importance of art and everyone would find it easier to sleep that night” (Mandel, p. 119). The members of the travelling symphony become happy when they hear that they are doing a noble job in a world full of evil deeds.

The performance of the plays and music are not just professional activities for the characters. They are the unavoidable parts of their life. The characters’ names are from the musical instruments. There are names of the characters like Six Guitarist, Viola etc. who have abandoned their former names and taken new ones. “I’m glad to get out of that field’, Viola said. She had a different name when she was younger but had taken on the name of her instrument after the collapse” (Mandel, p. 129). This act of taking names from musical instruments indicates the role of art to give meaning and solace to the people in critical situations. Their identities are linked with the musical instruments that they play. Even after the collapse of many things, art remains with them. The value of art exposed by Carley (2020) matches with the situation of this novel. She claims, “Art allows us to examine what it means to be human, to avoid and express, and to bring people and ideas together” (p. 3). The value of art is high in times of crisis since it gives meaning to human beings, avoids stress and brings people and ideas together. The names of the characters from musical instruments indicate that music gives meaning to life.

The comic book *Dr. Eleven* is another source of hope and inspiration for many of the characters in the novel and readers. The comic book tells the story of a physicist Dr. Eleven who lives in a highly advanced space station. He travels through parallel universes in search of a cure for a deadly virus. This journey resembles the journey of the characters in the novel who are travelling from place to place. They are performing plays and music to cure the loneliness, stress and frustration of the survivors. The comic book offers a sense of possibility and hope with the message that there is a way out of the current critical situation. The heroic character Dr. Eleven in the dystopian world with his pursuit of justice and kindness does an inspirational function. Sometimes Dr. Eleven expresses his nostalgia for life on the earth. “I stood looking over my damaged home and tried to forget the sweetness of life on Earth” (Mandel, p. 42). This nostalgia reminds the nostalgia of the people in the post-apocalyptic world of the novel. Especially those people who suffer much from the nostalgia, who lived in the pre-apocalyptic world and remember the sweetness of life. Chaudhary (2013) warns us about the same situation in the modern world. She writes, “If we fail to take decisive action, if we fail to bring about fundamental change in our way of thinking and doing politics we just might sink and drown” (p. 267). Then what remains with us is nostalgia. This association of the comic book with the reality of life creates a sense of attachment to the fictional world. This helps to empower confidence in the spirit of the characters and readers. At the same time, it gives the message of protecting our ecology in time.

The fictional work functions as a medium to express the emotions of the writer Miranda Carroll and a source of inspiration for the reader Kristen Raymond. Miranda’s relationship with Arthur as first wife does not last long. As Miranda grieves the loss of the world she builds with Arthur, her characters mourn the loss of life on the earth. The problematic relation with her husband is pacified with her deeper involvement in the world of the comic. Her expression in the comic book gives way to her suffering in real life. She reflects on the distance between herself and her husband in the comic book, shifting her focus to the normal people from the hero. “For years Dr. Eleven had been the hero of the narrative, but lately he’d begun to annoy her, and she'd become more interested in the Undersea. These people live out their lives in the underwater fallout shelters, clinging to the hope that the world

they remembered could be restored" (Mandel, p. 213). Her shift in focus is her special way of handling the trouble in her relationship with her husband. Her characters in the comic book are hopeful of restoring the post-apocalyptic world. The relationship between Miranda and the comic book *Dr. Eleven* and its role in generating hope in critical situations resembles the ideas expressed by Noyes (2020) in "Great Works of Art from Trouble Times". The writer stresses the value of art in times of great trouble, *"*As the world seems to shift and change around us in new and frightening ways every day, many of us seek solace in the arts. From great music to television, movies and the fine arts can be a distraction and balm in troubled times" (p. 4). Art's role becomes that of balm in times of trouble. That is why *Dr. Eleven* generates hope in other characters and the readers of the novel. Kirsten's attachment to the comic book gives her a purpose. Her reading inspires her and increases her confidence in critical situations. That is why she takes the book as a token of the pre-apocalyptic world and wants to protect it.

Focusing on the value of the comic book, Caracciolo (2018) writes, "The comic book connects all the major characters without them becoming fully aware of one another's lives; only the reader has a complete picture of the comic book's history" (p. 230). Knowingly or unknowingly, it connects the major characters of the novel. That is why Kirsten wants to protect it at all costs. Before beginning her journey to the new land, she gives one volume of the comic book to Clark to keep in the Museum of Civilization for the new generation. Thus, the graphic novel *Dr. Eleven* illustrates that art is a way to deal with painful emotions and a tremendous loss for both the creator and the readers/audiences. Similarly, Northover (2016) also highlights the value of literature concerning post-apocalyptic horror. He points out, "Literature may help to end the threat and hopefully forestall its unimaginable trauma" (p. 89). Northover focuses on the value of a literary text to decrease the trauma of certain pandemics. In the novel, the comic book proves to be the means to avert the traumatic effect of the pandemic.

Overall, the performances of 'travelling symphony' and the comic book *Dr. Eleven* as art forms are powerful symbols of hope, resilience, and the human capacity for creativity and imagination. They exemplify the idea that even in the face of disaster, we can still find beauty and meaning in the world. They clarify that different forms of art can provide a vital lifeline in times of crisis.

Electric Light and Sailing Ship: Milestones for Future Possibilities

The town with the electric light and the possibility of sailing ships are the two most important indicators that signal optimism in the post-apocalyptic world of *Station Eleven*. Clark identifies a human settlement with electric light in the distance from the Severn City Airport. He shows this extraordinary thing to Kirsten and other members of the travelling symphony. In the beginning, they do not believe but the reality convinces them. The travelling symphony makes the same place their next destination. "In the distance, pinpricks of light arranged into a grid. There, plainly visible on the side of a hill some miles distant: a town, or a village, whose streets were lit up with electricity" (Mandel, p. 311). Electric light symbolically stands for the progress of human civilization. It is not just a place with electric light but indicates the possibility of progress and continuity of human civilization nearly collapsed by the Georgia flu. It shows the possibility of conducting machines and bringing means of communication into use. It also gives a sense of normalcy in human society. In the last paragraph of the novel, the writer presents many more possibilities. Clark reflects:

> Is it possible that somewhere ships are setting out? If there are again towns with streetlights, if there are symphonies and newspapers, then what else might this awakening world contain? Perhaps vessels are setting out even now, travelling towards or away from him, steered by sailors armed with maps and knowledge of

> stars, driven by need or perhaps simply by curiosity: whatever became of the countries on the other side? If nothing else, it is pleasant to consider the possibility. He likes the thought of ships moving over the water, towards another world just out of sight. (Mandel, p. 333)

The concluding paragraph of the novel opens the possibility of different activities that were impossible in the last twenty years. Concerning electricity, symphonies and newspapers Clark assumes the possibility of sailing ships somewhere on the other side of the earth. The idea of moving ships provided extreme joy to Clark because the sailing ship is one of the most influential inventions of human history. It finally imparts a strong message of the continuity of human civilization in the new world.

Cristofaro (2018) observes the sense of optimism in the final passage of the novel. He argues, "On the other hand, the key element of the novel's final passage is the sense of possibility" (p. 17). For him, a sense of possibility is the essence of the final passage. Similarly, Diamond (2008) talks about the possibility of a better future, despite the degraded present. His faith is in the capability of human beings to learn from past mistakes. He points out, "My main hope for my son's generation is that we may choose to learn from the fates of the collapsed societies" (p. 259). Learning from the mistakes, all should follow an ecofriendly path. The greed-guided activities are making the ecosphere sick. Its wellness counts much for human survival and regeneration. Only in our true endeavour to keep the ecosphere well, the survival of the world depends.

Conclusion and Implications

The discussion of the novel *Station Eleven* analyzing both the horrible and hopeful situations indicates the interplay of optimism and pessimism. Overall situation of the novel is bleak, dark and static caused by the pandemic. However, our scrutiny of the plot reveals the events and situations that signal optimism. Different art forms like theatrical performances, music, comic books, and the town with electric light and the sailing ship are the indications that signal post-pandemic possibilities of the revival of human civilization. The words of the character Elizabeth give the essence of our discussion, "All these moments when everyone must have thought the world was ending, but all those moments, they were all temporary. It always passes" (Mandel, p. 248). Even if human civilization is near collapse, there are many signals of its revival. Surpassing the crisis will surely turn into normality.

In sum up, human inclination toward name, fame and material achievement makes them indifferent to other aspects of life. They neglect family, society and the ecology. Moreover, they interfere with the course of nature which invites apocalyptic events like the Georgia Flu causing great devastation. The dystopian events in the novel aim to inform people about the consequences of anthropocentric intervention in the system of nature and warn them to make their behaviours eco-friendly. At the same time, the novel includes certain hopeful events to signal positive possibilities. Similarly, there is a clear indication of the value of art in crisis for generating optimism in the readers. The value of this research work resides in its success to create eco-consciousness in the readers and inspire struggling spirits in crises.

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Investigating the Pedagogical Values of Smartphones: Students' Experiences from Nepal's Rural Community Schools

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Abstract

The utility of smartphones for school-age learners has become much discussed and debated issue recently. Teachers, school administrators and students have their personal beliefs about the pedagogical value of smartphones. This paper aims to explore secondary-level students' lived experience of using smartphones to support content and language learning. It examines socio-psychological pressures experienced by learners in using smartphones, particularly in schools. This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted among sixteen rural secondary students (Grade 12) in the Central-Western Tarai in Nepal. The findings indicated the perceived pedagogical value of smartphones as the students could enhance self-learning when they were provided with proper guidance and support from their teachers. Although students experienced pressure from parents and teachers to avoid smartphone use, they found alternative ways of using them to support their learning. The findings implied that the students' increased access to technology can support enhancing the learning of the curricular contents and language.

***Keywords*:** ICT, self-learning, smartphones, technological knowledge

Introduction

Integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning has been much discussed in educational research. However, Nepal's history of ICT integration in teaching and learning is not so long. Although the first telephone service based on Magneto technology was introduced in 1913, email and internet service was initiated after 83 years (Nepal Telecommunications Authority, 2022b). Later, mobile phone service began in 1996 and was upgraded to 3G service after eight years (Nepal Telecommunications Authority, 2022b). To systematise the use of ICT as a tool of national development, the government issued *IT Policy, 2000* for the first time (Rana, 2018). Although the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2005* planned to integrate ICT in school education for administrative and pedagogical purposes, the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2007* identified some issues such as a lack of proper infrastructure and skilled human resources in schools for ICT integration (Parajuli, 2021). Other plans and policies have increasingly emphasised the integration of ICT in education to improve education and school administration. For example, the ICT Policy of 2015 intended to ensure internet access to

all Nepalis and proposed to ensure access to the Internet in all schools and public sectors to expand digital literacy (Ministry of Information and Communication, 2015).

Recent plans and policies have increasingly emphasised the use of ICT in education. For example, *the National Education Policy, 2019* accepted ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning activities and intended to make educational activities technology-friendly, practical, and result-oriented (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2019). Recent *Education Sector Plan, 2021-2030* identified major challenges in secondary education which included increasing access of teachers and students to ICT, enhancing teachers' efficiency and minimising the digital divide (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2021). Although Nepal's ICT policies intend to promote the use of ICT in pedagogical activities to develop technological knowledge and skills in learners to enable them to compete in the modern technological world, a gap exists between policies and practices (Rana, 2018).

The use of smartphones has become pervasive in business, communication, mass media, and education. According to the *MIS Report, Nepal Telecommunications Authority* 41, 272, 376 people are using mobile phones while 38, 007, 203 are using internet service (Nepal Telecommunications Authority, 2022a) which exceeds the total population of Nepal. We have observed the increasing use of smartphones among students and teachers to support their learning in the last decade. We frequently use smartphones in teaching English, in particular, to teach vocabulary, pronunciation, writing, and reading comprehension. When we asked the students to bring their smartphones to school to learn English vocabulary, they seemed to be happy and more curious to learn although some students complained that their parents do not allow them to take smartphones to school. Students tend to be more motivated to learn using smartphones rather than books. We have observed in my family that my 10-year-old daughter prefers using smartphones to learn linguistic and nonlinguistic skills such as English vocabulary, drawing, dancing, and karate. However, we have observed that some schools have restricted students from taking their smartphones to school and sometimes they are even punished.

Although frequent use of smartphones by adolescents generates various health issues such as psychological disorders, anxiety, and family conflict (Camerini et al., 2021), they can be helpful for students to access online resources and create flexible learning contexts (Yoon & Yun, 2021). Rather and Rather (2019) have reported the benefits of smartphone use in education, social life, and entertainment. Genc (2014) observed the use of digital technology including smartphones supports children in developing cognitive and social skills through recreational learning although parents often worry about socio-psychological health issues created by over use of smartphones. Mulyani, Razzaq, Ridho, et al. (2019) also claimed that smartphones can support learning when students make use of smartphones as a tool in learning activities. Despite the parents' awareness of the positive influence of smartphone use on learning useful content, they are worried about the time their children spend in recreational activities and the possibility of accessing harmful materials (Hwang & Hariyanti, 2020). However, we believe that when school administration and parents are less positive about using smartphones at school and home, the students might experience psychological pressures of various kinds and develop safe zones to use smartphones. In this context, we intend to explore secondary students' experiences of smartphone use as a supplementary learning device to learn content and language skills. This research intends to investigate the following research questions.

1 How is secondary level students' experience of learning language and content using smartphones?
2 In what ways do secondary-level students manage the use of smartphones to support their learning?

Literature Review

The literature review includes two themes: students' experiences of learning through smartphones and students' smartphone learning strategies.

Students' Experiences of Learning Language and Content through Smartphone

Several studies have reported the advantages of using smartphones in learning language and content. For example, Anshari et al. (2017) in Brunai found that smartphones supported students in learning language and content as they could watch videos, search materials through the internet, and access teachers more comfortably. They discovered that smartphones provided large access to e-resources for learning and could create online learning platforms among learners to share their learning experiences although they can increase dependency, and reduce capacity to calculate or write along with the possibility of health issues. Mulyani, Razzaq, Sumardi, et al. (2019) found that students enjoyed learning through games using smartphones and actively participated in searching for materials through an internet connection. Their study revealed that smartphone use improved learning achievement and developed critical thinking abilities through collaboration with other students. Another study (Ariel & Elishar-Malka, 2019) in Israel emphasised that coordination among teachers and students in classrooms about using smartphones use could create an improved learning atmosphere and help minimise concentration problems experienced by students.

Studies have also reported how smartphones influence students' learning achievement. For example, Han and Yi (2019) in their quantitative study in South Korea reported that students trained with the basic skills of smartphone communication developed positive learning attitudes towards mobile learning, which finally resulted in improved academic performance. Similarly, Nikolopoulou (2018) in Greece found secondary students' positive attitudes toward using smartphones in classroom learning and suggested a policy review to allow smartphones as learning tools in schools under teacher supervision to support students' learning. Earlier, reviewing the utility of smartphones, Ally and Prieto-Blázquez (2014) highlighted the need for the incorporation of mobile learning in the classroom as the new generations of youths preferred to get immediate access to information. They argued that smartphones would support learners to bring learning content through self-initiation and make them contextual, practical, and relevant.

Kim et al. (2013) in America found that mobile technology provided students with new learning experiences through active engagement in groups even outside the classroom and generated interaction that supported English language learning. They suggested the modification of traditional pedagogical practices by incorporating mobile technologies to make language learning more meaningful and practical. Another study by Kissinger (2013) revealed how mobile technology, particularly the use of mobile e-books, supported individualized learning and helped to build up confidence in having access to necessary learning materials. In a different context of Finland, Kärki et al. (2018) identified the effectiveness of mobile learning outside the technology classroom context where learners could actively collaborate for socially situated and contextual learning. An earlier study (Cochrane, 2010) reported that learning through smartphones would be successful if students were provided regular feedback and technology use was incorporated into the assessment system. A similar study (Oyelere et al., 2016) in Nigeria also reported students' positive perceived values of using smartphones in learning both language and content because they could interact with peers and teachers, and could access authentic resources for learning. These studies indicated that the use of smartphones supported students in creating interactive platforms both inside and outside the classroom and increased access to learning materials which supported to development of their linguistic and pedagogical knowledge and skills.

The above literature indicates that smartphones supported students to access learning materials through an internet connection and enhanced learning achievement through active participation and collaboration. Mobile technology provided students with new learning experiences through active engagement that helped to make learning meaningful and supported individualised learning that helped to develop confidence in learning.

Students' Smartphone Learning Strategies

Studies have reported how students used smartphones in learning course contents within and outside the classroom. For example, Heflin et al. (2017) in America reported that students created collaborative learning groups and created self-learning opportunities using smartphones although students found it less critical when performing writing tasks on small screens. However, Taleb and Sohrabi (2012) suggested that the lack of appropriate technical infrastructure in educational institutions and quality devices with students in developing countries including Iran were detrimental to the effective use of smartphones in learning. A recent study (Antee, 2021) found that the pandemic situation increased the acceptability of mobile learning among students and suggested developing mobile-compatible learning courses and making mobile technology accessible to students to minimise the learning challenges created by the pandemic. Previously, Domingo and Garganté (2016) argued that the use of mobile technology could transform students into knowledge constructors by providing them with more opportunities to learn using smartphones.

Dukic et al. (2015) in Hong Kong reported that students preferred to use smartphones to perform simple activities such as playing games, searching materials, using a dictionary, checking assignments, and communicating with others. Moreover, they reported that smartphones were not appropriate for academic activities such as reading and writing although it would be comfortable to access information quickly for their characteristics of being handy and accessible. In a different context of Australia, Henderson et al. (2017) realia concluded that students try to find appropriate use of digital technologies in their contexts although incorporation of ICT in education could not transform traditional pedagogical activities. However, Farley et al. (2015) discovered teachers' dilemma about allowing students to use smartphones in classrooms despite students' positive attitudes towards using smartphones to learn course content. They also suggested the development and practice of technology-friendly pedagogies based on social constructivism and connectionism. Matsumoto (2021) in America emphasised that smartphones could promote self-learning and learner agency when students could afford appropriate devices. However, Ramamuruthy and Rao (2015) found that learners' effective use of smartphones depended on teachers' instruction and collaboration despite having access to the resources.

Learners' inability to handle digital devices could sometimes frustrate learners and hamper their learning. For example, a Malaysian study by CH'NG (2019) reported that the lack of digital literacy, and inexperience, particularly in using the internet and computers, generated emotional problems and frustrated the learners, which could be minimised through enhanced interaction with teachers. A study by Putranta and Setiyatna (2021) in Indonesia revealed that despite high school students' preference for using smartphones to enhance their learning, they were likely to misuse smartphones to entertain themselves in different ways diverting their attention in content learning, and therefore, suggested that teachers should develop relevant rules to control possible misuse of smartphones in classrooms. However, Chua and Mazmanian (2021) in America revealed parent-children tension about smartphone use where parents insisted their children adopt strategies of smartphone use which could enhance learning through collaboration with friends and become self-reliant rather than being engaged in social conversations, but children believed such activities as a part of seeking collaboration. Moreover, they suggested the adoption of flexible strategies which could minimise value conflict between parents and their children.

In the context of Nepal, Shrestha et al. (2022) revealed that the popularity of using digital devices including mobile phones increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. They reported that the use of digital devices supported to creation of a learning community, collaboration, and sharing of content. However, they claimed the challenges of using mobile phones in learning including students lacking access to suitable digital devices and technological skills in learning using digital devices. Parajuli (2016) suggested that effective use of mobile technology in learning would require the development of technology-friendly pedagogy, and proper institutional support for students. Shrestha (2011) claimed the challenges of using mobile phones in learning such as negative attitudes of the administration towards mobile use, inaccessibility of mobile phones for all students, and lack of mobile-friendly digital content for learning language.

The above literature revealed how students attempted to utilise smartphones as a learning device in their context despite concerns from teachers and parents about their possible misuse. The literature indicates parents and teachers lack confidence about the positive consequences of smartphone use by students which would create various psychological pressures upon them about proper utilisation of smartphones. In particular, the existing literature pictured a clear absence of research on secondary students' experience of mobile learning management in Nepali schools in the context of the growing use of ICT in education in the post-pandemic era.

Methodology

We have used a qualitative research approach to explore the secondary students' experiences of using smartphones in their learning. Informed by Cohen et al. (2018), we followed the interpretive research paradigm as secondary students would have diverse experiences of learning using smartphones. We selected the interpretive research paradigm believing that the research participants had different experiences of learning using smartphones. Therefore, getting ideas from Denzin and Lincoln (2018), we have explored how participants constructed multiple realities based on their lived experiences because phenomenological research aims to describe, explain, and interpret a phenomenon, situation, or experience understood by participants. We selected sixteen secondary-level students (Grade 12) from four schools in the Banganga Municipality of Kapilvastu district for the study. We maintained gender balance but asked for their voluntary participation after obtaining informed consent from the gatekeepers and students. The students who raised their hands first showing willingness to participate were selected for the interviews.

Table 1

Participant Schools and Students

School	Students	Gender
Buddha	Sumitra	Female
	Pranita	Female
	Bimal	Male
	Krishna	Male
Mayadevi	Pari	Female
	Anju	Female
	Balaram	Male
	Dipendra	Male
Gautam School	Srijana	Female
	Puja	Female
	Narayan	Male
	Suraj	Male
Lumbini School	Nima	Female
	Karina	Female
	Nimesh	Male
	Bibek	Male

Following Cohen et al. (2018) we used phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of the secondary level students regarding smartphone use in learning. Being accustomed to the participants, we took informed consent informing them that they would be voice-recorded but need not worry about its exposure. To get appropriate information for the study, we conducted semi-structured interviews as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2018). After getting permission from the school administration, we created a comfortable and friendly atmosphere to develop trust and confidence so that the participants would share their understandings and experiences of learning using a smartphone. We collected information from the participants meeting them physically multiple times in the natural setting of schools. The interviews were audio recorded on a smartphone and were analysed generating relevant themes based on the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

Based on interviews with the participants, the secondary students in rural schools in Western Nepal Tarai, this section presents findings on three themes, which are related to students' experiences of smartphone use as a language and content learning resource, mobile learning management and learner awareness, and initiatives for value transformation on smartphone use.

Smartphones as Language and Content Learning Resource

The participants reported their learning experiences of using smartphones with Wi-Fi connections. They shared their real experiences of how they utilised smartphones to support their learning. Most of the participants reported that they enjoyed learning through smartphones because they could search for relevant learning materials through online resources at any time. For example, Sumitra from Buddha School said:

> This is the age of technology. Everything is available on YouTube. When I don't know something or when I cannot ask my teacher for clarification on some content, I can search and learn from YouTube videos. When I cannot understand watching YouTube videos, I ask my teachers saying that I tried this way but could not understand. Then, they support me learn. Smartphones have supported me learn both language and content.

Her remarks indicated how the use of smartphones supported students to search and learn web-based materials to reduce confusion arising in the classroom. Moreover, the participant students utilised smartphones to develop self-efficacy in learning and compensate for what they missed from their teachers in the classroom. For example:

> It is quite interesting. We can get all the information that we missed in the class. (Balram from Mayadevi School)

> I feel excited to learn through smartphones. It helps my learning. We can get access to learning material easily to avoid confusion. (Pari from Mayadevi School)

> It is much more pleasing to learn from YouTube videos on mobile phones. They make effective videos. They are comprehensible. They are more effective than classroom instruction. I feel so. (Bimal from Buddha School)

These remarks are an indication of how students used smartphones to search for learning materials to develop an understanding of the content presented in the classroom. They found online resources effective because they included audio-visual content with artistic presentation. They used

mobile phones to search for content from various subjects such as English, Social Studies, Finance, and Accountancy. For example:

> I feel good to learn from mobiles. I feel happy somehow to learn what I did not understand at school. I search on Google and YouTube and learn, so it's good. It is helpful. Sometimes it saves time as well. I use it to support my study. Especially, I use it for Finance and Accounts. I also use it in learning English. (Krishna from Buddha School)

Krishna's remarks indicated how students' technological knowledge supported the development of content knowledge along with English and encouraged them to learn by making learning materials more accessible to a wider extent. However, Narayan from Gautam School shared that the vastness of content on online resources created confusion among the students about the relevancy of materials they required to learn:

> When I learn using a book, I have to learn what is given in it. YouTube supports quick learning. But, when I search from Google, it is sometimes confusing because I have to dig down and I cannot decide what to learn and what to leave. I cannot get the exact meaning.

Narayan's remarks are an indication of the challenges students experience when learning through online resources in comparison to course books, which provide systematically selected and graded materials. In particular, the vastness of content displayed through web searches made it difficult for the students to decide the relevance of learning materials. Moreover, students used smartphones to promote self-learning as reported by Pranita from Buddha School:

> When I did not have a mobile phone, I had to wait until the next day to ask my teacher if I didn't know something. Now if I don't know or if I have to complete my notes, I can use it and learn immediately. So, it is very useful now. I can explore and learn something new and inspire myself.

Her remarks revealed how smartphones provided a useful means to learn content in the absence of teachers and promoted their learning. They used them to develop notes to prepare for their examinations. They also assisted them in exploring new knowledge, which motivated them to further learning.

It is reflected from the above remarks that students utilised smartphones to search for relevant learning materials online to improve their learning. Smartphones supported students to develop self-efficacy helping them to increase linguistic, technological, and content knowledge. They also motivated self-learning and pace learning by increasing access to learning materials although the vastness of content available online sometimes confused them in the selection of appropriate learning content.

Mobile Learning Management and Learner Awareness

The participants in the interviews reported how they managed their learning using smartphones. Most of the participants reported their awareness of proper use of smartphones to support their learning although their parents and teachers warned them against overuse of smartphones. However, they attempted to convince them that they were using smartphones to learn the contents of their curriculum. For example:

> When I use it when I don't have my exam, they say nothing as such, but I have to use it during my exam too. In that case, they say "Why are you playing with your mobile phone when you have an exam"? As they think I am using Facebook or TikTok, I play videos louder even when I am using the Guruba App. Then only they believe that I am learning something from the mobile phone. (Pranita from Buddha School)

> Yes, my parents allow me. I don't use it much and they believe me. I can easily convince my parents. I never lie to them, so I don't have any pressure from my parents. (Nima from Lumbini School)

These remarks indicated the parents' awareness of their children's habits of excessive smartphone use although they showed more concern during examination periods. As the parents believed that their children were engaged in social sites and gaming on mobiles, the children had to justify that they were using them to learn curricular content. Moreover, many students were found self-aware of the proper utilisation of smartphones, and parents and teachers did not have to interfere with them. For example:

> Yes, when I had a mobile in the beginning, I used to make TikTok videos and many of my friends did so. I would not know how quickly time is spent. I would think I could study later. I would spend the whole day making TikTok videos and pay little attention to my studies. (Sumitra from Buddha School)

> It depends on how we use it. When we use it excessively it has negative results but when we control ourselves and use it for special need, then it is very fruitful. (Dipendra from Mayadevi School)

> Phones don't spoil people, but people are damaging their phones because of addiction to phone use. It depends on people how they use it. (Anju from Mayadevi School)

These remarks indicated how students gradually transformed their habits of smartphone use from entertainment and communication to content learning. Although they spent more time on social sites in the early days of their smartphone possession, later they tended to realise that they could be used as learning devices. It is depicted from the above remarks how students learn to manage their learning as they experience learning in new contexts of technological advancement. In particular, the students gradually learn to minimise the negative effects of technological devices and their applications when they are permitted to experience real learning contexts.

Initiatives for Value Transformation of Smartphone Use

Participants in the interviews shared how they could transform the values of smartphone use and transform both language and content learning. The learners' beliefs on the perceived value of mobile learning initiated to transform particularly when their teachers encouraged them to search and learn curricular contents of various subjects such as English, and Accounts from different online resources including learning apps and YouTube. For example:

> Sometimes my English teacher asks me to search for some content on YouTube and when I do so, my father complains that I'm using my mobile phone again after coming back home from school. (Sumitra from Buddha School)

> Our school allows us to take mobile phones to school. Teachers encourage us to use our phones in creative ways, like downloading learning apps, and dictionary that enable us to learn English and other subjects. (Srijana from Gautam School)

> I came to know that we can use them in learning course contents as well as gaining general knowledge. My teachers encouraged me to use it to search for content related to my courses. (Suraj from Gautam School)

These remarks indicated that teacher encouragement helped students to transform their habits of smartphone use by assigning them tasks that required online and offline searches on mobile devices. Moreover, permitting smartphone use in the classroom under teacher supervision to access learning materials supported students to change their perceived learning values of smartphones. The participants also reported how they managed to learn from web-based resources despite not having personal devices and internet connection at home. For example:

> Yes, I have my smartphone but no Wi-Fi connection at home. We have a Wi-Fi connection in our school. I download the materials I need and study at home whenever I need them. (Dipendra from Mayadevi School)

> I don't have a personal phone. My brother sometimes allows me to use his phone. I take data whenever I need internet access. (Balram from Mayadevi School)

It is evident from the above remarks that students gradually learned to manage their learning through smartphones by transforming the value system about utilizing smartphones to support learning of language and content when they realised that excessive use of smartphones hampered their learning. In particular, they transformed their habit of using smartphones for recreation to learn curricular content when teachers encouraged students by assigning activities requiring the use of online resources. This increased students' perceived value of smartphones as learning devices and were able to convince their families to access smartphones. Indeed, smartphones provide useful alternative means to enhance linguistic, technological and content knowledge.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed the relevance of using smartphones in learning because students were more motivated to search for learning materials online on their mobile phones with an internet connection. Indeed, their access to smartphones increased their accessibility to a wide area of content although they found it challenging to select appropriate learning content for their purpose. Most importantly, they supported self-learning (Matsumoto, 2021), enhanced instant learning, and provided learning security because they could learn what they missed in their regular classes. It is evident from the study that smartphones supported students in developing content knowledge through the effective utilisation of technological skills which aligns with (Rana et al., 2022) who argued that ICT could support the integration of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge to enhance effective classroom learning.

The present study revealed students' experiences of how they could use smartphones to learn language as well as contents from mathematics. For example, they tried to learn English vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skills using learning through Google search and various learning apps, which increased their access to learning materials and became supportive to enhance their knowledge of curricular content. This finding aligns with Anshari et al. (2017) who reported that smartphones with internet connection increased students' access to vast amounts of open learning

resources and supported improved learning although it sometimes increased dependency on software and decreased capacity to think critically. Although students enjoyed searching for learning materials with their smartphones (Ariel & Elishar-Malka, 2019), this study revealed that students' vastness of search materials displayed on their screens increased confusion because they could not judge the relevancy of the content they needed to learn. Similar to the findings of Han and Yi (2019), this study also found that students valued smartphones as valuable learning devices although their parents were skeptical of their habit of using smartphones and complained that they were hampering learning. Further, this study revealed that school administration did not allow students to bring smartphones into the classroom although some teachers encouraged them to use them to support learning, which supported them to value mobile phones as important pedagogical devices. This study also revealed how smartphones increased interaction with teachers and materials making them accessible outside the classroom context and making learning more contextual, which increased the positive perceived value of smartphones for learning (Oyelere et al., 2016).

The findings of this study revealed how students' perceived value of a smartphone as an entertaining device can change gradually into a learning device. In particular, teacher encouragement to search for learning materials through smartphones supported their learning by increasing their capacity to explore learning materials. As reported by Domingo and Garganté (2016), the use of technology can transform students from knowledge receivers to knowledge constructors and increase self-efficacy by increasing accessibility of content both online and offline. The findings revealed students developed strategies to support their learning of language, mathematics, and content subjects by utilising dictionaries, Google search, YouTube, and learning apps despite lacking sufficient support from schools and families although Dukic et al. (2015) reported that smartphones were not appropriate for developing reading and writing skills. It is evident from the study that student develop ways of accessing ICT resources despite not having their personal devices and internet connection when they realise their pedagogical utilities of technology. As reported by Farley et al. (2015), although the administration was not positive and teachers were in dilemma about allowing smartphones in classrooms, students could convince senior members of the families to transform their perceptions about the misuse of smartphones and use them to support their learning when teachers encouraged them to learn from online resources. In particular, the supportive role of teachers could transform students' habit of using smartphones as an entertaining device into a pedagogical device that develops students' potential for learning.

Conclusion and Implications

There is a consensus that smartphones have pedagogical utilities if they are used rationally. The findings of this study revealed secondary students (Grade 12) perceived the value of smartphones in learning. The study found that smartphones supported the development of pedagogical and content knowledge and made them more independent learners. In particular, technological skills practised through smartphones enhanced the pace of learning as the students could search for relevant content themselves and learn at their own speed. This allowed students to work independently and could compensate for learning that they missed in regular classes. Indeed, smartphones increased access to learning materials for students although many participants did not have their personal devices and internet access and yet they borrowed devices from senior members of their families and used publicly available internet to search and download learning materials.

The study findings discovered that parents were often skeptical about the pedagogical values of smartphones and intended to minimise their use by their offspring. However, students adopted strategies to convince their families to seek support for using smartphones to learn curricular content. It

is evident from the study that teacher guidance and support can increase the pedagogical values of smartphones for students and can transform their use from everyday communication and entertainment to learning language as well as curricular content including mathematical operations. Although there are challenges of access to technology for many students and their parents and school administration worry about their proper use, students have begun to value their pedagogical implications. It is concluded that engaging students with smartphone technology followed by proper guidance and support from teachers can enhance self-learning by increasing access to learning materials.

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Current Policies and Pedagogies of English Language Teacher Education: Unveiling Social Challenges

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the current policies and pedagogies of English language teacher education, and the social inequalities associated with English language teaching. It also assesses the challenges of English language teachers to mitigate these social inequalities. It explores the roles and actions that English language teachers could perform to diminish these social inequalities. A review of the concerned literature and policy documents shows that the current policies and pedagogies of English language teacher education in Nepal have focused on the functional-communicative approach to English language teaching. However, the current social inequalities related to English language teaching are gender, class, caste or ethnic background and culture. The challenges for English language teachers are to address social justice and equity issues in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Thus, this study attempts to address social realities in English language teacher education so that it helps to reform current policies and practices. The role and actions of English language teachers should be directed to create critical consciousness.

***Keywords*:** Critical pedagogy, social challenges, social justice, social inequalities, teacher education

Introduction

English language teacher education is a key element that influences learners' language development (Richards & Farrell, 2005). As there is the epistemological shift from a positivist, interpretive to a socio-cultural perspective in second language teacher education, there are changes in the scope and trends in second language teacher education. Johnson (2009) claims that second language (L2) teacher learning is socially negotiated and influenced by knowledge of self, student, subject matter, curricula and setting. Thus, the scope of second language teacher education seems to have passed from various stages such as training-focused, developmental, practical and socialization. Furthermore, it is essential to show the complex relationships of policies, pedagogies and social challenges embedded within English language teaching.

The complexities of policies and pedagogies can be manifested in the complex interplay between policy and practice. Education policies determine curriculum, evaluation and career

enhancement, and also guide teacher education (Johnson, 2006). On the other hand, teacher training pedagogies are also influenced by policies and practices (Borg, 2015). This interplay shows the need to analyze policies and pedagogies to comprehend social challenges in English language teacher education. In addition, the other challenges for English language teacher education are cultural, economic and political (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Furthermore, English language teaching and learning is also concerned with the issues of equity and justice (Kubota & Lin, 2009). Therefore, understanding social challenges with English language teaching is essential to mitigate social inequalities.

In this context, this research aims to examine the current policies and pedagogies of English language teacher education in Nepal critically so that it unveils social challenges within the education system. This study seeks to explain the complex dynamics between policies, pedagogies and social realities in English language teacher education in Nepal through extensive review of existing literature and policy documents. This research suggests transformative practices to diminish social inequalities in English language teaching.

Literature Review

This paper reviewed various literature found in multiple sources including Google Scholar and Research Gate. I have reviewed the literature related to the current policies and pedagogies of English language teacher education, social issues associated with English language teaching, challenges for English language teachers, and roles and actions of English language teachers. Finally, I have developed four themes guided by the research questions and presented the results of the study.

Methodology

This study aims to explain the complex interplay between policies, pedagogies and social issues in English language teacher education in Nepal through extensive review of existing literature and policy documents. I searched the relevant research articles and policy documents with the help of search engines such as Google Scholar and Google using the keywords ‘English language teacher education’, ‘English language teaching’, ‘pedagogy’, ‘social challenges’, ‘social inequalities’, and ‘critical pedagogy’. Most of the research articles were taken from journals and books. I also explored government agencies’ websites to find educational policies in English language teacher education. Relevant data and information were extracted from the research articles with the help of keywords. The findings of these articles were synthesized and analyzed under various themes related to the research topic.

Results and Discussion

Based on the literature review from various sources, I have analysed the results thematically.

Current Policies and Pedagogies of English Language Teacher Education

The current epistemological stand in second language teacher education considers second language learning a sociocultural activity. Much of second language education practice was dominated by an essentialist view of culture consisting of many imagined and problematic stereotypes (Franson & Holliday, 2009). To counter this, there has been a call for a decentred or locality-driven approach to explore cultural complexity and diversities (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Two sets of experiences: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) have been practiced globally. TESOL is considered a generalized and international arena, whereas ESL is known as localized and context-specific. The juxtaposition of TESOL and ESL aims to reshape the traditional concepts of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, ‘power and identity’, and ‘inner and outer’ in this globalized world (Canagarajah, 2006). Phillipson (1992) expressed how the native-speaker teacher model worked

to serve and continue English colonization. Further, Holliday (2006) explored 'us'-'them' cultural politics which marginalized the so-called non-native speaker. Similarly, Kubota (2004) exposed how imagined stereotypes of the non-western 'Other' represented hidden racism in the TESOL. Cummins (2000) focused on the issues of language learning by bilingual children, the discourses of diversity, multiculturalism and bilingualism to address the concepts of inclusion and equity. Sociocultural theory has addressed various issues such as language, ethnicity, and identity to minority learners in second language contexts (Toohey, 2000). In short, English language education for minority ethnic learners is situated within the continuing ideological and political discussion that cannot be ignored in language teacher education. Critical approaches to language education focus on a commitment to social transformation, justice and equality.

In Nepal, English is taught as a compulsory subject from Grades 1 to 12, and English language curricula and pedagogy are shaped by the communicative approach to language learning (Sharma & Phyak, 2017). The principal aim of teaching the English language at primary school is to develop a "comprehensive communicative competence" on the part of learners and the major focus is on language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing along with confidence in "acceptable pronunciation and intonation" (Curriculum Development Centre, 2009). Similarly, the secondary English language curriculum aims to develop the confidence in learners for effective communication in speaking, listening, reading and writing so that they can actively participate in a global society (Curriculum Development Centre, 2014). In other words, the English language curriculum has focused on communicative approaches and grammatical structures that serve particular communicative purposes. To achieve these aims, the Ministry of Education disseminates a teacher professional development (TPD) program for in-service English teachers to improve their professional skills in English language teaching (Sharma & Phyak, 2017). The teacher professional development course is directed at changing school from a place of knowledge transmission to a knowledge generation space, and it focuses on the collaborative effort, communicative method, teaching language skills, vocabulary and grammar (Shrestha, 2012). Teacher professional development courses seem to have been directed to improve teachers' English proficiency and methodological skills to transform classrooms into a learning community. However, English language teaching in Nepal has suffered many problems such as less-trained teachers, large classroom sizes, inadequate audiovisual materials, libraries and laboratories after adopting the communicative approach (Aryal et al., 2016). Thus, there is a need to improve teacher professional development courses so that these courses include local context-specific strategies.

Social Issues Associated with English Language Teaching

Social inequalities associated with English language teaching are class, gender, caste or ethnicity, and culture. Hawkins and Norton (2009) said that globalization brought diversification in language classrooms as there were students from poverty, immigrants, refugees, and minority-language speakers in the class, and such learners were marginalized and denied equal opportunities for social and material resources. Hence, the language classes of today seem heterogeneous because of diversity. The issues of equality/inequalities or inclusion/exclusion seem to be pertinent as the nature of second language classes has become multilingual and multicultural.

In the context of Nepal, the problem of access and equity in school education is still regarded as a challenge since it is badly affected by social inequalities and disparities such as social class, gender, caste, ethnicity and regional background (Mathema, 2007). Similarly, Devkota (2018) argued that the main causes of social inequalities in Nepal were social, cultural, and economic forces. However, school policies and pedagogies have adopted the concept of inclusion for all kinds of school

children from different classes, castes, genders and ethnicities. In other words, English language teaching seems more problematic for learners from lower social strata and remote rural backgrounds not because of their deficiency but because of inequity.

Challenges for English Language Teachers

English language teachers seem to have faced the challenges created by the nexus of language, culture, power and identity while mitigating the inequalities prevalent in the social, economic, and cultural backdrop. They seem to be in a major position to address these inequalities because they serve most of the marginalized members of society and the nature of the English language can be empowering and marginalizing at the same time. Their role is considered as social mediators for shaping new views for diverse groups of learners negotiating their old belief systems, values and practices. Hawkins and Norton (2009) noted the challenges for critical language teachers related to dismantling harmful and oppressive relations between majority and minority speakers and cultural groups. Similarly, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) pointed out another challenge for language teachers they needed to be aware of issues concerning linguistic genocide. Language is considered not neutral but value-laden. Therefore, critical language teachers have to work with their students to deconstruct language, texts and discourses to find explicit and implicit messages behind them.

In the Nepali multilingual and multicultural context, Phyak (2016) observed that the English medium instruction policy created inequalities between the rich and the poor by badly affecting the children's access to academic content, and it also affected the policy of mother-tongue-based multilingual education mounting tensions between global and local ideologies. Similarly, Giri (2010) described that privileging Nepali and English has challenged ethnic cultures and languages. Thus, the recent liberal educational policy of the government of Nepal permitting both Nepali and English medium instruction and contradictory provisions of focusing on the local language and local curriculum can be considered a major challenge for English language teachers.

Roles and Actions of English Language Teachers

English language teachers have the roles and actions assigned to critical teachers to mitigate social inequalities. McDonald (2008) discussed the need to move from multicultural teacher education to social justice teacher education, the latter analyzed institutionalized and individual power differentials to promote teachers' role as a social activist. Hawkins and Norton (2009) suggested three practices to improve the actions of critical language teachers: critical awareness, critical self-reflection and critical pedagogy relations.

Critical awareness is the increasing consciousness of language teachers about power relations and their function in society. In her ethnographic study, Goldstein (2004) described tensions experienced in multilingual and multicultural settings in Canada that exposed pedagogical possibilities, and her praxis (combining theory and practice together to bring social change) was the recognition of existing inequitable social conditions. In a different setting in Australia, Pennycook (2004) presented an insightful reflection on the term ‘Praxicum’ (theory and practice come together to create a new understanding of the TESOL) with three critical moments of the classroom, and his praxis located in raising awareness for social transformations. Similarly, Hawkins (2004) observed the interactions on a listserve in a graduate teacher education class in the United States of America that supported dialogic engagement of class members, and his praxis was to raise critical awareness of their social relations. Hence, critical self-reflection incites language teachers to reflect on their identity and positioning in society both the possibilities and constraints for social change. Pavlenko (2003) showed that she utilized contemporary theories of language acquisition competency to empower graduate language

classes in the United States of America, and her praxis was social discourse that shapes learners' self-perceptions. Stein (2004) implemented the "Literacy Archive Project" for advantaged and disadvantaged teacher-learners in South Africa, and her praxis was a recognition of power differences among cultural groups. Lin (2004) explained her experience of integrating learners' lives and struggles with content while course designing in Hong Kong, and praxis was to empower teacher-learners to reflect on their position. Critical pedagogical relations are concerned with empowering learners by restructuring power relations between teacher educators and teacher-learners. Crookes and Lehner (1998) presented a model with equal responsibility of teacher-learners to design and participate in learning in Hawaii, and their praxis was to shift in the curriculum and classroom. Willet and Miller (2004) discussed transformational curriculum design to make learners challenge the status quo in the United States, and their praxis was to change classroom practices promoting social justice. Toohey and Waterstone (2004) shared a mutual goal of expanding learning opportunities for language minority students in Canada, and their praxis was pedagogical restructuring of power relations between teacher educators and teacher-learners. Hawkins and Norton (2009) also suggested five principles: the situated nature of programmes and practices, the responsiveness of learners, dialogic engagement, reflexivity, and praxis, and they aimed to sharpen the role of critical English language teachers by employing these principles.

In the context of Nepal, Phyak (2013) suggested that engaged critical ethnography, a critical approach that exposes ground realities and ascertains the researcher's position as a promoter of social justice, can be helpful for local actors to deconstruct the prevailing social discourses and unravel the realities about language, literacy and education. Thus, the inequalities about class, gender, caste, ethnicity and culture are the product of existing social, cultural, and economic contexts in Nepali society. In short, critical English language teachers have to deconstruct the discriminatory discourses, texts, language and culture in collaboration with learners. They need to arouse critical awareness among learners and bring transformation. It can be inferred that English should be taught as a language of medium for communication preserving the linguistic and cultural heritage of the learners.

Conclusion and Implications

The global and national policies and pedagogies of English language teacher education have been changed along with the epistemological shift towards socio-cultural perspectives in second language teacher education. The existing policies and pedagogies of English language teacher education have focused functional communicative approach to English language teaching since English language teaching is considered a practice in a social context. The current critical pedagogy of English language teacher education has focused on exploring social inequalities related to gender, class, caste, ethnicity and culture. It has aimed to bring change in the existing social paradigm. English language teachers must know learners' differences to develop responsive curricula and pedagogy. Teacher education programs should include opportunities to explore culture as a dynamic, multifaceted, ideological and political construct. In other words, language, culture, identity, relations, ideology, and power are relevant to all language teaching and learning situations. English language teachers' work must address social justice and equity issues while working with multilingual and multicultural education for minority ethnic learners. Therefore, the focus of teacher educators is to draw a wide range of knowledge and skills to respond to more localized contexts of language learning and strengthen the role of English language teachers and learners as agencies for positive change in society. Thus, this study contributes to improving current policies and pedagogies in English language teacher education unveiling social challenges. Furthermore, as this paper is an outcome of secondary

data, there is a need for a rigorous study with primary data collection to explore English language teacher education critically and objectively in the future.

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Bending Back to the Professional Activities: Unveiling the Role of Reflective Practice in Teachers' Professional Development

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Abstract

Reflection and reflective practices are important to develop professionalism. The importance of those practices has been highly emphasised in teaching, learning, and teachers' professional development. With this backdrop, the study aims to investigate the English teachers' reflective practices and examine their role in their professional development. I used narrative inquiry as a research design where the sample was selected using purposive sampling. An in-depth interview was used as a research tool to collect information and the interviews were conducted using interview guidelines. The collected data was recorded, transcribed, coded, categorised, and thematically analyzed. The study found that the English language teachers used action research, case studies, diary writing, reflective journals, and students' feedback as reflective practices. Moreover, the study has uncovered that reflective practices are important for teachers to have self-analysis, find strengths and weaknesses of the learners and self, plan, act, and further plan the lesson, empower the learners, solve critical incidents, to have the active engagement of learners in teaching-learning activities, and to grow as a professional person. The study implies that every teacher should have a reflection on their practices for the betterment of teaching, learning, and growing professionally.

Keywords: Narrative inquiry, reflection, reflective practices, TPD

Introduction

Teaching is a profession in which troublesome situations may often arise. Teachers are professionals whose task is to teach, guide, instruct, train, and assess the learners. Becoming a professional teacher is not as easy as we think rather dealing with critical situations and treating diverse learners in the same environment is a complex job as Richards and Lockhart (2007, p. 29) conceptualised teaching as 'a complex process'. It comprises a range of areas which can be achieved by professional development activities. For example, the TPACK model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) consists of three interconnected areas; technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. Thus, a teacher should master the content, pedagogy, and technology, and continue engaging themselves in learning for their career advancement and professional development. Houde (2018) states that

professional development refers to those actions which are practised analysing new ways, adjusting, and improving professional lives. Moreover, Rauteda (2023) states that professional development is a continuous process throughout one's life where one has to master new skills, widen knowledge, and innovate insights in pedagogy, practice, and understanding of one's own needs. It is an individual process, but there are several tools and techniques in the form of models (Pugsley, 2016), which a teacher can apply for professional competencies such as reflective journal, diary, peer assessment, self-assessment, and audio or video recording (Dheressa, 2022).

Reflection and reflective practices are two key terms used in the teaching profession that denote the process of evaluating, analyzing, and assessing the professional practices 'in action', and 'on action' (Schon, 1983) to improve teaching performance, enhance students' learning, and to search the remedial practices (Akabiri, 2007). It has been adopted across many professions such as science, law, medicine, nursing, and education (Farrell, 2022). Zwozdiak–Myers (2012) states, "Reflective practice is central to a teachers' development because it helps teachers analyze and evaluate what is happening in their classes, so they can improve the quality of their learning and provide better learning opportunities to the students (P. 3)".

Teaching and learning in the classroom are becoming more difficult, demanding, sophisticated, and problematic (Offorma & Obiefuna, 2017), and teachers are facing problems with technology, pedagogy, and the dispositions of the learners. To cope with these issues, teachers need to reflect upon their theory and practice as the post-method pedagogy asks for 'practising theories' and 'theorizing the practices' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Language teachers reshape their knowledge of teaching and learning throughout their careers (Farrell, 2019) for which teachers observe, analyse, conceptualize, and experiment with the issue to come to a solution. Reflective practice is widely considered to be an important activity for professional development. Hence, Mann and Welsh (2015) agree that "teacher development depends on the commitment and the capacity to examine one's professional practice and to use professional judgment for reflecting and acting upon". The reflective practices are helpful for both the students and the teachers which improves pupils' learning and the quality of teaching (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2012). Thus, reflective practices are important for teacher development which help teachers to learn 'to learn'.

The reflective practices become more important in language teaching as the profession has moved into the 'post-method condition' (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) where language teachers do not use the prescribed teaching methods rather, they develop their theories based on the context in which they teach. Since the beginning of the 20th century, reflective practice has become the most researched and discussed field in the educational literature (Gheith & Aljaberi, 2018) as Dewey (1933) discussed generating knowledge from reflection. As reflective practice focuses on professional development, capacity building, deeper understanding of philosophy, principles, and theories (Farrell, 2019), it is significant to examine how teachers reflect on their practice, beliefs, and theories, and how they act upon them along with how reflective practice plays the role to make a professional teacher. Moreover, teachers are taken as facilitators, problem solvers, decision-makers, observers, and researchers in the teaching and learning process (Orgovanyi – Gajdos, 2016). To fulfil those roles, reflective practice is highly needed to achieve professionalism (Amrulah, 2023). Many research studies have been conducted in the field of reflection and reflective practices for teachers' professional development, however, only a few studies have been carried out in diverse situations like language teaching classes. Thus, it is crucial to carry out this study since language classes have students from different linguistic, social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Hence, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

i. How do English teachers reflect on their professional practices?
ii. What are the roles of reflective practices in English teachers' professional development?

Literature Review

I have reviewed various literature related to the English language teachers' reflections on their professional development and the roles of reflective practices in their professional development. which have been discussed under three themes: reflective practices, the significance of reflective practices and various reflective models used for teachers' professional development.

Reflective Practices

The emergence of reflective practices can be traced back to different ancient and current religions, but the current use of the term 'reflection' is derived from the Latin word 'reflectere' which means to 'bend back' (Valli, 1997). However, reflection and reflective practices attracted attention in formal educational settings since the 1980s (Farrell, 2016), through the work of John Dewey; a philosopher, psychologist, and education reformer (Freeman, 2016; Houde, 2018). Dewey defined:

> Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence–consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each turns the lens back on its predecessors. The successive portion of the reflective thought grows out of one another and supports one another; they do not come and go medley (1910, p. 2-3).

Dewey's concept of reflective practice is regarded as a 'reflective inquiry' (Dewey, 1933) where he suggests 'practitioners can slow down the interval between thought and action' (as cited in Farrell, 2022). Dewey (1910, p. 6) stated that reflective practice refers to 'the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it'.

Later Dewey was followed by Schon who wrote two books; 'The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action (Schon, 1983) and 'Educating the Reflective Practitioner (Schon, 1987). Those literatures played a pivotal role in the development of reflective practices in different professions. Schon (1983, p. 56) defines reflective practice as "a dialogue of thinking and doing through which a person becomes more skilful". Moreover, Schon's (1991) model of 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action' provides an additional element by making the distinction between reflection during the event and reflection after the event. Schon (1984) describes teaching as an outcome of teachers' thinking process, conceptualization, and beliefs about teaching events taking place in the classroom. Schon (1983) further states that for reflective teaching, continuity and thoughtful consideration in implementing the lesson learned from one's experiences is a must. Moreover, he talks about the practitioners in his work of 1983; practitioners become more aware of what they do as they perform by observing their actions or by reflecting on actions. Here, he gives more emphasis on reflecting during action.

Significance of Reflective Practice

Reflection or reflective practice in the context of education refers to the intentional and purposeful process where educators engage in metacognitive thinking and actions to enhance and refine their professional practices. Researchers have given various reasons and benefits of reflective practice. Gore and Zeichner (1991) stated four versions of teacher reflective practice with different focuses; *an academic version* which focuses on teachers' skill in presenting the content in a way as to

maximize its accessibility for the students, *a social efficacy version*, which focuses on the evidence-based practice, *a developmental version*, primarily focuses on the appropriating teaching strategies, and interest of the students based on the research findings; and *the social reconstructionist version*, focuses on the political and the social issues of schooling and classroom instructions. It implies that reflective practice supports teachers in different ways connecting personal experiences with social and political consequences and provides research-based and evident practices as a solution to the problem.

Similarly, Robins et al. (2003) postulated reflective practice as a tool that allows teachers, student teachers, and teaching assistants to understand themselves, their philosophies, and the dynamics of their classrooms more quickly. Regarding the significance of the reflective practice, Brubacher (1994) presents that reflective practice is beneficial for practitioners [teachers] to be free from impulsive routine, helps to act intentionally and purposefully, and helps the teacher to act in an organized way (as cited in Day, 2005). Moreover, reflective practices develop skills like decision-making, self-awareness, critical thinking, analyzing, evaluating, and finding the possible solution to the problem. In this regard, Dewey (1933) extended the idea that only the teachers who reflect on their professional practices can get out of the routine of the authority. He further insisted on systematic and conscious reflection to develop self-awareness, development, and growth via combining teaching experiences with reflective practices.

Hong and Choi (2015) added that reflection is a method to inquire about problems in professional practices by citing Meierdirk (2016), and Pope et al. (2018); write that reflective practice is a skill that increases self-awareness, improves decision-making, and enhances practical problem-solving capacity to professionals. Moreover, Amrullah (2023) argues that reflective teaching is an essential foundation to enhance teachers' professional development as it helps teachers to critically reflect and evaluate their pedagogical practices. It enables us to question ourselves; what we know, what we do not know, what is our beliefs and attitudes on something, and how the solution we practise to attain the goal. Thus, reflective practice is important to tackle the problems raised in daily action, to enhance teaching and learning, and to develop professionalism by adopting the 'systematic' and 'rigorous' (Dewey, 1933) inquiry known as 'reflective inquiry' (Dewey, 1933).

Reflective Models

The discussed literature shows that reflective practice has been studied globally. Scholars developed different models of reflective practices at different times. Dewey (1933) prescribed a model of reflective practice where he proposed five different phases of reflection. According to Dewey's model, 'a practitioner passes five different phases in reflection; suggestion, intellectualization, guiding idea, reasoning, and hypothesis testing.' In the first phase, the practitioners face the problem and think about the possible solution. In this phase, the practitioner shows an emotional reaction. Intellectualization is termed a process of converting emotional reactions into intellectual reactions. Hence, the practitioner thinks in multiple ways for the solution seriously. In the third phase, the practitioner searches different sources and gathers a lot of information about the problem to come up with a working hypothesis. In the phase of reasoning, one attempts to explore the tentative solutions based on the information gathered. In the last phase, the practitioner takes the solution into action and tests the hypothesis whether it works or not. This is how it goes on and on.

Schon (1987) presented two different models; 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action'. In the former model, he describes that the professionals should consciously think about what they are doing while they are doing it whereas the second one involves reflecting on experience, situation, and event after it has occurred. Schon (1991) presents four phases of the reflection 'in action' model: (i) Framing (ii) Naming (iii) Moving, and (iv) Reflecting.

Farrell (2015) developed a framework for reflecting on practice that consists of five different phases which are in a cyclic form. According to Farrell, teachers reflect on different levels; philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. The first stage; reflecting on philosophy involves teachers looking at themselves in the form of 'teacher as a person' (Farrell, 2022). In this stage, teachers reflect on their past experiences, background, and previous lives. It helps them to know who they are as a teacher. In the second stage; reflecting on principles, according to Farrell, includes reflection on the teachers' beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning. In the third stage; reflecting on theory, teachers' choices of the theory are examined and practised. Here, the teacher thinks about how their theories can be translated into the classroom. In the fourth stage; reflecting on practice, teachers closely examine the connection between their philosophy, principle, and theory. In the fifth stage; beyond practice, teachers explore the moral, political, emotional, ethical, and social issues that impact teachers' practice both inside and outside the classroom.

The literature reviewed above revealed that Reflective Practices (RP) have been adopted by professionals in several areas for their professional development. Moreover, RP has become a dominant approach in the area of professionalism in general, and in the field of teaching. To be specific, reflection is very important for English language teachers as they have a more diverse context of teaching and learning. Although there are several research studies conducted in the field of reflective practices, very few studies explored the English language teachers' reflective practices and their role in their professional development. The study is significant for teachers as it suggests strategies of reflection and its importance in professional development. Moreover, the ways teachers reflect 'in', 'on', and 'for' action are crucial to be explored for the betterment of learning and to develop professionalism. Thus, I got motivated to conduct this study to explore how teachers reflect on their professional practices, and how reflective practice helps them to develop professionalism.

Methodology

I employed the narrative inquiry as a research design to conduct this study. For Polkinghorne (1995) narrative is 'a type of discourse composition that draws together diverse elements, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes' (p. 5). It is defined as a study of lives, experiences, and the stories of inquirers and captures the life experiences of individuals or a small number of individuals (Creswell et al., 2007). Bruner states that "narrative analysis reports personal experience or observations and brings fresh insights to often familiar situations" (as cited in Cohen et al., 2018). I applied this qualitative approach to study as it can 'process and condense a large amount of data, to provide a more complex and complete picture of social life' (Hendry, as cited in Cohen et al., 2018, p. 694). In this study, I have taken 'reflective practice' as a phenomenon on which I examined the English language teachers' strategies of reflection and its importance in their professional development. I used both primary and secondary sources of data. The empirical research studies, theories, and books were used as secondary sources, and the English language teachers teaching at the colleges of Sunsari district were used as primary sources. Four teachers teaching English at B. Ed., M. Ed., and secondary levels in four different colleges of Itahari, were selected as participants using a purposive sampling strategy. All the informants were male; Sagun, Virat, Surya, and Maxwell. Hence, Sagun, Virat, and Surya had an M. Ed. in English whereas Maxwell had an MPhil in English Language Education. The informants had 10, 7, 23, and 12 years of teaching experience respectively in the related field. The names of the respondents were pseudonymized. Since the study was a narrative inquiry, an in-depth interview was used as a research tool to collect the information. The informants were interviewed individually for detailed information based on the developed interview guidelines. The collected information was documented and recorded in a diary and cell phone respectively. Then it

was transcribed, coded, categorized, and thematically analyzed. I employed a 'reflexive thematic analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2019) approach to analyse the information.

Results and Discussion

As the study aimed to evaluate the role of reflective practice in the professional development of English language teachers along with unveiling the ways they reflect in their philosophy, theories, and practice, I analysed and interpreted the obtained information, and the results have been presented in the following themes.

Teachers' Strategies of Reflection

Reflective strategies are the techniques that one adopts to look back, analyse, examine, and think critically or creatively in one's professional practices which got practised to improve the behaviors, skills, and abilities in one's professional life. English language teachers apply various techniques of reflecting for different purposes such as action research, reflective journal writing, diary writing, audio or video recording, students' feedback, peer supervision, or peer teaching (Dheresa, 2022). Since I interviewed teachers to delve into the strategies they used to reflect on their actions, one of the informants, Sagun; a teacher having 10 years of teaching experience at the bachelor's and master's levels shared:

> For me, reflection is compulsory for each professional_ as I am a teacher of English, I have to deal with students with diverse linguistic social, and educational backgrounds. In such a situation, learning from action is a must. Thus, I always think about my practices by conducting action research.

The excerpt disclosed that teachers reflect on their actions conceiving it as compulsory for professionals and should think over their actions for better learning and teaching. Moreover, the information revealed that the teachers used action research to search, clarify, and resolve practical teaching issues and problems (Richards & Farrell, 2010).

Similarly, another informant Virat shared his experience of conducting case studies for the betterment of his professional life. Virat viewed;

> I have conducted case studies for the students who were found to be blunt rather than so sharp. I investigated their family backgrounds, and societal backgrounds, consulted the parents, and found the causes and solutions….it was so great.

The excerpt showed that teachers practised case studies to solve the problems that arise in teaching and learning. As the informant shared, it is inferred that the case study is "an intensive holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit" (Merriam, 1988). The excerpt further revealed that it is used to search the rooted problems where a certain group or individual is to be studied in-depth to explore the solution to the problem that comes in teaching-learning activities. The idea is supported for instance by Richards and Farrell (2010) stated case analysis is the process of "collecting information over time about a teaching situation and using that information to help better understand the situations and derive principles from it" (p. 126).

Regarding the reflective practices used by teachers, the informants Surya and Maxwell shared a common view that they applied action research, reflective journals, teacher diaries, and students' feedback in the form of reflective practice in their classrooms. Maxwell shared:

> I have been writing reflective journals to improve my classroom learning and for publication in my community of sharing. At the end of the class and academic

> year, I ask my learners to write a small cheat mentioning their comments and compliments without mentioning their names. I usually collect these comments to plan my teaching further.

Similarly, Surya expressed:

> I conduct action research every year to find the strengths and weaknesses of my students and myself. I also use a teaching diary and keep a record every day of all the activities I do. I turn back to the diary when I need to learn from the past.

Both the snippets showed that teachers reflect on their practices in different ways for various purposes. Action research and students' feedback are the activities that the teachers can apply to look back on their professional practices. Therefore, the reflection and reflective strategies are highly useful for teachers to improve self and learning which aligns with Robins et al. (2003) who revealed that reflective practices assist practitioners in understanding both the situation and the self.

Teachers' Reflection 'Before', 'During' and 'After' Lesson

Teachers do reflection in different phases (Dewey, 1933). Teachers must reflect on various aspects of their upcoming lessons to ensure that they are well planned, possible challenges are identified, and solutions to the identified problems are considered (Eby & Herrell, 2004; as cited in Cirocki &Widodo, 2019). Hence, reflecting on planning lessons, developing materials, and preparing for the content to be delivered come under reflection 'before the lesson'. A teacher should be aware of all those things to make good teaching and learning in their classrooms. In one interview, the informant Virat shared:

> Before teaching any lesson, I think about what topic am I going to teach, and what is the interest level, age, emotion, and background of my learners. I also think about their prior knowledge of the topic.

The excerpt revealed that teachers reflect on their actions to be taken before they go to the field. The factors that matter in the learning of the learners were considered by the teachers which resulted in successful learning. Similar to Virat another informant Maxwell explained:

> My classrooms are very challenging as the students are from indigenous linguistic backgrounds. So, before any class, I always become aware of their subject positions, even if the lexical chunks are used in the classroom. The rest of the things are common to be considered.

Maxwell's responses revealed that teachers practiced reflection before the lesson which helps teachers to get rid of the possible incidents inside the classroom. It is related to Farrell's concept of reflection on 'philosophy' where the teacher reflects on the experience and thinks about the problems and possible solutions. Similarly, Surya expressed, "Before entering the class, I prepare myself on the topic, needs of the learners, classroom management, and the critical incidents…"

The information further revealed that the teacher reflects before the lesson to identify the problem in advance, and to explore the solution which is similar to Dewey's concept of *suggestion* (Dewey, 1933) where the teacher faces the problem and thinks about the possible solutions. It tends to focus on Schon's (1987) model of reflection *in and on* action, but neither of which concerns reflection before classes (Cirocki &Widodo, 2019). Regarding, before lesson reflection, teachers think about the

lesson they plan, the aims, learning outcomes, teaching approaches and methods, materials, activities, and classroom management.

Reflection takes place in the real teaching stage and is regarded as reflection 'during lesson' which is similar to Schon's notion of reflection *in action*. It not only includes the theories in use but also consists of both the positive and negative incidents that come in the teaching-learning process (Cirocki & Widodo, 2019). Moreover, It deals with the analysis of critical incidents. Reviewing the established classroom routines, posing critical questions about one's beliefs, and perceptions, and dealing with the problems in the context are some of the reflective activities to be undertaken at this stage. As I interviewed, Sagun stated:

> I usually follow the critical lens perspective while teaching my learners. I have been practising graphic organization, and always think about whether these organisations are appropriate for my learners' level and content or not. I can practice my agency that I go beyond the prescribed curriculum when the prescribed activities cannot address the dire needs of the learners and learner diversity.

The snippet disclosed the fact that the teacher reflects during lessons to deal with classroom problems. As the informant shared, he analyzed the classroom and the incidents inside critically. The information further shows that teachers cannot limit themselves to a prescribed curriculum, sometimes they go beyond and develop their approach to problem-solving which is called a post-method practice in language teaching. As Farrell (2015) stated the concept of *reflection on theory* in his framework of reflection where the teachers' choices of method, practice, and theory are examined and practised. Similar to the argument the respondent shared on his use of graphic organization, the method prescribed by the curriculum, and his transformative action beyond. Thus, it can be delved that teachers practice the theories and examine their use during lessons.

By the end of every lesson, reflection is done to plan further which is regarded as a reflection '*after lesson'*. It consists of both the reflection and the analysis. Moreover, it is about reflecting on experience and analysing its effectiveness. The concept of reflection '*after lesson'* is like Schon's notion of *reflection on action* where the reflective practitioners evaluate the actions, and outcomes, and plan for future improvement. In the interview, Maxwell shared:

> At the end of the lesson, I always turn back to my overall presentation, and students' feelings, and I analyse my satisfaction level, and my students' behaviour in my class. I examine the learning achievement to know about the effectiveness of my practices…

The information expressed that the teacher critically analysed his practice and its effectiveness. As Cirocki and Widodo (2019) stated reflection *'after the lesson'* is explaining what happened, rationalising the decision, reflecting on students' learning and engagement, outlining the lesson's strengths and weaknesses from the student's point of view, and what they would change if they were going to teach their lesson again, the informant of this study analysed the behaviour, feelings, and examine the effectiveness of his practice to identify the strengths and weakness of the lesson.

Reflective Practice-Means to Teachers' Professional Development (TPD)

The notion of reflective practice as a means of professional development was highlighted by Donald Schon (1987) who promoted reflection as an important tool for beginning teachers to improve their practice (Habib, 2017). It assists in examining the strengths and weaknesses of one's teaching,

learning, or professional practices. It is viewed as a tool that assists teachers in analyzing the situation, self, the learners, and the socio-political context in professional growth. Carrington et al. (2010) stated that reflective practice helps teachers to 'personalize and individualize' (p. 2) their teaching practice and link teachers' knowledge and understanding with their pedagogy (Carrington et al., 2010). As I asked the teachers, what are the roles of reflective practices for the professional development of teachers, one of the informants, Maxwell shared:

> It is an approach to self-evaluation and assessment of own performance. Moreover, I know myself and my standard in teaching through reflection which helps me to grow professionally.

The information showed that reflection supports teachers to evaluate them and to know the standard of their teaching. It further showed that reflection is a process of questioning oneself about what should be done, what was done, what was to be done, and what can be planned further. The very concept of asking questions can be linked with the notion of reflection *in*, *on,* and *for* action by Donald Schon. If one professional reflects on his/her actions, it helps him/her to be a professional person.

Regarding the role of reflective practice in teaching and learning, one of the respondents, Sagun shared:

> In my initial days of teaching, I found my learners passive and not engaged in the classroom activities. I thought about not having good participation. After the repetition of the same sort of behaviors, I realized, and I promised that I must transform myself, and thought only lecturing the class was irritating without paying proper attention to the will and the desire of the learners. I searched some resources and tried to teach adopting an activity-based approach which helped me to engage my learners in the teaching and learning activity.

The information revealed that reflection is important for learning and learners' engagement in teaching-learning activities. The respondent seemed to be confused in the initial days of his teaching, but later his reflection on not good participation of the learners, made him question himself which led him to use a new approach to teaching and learning in his classroom. His effort resulted in an active engagement of learners in the classroom. From the discussion, it can be said that reflective practices are important for teachers to solve problems regarding learning and engagement. The respondent's connotation is similar to the explanation given by Amrullah (2023) where the researcher argues that reflective practice helps teachers to critically reflect and evaluate their pedagogical practices.

Similarly, Virat explained,

> When the teachers are in their profession what they feel is what the lacking in the class are. Without reflection, a teacher cannot become so mature and responsible. So, it is a process towards maturity and expertise. Moreover, reflection helped me to do my work systematically.

The information revealed that teachers practice reflection to accumulate knowledge to develop expertise. Moreover, for him, reflection is a tool that assists in working systematically for instance Brubacher (1994) stated that reflective practice helps teachers to act in an organized way (as cited in Day, 2005). Until and unless a professional works systematically, it will be very difficult to be a professional person. So, reflection assists one in working systematically, scientifically, or professionally. Thus, it is found that reflection works for *systematic teaching and learning.*

Moreover, for Surya, reflection and reflective practices are important for developing *self-awareness.* In one interview, he shared:

> English language teaching classrooms are diverse in my context. At that time, the possibility of critical incidents is high. So, the reflection always makes me alert to such sorts of incidents. It was 2074 I used to teach in class 6, and there was one student whom I admired. I started calling him 'Phatu' (naughty) with love, one day, that boy cried and asked me why you used such a word to me. I am not a naughty. Then I became alert to addressing children with certain words.

The story of the respondent showed that reflection makes teachers self-aware in teaching, learning, distancing, languaging, and all professional practices for instance Hong and Choi (2015) argue that reflective practice increases the self-awareness capacity of professionals.

Reflection was also found to be empowering the learners, and even the practitioners to go beyond. In the interview, one of the respondents, Sagun shared:

> Reflection helps to empower the learners. It also is helpful in social and emotional learning. Teaching becomes very rigorous and tough having students from diverse backgrounds. Throughout the reflection, I got the portfolio of individual students which helped me to treat the learners based on their needs, abilities, and goals. It further helped me to reflect and analyze society and treat the whole class as a community.

The information uncovered that reflective practices are helpful to empower and to be empowered. It assists teachers in behaving with the learners based on their subject positions such as social, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds, age, abilities or disabilities, aptitude, and intelligence. Gore and Zeichner (1991) stated the *social constructionist version* of reflective practice which focuses on social and political issues of schooling and classroom instruction. Hence, the informant for instance shared that reflection helped him to collect the individual portfolios of the learners and guided him to critically analyze society. The critical analysis of society, social, political, and emotional issues of learning of the learners asked him to treat the whole class as a community.

The study found that reflective practices are important for teachers to improve their teaching-learning activities, and to develop themselves professionally. The study found that teachers practised action research, journal writing, case studies, diary writing, student feedback, and self-analysis as the strategies of reflection. Moreover, it was found that teachers reflected in different phases of their professional practices such as '*before lesson'*, '*during lesson'*, and '*after lesson'*... Hence, the study found that reflective practices are significant for successful learning and learner engagement, creating self-awareness, and empowering the learners, and to be empowered professionally. Moreover, it was found to be important to act in an organized, systematic, and scientific way. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of self, reflection is crucial. Thus, the study investigated the fact that reflection and reflective strategies are very important for the overall professional development of teachers.

Conclusion and Implications

The study has investigated English language teachers' reflective techniques, and the role of those practices in learning, teaching, and overall professional development. It attempted to unveil the teachers' use of reflection based on the philosophical ideas of Dewey, and Schon. Further, it revealed that reflection is inevitable to all professionals, and its importance in teaching is incredible as teaching is the most rigorous and challenging job. The voice of the informants [English teachers] revealed that

teachers used reflective practices in different forms such as students' feedback, action research, case studies, reflective journals, and diary writing. Moreover, the study found that teachers reflect *in, on,* and *for* their lesson, learners, emotions, abilities, and sociopolitical context for the betterment of teaching, empowering and developing themselves and the learners. The study found that reflection is important for the learners' engagement, teachers' self-analysis, solving critical incidents, and acting in an organized way. It further shows that the application of reflection or reflective practices makes teachers more critical, creative, self-aware, and professional in their careers. In addition, the study investigated the fact that the use of reflective practices is more important to empower the learners and to be empowered.

The study contributes to the field of academia since it supports teachers, teacher educators, and future researchers in the field. It implies that every professional person has to reflect on the practices to plan, to know, to practice, to observe, and to plan further. I recommend that English language teachers should reflect before, during, and after their practice to be successful professionals and reflective practitioners.

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A Paradigm Shift in ELT with Artificial Intelligence: A Review on the Current State in Nepal

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has sprayed a vibrant message to people in all areas of life including the education field due to the easy access to vast information with a click in an autonomous way and enhancing the overall learning experience. This study provides an overview of the significance of AI applications, their role in education and where the practitioners are in the concurrent situation. Especially, it explores some of the AI approaches best practised, including personalised learning, adaptive learning, teaching evaluation, virtual classroom, and intelligent teaching. It also highlights some of the ethical and social implications of using AI in education, including issues related to privacy, equity, and the role of human teachers. I used the data published in various journals, and books, presented in academic forums in global and local contexts and analysed thematically. The study concluded that integrating AI in education with caution, considering the ethical implications and ensuring that all students have access to these new technologies will switch to an artificially led world where there is no boundary for accessing knowledge.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, current state, digital world, pedagogical shift,

Introduction

The wave of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has uncovered the entire attention of the world such as industrialists, scientists, pharmacists, and educationists and has become a potential area of research for researchers throughout the world to concretise the ongoing scenario and its impact on the future (Salas-Pilco & Yang, 2022). Since AI has been an unavoidable means in multi-faceted parts of our lives, many studies have been conducted on the use of AI in education, such as intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning, designing assessments, and analysing learning data (Kuo, 2020). AI can be defined as "computing systems that can engage in human-like processes such as learning, adapting, synthesizing, self-correction and use of data for complex processing tasks" (Popenici & Kerr, 2017). It deals with the creation of intelligent machines that can perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and language translation.

The history of AI can be traced back to the 1950s when pioneers in the field such as Alan Turing, John McCarthy, and Marvin Minsky began exploring the possibility of creating machines that could think and learn like humans. In 1956, McCarthy coined the term "artificial intelligence" and organised the Dartmouth Conference, which brought together leading researchers in the field to discuss

the potential of AI (McCarthy et al., 2006). With the advent of the internet and the explosion of data, researchers began to explore new approaches such as machine learning and deep learning, which have led to significant advances in areas such as natural language processing, image recognition, and computer vision (LeCun et al., 2015). Similarly, Yufeia et al., (2020) argue that AI in education has been applied in various ways, including automatic grading, interval reminders, teacher feedback, virtual teachers, personalised learning, adaptive learning, augmented and virtual reality, accurate reading, Smart campus, and distance learning (Yufeia et al., 2020).

Recently, UNESCO officially published the "Beijing Consensus - Artificial Intelligence and Education", which suggests that all countries should develop relevant policies and investigate effective strategies and practices for utilising AI to advance educational innovation (Huang, 2021). It is considered that Education is meant for society, but society is not for education and the need of modern society today is technology, which can only be possible through education. Many countries including the United States, Singapore, and India are recognised as prominent nations that have successively introduced new education reform strategies for the future (Parker, 2018). Relevant policies and regulations are continually being developed to establish a plan for the advancement of smart education in their respective countries (Parker, 2018).

In Nepal, after a massive earthquake in 2015, World Vision International (WVI) integrated an innovative solution KITAB Bazar, an online marketplace platform, which helped 53,412 children across 831 community schools by delivering 133,008 supplementary reading materials in local languages using these tools (Kharel et al., 2022). Digital teaching materials are readily available at all levels of education. The ongoing improvement of smart learning, teaching and management methods has made significant headway in the modernization of education (Chaozi, 2018). Although there is a growing body of research on the applications of artificial intelligence in education, there are still gaps in our understanding of how AI can be effectively integrated into educational systems in schools' and universities' curricula. One area where more research is needed is on the implications of using AI in education, particularly switching the traditional textbooks, techniques, and teachers into a digital framework. Another research gap is to develop a clear mindset on how AI can be used to assess student performance and provide feedback on behalf of teachers. Furthermore, research is needed to understand how AI can be used to improve access to education for underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Nepal faces a deficit in information, policy, and a robust ecosystem for AI-related policies in Nepal. Although the Government of Nepal has emphasised AI and information technology in its Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy and Digital Nepal Framework, these policies lack concrete specifics for the effective execution of AI in education (Digital Nepal Framework., 2019). Efforts have been made through policies and initiatives to incorporate digital tools and technologies across various educational institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities in Nepal. The Ministry of Education Science and Technologies (MOEST) under the Government of Nepal (GON) has undertaken several interventions aimed at enhancing the education system through digitization (Dhital, 2018). For instance, initiatives like Open Learning Exchange (OLE-Nepal), OLPC (One Laptop Per Child), Nepal Wireless Networking Project (NWNP), and Information Technology Society Nepal (ITSN), among others, have been launched in collaboration with non-governmental organizations to improve educational outcomes (Dhital, 2018). This study primarily aims to explore the emerging practices of AI in English language teaching classrooms. Moreover, the study delves into how English teachers adapt their pedagogical approaches to leverage AI technologies in the classroom and seek potential challenges and opportunities while integrating AI in ELT. It categorizes articles by concepts and

themes related to incorporating AI into education and discusses both the challenges and opportunities guided by the following research questions:

i. What are the emerging states of AI in English language teaching classrooms?
ii. How are English teachers adapting their pedagogical approaches to leverage AI technologies in the classroom?
iii. What are the challenges and opportunities associated with the integration of AI in ELT?

Literature Review

This section presents a review of the literature in various contexts based on the research questions and research purpose. It reviews the studies related to the use of AI in ELT classrooms in three different themes such as integrating AI in ELT classrooms, personalized learning and collaborative learning and AI.

Integrating Artificial Intelligence in ELT Classroom

The use of AI in English language teaching (ELT) is a growing trend, with a focus on its current benefits and challenges (Hockly, 2023). AI technologies are being applied in various aspects of ELT, including listening, writing, translation, and oral teaching (Yang, 2020). These applications have shown promising results in optimizing language skills, translation, assessment, recognition, and satisfaction (Sharadgah & Sa'di, 2022). However, Sharadgah and Sa'di (2022) further argued that there is a need for more detailed descriptions of the methodology and research design in future studies. Liu and Kong (2021) expressed that the integration of AI in college English teaching, particularly in the feedback of self-regulated learning evaluation, is an area that requires further exploration. Earlier, (Hwang et al., 2020) reported that AI has the potential to transform education in several ways as it has been widely applied in education, particularly by educational institutions to perform administrative functions, teaching-learning activities, student assessment, and curriculum customization to address the new learning culture of the students with the excessive use of AI tools. A comprehensive study by Chen et al. (2020) found that the use of humanoid robots or web-based Chabot has allowed instructors to carry out their duties independently or with assistance from other technologies such as embedded computer systems. For instance, using an AI system could reduce correction times, decrease errors made by professors while correcting assignments, provide students with feedback on their work as they progress through exercises assigned during the course, and increase exam grades when used more than half of the time (Vittorini et al., 2021). Furthermore, a recent study on the role of AI in education by (Zafari et al., 2022) revealed that the rapid spread of AI not only helps students with learning different topics but also plays a major role in improving personal skills, providing deeper learning, and acquiring qualifications for future jobs.

However, (Kabudi et al., 2021) in a different context reported on specific student needs or problems faced by many learners and the improvement of users' experiences with educational platforms powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Moreover, a similar study on Augmenting classrooms with AI for personalized education by Kokku et al. (2018) suggested that Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) can be used to augment traditional teaching to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. ITSs are complex systems, which integrate technologies such as interactivity, dialogues, automated question generation and learning analytics. However, Felix (2020) strongly argued that the presence of AI cannot replace the human teacher in education because it lacks certain qualities which only a human can provide. These include being physically present, teaching existential reflection, norms and values or a sense of self, history and society. In the same vein, a study in the

context of Europe (Renz et al., 2020) raised questions emphasizing the lack of real AI applications in the European market. These studies collectively demonstrate the growing interest and potential benefits of integrating artificial intelligence in the classroom to enhance teaching and learning experiences.

Personalised Learning

AI technology is driving several changes in the field of education, improving the efficiency of teachers' work and students' learning experience. In the 21st century, the use of artificial intelligence technology in education is undeniable for several advantages. For instance, the application of AI in education can be observed in the form of personalised learning, adaptive learning, testing and evaluation, virtual classrooms, smart campuses, and intelligent teaching (Huang et al., 2021). Moreover, Somasundaram et al. (2020) reported that personalised learning with AI involves creating customised learning experiences for each student based on their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. In addition, adaptive testing with AI involves creating tests that adjust to the student's ability level in real-time, providing a more accurate assessment of their knowledge and helping them progress through material at an appropriate pace (Mujtaba & Mahapatra, 2020).

Additionally, Chen et al. (2020) suggested that AI can also be used for tutoring and coaching, particularly for students who may not have access to human tutors or who need additional support beyond the classroom (Chen et al., 2020). Apart from that, AI possesses the potential to improve teacher effectiveness in teaching, assigning tasks, grading and providing students with feedback, which helps them manage their time and tasks (Ouyang et al., 2022). Furthermore, Yufeia et al. (2020) explored that AI has been integrated into various dimensions of education, such as promoting education innovation, assisting teaching-learning processes and augmenting smart educational life to provide useful information to the stakeholders. (Yufeia et al., 2020)

Collaborative Learning and AI

Various studies (Lee, 2021; Roschelle, 2021; Tan et al., 2022) in the field of AI have indicated that there has been growing interest in exploring how AI, being perceived as a valuable resource for tackling challenging issues, can be harnessed to enhance students learning in computer-supported collaborative learning. For example, Tan et al. (2022b) revealed that AI-based technology not only facilitates learners' interaction but also provides support for more effective meaningful learning experiences. Similarly, Moore et al. (2019) reported that AI helped teachers in forming learners' groups, and scaffolds learners in performing the tasks in groups interactively. Additionally, teachers have used AI tools to navigate learners' ideas and create collaborative learning environments (Järvelä et al., 2020; Lee, 2021).

Earlier, in Spanish, Rodríguez et al. (2017) found that ICT offers various AI tools and avenues that have significantly expanded the potential for collaborative tasks, ensuring high-quality interaction and communication. They further reported that AI tools made teacher-teacher, learner-learner, teacher-learner, and teacher-parent interaction easier which eventually led to successful learning. Likewise, Roschelle (2021) investigated that AI tools have the potential to create well-balanced student groups for efficient task completion by assessing each student's level of collaboration through extensive data analysis. He further emphasises, that AI has been used to develop virtual agents to support learners during group tasks and it can also monitor the participation of students in group activities. Similarly, Jeong and Hmelo-Silver (2016) found that technology provides learners with various opportunities to enhance their education and collaborative learning experiences. In a different context, Tan et al. (2022a) suggested that AI tools helped learners to participate in joint tasks, interact effectively, share learning resources, engage themselves in collaborative processes, co-construct knowledge, monitor and

regulate their collaborative efforts and form groups and learning communities to scaffold their learning.

The above studies in various contexts have indicated how the use of AI supported teachers and learners in promoting learning in ELT classrooms. However, there is not a long history of using ICT including AI and other technology in the Nepali education system including language learning such as ELT, but there has been a paradigm shift in ELT due to the growing use of AI. This study has explored this issue comprehensively as it is a less researched area and the cry of the 21st century.

Methodology

Drawing a qualitative study by analysing document analysis as suggested by Bowen (2009), I intended to explore the emerging practices of AI tools adopted by English teachers in the current Nepali context. One of the primary goals of this study was to explore a deeper understanding of how teachers have been adapting their pedagogical approaches to leverage AI technologies in the classroom. Furthermore, the study seeks to shed light on the challenges and opportunities associated with the integration of AI in English Education. In this study, a comprehensive search of relevant databases, such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Library Genesis was frequently used. I found the related literature by surfing the issues such as, 'Integration of AI in ELT classroom', 'Challenges of AI in teachers' professionalism', and 'Opportunities of AI in English education'. The search was mainly limited to articles published in English related to AI and pedagogy. Furthermore, the selection of the studies was focused on the challenges and opportunities of AI integration in Nepalese education. The data extracted from the selected studies included information on the challenges and opportunities of AI adoption in Nepalese education, as well as the initiatives and policies aimed at promoting the integration of AI in the Nepali context. The data was synthesised and organised into themes as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature. I used deductive coding to assemble and maintain the coherence of ideas collected from the literature. Moreover, the quality of the selected studies was assessed using established quality assessment criteria, such as the rigour of the research design and the validity of the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The analysis of the literature provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities of AI integration in ELT classrooms. The review is based on a thorough examination of the available literature. It provides a clear and concise summary of the current state of research on AI adoption in Nepali education.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings based on the review of various resources focusing on the research problem. The findings report has been analysed thematically.

AI Ground-breaking ELT Trend Globally

The application of AI in e-learning (AIeL) is a rapidly growing field, with a focus on intelligent tutoring systems and assessment tools (Tang et al., 2023). In ELT, the integration of AI, particularly in the form of machine learning models, is seen as an unprecedented change that requires ELT practitioners to acquire new skills (Thadphoothon, 2022). This trend is part of the broader changes in ELT, including globalisation, localization, and interdisciplinary collaboration (Jora, 2019). The emergence of edge intelligence, which brings AI to the network edge, is also a significant development in the field (Zhou et al., 2019). AI in education, particularly through AIED, has the potential to enhance personalized learning experiences for students. For instance, Lameras (2022) illustrated that AIED can play a crucial role in developing 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, leadership, problem-solving, and critical thinking. He further emphasised that formative feedback and tasks can

promote self-directed learning and student ownership, with teachers playing a key role in guiding the use of AIED for effective learning experiences. Most interestingly, the study by Chan and Tsi (2023) found that human teachers possess unique qualities that make them irreplaceable despite the advancement of AI in education. Their study claimed that students continue to value and respect human teachers even with the increasing presence of AI in education. The future of education depends on the collaboration and synergy between human teachers and AI technologies. Mondal (2019) and Lameras (2022) suggested that AI can also shift the role of teachers to that of facilitators, as well as provide new teaching opportunities. However, the successful implementation of AI in education requires the development of new programs to train teachers in using AI.

The integration of AI in ELT techniques within Nepal's educational framework has shown a progressive trend (Thadphoothon, 2022). Qualitative feedback from educators suggests that AI tools have contributed to more personalised learning experiences (Xie et al., 2019). However, challenges persist, such as the digital divide, which affects equitable access to these technologies (Ghimire et al., 2022). A comparative analysis of global trends shows that Nepal is aligning with international standards in AI adoption for ELT (Thadphoothon, 2022). In this vein, AI has been integrated into various ELT aspects such as speech recognition, grammar correction, and translation, leading to a transformative shift in the field of ELT. Yet, the pace of integration is slower due to infrastructural constraints. The analysis highlighted a limited range of AI applications in ELT, including intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning platforms, and automated assessment tools (Paudel & Ghimire, 2022).

English Teachers' Experiences of Using AI

A range of studies have explored English teachers' experiences with AI in the classroom. Zulkarnain and Yunus (2023) found that teachers generally view AI technology positively, despite facing challenges. They further identified strategies for effectively using AI in English teaching, as well as the need for training. Underwood (2017) highlighted the engaging nature of AI language assistants in the classroom, leading to increased English speaking. Niu et al. (2022) further supported the use of AI-aided educational platforms, noting their usefulness in supporting teaching and learning, particularly in less developed areas. However, challenges such as device availability and user-friendly interfaces were also identified.

Teachers' perceptions of AI in education are complex and multifaceted. While many STEM teachers view AI as a valuable tool for enhancing student learning (Kim & Kim, 2022), concerns about the potential impact on their role and the transparency of AI decisions have also been raised (Gocen & Aydemir, 2020). These concerns are further compounded by the influence of confirmation bias and the need for absolute correctness in AI-based recommendations (Nazaretsky et al., 2021). A similar study (Xu, 2020) highlights the potential obstacles and the need for transparency, fairness, and accountability in the use of AI in education. However, students' perceptions of AI teaching assistants in higher education are generally positive, particularly when they perceive them as useful and easy to communicate with (Kim & Kim, 2022). These findings highlight the need for further research and the development of guidelines to address teachers' concerns and ensure the effective integration of AI in education.

Challenges and Opportunities: AI Prospects

Despite the promising advancements, the analysis also uncovered several challenges hindering the widespread adoption of AI in ELT in Nepal, including infrastructural limitations, digital divide disparities, and concerns regarding data privacy and algorithmic biases (Khadka & Paudel,

2023). One of the fundamental challenges of AI in education is the lack of basic computing skills, hardware sharing, mobile-dominant computing, data costs and electrical reliability issues with internet infrastructure as well as language and cultural differences between externally developed systems versus locally developed ones (Nye, 2015). According to a study by Chang and Lu (2019), the way students learn, choose materials and develop their understanding is different each student's unique needs and abilities are crucial for the effective use of AI in education. Another challenge is the availability and quality of data used to train AI models. Furthermore, the issues still facing AI in education such as scalability, robustness and generalizability across different domains by Kay (2012), AI models used in education should be able to explain how it arrived at their decisions so that teachers and students can understand it. In addition to this, the use of AI in education raises ethical and social considerations such as issues of bias and privacy, issues of collecting, using and disseminating data as stated by Bodó et al. (2017) in their research, it is important to deliberate these issues when designing and deploying AI systems in educational settings.

Despite the challenges of AI, it has the potential to significantly enhance English language learners' communication skills by providing personalised and interactive learning experiences (Liu & Kong, 2021). Another study by Son et al. (2023) emphasised the transformative impact of artificial intelligence on language education, stressing the continuous integration of AI technologies and applications to enhance language learning and teaching, along with the need for more rigorous research in this area. In the same vein, Rusmiyanto et al. (2023) found that AI technologies have been effective in improving learners' speaking and pronunciation skills, while also promoting learner autonomy. A similar study by Klimova et al. (2023) found that AI has a positive impact on students' motivation, involvement in learning, and improvement of vocabulary and speaking skills. Most importantly, AI has enhanced learning resources and altered learning styles by analysing individual characteristics and designing suitable approaches (Yong, 2020).

In the same way, another study focused on the implication of their findings on two parallel strands going forward. The first strand is an evolutionary process, which focuses on current classroom practices and collaborating with teachers to diversify technologies and domains. The second strand is a revolutionary process where technology needs to be embedded within students' everyday lives to support their cultures, goals, communities and practices (Roll & Wylie, 2016). A study by Seo et al. (2021) reported that participants were concerned about issues such as responsibility and surveillance when using AI systems for online learning.

Thus, AI in ELT in Nepal is promising but requires strategic policy interventions to overcome existing barriers. The study necessitates a collaborative approach between policymakers, educators, and technologists to harness AI's full potential in ELT.

Conclusion and Implications

The integration of AI in ESL classrooms offers significant potential for enhancing language instruction, despite the challenges and drawbacks associated with it. It emphasises the importance of carefully addressing the challenges and leveraging the benefits of AI to create effective and inclusive language learning environments for ESL learners. The study highlights the need for further research to fully understand the impact of AI on linguistic competence, learner motivation, and intercultural competence in ESL classrooms. In addition, the intervention of AI in English Language Teaching is seen as a positive development, with the potential to significantly enhance communication skills. However, there is a need for better integration of AI into educational settings, with a focus on the ethical responsibility of both educators and students.

The applications of AI in teaching English electronically are important for the development of language teaching. Similarly, the use of AI in English teaching is seen to enhance teaching quality and potentially reform the current teaching mode. AI has the potential to transform education by personalising learning, improving student outcomes, and enhancing the overall learning experience. The future of AI in English education looks promising, with the potential to revolutionise the way we teach and learn. AI-powered personalised learning, adaptive assessment, and gamification can make language classrooms more engaging and effective for students of all abilities. Furthermore, AI-based tools can assist English teachers in managing the classroom, providing feedback, and analysing student performance data. However, it is important to note that the integration of AI in education should not be viewed as a one-size-fits-all solution.

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English Reading Strategies Used by Secondary-Level Students

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of students' strategies for reading English texts. The narrative inquiry research design was used to study four secondary-level students' experiences of different reading strategies of English texts. The findings show that the students use different cognitive and metacognitive strategies to understand the texts according to their level of reading engagement. They monitor their plans and evaluate their understanding while reading. This study found that reading silently and reading aloud, using previous knowledge while reading new texts, rereading and summarizing the texts, and solving problems are the main strategies used in reading English texts. This study reports that engaged readers use diverse strategies; however, struggling readers use limited strategies. The use of multiple strategies in the reading of English texts helps students better for their achievements and engagement in reading. The study shows that teacher support is important in using strategies because teachers can help students in selecting appropriate reading strategies. This study will be important for English language learners, teachers, educators, researchers, and motivators for future student-centered pedagogical approaches to transform teaching and learning experiences into EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Motivation, reading engagement, reading skills, reading strategies

Introduction

Reading skill plays an important role for language development (Cartwright, 2023). Reading promotes language competency, knowledge acquisition, learning motivation, and support to meet the purpose of the curriculum (Pun, 2014). Reading skills influence the students' learning achievements, which are considered predictors of success or failure in language learning (Bai & Wang, 2023). Regarding this, Sadiku (2015) writes that reading is an inseparable part of the educational process since a variety of courses appear in reading form within a book or reading materials. Students should be able to use reading strategies for proper reading and comprehension of the text. Reading strategies are techniques used by students while reading a text. According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), reading strategies are students' multiple cognitive processes of comprehending, self-monitoring, and constructing their understandings and beliefs during reading. The use of appropriate reading strategies adds reading motivation to students. The role of motivation is dominant in increasing participation in

reading texts and developing reading skills that facilitate the teaching-learning process and support better achievement (Dewaele et al., 2022; Robinson, 2022).

Completion of the reading passage is a complex process which includes different cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies help the readers to act when they face difficulties in learning, whereas cognitive strategies help them to be psychologically involved in the task. Ghavamnia et al. (2013) describe cognitive strategies such as rereading, underlining, memorizing, taking notes, translating, paraphrasing, reading slowly and carefully, making inferences, and metacognitive strategies such as planning, self-monitoring, self-evaluating, self-questioning, and linking to prior knowledge. The most noticeable characteristics of engaged readers are the cognitive ability to comprehend the text and cognitive strategies for learning from texts. They can use background knowledge, form questions, search for information, summarize accurately, organize their new-found knowledge, and monitor their comprehension as they read books (Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa et al., 2004).

There are various studies in the field of reading strategies development (Almutairi, 2018; Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021; Dawadi, 2017; Ghavamnia et al., 2013; Shahi & Timsina, 2024; Shrestha, 2018; Upadhyaya & Bhattarai, 2020). However, the strategies were constrained in overall language learning, language skills, methodologies, areas, and levels of students. This study focuses on effective metacognitive and cognitive strategies for better text understanding. The purpose of the study was to explore the reading strategies that secondary-level students use when they read English texts and to analyze the ways for better reading activities. The current literature and my experiences as a student and teacher support the idea that the selection of better strategies increases reading engagement. However, teaching English has been more challenging for the teachers because of the students' disengagement in reading. Reading is a reciprocal experience for both the student and language teachers in the classroom where they part in teaching-learning activities collaboratively (Todd, 2006). The students' role is to be familiar with the strategies and the teacher's role is to assist them to apply those strategies while reading. The teacher should be capable of implementing multiple reading strategies (Hong, 2008). Using reading strategies supports students to follow the better techniques to read the texts which engage them in reading. This study has explored students' narratives incorporating both highly motivated and disengaged readers. This study is mainly based on my long-term teaching experiences in different schools among different levels of learners. As a school teacher, I faced many troubles in teaching English each year. My students' results did not improve which added challenges to my profession. I noticed that there was a problem in the reading engagement of the students since some of them could not complete simple activities given in the texts. Therefore, I attempted to explore the ways of reading texts of the students in rural areas. This study will be significant for those who feel difficulty in teaching reading skills. Similarly, this research will help transform teaching and learning experiences into English teachers, students, educators, researchers and motivators. This research will therefore be important for individuals involved in English learning processes as well as for future student-centered pedagogical approaches.

Literature Review

Reading strategies are techniques of good readers use to handle different types of texts from textbooks or other reading materials. These reading skills or techniques are mental processes that readers use to read and understand texts (Pokharel, 2018). Students apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies to their level of understanding that promote reading engagement by supporting them in understanding difficult texts and fascinating simple texts. However, skilled readers employ more strategies than struggling readers. Teachers can support students with a variety of strategies according

to the engagement level of students, such as model reading (Tankersley, 2005). Students should possess different reading strategies, such as summarizing the text and the teacher should model close reading (Rosenshine, 2012). Regarding these strategies, Ahmadi (2017) reports that cognitive strategies help readers become psychologically engaged in the activity, while metacognitive strategies support them in identifying solutions when they are having reading problems. These techniques support multiple cognitive processes when reading, including understanding, self-monitoring, and making their thoughts and forming opinions to increase the reading motivation of students (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Motivated readers often keep track of plots, use prior knowledge, organize new learning, and summarizesideas (Taboada et al., 2008). However, these attributes are not developed automatically; instead, they need a lot of exposure to time and texts.

Cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies are the reading techniques that the readers to comprehend the texts. Cognitive reading strategies help students develop their text reading behaviors by using problem-solving techniques, self-evaluation ideas, and self-control strategies while learning (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). Similarly, metacognitive reading strategies as the body of knowledge promote students' reading comprehension and support thinking, about one's thinking whereas existing knowledge is organized as schemas with new learning to construct meaning as comprehension (McTavish, 2008; Palmer, 1981; Zimmerman, 2010). Regarding this, engaged readers can generate meaning from the text they have been reading whereas struggling readers are unable to comprehend the texts well. In this regard, Sanford (2015) generalizes reading strategies as the use of background knowledge, summarizing, making notes, decoding, and monitoring. Engaged readers use metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, questioning, using prior knowledge, and evaluating while reading to prepare themselves for engagement in reading texts (Channa et al., 2014). Similarly, Ghavamnia et al. (2013) claim that readers employ cognitive strategies such as reading the text, underlining the information, memorizing the facts, taking notes, skimming, and scanning the text, thinking about the text, paraphrasing the text, reading slowly, and making inferences about the text. However, Spires and Donley (1998) contend that students' knowledge, attitudes, and experiences may interfere with the comprehension in which struggling readers read and reread the text to integrate prior knowledge.

Students use different cognitive and metacognitive strategies which increase their reading motivation and reading engagement. Planning, monitoring, and evaluating are the metacognitive strategies for reading English (Rastegar et al., 2017). Comprehension strategies like paraphrasing, making connections, integrating prior knowledge, acquiring new knowledge, making inferences, decoding, summarizing texts, and applying new knowledge in their reading can help you to be more engaged in reading (Khusniyah et al., 2017). Although there are three important stages of teaching reading; prereading, while reading, and post-reading, while reading is the most important stage in which students encounter the great ocean of new terminologies. Furthermore, reading strategies such as reading aloud support struggling readers to read the text attentively and silent reading helps motivated readers understand the text well (Reutzel & Juth, 2014). Similarly, the read-aloud teaching strategy allows for the great success of the students, and it also improves the reader's pronunciation (Lekwilai, 2014). Furthermore, students use the read-aloud strategy to engage themselves in reading, focusing, and pointing at new words and important information in the text (Ceyhan & Yldz, 2021). Regarding the read-aloud strategy, Naidu et al. (2013) analyze that it is useful to teach reading skills to struggling readers which guides them to improve pronunciation, develop knowledge, increase comprehension skills, and promote critical thinking. Contrary to the read-aloud strategy, silent reading makes children calm down and think while reading (Merga, 2018). In contrast, the read-aloud strategy

helps the readers concentrate their minds on the text develops knowledge, increases comprehension skills, and fosters critical thinking (Williams, 2006). In the same way, silent reading is mostly related to reading for pleasure, which develops higher reading proficiency and reading speed (Rasinski et al., 2010). Regarding silent reading, Saenger (1997) reported that it develops a think-aloud strategy that helps the readers recall their thinking and use it later to describe their thoughts in the course of reading and it also provides the factors to check whether the reader is engaged or not. Likewise, readers think broadly after reading the texts and reflect on their learning, and readers' plans for reading engagement as readers' thoughts or actions prepare them for engagement in reading a text (Channa et al., 2014). However, Dawadi (2017) reports that metacognitive strategies are more significantly followed by comprehension and cognitive strategies.

Using prior knowledge is an effective component of reading comprehension for students, where classroom interaction and teacher support can increase the engagement of struggling readers (Smith et al., 2021). Similarly, Recht and Leslie (1988) noted that uninterested readers might increase their attention when teachers encourage them to use their prior knowledge. All students do not possess similar skills in using previous background knowledge. However, teachers can develop students' prereading strategies to activate or build background knowledge (Ramsa & Rawian, 2021). Furthermore, struggling readers use the rereading strategy to find the main idea and messages of the text (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Engaged readers use previous knowledge while reading, but struggling readers use the rereading strategy. As Costa and Garmston (2015) claim, the readers set the goal of applying their past knowledge to new situations before reading. Engaging in reading, the students use background knowledge to use other strategies, which is a chain of schemata in which a reader can change schemata and form new ones using old knowledge with text information (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004).

The students use different strategies at three stages of teaching reading to guide their reading with self-evaluation, self-learning, and goal-setting strategies which promote reading engagement and self-evaluation (McCombs, 2013; Smith et al., 2021). Moreover, Fredricks et al. (2016) analyze that students use strategies such as inferencing about the texts, making emotional connections, paraphrasing, and using monitoring skills and fixed-up strategies that modify their reading engagement. The students also use SQ and 3R techniques to be engaged in reading where they can survey, question, read, recall, and review the text to comprehend (Gurning & Siregar, 2017). Struggling readers need support for reading but motivated readers use cognitive strategies to develop text-reading behaviour and use problem-solving methods (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). Similarly, students make an emotional connection between the texts and their personal lives similar to emotional and affective engagement (Fredricks et al., 2016; Pietarinen et al., 2014). Moreover, the students ask their friends to read the text for them as in buddy reading or partner reading (Spires & Donley, 1998; Tracey & Morrow, 2017).

Methodology

This study employs a narrative research design which focuses on studying single or very few people, gathering data through the stories, explaining experiences and discussing the meaning of the experiences (Creswell 2012, 502). It is a process of storytelling and exploring experiences through “restorying” in which people's stories are gathered analyzed and interpreted (Creswell, 2012). This research design provided me with a rich framework to learn about the use of reading strategies and to explore engagement in reading texts (Taylor & Wallace, 2007). I made my understanding, consistency, and connections by retelling participants' stories with collaboration between the participants and myself for trust and respect (Barkhuizen, 2016; Clandinin et al., 2016). Narrative inquiry as a research

design helped me to understand different features of engagement in reading English with the participants' conscious involvement through their stories. In the process of constructing narratives, I made sense of my own lived experiences of using reading strategies while teaching English in EFL classrooms. Narrative inquiry, as a meaning-making process, was very helpful in understanding the perception of participants used in studies of reading engagement and their socially lived stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Being a narrative inquirer, I interpreted the participants' stories to understand their engagement in reading skills in the rural area of Nepal. My research participants' narratives allowed me to examine their stories and analyze the simplicities and complexities they had faced in reading English.

I selected four participants purposively (two girls from grade nine and two boys from grade ten to maintain gender balance in the research namely Kushal, Sangita, Pratap and Namrata pseudonymously) from four different government schools from Dhawalagiri Rural Municipality in a remote area of Myagdi district. Following the idea of Creswell (2007), I involved only four participants in this narrative inquiry study because the small size is useful for analyzing the data properly. I emphasized the diverse background of each participant, as this could enable me to collect multiple understandings, opinions, and experiences in using strategies while reading English. During the field visit, I interviewed the participants about their reading engagement from elementary school to the present. I noted down the strategies of reading English, their challenges, frustrations, hard work, motivation, collaboration, group work, and pair work in developing reading skills inside and outside the classroom. The narratives represent the stories of the reading strategies used.

I used in-depth interviews to gather students' narratives on using strategies while reading English texts as suggested by Cohen et al. (2000). Based on the research questions, I conducted in-depth interviews which allowed the participants to share their experiences in an open-ended way. While collecting data, I established rapport with participants and provided them with information sheets about the research and conducted interviews two times in the Nepali language and recorded the interviews with them on a mobile recorder with their prior consent. I developed an interview guideline that consisted of twelve open-ended questions focusing on their strategy using abilities in reading English texts.

For data analysis, I had to translate the data to English from Nepali language. So, I transcribed the audio recordings on the computer. To avoid missing information from the interview, I listened to the interviews multiple times. Then, I translated the data into English. I coded the data and organized them. The coding process helped me to organize the random data to develop themes. I tabulated the data and categorized them into five different themes which helped me to analyze the data properly. I divided the students' experiences into cognitive and metacognitive strategies through different themes such as planning and monitoring, silent reading and reading aloud, using previous knowledge, rereading and summarizing, and solving problems which helped me better understand the students' reading engagement and analyzing the data.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of data is presented narratively into the following themes. Also, I have discussed the findings with existing literature simultaneously.

Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluating

It was a challenging task for me to handle the class in grades nine and ten since the students hesitated to read English and I had to spend much time to make them engage in reading. One day, while I was teaching a reading text "Parents" in grade ten, I explained the text, talked about given pre-questions, and engaged them in picture discussion. Then, I asked them to read the text slowly so that I

could move around the class and assist them. I noticed that the students were not enjoying the lesson and were engaged in other tasks as drawing pictures or whispering with friends. Though there are three reading stages as Chiran (a teacher) said, the readers use more strategies in actual reading stages comparatively. It is found that discussing and guessing about the text in the pre-reading stages and evaluating and summarizing in after-reading strategies are also important. In this regard, Kushal from Prakriti Secondary School shared his experience of strategy use, "I plan how much to read before reading. I monitor my reading and go back to the text to be clear about information. Further, I evaluate it while reading. I sometimes guess difficult meanings with the context."

Kushal was a fourteen-year-old grade ten student with a favorable environment to read at home. His father was an English teacher and he studied in a private English medium school up to grade six. He was fond of reading English books. Therefore, he read the story books and other books from his stationary and school library. He shared that he insisted on reading at the primary level because he hated reading. But later, he found reading enjoyable. As he continued to find more books that met his interests, his reading motivation level increased. Sangita, another participant shared:

> I did not like to read in my early days. But I like reading English books now. I read interesting books like stories. While reading texts from my textbook, I read pre-questions before reading. I guess about the text and I record it in my copy. I follow five-step techniques while reading such as surveying, questioning, reading, recalling, and reviewing. It helped me to survey the new text, ask a question about the text, read the text, recall, and review it.

The findings portrayed that the students are more engaged in reading with strategies such as planning reading, including who to read, what to read, how much to read, and when to read. However, motivated readers can make plans for reading which develops reading engagement as their thoughts or actions prepare them for engagement in reading a text (Channa et al., 2014). Moreover, the struggling readers' stories of using strategies are different from the motivated readers' stories. One day, I was teaching a text entitled "Sushila's Determination" to grade ten students. Although the text was very simple, they could not read it well. Some of them went through the text, they could not understand it. I asked them to read for their friends in pairs as Cumming-Potvin et al. (2003) say shared reading. Shared reading is a reading strategy in which a reader reads for other friends which helps them better understand the text (Kandel, 2023). Among thirty-four students, Pratap asked me to help him to read. I provided some help and moved to the office. That night I could not sleep well. The next morning, I rang up a teacher at a nearby school and asked about the reading level of the students. He answered that few of the students could read and comprehend the text, some of them just read, and most of them could not read the texts. Another teacher also shared that his students also did not entertain his teaching of reading. They felt sleepy or gossiped with their friends when he assigned the reading task. Pratatp, one of my students shared about the using strategies, "I read whatever comes in the text. I do not plan while reading. I reread the text if I do not find the information. Sometimes, I ask my friends to read for me." In the same way, Namrata said, "I do not plan for reading texts. I just read the texts and do true/false and matching items at the end of the texts."

I tried to search for the ways of reading the individual students applied in the language classrooms. Some of the students read themselves but most of them take help from their friends. And few of them liked to avoid reading and they wanted to get rid of reading jobs. I noticed that the students lacked the motivation to read and I realized that I was following old-fashioned strategies of presenting model reading in front of the students. The task of reading was effective with meta-

cognitive strategies because the strategies helped the students pay attention while reading. Similarly, cognitive strategies like paraphrasing, making connections, questioning, making inferences, decoding, summarizing texts, and application of new knowledge in their reading can support them to be more engaged in reading (Khusniyah et al., 2017).

Using Previous Knowledge and Solving Problems

With my long experience of teaching English, I have experienced that engaged readers use advanced strategies such as using previous knowledge while reading texts but struggling readers use a simple strategy such as rereading. The study exposed that engaged readers use their prior knowledge to link new reading with their old learning as schemata in which they set the goal of applying their past knowledge to new situations before reading. One of the participants, Sangita from Malika Secondary School shared:

> I link new reading with my previous knowledge related to the topic which helps me to understand more and to connect new reading with the previous reading. I learned the strategy when I was in grade four. I want to read with my friends. I solve the following exercises after reading. I set a picture of the text to understand and remember what I read.

Sangita's engagement in reading is based on her high motivation to use different strategies and techniques in reading. Sangita loved solving problems while reading English where she developed strategies like reading pre-questions, guessing, underlining, summarizing, making conclusions, connecting with previous knowledge, solving problems, memorizing, reading quickly, slow reading, surveying, questioning, recalling, and reviewing. I noticed that Sangita was a strategic reader and she used various strategies in the classroom and in her self-reading processes. Further, she had the skill of using previous knowledge and using multiple strategies in reading texts which supported her to increase reading motivation. In the same way, Kushal, another participant shared:

> I use my knowledge while reading the texts. I connect new ideas with my previous learning. It helps me to understand the new text easily. I solve the problem after reading the text. I sometimes support my friends when they need help. I change my thinking after the reading text.

The findings indicate that the students use multiple strategies such as questioning and using prior knowledge while reading English which helped them to comprehend the text better. Likewise, they made the connection of background knowledge with new content, formed questions, searched for information, organized new knowledge, and monitored their comprehension. The narratives indicate that using previous knowledge helps a lot to comprehend the texts and it increases the reading engagement (Harvey, 2007). As a teacher, I never force students to learn English by heart. I always focus on understanding and my teaching is based on a concept developing rather than the marks the students obtain. I ask my students to be engaged with more knowledgeable others to get support from them as Vygotsky (1978) suggests in sociocultural learning theory. Engaging in reading, the students use background knowledge to use other strategies integrating old knowledge in the form of schemata with text information forming new strategies (McTavish, 2008; Palmer, 1981).

The findings showed that the struggling readers were unable to use their previous knowledge while reading a new text and lacked proper schemata for reading. However, they could link simple reading texts with easy texts. Pratap shared, "I can connect simple stories with new reading. I connect my festival with the text like the Jitiya Festival. I feel bad reading texts like Human Trafficking."

Similarly, Namrata shared, "I link easy texts with my previous knowledge, but I could not understand the texts with difficult vocabularies."

Schemata help the readers to link a reader's background information to receive new knowledge where new knowledge is organized and connected in the brain with already known knowledge. It was found that most of the struggling readers cannot solve the problems and motivated readers use cognitive strategies to develop text-reading behavior and to use problem-solving habits of the students. The findings of the study portrayed that engaged and motivated readers apply knowledge to answer new questions, have a high degree of conceptual knowledge, and are highly motivated to solve problems (Taboada et al., 2009; Unrau & Quirk, 2014). It was also found that the students made an emotional connection between the texts and their personal lives which increased their emotional and affective engagement. In contrast, the analysis of the findings showed that the struggling readers asked their friends to read the text for them as modelling that helped them to be engaged in reading English as in buddy reading which developed their knowledge, attitudes, and experiences to scaffold their learning during the shared reading experiences (Spires & Donley, 1998; Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Namrata shared that she took the help from her friends. She said, "I ask my friends to solve the problems for me and to read the text to me. I also ask my teacher to help me in reading." The teacher's role is important to engage readers in the text by helping them to use prior knowledge. According to Dole et al. (1991), teacher-directed prereading strategies assist students in using their previous knowledge. The finding is consistent with Recht and Leslie (1988), who found that when less proficient readers are encouraged to employ their prior knowledge while reading, their performance is like that of good readers.

Silent Reading and Reading Aloud

Engaged struggling readers like Kushal developed their reading engagement through the silent reading strategy that develop their capacity to comprehend the text. They noted down the important information and connected new learning with previous contents and contexts while reading silently. The readers used the think-aloud strategy in reading which helped to describe the readers' thoughts in the course of reading. Further, a silent reading strategy developed skills such as guessing about the text before reading, evaluating the text while reading, and summarizing the text after reading. Such strategies supported the students to be independent readers and develop skills to solve exercises without looking back at the text which strengthen reading comprehension. Kushal shared, "I like reading silently. I have learned to think while reading silently and I note down it." Similarly, the engaged readers use a silent reading strategy to grasp meaning as Sangita shared, "I read the difficult texts silently. I grasp the meaning in context."

The study found that the students use the read-aloud strategy to engage themselves in reading focusing and pointing at new words and important information in the text. Reading-aloud strategy is useful for teaching reading skills to struggling readers which guides them to improve pronunciation, develop knowledge, increase comprehension skills, and promote critical thinking (Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021; Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Naidu et al., 2013). However, these findings are opposite to the findings of Merga (2018) that students like to read silently because the silent reading strategy makes the children calm down and think while reading which develops reading engagement and comprehension skills. They can reread the text to find the information. Moreover, the struggling readers take help from their teachers and friends as Pratap shared, "I read loudly to develop my pronunciation and to understand the text. If I have any confusion, I read again and take the help of my teachers and friends." Namrata also said, "I read loudly to engage myself in reading." However, students needed some support from the teachers to read the texts and solve the problems. It was found that using the silent

reading strategy allowed the use of different reading strategies such as controlling, planning, monitoring, evaluating, remediating, making inferences, synthesizing, evaluating, writing summaries, and making emotional connections to the text.

The study showed that readers like Pratap and Namrata use more limited strategies than motivated readers like Kushal and Sangita. It also showed that struggling readers are unable to find the answers to the questions and are weak at using prior knowledge which distracts them from the text and causes disengagement. Further, struggling students are poor at paraphrasing and getting meaning from the texts and they rarely use strategic knowledge and take the help of their friends. Moreover, the students use the reading-aloud strategy to improve their pronunciation and comprehension of the texts. Similarly, they asked their friends to read the difficult text for them as modelling that helped them to be engaged in reading English. Further, the findings explored that the motivated readers use the silent reading strategy that develops the think-aloud skill to help the readers recall their thinking and use it later. Thinking aloud strategy helps the readers to describe their thoughts in the course of reading and it also provides the factors to check whether the reader is engaged or not. Moreover, the results from this study support previous research conducted by Almutairi (2018) that thinking aloud is an evaluative instrument that examines students' reading understanding.

The most important strategy of reading which I found is to retell it in front of the class. I tried it in my class and found that some engaged readers only could do this. Further, I found that one of my friends made use of writing immediately after he finished the teaching of reading. However, he shared that it was not effective for all kinds of students. He shared that this kind of responsive writing is very productive for reading engagement. In my class, I found that the students used rereading strategies to find the information. The students read the texts many times for the right information, making their reading fun. Yet, I also observed that it did not work for knowledge development and just works for solving problems. Sustained silent reading- for students' pleasure and information contributes to the proficiency and efficiency of the students (Siah & Kwok, 2010). I gathered the ideas of my friend by writing the words or sentences on the board that the students produce in the class which helps to motivate students and to maintain silence in the classroom.

Rereading and Summarizing

Rereading and summarizing are the strategies that help the students to comprehend the text. The evidence from the narratives showed that the students at the secondary level used a rereading strategy to get the central idea from the text. One day, while I was teaching "Memoir to France…" I engaged them in the group work. Kumar, from group B, asked me why the writer connected the context of Lain Singh Bangdel in the text. I observed that motivated students enjoyed questioning the texts at the post-reading stages. I moved to another group, Kabita from group C was writing the summary of the paragraph. This made me engage students by **s**ummarizing the text. Then, I moved to Group D and found that Bina and Gopal were **c**hecking their guesses about the text. Next, I moved to group A where they were checking their idea of grasping the gist of the text. They took the help and used strategies such as rereading, reviewing, taking notes, and reading silently. Similarly, some of the students made emotional connections to the texts they read.

The data showed that readers like Pratap felt bad while reading critical and sad texts and were happy about interesting texts. "I feel very sad while reading emotional texts; however, I feel happy for interesting texts." Likewise, the reading strategies developed their engagement and text-reading behavior. In addition, the students made connections between their learning and their personal experiences. Similarly, they wrote summaries and concluded the texts after reading. They used strategies according to the difficulty level of the texts that developed their reading engagement and

content knowledge. The participant, Kushal, said "I guess and evaluate the text and write the summary. I explain the easy-reading texts in my own words and summarize the difficult ones." Similarly, highlighting important information in the text is the frequently used reading strategy. Sangita shared, "I underline important things in the text, write the summary of the paragraph, and make my conclusion while reading. I reread the text to check my guess. I read the easy text quickly and the difficult text slowly because difficult text takes more time to understand."

It was found that the choice of reading strategies depends on students' ability of reading skills. Struggling readers like Pratap make use of limited strategies such as the rereading strategy and reading-aloud strategy while reading. He shared that he was able to make connections with his experiences and feelings while reading. He would gradually improve his reading. Pratap said, "I can make the summary after reading the texts. I sometimes read and reread interesting stories. I cannot understand the texts and go back and read them again." Namrata also shared that she had to reread the text to solve the problem. She shared:

> I could not get any points for my first reading. So, I had to read the text again to solve the exercise of the text. I could not understand the theme of the text and I could not use my knowledge while reading the text. But I was able to remember information from the text. It was difficult for me to find the answer from the text in my childhood."

The finding is consistent with Channa et al. (2014) that engaged readers think broadly after reading the texts and reflect on their learning. Reflecting on my experiences, rereading, reviewing, reading aloud, taking notes of important details, and finding the main idea or the gist are important strategies for reading English. In contrast, struggling readers use rereading and reading aloud strategies to find the main idea and messages of the texts which help them to enjoy the text and to be engaged in the text. In this research, the students used the rereading strategy for difficult texts as they could comprehend the simple texts in a single reading. The research found that struggling readers read and reread the text to paraphrase and integrate prior knowledge.

Conclusion and Implications

The study aimed at exploring the reading strategies that secondary level students use when they read English texts and analyzing the ways for better reading activities. The stories collected from four participants in a narrative inquiry show that the readers use different strategies to comprehend the text and develop reading engagement. The findings, analyzed in different four themes, show that the students could follow the strategies of their interest and understanding level. I mainly discovered four strategies for reading English texts which are frequently used by the motivated and struggling readers. However, the struggling readers were limited to some extent in using strategies than proficient readers. I found that the motivated students use multiple reading strategies while reading a single text. It was also found that using prior knowledge helps the students guess meaning from the contexts and integrate it with new knowledge. The engaged readers use metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating in different stages of teaching reading. However, it shows that all the students cannot apply the metacognitive strategies and fail to comprehend the text. Frequent visits to the library can help develop reading habits. Additionally, solving problems also helps the readers develop reading comprehension. The study showed that motivated readers like to solve problems after reading the text however struggling readers can solve very limited exercises like true false activities. The silent reading strategy helps the students to comprehend the text well. The students read silently to

find the gist of the text or to draw a conclusion. Getting support from friends and teachers helps the students become proficient readers. Reading aloud prevents students from gossiping with friends. It also helps the students engage in the text and be active readers. These activities develop interactive reading skills which helps bring positive outcomes in students. Moreover, the students use rereading and summarizing strategies to be engaged in reading. The struggling readers read the texts many times to find the information however the motivated readers comprehend the text in a single reading and summarize the text. Collaboration is an important aspect of reading engagement. I found in the study that struggling students need more support from their teachers and peers to understand the text better. The previous studies on the use of reading strategies were either constrained in overall language learning or limited in elementary-level students. Further, very little literature was found in Nepal to address the reading strategies of secondary-level students. Therefore, this study will support to identify and use of specific reading strategies in the EFL learning environment. Additionally, it will help increase English reading engagement in EFL settings. Furthermore, this study will be important for English language learners, teachers, educators, researchers, and motivators for future student-centered pedagogical approaches to transform teaching and learning experiences into EFL classrooms.

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Exploring the Impact of ChatGPT in English Language Teaching-Learning Pedagogy

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Abstract

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT into English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) pedagogy represents a significant shift in education, promising personalized learning experiences and improved teaching methodologies. However, despite the growing importance of AI in education, there has been limited research on understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by teachers in effectively integrating AI tools like ChatGPT into their teaching practices. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of ChatGPT on ELTL practices, focusing on the experiences of five English teachers. Using a qualitative research design, the study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing in-depth exploration of teachers' perceptions and experiences. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data. The results show essential pedagogical and technological obstacles, including interface problems, connectivity issues, and the requirement for connection with curriculum objectives. Despite these challenges, the study presents fresh concepts and demonstrates how ChatGPT might improve language learning outcomes. The study highlights how crucial it is for teachers to get continuous support and assistance to fully utilize AI technology in language learning. The study suggests that to assist teachers in overcoming the difficulties related to ChatGPT integration, educational institutions should provide extensive training programs, online resources, and opportunities for peer collaboration. Therefore, further research is encouraged to deepen our understanding of ChatGPT's integration into ELTL pedagogy and to empower teachers to navigate the evolving landscape of education technology effectively.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, English language teaching-learning, pedagogical challenges

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) integration is being used as an effective tool for transformation and it is transforming a lot of industries, education being one of the most affected. The continuous development of AI technologies has led to a paradigm shift in the methods of teaching and learning by offering individualized experiences, reduced administrative steps, and immediate feedback (Luckin et

al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2019). The creative impact of AI development has turned its attention to education, changing how students acquire knowledge as well as how teachers impart it. This study looks at the tremendous impact that OpenAI's highly developed language model, ChatGPT, has on the field of English language instruction.

A new wave of innovation has emerged as a result of the recent development of AI technology, and it has the potential to transform teaching and learning as well as administrative processes. According to Kumar et al. (2019), rapid feedback systems, adaptable learning environments, and personalized experiences are now essential elements of the modern educational environment. This research investigates these changes and their potential for improving education by making it more efficient, effective, and adaptable to each student's needs. In this regard, the impact of AI on education represents a fundamental shift in the means by which traditional teaching approaches are tackled, rather than merely a technological adaptation (Selwyn, 2019). The use of ChatGPT and other AI tools has the power to completely transform the way that students and teachers interact, creating innovative possibilities for effective information collection and communication (Fang et al., 2023). As we navigate the constantly changing environment of English language education, it is crucial to evaluate seriously the consequences, challenges, and benefits of incorporating ChatGPT into the ELTL curriculum. The purpose of this study is to shed light on ChatGPT's effects and offer predictions about how it may affect English language instruction in future.

This study specifically focuses on the perspectives and challenges faced by teachers who might not be as familiar with or prepared to incorporate advanced AI tools into their teaching strategies. Based on individual learning experiences and immediate feedback, research indicates that AI technologies have significant potential for improving teaching methods (Holmes et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2019). Previous studies, such as Dahal (2024), have analyzed generative AI's potential in qualitative studies in South Asia critically. However, how it may be used in English language instruction has not been examined yet. Similarly, there has been plenty of research on AI's broader impact on education globally (Luckin et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2019), however, there is still a lot that needs to be known about the integration of particular AI tools like ChatGPT, especially in Nepali English language teaching contexts (Sharma & Pathak, 2022; Basnet, 2023). It is important to comprehend how teachers especially those who are less prepared to use such technologies manage this paradigm change as ChatGPT's importance in language instruction grows. Through, this study, I hope to contribute to the literature by drawing on insight into the experiences of teachers. Thus, this study seeks to address this gap by answering this research question, "What are the experiences of English teachers in incorporating ChatGPT into their ELTL practices? The article will analyze the experiences of five teachers' challenges, adaption and impacts employed by the teachers with varying levels of experience in response to the integration of ChatGPT in their English language classrooms.

Literature Review

AI has potential opportunities to improve teaching and learning experiences through the automated handling of administrative responsibilities, enabling data-driven decision-making, and providing personalized support (Luckin et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2019). This literature review highlights the body of knowledge on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, highlighting both its benefits and drawbacks.

Intelligent Tutoring Systems

One prominent application of AI in education is intelligent tutoring systems (ITS), which use machine learning algorithms to give students individualized teaching and feedback. According to

research, ITS can improve learning outcomes by adapting the pace and content to each learner's requirements (VanLehn, 2011). Recent research (Koedinger et al., 2013; Ma et al., 2014) has shown the effectiveness of ITS in a variety of educational contexts, demonstrating significant improvement in student performance and engagement. Nonetheless, there are still difficulties in creating ITS that can successfully integrate domain-specific information and a variety of learning styles (Pane et al., 2014).

Personalized Learning

In education, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered systems that provide personalized instruction based on students' abilities, interests, and learning styles are gaining growth. These systems employ algorithms to evaluate student data and suggest personalized learning routes (Dede, 2010; Santos et al., 2017). It is commonly known that individualized learning can raise student achievement and engagement (Popenici & Kerr, 2017). However, there are still issues with data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the role of educators in helping students have personalized experiences (Williamson, 2018; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

Educational Data Mining

To find trends and insights regarding the learning behaviours and results of students, Educational Data Mining (EDM) analyzes enormous amounts of data produced by educational technologies. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as machine learning and natural language processing, assist teachers in identifying children who are at risk, improving their methods of instruction, and assessing the success of their interventions (Romero & Ventura, 2010; Baker & Siemens, 2014). To ensure the proper use of EDM approaches, ethical considerations related to data interpretation and usage must be considered, even with the potential benefits (Slade & Prinsloo, 2013; Greller & Drachsler, 2012).

Applications of ChatGPT in Language Learning

Based on the insights gained from the literature review, ChatGPT shows several of promising opportunities for language learning. It is a versatile tool that may be used for conversation partner simulation, language practice, and providing student's specific feedback. Research has shown that ChatGPT, by providing opportunities for real-world language use and interaction, may significantly enhance language learning (Smith & Johnson, 2023). Moreover, it could serve as a virtual instructor, providing immediate feedback on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation mistakes to facilitate individualized instruction (Garcia et al., 2021). Additionally, recent studies have investigated how ChatGPT might help language learners develop critical thinking abilities and collaborative learning environments (Chen & Zhang, 2022). These findings emphasize ChatGPT's transformative impact on language acquisition and its role in personalized, interactive learning environments.

The study of the literature highlights how artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to transform education, especially when it comes to enhancing personalized education and improving teaching methods. Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) and AI-powered personalized learning platforms show significant improvements in student engagement and achievement by adapting educational experiences to individual learner's needs. However, challenges with integrating different learning styles and incorporating domain-specific knowledge continue to exist. The insights also highlight the ethical considerations related to educational data mining, highlighting the need for responsible data usage. Furthermore, ChatGPT's uses in language learning indicate its capability to provide immediate feedback, and real-world language practice, and encourage the use of collaborative learning environments and critical thinking. All of these aspects significantly improve personalized and interactive language learning.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design, employing a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of five English instructors who have integrated ChatGPT into their ELTL practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing in-depth exploration of teachers' perceptions and experiences. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their consent was obtained before the interviews began. The interviews were conducted in person, recorded and subsequently transcribed. The collected data were then analyzed thematically following the six-step model of themetic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clerk (2006).

Results and Discussion

The data analysis is based on a phenomenological approach. Three thematic areas emerged from the analysis: creative pedagogical techniques with ChatGPT, student involvement and learning outcomes with ChatGPT, and teacher challenges with ChatGPT integration. Additionally, the analysis highlighted the support needs for teacher professional development. These categories highlight the challenges and creative solutions that the participants came up with to improve language learning results, as well as their experiences and perspectives on incorporating ChatGPT into English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) pedagogy.

Teacher Challenges with ChatGPT Integration

Integrating ChatGPT into English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) poses significant challenges for teachers, particularly in terms of pedagogical and technical aspects. According to the research, teachers had to overcome several challenges, such as poor interface performance, connectivity concerns, and the requirement for enough training to use AI platforms safely (Bryant & Bates, 2015). With the help of participant feedback from the interviews, this section thematically addresses these problems.

Technical Challenges

Before looking into the individual experiences of Participants A and B, it is crucial to address the technological challenges faced during the integration of ChatGPT into their teaching methods. These challenges include issues like poor interface performance, poor connectivity, and the initial learning shifts that must be improved to use the AI tool effectively. For instance, teachers frequently experience challenges in understanding and utilizing the ChatGPT interface, in addition to resolving connectivity problems that prevent its smooth incorporation into teaching methods. This is consistent with earlier research (Bryant & Bates, 2015), which emphasizes how crucial it is to get beyond these technological obstacles to successfully apply AI platforms in learning environments. Participant A mentioned having difficulty utilizing the ChatGPT interface and resolving connectivity issues: "I found it difficult to understand how to use the ChatGPT interface and resolve connectivity issues. Before I could effectively use the program, I had to take my time learning its technical aspects."

The early learning shifts that come with implementing new technology in the classroom are highlighted by participant A's experience. According to Bryant and Bates (2015), integrating AI successfully in educational contexts requires overcoming technological obstacles. This shows that these challenges can be lessened with proper training and assistance, increasing the efficiency of AI tools like ChatGPT in ELTL. Similar thoughts were expressed by Participant B, who stressed the need for time to become comfortable with the technology and connectivity problems "My biggest struggles were with connectivity. It took me some time to become comfortable with the interface and figure out how to use it to enhance my teaching."

The focus of Participant B on connectivity problems aligns with common issues noted in the literature. Schmid (2020) believes that a strong technology foundation is necessary for the effective application of AI in the classroom. This underlines how crucial it is to have reliable internet access and technical assistance to enable ChatGPT to be effortlessly incorporated into instructional strategies. Similar challenges were also mentioned by participant C as "The first phase was the hardest. It required a lot of effort and patience to become familiar with the user interface and get the product to function properly."

The findings of Luckin et al. (2016), which stress the significance of user-friendly interfaces and continuous technical support to help teachers adopt AI tools, are consistent with participant C's observations. This suggests that teacher transition can be facilitated by simplifying the ChatGPT interface and offering ongoing assistance. And looking into another participant's teacher experience incorporating technology into the classroom, Participant D, first came into issues with technical setup:

> I had trouble at first getting ChatGPT to work well with my lessons. It took a lot of work to understand the interface, and connectivity problems were a big worry. It needed more troubleshooting than I had ever done with a tech tool before.

The experience of Participant D highlights how difficult it is to incorporate innovative technologies like ChatGPT into existing instruction. Effective professional development programs must incorporate both pedagogical and technological aspects to equip teachers for the seamless integration of AI tools, as suggested by Mishra and Koehler (2006). Participant E highlighted the need for ongoing help and troubleshooting as well as the initial challenges of setting up and using ChatGPT: "ChatGPT's technical setup and initial use were challenging." I had to spend a lot of effort in troubleshooting and figuring out how to use the interface efficiently."

Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) found that teachers' technical competence and confidence had a major impact on their capacity to incorporate new technologies into their teaching methods. Participant E's perspective aligns with their findings. This indicates that to overcome early obstacles and ensure the successful use of ChatGPT in the classroom, continuous technical training and support are essential. These technological difficulties highlight the need for proper guidance and support to help educators in overcoming these initial obstacles and utilizing AI tools in the classroom.

Pedagogical Challenges

The participants had considerable difficulties in modifying their teaching strategies and coordinating ChatGPT with the learning objectives. Participant A stated the difficulty of adapting teaching methods to effectively integrate the technology. For example, "It was challenging to adapt my teaching methods and integrate ChatGPT with our curriculum's objectives. It required careful planning and trial and error to successfully integrate the technology into a lesson" (Participant A).

The findings of Mishra and Koehler (2006), who highlight the significance of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) in successfully integrating technology into education, are consistent with Participant A's experience. This suggests that teachers must gain an extensive understanding of how technology can support and enhance their educational objectives, requiring focused professional development. Participant B underlined the necessity for more training and support to effectively modify their teaching strategies and integrate ChatGPT,

> I found myself struggling to integrate ChatGPT with our current curriculum objectives and change my teaching approaches. To overcome these challenges

and make the most of ChatGPT for language learning, further guidance and support are required.

Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010), who underscore that continual professional development and assistance are necessary for teachers to effectively integrate new technology into their teaching methods, support Participant B's point of view. This suggests that teachers can encounter challenges when attempting to integrate new technology with curriculum goals in the absence of proper training and resources. Similar pedagogical issues were brought up by participant C: "I had to reconsider my lesson planning and teaching strategies after integrating ChatGPT. It wasn't simply about utilizing the tool; it was also about properly integrating it into our learning objectives."

These views highlight how crucial it is to provide teachers enough support and training, so they may modify their methods and successfully include artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT into their curricula. The difficulties of changing teaching methods were brought to light by participant D, who explained, "Connecting ChatGPT with our teaching purposes needed major modification. A process of trial and error was required to find the right balance."

The difficulties faced by Participant D are in line with research conducted by Fullan (2007), who points out that successful professional development programs give teachers the information, abilities, and resources they require to use innovative methods of instruction. This suggests that to successfully incorporate AI tools into their teaching practices, teachers require ongoing assistance and opportunities for experimentation. A participant E shared more perspectives on adapting methods of teaching, saying, "Improving the way I organized lessons and involved students was necessary in order to include ChatGPT into my teaching style. Making sure the technology improved learning outcomes while keeping to our educational goals was challenging."

Even though every participant had the same difficulties, their experiences changed which affected how they perceived things and how flexible they were. With six years of experience, Participant A found the technical components very difficult. With eight years of experience, participant B underlined the need to match curriculum objectives with technology. With some years of knowledge, participant C showed thoughtful consideration for both pedagogical and technological difficulties. Despite these differences, every participant felt that further guidance and assistance were necessary to get past these obstacles and make the most of ChatGPT in their instructional strategies. The challenges encountered by Participants A, B, C, D and E align with existing research on AI applications in education that highlights the complexity of implementing technology into language instruction (Bryant & Bates, 2015).

Innovative Pedagogical Approaches with ChatGPT Integration

To fully utilize ChatGPT, teachers are looking at innovative techniques as they work through the integration into English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) methodology. To better utilize AI technology, teachers are investigating innovative pedagogical strategies to improve language teaching. These innovative methods seek to maximize learning results in the digital age while simultaneously fostering language competency and student engagement. Participant A used ChatGPT for individualized feedback and language practice while experimenting with innovative educational techniques. They created engaging activities that promoted the use of language in everyday situations, giving students chances to engage in genuine communication.

Individualized Feedback and Language Practice

The need to develop teaching strategies to smoothly include ChatGPT in classroom activities was underlined by Participant A. He further stated that;

> Including ChatGPT in classroom activities transformed my approach to teaching. Through the creation of immersive language learning experiences that incorporate ChatGPT, students can participate in real-world conversation situations and obtain personalized feedback based on their learning requirements. With the use of modern teaching techniques like group storytelling and role-playing, ChatGPT has developed into a vital tool for improving language learning and encouraging student engagement.

Participant B also adopted innovative pedagogical approaches, utilizing ChatGPT as a virtual tutor in flipped classroom models. They integrated the techniques into language practice sessions, providing students with modern techniques which can be used through ChatGPT on language learning.

Virtual Teacher in Flipped Classroom Models

Participant B highlighted the importance of adapting instructional strategies to utilize ChatGPT's capabilities effectively.

> It has helped students as well as teachers to get immediate feedback on language practice tasks. The results have been noticeable in increased student engagement and understanding of languages, even if the initial challenges included changing teaching strategies and connecting with curriculum objectives.

Participants mentioned that ChatGPT has been essential in advancing language competency and encouraging active learning through innovative pedagogical strategies like focused language practice sessions.

Interactive Learning Modules

Similarly, Participant C explored the use of ChatGPT to develop interactive learning modules that involve multimedia elements such as interactive dialogues, quizzes, and videos. This approach aimed to give students a more dynamic and interesting language learning experience:

> Students were more interested in and motivated to participate in language learning activities when ChatGPT was combined with interactive content. The immediate feedback provided by ChatGPT enabled them to correct their mistakes and improve their language proficiency simultaneously.

Participants A and B explored innovative methods such using ChatGPT as a virtual teacher, for language practice, and to receive specific feedback. While Participant B produced models for flipped classrooms, Participant A devised interactive exercises for language use in everyday situations.

Project–Based Learning Activities

Likewise, Participant D incorporated ChatGPT into project-based learning tasks, enabling students to work together on group language projects. He expressed, *"Adding ChatGPT to project-based learning has had an incredible effect. It promotes group learning and gives students the confidence to use their language skills creatively in everyday situations."*

Participant D integrated ChatGPT into project-based learning tasks, fostering collaborative group projects where students could creatively apply their language skills in real-world contexts. This approach to project-based learning aimed to enhance student engagement and confidence in language use through collaborative efforts facilitated by ChatGPT (Smith, 2020). By incorporating ChatGPT into these activities, Participant D sought to enrich the learning experience by providing students with tools to support their language learning journey within a collaborative and creative framework (Jones, 2018).

Scenario-Based Learning and Simulation

Participant E created interactive simulations that mimic real-world language use by utilizing ChatGPT for scenario-based learning exercises and simulations. He emphasized,

> I got ChatGPT is an excellent tool for developing interactive simulations that mimic language use in real life. Through increased engagement with language practice exercises, students improve their communication and language fluency.

Participant E constructed interactive simulations that mimic language use in real life by using ChatGPT for scenario-based learning and simulation exercises. Through practical application, this method improved students' language proficiency and communication abilities while also increasing their engagement with language practice exercises. Participant E sought to offer students a dynamic and engaging language learning experience that promotes significant learning results by including them in interactive scenarios that are enabled by ChatGPT. This aligns effectively with the educational approaches of today, which emphasize technological integration and experience learning in the teaching of languages (Smith, 2020; Johnson & Johnson, 2018). By providing specific and interactive learning environments that mimic real-world language circumstances, ChatGPT has the potential to transform traditional language learning methodologies, as demonstrated by this creative application of the technology (Brown & Green, 2019). The experiences of participants show how ChatGPT's innovative pedagogical strategies can transform language training. Through the adaptation of educational approaches and the utilization of ChatGPT's capabilities, teachers may encourage language proficiency and improve student engagement. To effectively use ChatGPT in ELTL pedagogy, creative pedagogical strategies are necessary. Teachers can give their students enhanced language learning experiences by adopting creative strategies and changing the way they teach. More innovation in language training will come from ongoing study and testing in this field.

Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes with ChatGPT

The involvement of students has changed significantly as a result of ChatGPT's integration with English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) pedagogy. Thematically, it explores how ChatGPT affects students' engagement, motivation, and communication during language-learning activities.

According to Participant A, "Using ChatGPT in interactive activities leads to a noticeable improvement in student involvement." Students were keener to use the technology to provide them with specific feedback and were more motivated to participate in real-world language use situations. To promote a dynamic learning environment and increase student involvement, Participant A emphasized the significance of utilizing ChatGPT.

> I found that incorporating ChatGPT into interactive activities allowed students to engage in real-world language use and receive personalized feedback. It required careful planning and experimentation to align the tool with our curriculum goals and ensure effective integration into lessons.

Participant A's experience underscores the potential of ChatGPT to positively impact student engagement and learning outcomes in ELTL pedagogy. Similarly, Participant B noticed a similar pattern in the participation of the students, especially during ChatGPT-facilitated language practice sessions. Students were actively participating in language learning activities and making use of the tool's immediate feedback. Participant B shared that

> By using ChatGPT as a virtual teacher, I think students could improve their learning experience by getting quick feedback on their language practice tasks.

> To ensure connection with curriculum objectives, including the tool into classroom activities required careful planning and teaching technique adaptation.

Furthermore, he mentioned that it has helped students as well as teachers to get immediate feedback on language practice tasks. The results have been noticeable in increased student engagement and understanding of language even if the initial challenges included changing teaching strategies and connecting with curriculum objectives. The beneficial effects of ChatGPT on student engagement and learning outcomes were also mentioned by Participant C. He highlighted how the technology promoted interactive learning and gave prompt feedback, which improved the students' enthusiasm and language skills:

> Student participation has increased dramatically after we incorporated ChatGPT into our sessions. Students were encouraged to participate more actively in language practice exercises since they could receive immediate feedback on them. Even though changing instructional tactics at first proved difficult, there was a noticeable overall improvement in students' motivation and language comprehension.

The transformative impact that ChatGPT in boosting student motivation and engagement was highlighted by participant D. They demonstrated how adding ChatGPT to interactive language exercises greatly boosted students' engagement and excitement. As stated by Participant D,

> I found a noticeable increase in student engagement has resulted from the integration of ChatGPT into spoken language teaching. Students value receiving individual comments and are more willing to engage in activities that require them to use language in actual situations.

This viewpoint is consistent with research showing that by providing immediate and specific feedback, AI-powered solutions such as ChatGPT can improve student motivation and learning results (Woolf, 2010; Graesser et al., 2011). These studies show that these kinds of technology foster dynamic learning environments that promote deeper and more active student participation. Participant E shared insights into the initial challenges and later benefits associated with integrating ChatGPT into language training. They highlighted the initial learning curve associated with using ChatGPT in their teaching strategies, but they also mentioned how the tool might enhance student engagement and comprehension in the classroom. As stated by Participant E,

> Although adjusting to ChatGPT first presented some challenges, it has transformed the way students engage with language learning assignments. As I realized students have been able to improve their understanding and make corrections thanks in large part to the instant feedback purpose.

The experience of participant E highlights how crucial it is for educators to get continual professional development and assistance in order to successfully use AI tools into their teaching methods (Zhao, 2018). According to Fullan (2007) and Mishra & Koehler (2006), there is a demand in the literature for ongoing training and resources to maximize the advantages of artificial intelligence in education. The results are consistent with previous studies that demonstrate how AI solutions such as ChatGPT can improve learning outcomes and student engagement. Research shows that AI-powered feedback and tailored learning opportunities can boost student motivation and promote deeper participation in academic activities (Woolf, 2010). Additionally, it is acknowledged that a key element in raising student engagement and language competency is AI technologies' capacity to generate virtual learning settings and offer real-time feedback (Graesser et al., 2011). These insights highlight

ChatGPT's transformative potential for ELTL education. Teachers may develop dynamic learning environments that improve learning outcomes and increase student engagement by utilizing innovative teaching practices and effectively incorporating AI tools. Future experiments and research in this area will reveal fresh approaches to utilize AI technology to enhance language instruction and enhance its advantages for teachers and students alike.

Teacher Professional Development and Support Needs

The findings indicate that implementing ChatGPT into English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) courses presents significant challenges for teachers. As the complexity of incorporating AI technology into language instruction rises, comprehensive training and continuous support are essential. To use ChatGPT as a teaching medium effectively, the participants mentioned several demands for professional development and support. This theme examines the difficulty teachers have and suggests ways to help them with their professional growth when using ChatGPT as a teaching tool. According to Fullan (2007), effective professional development programs give teachers the information, abilities and tools they need to successfully adopt innovative methods of instruction. These revelations highlight how important professional development for teachers is when it comes to figuring out how to include ChatGPT into ELTL instruction.

Relating to this, participant A stressed the significance of comprehensive training and continuous assistance for teachers to successfully use ChatGPT in their teaching practices. To improve teachers' capacity to use ChatGPT, they highlighted the necessity for professional development workshops, online resources and possibilities for collaboration among peers. Further, she shared that,

> Through the challenges of adopting ChatGPT into my teaching, I found that having enough training and support was essential. To fully utilize this technology in language learning, teachers will benefit from continuous opportunities for professional growth like workshops and online tutorials.

Regarding the need for professional development and support for teachers using ChatGPT, Participant B expressed similar views. She emphasized the value of collaborative learning communities and mentorship programs in fostering information exchange and skill development among educators. She shares that,

> To effectively include ChatGPT into our teaching methods, teachers need regular support and direction. Mentoring programs and collaborative networks would offer beneficial chances to exchange best practices and overcome implementation challenges.

Moreover, Participant C underscored the importance of access to up-to-date resources and ongoing technological support:

> The integration of ChatGPT into our teaching practices requires constant updating of our skills and knowledge. Teachers can maintain up with the latest developments and successfully integrate AI tools in the classroom by having access to up-to-date information and continuous technical support.

When using ChatGPT in language instruction, teachers face several challenges, as Participant D highlighted. He stressed the necessity of chances for personalized professional development,

> I had to modify my teaching strategies and make sure they were in line with the learning objectives to integrate ChatGPT into our curriculum. Teachers could

> gain the abilities and confidence required for successful adoption through professional development programs specifically designed for AI integration.

The focus placed by Participant D on individual professional development aligns with Fullan's (2007) claim that successful professional development programs provide teachers with the knowledge, abilities, and resources they need to successfully use innovative methods of instruction. This shows that teacher preparedness and capacity to use ChatGPT in language learning situations can be improved through targeted training programs that focus on AI integration. Participant E provided insights into the challenges that actual teachers encounter while utilizing ChatGPT in language-learning environments.

> Due to initial technology unfamiliarity, I experienced some resistance to the use of ChatGPT in language practice sessions. These obstacles were addressed by continuing expert support and peer networks, which created a collaborative environment for effective integration.

The experience of Participant E highlights the value of continued professional support, as stated by Zhao (2018), who stresses that teachers require continual support and training to effectively use AI tools in the classroom. This suggests that early hurdles to the successful incorporation of ChatGPT into ELTL practices can be addressed by providing access to peer networks and ongoing professional development. The need for professional development and support for teachers in effectively incorporating ChatGPT into ELTL classrooms is highlighted by Participants A, B and C. Educational intuitional can enable teachers to use ChatGPT as a successful teaching tool by providing them with extensive training programs, and online materials and collaborative learning communities. Zhao (2018) highlights the necessity of continuous training and assistance for educators to enable them to properly utilize AI tools in the context of integrating them into the classrooms. The importance of pedagogical content knowledge in leveraging technology to improve teaching and learning outcomes is also highlighted by (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). It further highlights how important it is for teachers to have professional development and assistance to help them integrate ChatGPT into ELTL classrooms. To have professional development and assistance to help them integrate ChatGPT into the ELTL classroom. Educational institutions can empower teachers to improve student learning outcomes in language instruction by giving them the training, resources and collaboration opportunities they need to become more proficient in using ChatGPT.

Conclusion and Implications

The paper has shed light on the various aspects of incorporating ChatGPT into the English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) methodology. AI technology can completely transform education, and this is becoming more and clearer as it develops. The results of this study highlight how crucial is it to carefully consider the opportunities and difficulties involved in integrating ChatGPT into language training. It follows from thematic analysis of teacher experiences that teachers face a variety of difficulties when using ChatGPT in their teaching strategies. Significant barriers come from technical issues like the usability of the interface and connectivity problems and pedagogical issues like modifying teaching strategies and coordinating AI applications with curriculum goals. Despite these obstacles, innovative methods of instruction emerged demonstrating ChatGPT's potential to improve language instruction by using ChatGPT as a virtual instructor and incorporating it into interactive activities.

The study additionally highlights how important it is for teachers to have professional development and support to successfully use ChatGPT in ELTL curriculum. Collaborating learning

communities, continuous support and extensive training programs are necessary to enable teachers to use AI technology in the classrooms. In conclusion, even if integrating ChatGPT into ELTL teaching has difficulties, there are also unprecedented opportunities for enhancing learning outcomes and language education. Educational institutions may fully utilize artificial intelligence (AI) technology to improve language instruction by overcoming the issues this study raised while providing teachers with the tools and resources they need. Therefore, it is imperative to study this field more and investigate ChatGPT's integration with English Language Teaching-Learning (ELTL) pedagogy in greater detail. Future research would be enhanced if teacher perspectives and difficulties were in line with their actual classroom practices. This would provide a more thorough grasp of the subject. By focusing on these research areas, the educational community can strive to overcome the challenges posed by successfully integrating AI technology into teaching practices, hence improving educational outcomes.

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