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In the past one year, Journal of NELTA has grown vertically as well as horizontally. By vertical growth, I mean we had a record number of submissions this year again. The submissions, many of which were quality manuscripts, ranged from practice based teaching of various language skills and aspects, use of technology in EFL classrooms, stylistics, and textbook analysis, more theoretical, research-based issues such as global Englishes, and to use of L1 in EFL (multilingual) classroom. The sheer volume of submissions in all sections of the Journal kept the reviewers’ panel as well as the editorial team busy throughout this time. The reviewers, in particular, had a tough task of reading, analysing and commenting on the manuscripts. Despite quality in them, a vast majority of the manuscripts had to be rejected for various reasons, the most important of which was that they did not follow the Journal of NELTA manuscript submission guidelines closely. Journal of NELTA has also grown horizontally in that we had submissions not only from teachers and ELT practitioners from all levels of education, vis-à-vis, primary, secondary and tertiary, but we also received submissions from applied linguists, researchers, and authors. However, the most satisfying growth we have had is that Journal of NELTA has been noticed globally; more specifically, in the US, Europe, the Middle East, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, and India. In addition to the submissions from scholars and ELT practitioners from Nepal, we received an increasing number of submissions from these countries as well.

The articles in this volume of the Journal address four contemporary issues in ELT and applied linguistics. The first of such issue is emerging varieties of English. While these varieties have generally been termed as “varieties of English,” “localized varieties of English,” “non-native varieties of English,” “second-language varieties of English,” and “new varieties of English,” the issues of their comprehensibility, intelligibility and legitimacy often take the centre stage in the ensuing discussion. Professor Patil’s article, in this respect, is a welcome
inclusion. The second issue the articles take up is the issue of maximising classroom achievement. To this effect, while Mahmud, Nduwimana, Rana, and Pokhrel engage with first or target language skills, Bristi, Le, Ullah and Yesmin, and Singh explore its technological aspects. Similarly, Kabir takes on the writing test of one of the most popular international English proficiency tests – IELTS. Professor Mohanraj challenges the reader with some of his thought provoking ideas and invites readers to join in a Journal of NELTA Forum. Another important issue addressed in this volume is teacher and teacher preparation schemes. Saud, for example, looks into how teachers perceive teaching of grammar; Ghimire, on the other hand, explores the practicality of teacher preparation courses.

The section of practical pedagogic ideas contains useful and practical teaching ideas, andis addressed to different levels of teachers. There are some practical teaching tips to have in this section. In the book review section, there are reviews of three most widely used reference books in the field of English language teaching. They provide a synopsis of what the books contain and an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. For those who like surfing the Internet in search of teaching tips and ideas, the section of from the ELT blogs offers five most popular ELT blogs. Similarly, the final section, from the ELT world, lists a number of upcoming ELT events where readers can take part either as presenters or as participants.

We would like to thank, Ms. Motikala Subba Dewan, president of NELTA, for her advice and support, Journal of NELTA advisory board, for their advice, reviewers’ panel and my editorial team for their hard work. We also thank the language editors who edited the language and proofread the manuscripts.

Finally, I encourage all readers and NELTA members to develop their ELT ideas and experiences into an article and submit it to neltaeditorialboard@gmail.com. For manuscript submission guidelines, please visit Journal of NELTA site on NELTA homepage, or turn to the last pages of this volume.

Happy reading, everyone!

The Journal of NELTA Editorial Team
# Table of contents

1. **New varieties of English: Issues of incomprehensibility and unintelligibility**  
   *Dr. Z. N. Patil. Professor Emeritus*  
   1-13

2. **The need for ESP in Burundi: What do tertiary English teachers say about it?**  
   *Arcade Nduwimana, Ecole Normale Supérieure du Burundi*  
   14-24

3. **Should teachers use L1 in EFL classroom?**  
   *Shahnaz Mahmud, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh*  
   25-39

4. **Retention of English language tension in multilingual communities of Nepal: A review of teachers’ narratives**  
   *Karna Rana, University of Canterbury, New Zealand*  
   40-53

5. **Turn-taking and gender differences in language classroom**  
   *Nayab Iqbal & Kaukab Abid Azhar, Barrett Hodgson University, Karachi, Pakistan*  
   54-67

6. **Boosting students’ creativity in the EFL class through higher order thinking activities**  
   *Vidhya Pokhrel, Regent Residential School, Kathmandu*  
   68-75

7. **IELTS writing test: Improving cardinal test criteria for the Bangladeshi context.**  
   *S M Akramul Kabir, University of Canterbury, New Zealand*  
   76-89

8. **Pre-service English language teachers’ perceptions towards teaching grammar**  
   *Mohan Singh Soud, Tribhuvan University, Nepal*  
   90-104
9. Teacher education courses: Are they germane to classroom practice for novice teachers?
   Nani Babu Ghimire, Tribhuvan University, Nepal  
   105-115

10. Incorporating EFL websites in class: Bangladeshi teachers’ perceptions
   Nousin Laila Bristi, United International University, Bangladesh  
   116-128

11. Voice Recording in second language outside the classroom: Process and product
   Thinh Le, University of Canterbury, New Zealand  
   129-141

12. Using technology in teaching English at the S.S.C. level
   Sifat Ullah, HEED International School, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Quazi Farzana, Yesmin, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh  
   142-152

   Renu Singh, Tribhuvan University, Nepal  
   153-168

   Journal of NELTA Forum
   Content, language and technology: Perspectives and prospects
   S Mohanraj, EFL University, Hyderabad, India  
   169-173

   Practical Pedagogic Ideas  
   174-184

   Book Reviews  
   185-196

   From the ELT Blogs  
   187-200

   From the ELT World  
   201-202

   Information about Journal of NELTA  
   203-206

   Submission Guidelines for Journal of NELTA  
   207-211
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New varieties of English: Issues of incomprehensibility and unintelligibility

Z. N. Patil
Professor Emeritus

Abstract:
The present article discusses new varieties of English with reference to intelligibility and comprehensibility. It has been observed that new varieties of English display deviant phonological features. Speakers of these varieties insert a sound, delete a sound, substitute a sound, and rearrange sounds when they pronounce certain words. Moreover, they use deviant word stress patterns. These things affect the intelligibility of their speech. The new varieties differ at the level of discourse as well; the content and language used to perform certain speech acts such as coaxing, responding to questions, etc., may result in miscommunication. Thus, unintelligibility is a result of mother tongue interference and incomprehensibility is a result of mother culture interference. The article illustrates unintelligibility and incomprehensibility using examples from non-native varieties of English.

Context
In this article, I discuss two significant aspects of new varieties of English. These aspects are incomprehensibility and unintelligibility. However, this does not mean that the dialects of native British and American English are invariably mutually comprehensible and intelligible. The article discusses the issues of incomprehensibility and unintelligibility against the background of three premises. First, it is not only the new varieties of English but also the native varieties that may be mutually incomprehensible and unintelligible. Secondly, the onus for being comprehensible and intelligible is on the shoulders of not only the non-native speaker of the English language; but equally on the shoulders of the native speaker. Thirdly, the linguistic, physical and psychological contexts help us to decipher unintelligible utterances and understand incomprehensible utterances; however, it is the responsibility of the speaker and the hearer to overcome unintelligibility and incomprehensibility.

Introduction
The English language has moved from its native habitat and spread its existence to new habitats. In the process of its spread it has changed itself not only formally but also
functionally. It is in this context that Achebe, a Nigerian writer (1965, p. 29) feels that it is neither necessary nor desirable for him to use English like a native writer does. Achebe (1975, p. 62) wants the English language to carry the weight of his African experience. Obviously, the native variety in its unchanged form is incapable of serving that purpose. To achieve that objective, it will have to be new English, still in communion with its ‘ancestral home’ but altered to suit its new African surroundings. Ojaide (1987, pp. 165-167) is another Nigerian writer who professes that the English that he writes and speaks is neither mainstream British English nor American English, and that he cherishes this uniqueness. The sensibility that he expresses is African sensibility, which is different from Western and Asian sensibilities, though a little closer to the Asian sensibility. His writing, though in English, has its roots in Africa, not in England or North America. Being a cultural standard bearer of the African world, not of the British or Western world, he is free to manipulate English to his advantage. Soyinka (1993, p. 88) regards native English as a linguistic blade in the hands of the traditional cultural castrator, which black people have twisted to carve new concepts into the flesh of white supremacy. Sidhwa (2000), cited in Yoneoka (2002), sounds a similar note when he remarks that “the colonized have subjugated the English language, beaten it on its head and made it theirs, and in adapting it to their use, in hammering it sometimes on its head and sometimes twisting its tail, they have given it a new shape, substance and dimension”.

Raja Rao (1938) echoes the views voiced by Achebe, Ojaide, and Soyinka. In the foreword to his celebrated novel titled *Kanthapura* he admits that “a language that is not one’s own” is inadequate to express “the spirit that is one’s own”. He confesses that the various shades and omissions of certain thought-movement look maltreated in a foreign language. Perhaps it is because of this inadequacy that Dasgupta (1993, p. 201) labels English as an alien language, an aunt, not a mother. His contention is that even if Indians have been using and exploiting English, it has not got close to their hearts. It is not one of them although it is an important presence to be respected. Kourtizin (2000, cited in Lee 2005), holds a similar view of Japanese, which is not his first language: “English is the language of my heart, the one in which I can easily express love for my children; in which I know instinctively how to coo to a baby; in which I can sing lullabies, tell stories, recite nursery rhymes, talk baby talk. In Japanese, there is some artificiality about my love; I cannot express it naturally or easily. The emotions I feel do not translate well into the Japanese language.”

It is this inadequacy of the other tongue that prompts Raja Rao to use the English language innovatively to make it approximate the Kannada rhythm. In keeping with his theme in *Kanthapura* he experiments with the language following the oral rhythms and narrative techniques of traditional models of writing. He breaks the formal English syntax to express the emotional upheaval that shakes the village of Kanthapura. The author’s foreword to the novel almost spells out the postcolonial cultural agenda: “The telling has not been easy…. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect, which will some-day prove to be as
These creative writers are justifying the need to modify the English language at the formal and functional levels to convey the nuances of the cultures that have adopted English as a vehicle of expression. Some of these properties and functions that these creative writers are hinting at may cause incomprehensibility and unintelligibility.

Before I illustrate properties and functions that hamper comprehension and intelligibility, let me distinguish between unintelligibility and incomprehensibility. Unintelligibility is basically a phonological and phonetic problem. Unintelligibility refers to the qualities of accent that result in failure to decipher pronunciation, articulation of sounds and word stress, and consequently to understand meanings and messages. Comprehensibility, on the other hand, is a pragmatic problem. We understand the words, we understand the accent, we understand the literal meaning; but we fail to understand culture-bound, culturally determined, contextual meanings. Thus it is basically a pragmatic failure. Smith and Nelson (1985), cited in Taylor (2003), distinguish between intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability. For them intelligibility has to do with word or utterance recognition, comprehensibility with word or utterance meaning, and interpretability with illocutionary force.

**Incomprehensibility**

Let me illustrate using Indian English as example formal properties that may cause incomprehensibility. These formal properties fall under vocabulary, grammar and discourse. Vocabulary is one factor that causes incomprehensibility. There are two aspects of vocabulary that create incomprehensibility problems for users of English who are unfamiliar with other varieties of English such as Indian English. For example, Indian users of English have added a few words to the lexicon of the language. Some of these words are ‘prepone’ for ‘advance’, ‘co-brother’ for one’s ‘wife’s sister’s spouse’, ‘godown’ for ‘warehouse’, ‘opticals’ for ‘glasses’, ‘lakh’ for ‘a hundred thousand’, ‘crore’ for ‘ten million’, ‘bunk classes’ for ‘play truant’ and so on. In addition, there are certain English words which are used in senses different from those in British and American varieties; for example, ‘hotel’ is used to mean ‘restaurant’, ‘shift’ is used to mean ‘move into a new house’, ‘reach’ is used to mean ‘arrive’, ‘standard’ is used to mean ‘grade’. A listener unfamiliar with this variety of English may not understand the intended meanings of these words or may misunderstand them. Similarly, the reverse use of the verbs ‘give’ and ‘take’ in the context of an examination may baffle a foreign listener. In the so-called standard variety, teachers ‘give a test’ and their students ‘take a test’. In Indian variety, the expressions are frequently reversed. The hearer may find it difficult to know as to who the tester and the testee is. Let me cite an example from Vietnamese variety. One case in point is the use of ‘come’ and ‘go’ in Vietnamese variety of English. In standard variety of English, ‘go’ means moving to a place that is far from the speaker and the listener and ‘come’ means moving to a place that is nearer to the hearer. For example, a student may say to his teacher: “May I come in, Sir?” and “Sir, may I go home now?” In the first case, the student is moving nearer to the teacher; in the second case, the student wants to move away from the teacher. This is the normal use in
English. But, in Vietnamese variety of English, the use is reversed. The student usually says to the teacher who is in school with him. “Excuse me, Sir. May I come back home now? And yes, I cannot go to school tomorrow” (Patil 2002, pp.14-16). Japanese speakers of English also tend to use these two verbs for reverse meanings. Let us look at one more example. Like the words ‘come’ and ‘go’, most Vietnamese students use the words ‘bring’ and ‘take’ in a reverse sense. In British English when I ‘bring’ something I carry it from another place to the place where the hearer is. Similarly, when I ‘take’ something, I take it from where the hearer and I are to another place. But most Vietnamese students use the two words in an opposite way. As a teacher, I often heard my students say, “Excuse me teacher. I don’t have this book at home. Can I bring it for a week, please?” and “I’m sorry teacher. I forgot to take the book that I brought from you last week. I’ll take it tomorrow.” Now, the important point here is how do these readers interpret ‘come’ and ‘go’ and ‘bring’ and ‘take’ when they encounter them in a reading passage? Do they interpret them the English way or the Vietnamese way? My experience is that elementary and intermediate level Vietnamese learners of English interpret these words the Vietnamese way. They need to be told time and again that the usual meanings of ‘come’ and ‘go’ are different from the meaning they attach, and so is the case with ‘bring’ and ‘take’.

Variant grammar is another factor that may lead to incomprehensibility. Some grammatical features of Indian variety of English are extensive use of the present progressive (e.g., “I am having very kind and considerate parents.”; “No I am not from Pune; I am coming from a tiny village near Pune.”); omission of the definite article (e.g., “I am only support my mother-in-law has.”); plural forms of uncountable nouns (e.g., “I bought some furnitures last week.”); plural forms of nouns that do not take the plural marker (e.g., “When we were landing at Delhi airport, we saw several aircrafts flying over New Delhi.”); and invariable question tags (e.g., “You have done the homework, isn’t it?”). These formal properties may cause comprehension problems.

Here are some more examples of incomprehensible English. Many speakers of Indian variety of English produce utterances like the following:

(1) “Like you, I cannot speak English very well.”

What the speaker wants to say is that the addressee can speak English very well, but the speaker cannot. But the unintended meaning of the speaker’s utterance is exactly opposite. The speaker’s utterance means that the speaker as well as the addressee cannot speak English very well.

(2) A: “You haven’t been to London, right?”

B: “Yes.”

Or

B: “No.”

Here there are two speakers. The first speaker (A) wants to know whether the second speaker (B) has been to London or not. The first speaker’s utterance is negative primarily assuming that B has not been to London. However, B can answer it either in the negative or in the affirmative. In
standard British and American English an affirmative response would mean that the speaker has been to London (“Yes, I have been to London”). However, in Indian English it means exactly the opposite. It means that A assumes that B has not been to London and what s/he assumes is right. It does not mean that B has been to London. Thus “yes” in this case implies agreement with the first speaker (speaker A). Similarly, in British and American varieties a negative response would mean that the speaker has not been to London. In these varieties B says something like this: “You assume that I have not been to London. No, I haven’t been to London.” But in Indian English it means “You think that I have not been to London, but I have been to London. So, I disagree with you or that your assumption is wrong.” Thus ‘No’ implies disagreement with speaker A.

Omission of an article may also lead to incomprehension. As we know, ‘a few’ has different meaning from ‘few’ and ‘a little’ has different meaning from ‘little’. ‘Few’ and ‘a few’ have countable meanings; ‘few’ means ‘almost none’ whereas ‘a few’ means ‘some’. ‘Little’ and ‘a little’ have uncountable meanings; ‘little’ means ‘almost no/nothing’ whereas ‘a little’ means ‘some’. The speaker’s lack of knowledge of this distinction results in a wrong choice. There is a mismatch between speaker’s intention and listener’s comprehension. The speaker intends to say or mean ‘almost no sugar in the kitchen’ or ‘almost no students in the classroom’ but chooses ‘a little sugar in the kitchen’ and ‘a few students in the classroom’ respectively. The speaker’s choice of ‘a little’ and ‘a few’ are semantically positive, but the meanings that s/he wants to convey are negative. When the listener who is aware of the semantic distinction resulting from the grammatical difference listens to the speaker, s/he interprets the expressions as positive. Thus there is a mismatch between what the speaker wants to convey and the grammatical choices s/he makes. A similar thing happens at the interpretation stage. The listener hears positive expressions such as ‘a little’ and ‘a few’ and naturally interprets them as having positive meaning. Thus there is a conflict between the speaker’s intention and the listener’s reception. This mismatch leads to confusion at the comprehension level.

Another stumbling block in comprehensible communication is the use of information seeking interrogatives in place of interrogatives that express irritation, annoyance, accusation, surprise, etc. As we know, there is a semantic difference between the two. In the interrogatives expressing special meanings ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘who’, etc. change to ‘whatever’, ‘wherever’, ‘whoever’, etc. Let’s look at the following sets of sentences.

**Information seeking interrogative sentences:**
1. What did you do?
2. Who did you go with?
3. Where were you yesterday?

**Interrogative sentences with special meanings:**
1. Whatever did you do?
2. Whoever did you go with?
3. Wherever were you yesterday?

Certain features of spoken discourse may also lead to incomprehension. For example, differing patterns of turn taking found in different cultures may cause incomprehension or rather confusion.
In the first pattern, one speaker completes his/her turn and only then does another speaker begin his/her contribution. In the second pattern, there is a silence after the first speaker has finished his/her turn. This pattern is observed in Japanese culture. The pause between the two turns is interpersonally and socially significant. It is indicative of respect shown by the second speaker. The pause means that the second speaker thinks that the first speaker’s contribution is so valuable that the second speaker needs time to understand its import. The third pattern shows interruption. These interruptions may not only be due to any urgency, but due to cultural acceptability. In the fourth pattern, two speakers talk simultaneously and demand the listener to listen and make sense of what they are talking about. In the fourth pattern, two speakers keep talking simultaneously. In the fifth pattern, more than two people talk together. This is a pattern most noticeably observed in debates, especially political debates, on some Indian TV channels.

Coaxing is another instance, which may cause incomprehension in a situation involving a foreign guest. An Indian host would like to continue coaxing even when the guest cannot eat any more. The host would say that the guest has eaten nothing, which may baffle the foreign guest. It is equally interesting to see what happens in a situation where the guest is an Indian and the host is a foreigner. In the Indian culture, it is polite to say ‘no’ to a second helping and ‘no’ here means, “I will have another helping only if you coax me again.” However, if the foreign host interprets that ‘no’ literally and does not offer another helping, the guest may remain hungry.

Another strategy that may baffle a foreigner is that of attributing ownership. Thus, utterances such as “Be comfortable, this is your house” may confuse the foreign listener. Another strategy that may confuse foreigners is self-humbling. In Indian culture, whatever belongs to the speaker is ordinary and whatever belongs to the addressee is extraordinary. Thus, my house would be a humble hut or a cottage, and your house would be a palace, a bungalow. The question “May I know your good name please?” is a result of this strategy. The listener who is not familiar with the strategy of addressee-elevation and speaker-humbling may find this question rather puzzling. S/he may say, “Well, I have a first name, a middle name, a last name, a nickname and a pen-name. I don’t have a ‘good’ name”. The question unwittingly implies that the addressee has a good name and a bad name. So is the utterance “I am at your service”. An Englishman will usually say, “May I help you?” or “What can I do for you?”

Quite often such utterances are translations of utterances from the speaker’s mother tongue. Once I was participating in an international conference. After my presentation, a German friend shocked me when she described my ideas as ‘the yellow of the egg’ and my presentation as ‘very pregnant’. What he meant was that my ideas were brilliant and that my presentation was very precise. Initially, I understood the literal meaning and was a bit amused, but when I comprehended the implied meaning I was comfortable.

Unintelligibility

Now let me illustrate features of Indian variety of English that may cause unintelligibility. This section examines the
relevance of the construct of speech intelligibility in the light of two presuppositions. First, ‘familiar social context, shared cultural background or schematic knowledge, and insider awareness of linguistic norms’, ‘a willing ear’ (Nair-Venugopal 2003), and paralinguistic and nonverbal features such as intonation, facial expressions, eye contact, physical touch, social distance, posture and gesture (see Miller 1981, and Pennycook 1985, cited in Brown 1989) can facilitate intelligibility. Secondly, intelligibility is not a matter of ‘either or’. In other words, it is not speaker-centred or listener-centred; it is interactional (Smith and Nelson 1985, p. 333). Non-native speakers have to be intelligible to native speakers; conversely, native speakers need to be intelligible to non-native speakers. In this context, let me mention the decision taken by the civil aviation authorities of India (The Times of India, February 10, 2006). According to this mandate, all expatriate pilots will have to pass a spoken English test, because as the source says, “We do not want to face a situation where these foreign pilots are not able to converse with the ATCs- Air Traffic Controllers. This can cause serious problems”. This resolution comes years after a worst mid-air collision between a Saudi Arabian Airliner jet and a Kazakhstan cargo plane, caused by a pilot’s poor understanding of English. As Toolan (1997) suggests, L1 and L2 speakers of English accommodate to one another’s use of the language and share responsibility for intercultural communication. By the same token, the negotiation of meaning between non-native speakers of English with different linguistic backgrounds stresses the ‘cooperative nature of lingua franca communication’ (Meierkord 1998). These assumptions underpin the discussion of the issue of intelligibility of English as a global language.

Crystal (1997, p. 2) characterizes a global language as follows: “A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country”. As Graddol (1997, p. 56) points out, the English language has two main functions in the world: it provides a vehicular language for international communication, and it forms the basis for constructing identities. The former function requires mutual intelligibility and common standards; the latter encourages the development of local forms and hybrid varieties. Given the forecast that English will remain a global language for several decades to come, we may then ask the question ‘How will English change its form and role as an international link language?’ Yano (2001, cited in Yoneoka 2002), predicts three possible outcomes for the future of English as a global language: (i) Acrolect-level local varieties of English may come into existence; (ii) English may diverge into many mutually unintelligible local varieties; (iii) it may diversify into a variety of mutually intelligible dialects except in writing. The first of these outcomes seems to be coming true. Attempts to codify the varieties have accorded them acceptance and prestige. We no longer subscribe to the rigid distinction between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’, and we look at the varieties in the spirit of equality and shared communicative responsibility. In fact, with the diversification of English, we are talking about training the native speaker to develop sensitivity towards intercultural communication.

Cathford (1950, as cited in Nair-Venugopal 2003), states that intelligibility depends on its realization of at least four out of five
aspects: selection, execution, transmission, identification, and interpretation with an elaboration-effectiveness—which depend on the hearer’s response matching the speaker’s intent of purpose. As Jandt (2001, p. 29) puts it, the components of communication are source, encoding, message, channel, noise, receiver, decoding, receiver response, feedback and context. When receivers fail to decode a message, communication stops and responses can be quite diversified.

Most of the work done so far discusses intelligibility with reference to native speakers. As a result, non-native learners and speakers are supposed to emulate the native speaker model (Taylor 2003), because the native speaker is believed to be the sole owner of English. Hence it is the responsibility of the non-native speaker to work towards the native model (Smith 1987, p. xi). Scholars like Bansal (1969) held a one-sided perspective and thought of intelligibility with reference to external norms. They maintained that the non-native varieties of English were not only different but also deficient and unintelligible. They took British and American varieties as standard, correct, prestigious, and intelligible and suggested non-native speakers of English emulate them. However, if English no longer belongs to the native speaker and the native speaker is no longer involved in many English transactions, perhaps this is no longer appropriate. As Nihalani (2000, p. 108) states, “The typical approach in this tradition is to use the native accent selected for comparison as a template, juxtapose it against a non-native accent, and identify the features that do not fit the template”. This outlook has two implications. First, the non-native speaker should make effort to approximate the external norm set by the so-called standard variety to understand the native speaker and to be intelligible to him/her. Secondly, the native speaker is free from this responsibility. Thus, only one participant is obliged to make effort because s/he speaks a deviant variety.

The legitimization of new varieties of English has moved the debate on the issue of intelligibility from the one-sided position to a two-sided perspective. The latter perspective looks at communication between speakers of different varieties as a shared activity, a common pursuit to achieve mutual intelligibility. The central argument is that users of English as a lingua franca in international contexts should not look to native speakers of English for norms but should aim for mutual intelligibility among themselves (Jenkins 2000). It is in this context that McKay (2002) considers standards for English as an international language with reference to intelligibility and examines the lexical, grammatical, and phonological features of varieties of English. As Seidlhofer (2003) points out, “a general shift in curricular guidelines has taken place from correctness to appropriateness and intelligibility, but by and large intelligibility is taken to mean being intelligible to native speakers, and being able to understand native speakers”.

Let us now discuss factors that cause unintelligibility. Nihalani (1997) states, “two foreigners of the same nationality can converse with mutual understanding in English using their own phonetic and phonological systems. They run a serious risk, however, of being quite unintelligible to a speaker of English from the outer or inner circle. The learner must therefore adopt certain basic features of English in his pronunciation if he is to acquire a linguistic tool of international use. It is commonplace
knowledge that various native varieties of English differ from each other in major ways, as much, perhaps, as the non-native varieties differ from the native varieties. Nevertheless native speakers of English appear to be mutually intelligible to a degree that does not extend to the non-native varieties. Obviously, there are features that various native accents have in common, which facilitate their mutual intelligibility, and these features are not shared by non-native accents”.

Incidentally, Nihalani’s observation stands the test of validity, although I find it difficult to fully agree with his view that two foreigners of the same nationality can communicate without any intelligibility problems. In this respect, Kenworthy (1987 cited in Walker 2001), proposes the idea of ‘comfortable intelligibility’ as a realistic goal. We could take this criterion to mean minimum general intelligibility or “what all speakers of all varieties have in common, which enables them to communicate effectively with speakers of native and non-native varieties other than their own”.

This comfortable intelligibility is what Achebe (1965, p. 30) means when he says, ‘the African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience…. it will have to be anew English, still in full communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit its new surroundings’.

Brown (1989) classifies language features as (i) features that cause unintelligibility to non-native listeners from the same speech community as the speaker (for example, a Malaysian finds another Malaysian difficult to understand); (ii) features, which make it difficult for native listeners of English to understand non-native speakers (for example, an American finds it hard to comprehend a Japanese speaker of English); and finally, (iii) features, which lead to loss of intelligibility to non-native listeners from other speech communities (for example, a Chinese listener of English finds it difficult to understand a Japanese speaker of English). Brown’s second and third categories are similar to Melchers and Shaw’s (2003, cited in Nunn 2005, p. 70) international intelligibility and his first category resembles their national intelligibility.

Seidlhofer (2001, cited in Burt 2005), observes that quite often it is features which are regarded as the most typically English, such as the agreement between a third person singular subject and its verb, tags, phrasal verbs and idioms, which turn out to be non-essential for mutual understanding. In a subsequent publication, Seidlhofer (2001) observes that certain traditionally serious errors do not hinder English as a lingua franca communication. According to Seidlhofer, these typical errors include (i) dropping the third person present tense –s, (ii) confusing the relative pronouns ‘who’ and ‘which’, (iii) omitting articles where they are obligatory in native English language, and inserting them where they do not occur in English as a native language, (iv) failing to use correct forms in tag questions, e.g., ‘isn’t it?’ or ‘no?’ instead of the ones used in standard British and American English, (v) inserting redundant prepositions, as in ‘we have to study about…’, ‘we have to discuss about…’ (vi) overusing verbs of high semantic generality such as ‘do’, ‘have’,
‘make’, ‘put’ and ‘take’, (vii) replacing infinitive constructions with ‘that clause’ as in ‘I want that...’, (vii) overdoing explicitness, e.g., ‘black colour’, and ‘dead body’ rather than just ‘black’ and ‘body’. We may add several other features of Indian, Vietnamese, and Japanese varieties of English that do not cause unintelligibility. Such features are generally unproblematic and are no obstacle to communicative success.

As an alternative to inclusive and exclusive notions such as ‘native’ and ‘non-native’, Melchers and Shaw (2003, cited in Nunn 2005, p. 70), suggest international intelligibility (for example, an Indian and a Korean communicating effortlessly with each other), national intelligibility (for example, a Kashmiri and a Tamil interacting without any problem) and local intelligibility (for example, two Japanese people from Okinawa island or from Kyoto city interacting smoothly). Someone who knows some English but cannot communicate in it internationally, nationally or locally is an ineffective user of the language.

However, inaccurate pronunciation that is clearly understandable is forgiven whereas pronunciation that is not understood is, and must necessarily be, perfected if the speakers wish to be understood and if the listeners wish to understand, as this is the fundamental rule of communication (Offner 1995). Jenkins (2000) classifies the phonological features of EIL into core features and non-core features, essential in terms of intelligibility. According to her, divergences in the areas of vowel quality, weak forms, assimilation, and word stress from the native speaker realizations should be regarded as instances of acceptable L2 sociolinguistic variation. On the other hand, devoicing of consonants (‘mug’ pronounced as ‘muck’), omission of consonants from clusters (‘six’ pronounced as ‘sick’), confusion between short and long vowels (confusion between ‘ship’ and ‘sheep’), substitution of the vowel as in ‘bird’ especially with the vowel in ‘bard’, and substitution of consonants and vowels by other consonants and vowels (‘TB’ for ‘TV’; ‘snakes’ for ‘snacks’; ‘hole’ for ‘hall’ respectively). In her opinion, it is these features that play a significant role in international intelligibility.

Poor articulation of words can also affect intelligibility. For example, most Vietnamese and Japanese learners do not articulate words clearly. Vietnamese learners tend to drop word-final sounds. For instance, they will pronounce the italicized words in the following sentence almost identically, as if they were homophones:

“Mr. Nguyen, why (/wai/) doesn’t your wife (/wai/) try white (/wai/) wine (/wai/)?”

Whereas omission is a major problem with Vietnamese learners, substitution is a big problem with Japanese learners (Patil 2005, p. 7). For instance, there is a strong tendency among Japanese learners to replace /r/ with /l/, /v/ with /b/ and /f/ with /h/. As a result, it is very difficult to distinguish between ‘This is a grass house’ and ‘This is a glass house’. An Arab learner’s problems are substitution of sounds and insertion of extra sounds. So, ‘pill’ is articulated as ‘bill’ and ‘text’ is pronounced as ‘tekist’. The pronunciation problems of the three groups of learners can be summarily illustrated with the help of the following single example:

“I’m going to dine with six friends. We’ll have a pot of friedrice each”.
An Arab learner will most probably say, “I’m going to dine with sikis friends. We’ll have a boat of rice each”.

A Vietnamese learner will tend to say, “I’m going to die with sick friends. We’ll have a pot of rice each”.

A Japanese learner will likely say, “I’m going to dine with six friends. We’ll have a pot of fried lice each”.

Thus mispronunciation of words such as ‘dine’ as ‘die’, ‘six’ as ‘sick’, ‘friends’ as ‘hrends’, ‘pot’ as ‘boat’, ‘fried’ as ‘flied’ and ‘rice’ as ‘lice’ may cause incomprehension or miscomprehension.

**Conclusion**

In short, we can say that unintelligibility concerns articulation or delivery of sounds, words, stress and intonation; incomprehensibility refers to culture-specific content and linguistic realization of politeness, conversational cooperation and nature of speech acts. Incomprehension may result from the use of new vocabulary and new use of existing vocabulary as well as certain turn taking patterns and deviant linguistic realization of speech functions such as coaxing, self-humbling, addressee-raising, etc. Unintelligibility may result from deviant pronunciation of certain sounds and words, and deviant word stress patterns. The spread and growth of new varieties of English has led to development of new formal properties and functions which may cause incomprehension and unintelligibility.

**References**


**Contributor**

Dr. Z. N. Patil has taught and delivered plenary talks and keynote addresses in twenty countries. He has several books and articles to his credit. These days he conducts workshops on ELT, soft skills and life skills in India and abroad. He is a founder member of the international group of scholars called ‘English Scholars Beyond Borders’.
The need for ESP in Burundi: What do tertiary English teachers say about it?

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Abstract

This study examines the views that tertiary English teachers hold on the need for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Burundi higher education. To do so, it investigates the extent to which they are familiar with the theory and practice of ESP. For this study, 32 English teachers were contacted to participate in it. They were all requested to complete an online questionnaire, but only 17 proved willing to do so. The findings revealed that the majority of teachers are familiar with the practice of ESP. Although many of them reported to have high familiarity with the field of ESP, a few of them conduct a Needs Analysis (NA) before teaching ESP courses. Results also indicated that tertiary English teachers highly acknowledge the importance of teaching ESP in Burundi higher Education and, therefore, would encourage the ministry of education to fund an ESP project.

Keywords: ESP, Burundi higher education, online questionnaire, NA

Introduction

The demand for English language is growing across the globe and so its use in higher education. This increasing demand for English is translated into, for example, the growing number of non-English speaking countries that are switching from French to English or adopting English as an official language such as Gabon, Burundi, South Sudan (Plonski, Teffera & Brady, 2013), and others adopting English as medium of instruction in higher education (Dearden, 2018).

In Burundi where French is a medium of instruction, the English language was adopted as an official language in 2014 (Uwimana, 2014). This change of the status of English language resulted from the growing interest in and need for English that Burundians have shown in the last three decades. Indeed, Nizonkiza (2006) argues that the interest in English is growing considerably. The evidence for this is that the number of people enrolling in English language programmes increased tremendously throughout the decade of 1996 to 2005 (ibid). Currently, English is
taught from primary to tertiary level of education. At tertiary level, even departments/branches other than English (DBOE) have an English course on their curricula. Besides, some universities are now offering English Medium Instruction. The primary reason for this shift in the medium of instruction is a desire for universities to internationalise both by attracting international students and by ensuring that domestic students are advantaged on the global job market (Dearden, 2018).

Given this situation, it seems reasonable to ask such questions: (1) what kind of English are French Medium universities offering to their students? (2) Do the pre-studies English courses offered by English-Medium Universities enable students to meet the language requirements to undertake their studies in English? (3) Are teachers well prepared to teach English courses in those universities? This small-scale study has no space to answer these questions but the point is that the above-mentioned students have specific needs in English. These needs range from vocational, to professional and to academic (Bracaj, 2014; Charles, 2013; Thompson, 2013; as cited in Çelik, Stavicka & Odina, 2018). It follows that; though some may disagree, there is a need in these universities to teach English for Specific purposes (ESP), a major subfield of English Language Teaching (ELT), which aims to meet the students ‘specific needs within a particular discipline (Sabieh, 2018; Dudley-Evans & St John,1998). However, the extent to which tertiary English teachers in Burundi are familiar with the theory and practice of ESP is so far still questionable. Besides the views these teachers hold on the need for ESP in Burundi higher Education are not known.

Literature review

What is ESP?

The acronym ESP is used as an umbrella term to refer to the teaching of English for all specific purposes such as academic, occupational or professional purposes(Basturkmen,2017). Hutchinson and Waters (1988) define ESP as an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and methodology are based on the learner’s reason for learning [emphasis is added]. What those who adopt ESP approach consider as distinguishing it from other approaches to ELT is the commitment to the goal of providing language instruction that addresses students’ own specific language learning purposes (Hyland, 2002; as cited in Belcher, 2009).

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) provide another definition of ESP that is rather more comprehensive. Drawing on Stevens’ (1988) definition of ESP, they base their definition on the distinction between absolute and variable characteristics. They identified three absolute characteristics: (1)ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; (2)ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves; and (3) ESP is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. The same authors suggested four variable (optional) characteristics of ESP: (1) ESP may be related to or designed for specific discipline. (2) ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English. (3) ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; it could, however, be used
for learners at secondary school level. (4) ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students; most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Although the literature on ESP provide a number of definitions, they all agree that ESP is centred on learner’s reasons for learning, that is, their needs for taking the course. Therefore, Needs Analysis (NA) is the cornerstone of any ESP course (Brown, 2016; Rahman, 2015; Basturkmen 2010).

**Growing demand for ESP worldwide**

Since its emergence in the 1960s as a distinctive movement within the field of ELT, ESP has grown rapidly and is still spreading worldwide. This is mainly due to the status of English language as an “international language or a global lingua franca” (Marlina & Xu, 2018). Indeed, English language is, nowadays, predominantly used in diverse international economic and cultural arenas, and in electronic communication (ibid). Similarly, English continues to be the dominant language in business, technology, media, education, medicine, and research, and therefore, the demand for ESP is rapidly growing to fulfil people with an instrumental purpose (Tsao, 2008; Xu, 2008, as cited in Lin& Huang).

To respond to the growing demand for ESP, some countries such as Brazil, Tunisia, Algeria etc. did set up ESP projects (Labassi, 2010; Bouyakoub & Bouyacoub, 2017). In Saudi Arabia, for example, Ahmad (2012) argues that the demand for ESP is high. Being in line with Ahmad, Alsubaie (2016) calls for the establishment of a local ESP Saudi Center and argues that the Brazilian ESP experience is applicable to Saudi situation.

**Motivation for the study**

To conduct this study, the researcher was motivated by a combination of three factors. The first factor is the researcher’s experience as an English teacher at a tertiary level. He was assigned to teach English to Engineering students. Because of lack of teaching materials at the institution and the short time given to prepare the course, he could not design his own course that would cater for the specific needs of the learners. He therefore resorted to ready-made materials and decided to use Glendinning’s and Glendinning’s (1995) ‘Oxford English for Electrical and Mechanical Engineering’ textbook. Although the textbook seemed to reflect their discipline, it turned out that students were not motivated. The textbook proved difficult due to student’s low level of English and of engineering subjects.

As far as the second factor is concerned, a student studying in Management and Public Finance at a National Administration School, requested help from the researcher – explaining a handout provide by an English course teacher. Surprisingly, the handout was nothing but a list of simply explained (only the first meaning in the dictionary was given) vocabulary items without examples. This raised the question, on the part of the researcher, of whether the English course teacher had conducted a Needs Analysis to determine whether the handout would cater for the particular needs of the students.

The last factor that motivated this study is the growing number of English-medium universities. At these universities, students are given pre-studies English courses to enable them follow their studies
successfully in English. It is, however, questionable whether these courses are tailor-made to serve the specific academic language needs of the students.

**Research questions**

The following two research questions were the main concern of this study:

1. To what extent are tertiary English teachers in Burundi familiar with the theory and practice of ESP?
2. What views do they hold on the need for ESP in Burundi higher education?

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The subjects in this study are tertiary English teachers from two public higher institutions namely University of Burundi (UB) and Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS). These subjects were chosen because they are more exposed to the teaching of English in academic settings and are very often, if not always, called upon to teach English courses to non-English major (NEM) university students.

The link to the questionnaire was sent to 32 tertiary English teachers via email. Of the 32 English teachers that received the online questionnaire, only 17 were willing to respond to it. Of the 17 teachers who responded to the questionnaire, 58.8% work at ENS while 41.2% teach at UB. Besides, 70.6% are male whereas 29.4% are female. Their teaching experience ranges from 2 to 38 years.

**Research instrument**

This study used an online questionnaire that consisted of 16 items grouped into two sections. The first section (item 1 to 7) aimed at gathering data as to how tertiary English teachers are familiar with the theory and practice of ESP. The second section (item 8 to 16) was devised to collect data about the teachers’ views on the need for ESP in Burundi. Of all the 16 items, only two were open-ended questions. All the remaining 14 items were put on rating scales ranging from 2 to 5 points.

**Data collection procedures**

As the instrument used was the online questionnaire, participants were contacted via e-mail. Their mail addresses were gathered from the heads of English departments at UB and ENS. Since the targeted population was not too large, all that could be reached were requested to take part in this study. They were given a month to complete the questionnaire.

**Findings**

**Findings for the first research question**

Regarding the teachers’ familiarity with the theory and practice of ESP, 82.4% of the respondents reported that they had taught in DBOE (see Graph 1); while 64.7% confirmed that they had taught English course in language centres (see Graph 2). Besides, 70.6% of the respondents reported that they had, at least once, taught English to a group of learners who have special and/or immediate needs for English (e.g.: company workers, civil servants, businessmen, diplomates etc.) (See Graph 3). From this, it can be seen that tertiary English teachers have practiced the teaching of ESP, though the quality of their practice is not known.
Although many of the tertiary English teachers reported to have already taught in DBOE and/or in language centres, the results on Graph 4 show that a few of them (47.1 %) conducted a Needs Analysis before teaching the course. However, all the respondents (100 %) agree that it is necessary to conduct NA before teaching ESP courses (see Graph 5).

As asked to rate their knowledge in the field of NA on scale ranging from poor to excellent, only 47.1% rated themselves as having very good knowledge whereas 29.4 % reported to have good knowledge, and 23.5% to have fair knowledge (see Graph 6). This indicates that there is a need for tertiary English teachers to expand their knowledge in NA. Similarly, asked to rate, on the whole, their familiarity with the theory in the field of ESP, 52.9% of the respondents said that they have high familiarity with the field of ESP; 23.5 % reported to have medium familiarity, while 17.6% confirmed to be poorly familiar with ESP (See Graph 7).
Findings for the Second Research Question

As far as teacher’s views on the need for ESP in Burundi higher education are concerned, 58.8 % of the respondents believe that it is very important to teach English to NEM students, and 29.4% believe that it is extremely important (See Graph 8). This shows that teachers have a positive view about the teaching of English to NEM students.

Regarding the reasons for the need of English course in DBOE, respondents were asked to show their level of agreement on a rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The findings on Table 1 show that the majority of tertiary English teachers (88.8%) strongly agree that there is a need for English course in DBOE to help NEM students to get access to academic and scientific sources published in English. Similarly, teachers believe that studying English in DBOE increases the chance to get a scholarship to study abroad. In fact, 64.7% strongly agree on this while 29.4% agree. Although 17.6% of the respondents are neutral on whether the English course help NEM students to get a high quality job after graduation; 35.3 % strongly agree about it, whereas 33.3% agree. In nutshell, tertiary English teachers perceive the need for teaching English in DBOE.

Table 1. Teachers’ Views on the Reasons for the Need to Study English in DBOE
The other main reasons for the need to study English in DBOE, as was provided by participants in an open-ended way, are listed on Table 2.

Table 2. Other Main Reasons Outlined by Teachers for the Need for English in DBOE

- To pass international English tests,
- To establish business and scientific contact with people from English speaking countries,
- To attend conferences held in English, etc.,
- To enhance intercultural communication,
- Because English opens students to the world,
- To easily integrate in native English speaker communities; understand their cultures through readings, movies, etc.
- Meet different requirements and needs of globalisation in this fast-changing world,
- Because it is a great asset for research, many publications are in English.

As asked about what kind of English that should be taught to NEM students, 70.6% of the teachers suggested that students should be taught both academic and vocational English (see Graph 9). Similarly, 87.5% highlighted that they would highly encourage the Ministry of Higher Educations and Scientific Research to fund an ESP project (see Graph 11).
Asked to explain why the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research should fund an ESP project, respondents stated the following, as summarised on Table 3.

**Table 3. Reasons for Funding an ESP Project in Higher Education**

- ESP curriculum design and implementation requires means and resources which transcend those available for the teaching of General English.
- ESP is very important; it meets the English language needs of students not majoring in English studies.
- Since the need for Burundians to use English remains tremendous (in businesses, studies, transport, etc.), the ministry should sustain each initiative related to promoting ESP to help learners of ESP succeed.
- English is a world language and therefore it is essential that specialists in other domains have a mastery of it to help them communicate across the borders.
- ESP project will help detect the specific English language needs for every branch or department and design tailored curricula that will efficiently meet the students’ needs.

Regarding the contents of different programs taught in specific branches, there has been, so far, individual initiatives from teachers. It is therefore high time there were a basic program for each field (agriculture, computer science, physics and technology, justice, health, etc.)

**Discussion and implications of the Findings**

**Teachers’ Familiarity with the theory and practice of ESP**

The results obtained from the online questionnaire revealed that the majority of teachers have, at least once, taught English course in departments other than English (81.3 %) or in language centres (62.5 %). Although many of the participants rated themselves as having a good knowledge in the field of NA, only a few of them (43.8 %) admitted to have conducted a Needs Analysis before teaching the course. In such a situation, it seems reasonable to ask the question of whether the language needs of NEM students are served. Indeed, Needs Analysis is acknowledged as the most important part in any course development (Brown, 2016; Basturkmen, 2010, etc.). It is the key stage in ESP (Rahman, 2015).

Another finding regarding teachers’ familiarity with ESP is that 50% admitted to have a high familiarity with ESP. Since only a few of them conduct a NA before teaching, one may ask the question as put by Çelik, Stavicka, and Odina (2018): ‘Are we really teaching English for specific purposes, or basic English skills?’

**Teachers’ views on the need for ESP in Burundi higher Education**

The analysis of the data from the online questionnaire showed that 58.8% of the respondents asserted that it is very important that DBOE have an English course on their curricula; 29.4% highlighted that it is extremely important. According to teachers (87.5 %), the main reason for this need of ESP in DBOE is that students
will get access to academic and scientific sources published in English. These findings are consistent with the Brazilian and Tunisian ESP projects which assigned priority to the reading skill so that ESP students can read field literature which is, in some disciplines, available exclusively in English (Labassi, 2010). The findings also indicated that 70.6% of the respondents suggested that NEM students be taught both academic and vocation English. Indeed, ESP students’ needs range from vocational, to professional and to academic (Bracaj, 2014; Charles, 2013; Thompson 2013; as cited in Çelik, Stavicka & Odina, 2018). The respondents (87.5%) also highlighted that they would highly encourage the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Burundi to fund an ESP project.

**Implications of the findings**

The results of this study have implications for potential positive change in the provision of ESP courses in Burundi. For the change to happen, different stakeholders are involved – students, teachers, language departments and the government.

As far as students are concerned, this study might help them be aware of the reasons for learning English (getting access to academic and scientific sources published in English, increasing the chance to get a scholarship to study abroad, etc.). The more they get aware of these reasons, the much likely their motivation to learn English is to increase.

Regarding teachers, the results of this study revealed that though many of the surveyed teachers are familiar with the practice of ESP, a few of them conduct a Needs analysis. This indicated that there is a need for teachers to reflect on the English courses they provide to NEM students. To put it differently, what ESP teachers in Burundi need to do is to first analyse the particular needs of students and then develop, adopt or adapt suitable materials that would cater for the needs of the students.

The findings of this study might also encourage the language departments to consider the issue of well preparedness of the teachers to teach English to special groups of learners. In other words, there is a need for language departments to enhance the teachers’ ability to design, deliver and evaluate ESP programmes.

Given that 88.2% of the respondents reported they would highly encourage the ministry of education to fund an ESP project, the government of Burundi might feel this need and therefore initiate an ESP project that would help coordinate and support the teaching of English to special learners.

**Limitations for the study.**

Although this study revealed important findings, it does have some limitations. First, the number of respondents is low comparing to the targeted population (17 respondents out of 32). Had all the tertiary Burundi English teachers been willing to respond to the questionnaire, the study would have indicated much more reliable results. Second, this study did not involve students who constitute one of the key components in the teaching-learning process.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study set out to investigate tertiary English teachers’ views on the need for ESP
in Burundi and examine the extent to which they are familiar with the theory and practice of ESP. Although many of the respondents reported to have, at least once, taught English in DBOE, many of them ignore the practice of NA, a key essence in ESP. Despite this, a great majority of the teachers recognize the importance of teaching English to NEM students and suggested that those students be taught both academic and vocational English. They also reported that they would highly encourage the Ministry of Education to fund an ESP project.

Given the above findings of this study, it is recommended to teachers to read more about ESP to get a comprehensive understanding of this field so as to fully serve the specific English language needs of NEM students. To the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, it is recommended to set up an ESP project which would help teachers of English to easily shift from General English teachers to ESP teachers and would therefore help coordinate the teaching of ESP in Burundi.

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**Contributor**

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Should teachers use L1 in EFL classroom?

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Abstract

English language teachers customarily rule out the use of mother tongue for teaching English. Reflecting on the theoretical underpinnings and empirical research on the use of mother tongue (L1) in English classroom and its ongoing debate the present study aims to explore teachers’ and students’ perceptions of it. A mixed method approach using questionnaire and interview is employed to analyze Bangladeshi university teachers’ and students’ belief and perceptions of teaching English with the help of L1. The study also attempts to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of using L1. Results indicate that both teachers and students perceive the necessity of judicious use of L1 to facilitate learning and acquisition of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Key words: mother tongue (L1), Bangla, English as a foreign language, monolingual, bilingual.

Introduction

English should solely be used in English language classroom has been a matter of extensive debate and has often become an issue of ambivalence to teachers whether it is prudent to use mother tongue in the English as a Foreign language (EFL) classroom. The debate initiated from the common resolute view that mother tongue (L1) blocks the process of acquiring the target language (TL) while the other view claims L1 use is the verification of learning the target language. In addition to this, different theories over decades have provided different hypothesis about the value of L1 use in second language (L2) classroom. Researchers (Asher, 1993; Chaudron, 1988; Halliwell, & Jones, 1991; Krashen et al., 1984; Macdonald, 1993; Wong-Fillmore, 1985) agree that input in the target language is the gateway to successful language acquisition to occur and learners should get the opportunity of a second/ foreign language environment to practice and thereby develop their language skills. The traditional second language (L2) teaching pedagogy, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) promoted bilingual method of teaching emphasizing on the facilitative role of mother tongue in the target language learning. This approach received heavy criticism and was disowned by new school complaining of the negative effects of L1 on learning process. The school propounding monolingual approach, such as Direct
Method (DM) and Audio Lingual Method (ALM) believes that L1 has no essential role in classroom, its use rather interferes second language (L2)/ target language (TL)/ foreign language (FL) learning process; by taking recourse to mother tongue students would be blocked out of target language exposure (Bouangeune, 2009; Ellis, 1985). This assertion remains unjustified in a non-native EFL environment and is largely not supported by any empirical evidence (Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014). The proponents for using L1 (supported by humanistic and communicative methodology) argue that its judicious use would help learners develop the skill for comprehensibility of the target language (Atkinson 1987; Al-Nofaie 2010; Auerbach, 1993; Machaal 2012; Nation 2003; Salah & Farrah 2012; Sharma 2006; Spada & Lightbrown, 1999; Storch & Wigglesworth 2003; Swain & Lapkin 2000; Tang 2002). Despite the abundance of research on underlying principles and approaches for teaching English common assumption still exists that learners’ mother tongue should be abandoned and its use discouraged (Sa’D & Qadermazi, 2015). The language teacher in a monolingual large classroom of less proficient students often finds himself in a predicament as to which to adhere—the monolingual approach or the bilingual approach to teaching English language. The current study intends to provide insights into the perceptions of teachers and students for L1 instruction in English classroom and how the use of L1 could be an effective tool for teaching English language.

The study is conducted in the perspective of English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh where the mother tongue Bangla proudly holds the country’s linguistic, cultural and sovereign identity. The study looks at teaching and learning of EFL from the perspective of L1 use (in this case Bangla) in the universities in Bangladesh. A mandatory course in the universities in Bangladesh, the English language course aims at enhancing the language proficiency of the students so that they can meet the language requirements during their study in the universities and empower themselves with linguistic and communicative competence required in the work placements in future years. Although they study English as a compulsory subject since their primary schools, majority are of the students are found to lack competence in English language. Personal observations during lessons in the class reveal that some students just are not in the level of comprehending the simplest utterances in English. Many universities in Bangladesh do not conduct a separate test to evaluate admission seekers’ level of academic English proficiency. Because of their inadequate proficiency, some students find the foundation English language course at the university problematic as it is a subject/course that they had endeavored for long 12 years but all resulted in little improvement. So, question may arise as how do teachers manage the medium of instruction (MOI) in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom and to what extent. The present study outlines teachers’ and students’ perceptions about why teachers should or should not use L1 in their English classroom, discusses and provides insights into the strengths and weaknesses of using L1 in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Bangladeshi universities. More specifically, this study will study in detail teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the use of Bangla as a
complementary to the MOI in English language classroom as well as its role in facilitating the upgradation of students’ English language proficiency.

**Literature review**

Teachers all over the world assume a discreet autonomy regarding their beliefs, perceptions and knowledge of teaching methodology. They at the same time follow some model to identify themselves in the customary praxis of teaching. Literature abounds in plenty relating to the contention of using mother tongue in L2 classroom. The present section intends to provide an overview of the research pertaining to it.

The prevalence of L1 use in teaching target language as prescribed in GMT turned out to be uncommunicative and irrelevant (Harmer, 2001) as it could not produce proficient English language learners even after years of study. Brown (2000, p.16) spotted it as doing “virtually nothing to enhance students’ communication ability in the language”. As a reaction to the overwhelming translation practice of GMT, newer methods in the 1970s and 1980s such as the Direct Method and ALM advocated banning of L1 use and emphasized for a monolingual approach arguing that

a) Instructions in English classroom should be carried out exclusively in the target language without recourse to students’ L1 (Cummins, 2007)

b) Translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the teaching of language or literacy (Cummins, 2007)

Such instructional pedagogy underscores that L1 use rather interferes and impedes the acquisition of L2. Emphasis on only English use can enhance communication in a way that it will develop an attitudinal and behavioral change in the learner, he will be able to internalize the language and use fluently. Sharma (2006) provides a psychological rationale for using L2 only, “the more students are exposed to English, the more quickly they will learn; as they hear and use English, they will internalize it to begin to think in English; the only way they will learn it is if they are forced to use it” (p.80). Sharma (2006) concludes that L1 use should be judicious as long as it facilitates learning English effectively, saves time and makes students relaxed and motivated in the lesson. Supporting minimal use of L1, Krashen and Terrell (1983) argue that learners acquire L2 as they acquire their L1 in their childhood.

Studies conducted in recent decades assert that L1 has a functional role in the classroom discourse which facilitates students’ learning. Stern (1992) sees the use of L1 as “a natural psychological process in second language development” (p. 286). David Atkinson (1987, p.241) suggests a series of use of L1 in EFL classroom discourse:

a. Eliciting Language: “How do you say ‘X’ in English?”

b. Checking comprehension: “How do you say ‘I’ve been waiting for ten minutes in Spanish?’ (Also used for comprehension of a reading or listening text.)

c. Giving complex instructions to basic levels

d. Co-operating in groups: Learners compare and correct answers to exercises or tasks in the L1. Students at times can explain new points better than the teacher.

e. Explaining classroom methodology at basic levels
f. Using translation to highlight a recently taught language item

g. Checking for sense: If students write or say something in the L2 that does not make sense, have them try to translate it into the L1 to realize their error.

h. Testing Translation items can be useful in testing mastery of forms and meanings.

i. Developing circumlocution strategies: When students do not know how to say something in the L2, have them think in different ways to say the same thing in the L1, which may be easier to translate.

On a similar note, Atkinson (1987) provides a rationale for using L1 suggesting that translation helps students to give voice to their feelings and avoid negative transfer of L1. He suggests that teachers can use L1 for functional purposes such as checking comprehension, giving instructions, enhancing cooperation among learners and improving presentation and reinforcement. Furthermore, Atkinson (1993) incorporated select use of L1 into communicative methodology and concluded that “L1 can be a valuable source if it is used at appropriate times and in appropriate ways”.

In the same year, Elsa Auerbach (1993, p.29) gives a sociopolitical rationale for the use of L1 in ESL classrooms suggesting that L1 provides a sense of security and validates learners’ lived experiences facilitating them to express themselves in English without hesitation. Auerbach (1993) suggests the following possible occasions for using the mother tongue: negotiation of the syllabus and the lesson; record keeping; classroom management; scene setting; language analysis; presentation of rules governing grammar, phonology, morphology, and spelling; discussion of cross-cultural issues; instructions or prompts; explanation of errors; and assessment of comprehension.

Within the same context, Sipra (2007) supporting the facilitative role of L1 concluded that a teacher having the knowledge of both the target and mother tongue is able to provide better input than a monolingual teacher. According to Cangarajah (1999) “accommodation of L1 in English classroom does not hamper the acquisition of L2, but enhances it” (p. 143).

Having similar view, Macaro (2001) argues that L1 is an important resource to learning the target language because it assists convenient comprehensibility. According to Harbord (1992), ELT teachers who use only English have been found not successful enough in getting their meaning across, resulting to student incomprehension and resentment. Mc Millan and Rivers (2011) are of the view that selective use of the L1 can “play important cognitive, communicative and social functions in L2 learning” (p. 252). Aqel (2006) in his study of teachers’ and students’ reactions to using their L1 in teaching EFL recommends a judicious use of Arabic in EFL teaching since L1 helps to make L2 meanings comprehensible to low proficiency learners easily. Similar suggestions are also found in studies such as Schweers (1999), Cole (1998), Bouangeune (2009). Woodall (2002) observed L1 as an important resource in L2 learning arguing that code-switching occurs instinctively to all language learners.

To summarize this section it could be said that researchers have revealed the positivity of limited and judicious use of L1 in English language classroom for classroom management, lesson instruction, problem solving, grammar and new vocabulary explanation, translating words
or vocabulary or sentences to convey meaning. Researchers have observed actual practices in classroom, investigated the function and purposes of L1, conducted survey in institutions under specific contexts, explored the amount of use of L1 and investigated the perceptions of teachers. Though relevant research abounds in exploration of the current issue, it seems confusion still prevails among practicing teachers about the extent of use of L1. The current study is not limited to teachers’ perceptions only; it investigates both the perception of the teachers and students regarding teachers’ use of L1. The study also explores the strengths and weaknesses of mother tongue in a context where a traditional and official strict English policy is expected to be practiced and maintained. Though the study is conducted in Bangladesh context, its pertinence is expected to be observed in the surrounding Asian and wider foreign language teaching context.

The study

The study attempted to explore the following research questions

- What are the Bangladeshi EFL teachers’ and students’ perceptions regarding teachers’ use of L1 (Bangla) in classroom?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of teachers’ use of L1 in teaching EFL?

Context and participants

The present research was carried out in the 2017-2018 academic session of a public and a private university in Bangladesh during the English Language Foundation courses studied by students in the first year of undergraduate programs. These courses focusing on review of grammar items and language skills aim improve students’ English language proficiency which they are expected to have acquired from twelve years of education in their schools and colleges.

The participants comprised of 10 teachers and 60 students selected through purposive sampling using the homogenous technique. Purposive sampling involves “deliberate selection of sample from particular settings, people or events for getting information which otherwise cannot be acquired from other sources” (Maxwell, 1998, p. 87).

The teachers have different educational backgrounds from home and abroad and various years of experience in teaching English. Among them, 3 teachers possess PhD degrees with 15-17 years of teaching experience, 3 teachers have 8-10 years of experience in teaching English and hold MA degrees in ELT (Bangladesh) and TESOL (from UK). The rest 4 teachers hold Masters degree in English Literature and Language and have been teachers since 2013 or 2014.

The participant students aged between 19-22 years studied in the departments of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Textile Engineering and Fashion Design and Technology. Being natives of a monolingual country Bangladesh, the students’ language profile comprises practice and use of English language only during their time in the English classroom. Majority of them studied in Bangla medium schools with little or no opportunity to communicate in English outside their English classroom which turned out to be a classroom with monolingual linguistic competence. Nonetheless at the university they get exposure to English since the medium of instruction (MOI) is at large English. The use of Bangla in the classrooms is strictly limited to oral production by both the teachers and the students. The English
course contents do not include any Bangla reading or writing or any translation task.

**Instrument**

The study adopted a mixed method approach for the investigation of the research problem. The mixed method approach involved collection of quantitative close ended (using self report questionnaire) data and qualitative open ended (employing semi-structured interview) data with the purpose to obtain a detailed understanding and corroboration of information which would otherwise be lacking if only one method was used. Quantitative data helped to collect broader opinion on the research issue while the qualitative data helped to elaborate, clarify and corroborate results building on the findings. The content validity was verified by two colleagues, experts in ELT and Applied Linguistics. Following their comments, necessary modification was applied to the instruments.

**Self- report Questionnaire**

The questionnaire adapted from Shabir (2017) which explored a similar research was used to tap into the participants attitudes towards L1 use. Two questionnaires one for the teachers and another for the students comprised of 22 items about teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the function and strengths and weaknesses of L1 instruction in their EFL classroom. Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of occurrence on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree). The questionnaire for teachers had Cronbach’s alpha value of .90 and the second questionnaire for students had Cronbach’s alpha value of .87.

**Focus group semi-structured interview**

Qualitative data with a purpose to validate the questionnaire data was obtained by interviewing selected number of participants individually at different times as scheduled by the researcher. Pre-determined questions were prepared in order to prompt respondents and elicit their deeper thoughts. Towards the end of participant students’ language course 20 of them were interviewed to tap more deeply into their mind. All the teachers were also interviewed to back up the questionnaires and triangulate the data.

**Procedure**

Students were given the questionnaire in their classroom with assertion that their responses would in no way affect their academic grades in the university. Questionnaires were sent to the teachers with request to fill in and return them in their convenient time during the semester. Data was calculated in term of the percentage on every statement and then mean was calculated to measure the degree of overall opinion about each statement.

The present study is qualitative in essence with frequencies offered at times for elaboration of the information collected through the instruments. Data were analyzed by calculating the number of respondents who agreed or disagreed to different degrees with the different aspect specified by each statement included in the survey.

**Result and discussion**

This section presents and discusses the findings from questionnaire and interview with both teachers and students.
Questionnaire findings: Teachers’ responses

The data revealed equal frequency of opinion of teachers on many questionnaire items (such as item 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17 and 21) and differences of opinion on the rest of the items. 7 to 9 teachers’ equivalent opinion of agreement and strong agreement is observed for the items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 21. Almost all the teachers agreed and strongly agreed that use of L1 might habituate students into using L1 all the time (item 4 and mean is 4.7), its use should be at a minimal level (item 8 and mean is 4.8), students prefer teachers’ use of L1 to explain new vocabulary, difficult grammar and concepts (item 1, 3 and 6 and mean is 3.6, 3.7 and 4.3 respectively) and students use of L1 help them to express themselves fully and clearly (item 21 and mean is 3.7). Furthermore, 9 teachers supported that they do not themselves prefer to use L1 as it does more harm than benefit (item 12, mean is 4.1).

Higher frequency of opinions of disagreement to the statements in the questionnaire can be observed for items 9, 10, 11, 17 and 22. 9 teachers disagreed that they ask students the L1 meaning of words or sentences as a comprehension check (item 11 and 22 and mean is 1.9 and 1.7 respectively). 6 disagreed and 2 strongly disagreed, 2 agreed that students should translate a text into their L1 while reading (item 9, mean is 2.3), 7 disagreed that a student should know the Bangla meaning of every word (item 10 and mean is 2.8). Differences of opinions are also observed in the responses of item 13, 15, 16 19 and 20. 5 teachers are of the opinion that L1 use relieves students from their apprehension of not comprehending language whereas the other 5 disagree to this proposition (item 16 where mean is 2.8). 3 teachers agree that it is essential to know the Bangla meaning of English words while the rest 7 disagree to its necessity. Data also revealed that teachers (3 disagreed while 5 agreed and 2 strongly agreed to item 13) sometimes speak in L1 for explanation and clarification of topics/or concepts. 5 teachers agreed and 2 strongly agreed to the proposition that they feel disappointed when they see students speaking in Bangla (item 14). 1 remained neutral while another teacher disagreed to this statement.

Students’ responses

Students’ response shows a similar preference for teachers’ using Bangla (L1) in the classroom. The mean calculations revealed an overwhelming preference for use of Bangla for explaining difficult grammar, vocabulary and concepts (item 1, 3, 4 and 6 where mean calculated are 3.93, 3.73, 4.08 and 3.86 respectively). Their apprehension of the disadvantage of Bangla use is also revealed from their agreement to item 5, 7, 8, 18. Accordingly majority agreed that the more are taught in Bangla, the more they would become habituated to its comfortable and easy (item 5; the mean is 3.65), L1 use should be restricted (item 8 and mean is 3.75) as students will get less exposure to English (item 7 and mean is 3.16) and so medium of instruction should be English (item 18 where mean is 3.26). However, they also agreed and strongly agree that they feel at ease when teacher talks, explains in Bangla (item 19 and 20, where mean amounted to 3.56 and 3.90 respectively). Majority also agreed that the use of Bangla helps them to express themselves clearly and efficiently (item 21, mean is 3.66) and reduces anxiety and inhibition (item 16, 17, the mean being 3.3).

Interview findings: Teachers’ response

Data collected from interview assisted in gathering teachers’ and students’ thoughtful opinions and views about use of Bangla in classroom. The foremost opinion of all the teachers is that L1 should not be
encouraged, English should be the sole medium of instruction in the English class to provide exposure to language and consequently enrich students’ understanding of communicative English. Occasional and judicious use of Bangla is acceptable only when the teacher assumes its necessity. They try not to use Bangla except in situations where they realize that students did not comprehend the presented item such as a complex idea or a method of grammar or any genre writing. In a classroom of diverse proficiency level of students, teachers sometimes have to switch to the native language to grab the students’ attention, maintain some degree of interest, create comfortable atmosphere, to explain meaning of words, sentences or concepts and make learning experience enjoyable. This switching functions as a resource for the students who suffer from apprehension of inadequate language proficiency. This finding correlates with Greggio and Gil (2007), Morahan (2007) which pointed out that teachers code switching is targeted at clarification of the difficulties in language.

**Students’ response**

Response of students in the interview session also revealed their preference for their teachers to use L1 though in a restricted range. Students want their teachers to use Bangla for some explanation of difficult grammar, new topics, and when it is difficult to understand in English. Followings are some of the responses of students:

- **The teacher must talk in Bangla when we find English difficult**
- **Sometimes we request the teacher to explain in Bangla when we don’t understand the English.**
- **We ask the teacher to narrate the prescribed literary text in Bangla so that it helps us to understand easily when we read the text ourselves.**
- **Bangla explanation helps us to understand a reading text. Bangla explanation makes the comprehension of the text in short time.**
- **If we can’t understand in English teacher should only use Bangla to help us learn English.**
- **Bangla helps me to exchange my ideas and opinions clearly without the need to talk in English and run the risk of misunderstanding.**

The most interesting finding of all is that students themselves are aware that excessive use of L1 would not facilitate their learning. They complained that they do not appreciate it if teacher uses Bangla for simple and easy matters, which otherwise could have been avoided. But at the same time they all acknowledge the benefits of Bangla especially as a scaffolding tool, i.e. translate words, explaining difficult grammar.

It is interesting to note that every participant is aware of the benefit of using English as the sole language in EFL classroom. But they also believe that L1 can act as a scaffolding resource to get help from in case of incomprehensibility. Herein lies the strength of L1. On the other hand, it is important that students acquire the comprehensible skill for understanding FL in the class. They have to be accustomed to the target language as much as possible without any explanation in their L1. Students overwhelming preference for teachers instruction in Bangla for expediency and efficacy of information transmission and clarification is justified if it is strictly limited to introduction of new and complex lesson/ idea/ concept/ vocabulary/ grammar point. Bangla can be
used as a resource that both teachers and students can share when it is pre-requisite.

The findings of the present study are in congruence with those of other studies (Machaal 2012; Salal&Farrah 2012; Nation 2003; Tang 2002; Al Nofaie 2010; Sharma, 2006; Storch&Wigglsworth, 2003) in the contexts of Nepal, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, China.

From the analysis it is revealed that both teachers and students prefer L1 use only when the degree of incomprehensibility is high. Thus the strength and weakness of L1 could be assumed to depend on the time, place and manner of its use and how successful the teacher is in conveying the message when he needs to cater to different learner styles and abilities.

The objective of this small exploratory piece of research is to study teachers’ and students’ perception of teachers’ use of Bangla in the EFL classrooms and the strengths and weaknesses of its use. The findings from data collected through questionnaire and interview indicated that the teachers out rightly do not oppose Bangla use but they call for its judicious application. They believe English should be the main source of input and students should get accustomed and internalize English language linguistic and communicative features, so that they begin to think and produce in English. Sometimes teachers cannot avoid using L1 owing to the inadequate proficiency of majority of students in the classroom. Two of the teachers elaborated that use of L1 to support EFL development can be considered from humanistic approach which allows students to say what they want in their mother tongue. L1 can assist a learner as a scaffolding tool in circumstances where he needs backing referred to as his zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). By identifying students’ zone of proximal development (ZPD) teachers can locate their style and strategies and accordingly plan more targeted instruction for them. Use of L1 could be tailored according to the ZPD of individual students. However, this instruction strategy would be more effective and advantageous in a small classroom size.

**Conclusion**

The present study revealed various pedagogical functions of Bangla (L1) ranging from explanation of meaning, grammar, complex patterns of language and building rapport with students. Bangla can be used as an effective tool for EFL development. As stated in the beginning of the article that there exists no empirical evidence supporting total obstruction of L1 in EFL classroom (Bhooth, Azman & Ismail, 2014)teachers can switch codes because of the mixed abilities of EFL learners which would help lower students’ affective filter (Krashen 1985).

English plays a dominant role in tertiary education in Bangladesh. Teachers should be cautious to use mother tongue in an effective way as an operative tool. Teachers should introduce awareness raising activities to persuade learners to use the target language.

It is important for teachers to realize that in cases where either the students are competent in English or not, or either L1 is allowed or banned in English classroom, the use of L1 cannot be totally avoided. The judicious use of L1 may enhance the acquisition process and encourage learners to focus on similarities and differences between mother tongue and target language.
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## Appendix 1

### Teacher’s questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My students like it when I use L1 to explain grammar rules.</td>
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<td>2. My students like my use of L1 for classroom management (e.g. giving instructions and groupings students).</td>
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<td>3. My students like my use of L1 to explain the meaning of a new vocabulary.</td>
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<td>4. When I use L1 in English classrooms students will tend to speak more L1 than English in the classroom.</td>
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<td>5. The more I make use of L1, the less effort students make to understand my use of English.</td>
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<td>6. My students understand me when I use English to explain simple grammatical terms and concepts but want me to explain difficult terms and concepts in L1.</td>
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<td>7. Teachers should not use L1 in English classrooms because it reduces the amount of students’ exposure to English.</td>
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<td>8. The use of L1 should be minimized in English classrooms.</td>
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<td>9. Students should translate English language into L1 while reading a text.</td>
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<td>10. The only way to learn an English word completely is to know its meaning in L1.</td>
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<td>11. I like to ask my students to translate a word or sentence into L1 as a comprehension check.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>I do not like to use L1 in the classroom because it prevents students from thinking in English.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>I sometimes speak L1 to clarify my directions.</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>I am disappointed when I see students speak L1 in class.</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>I like to use L1 for giving individual comments.</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>The use of L1 in English classrooms reduces students’ anxiety.</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>I find my students frightened when they do not understand what I am saying in English.</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>The medium of instruction should be only English in English classroom.</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>My students feel more comfortable when I talk to them in L1.</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>My students understand a lesson much better if I use L1.</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>The use of L1 by my students help them to express their feelings and ideas that they cannot explain in English.</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>I prefer to ask questions in L1.</td>
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Appendix -2
Students’ questionnaire
Ref: Cooperation in research.

Dear Student

The following is a self-report questionnaire for data collection for a research on the role of Bangla in English language classroom. Your cooperation is needed to explore your opinion/perception regarding the extent of use of Bangla in the English classroom. Would you tick (”) the option (strongly disagree/disagree/agree/strongly agree) you think best against the statements in the questionnaire attached? All individual responses would serve research use only and would not affect your academic performances. Moreover, your response would be kept confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like it when my teacher uses Bangla to explain grammar rules.</td>
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<td>2. I want my teacher to use Bangla for classroom management (e.g. giving instructions and groupings students).</td>
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<td>3. I want my teacher to use Bangla to explain the meaning of a new vocabulary.</td>
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<td>4. When teacher uses Bangla in English classrooms, students will tend to speak more Bangla than English in the classroom.</td>
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<td>5. The more I make use of Bangla, the less effort I will make to understand my use of English.</td>
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<td>6. I want my teacher use English for explaining simple grammatical terms and concepts and Bangla for more difficult terms and concepts</td>
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<td>7. Teachers should not use Bangla in English classrooms because it reduces the amount of students’ exposure to English</td>
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<td>8. The use of Bangla should be minimized in English classrooms.</td>
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</table>
9. I like to translate the English language into Bangla when I read a text.

10. The only way to learn an English word completely is to know its meaning in Bangla.

11. I like to translate a word or sentence into Bangla as a comprehension check

12. I do not like the use of Bangla because it prevents me from thinking in English

13. I sometimes like to speak Bangla to clarify my difficulties

14. When teacher speaks Bangla in the English class, it makes me disappointed.

15. I like my teacher’s use of Bangla for giving individual comments

16. The use of Bangla in English classrooms reduces my anxiety.

17. I am frightened when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English in the English class.

18. The medium of instruction should be only English in English classroom.

19. I feel more comfortable when my teacher talks to me in Bangla.

20. I understand a lesson much better if teacher explains in Bangla.

21. The use of Bangla can help me to express my feelings and ideas that I cannot explain in English

22. I prefer to ask questions in Bangla.

Contributor

Shahnaz Mahmud is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh.
Retention of English language tension in multilingual communities of Nepal: A review of teachers’ narratives

Karna Rana

Abstract:

This article discusses the voices of teachers about shifting from Nepali to English medium in community schools in Nepal and suggests ways to solve some of the problems of the English language in schools of multilingual communities. The article is based on previously published teachers’ narratives in several issues of ELTChoutari web-magazine in the past ten years. The teachers’ narratives, which are discussed in this article, focused on English language teaching pedagogies in Nepali government schools. The article analyses the problems, which several teachers raised in their narrative articles, and offers some suggestions to overcome them. The article begins with a discussion about the multilingual context of Nepal, language policy and the English language in schools. Moreover, the article discusses community schools’ interest in the English language, teachers’ perceptions of English as a medium of instruction and schools’ expectations of improving educational quality.

Keywords: English language, multilingual community, language policy, school education

Introduction

It is important to start with context, an environment where particularly the disposition of several indigenous languages is nuanced by various traditional performance and expression of diverse community people. Nepal, a small country, which occupies an area of 147,181 square kilometres, has a broad range of socio-cultural, linguistic, religious and topographic diversities. Out of the total land, the Himalayan region occupies 23%, the Hilly 60% and the Terai 17%. The regions as reported in the 2011 Census constitute 50.27%, 43% and 6.73% of the total population respectively (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011; published 2012 November). The 2011 Census report stated that about 80% of the total population live in rural areas whereas only 20% reside in cities. The report of the diversity of languages and ethnic communities may seem very strange to rest of the world who might see Nepal as a small homogenous country. The census reported 125 ethnic communities and 123 languages spoken as a mother tongue. Nepali, which is the national language and is spoken as the mother tongue by 44.6% of the total population, also has various dialects in different regions. The majority of these languages, which do not have own script
and are transferred from one generation to another verbally, are gradually losing speakers and dying slowly. Although the re-establishment of democracy in 1991 provided rights to language in the country, there is no clear policy on bilingual education. Weinberg (2013) reports that the language policy in Nepal is chaotic and complicated to follow. In recent years, the debate on language policy and bilingual education has drawn the attention of government and members of the public. However, the government of Nepal does not clearly define the right to education in mother tongue in the recently passed Nepal’s Constitution, 2015 and does not clearly define the space of the English language in education. Many state schools’ shifting from Nepali to English medium in the recent years has been a concern in Nepal’s education.

Some studies (Alexander, 2009; Phillipson, 1996; Shannon, 1995) reported English language hegemony in the classroom where bilingual students study specifically in African school classrooms. However, the dominant role of a language is country-specific, much more connected with colonialism in many countries in the world. Alexander (2009) argues that in the colonial period, English language policy suppressed the native languages of South African countries and many of the local languages gradually got the minority status. Even in the United States, hundreds of languages are looking for a shared space in the classroom, but the policy of English language restrains the entry of bilingual education. For example, Macedo, Dendrinos, and Gounari (2005) argue that, although research in language acquisition acknowledged the advantages of bilingual education, a slogan like English for all children in the United States dominates the empirical evidence supporting bilingual education and educators manipulate research findings to eliminate bilingual education. Although the context in Nepal

is different than that of African, American, European and many Asian countries, the hegemony of one language over several languages is similar to their contexts. In the absence of bilingual education policy in Nepal, the Nepali language among 123 native languages of Nepal gets overarching space in education and the English, in fragile language policy, is seemingly overtaking the race with the Nepali particularly in private schools.

Many of the native languages in Nepal lack orthographic systems, which is perhaps one of the difficulties to raise, preserve and bring them into education (Phyak, 2011), but it is not enough to justify why bilingual education does not get space in the classroom. Although several organisations, particularly ethnic community organisations, have been raising voice about language and primary education in mother tongue for several decades, it is still, in a way, awaiting clear language policy and other way seeking help develop language systems. Phyak (2011) argues that school education and the choice of medium of instruction has become a more pressing issue since Education Act, 2002 empowered School Management Committee (SMC) of state schools with the decentralised school management system. He states that many government schools are gradually shifting from Nepali to English medium to attract a maximum number of students. The decentralised school management system allowed the SMC to mobilise local communities, generate resources and sustain education programmes (Rana, 2018). However, its results are observed more in shifting state schools from Nepali to English medium particularly in cities and recruitment of teachers in the schools. People’s attraction towards private schools, which are English medium, also indicates that the English language is gradually expanding its space in education in Nepal. However, the fragile language policy of the government of Nepal seems to be a loophole
for the growth of the English language. There are tensions such as identity crisis, job opportunities, quality of education, fragile policy on language and medium of instruction in the classroom teaching, which are discussed in this article below.

The fear of losing native identity

Many researchers including McCrone and Bechhofer (2008), Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) and Jenkins (2004) explained social identity, which is different from individual identity that includes attributes of personal competence, talent and ability, as an association of a person with a group of people based on race, gender and occupation. However, it is not definitive in meaning as it is the shared understanding of commonness. The identity of someone depends on various situations such as national identity in an international event and regional identity in the national conference. Moreover, the claim of identity relies on the interpretation of identity markers such as birthplace, ancestry, accent, appearance and dress, language, and many others as indicators of national identity (McCrone & Bechhofer, 2008). The narratives of several Nepali teachers, for instance, the following excerpt from the narrative of Prem Phyak who is an English teacher at a Nepali university, reflect tension about gradually losing native language as a national identity by giving emphasis on the English language in education:

What steps should Nepal take to maintain its linguistic and cultural heritage from the potential “killer” characteristics of English? This question has a great implication not only for English language teachers but also for the whole notion. This indicates that being ELT practitioners we should also look after a unique linguistic and cultural diversity we have. This is our responsibility to address the values, skills, attitudes, and cultures of people while teaching English (Pyhak, 2011).

Phyak’s narrative reflects a silence of citizens of Nepal that the emphasis on the English language in education may diminish social and cultural characteristics, indicators of national identity. Moreover, his account suggests that English teachers in Nepal’s multilingual communities should bear the social as well as national responsibility when teaching the English in the classroom. Many of 123 languages are endangered in Nepal and Phyak’s concern indirectly advises the Government of Nepal and its citizens to be aware of the possible loss of endangered languages and to be responsible when prioritising the English in education. Perhaps the language endangerment is similar to, as Krauss (1992) says, endangerment of their ethnicity in a social ecosystem. Uttam Gaulee, who has been a teacher in Nepal for many years and is currently a faculty in an American university argues that among many reasons, allowing international development organisations, for example, Nordic NGOs to invest in Nepal’s education has promoted the English language in schools and influenced local languages:

Why do parents, societies, and educational systems favour dominant languages against their own local languages? One of the most important reasons for this is the invisible hands of money. When countries or educational establishments receive cash from someone, they have to meet the expectations of the donors (Gaulee, 2012).

Gaulee, in his narrative, argues that the responsible government authorities and educational organisations are
systematically imposing the English language over the majority of people, who live on little crops without a reliable source of income and follow what education systems and organisations bring, and intending to replace the diversity of languages in Nepal. However, Sajan Kumar Karn, an English teacher in Nepal, stresses that the hierarchical status legally agreed of certain languages in the country becomes a monster of many other local languages:

The spread of the English is not the direct cause of language endangerment. The English, in fact, has its effects on national (major languages) not on regional and minority languages. In many countries, it is the national language, such as Nepali that threatens local languages, not English (Karn, 2009).

Karn argues that the major threat for several indigenous languages in Nepal is from the Nepali language, only the official language in the country. However, on one hand, he, as his narrative reflects, does not seem to be aware of research findings in other developing countries. For example, the findings of Mustapha (2014) in Nigeria suggest that the rapid growth, acceptance and use of the English is not only threatening the local languages but also shifting them from the communities which may lead to a loss. Lane (2017 May 10) reported that the widespread of the English hegemony is not affecting only local languages in many countries but also showing the danger of monoculture although we want differences and varieties and our civilisation is a rich garden of colourful flowers. His metaphor “garden” indicates social, cultural and linguistic diversity as our identity.

On the other hand, Karn’s account aligns with the argument of Giri (2009) who raises a valid issue in Nepal’s context where the government policy instigates only the Nepali language considering it as an instrument to unify all the communities and the English as a compulsory language for all to learn in schools, regardless of recently promulgated Nepal’s Constitution, 2015 (Constitutional Assembly Secretariate, 2015) vaguely states that the state governments may decide their official language which is still impending. However, the narrative of Mahendra Kathet, a retired teacher who is working as a teacher trainer in Mt Everest region in Nepal indicates that teachers in government schools emphasise the English language to teach lessons for certain reasons:

English language, which is the most widely spoken language, makes communication possible in any part of the world. The English language transformed the gigantic world into a small community. It is an enormous medium of world knowledge and affairs. Majority of the web-pages are written in English. Knowledge of English skills, therefore, allows us to enter the world’s ruling intellectual resources (2015).

Kathet’s narrative reflects the innocence of Nepali citizens who have only read but never experienced the suppression of colonial governance. His account extends the voice of current generation youths who are growing with the rapid development of modern digital technology and aiming to explore opportunities across the world. The English language being an international language perhaps allows people to access a wide range of opportunities in most of the parts of the world. However, several researchers (Guo & Beckett, 2007; Krauss, 1992; Mustapha, 2014; Tupas, 2001) reported that the English language in colonial and post-colonial period endangered several local languages in many, particularly colonised countries. Kathet focuses on making the English as a
medium of instruction in Nepali schools without considering the social, cultural and linguistic diversity in Nepal and the hidden interest of imposing the English in Nepal’s education.

**Prospective opportunities in the international market**

Several teachers’ narratives indicate that the English language knowledge and skills open doors of a number of opportunities for the currently growing generation of youths across the world. The teachers through their writing emphasise the teaching of English from the very beginning of formal school, which has already been started in Nepal and teaching other subjects in English. The rapidly growing number of private schools, which claim they are English medium, and the expanding volume of students enrolled into English language department in Nepali universities also indicate the attraction of people particularly youths towards English language learning. In the recent years, a number of government schools even in rural areas have shifted to English medium from Nepali medium, however no record of how many schools adopted English as a medium of instruction is found, and the trend is widely increasing. For instance, a quarter of sixty schools in Lukla, one of the mountainous districts where Mt Everest lies, adopted English as a medium of instruction in the year 2013 with the support of REED, an NGO that has worked for several international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) such as Himalayan Trust New Zealand, Australian Himalayan Foundation, American Himalayan Foundation, and many others. For the reference, I, one of the volunteers to train many teachers from different schools in one of the schools in Lukla in 2016, involved in the two-week teacher training programme, observed various training sessions and had several interactions with those trainee teachers, and I learned that rural government schools were gradually shifting from Nepali to English medium. Mahendra Kathet, as mentioned above, was one of the trainers who strongly focuses on the importance of English as a medium of instruction for some reasons:

- Careers that involve lots of travel and international exposures such as the airline, tourism, film industries, etc. use the English as their official language and many employers in these sectors demand a certain level of proficiency in English. The proficiency in English broadens social networking and increases our chances of getting a good job in foreign countries (2015).

Kathet’s account seems to be logical from the global perspective need for exploring opportunities, but his narrative, however, raises an issue that whether he wants schools to teach the English language only, regardless of teaching several other subjects such as Social Studies, Science, Maths, Nepali and other optional subjects which are in the Nepali language. His account provides a space for several criticisms as such whether he expects all the schools in Nepal to be English language learning centres similar to those in city corners which teach several international languages including the English, or he wants all new generation Nepali people to be English monolingual ignoring native languages and without learning other life skills. However, Ishwor Kadel, a teacher trainer, in his narrative article talks about the English language as a need of students and parents and the challenge of implementing English as a medium of instruction in schools where most of the teachers themselves cannot communicate in English and do not have English language proficiency that they require:
The developing craze for the English language among students and parents brought most of the students from community schools to private boarding schools. The number of students in public schools has been decreasing gradually in Nepal. The students, though they learn the English language from primary level cannot communicate in English and they do not easily comprehend the texts they use. The students and most of the primary teachers do not have good command over the English language. But many public schools have started introducing the English language as a medium of instruction. This has made EMI training to public school teachers a must. After the completion of EMI training, the trained teachers can use English as a medium of instruction, plan their own lessons, prepare teaching materials, train other teachers and become more creative (Kadel, 2015 August 9).

Kadel’s narrative as such the account of Kathetaligns with the argument of Giri (2011) that the majority of people in Nepal have a neo-colonial belief: the English language ensures an access to a wide range of opportunities and better future of the growing generation of youths. Kadel’s narrative indicates that government schools are unable to fulfil parents’ expectation that their children would learn the English language from their schools, and this has provided private schools with an opportunity to increase their educational business. His account also shows that the reason behind shifting government schools from Nepali to English medium is to hold their students in the government schools from going out to private English medium schools. This has raised concerns that perhaps government schools have been unable to ensure the quality of education and convince community people about their educational activities. However, Kadel’s account suggests that teachers, teacher trainers, educators, and policymakers need to understand the contexts, particularly rural areas of Nepal where there are several indigenous languages including Nepali, a dominant national language and the English is a foreign language. His contradictory statements, as he says that both teachers and students have a lack of English language skills, and he claims that a short-term training in how to use the English as medium of instruction in Nepali government schools’ classrooms makes teachers able to use the English as classroom instructional language, raise questions against the teacher training system, trainers’ qualification and national education goal. This suggests that he among many other teacher trainers in the country who is protecting his job of training, regardless of being realistic in multilingual contexts of Nepal, where the English is one of the foreign languages taught in schools, needs to learn about social, cultural and linguistic diversity of Nepal and include these properties in educational activities.

The expectation of changing educational quality in schools

The ongoing debate on how the quality of education can be improved has been a political agenda in Nepal, particularly since the re-establishment of multi-party democracy in 1991. The democratic government’s flexible education policy provided individuals with an opportunity to open private schools, which was a kind of strategy to develop a competition between government schools and private schools and to improve the educational quality of government schools. However, the proliferation of private schools gradually created a gap between government and private schools. Instead of developing academic collaboration, private
schools, which own sole authority to manage themselves, increasingly developed an environment particularly in cities where they were able to gain people’s motivation and trust with their identity of the English language business and government schools lost the public trust. Although education is free in government schools and people have to pay expensive fees in private schools, people who can afford the expensive education prefer to enrol their children in private schools and otherwise, they send their children to government schools. Regardless of talking about teachers’ involvement in various political parties, crossroad conversations about government schools and education are mostly oriented towards a political alliance of government school teachers and their lack of responsibility at their workplace. In recent years, several hundreds of government schools, particularly primary ones, have been either merged into one or shut down forever due to lack of students. These are probably some of the indicators of rising issues regarding the quality of education in government schools and future researches may explore evidence about the issues.

Several teachers in their narratives have emphasised that the use of English as a classroom language will improve the quality of education, and some teachers resent the schools’ approach to make the English as a medium of instruction in Nepali schools. However, many teachers’ narratives indicate that the quality of education is usually measured depending on the results high schools achieve in Secondary Education Examination (SEE) board in Class Ten (Year Ten) and that children’s capability of using the English language is a major indicator of the quality of education. The excerpt depicted from Kathet’s narrative article can be a good example to understand the perceived value of the English language in Nepal:

High school graduates from community schools have failed to develop their proficiency in English in school. Whereas, the proficiency level of graduates from private schools is better than of community schools. When analysed the gaps, the only tangible difference between private and community schools is the medium of instruction. Private schools have been using English as a medium of instruction (EMI) while Nepali is the medium of instruction in community schools (2015 August 9).

Although Kathet does not explain why students in community schools are unable to develop English language proficiency, there might be many factors such as lack of teachers’ English proficiency, learning environment in schools and English as a foreign language in multilingual Nepali communities. However, his narrative reflects that imposing the English language in students will improve the quality of education in government schools and that the students from government schools will meet the level of private schools. His reason for making the English as an instructional language in Nepali schools seems to be inconsistent with psychological principles of learning, and this provokes questions against the qualification of teachers and educators. There is no empirical evidence found to support his idea that the English as a medium of instruction assures the improvement of the quality of education. Instead, the decision that many community schools have made to shift from Nepali to English medium is absurd and it is against the right to education in mother tongue in school as stated in Nepal’s Constitution, 2015.

Ashok Khati, who has been a teacher for about twenty years as well as a teacher trainer for several years, doubts whether or not the initiatives of those schools which
have adopted English as a medium of instruction would improve the quality of education:

Public schools are adopting EMI so that they can acquire more quotas for new teachers from the government. More strikingly, teachers take for granted that teaching in English helps students find jobs and participate in the global community. They also believe that students' progress in the English language contributes to more access to information and knowledge. Both the teachers and guardians mean EMI leads to quality education. Sadly, there are not any support and teaching resources that can help the teachers to effectively conduct their classes in English medium. Very few teachers find EMI classroom pleasant and exciting in several content-related subjects. Most teachers who have been teaching in Nepali medium of instruction for decades in the past find EMI very challenging. They feel their schools adopting EMI has posed a burden on their profession. This tendency might hinder teaching-learning activities (Khati, 2015, August 9).

Khati argues that the schools, which have adopted English as a medium of instruction, have made the decision without any directive and plan of the government, but with their own interest and individual strategy to bring changes in the schools. His narrative, for instance, the above excerpt, reflects his anxiety that the schools' hasty decision to shift from Nepali to English medium may deteriorate teaching and learning environment in schools and bring frustration in teachers.

Several studies (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2001; Hovens, 2002; Ndamba, 2008) have reported that learning takes place when the learners understand what they need to learn, and bilingual children learn better in their mother tongue. However, many government schools in Nepal, who have shifted from Nepali to English medium and many others which have thought to follow them, have neglected the reality of the Nepali contexts where children have their own mother tongue as well as national language and they learn English in school. The idea of imposing the English as an instructional language for children in Nepali schools is irrational, and it is, as Giri (2011) alleged neo-colonial ideology.

Kathet’s idea of improving the quality of education by shifting all Nepali schools from Nepali to English medium signposts the future threat of losing native identities such as social, cultural and linguistic diversities and also creates a confusion between language and education. His belief reminded me Biggs’ (1990) findings in Hong Kong schools that the imposition of English as a medium of instruction in the classrooms in the late 1980s led students to memorise contents instead of learning what they needed to learn from daily classes. In the context of Nepal, the pressure of English as a medium of instruction on students in Nepali schools not only betrays students from learning but makes them robotic because English is a new language they learn in schools but is not commonly used in their daily life. In government schools where almost all teachers cannot communicate in English (Kadel, 2015 August 9), the holistic approach of shifting schools from Nepali to English medium will pressurise several teachers to leave their teaching profession and search alternative jobs. This will gradually break down the education system, produce unproductive graduates and require reformation of the education system.
Policy on national and foreign languages

Many teachers’ narratives reflect tensions about language policy of Nepal, linguistic hegemony and language for education. Particularly the language for education and foreign language in school education seem to be a major concern in Nepal’s school education system. Nepal, having 123 languages among 125 ethnic communities as discussed earlier, has a complicated socio-political stress to include social, cultural and linguistic diversity in national education policy and protect these properties. Nepal’s Constitution, 2015 (Constitutional Assembly Secretariate, 2015) states that the implementation of the constitution will address the issue of inclusion of ethnic entities, which have been made political agenda by several political parties for several decades but have never been addressed. The constitution states that members of the public have a right to get the formal education in their mother tongue. It is expected that the constitution will resolve the problems regarding minority languages, which have been seeking a status of official language and space in education. However, it is too early to say how the government and schools operate their educational activities in multilingual communities and what strategies they are going to develop to conduct bilingual or multilingual classrooms in this existing monolingual education system. In one way, the new policy provides children with an opportunity for learning in their mother tongue and in another way, this will protect several minority languages of the country. However, teachers’ narratives indicate that fragile language policy and the place of the English language in school education are other major problems. For example, as discussed above, several government schools have shifted from Nepali to English medium in the recent years without any official plan, policy, and directive of government, which shows the weakness of Nepal’s national education policy, the fragility of language policy and meager governance. Khati (2015 August 9) argues that, although several schools have chosen EMI as an instrument to improve the quality of education, there is no empirical evidence found to support their ideology. He suggests that schools need to be able to differentiate between teaching the English language and teaching in English before planning to adopt EMI in Nepali schools.

Schools do not have any strategic plan to teach students through EMI. Teaching through second or foreign language is an entirely different issue from teaching academic subjects through the first language (Khati, 2015 August 9).

Khati’s argument aligns with the findings of Phyak (2011) that neither the schools have a particular plan for shifting from Nepali to English medium, nor the government has a standard language policy and an ability to make commitments. He stresses that the idea of making English as an instructional language in Nepali government schools will be a barrier for children to learn new things and it will decline their creativity of learning instead of supporting them in their learning activities. He argues that the schools’ idea of making the English as a medium of instruction is only a key to sell them in the market, which other private schools have been doing for three decades, in the name of improving education quality. Giri (2011) states that the language policy of Nepal is always conjugated with the English language, and therefore, the English language has got an undeniable status in Nepal’s educational development. He argues that the invisible politics of language within the country, which is visible in ambiguous terminologies: “language of the nation” for Nepali and “national languages” for other ethnic/ minority languages stated in the
constitution, has illustrated a fragility of language policy. He further argues that dynamic process of language policy development is never considered as a multi-disciplinary, and suggests that the issues regarding languages should be openly discussed and public voice should be valued in the process of developing language policy.

However, Gaulee (2012 January 1) argues that the foreign influence over Nepal’s social, educational and economic policies has promoted the English language in Nepal and dominated local languages:

> There are arguments that the spread of the English language all over the world did not happen automatically. This has been systematically proliferated by agencies and this proliferation is still on. Languages are often imposed by powerful countries to foster their own languages.

His argument is, at some level, consistent with Mustapha (2014) that the dominant role of politically and economically powerful countries influences the educational policies including social, political and economic aspects of developing counties. Phillipson (1997) and Modiano (2001) stress that internationalised English language learning based on culture-specific perspective norms is an imperialistic approach, which exploits one society by another. Phillipson argues that the linguistic hegemony, although it consciously or unconsciously reflects dominant attitudes, does not indicate predispositions and there is always a room for people to choose their language, but he stresses that there may be linguistic hegemony when one language is associated with donor country. He further stresses that the linguistic hegemonic belief creates a conflict in educational language policymaking, for example, education through the medium of English or English language education, which is an issue in Nepal. Many teachers (Khati, 2015 August 9; Phyak, 2015 August 9; Sah, 2015 August 9; Sharma, 2015 August 9; Sharma, 2017 June 11) through their narratives suggest that the idea of making the English language as a medium of instruction in Nepali schools, where the English language is taught as a subject like Mathematics, Science and Nepali, is impractical. Instead, they emphasise that the bilingual education system is required in the multilingual context of Nepal and the government needs to develop and implement standard language policy to solve language-related problems in the country.

### The bilingual approach to classroom teaching

Most of the communities in Nepal are bilingual but several languages exist widely scattered. It is probably the first challenge to identify who speaks what language in particular communities and then to develop a language plan and materials in the language. In absence of researches in those several languages and lack of standard statistical data, the official language policy and political decisions may not work effectively and practically. Phyak (2011) stresses that, although the Curriculum Development Centre has developed curriculum and textbooks in 18 different indigenous languages, there are other challenges such as how to develop teachers’ professionalism in a particular language and convince parents to teach children in their mother tongue. However, he emphasises that it is necessary to implement the constitutional commitment of teaching in mother tongue to foster children’s basic communication skills and develop their self-esteem. Children think in their mother tongue and can learn social and cultural values instinctively in their first language (Rana, 2017, June 11). Some
teachers’ (Phyak, 2015 August 9; Pyhak, 2011 March 11; Sah, 2015 August 9; Sharma, 2015 August 9; Yadav, 2013 December 1) narratives indicate that multilingual pedagogy can be an appropriate approach in Nepali schools as the majority of children have their own mother tongue. Yadav (2013 December 1) exemplifies that literacy programmes conducted by NGOs in the Terai region, particularly in Rajbansi and Tharu communities, in their indigenous languages: Rajbansi and Tharu, encouraged the communities to educate their children in their mother tongue and motivated children to learn in the classroom.

Agnihotri (2013) in his narrative argues that observing children’s mother tongue as an obstacle to learn other languages and different subjects in the classroom is a predisposition which interferes with the natural process of children’s learning. He stresses that bilingualism or multilingualism in education in Nepal is not a problem but there is always a political power to continue a monolingual education system. Giri (2011) argues that the invisible politics for decades has been playing a drama on the linguistic diversity of Nepal to strengthen one language policy in the country and that the government has never tried to change monolingual education system to bilingual education system. However, the English language has been emphasised in education as discussed above. Leaving several indigenous languages behind, the English language has got a second priority after the Nepali language in education, and this has created a tension among various ethnic communities in the country.

Sharma (2016 January 1) stresses that without trying to understand the actual local challenges of education and diversity of languages in Nepal, stakeholders such as schools, parents, teachers, and educators are adopting English-only medium of instruction, an idea which they think it will magically improve the quality of education. He argues that instead of improving education in government schools with only English idea by replacing Nepali and local languages, the situation will be worse because the teachers cannot speak well and students have limited opportunity to develop their English language competence. Many other teachers also criticise the only English idea that few students may at some level master nuance of English after being forced to use it for a decade or more but it is unlikely to be successful in the context of Nepal and many schools have miserably failed to achieve their expected goals due to insufficient resources. Sharma (ibid) suggests the multilingual approach in Nepali schools which allows teachers and students to learn diverse ideas in more than one language, to improve their learning and to increase opportunities in their life. Yadav (2017 June 11), an experienced teacher of English language, suggests that language policy, although it is a serious and difficult task to develop, should be inclusive and has to protect languages as an indicator of social identity. He emphasises that the bilingual education system is perhaps an appropriate way to solve many problems related to the diversity of languages.

Conclusion

The discussions above show that there is a lack of inclusive multilingual language policy in Nepal to address the diversity of languages as an indicator of the social and national identity of several indigenous communities. Although the vague statements of recently promulgated Nepal’s Constitution, 2015 assures the right to education in mother tongue in school, there are a number of challenges, such as teacher development in a particular language, development of strategic plans for various languages and implementation in education, to realise the norm of the right provided for the citizens of Nepal.
This article demonstrates that the absence of clear-cut national language policy in Nepal resulted in unsystematic changes in school education as such many government schools shifted from Nepali to English medium and some others are in the process. The decision many government schools have made to adopt the English as a medium of instruction is neither conscious effort nor a wise idea in the multilingual context of Nepal where children learn the English language as one of many subjects in the classroom but do not use it in their daily life. Instead of improving the quality of education that many government schools have expected by shifting from Nepali to English medium, the imposition of English as an instructional language on children will betray them from learning and gradually make education worse. The English language interest of schools, parents and educators in Nepal is likely to promote English language hegemony over several local languages including Nepali, the national language and endanger social, cultural and particularly linguistic diversity of Nepal. In the context of Nepal, it is wise to choose bilingual education system which provides teachers and learners with opportunities for learning diverse ideas in more than one language, for improving their learning and for increasing job opportunities in their life.

References


Policies practices realities and looking forward


**Contributor**

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Turn-taking and gender differences in language classroom

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Abstract:

The study aims at studying gender differences in the ways male and female students take turns and participate in a mixed-gender classroom. Two groups of first-year English compulsory classes held at two different departments (Geography and Economics) at the University of Karachi took part in the study. The results revealed that in the Geography Department, where there was a female teacher, male students were more dominating as compared to the female students who hardly participated in the class. They took more turns and participated better in the classroom discussion. In addition, they also interrupted the teacher and the female counterparts when they tried to contribute to the discussion. On the other hand, at the Department of Economics, female students had more number of turns. They dominated the classroom as compared to the male students. Besides, the study revealed that the gender of the teacher played an important part in shaping the discourse taking place in the classroom.

Keywords: Classroom Discourse, Classroom Participation, ELT, Gender Differences, Turn-taking.

Introduction

Gender difference has been an area of interest for a long period of time. Initially, the differences between genders were restricted to the ways males and females are expected to behave in a particular context depending on the culture they belong to. As interest in studying language from a variety of perspectives grew, people started observing the gender differences in the ways males and females use language in different contexts. In the beginning, researchers Lakoff (1975), Cameron and Coates (1985) and Trudgil (1972) studied such differences with a specific focus on the vocabulary, adjectives, amount of talk and pronunciation style used by both male and females while talking for different purposes. Now, the focus has shifted to the conversational strategies used by men and women in mixed-gender conversation to maintain their individuality or to assert their dominance. Samar and Alibakshi (2007) analyzed the linguistic strategies used by male-male, male-female and female-female communication. The results indicated a significant difference in the use of linguistic strategies in male-male, female-female and male-female
communication. However, the research also focused upon the role of gender and experience, power and education of interlocutors in the use of linguistic strategies. Among the different conversational strategies used by people during the conversation, turn-taking is an essential strategy to continue the flow of conversation and to convey one’s idea completely and at a proper time.

Behavior of men and women, both expected and observed, is determined by the culture they are born into. A major part of this depends upon how they speak and how they should speak. Women are generally stereotyped as being more talkative than men, however; an earlier study by Tannen (1984) suggest that women are interrupted more by men, which plays an important role in theory of male dominance over female. Kandell and Tannen (1977) talked about the difference between males and females at the workplace. They concluded that males dominated conversations by getting and holding the floor longer than females, interrupting more and making various contributions using language strategies that help maintain the status difference.

Zimmerman and West (1975) are considered as the pioneers of the research focusing upon the gender differences. West and Zimmerman (1987) explained that the differences between men and women are created by the process of social arrangement. He said that in gendered conversations and situations men portray dominance whilst women display deference. On the other hand, a recent study by Park et al (2016) explored differences in language use across gender using a social media dataset. The results revealed that the language identified by females was more polite, warmer and compassionate but they were still assertive in their language use.

In addition, Zimmerman and West (1975) discussed turn-taking as an economic system and described the differences between male and female in their number of turns as parallel to the differences between them in society’s economic system. Furthermore, a recent study by Hancock and Rubin (2015) focused on the influence of communication partner’s gender on language. They established that there were not any significant differences in the way men and women use language. However, participants interrupted more and used more dependent clauses while speaking with a female than with a male.

By studying turn-taking and gender differences this research article aims to find out the differences between the male and female students’ participation in the classroom focusing on the gender of the teacher concentrating on the following research questions:

- Is there any difference between the turn-taking patterns observed in the two classes?
- Who dominates the classroom discussion (male/female students) in the two classes?

This research study will shed light on the turn-taking patterns and turn-taking strategies used by male and female students in a language classroom while taking into consideration the gender of the teachers. It will help the teachers understand how male and females contribute differently in a classroom discourse, which as a result would help them make their classes more interactive.

**Literature Review**

Turn-taking has been an important part of studies on gender differences. Turn-taking in this research is seen as the conversational strategy that helps maintain
the flow of conversation by allowing the speakers to take the floor in order to contribute to the discussion that is taking place. It also includes holding the floor and yielding the floor at a particular point in the discussion. Goffman (1976). It can be considered as one of the basic mechanisms in conversation.

Aukrust (2008) discussed the participation of boys and girls in a classroom in Norway across four grades (first, third, sixth and ninth). His findings revealed that the differences between girls and boys participation were least in the first grade and most in the ninth grade. The girls were mostly found to speak when the teacher initiated the conversation by allocating turns whereas the boys had more overlapping turns with the teacher. Unlike the girls, they also gave comments when not asked by the teacher. Besides, there was less difference in their participation when the teacher was a female as compared to when the teacher was a male, whose presence accounted for more difference in participation. In the class of the male teacher, boys made many uninvited comments.

Similarly, Tannen (1995) discusses the difference between male and female in the way they organize their speech on different occasions. She concludes that men are found to be more sensitive to the power dynamics. They tend to speak in a way that keeps them in a dominant position. On the other hand, women are more concerned about the rapport dynamic and speaking in ways that save face for others. Besides that, Wang (2010) talked about gender differences in speech style in public places. The researcher used conversation analysis, interview, and questionnaire as the data collecting instruments. The study revealed men as contributing more to talk than women do in their conversation with women. It is men who always violate the rules of turn-taking and take more turns to control the conversation. Similarly, Chalak and Karimi (2017) studied turn taking system and repair strategies used by Iranian EFL learners in 10 EFL classrooms. The results indicated that female students were mostly chosen by the teacher to speak while self-selection was commonly employed by the male students.

Moreover, Aidinlou and Dolati (2013) focused on comparing male and female gender in taking turn to see which gender talks more while discussing education quality at different public and private schools in Turkey. The conversation between male and female teachers was recorded. The study revealed that female teachers talked more in discussions with their own gender. Males helped complete each other’s utterances whereas females had more overlapping statements. Broadbridge (2003) examined the difference between male and female speakers during conversation using recording as a method for collecting data. The sample included two male and two female speakers who worked for the same English-language school in Tokyo. The study showed that men were the ones to interrupt most and women were interrupted most. Besides this, women were more active in listening as compared to men.

Similarly, Zhang (2010) studied the difference between male and female students in terms of participation in classroom in a Swedish school. The data was collected through classroom observation and interview with the teachers. The findings revealed that girls contributed more to the classroom talk in terms of the total number of turns and in the amount of turn length. The girls were also found to be better at elaborative talk as compared to the boys. Furthermore, Wolfe (2000) analyzed ethnic and gender differences in classroom conversational styles in a face-to-face and computer-
mediated discussion. The results revealed that white males were found to participate more in a face-to-face discussion whereas white women were more comfortable having a discussion in a computer-mediated setting. On the other hand, Hispanic women contributed frequently in a face-to-face conversation, spoke more than Hispanic males and disliked computer-mediated settings. The research study helped to understand how gender differences may vary across cultures.

In addition, Martin and Marsh (2005) explored the impact of students’ and teachers’ gender and their interaction on academic motivation. The study revealed that academic motivation and engagement did not vary as a result of the teacher’s gender. In terms of academic motivation and engagement boys did not show any differences in the class of a male or a female teacher.

Like all these research studies, the current research study aims at studying the turn-taking patterns. However, the specific focus of this article is to analyze the turn-taking patterns of a classroom discourse, taking the gender of the students and teachers into consideration.

**Methodology**

The research was based on Qualitative Research Paradigm as it helps explore any issue in depth. It is not only conducted in a natural setting but also helps collect reliable data in terms of one to one interaction between the researchers and their participants.

Convenient sampling was used for selecting the research participants. The classes that were easily accessible were selected for observing the turn-taking patterns occurring in the classroom setting. However, it was made sure that the classes consisted of the students of both the gender as the aim of the research was to observe gender differences.

Discourse analysis was used as a method to analyze conversation taking place in the class. It is a qualitative method of analyzing the texts focusing on the connection between language, power, and social practices. Discourse can be defined as a way of speaking that does not only reflects social relations but construct them. (Fairclough, 1992). The method helps to examine the conversation with a specific focus on the meanings derived from a particular context.

In the current research, conversational exchange taking place in the classroom between teachers and students and between students are observed to see if the gender difference exists in the way male and female students interact in the classroom environment. Compulsory English classes for the 1st year Honors students held at the Department of Geography and Economics were observed. A female teacher conducted the session observed at the Department of Geography whereas a male teacher instructed in the class observed in the Economics Department. Both male and female teachers’ classes were observed to note if the difference in participation between the male and the female students was because of the gender of the teacher or if it remains the same irrespective of the gender of the teacher.

In order to collect data, classrooms were observed using field notes and informal discussions with the teachers who participated in the study. The observation was a primary data collecting instrument as it helps collect first-hand data and allows the researcher to focus on all the aspects that play an important part in constructing the social phenomena under study.

The study was based on unstructured observation as it has an edge over structured observation because of the
diversity that can be studied through it. (Gevin, 2008). Besides, structured observation helps focus only on the aspects the researcher considers related to the study based upon his/her prior knowledge whereas unstructured observation allows a study of all the critical events that may influence behaviors observed hence, proposing new and varied dimensions to be focused upon. Therefore, everything from the topic of discussion to the body language, disturbance and silence were observed to collect reliable data. Two of our friends helped us gain access to the teachers instructing at the respective departments. As part of ethical consideration, the consent form was signed by the teachers. After the teachers’ approval, further research was conducted. To minimize the chance of collecting any contaminated data, the first three sessions were used as piloting so that the students become familiar with the presence of the stranger and perform in their normal way.

Field notes help keep track of important events discussed as part of the research. It helps to keep a record of all the events that play a significant role in the development of the phenomena under study. (Thomas, 2015). While observing the classes, field notes were taken. Moreover, in order to cross-check the data that was collected an informal interview with the teachers was conducted. The discussion was mainly based upon inquiring the difference of performance in male and female students, their interaction in class and with the teachers separately (if they had any) and their response when asked to contribute to the ongoing discussion in the class. Informal interview helps get significant information about a particular subject of study. It also helps to gain insight into the subject under research.

**Data Analysis**

The section discusses the number of turns taken by both male and female students in the sessions observed at the Department of Geography and the Department of Economics.

*Table 4.1: Number of Turns taken by Male and Female Students at the Department of Geography*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Sessions</th>
<th>Number of Students Present (Boys, Girls)</th>
<th>Number of Turns (Boys)</th>
<th>Number of Turns (Girls)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>17, 31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>18, 34</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>12, 26</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.2: Number of Turns taken by Male and Female Students at the Department of Economics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Sessions</th>
<th>Number of Students Present (Boys, Girls)</th>
<th>Number of Turns (Boys)</th>
<th>Number of Turns (Girls)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>7, 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>6, 31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>11, 26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although six sessions were observed, the data presented is only for three sessions as the observation for few of the sessions were used as piloting and to avoid repetition. The boys were in minority in both the classes but their performance varied to a great extent in both the Departments. The presence of students in such a large classroom cannot be controlled, therefore; the above table
presents the number of students that were present on the day of observation. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) in their article mentions some of the ways in which turns are organized in a conversation. The turn-taking patterns of the classroom were analyzed using their model of turn-taking. The model refers the following patterns in the conversation being observed:

1. Speaker change recurs, or at least occurs.
2. Overwhelmingly one party talks at a time.
3. Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time is common but limited.
4. Transitions with no gap and overlap are common.
5. Turn order is not fixed, but varies.
6. Turn size is not fixed, but varies.
7. Length of conversation is not specified in advance.
8. What parties say is not specified in advance.
9. Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance.
10. Number of parties can vary.
11. Talk can be continuous or discontinuous.
12. Turn-allocation techniques are used.

Findings and Discussion

In the department of Geography, where the teacher was a female, the male students dominated the class in terms of the number of turns during the conversation. They took the floor to speak very often and participated in almost each and every discussion in the class. Two of the girls sitting at the front row took part whereas the girls sitting at the back rows mostly remained silent in the class.

Teacher: What does the term ‘Global Village’ means?

Boy: Ma’am it means that the world has become advanced

The teacher asked the students to locate topic sentences of all the paragraphs given in a text related to Global Village. However, this discussion was mostly based upon the IRF (Initiate-Response-Feedback) exchange in which the teacher asks questions and the students respond, followed by teacher’s feedback. Even in this situation, boys responded and participated more as compared to the girls. For instance;

Teacher: Locate the topic sentences of the 1st paragraph

Boy 1: The first sentence is a topic sentence

Teacher: Good, second para?

Boy 2: Ma’am the second sentence

(shows overlap in conversation between the two boys)

Another boy: No ma’am the first one

Teacher: Yes, it’s the first one

However, boys also took the floor themselves for speaking and not only when asked questions, so the class was not always based upon the IRF exchange between the teacher and the students. The turn order and size were not fixed, and the boys took more turns as compared to the girls in the class.

According to the rules of turn-taking, one speaker is supposed to speak at a time. However, boys violated this rule by interrupting the teacher’s lecture as well as the female students’ comments on the topic of discussion. For example, in one of the classes, in the middle of the discussion, one
of the boys interrupted to give an excuse for not completing his homework, disturbing the entire class. The teacher scolded and punished one of the boys for interrupting the lecture repeatedly, and she asked him to leave the class. Similarly, they interrupted one of the girls when she tried to answer a question asked by the teacher.

Teacher: What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?

A girl: Ma’am fact means

Boys: aawaaznahiaarahi (we can’t hear you)

They also interrupted the teacher;

Teacher: So while writing a summary you have to

2 Boys (entering the class): assalaam-o-alaikum (Greetings)

Teacher: Why don’t you people go back, greet each other and then come back to the class?

Teacher: now you people have to write a summary

A boy: of the first paragraph

Teacher: Do we summarize only one paragraph or the entire text while writing a summary? Did I say you have to write a summary only for the first paragraph?

The boys were found to interrupt the teacher during her lecture many times like the ones discussed above, as when they started speaking before the teacher completed her utterance, which shows the dominance of the male students. Moreover, it was also noticed that whenever the teacher asked any questions related to the task or homework, for example 'have you done the task?' the boys shouted loudly in affirmation in contrast to the girls. They deliberately made noise most of the times in the class. On one occasion, instead of doing the task, two of the boys talked at the back and were reprimanded by the teacher. On some occasions the boys deliberately disturbed the teacher:

Teacher: Has everyone submitted their assignment to the CR?

CR (A girl): Ma’am girls ne dia boys nenahidia

Boys: humenahipata k CR kaun he

(CR: Ma’am girls have submitted their assignments but boys have not; Boys: We do not know who the CR is)

Teacher: I made the CR the first day and you people do not even know about the CR, great! Submit your assignments to me right now.

The way the male students responded on some occasions like the one mentioned above showed that they intentionally interrupted and disturbed the teacher.

As per the rules of turn-taking mentioned in the model discussed above, in some situations, turns are allotted to the speakers in advance to speak. In one of the classes, the teacher asked students to write a story about a bad experience with any of their teachers in their childhood as an activity for the chapter ‘Recounting Past.’ The teacher asked the students to come to the front of the class and share what they had written on the given topic. At first, she did not assign the turn individually. The boys voluntarily came and shared their stories in the class. They were more enthusiastic to participate as well as confident enough to share their stories whereas the girls at first were hesitant to mount the dais to share their stories until and unless the teacher herself selected the girls and forced them to do so and participate in the class.
Teacher: Why are the girls so reluctant to participate in the class? You people are marked for speaking in the class. The girls won’t get the marks if they do not come and share their stories.

In one of the classes, the teacher discussed a text named ‘Gender Discrimination at Workplace in Pakistan’. She asked the students to locate if the given statements can be considered as a fact or as an opinion. The boys talked among themselves while given a task, whereas the girls mostly remained silent throughout the class. Although the topic was related to women, the boys were the one to participate more. This time as well the conversation was initially based upon the IRF exchange with the teachers giving the statement and asking the students to classify them as facts or opinions.

Teacher: ‘Women are more jealous than men’, is it a fact or an opinion?

Boys: It’s a fact ma’am.

Teacher: Women are more spend thrift than men

Boys: Hundred percent, ma’am.

Teacher: Women are more intelligent than men.

Girls: True, ma’am

A boy: Ma’am, it is a printing error

Following this discussion, the boys began commenting on how men were superior to women. They were so enthusiastic that they kept on debating with the two girls presenting the counter-argument on some occasions.

A boy: Women are physically weak so they should not work.

A girl: Behind every successful man, there is a woman

A boy: How many women are scientists?

Another boy: Women cannot even do business

Boys were found holding the floor almost throughout this session. This was the class where the speaker change rarely occurred and even the teacher was unable to speak in some instances. This, however, could again be attributed to the gender of the teacher. As the teacher was a female, she, despite being in an authoritative position, was found to remain silent in the conversation. She did not get a chance to respond many times during this discussion. She was unable to control the conversation as the male students were quite dominating in her class, specifically on that particular day. Also, the fact that the teacher was young and inexperienced can be considered as another reason behind her lack of control especially when it comes to dealing with the male students.

Throughout the discussion, boys were the ones to speak and contribute more. They were more vocal than the girls despite being in minority. We expected the girls to participate more when the topic to be discussed was announced in the class but, like all the other classes, boys dominated and held the floor a lot longer than the girls in the entire session. This could also be attributed to other factors like students’ prior educational experience and culture. Most of the girls have studied from girls’ college previously, so they take time to adjust and express themselves especially in the presence of male students. The other reason could be the lack of proficiency in English language as most of them came from a government college where English was taught through rote learning, therefore, they lacked confidence to speak in the class.
In short, the boys in the Department of Geography were found to be more interactive than the girls. They interrupted the teacher as well as the female students whenever they tried to participate. They violated the rules of turn-taking many times. The dominance of male students in this class was in accordance with Lakoff (1973) dominance theory. According to this theory, men control the conversation with women and the language system itself. On the other hand, women use language that reflects their subordinate position as compared to men, therefore, the language used by men reveals their power more than their gender.

In the Department of Economics, where the instructor was a male, the girls dominated the classroom discussion. Besides, they were more relaxed than the boys. Although the discussion in this class was most of the time based upon IRF exchange, the girls responded more to the questions asked by the teacher. This could be because of their interests in the topic of discussion. Also, the male students were more alert in the presence of a male teacher because the male teacher was more authoritative and had a better classroom control as compared to the female teacher.

In one of the classes, the teacher discussed the number of students who opted for Economics major as their own choice. The teacher asked them to use adjectives and be expressive in sharing their experience.

*Teacher: Are you people here because you like Economics?*

*A girl: agar aapkosa na ho to Economics parhe~ (If you want to sleep you should study Economics)*

*Teacher: ((laughs))*

The teacher interacted more with the girls as they participated more in the discussion every time. The boys did not participate most of the time. The teacher posed a direct question to one of the boys:

*Teacher: Is there any other subject that you like?*

*Boy: I like Physics because the world obeys the laws of Physics.*

On the other hand, on some occasions the girls took turns voluntarily, unlike the boys who were mostly allotted the turns:

*Teacher: What about others? What is it that you people like studying?*

*A girl: Sir, I don’t like Urdu and I don’t like Economics either.*

*Teacher: aapko Urdu nahipasand, aap ko Economics nahipasand toupasand kya he? (You don’t like Urdu, you don’t like Economics, then what is it that you like?)*

Besides, in one of the classes two girls were seen talking among themselves:

*Girls: ((talking among themselves))*

*Teacher: kya koi bohatzurruribaat ho rahe he (is there anything important that you people are discussing?)*

*Girls: No, sir.*

*Teacher: nahi hum sab kobhi bataye~ agar koi zuruuribaat he to (no, please let us all know if it’s something important.)*

But unlike the female teacher, the male teacher did not behave in a strict manner and did not punish them for disturbing the class. The difference in the way the male and female teacher controlled the class can also be attributed to the difference in their
gender. The male teacher had an authoritative position as compared to the female teacher who in some instances lost control of the class. On the other hand, the male teacher had complete command on his class. The female teacher was young and less experienced as well, so age and experience can be another reason behind her lack of class control.

In the next class, the teacher conducted a listening activity. He asked the students about the advantages of the internet as a pre-listening activity, telling them to have a peer discussion and to jot down their points within three to four minutes. The teacher walked around in the class after assigning the task. Three of the boys sitting together called him to their seat and discussed their answers with him. Then, a boy sitting separately also called the teacher to his place. At the time of discussion, the girls participated and voluntarily spoke more as compared to the boys.

Teacher: What are some of the advantages of internet, besides the ones mentioned in the text?

A girl: Online shopping.

Teacher: ha~ aap logo~ k lie to ye bohatbara advantage hogya (yes, this would be one of the greatest advantages of internet for you people) What else?

A girl: Marketing

Teacher: Again shopping? ((laughs))

Girl: No sir, marketing different products.

Teacher: oh me~ samjhaaap sab yehikarteyrhehtey he~ internet pe (oh I thought you people only shop online over the internet.)

Another girl: Sir, freelance work.

Teacher: Ok boys, ((points towards a boy))

A boy: Internet helps in online banking and it also helps find locations through Google maps.

Teacher: Very good.

The male students were quite reluctant to participate. They only participated when the teacher directly asked them to answer and did not take the turn to speak on their own.

The teacher then commenced the listening activity by reading a passage and asked the students to locate which character had spoken the asked statements in the passage that was just read. There were three characters Ayesha, Fatima and Fatima’s mother. The teacher gave different words and asked the students to relate it with the character that had used the word in the text that they had just listened to. The entire class participated together. However, the girls were more vocal and energetic in their participation. Then the teacher asked different questions related to the passage and the students themselves took turns to answer. One of the boys started to answer one of the questions when he was interrupted by a girl:

Teacher: Why didn’t Ayesha come to college?

A boy: Because she was

A girl: Sir, she stayed awake all night to chat that’s why she didn’t come to college

The girl not only interrupted him but also continued to answer the question whereas the boy remained silent from then on.

In the Department of Economics, the turn-taking patterns were totally different than those observed in the Geography
Department, where the boys dominated the classroom discussion most of the times. However, sometimes there was no participation in the class by both the boys and the girls in the Economics Department. In one of the classes, the male teacher was found saying:

Teacher: What is wrong with the class? Am I talking about rocket science that you people are so reluctant to speak in the class?

Although the girls in this department were also not that interactive, they still dominated the class with their contribution to the classroom discussion as compared to the boys who most of the times were observed to be passive listeners only. The way males and females students interacted in this particular class was in sharp contrast to the Lakoff (1973) dominance theory which suggest that men are always the ones to assert their power and dominance in a mixed-gender conversation. Therefore; the theory can be criticized for not making allowances for the individual differences and situational factors.

Moreover, we had an informal discussion with the teachers to cross-check the data that was collected through the classroom observation. We asked the female teacher if she thinks the boys participated more, to which she replied in the affirmative. She said that boys were very energetic and more willing to participate in the class. She also said that girls hardly participated in the class discussion, except for the two girls sitting in the front row. When asked if the girls approached her to discuss things privately, the teacher replied in the negative. She also said that usually, girls approach her to discuss things separately but in this class boys are the ones to do so.

She also said that boys were mostly active in class if the teacher is a female. Moreover, she revealed that sometimes the boys created a lot of disturbance in the class due to which she scolds them in order to control the class. Apart from talking, she said, the boys were quite good in their class performance. She was also asked if she thinks that the girls do not participate because they lack proficiency in English language. To this, she answered negatively. She said that even boys have language problems yet they speak and take part in the classroom discussion. Besides, she was also asked if she thinks that girls do not speak because of the presence of the boys. She replied that his might be the reason as boys interrupted and even made fun of the girls sometimes when they tried to participate.

We started the discussion with the male teacher sharing our observation that girls participated more in the class whereas the boys hardly did so. The teacher replied in the affirmative, saying that boys do not participate until and unless you ask them to do so whereas the girls participate voluntarily. The teacher was then asked about the reasons that he considered as the cause of the boys’ lack of performance in the class to which he said that this could be because of the overwhelming presence of the girls, as the boys were in the minority. He also claimed that the boys were shy to participate in the class. He further said that one of the boys approached him personally and confided that his lack of proficiency in the English language made him unwilling to attend the class.

Besides, the teacher said that there was a boy who completed all the assigned tasks but still hesitated to participate in the class discussion. He also said there are two other boys who are from the Northern areas who were so shy that they just smiled at the teacher whenever he asked them a question. Then, the teacher was asked if the boys were hesitant to participate because of their pronunciation problems. The teacher agreed on this as a probable cause

64
as he felt that the males were very conscious of their self-esteem so they might skip answering out of fear of giving incorrect answers, especially in the presence of the female students. The teacher also said that even though the girls also face language issues, it is the boys who lack the confidence to participate. The teacher said that when he approached the three boys sitting together and asked them to share what they had written on the given task, they passed the sheet to one another because of shyness or their lack of confidence. The teacher was also asked if the boys visit him personally to discuss things. He answered that the boys do come to discuss things with him personally but are reluctant to participate in front of the class.

Conclusion:

The present study revealed quite obvious differences between the participation of the male and female students in both of the classes that were observed. The boys were found to talk more, interrupt more and participate more enthusiastically in the class where the teacher was a female whereas, in the class of a male teacher, the boys were the passive listeners, participating only when asked direct questions by the teacher. Similarly, the girls were found to participate actively in the class where the teacher was a male, while the girls hardly participated in the class of a female teacher. The boys were found to dominate when the teacher was a female, whereas the boys were found to be very conscious in the presence of a male teacher. The boys in the Economics Department minded their behavior in the presence of their teacher, who was a male. Their demeanor was deferential, which can be attributed to the gender of their teacher. To sum up, the study reveals that gender differences do exist in the way male and female students interact in the classroom. Also, the gender of the teacher plays an important part in shaping the classroom discourse.

Limitation and Future Research

The present study cannot be generalized as it was conducted in higher education language classes of Pakistan. Future studies can be carried out at different levels to validate the findings of our study. This study is based on a qualitative research design, future studies may include a quantitative framework to investigate the same research area.

References


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Introduction

Classroom is such a place where teachers encounter with children of different levels of thinking. Children in the classroom are of different abilities and therefore their thinking ability is also different. We want children to learn. Most often, we do not have the idea about why children are not learning. It might be because we as teachers are not skilled enough to give them opportunity to face higher order thinking skills. According to Saido, Siraj and Nordin (2015), higher order thinking skills can be improved by giving opportunities to students to think about their own thinking. They get to experience higher order skills if they are given opportunities. In fact, children’s learning can be enhanced with higher order thinking activities.

The Context: An Encounter with Higher Order Thinking

With a view to putting the theme of the article into perspective, I begin with a personal account. Once, I was taking class at grade two. It was a substitution class. I thought it would be easy for me to handle the class if I engaged them in some work. I chose a very easy work that normally teachers choose when they have no plan or preparation for their class. I simply asked students to draw an apple and colour it. The students, with a great enthusiasm started their work. In about thirty minutes, they all
finished drawing and colouring which they brought to me to check. While I was praising some of their work and giving them feedback, one of the students stood up and complained about her friend. Teacher! Look, she has coloured the apple half with green and half with red colour. Everybody laughed. As I asked them to be quiet, the same student uttered, Teacher! An apple should be red no... I went towards the student whose colouring was being criticized. I asked her, Ok tell me why you coloured this apple with both red and green. She replied, this apple is half ripen and half left to be ripening. Listening to her reason, I was perplexed. She was right. All apples may not be found ripen. I explained her logic to everyone and they were convinced. At this point, I thought, there are some students who have the higher order thinking skills. May be this girl was analyzing that particular stage of an apple while colouring. It may be that she was evaluating the apple and its ripening stage or maybe she was creating something with critical thinking Why do we colour the apple only red when we do have green apples in the market and also on my table? This girl triggered my thinking of higher order thinking in children.

Higher Order Thinking

Everybody wants children of the 21st century to be problem solvers. There are some types of thinking that require greater cognitive processing. This thinking skill is necessary for problem solving. According to Zetriuslita, Ariawan & Nufus (2016), problem solving is possible when there is critical thinking. Higher order thinking incorporates critical thinking as well as creative thinking where the learners work out to create something. The demand of today’s society is the products that come out of creative and critical thinking. Furthermore, higher order thinking skills help students to conceptualize the things holistically and to reflect their creativity in their work (Shukla & Dungsungnoen, 2016). Consequently, students can visualize a bigger picture when they are in the level of higher level thinking. Teaching strategies play a vital role in making students vigorous in higher level thinking. In other words, teachers need to be very much aware about giving higher order thinking tasks for students as higher level thinking tasks are totally in contrast with lower order tasks that comprise memorizing and translating. Ganapathy, Singh, Kaur & Waikit (2017) claim that though it takes more time to implement higher order thinking skills in the lesson plan, it has positive learning outcomes. The implication of this is that teachers have to work hard for bringing higher order thinking and learning output in the class.

Exploring the Real Classroom: a Step for Higher Order Thinking Activity

Pohtola (2015) states that when students are asked to work in groups with the instruction that fits for that particular group, they can grasp the opportunity to learn better. Therefore, different activities can be implemented for different groups as per the level of thinking. Where they get to work with higher order activity, they can come up with their creative thinking.

Course of Action

King, Goodson and Rohani (1998) state that higher order thinking skills need good planning which has to be away from unrealistic expectations but has to have an appropriate instruction. Similarly, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) suggest that teachers can make instruction distinct through the categories: content, process and product. Being inspired by this, I developed a lesson plan including higher order activities to put to practise. I observed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class
at grade five. Data were collected from classroom where the higher order thinking activities were kept as instructions for students.

Content

This is where the information and skills are provided to students which they need to learn. The content was differentiated by designing the activities in level of Bloom’s Taxonomy. I took hold of revised Bloom’s taxonomy which focuses on the levels: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. These levels have carefully been spotlighted in the content that I developed. I designed plan for different groups who are supposed to work in different learning centers namely writing center, reading center, games center and creative writing center. In writing center, there was a task to remember what they are supposed to understand about Wright Brothers. In reading center, the students had the task to find the information about Wright Brothers from other reference books and to write. This was at the understanding level. Similarly, in games center, the task was to use flash cards to pick up the words related to invention and then to create a funny story out of those words. Thus, the task was in evaluation and applying level. It was to evaluate how much they have learnt from the lesson and how far they could reflect that in their story by applying the words they got. The other level included was the creating level as they had to create a story. Lastly, in the creative writing center, the task was in the creating level. This was the higher level of work where they had to write about the invention of their own. As everything was to be imagined and to write themselves, it was highly creative.

Focusing on home assignments they got, it was also based on different levels of thinking. The writing center was assigned the work in such a way that they had to go to the remembering level. It was to write answer of the given questions related to Wright Brothers. The reading center was assigned a task to collect the information from the Internet or from other reference books. Students were taken to the understanding level there. In games center, they were assigned work to make a paperairplane and write instruction for that. It was the creating level as well as analyzing level. Finally, the creative writing center was assigned with a task that they were supposed to construct something that is innovative. This was in the creating, applying and analyzing level. Bloom’s taxonomy was properly exercised in the content that I developed.

Process

Different questions were asked Have you ever gone to the places using an aeroplane? Where did you go? The answers dropped from students’ mouth were Bhairahawa, Hongkong, Pokhara and UK. Again, the question was asked, those who have not gone anywhere using an aeroplane, what is your feeling about it? The answers were scary, dangerous, interesting, etc. It shows that the students were making sense of what they were up to. Meaning making is an ability that enables students to use ideas intuitively (Bird, 2010). This is a level which uplifts learning. On day one, everybody was explained the chapter and were made to do the same task. They looked passive. The class was quiet and they did work as per the teachers’ instruction. They were twisting their body, yawning though it was their first period, looking exhausted and looking at the watch time and again.

From day two, the students were sent to learning centers where they were to face activities which were in lower and higher order both. My participants were the particular group which was named as Group One. These students were normally
counted as students of advanced level. I observed this group when they were in all four learning centers. On the day (day two), they were in the writing corner. As the instruction was to write about Wright Brothers, they started revising lessons in order to write something from there. The students were quiet in comparison to other groups. My focus was only on them. So, I kept on keeping my eyes upon them. I heard the voice somewhere in the group like Yes, it is in book, Do we copy it? It was a silent task where they need not to communicate. There was no curiosity in them. In the interview with Student 1 the expression was that the students do not enjoy plain reading and writing task. The question was Do you enjoy reading and writing task or something interesting? The answer by Student 1 was Something interesting like project works, 3D modelling…. For the same question, answer of Student 2 was Not reading and writing only…. we have to do different activities. We have to learn something new…. creativity…. This shows that students enjoy involving in higher level activities.

Third day, when Group Two was sent to the creative writing center, I saw a different spirit in children. My field notes have the contents such as Student 1 became thoughtful and said what shall I invent? as if she was inventing something real. The teacher asked, what do you like to invent? Nannybot, she said. The teacher asked, what is it? She answered; It is just like a robot that helps us to do household work. As my mother is busy, it could help her too. Interesting thing is that everybody in the group was talking about their invention. In that group, one boy wanted to create a pen that writes automatically without students’ effort. The other girl wanted to write about a doll with all five sense organs. Next boy, a flying ladder so that he can fly in it and see the heaven and the other one, a flying bike in order to avoid traffic. Their discussion about the invention that they would like to make was amazing. I could see how little children wanted to get rid of the problems that they face in everyday life. Students were enthusiastic to write more about their creativity. Student 1 asked Teacher! Can we write more with more ideas? With the answer yes, she looked pleased and other members of the group were also eager to write. For me, this was just a twist in the planning. It was the writing task. However, a little of their imagination brought a huge difference in the task.

The games center gave another excitement to these students. As they had to pick cards one by one and tell words they got, their sound started overcoming the sound of other groups. I could hear day and night, machine, successful, effort, manpower, experiment. A discussion turned into the noise but I could see how constructive their noise was. Everyone was giggling, speaking and accepting. They were refining the ideas to create the story. Student 1 and Student 2 were giving their input. Others were adding the ideas. In the midst, I heard You can write it was unuseful. Student 1 immediately said I think unuseful is not the right word. Next student said oh…. useless, not unuseful. Student 1 said Hmm useless. Student 2 kept on writing. At last, they read their story in a group. They created a good story.

In the reading center, Group 1 just read book and wrote the points from there. They consulted other reference books and copied some points about Wright Brothers. No new was brought as they wrote the points from what they have read. I observed students’ behaviour there. Student 2 was playing with his pen, Student 1 was double writing and her handwriting seemed worse, the other one was making a pair of his pen and started playing a drum-set. A good conversation went on between Student 1 and Student 2.

S 1: It is just to copy from here. (pointing to the book)

S 2: Yes.
S 1: My hand is paining.
S 2: Mine too.
S 1: Two points more...Hyann...
S 2: Five number!! (looking at S 1’s notebook) and this is last.
S 1: Already? I am in four number.

Their focus was just to finish their work, not to learn something. They copied their homework and the class was over.

On the sharing day, I noticed that most of the students wanted to share what they had done in the creative writing center and the games center. Even in the interview with Student 1, she said that she liked creative writing corner the most. She gave the reason saying because in the creative writing corner, we could write about our invention and how we feel about them and in games, we could use all of the words our friends collected and make a nice story. This shows that students enjoyed the interesting work in the corners.

Product

The activities were developed in such a way that the learners would demonstrate what they have learned. In the writing corner, the write up went in a way they were limited to the already learnt information. There were two brothers whose names were Orville and Wilbur. Orville was born in 1871 in Ohio and Wilbur was born in Indiana in 1867. They invented an airplane which could fly 812ft high and for fifty-nine seconds. In comparison to this writing product, the one that was produced in creative writing corner projects the freedom that the learners got in their work. Student 1 went in this way. If I were an inventor, I would invent a useful thing like A Nanny Bot. A Nanny Bot is a robot that helps us in different things like: cleaning, cooking, washing etc. It would be proud. My neighbour would respect my invention. The leaner is more flexible, open up and free to write about her invention here. It boosted up her learning too.

Similarly, their product in the reading corner came up exactly as the points that were in textbook such as The longest flight of the day was only fifty nine seconds and distance only eight hundred and twelve feet. In contrast, the story that was created in the games corner using the words from the flash cards became a fun activity for them. They wrote Once in a small town, there lived some crazy inventors. They used to invent crazy machine without any effort. They worked day and night to make useless machine like flying toilet, soap that makes you dirty, powder that makes your face looked old etc. They were never successful...

They were having fun while they were in discussion time. It was a wonderful group work. Student 2 was interviewed with a question Do you think you become good in study just by reading and writing or by doing different activities like you did in the previous week? He answered, Not by reading and writing only. We have to do different activities. We have to learn something new... Again the question was asked, What type of class is the interesting class for you? He replied, The class where I can do new things. The product that came by the end of each class demonstrated that the students perform well when they are given the higher order thinking activities.

[Image of the Wright Brothers]
Discussion of Findings and Implications

The study was carried out in the whole class but the focus was in one group. It was observed that students, when kept in different learning centers for exercising higher order thinking activities and lower order thinking activities, make better effort in the higher order thinking activities. Abosalem (2016) concur that once the student obtains new knowledge and keeps that in his/her memory, he/she correlates, organizes and evaluates this knowledge for specific purpose and this is where they reach higher order thinking level. This point was kept in mind and the learners were kept in different corners each day to do different tasks, which were either of the level. This showed different level of performance in them. Overall, the classes went in different ways. In the whole class discussion day, everybody was excited to talk about creative writing center and games center. As I observed Group 1 as my participants, I found that the students did not enjoy writing center. They were yawning. They wanted to finish their work fast. It was just to copy. So, they mostly copied from book. They did not look excited. Rather they were looking at other group’s work. They did not ask any questions. They finished their work for the sake of doing.

In creative writing center, Student 1 was sharpening her cognition. According to Eison (2010), when instructions are made for active learning, students get chance to think critically and creatively, grow in group work and express their ideas by exploring their personal values and by reflecting upon their learning. Student 1 said, What shall I invent? Later she said, she would like to invent Nanny Bot. She wanted to help her mother. So, she wanted to create Nanny Bot. She said, her mother is busy and Nanny Bot would help her do household work. I was amazed to see her level of thinking. She looked more enthusiastic.

In addition, the games center took these students to the level where they discussed and learnt something from their group. It was unuseful. One student said. The other said, I think unuseful is not the right word. Again, the other student said, Useless is the right word. They agreed. In reading corner, they projected like they did not enjoy. The outburst like My hand is paining, I am just in four number demonstrate that they did not enjoy their work. Their class behaviour, the product which they came with and their innocent expressions during class discussion show that they enjoyed much in creative writing center and games corner but were less interested in writing center and reading center.

My contemplation was that the students learn much better when they are given tasks of higher order thinking. Lee, Chao and Chen (2011) claim that interest can be generated in the classroom when the learning is meaningful and this makes learners active participants in the class. So, learning could be made meaningful by designing the tasks including higher order thinking. This has been clearly spotted in the classroom reality that I brought. Thus, higher order
thinking activities can make difference in students’ learning.

Human beings are of such characters and behaviours where they enjoy doing challenging tasks. To make their task challenging, teachers can think of including higher order thinking activities and it could be the finest way. The planning from teachers’ side seems a bit thoughtful but the impact of the planned instruction is fruitful. This is what I exactly found in my small research towards implementing higher order thinking activities for my students.

As I indicated above, teaching higher order thinking/creative skills is a step-wise process. There are different activities to be developed and practised at different levels of the process. In a way of recommending teaching higher order thinking skills and assisting teachers in designing creative activities, the following figure of Level of Bloom’s Taxonomy provides a list of activities that may be developed at different levels of teaching higher order thinking skills:

![Figure 1. Level wise activities for teaching higher-order of thinking skills](https://rachelmarsdenwords.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/blooms_taxonomy_staircase.png)

It can be generalized that the higher order thinking activities are effective to teach EFL students to be creative. If teachers want, they can associate each student with their potential. They can make students creative and critical thinkers. To boost up students’ learning, they have to be given the challenging tasks of higher order thinking where they can come up with their creativity and their critical thinking and thus learn with joy.

References


Contributor

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IELTS Writing Test: Improving Cardinal Test Criteria for the Bangladeshi Context

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Abstract

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has become a widely used and globally accepted test for non-natives. It is conducted at more than a thousand centres in at least 130 countries (British Council, 2016), including 12 centres in Bangladesh (“Take IELTS test in or nearby Dhaka”, 2018). It also encompasses all four independent skills of the English language. Due to its popularity and effectiveness as a test, it is important to focus on assessment procedures of IELTS Writing tasks in the Bangladeshi context which is inconsistent with cardinal test issues. Thus, this article provides critical commentary on the IELTS writing test based on five cardinal issues for a proper test: reliability, validity, practicality, authenticity, and washback in connection with Bangladeshi as well as other similar ESL contexts. The documentary analysis of this article may help further research to enhance the utility of the IELTS writing test to measure ESL writing competence in a global context as an international test.

Keywords: IELTS writing, test criteria, World Englishes, Bangladeshi context, ESL context

Introduction

At present, IELTS is one of the widely accepted tests for measuring English proficiency. The standard set by the test has an enormous impact on the professional and academic lives of myriads. IELTS made its inception in 1989 by substituting English Language Testing Service (ELTS), which was prevalent from 1980 to 1989. Previously, ELTS replaced English Proficiency Test Battery (EPTB) that was in operation since the mid-1960s as the British Council used to operate this test internationally to filter international applicants for the academic institutions in the UK (Charge & Taylor, 1997). Nowadays, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand recognize the IELTS as a mandatory language requirement for the entry to courses in higher education, to undertake work experience or vocational programmes as well as for immigration purposes to these countries. According to IELTS test-takers’ performance report (2016a), 80.7% of people take Academic IELTS module and 19.3% of people take the General Training Module. More than 2.2 million people participated in the IELTS test in the year 2013 that represents 11% growth globally than over the previous year (British Council, 2016).
Importance of IELTS Test in the Bangladeshi Context

Since its inception, the IELTS test is designed to focus on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and English for Specific Purpose (ESP) approach of English learning so that test tasks can measure test-takers’ ability to use language both in academic contexts and in intended real-life situations in all four skills of language (Matin, 2014). In Bangladesh, IELTS started gaining popularity since the late 1990s and about 15,000 to 20,000 candidates sit for the IELTS test every year (Kar, 2013). People in Bangladesh prepare themselves to sit for IELTS for their global education and employment opportunities. IELTS results can open doors for people to study in the anglophone countries, such as USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand or to obtain a visa to live and work in those places. As a result, the number of IELTS test participants has increased rapidly not only in Bangladesh but also in other ESL and EFL countries around the world (British Council, 2016).

IELTS Test Preparation in Bangladesh

According to the National Education Policy 2010 (NEP 2010) of Bangladesh, learning English is a sine qua non of academic and professional development to create a knowledge-based society and economy (Ministry of Education, 2010). For this reason, NEP 2010 mandated English as a second language through its curriculum to align its national aspirations (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). National Curriculum for English, 2012 (NCE 2012) also aligned its secondary and higher secondary curriculum in 2012 for English education in light of the NEP 2010. Nonetheless, there is a disconnect in the curriculum, classroom practice, and assessment in English education of Bangladesh (Ali & Walker, 2014). This situation led post-higher secondary students to take preparatory courses or private tuition at coaching centres for the IELTS test. They are about 13,000 to 18,000 at least. Apart from British Council centres, there are many IELTS preparatory coaching centres. However, the exact number of these coaching centres is unknown. These centres have been growing in an unplanned way mainly in Dhaka and Chittagong regions, advertising themselves as offering help, often allure potential IELTS candidates guaranteeing overall IELTS band score of 7 or above (Kar, 2013). Although most of the English language experts in Bangladesh opine that the growth of IELTS coaching centres is the result of our loopholes in English education. They also warn that IELTS coaching centres are doing more hoax than help. Some of the experts raised the question how the coaching centres could guarantee all the students a band score of 7 or above in just three months without knowing candidates’ current linguistic knowledge and competence level (Kar, 2013).

Since the IELTS test is popularly used as a language test all over the world to take admission to the universities where English is the medium of academic instruction, it plays a crucial role in many people’s lives and careers in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the IELTS test is a ‘vanguard’ for English language proficiency testing as well as a high-stakes test with the power to make a change in one’s life because many academic institutions accept between 6.0 -7.0 individual band score (IELTS, 2016a). So, paltry performance in writing module can deter test-takers’ dream to have access to those English speaking developed countries for better education, better jobs, and a better life (Moore, Stroupe & Mahony, 2009).

Every part of the education process has political and economic influences on our lives and society, so does testing. Therefore, it is necessary to address the evaluation procedures of such large-scale tests on a
regular basis to ensure that they meet professional standards and contribute to the further development of the test takers. This article is an attempt to critically comment on IELTS writing module in connection with the criteria of a proper language test and its assessment procedures on a global scale in the Bangladeshi context based on few existing literature.

The critical analysis of the article shows the issues related to IELTS writing assessment and selection of topics that can impede IELTS writing test to achieve its greater Validity, Reliability, Practicality, Authenticity, and Washback in the Bangladeshi as well as similar ESL contexts.

Background and Overview of the IELTS Test

Rubrics of a Proper Language Test

In order to develop and design any type of language test, the main considerable prior thought is the reasons for the test to whom it is focused, what the caveats are, and why the test is useful. Now the question arises how can we know whether a test has usefulness in a particular context, no matter before or after, in developing or designing a language test? Therefore, from the beginning to the end of designing or developing an entire test, we can put forth a model of test usefulness as the basic underpinning for quality control of it. In this regard, Bachman and Palmer (1996) proposed three principles about the usefulness of a test:

a) The overall usefulness of the test is to be maximized rather than the individual qualities.

b) Individual test qualities cannot be appraised separately but on the overall usefulness of the test.

c) Usefulness and the appropriate balance among the different qualities of a test cannot be suggested overall but should be chosen for every specific testing situation.

As a language test, the IELTS test follows the above-mentioned principles for its usefulness. These principles about the usefulness of a proper test can be further measured by the five cardinal test qualities. These are validity, reliability, practicality, authenticity, and washback. Therefore, the IELTS writing test can be critically examined in consideration of the five cardinal test qualities mentioned by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) in the context of Bangladesh as well as similar ESL contexts.

The Significance of IELTS Writing Tasks and its Assessment

It is necessary to explain the format of the IELTS writing test, its test-takers, and the process of conducting the test all over the world to open up the discussion in the Bangladeshi context. The IELTS writing test is a direct test of writing where tasks are communicative and contextualized incorporating recent developments in research of writing. It is also meant for the specific target group considering their purpose and necessity of the test (Uysal, 2010). Writing module is a crucial and significant section in the IELTS to be assessed accurately. It is challenging for the testers to assess writing tasks as it is not only subjective but also critical in comparison to the other three skills. IELTS writing test is a target-specific test where tasks are analytical and argumentative. The test is designed to specific target groups of people, such as potential international students seeking admission at Universities and the people attempting to undertake training, to have work experience, and to meet immigration requirements in an English speaking country.

For these reasons, the IELTS writing test has both academic and general training
modules combining two tasks per module. For the task 1, in academic writing module, test takers are required to write a report of approximately 150 words on the basis of a given table, chart or diagram, and for the task 2, candidates need to write an essay or a general report of about 250 words addressing an argument or a problem. Like academic writing module, task 2 remains the same for the test-takers of both general training and academic writing module. However, the task 1 is different which requires the candidates to write a letter responding to a given problem. Both the tasks of writing module must be completed within 60 minutes (IELTS, 2016b).

Trained and certified IELTS assessors separately evaluate each writing task giving more weight to the task 2 in marking than to the task 1. After testing, writing scores and the scores of the other three skills are averaged to produce an overall band score. How the process of average is executed into band score is still remained a secret. There is no pass or fail demarcation in IELTS. The performance of the test is described using 1 to 9 IELTS bands and the performance descriptors. The final band score is reported as an integer and half bands (Uysal, 2010).

Bangladeshi Test-takers’ Performance in IELTS Writing Module

In recent time, the word ‘IELTS’ is being considered a household name among those who are inclined to study in anglophone countries or to emigrate there as a skilled migrant. Therefore, being a non-English country, both Bangladeshi students and emigrants-to-be need IELTS score as a means of English language competency. In Bangladesh, although English is not yet widely used by all walks of life in the society parallel to its first language ‘Bangla’ except for educational need and foreign communication, the latest NEP 2010 evaluated the English language as the tool to create a knowledge-based society (Ministry of Education, 2010) and mandated English as a second language through its NEC 2012. Rasheed (2012) and Hasan (2016) also posited that in reality, English is the second language of the country; and in many sectors and jobs, English is more important than Bangla - the first language of Bangladesh.

The Main Focus of the Article

The main focus of the article is to critically comment on the cardinal test criteria of IELTS writing module in connection with the Bangladeshi context and other similar ESL contexts. The discussion encapsulates both the strengths and weaknesses of the IELTS writing module for its alignment with cardinal test criteria and provides suggestions for further improvement of the IELTS writing module.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Recommendations for Improvement

Validity to IELTS Writing Test

Validity is the most complex in nature as an aspect of an effective test - and arguably the most essential part of a test (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). According to Weir (2005), validity is a matter of degree of appropriateness of a test that should be evidenced in different matters concerned.

If a language test needs to have content validity, it must have the constitutions and representations of a sample of the language skill to measure with which it is meant to be concerned (Hughes, 2014; Mousavi, 2009). For example, if anyone attempts to assess a learner’s speaking ability in a second language in a traditional setting by asking the learner to answer on paper-and-pencil requiring grammatical knowledge, it lacks the content validity of a test. The
IELTS writing task 1, in terms of content validity, represents Target Language Use (TLU) content for both academic and general training module. Although the writing task 2 for both in academic test and general training module are descriptive as well as critical, we can compare it to university writing tasks. It is noticed that the task 2 of IELTS writing test is very much like a non-academic public form of discourse and do not match with any of the academic genres in the TLU domain. The academic assignments, for which the task is meant for, are mainly concerned much with practical research findings and relevant theoretical knowledge of the discipline and less with evaluative writing (Moore & Morton, 1999). This situation may become worse for Bangladeshi students when they start their education at anglophone universities. Firstly, Bangladeshi IELTS test-takers achieve a low score in writing module compare to the other three modules. On top of that, the writing band score that many Bangladeshi IELTS test-takers obtain is not the actual projection of their writing skill. Nonetheless, they score 5.0 to 6.0 band score in writing module. More often they achieve that score by just following a stereotyped format to answer the writing tasks 1 and 2 advised by their respective IELTS coaching centres (Kar, 2013). Secondly, due to the lack of a process-based curriculum of English education in Bangladesh, students do not develop the critical and evaluative genre of writing skill. Therefore, to increase content-validity to Bangladeshi test-takers, it can be suggested that IELTS policy-makers can redesign both the task 1 and 2 in such a way that candidates cannot follow any set format to answer these tasks and they are forced to display their own critical writing skill. Furthermore, the task 2 of IELTS writing can be designed in a similar way to university assignment-writing and research-report-writing so that the task can align to the pragmatic purpose of the test for a candidate’s future academic performance.

Moore and Morton (1999) explain that due to the diversity of the purpose and the targeted group of the test-takers, it is quite challenging to maintain construct validity of both General and Academic writing modules of the test for task response, lexical resource, and grammatical use and accuracy. For this reason, TLU tasks for its representativeness and relevance of the construct and meaningfulness of interpretations in other domains are indeed questionable as the tasks are only limited to British and Australian universities’ context. Therefore, it is explicit that in respect of recognizing the construct validity of IELTS writing, other ESL contexts of English or global English have not been taken into consideration yet. Moreover, IELTS authority has set the scoring rubrics to assess the writing tasks 1 and 2. The measures of writing fluency (topic development, topic relevance, cohesion, and coherence), grammatical complexity, and language accuracy should be weighed equally. However, test-raters consider language accuracy first in comparison to writing fluency and grammatical complexity in scoring test-takers’ writing band score (Azizi & Majdeddin, 2014). This unequal weight of rating between writing fluency and language accuracy can be problematic in ESL contexts such as Bangladesh. Many of the prevalent Bangladeshi contextual expressions or collocations may seem grammatically inaccurate and culturally inappropriate in Anglophonic-context. In Bangladesh, for English education, the students (from Class-One to Class-Twelve) follow a textbook series for the whole country named English for Today - designed on the basis of local historical, social, contextual and cultural topics and written by the local non-native Bangali experts. Moreover, the aim of the English education in Bangladesh is not to introduce a British
or American version of English but as a means of access to ICT, education, and global communication (NCTB, 2012). As a result, English textbooks included many socio-contextual topics. The socio-cultural context in Bangladesh is quite different from the Anglophone countries so does the common linguistic expressions. In Bangladesh, bumping on someone is duly apologized not merely by pronouncing ‘sorry’ as in the anglophone countries but also along with body language and surely with typical Bangladeshi or sub-continental collocation ‘Extremely sorry’ which is not common in anglophonic use. Similarly, some contextually common collocations or expressions - ‘fresh water’ instead of ‘pure/clean or drinkable water’, ‘marriage anniversary’ instead of ‘wedding anniversary’, ‘dressing sense’ instead of ‘dress sense’, ‘quiz competition’ instead of ‘quiz’ only, ‘I saw a dream’ instead of ‘I had a dream’ to mention a few are widely accepted and used by Bangladeshi user of English language. However, may seem weird to the native users as well as IELTS policy-makers. In ESL contexts like Bangladesh, although these aforementioned contextually generated expressions or collocations can communicate clearly, may seem ‘lexically deviant’ or ‘inappropriate’ to Anglophonic societies - are actually lexical innovations (Rahman, 1996) as we do not find identical meanings and exact substitutes often in Native English. Leitner (2004) further reinforces that many language features of L2 English are naturally innovated from L1 and L2 language-contact situations. Therefore, if the IELTS writing assessors do not attune their attitude to consider these contextual expressions as another variety of non-native English, the validity of the proper judgment of rating tasks’ band score may be questioned. This issue should be addressed to increase the validity of IELTS writing assessment in Bangladesh as well as other ESL countries as each English language variety produces many idiomatic expressions rooted in its own culture. The absorption of these ESL idiomatic expressions will also increase mutual understanding of International English which is a global need now as Crystal (2003) calibrates that non-native speakers outnumbered native speakers by a ratio of 3 to 1.

English has become either Lingua Franca or de facto first language (Crystal, 2003) and it is used as ESL in many countries to gain an extraordinary ground as an oft-used language. Considering this perspective, the IELTS test-takers have the valid ground to demand the inclusion of the global varieties and diverse cultural issues of English in the IELTS system of evaluation for its writing module. If this viewpoint is taken into cognizance, IELTS organizational body will have the opportunity to add meaningful and global dimensions to the test. Moreover, Riazi & Knox (2010) posit that validity is crucial for the predictive power of the IELTS Academic Writing test as it is a global test for non-English test-takers. Uysal (2010) also criticizes that IELTS writing test drawing focus on validity issues, such as the definition of the ‘international writing construct’, without thinking about genres and different rhetorical conventions worldwide. This issue emphasizes the consideration of an accepted non-native variety of English language features of World Englishes. Therefore, the issue of standardization of non-native varieties in World Englishes has become debatable. For example, if IELTS organization starts considering non-native/ ESL writing genres of English in its assessment process, how the Bangladeshi variety of English or similar non-native varieties of English can be standardized to be accepted along with native varieties of English? Guzman and Rosario (2009) address this problem with reference to Philippine as non-native context:

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However, if the Philippine Variety of English (and other Asian varieties as well) is to be made acceptable in the academe and/or for academic purposes it likewise has to undergo a process of standardization, intellectualization and finally, codification. Again, one can never escape standards. (p.328)

As far as this standardization of ESL English is concerned, it is now a global call for the issue of international intelligibility of English writing. IELTS organization can gradually consider a Lingua Franca Core for its writing assessment. There is also criticism of the selection of topics as these are considered anglophonic and not sufficiently international or local (Moore, Stroupe & Mahony, 2009). This issue may also reduce the validity of the IELTS writing test in ESL contexts. Therefore, one possible solution to the topic selections for IELTS writing tasks in ESL contexts such as Bangladesh, IELTS organization can select writing topics that have a global relevance rather than relevance to anglophone-context only. As a result, the writing test-takers will have schemata of the IELTS writing topics resulting the test seem international to them.

Reliability of IELTS Writing Test

According to Hughes (2014), “Reliability is a measure of how consistent an assessment process is” (p.3). For example, if the variation of the test, time and its setting does not change test-takers’ performance and the result remains the same or almost similar then it can be identified that the test is reliable. If it varies then the test has a paucity of reliability. Moreover, Hamp-Lyons (2002) describes that the writer, task, raters, and scoring procedure can reduce the reliability in a writing assessment as the sources of error. The IELTS has introduced few research efforts such as scoring procedure to reduce the chance of errors and to improve the acceptable reliability rates.

Reliability is an imperative quality for a test score. If the consistency of the test score does not comply with different time and setting, we cannot assure us with information on how to measure the ability we want for it. It is known that the IELTS writing test uses analytic approach to gauge the writing tasks based on set parameters for different band score. To calibrate the band score, the answer scripts of the IELTS writing tasks are examined not only by a single-rater but also by inter-raters for multiple judgments to ascertain the high reliability of the test. It is reasonably established that multiple judgments in writing assessment lead to such a score that is more akin to an objective score than any single judgment (Hamp-Lyons, 2002). This notion posits that the scoring process of the IELTS writing test has reliability.

Furthermore, both academic and general training module tasks are also aim-driven and serve the exact needs of test takers in terms of reliability. IELTS writing test acknowledges that the use of analytical scales contributes to higher reliability and to attain considerable difference across the band score. However, Mickan (2003) mentions the issue of inconsistency in ratings in IELTS writing exams and noticed that it was very tough to calibrate specific lexicogrammatical elements that separate different levels of performance. He also reveals that in spite of the use of analytic scales, raters inclined to respond to texts as a whole rather than to individual components. This finding actually ignites controversy about rater behavior in using the scale. Therefore, more precise information about the scale and about how raters determine scores from analytical categories should be given in detail to defend IELTS’ claims about the analytic scales.
The IELTS test also claims that it always tries to avert any bias or prejudice against any specific section of candidates of a particular cultural heritage in choosing the topics, or contexts of language for the writing task 1 and 2. However, in the ESL context such as Bangladesh, the IELTS writing module contradicts to its claim for reliability issue. Mickan & Motteram (2006) reveal that the IELTS as a test of English proficiency was problematic because of “the fact that IELTS tests much more than English...it tests general knowledge, interpretation of statistics or graphs...critical thinking” (p. 43). It means that the IELTS test-takers should have not only proficiency in English but also general, critical, analytical, and interpretive skills of knowledge to attempt the writing tasks of the IELTS test. At the same time, they should have statistical knowledge too. Therefore, it may not be guaranteed if a test-taker is proficient in English writing only, can attain good band score unless he/she is equally good at statistical as well as critical and analytical skills of knowledge. This may pose a huge problem for the candidates of Bangladesh. They can face difficulties in providing exemplification to support a contextual opinion in writing task 2 for the lack of knowledge about the world beyond their context. Moreover, those who are not from science education background at their secondary higher secondary levels or do not have any statistical knowledge may also face problem answering the writing task 1. Arguably, this situation may be similar to other ESL contexts, especially in the ex-colonial countries of South, Southeast, and East Asia where the pattern of social dynamics for English education is identical (Bolton, 2008). Therefore, it is debatable whether the IELTS writing tasks are equally reliable to the test-takers of Arts, Social science and Humanities background. For this reason, Mickan & Motteram (2006) admit that it is really challenging to control the topic variable by determining a common knowledge base for all the IELTS candidates. The IELTS test authority may conduct continuous research to overcome these reliability issues and to increase the appropriateness of topics for the writing module.

Practicality in IELTS Writing Test

To look into the degree of feasibility of an assessment procedure, practicality is a stand-point (Hughes, 2014). For example, if we raise the question: “are we capable of designing and developing a test in terms of cost, resources, and time?” If the answer is “yes” then it is perceived that the test has its practicality and if the answer denotes “no” that means the test is impractical or lacks practicality. Bachman and Palmer (1996) pointed out practicality as the yardstick to balance between the design, development, use of the test and the availability of required resources. As far as IELTS Academic and General modules are concerned, the test qualities for the practicality rubric in conducting the test internationally in terms of time, cost and the arrangements of resources.

To consider the practicality of the IELTS test for the time for the writing task 1 and 2, 60 minutes are given which is reasonable to answer the tasks. The test result is also published within two weeks of the test. So far the resources of the IELTS are to consider, it follows modern arrangements to conduct the test and the IELTS authority updates the resources and arrangements of the test accordingly. However, in terms of practicality in the IELTS test-taking in the ESL context in developing countries, the test is considered to be expensive for the test-takers (Moore, Stroupe & Mahony, 2009). In Bangladesh, the fee for a regular IELTS test is 16,500/- BDT (in the local currency) (https://www.britishcouncil.org.bd/en/exam/ielts/dates-fees-locations) which is equivalent toAUD$340. According to the Asian Development Bank("https://


www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/economy), GDP per capita in Bangladesh is 1,517 US$ with a low level of affluence. Being a low-GDP country, this is a huge amount for many lower and middle-class probable IELTS test-takers in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is recommended that the IELTS authority considers the test cost in proportion to the socio-economic condition of a developing country to increase its practicality for the test-takers.

The Authenticity of the IELTS Writing Test

Authenticity is one of the five major principles of language testing. Although the concept of authenticity is a bit tricky to define, Bachman and Palmer (1996) illustrated authenticity as “the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test-task to the features of a target language (TL) task” (p.23). Having an important effect on test-takers’ perception of the test, authenticity gets a crucial consideration for language testing. The IELTS writing test also considers this factor for its writing tasks in the test for both the Academic and General modules, whether the test-takers are likely to correspond to the “real world’ tasks or situations. It means, the test-takers can use their known knowledge to the tasks of the test to perform well in the test. However, in terms of the global ESL context, the IELTS test is Eurocentric for its expected ‘world knowledge’ for topic selection. The test clearly advantages European ESL test-takers than non-European test-takers. As a result, the IELTS writing topics fail to assess the actual writing skill of a non-Euro ESL test-taker who is inclined to be an applicant for either education or immigration in anglophone countries (Mickan & Motteram, 2006). Therefore, there is a real need for the IELTS writing test to make an equal level playing ground for all ESL test-takers by mapping multiple sources of ‘world knowledge’ from both the Eastern and the Western world.

Washback on the IELTS Writing Test

According to Hughes (1989), washback can be defined as the impact of an assessment on teaching and learning either positively or negatively. As far as the washback of IELTS writing tasks is concerned to its test-takers or in the specific context, it can be identified as a high-stakes test with a universal standard for ESL participants. To measure their level of English through the test, being acclaimed as an International language test, the IELTS has a shortcoming in selecting and evaluating the tasks of writing as the tasks are based on the criteria which are basically depended on the anglophone writing norms rather than creating a dependence on the standard variety of ‘World Englishes’. So, washback can take place if in choosing and judging the writing tasks, IELTS test authority doesn’t consider task-topics from diverse ESL contexts. It is important to show the acceptance for other language variations (eg: in many ESL countries the continuous form of the verbs ‘think’, ‘feel’ in the sentences like “I am thinking”, “I am feeling” etc. are considered culturally correct and widely accepted which are not usual in Australian or British standard of English) and writing norms while rating for both the writing tasks 1 and 2 as they possess the rationale that the English language is nobody’s language nowadays rather it is the language for everyone no matter what is the country or culture is as in some cases it is pidginized and in some cases it has become creole (Crystal,2003). In this regard, Kachru (1998) also states that the ownership of English lies with all those who use it (as cited in Hamid & Baldauf, 2013, p. 477). Therefore, if the rating rubrics of the IELTS writing are rigidly followed by only the Australian or the British standard, it can create negative washback on IELTS writing test both for individuals and for the society of that specific ESL country. Moreover, as positive ‘washback’ enhances intrinsic motivation (Brown & Abeywickrama,
2010), the exclusion of the other standards of English writing for the IELTS writing tasks, except the Australian or the British standard of English language, may also create negative Washback among the ESL test-takers.

**Overall Discussion**

Although the IELTS claims to reflect social and regional language variations in test input in terms of content and linguistic features, it actually includes only the varieties of the inner circle of English experts as the raters of IELTS written test. The non-native English experts are rarely attached to the process of IELTS test design and its content development. Moore, Stroupe, and Mahony (2009) in their research showed that out of six IELTS assessors in an ESL country, four were Australian, one was British and only one was Burmese (the people of Myanmar is called “Burmese”). So, IELTS test authority may include more non-native ESL experts from the top IELTS test-taking countries to provide the writing assessment process a global undertone.

Moreover, this notion narrows down its scope as an international test of English. As construct variation is identical to other language tests and the IELTS considers the need to account for language variation within the model of linguistic and communicative competence. Being an international English language test rater, it should encompass international language features in its construct definition to endorse that the IELTS can really measure English as an international language. Taylor (2002) also defines that in terms of cultural variations across the world, there are both micro-level linguistic variations and macro-level discourse variations. For this reason, IELTS writing test should evaluate the linguistic variations of English as well as the variations of rhetorical conventions and genres around the world to explain the writing construct to the criteria on coherence, cohesion, and logical argument. It is already evidenced that writing genre is not universal rather it is culture-specific (Riazi & Knox, 2010). Consequently, people in different parts of the universe vary in consideration of their argumentative styles, logical reasoning, rhetorical norms, and organizational patterns of writing. Notwithstanding, it is convincingly evident that the host countries’ trio partners of IELTS (British Council, IDP Australia, and Cambridge ESOL), have shown linguistic hegemony avoiding the above-mentioned issues and setting, i.e. inclusion of the culture-specific writing models as the only yard-stick, specifically for the task 2 of both academic and general writings. Moreover, due to the cultural unfamiliarity of the topics of the host countries, Bangladeshi students often struggle with the IELTS writing task 2. In this regard, Freimuth (2014) revealed that ESL test-takers were affected by 0.5 band score due to culturally unfamiliar topics of IELTS writing task 2. It means contextual issue can influence a test-taker’s writing band score which emphasizes the importance of a contextual understanding of World Englishes as well as the relevance of global topics for IELTS writing tasks.

Since IELTS test authority globally assesses English for ESL countries, localized diversifications of English discourse that have their unique pragmatic bases should be recognized as Kachru (1985) explains, “In my view, the global diffusion of English has taken an interesting turn: the native speakers of this language seem to have lost the exclusive prerogative to control its standardization […] What we need now are new paradigms and perspectives for linguistic creativity in multilingual situations across cultures” (p. 30). Kilickaya (2009) further adds, “English has currently seen the best option for communication among people from different language backgrounds, thereby
being labelled as ‘English as an International Language (EIL)’ or ‘English as a Lingua Franca’” (p.3). For this reason, although many of the corpora collected for corpus-based research of English language tended to follow British and American Englishes 15 years ago, the International Corpus of English (ICE) project found corpora that included other varieties of English, in particular, the Englishes of Outer Circle (Jenkins, 2007). For this reason, collocations in World Englishes and the aspects of native, as well as non-native varieties of English, again deserve to be investigated further by using International Corpus of English so that IELTS can be a bias-free test in consideration of English as a Lingua Franca for ESL countries.

IELTS may also consider more acceptable language variances in terms of style, task and context-based contents in its construct definition to provide more validity, reliability, and authenticity to the test and the test takers from all over the world. Considering the importance of these issues, more empirical researches can be conducted to find out the linkage of TLU tasks and IELTS organization can consider writing topics that have a global relevance. This issue can be one of the many reasons that influence the IELTS test tasks in terms of their attributes not only in the domain of UK and Australia but also in other domains around the world. Therefore, one possible solution to the selection of topics in ESL contexts such as Bangladesh is to emphasize on the concept of World Englishes so that the IELTS test-takers’ low performance in writing module in Bangladesh which can direct to future research on the acceptability of Bangladeshi English in the IELTS writing assessment and the relevance of IELTS writing tasks in the Bangladeshi context. I assume this issue may also prevail in other similar ESL contexts and can be a potential area for the empirical research.

Conclusion

The article has highlighted a critical overview of the relevance and assessment of the IELTS writing tasks in the Bangladeshi as well as other probable ESL contexts. Any International Language Test of English should seem to be reliable and equal to all its test-takers. In the age of World Englishes, this may not be fair to consider only the native genre of English and its writing topics for the IELTS writing test without considering other non-native varieties of World Englishes. Today, the linguistic world of many people are becoming increasingly diverse, and the linguistic landscapes of individuals are not simply defined through physical space, but also through global travel, electronic space including media awareness and usage, popular culture, as well as the virtual space of the Internet. English in writing is exchanged probably more between non-natives than the natives versus non-natives as three-quarters of the total mail is written in English by non-natives everyday (Davies & Patsko, 2013). So, possibly there are situations in the IELTS host countries (UK, Australia, and NewZealand) where a significant percentage of the total population is non-native immigrants and international students from diverse ESL countries of the world. Therefore, in their written communication with other non-natives, they presumably use their contextually owned but intelligible ESL writing norms. So, at present, it may not be reasonable to consider that the IELTS test is only conducted to assess the test-takers’ ability to use the English of the host countries. The IELTS authority may consider other ESL writing norms in its assessment procedure to acknowledge the unity of global English in diversity.

It may take time to codify the Bangladeshi L2 English of 170 Million people (excluding more than 10 million expatriates) as well as other ESL varieties of English in
dictionaries and other authoritative publications but these features of English may gradually reach the larger social spaces via the continuous growth of International English genre with an estimated 1 billion L2 users where English is used either as a second or foreign language (Crystal, 2003) and will nearly double by the year 2020. Therefore, the discussion related to the cardinal test criteria and ESL contexts of English can be further explored empirically as the IELTS test has a global evaluative contribution and a global impact as an international test.

References


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Pre-service English language teachers’ perceptions towards teaching grammar

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Abstract

This article explores the perceptions of pre-service English language teachers studying at Master’s level under Education faculty at Tribhuvan University Nepal towards grammar and grammar teaching employing a qualitative research design. Three pre-service English teachers were involved in this study, out of which two were females and one was male. The research participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview technique to collect relevant information to fulfill its purpose. The findings reveal that pre-service English teachers are in favour of teaching grammar. However, they believe that grammar should not be taught giving rules directly. All of the participants favour the use of inductive method of teaching grammar though they were taught through the use of deductive method at school.

Keywords: Grammar teaching, pre-service teachers, inductive method, deductive method, constructivism

Introduction

The teaching of grammar continues to be a matter of controversy in the field of language teaching. English language teaching and learning consists of different skills and aspects. English grammar is one of the aspects of teaching English language. Grammar teaching has held and continues to hold a central place in language teaching. “Grammar gains its prominence in language teaching, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL), in as much as without a good knowledge of grammar, learners’ language development will be severely constrained” (Widodo, 2006, p.122). The role of grammar and how to integrate it into foreign language classroom are at the core of ESL and EFL learning and teaching context (Ellis, 2001, as cited in Uysal & Yavuz, 2015, p.1828). “Grammar is an instrument to form meaningful sentences” (Thornbury, 1999) of English language. Therefore, grammar teaching is taken as “an indispensable part of English Language Teaching (ELT)” (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015).

Larsen-Freeman (2003) claims ‘grammaring’ as ‘the fifth skill’ (alongside listening, speaking, reading, and writing). By grammaring, she means “the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully, and
appropriately” (p. 143). Grammar lessons are no longer about knowing language systems (declarative knowledge), but about knowing how to use language (procedural knowledge). Cross (1991) defines grammar as “the body of rules which underlie a language. This includes rules which govern the structure of words and which govern the structure of clauses and sentences ‘that are acceptable to educated native speakers’” (as cited in Dikici, 2012, p. 207).

Grammar is fundamental to language and is an indispensable component of any language teaching programme. Therefore, the teaching of grammar is essential if students are to develop confidence in their ability to use language in various social and educational settings. Grammar is seen as “an essential, inescapable component of language use and language learning” (Burgess & Etherington, 2002, as cited in Dikici, 2012, p. 207). Formal grammar teaching helps learners to acquire second language (L2) more rapidly and get higher level of achievement. Practically, in the teaching of grammar, learners are taught rules of language commonly known as sentence patterns. According to Ur (1999), in the case of the learners, grammatical rules enable them to know and apply how such sentence patterns should be put together. For most teachers, the main idea of grammar teaching is to help learners internalise the structures taught in such a way that they can be used in everyday communication (Ellis, 2002, p. 168). The teaching of grammar should ultimately centre attention on the way of using grammatical items or sentence patterns correctly. In other words, teaching grammar should encompass language structure or sentence patterns or forms, meaning and use (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). “The ultimate goal of teaching language is to provide the students with knowledge of the way language is constructed so that when they listen, speak, read and write, they have no trouble applying the language that they are learning” (Widodo, 2006). So the importance of teaching grammar cannot be underrated as Long and Richards (1987) add that “it cannot be ignored that grammar plays a central role in the four language skills and vocabulary to establish communicative tasks” (as cited in Widodo, 2006, p. 122).

However, recently there has been lots of debate about grammar in language teaching and learning. As Thornbury (1999) says, “Grammar teaching has always been one of the most controversial and least understood aspects of language teaching” (p. ix). One controversy or issue is whether to teach or not teach grammar. As Lakhoua (2004) says “From grammar translation to the communicative approach, to grammar in use and functional grammar, grammar teaching has ebbed and flowed going from banning its explicit teaching, to teaching it as a communicative tool, to teaching it explicitly in an instructional way”. “With the advent of the Communicative Approach in ELT, grammar has been marginalized as the focus has shifted from accuracy to” (Lakhoua, 2004) fluency and communicative competence. Some linguists like Krashen (1982) argue that formal instruction in grammar will not contribute to the development of ‘acquired’ knowledge. Others, however, have argued that grammar teaching does help in learning and acquiring language (Ellis, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Ur, 1999; Thornbury, 1999; Doff, 2000; Cowan, 2008). Doff (2000) says that by learning grammar students can express meanings in the form of phrases, clauses and sentences. According to Ellis (2002), “formal grammar teaching has a delayed rather than instant effect” (p. 167). “Usually debates about grammar often lie at the heart of various methodological orientations whether grammar should be taught inductively/deductively” (Dikici, 2012) or “implicitly/explicitly” (Rahman, & Rashid, 2017).
Despite the debates on teaching grammar, English grammar has been taught from school level to even Master level in the context of our country. This is perhaps due to the importance of teaching grammar for the consolidation of English language. In this regard, Mart (2013) says, “To be an effective language user, learners should study grammar because grammar skills will help learners to organize words and messages and make them meaningful” (p.124). In another idea about why teaching grammar is important, Ellis (2006) writes that “grammar teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it” (as cited in Burgo, 2015). As Richards and Rynandya (2002) state:

In recent years, grammar teaching has regained its rightful place in the language curriculum. People now agree that grammar is too important to be ignored, and that without a good knowledge of grammar, learners’ language development will be severely constrained. (p.145)

This saying also highlights the importance of teaching English grammar. As an English language teacher, I have been teaching English from plus two level to Master’s level. So my interest here is to explore how pre-service English language teachers perceive teaching English grammar at school level in the context of Nepal despite the role of grammar as one of the most controversial issues in language teaching. Here, in my study, pre-service teachers refer to those who are studying English education at universities and who have not involved in the real classroom teaching profession yet.

Research Questions

The present study aims to explore the pre-service English language teachers’ perceptions on grammar instruction by looking for answers of the following questions:

1. How do the pre-service teachers perceive teaching English grammar?
2. How do they think grammar should be taught and why?
3. Why do they think that grammar should be taught in language teaching?

Literature Review

As grammar teaching is a controversial issue (Lakhoua, 2016), research on teachers’ beliefs about grammar instruction has gained prominent importance (Capan, 2014). Here, teachers’ belief is taken synonymously with teachers’ perception. Perception is a particular attitude or a way of viewing something. In relation to this study, perception indicates any sort of views and ideas pre-service English “language teachers hold regarding the nature of language learning and teaching” (ibid.). In fact, every English language teacher brings certain beliefs and perceptions with them in the classroom. Therefore, exploring pre-service English language teachers’ perceptions is an essential issue. As Johnson (1992) states “these beliefs should be specified as early as possible because they shape pre-service teachers’ understanding of language teaching and learning as well as their practices (as cited in Capan, 2014). “Teachers’ knowledge of grammar, the way they are trained to teach grammar and the way they are taught grammar are the most prominent factors impinging their beliefs about grammar instruction” (Teik, 2011, as cited in Capan, 2014). In this regard, this
study is based on Piaget’s (1952) cognitive theory as teaching is a cognitive activity (Farrell & Particia, 2005). Similarly, as belief system is socially constructed through interactions with other individuals who are more knowledgeable and experienced, this study is also based on social constructivism or socio-cultural theory developed by Vygotsky (1978). Thus, I used these two major theories as a theoretical framework to explain the perceptions of pre-service English language teachers regarding teaching English grammar.

Cognitivism as a theoretical framework focuses on mental processes of people’s perception, thought, beliefs, memory, etc. The cognitive theory states that people produce knowledge and form meaning based upon their experiences. Vygotsky is a cognitivist, but rejects the assumption made by cognitivists such as Piaget that it is possible to separate learning from its social context. Vygotsky considers cognitive development primarily as a function of external factors such as cultural, historical, and social interaction (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Cognitivism is a set of beliefs about teaching and learning, which helps to explain the perspectives on teaching grammar.

Social constructivism is a theory that examines the knowledge and understandings of the world developed jointly by individuals. It focuses on an individual’s learning that takes place because of his or her interactions in a group in a social setting. This theory assumes that understanding and meaning are developed in coordination with other human beings (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Social constructivists assert that knowledge is constructed through interaction with others.

Vygotsky states that cognitive growth occurs first on a social level, and then it can occur within the individual. In the words of Kim (2001), “Social constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding”. Social constructivism represents “knowledge as a human product” (Kim, 2001) in the sense that knowledge is constructed in terms of the socio-cultural environment. Individuals can create meaning when they interact with each other and with the environment they live in.

My study is best supported by Piaget’s cognitive theory, as teaching is taken as a cognitive activity, and perception is a mental process. Similarly, as belief system is socially constructed through interactions with other individuals who are more knowledgeable and experienced, this study is also based on social constructivism or socio-cultural theory as viewed by Vygotsky. Constructivism “suggests that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences” (Bada, 2015). In this study, I investigated how pre-service English language teachers perceive teaching grammar as a formal classroom instruction and how their view acts as a social construct as Vygotsky suggests.

Pre-service English language teachers come to teacher education programme with certain prior experiences, perceptions, knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning in general, and about teaching grammar in particular. Therefore, “pre-service teachers’ prior knowledge and beliefs have an effective role in developing them as teachers” (Dikici, 2012). In the teaching of grammar, pre-service English language teachers are expected to have their own beliefs and perspectives, which are reflected upon their prior experiences as students. In this regard, Piaget’s cognitive theory and Vygotsky’s social constructivism work as theoretical lens to explain my study.
Likewise, this study is based on two contrasting views of grammar teaching: prescriptivism and descriptivism. Prescriptive grammar “states rules for what is considered the best or most correct usage” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010), whereas descriptive grammar “describes how a language is actually spoken and/or written, and does not state or prescribe how it ought to be spoken or written” (ibid.). Based on the school of linguistic structuralism, descriptive linguistics founded by Bloomfield and Sapir is the modern concept of grammar teaching.

Similarly, this study is also supported by Aristotle’s inductive-deductive approaches of reasoning. Deductive reasoning follows general to specific procedure, whereas inductive reasoning moves from specific to general procedure. Deductive and inductive reasoning are often equated with ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom up’ approaches respectively. These two approaches have been applied to grammar teaching and learning. “A deductive approach starts with the presentation of a rule and is followed by examples in which the rule is applied”, whereas “an inductive approach starts with some examples from which a rule is inferred” (Thornbury, 1999, p.29). Thus, a deductive approach involves the learners being given a general rule (rule-driven), which is then applied to specific language examples and consolidated through practice exercises. An inductive approach involves the learners observing patterns and working out a ‘rule’ (rule-discovery) for themselves before they practise the language.

Second or foreign language teachers are great consumers of grammar. They are mainly interested in pedagogical grammar, a grammar developed for learners of a foreign language, for their teaching in the classroom. In second or foreign language teaching, there is an extensive literature on pedagogical grammar. Pedagogical grammar is defined as “the types of grammatical analysis and instruction designed for the needs of second language students” (Odlin, 1994, as cited in Bourke, 2005). Various linguistic theories have greatly influenced language teaching theories, and teaching grammar is just one part of language teaching. Until now in the history of linguistics, the three main stages of linguistic theories that have existed are traditional grammar, structuralism and functionalism (Xia, 2014). However, Bourke (2005) considers five main schools of English grammar that can be adopted in the context of ESL/EFL classroom: traditional prescriptive grammar, structuralist applied grammar, modern descriptive grammar, Chomskyan generative grammar, and Hallidayan systemic functional grammar. These theories of grammar are closely related to each other and have generated the change of language teaching trends. English language teachers should know and decide which kind of grammar is best suited to their pedagogic purpose and domain.

“Grammar for teaching purposes has to go beyond reference grammar and involve learners in ‘grammaring’, i.e. applying their grammar in various contexts of use” (Bourke, 2005). In this regard, modern descriptive grammar, which is structural in nature, seems to be quite suitable to support my research study. To be more specific, descriptive structural grammar helps my study understand the pre-service teachers’ perspectives about teaching English grammar. Descriptive grammar focuses on describing the language as it is used, not saying how it should be used. Thornbury (2006) talks about prescriptive grammar, descriptive grammar, pedagogical grammar and mental grammar, defining that “a descriptive grammar simply describes, in a systematic way, the rules that govern how words are combined and sequenced in order to form sentences in a given language” (p.92). Descriptive
grammar relies on structural analysis in its application. It looks at grammar on “many levels: morpheme, word, phrase, clause, sentence, and text” (Bourke, 2005). For example, at the sentence level, each simple sentence is analysed into its constituent parts known as grammatical functions such as subject, verb, object, complement and adverbial. These higher-level units are then analysed into their phrasal elements, such as noun phrase, verb phrase, etc. Phrases, in turn, are analysed into word classes such as noun, adjective, determiner, etc.

Many studies have been done on grammar instruction, and pre-service teachers’ perceptions and beliefs towards grammar and grammar teaching. Dikici (2012) examined pre-service English teachers’ beliefs towards grammar studying at two Turkish Universities. The aim of his study was to look into pre-service English teachers’ pedagogical beliefs towards grammar and its teaching as well as their knowledge on the metalanguage of grammar. The findings revealed that although a great majority of the participants favour the use of metalanguage in teaching grammar, and support the deductive grammar teaching practices, they themselves still have serious problems even with the most basic grammatical terminology.

Uysal and Yavuz (2015) studied about the pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards grammar teaching, studying ELT in Balıkesir University. The findings in general showed that pre-service teachers show an affirmative attitude towards grammar teaching although they strongly believe that it should not be taught directly or overtly.

Aljohani (2012) surveyed grammar beliefs of in-service teachers with the aim of understanding the mental lives of non-native English language teachers at the tertiary level. He tried to find out teachers’ beliefs regarding the nature of grammar, importance of grammar learning and grammar instruction, along with gender differences between male and female in-service teachers. The research was a quantitative one with a cross-sectional design. The researcher used a self-completion questionnaire to collect data with a Likert scale. Results showed that teachers showed a good understanding of the nature of grammar. Moreover, they appreciated the importance of learning grammar to facilitate language learning. Further, teachers believed that form and meaning should be taught together; and it should be put in a meaningful context as in dialogues. The Form-Focused Instruction seemed as an appropriate teaching method that suits teachers’ beliefs. Gender seemed to play no role regarding teachers’ beliefs.

Kaçar and Zengin (2013) investigated the perceptions and classroom practices of Turkish pre-service teachers of English employing a quantitative research design. Findings and results showed that the student-teachers favoured benefiting from not only form-focused instruction and but also holistic, meaning-based approaches.

Capan (2014) investigated pre-service English as Foreign Language teachers’ beliefs development about grammar instruction in a foreign language context through their initial teaching practices, and found that practicum course has made no changes in pre-service teachers’ beliefs except for the role of conscious knowledge.

Grammar teaching has been a controversial issue for long due to ESL/EFL contexts. Therefore,”there is a growing need to explore how pre-service English teachers perceive grammar teaching in a variety of contexts” (Kacar & Zengin, 2013). Teachers as humans have their own perception of the world in general and about teaching and learning language in particular. So having their own perceptions
will have its direct impact on teaching and learning. This field of teacher cognition allows us to discover those implicit beliefs teachers have about learning and language teaching, particularly grammar teaching and learning. By discovering those beliefs, teachers’ behaviours can be interpreted more effectively. Those behaviours are the actual classroom practices accomplished by teachers (Aljohani, 2012).

Overall, the area of teachers’ perspectives and beliefs is a relatively abstract construct. Borg (2003) maintains that there is a dearth of research on teachers’ beliefs with non-native teachers of English. Therefore, the present study tries to compensate this deficiency by focusing on pre-service EFL teachers’ perspectives on teaching grammar in a Nepalese context with non-native teachers of English. In Nepal, little research has been done in this particular field. No researcher (to my knowledge) has tried to investigate the pre-service English language teachers’ teaching perspectives, nor grammatical beliefs in Nepal. The studies we have discussed above were in the context of foreign countries. Moreover, all of them followed quantitative survey designs. Therefore, this research study is qualitative in nature in that it attempts to explore information about pre-service English language teachers’ perceptions on the phenomenon of teaching grammar to the learners in the classroom in a formal way.

**Participants**

The participants of the study consisted of three pre-service teachers studying English at Master’s level under education faculty at TU. Out of three pre-service English teachers, two were females (Participant A and Participant C) and one was male (Participant B), ranging in age from 22 to 25 years. They were all native speakers of Nepali. The pre-service English language teachers participating in the study were informed before, after and during the research process about the aims. The participants were affirmed to be volunteers in the study. The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling technique.

**Tools**

The information collection instrument consisted of two parts, background interview and open-ended questions asked orally. The background interview interrogated the pre-service English language teachers about their name, level, gender and age. Open-ended interview mainly included five research questions of the study. The participants were asked to express their experiences and views regarding the teaching of English grammar to the learners. To conclude, the research was conducted qualitatively as the semi-structured interview technique was used to gather information from the participants’ point of view.

**Procedure**

The study was employed a two-step procedure: information collection and information analysis. In information
collection, the participants were asked to express their experiences and views regarding the teaching of English grammar to the learners. All the information was collected by the researcher. In information analysis, the information obtained from each participant was coded, interpreted and analyzed. The irrelevant statements were excluded in the limits of the research question interrogating the background of the participants. Finally, information was discussed and conclusion was drawn.

Results and discussion

On the basis of the information collected from three pre-service English language teachers studying at M.Ed. at TU, I have drawn some findings or themes of the study. So this section presents the results of the qualitative data analysis about the teaching of grammar with the focus on the research questions: how is grammar viewed, why is grammar taught, how should grammar be taught to language learners, and to what extent should grammar be taught. The results of the qualitative analysis are reported in three themes: pre-service English language teachers’ perceptions of teaching grammar, role of grammar in language, and method to be used for teaching grammar.

Perceptions of teaching grammar

Perceptions and beliefs can have tremendous effects on the process of learning and teaching. “It is necessary to have better insights into teachers’ beliefs because they have clearly been seen as one of the crucial factors that affect teachers and their teaching activities” (Thu, 2009).

Regarding teaching of grammar, all three participants showed positive attitudes towards teaching grammar. In response to the question “What is your view regarding teaching English grammar?”, Participant A (names are not used for their privacy) said, while teaching grammar in the classroom, teachers should understand interest and the level of the learners. This expression clearly indicates that pre-service English teachers have belief towards teaching English grammar and they perceive it in a positive way. This expression is in line with Piaget’s cognitive theory. Participant A focuses on indirect grammar teaching. It means grammar teaching is descriptive rather than prescriptive. Grammar is at a state in which it is considered an essential element of language teaching.

The evolution in language teaching from Grammar Translation method towards a more communicative approach in teaching has also brought with it a great change in the way grammar is viewed and taught. Traditionally, grammar was considered solely as prescriptive; but now teachers have begun to view it in terms of its descriptive aspects as well. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define descriptive grammar as a grammar which describes how a language is actually spoken and/or written, and does not state or prescribe how it ought to be spoken or written while prescriptive grammar is a grammar which states rules for what is considered the best or most correct usage. Therefore, as prescriptive grammarians suggest, grammar teaching is often seen as establishing the ‘correct’ way of speaking and writing. With the advent of communicative approach, it has become clear in language teaching that grammar is viewed as a tool or resource to be used in conveying meaning and comprehending other people’s messages. The participants viewed on teaching grammar descriptively. In this regard, the view of Participant A is quite contextual as she expressed while teaching grammar...the teacher should be context-sensitive. As Vygotsky suggests, teaching is a socio-cultural activity, teaching grammar in context is apt.
The role of grammar in language teaching

The teaching of grammar has been playing a central role in second and foreign language classrooms. “Regardless of how important grammar is considered in language learning, grammar remains being one of the essential factors to master a language” (Thu, 2009). Ellis (2006) asserts that grammar has held and continues to hold a central position in language teaching. Grammar teaching has always been a mainstay in ELT all over the world due to its importance for the consolidation of language learning.

All the three participants focused on the teaching of grammar as they viewed that grammar plays a significant role in language teaching. Responding to the question “Why is grammar teaching important?”, Participant A expressed:

While teaching language students should have knowledge about the grammar. If they have not the knowledge about the grammar, they can’t…they are not able to produce the acceptable structures and they can’t convey the exact sense. While expressing something, it’s important.

She focused on teaching grammar for developing confidence of the learners in using language for communication. Therefore, the knowledge of grammar is important.

Participant B expressed similar view saying that:

While learning language, this grammar is very essential, this grammar is very essential, so all the levels this is included and regarding for the language…we need to learn grammar and that must be very essential.

Participant B emphasized that teaching grammar is very important; it is indicated by the repetition of the phrase ‘very essential’ three times. Moreover, as he expressed, it can be inferred that grammar is included at all levels in our education system, from school level to even master level.

Similarly, Participant C opined that:

Teaching grammar is one of the most essential part of the teaching learning strategies without grammar teaching learning is not effective…and it is interrelated with each other…teaching learning activities and grammar are interrelated.

This expression clarifies that grammar is the integral part of teaching learning activities. When the teachers have to teach or conduct activities for learning in the classroom, there is the use of grammar. Grammar is equated with the correct use of language in this context.

Participant C viewed:

Grammar is the backbone of language because…without grammar, we can’t, students can’t improve reading skill also, writing skill also then the speaking skill also then only the listening skill is not appropriate for students and it is not only used, so it is most important.

This expression indicates that teaching grammar is also helpful in developing the language skills such as reading, writing and speaking. As Participant B said grammar makes language very accurate which is essential to transfer the willing or to communicate effectively and to standardize the communication to make intelligible to the listener, so it’s of course essential.

Thus, all three participants gave much more focus on teaching grammar due to its
benefits in learning language for effective and accurate use in both spoken and written communication.

Many linguists and researchers have given support to grammar instruction in ESL and EFL language teaching and learning. For example, the communicative competence model of Canale and Swain (1980) clearly illustrates the significance of grammar. Without grammar, learners can communicate effectively only in a limited number of situations. In addition, Ellis (2002), Larsen-Freeman (2003) strongly support the teaching of grammar.

From the above perspectives given by three participants, it is obvious that grammar is now part of language teaching. In this regard, as Celce-Murcia (1991) says, grammar instruction should be content-based, meaningful, contextualized and discourse based rather than sentence-based.

**Deductive or inductive instruction?**

There are mainly two approaches to acquisition of grammar in teaching second or foreign languages: inductive and deductive. When grammar is taught inductively, a teacher allows students to induce and formulate a rule by themselves (Thornbury, 1999). In deductive approach of teaching grammar, a teacher provides a clear grammar rule with relevant examples. As Nesic and Hamidovic (2015) claim, “The deductive method is easier to apply than the inductive one, leaving little space for mistakes, provided it is explained in a correct and precise way”.

While the participants were asked how grammar should be taught, they gave changing opinions. They said that they were taught grammar through deductive method at school and still teachers use deductive method. In this regard, to quote Participant A, in the context of Nepal, teachers especially teach grammar through the deductive approach. And to quote Participant C, in our age...teachers teach only formula of the grammar... then there are not in practical way. These two participants meant that they were taught in a deductive way while they were taught grammar at school level. As Vygotsky suggests, teachers construct their own understanding about teaching grammar through experiencing and reflecting on those experiences. Teaching grammar has become a social ‘convention’ (Lewis, 1968) in the context of Nepal as teachers mostly use deductive method of teaching grammar due to its tradition since long. ‘Deductive learning occurs when a rule or generalization is first presented to the learners, and then they go on to apply it in practical activities’ (Thornbury, 2006). Contrary to this, in an inductive approach, ‘the learners themselves generalize the rule from examples, before practising it’ (ibid.).

Now they have different opinions regarding how grammar should be taught. All of them preferred inductive method of teaching grammar. To quote Participant A again:

Teacher should use the communicative approach...if teachers develop rapport between the students and motivate them and encourage them, they can easily produce the acceptable structures while expressing their views...inductive will be the best and the teacher should provide the students centred activities...we can focus grammar through the indirect teaching with teacher can use the indirect approach, indirect grammar teaching methods and give the free environment and friendly environment in the classroom and the indirect is the grammar, grammatical structures and the grammatical correctness of the learners but through different language skills and the aspects.

Her expressions clarify that grammar should be taught indirectly, inductively...
involving students in communicative activities. This way is the practical way of teaching grammar. Again to quote Participant C:

*Somehow if grammar is practical way then it teaches effectively but only the rules is not effective for students...with interaction between the teacher and the students it’s more effective in grammar teaching. Only the lecture method is not suitable for grammar teaching...inductively it’s the best in the grammar teaching because without interaction grammar teaching is impossible...inductively way is the learning by doing then practical way then teaching in context then it is effective.*

The ideas expressed above suggest that grammar teaching should be practical through interaction and in context. Only the rules given to students through lecture method cannot be effective. This is in line with constructivism as the learners can construct meaning of grammar if they are provided social and cultural contexts of learning grammar in an interactive way. Social constructivists assert that knowledge is constructed through interaction with others. Therefore, learners can easily learn grammar if they are provided interactive environment in different contexts.

**Conclusion**

This article has explored the perceptions of pre-service teachers of English towards teaching English grammar to the learners in a formal classroom setting. Pre-service English language teachers consider grammar as an efficient way of learning a language and state that teaching grammar is quite essential for developing language skills. Pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards grammar are generally positive and they are in favor of teaching grammar integrating with skills in a formal way in the classroom. The participants state that grammar teaching promotes accuracy at the expense of fluency. They believe the theory that if learners discover rules on their own, they can acquire them better. They are under the impression that contexts and interaction that serve communication can promote grammar learning and think it is appropriate to teach grammar in a context-sensitive way. They are in favour of using inductive method of teaching grammar while they accept that explicit grammar teaching works better for them in an academic study though they were taught deductively while studying at school. The participants criticize that English teachers still use traditional deductive method while teaching grammar without involving learners in the activities.

The findings of this study have great pedagogical implications for the English language teachers. As it indicates, teaching grammar is essential because it supports other language skills. Like listening, speaking, reading and writing, grammar has been taken as a skill to be developed for the effective use of language both in spoken and written forms. For this, inductive method of teaching grammar has to be applied by the teachers to involve the learners in learning.

In this study, I have just explored the pre-service teachers perceptions about teaching English grammar in the formal classroom setting. How in-service teachers perceive teaching English grammar in the context of Nepal can be another area of research.

From the views that I got from the pre-service teachers, what I feel is that teaching grammar is essential for the consolidation of language skills. Regarding how it has to be taught, my feeling is that for the beginners inductive approach is better but in higher levels, it is best to use deductive approach as the learners of higher level prefer rules directly. This is what I have experienced from my teaching up to now.
References


Appendix A

Interview Guideline Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. At which semester of M.Ed. are you studying?
4. Were you taught English grammar at school level?
5. How do you perceive teaching English grammar?
6. Do you think that grammar teaching is important to the learners at school level?
7. Why is grammar teaching important?
8. How do you think that grammar should be taught? Directly or indirectly?
9. What can be the best way of teaching grammar?
10. Can we teach grammar in contexts?
11. Why do you think that inductive approach of teaching grammar is better?
12. How were you taught grammar at school level?
13. Don’t you think that deductive approach of teaching grammar is better? Why?
14. How much focus should be there in teaching grammar?
15. If you have to teach grammar, then how will you teach: deductively or inductively?

Contributor

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Teacher education courses: Are they germane to classroom practice for novice teachers?

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Abstract

The article analyses novice teachers’ perception on the pre-service teacher education courses of English at Tribhuvan University (TU) and to describe their beliefs and satisfaction on teaching profession. It also aims to describe novice teachers’ practice to implement the acquired knowledge and skills of these courses in their teaching field. Narrative inquiry was adopted as a research method and three novice teachers of community school of Sindhuli were selected as informants following purposive sampling technique. The semi-structured interview was used in order to elicit in depth data from the participants. Content analysis framework was used to analyse data by developing main themes into codes and using them to look for relevant features in the text. The findings divulge that pre-service teacher education courses are supportive and satisfactory for novice teachers as it provides methodological skill and theoretical knowledge to them to teach in the classroom. The novice teachers, who strongly believe in the teaching profession, also think that the contents are theoretically appropriate but they lack some practical applications.

Keywords: Teacher Professional Development, Pre-service Teacher Education Courses, Novice Teachers,

Introduction

As a school student some 25 years ago, I felt that we were weak in English. I thought that teacher were not qualified, they did not have minimum qualification to teach, they were inexperienced, and that they did not have any ideas of teaching approaches, methods and techniques. In 2003, I started to teach in a secondary school myself and I found that the situation is the same like it was when I was a student. When I became an English teacher, many of my colleagues had a teaching degree, and they knew about teaching methodology. Despite that students failed in English in large numbers. Now, as a teacher-educator, when I visit schools to supervise practicing teachers (undergraduate and/or postgraduate trainee teachers), I find that the situation has not changed much. There is little progress in teaching English. The result in English is very dismal even if we have trained and experienced teachers with required qualification and knowledge of teaching learning methodologies. This situation inspired me to carry out a small-scale research. I chose the area of teacher education involving novice teachers. I studied their perceptions and practices on
the pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU.

Novice teachers are new teachers who have completed pre-service teacher education courses, and have passed the Teacher Service Commission examination but have little or no teaching experience. Novice teachers, according to Farrell (2012, as cited in Akcan, 2015, p.1), are those who have started to teach English within three years of completing their language teacher education program. They are fresh out of teacher-training college, and are usually anxious to get better at their practice. However, they often get lost in the routine of planning, teaching and marking. Similarly, Kim and Roth (2011, p.4) define a novice teacher as “any teacher with five years or less experience”. In other words, novice teachers are those who have less than five years of teaching experience and need supportive environments that foster continuous learning, collaboration, and professional growth. Additionally, Goff-Kfouri (2013, p.1) states, “pre-service teachers face several challenges as they strive to achieve excellence. Not only must they prove they master their subject matter, but they must also show competence in classroom management, methodology, and assessment”. Depending on the area, development from novice teachers to professional teachers may take a shorter or longer period of time.

Teacher education program is one of the most important components of teacher professional development (TPD). Through it, school teachers, who are considered mentors of society, are prepared and produced (Melita & Katitia, 2015). Teacher education refers to the policies, procedures, and provision designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behavior and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. In this regard, Kafu (2003) said that teacher education is ostensibly designed, developed and administered to produce school teachers for the established system of education. Likewise, Teacher Student Union of Finland has justified teacher education in Goals for Teacher Education (2016–2019, pp. 1-2) as:

Teacher education provides students with a range of skills that are needed in order to work and improve in global and multinational information society […] Teacher education is built on research and it builds a base for research-based teaching and encourages students to update their own skills.

Some of the TPD schemes include teacher education programs, training programs, workshop, seminar, symposium, conference organized and conducted by higher education institutions, organisations and agencies involved in teacher development. Loughran (2006) contend that teacher education is the pre-service and in-service teacher preparation where students of teaching seek to develop knowledge and skills of teaching and to learn how to competently apply these in practice. These views summarize the importance and the role of teacher education in the preparation of quality teachers.

My own experience of working as a teacher as well as a teacher educator prompted me to study the impact these pre-service teacher education programs have on the achievement of the students in learning English. The present study, therefore, looks into a possible link between teachers’ expertise and students’ achievement. It also explores the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU. In particular, it addresses questions like ‘what the practice and perception of teaching English the young graduates have’.
Literature review

Pre-service teacher education course is typically designed to teach the students who want to engage in teaching learning process after completing the course. Discussing pre-service teacher education, Freeman (2001, p. 72) has written:

Teacher education is the sum of experiences and activities through which individuals learn to be language teachers. This learning can be taught, as in courses, or acquired by means of experience, which must guarantee that the pre-service teachers can develop all the skills required to become professional teachers.

Pre-service teacher education courses make the teachers able to master their subject matter and to show competence in classroom management, methodology, and assessment. In this respect, Mergler & Spooner-Lane (2012, p.66) asserted that pre-service teacher education programs aim to prepare graduates to become quality teachers equipped with pedagogical practices that will serve to meet the increasing demands associated with the teaching profession. One way to improve the quality of the teaching profession is to introduce certification of teachers based on national professional teaching standards. Similarly, in Akcan (2016) study the participating novice teachers agreed that their teacher education program provided them with a good foundation in English language teaching. However, they thought that there was more emphasis on theory rather than practice and that theory and practice were not integrated in the program. Similarly, Tarone and Allwright (2005, p.12) suggests that the “differences between the academic course content in language teacher preparation program and the real conditions that novice language teachers are faced with in the language classroom appear to set up a gap that cannot be bridged by beginning teacher

learners”. Additionally, Beltman, Glass, Dinham, Chalk and Nguyen, (2015, p.241) concluded that newly graduated pre-service teachers had optimism about their profession and attitudes that were positive, confident, capable and happy. In Okas, Schaal, and Krull, (2014, p.340) study, novice teachers saw the teacher’s role as making students work independently [...] the younger teachers had greater hopes and expectations.

Conforming with studies above, Faez and Valeo (2012) found that novice teachers enhanced their efficiency through classroom experiences, and they condemned teacher education programs because they did not deliver the sort of knowledge that teachers needed most (Johnson 1996). Similarly, novice teachers, complained that they learnt too much theory and too little practical knowledge from such a program. Discussing the problems of novice teachers Cakmak (2013, p. 59) concludes that:

Major challenges that novice teachers face with time management; student assessment; negative relationships with teachers, principals, lack of time (to plan, prepare, carry out administrative duties); establishing positive relationships with students; the need to establish authority; difficulties in aligning instructional techniques to the subject content and evaluation.

Satisfaction and beliefs on teaching help teachers adopt their teaching strategies for coping with their daily language teaching challenges, influence their general well-being, and in turn, shape learning environment and student learning.

A number of points emerge from a survey of the related literature on teacher education (TE) programs and practices: First TE has to be grounded in the reality of the practice of English language teaching.
Second, TE programs and practices should be made functionally accountable in terms of the quality of graduates they produce. Third, a standard for the selection of teachers have to be maintained in issuing teaching license and in employment processes. Fourth, preservice programs of preparation teachers practice oriented, rather than theory oriented. For this reason, the concerned government departments and TE agencies should be active and responsible partners in TE programs and practices. And finally, teacher educators and supervising teachers should be accomplished professional practitioners with extensive expertise of the field who could inculcate not only positive attitude towards the profession.

The challenge for developing quality teachers of English who are qualified in the subjects they teach, and knowledgeable about English language teaching processes and practices, is multifaceted. It involves not only all partners working together, but also having adequate resources to ensure that the trainees undergo a rigorous training process and have the needed mentoring and support for their professional satisfaction.

In Nepal, the pre-service teacher training or teacher education is, according to the Pre-service Teacher (PST) Report (2017), “the training of teachers prior to their teaching career”, and theoretical as well as practical in nature. Such programs are conducted by Faculty of Education (FoE) of TU. Regarding teachers’ belief and satisfaction Pajares (1992, as cited in Xu, 2012, p.1397) noted that teachers’ beliefs have a greater influence on the way they plan their lessons, on the kinds of decisions they make, their attitude toward job and job satisfaction, and on their general classroom practice than the teachers’ knowledge. This study has adapted Pajares theory to study teachers’ beliefs and satisfaction.

The Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the novice teachers’ perception and practice on the pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU. Consequently, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do the novice teachers perceive the pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU?

2. What are their beliefs on teaching profession?

3. How do they practice implementing the acquired knowledge and skills of pre-service teacher education courses in their teaching field?

I adapted narrative inquiry as the research method of qualitative research approach in order to capture the complexities of perspectives and experiences of novice teachers. According to Webster & Mertov (2007, p.i), “Narrative inquiry provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories”. Similarly, in Khanal’s (2009, p.241) words, “Narrative inquiry is the process of gathering information for the purpose of research through story telling”. This research was conducted in Sindhuli district of Nepal. I had selected three community schools of this district. The informants of the study includes a total of 3 novice English teachers (2 female, 1 male) who were teaching in different community school of Sindhuli district. They were selected following a purposive and convenience sampling technique. The informants had no more than four years of teaching experience and all voluntarily participated in this research. To ensure anonymity, alpha-numeric
identity (T1-T3) had been used for all participants involved in this study (Ambler, 2016).

Interview technique was used to collect data. The interview, being the most common and powerful research method, enables participants to speak for themselves. The semi-structured interview was used in order to elicit in-depth data from the novice teachers on their perception, practice and beliefs about pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU. Content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used in the analysis of the data based on interviews. All interviews were first audio-recorded by the researcher after taking the informants’ permission. Secondly, data was transcribed for analyzing process. Thirdly, content analysis was utilized based on the assigned codes on the text. Finally, the main themes were defined in terms of the codes given.

Results and discussion

This section discusses the results of the study in terms of perception, belief and satisfaction of novice teachers in three main subthemes.

Theory-oriented courses for Teaching

For most novice teachers, teaching in a community school after completion of pre-service courses of English is exciting because there is a new environment and all circumstances are different for the teachers. When the teachers enter the class to teach, they reflect what they had studied in the pre-service teacher education courses; whether the courses is supportive or not. In this regard T1 said:

- The pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU that we studied is theory-oriented where we studied methods, techniques and approaches which we use in our classroom while we are teaching. Similarly, the course is fruitful for us in the sense that it gives us ideas on teaching grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and language functions that are the major aspects of language teaching. It helps us provide content based teaching. The courses are theory-oriented which supports lecture method but it needs to be training based focusing on participatory and task-based approach.

As it is obvious, the courses of English in TU are only partly supportive to the novice as they mainly offer content knowledge. In this regard, Yook and Lee (2016, as cited in Rouf & Mohamed, 2017, p.3) surveyed Korean EFL teachers’ perceptions of how teacher education programs affected their classroom teaching. The findings show similar outcome that pre-service teacher education programs had little impact on teachers’ classroom practices as these programs were predominantly theory-oriented. According to Botha & Reddy (2011, p.257), “pedagogical content knowledge is described as a transformation of teacher knowledge from a variety of domains of knowledge, which includes subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge about content”. However, T1 is not completely satisfied with the course as it is not practice-oriented. In order to do so, Genc (2016, p.678) suggests that, “English language teacher education programs offer practicum courses which involve teaching experiences for pre-service teachers in co-operating schools [...] an effective cooperation and collaboration need to be established between schools and pre-service teacher education programs”. T2 expressed similar ideas as:

- The pre-service course of English is helpful in teaching English because I practiced to teach in practice teaching
program and I learned qualities of good teachers as well. However, what I felt from the situation where I am teaching it requires practical child centered knowledge and skills to teach the students. If our courses address such type of matter, it will be much more fruitful for novice teacher like us.

This is in line with Fajardo & Miranda (2015) who stated that the teaching practicum allows pre-service teachers to become exposed to the real world of teaching English to students of other languages and to gain knowledge about the complexity of current classroom practices, which contribute to enhancing pre-service teachers’ motivations, attitudes, and engagement towards the teaching profession. The participating teachers felt the lack of practicality in the courses which echoes Macias and Sanchez (2015) finding that pre-service teachers have difficulties during their teaching experiences as well as the decisions they made in order to maintain the control and organization of the classrooms. As practice makes the novice teacher perfect, they try to utilize the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their study. Expressing their dissatisfaction, T3 put his ideas differently:

I am neither completely satisfied with this course nor dissatisfied on the contents of the courses. Generally, the courses are okay. What is missing I think, is the modern technological aspects of the courses. I didn’t learn to teach using modern technology even at M. Ed. As a novice teacher, I am feeling very difficult to teach utilizing modern technology.

Likewise, Zhiting and Hanbing (2006, as cited in Mwangi & Khatete 2017, p.636) stated also reported similar findings:

Teacher education program in China and other parts of the world mainly train teachers in two clusters of technology courses. The first cluster falls into what he calls ICT basics, including modules such as computer basics, programming, software tools, and network applications; the second cluster is related to educational technology, including modules such as instructional media, computer-based instruction, and multimedia authoring.

Thus, teacher education courses of English in TU are not up-to-date as they do not support the recent ways of teaching English not sufficient. The practicing teachers have bitter experiences and reflection on the use of modern technology in the classroom in the sense that they do not know how to use modern technology because the courses did not have that provision.

Strong beliefs on teaching profession

Belief is the most important aspect in teaching profession. The teachers, who have strong beliefs in teaching profession, can teach effectively. In other words, teachers’ beliefs are important quality for teaching. Talking about teachers’ beliefs, T2 said, “I entered into teaching profession because I like this profession very much from my childhood days and I have strong belief that I can do the best in this profession. I want to be identified as a good teacher, so I am trying my best for that". Murphy, Delli, and Edwards (2004) asserted that teacher beliefs are formed based on experience both in the classroom as a teacher and as a student. Early formed beliefs are strong and resistant to change, which means what someone believes is good teaching could be based in childhood experiences. Beliefs play an important role in many aspects of teaching as well as in life. Guotao (1997, as cited in Xu, 2012) also stated that a teacher’s beliefs are formed during the teaching
process and reflect the teacher’s subjective knowledge of relevant educational phenomenon, especially towards his/her own teaching ability.

T1 and T3 agreed in that;

Family background and members of family encouraged us to involve in teaching profession because they have strong belief on this profession. As teachers, we think that we should respect students’ autonomy and creativity in learning and provide ample opportunity for them to be creative and independent learners.

This observation demonstrates that teacher’ beliefs on teaching profession is not only confined to the professional development of teachers but also related to the development of students as well. In the similar type of the study (Xu, 2012, p.1401) mentioned that, “the formation of a teacher’s educational beliefs in the language teaching-learning process will exert an imperceptible influence on forming active language teaching methods and will bring about an improvement in students’ language abilities”. Teacher’s beliefs are more influential than a teacher’s knowledge on determining his or her teaching activities. Thus, it is important that teacher educators uncover particular beliefs that facilitate the efficacy of teacher education.

**Satisfaction in teaching**

Satisfaction is generally considered the difference between what is expected or desired compared to what is actually experienced. Job satisfaction occurs when someone feels he/she has proficiency, value, and is worthy of recognition (Garcez, 2006). Job satisfaction is a positive or pleasant emotional state resulting from a person’s appreciation of his/her own job. Being novice teacher, the participants of this study are satisfied in their profession.

Expressing satisfaction in teaching, T1 stated, “I am satisfied with teaching profession because I have got opportunity to apply what I have learnt in pre-service teacher education courses. Likewise, I have earned money to run my family and I have social image as a teacher in my society”. This illustrates that novice teachers are satisfied and are working effectively in schools in the sense that they are satisfied with their profession. T2 and T3 disagreed this way:

We are unsatisfied in some aspects of the pre-service teacher education courses. Some courses are not applicable and useful for us because when we are teaching, we never find their use in the classroom. The contents of the courses such as ‘Expanding Horizon in English’, ‘English for Mass Communication’, ‘Pedagogical grammar’ are not frequently used in course of teaching English language in classroom.

The participants expressed the opinion that some courses of pre-service teacher education course were not relevant to the novice teachers to teach English in the classroom. Consequently, it was because of these irrelevant courses, they were unsatisfied in the teaching profession.

To sum up this section, the participating teachers were dissatisfied and had somewhat negative attitude towards TU’s TE programs and practices because most of the courses were (a) theory-oriented, (b) not practice oriented, (c) not uptodate, and (d) out of touch of the classroom realities. They were unsatisfied because they did not have a strong faith that the programs trained the teachers well. They were unhappy because most of the training they received was ‘useless’ when it came to classroom practices.
Findings and implications

Teacher education program and its courses of English in TU are helpful to the novice teachers as this program provides the content-based knowledge which is appropriate to them to teach to the students. However, the courses are mostly theory oriented and lack practical aspects that are of great significance to novice teachers. The courses are inadequate for the novice teachers and do not help them gain proper theoretical as well as practical knowledge to use modern technology in the classroom. To address this gap in the courses, they must be improved focusing on their practicality and current demand of the profession.

The novice teachers have strong belief in teaching career. Their beliefs in teaching profession is not only confined to their professional development but also related to the development of students as well. They are dedicated in their work because they are surviving through this occupation. The beliefs of novice teachers in teaching profession need to be continued and facilitated.

Novice teachers are contented in their profession as they are working effectively in their teaching field. Some courses of pre-service teacher education program are not practically relevant to them because these courses never assist them in teaching. The courses that are irrelevant need to be revised to make their use purposeful for novice teachers in teaching English.

Limitations of the study and suggestion for further research

This study had some limitations in terms of sample size, research site and the research area. It had included very small sample size because of which the finding of this study cannot be generalized. The site of the study was only Sindhuli district. The research area was only pre-service teacher education courses of English of M. Ed. in TU. The findings of the study, therefore, have limited applicability.

Conclusion

This study, applied qualitative research following narrative inquiry with three participants, explored the perception, practice and belief of novice teachers on pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU. The participants reported that there was more emphasis on theory rather than practice in the teacher education program of English in TU. They believe that the knowledge and skills that they have acquired in teacher education program practically in their field are only partially useful. They suggest that the courses need to be practical-based focusing on modern information technology instead of imposing the bundle of theoretical knowledge.

References


Mergler, A. & Spooner-Lane, R. (2012). What pre-service teachers need to know to be effective at values-based education.


Appendix 1

Guideline Questions for Interview

1. Could please briefly introduce yourself and tell me your experiences as a student of Faculty of Education.

2. Explain me your experiences as the novice teacher in teaching profession. How do you feel? What were the problems?

3. What is your perception regarding the pre-service teacher education courses of English in TU that you have completed?

4. Do you think the courses are relevant to you for teaching in the classroom? Are they supportive? Do you utilize the reflection of the courses in terms of teaching?

5. How do you perceive these courses to prepare you as a good teacher: theoretically or practically applicable?

6. Have you faced any practical difficulties in implementing the knowledge that you have gained in teacher education program?

7. How are you implementing the acquired knowledge and skills of pre-service teacher education courses in the classroom?

8. Why do you select teaching profession? What is your belief on this profession? How do you perceive teaching profession?

9. Do you think you are satisfied with these courses? And Why?

10. Are there any courses that are not completely irrelevant in terms of conducting teaching and learning activities in the classroom?

11. Are you satisfied with your profession? How do you feel in teaching in community school of Nepal? Do the courses of teacher education of TU help you to be a good teacher?

Contributor

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Incorporating EFL websites in class: Bangladeshi teachers’ perceptions

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Abstract

Incorporating Information-Technology in classes is revolutionizing English language teaching (ELT) practices. Since teachers are the key personnel, their attitudes towards the process determine its success. This study presents the results of a study investigating Bangladeshi university level English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers’ perceptions of incorporating EFL websites in their classes. The findings revealed that private university teachers’ have more positive attitude than public university teachers do. In addition, both private and public university teachers reported of logistic limitations and systematic complications in their respective institutions. Following this, the study proposes enhancing administrative collaborations, arranging teacher-student skill development programmes, and creating customized websites for Bangladeshi ELT contexts.

Keywords: EFL websites, Attitude, University English Teachers, Bangladesh

Introduction

In foreign language teaching, the Internet is considered to be an essential tool (Chong, 2000) which is literally revolutionizing the traditional classroom practices. The ever-expanding internet resources like blogging, chatting, online readings and videos, and readymade lessons, etc. are bringing unprecedented benefits for both EFL teachers and learners (Aydin, 2014; Almurashi, 2016; Cai, 2013). The fusion of ICT in EFL classes is substantially influencing teaching and learning patterns and success rates (Lin, 1997).

With the economic growth and the present government’s promise to build digital Bangladesh, the number of Internet users in Bangladesh is increasing rapidly. Presently, there are 87 million people in the country who are using the Internet (BTRC, 2018). The Internet plays key roles in social, financial, communicational, foreign affairs, and in educational sector of the country.

At present, in most private and many public universities in the country, EFL classes are facilitated with computers and multimedia projectors (Joher, 2014; Afrin 2014). Furthermore, at the moment, out of 160 million of the population, 150 million are using mobile Internet for their various needs (BTRC, 2018). Studies suggest that the use of the Internet on mobile can be an important way to learn English (Liu & He, 2014). In this circumstance, accessing teaching materials from EFL websites in
class either from computers or mobile phones may be considered a timely approach in Bangladeshi context.

Blending technology in the class can be possible and fruitful only when the teachers have a positive attitude towards it (Sanchez, Marcose, Gonzalez, & GuanLin, 2012). Accordingly, the study presents the results of a qualitative study investigating Bangladeshi tertiary level teachers’ perceptions of using EFL websites in class.

**Literature review**

Foreign language learning is a continuous and a lengthy process which requires innovation in teaching to lift learners’ motivation in and outside the class. The modern day EFL teachers, immensely empowered to enhance innovation in teaching by ICT, are able to introduce diverse and unconventional teaching approaches (Emhamed & Krishnan, 2011).

Drigas and Charami (2014) points that ICT in language classes is particularly effective for developing the four language skills. Reading and listening to online resources help learners to develop their receptive language skills. Similarly, teaching writing through a web-based approach and speaking through online communication can reduce learners’ anxiety and maximize learning outcomes.

Joshi and Kaur (2011) emphasizes that for adult learners it is appropriate to incorporate the Internet in EFL classes. The set materials like texts, downloaded or recorded materials may seem less attractive to them because adults are generally attracted by the authentic and updated contents, like news articles, articles on contemporary issues for reading practices, listening to authentic news and connecting with native speakers. Moreover, internet resources are boundless, and allow scopes for intercultural communication.

Recently the integration of ICT in EFL classes has become a major concern among teachers and researchers (Azmi, 2017). Especially the number of websites that offer EFL teaching and learning materials is rising rapidly. Some of these websites concentrate on one particular skill such as podcasts in English (https://www.podcastsinenglish.com/) is used for developing listening skill while BBC Learning English (http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/) focuses on all the four skills. Some of them offer materials that can be filtered according to the learners’ proficiency levels and topics of interests, for instance, ReadWorks.org. (https://www.readworks.org/). From this website, teachers can choose reading materials based on their genre, topic and learners’ proficiency level. Students and teachers may access the prepared activities and check the answers online for example, Awl Academic Sub list (http://www.englishvocabularyexercises.com/AWL/). (For more such useful websites, please see the appendix.)

For some time now, researchers have been proposing plans for website material based EFL classes. Chong (2000) stated that in such classes, the Internet will not replace the teacher. Teachers will work as the facilitators. He has proposed a four-stage lesson for Internet material based class. First, the learners simply communicate with one another using Internet in the class, then they will explore the Internet for collecting data, which means they do extensive reading. Next, they produce their own pieces of writing in their own homepages. Finally, they work in groups to develop a thesis by researching the Internet contents. Robertson (n.d.) proposed a website-based reading lesson. In the class, the learners compare news articles on a similar contemporary topic from different news websites. Then they create their own websites or compare their country’s and native country’s website. Before asking the
students to do this, the teacher himself/herself has to go through the websites. Thus, teachers may customize their own classes by choosing specific websites, contents and activities based on the teaching and learning goals.

Considering the significance of teachers’ attitudes towards the incorporation of technology in EFL classes, numerous studies have been conducted investigating the attitudes of teachers to the use of ICT in classrooms. Teachers’ positive attitude is the determinant of whether a technology will be integrated in the teaching or not (Gilakjani & Leong, 2012; Mollaei & Riasati, 2013). Moreover, it (positive attitude) regulates the extent of use of technology in class (Al-Zaiyideen, Mei & Fook, 2010) and innovation in teaching and how students will use technology for learning the language (Gilakjani & Leong, 2012). Teachers’ positive attitudes towards technology in education is crucial for tackling the anxiety in a technology oriented education system (Yuksel & Kavanoz, 2011).

Abunowara (2014), and Riasati, Allahyar and Tan (2012) stated that teachers’ negative attitudes towards the use of technology hamper the incorporation of technology in the class. Teachers’ attitudes towards the inclusion of technology in education can be changed by incorporating technology courses in the teacher development programmes (Abbott & Faris, 2000).

Pardo and Tellez (2009) said that teachers have to continuously look for engaging and innovative teaching resources that can capture the motivation of the learners. As an EFL teacher, the researcher has observed that, because of the lack of variation and flexibility, the EFL course books used in universities in Bangladesh, often fail to motivate students to become independent learners. Moreover, as the same text is used for both teaching and learning purposes, it limits the learners’ exposure to the language. Therefore, it is high time for Bangladeshi ELT practitioners grasped the potentials of EFL website resources for ingenious teaching.

In order to ensure quality education, in National ICT Policy 2009, the incorporation of ICT in all sectors of education has been included as a major undertaking of the present government with special focus on English (Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology, 2009). Moreover, the policy specifically addresses the issues of extensive logistic developments and teacher trainings and incentives for effectively using ICT in education. Studies have shown that, the implementation of the policy is already on the go (Hasan, 2017; Imon, 2017; Karim, 2014). There have already been a good number of studies on the incorporation of CALL in EFL classes in Bangladesh (Afrin, 2014; Akter, 2012; Nila, 2013). However, research studies on Bangladeshi teachers’ attitudes towards the use of ICT in the class are hard to find while researchers are considering teachers’ positive attitudes as a major condition for successful integration of ICT in EFL contexts (Richards, 2006). Hence, it is imperative to investigate Bangladeshi EFL teachers’ attitudes towards the inclusion of EFL websites in the class.

The study bears multifold significances. First of all, the study will raise awareness among teachers and inspire technological and professional development and confidence by encouraging them to use EFL websites in the class. This, in return, will have a positive impact on the learning outcomes.

Besides, the study, by drawing attention to importance of website based teaching, will stimulate the authorities to take executive steps in private universities and distinctly
in public universities. As a result, the target of the present government to create tech-savvy world-class manpower (Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology, 2009) will go one more step ahead.

**Objectives of the study**

The aims of the study are (a) to find out the attitudes of the teachers towards the use of EFL websites as teaching tools, (b) to identify the factors that hinder the execution of it, and (c) suggest measures for effective English language teaching through positive attitude towards the inclusion of online materials in EFL classes.

**Research questions**

The study has explored the following questions.

1. What are Bangladeshi University teachers’ perceptions of using EFL websites in the classroom?

2. Is there any problem in incorporating EFL websites in the classroom?

**Methods**

**Research design**

This study makes use of a phenomenological research design, which “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p.57) with a focus “on the participants’ perceptions of the event or situation” (Williams, 2007, p.69). So this research study is qualitative in nature in that it attempts to explore the university teachers’ perceptions towards incorporating EFL websites in the class in Bangladesh.

**Research tool**

Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data were collected mainly based on eight interview questions related to the teachers’ perceptions and problems regarding incorporation of EFL websites in classes. Questions 1-5 were mainly related to the teachers’ attitudes towards using EFL websites as teaching tool and questions 6-8 were related to the possible problems in doing so (Appendix B).

**Participants**

The details of the five purposefully selected participants are given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Affiliations</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Public University</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Public University</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Private university</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Private university</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Private university</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five university teachers participated in the research. The teachers were numbered as T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5 for the convenience in data analysis. T1 and T2 were from public universities and T3, T4, and T5 were from private universities. The table also shows the level of experiences of the teachers. T2 and T4 are comparatively less experienced than T1, T3, and T5.

**Data collection procedure**

Before taking the interviews, the respondents were contacted in person and through phone calls. The interviews were conducted in the suitable times confirmed
by the participants. Interviews of T1, T2 and T3, who are staying far away, were taken through active Facebook chats while T4 and T5 were interviewed in a face-to-face mode. Each of the interview sessions took 20-30 minutes. Facebook interviews were then taken as screen shots for later analysis whereas the direct interviews were recorded on Samsung J5 phone model and transcribed later.

Data analysis procedure

In order to analyze interview data, five-step approach to analyzing semi-structured interview data (Piercy, 2004) was followed. First, all the interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word programme. Then the transcript of each interview was read carefully several times and observations were written down beside each statement. Next, the statements and observations with a similar concept were compiled together which helped to find the emerging themes. After that, it was also examined if the participants’ experience had any impact on their perceptions. Those observations and key words were also recorded beside previous observations. Finally, reviewing all the observations and key points, the major themes were identified. Issues that were insignificant to the themes were excluded at this point. Finally, the findings were presented through an organized narrative that was supported by selected statements of the interviewees and research literature (Navigating the Dissertation, n.d.). After the analysis was done, the major themes of the teachers’ attitudes towards using EFL website as teaching tools in their classes. The subthemes are willingness to use EFL websites in the class and belief about the effectiveness of incorporating EFL websites in the class. The subthemes are discussed in detail below:

**Teachers’ willingness to use EFL websites in class**

From the study, it became clear that Bangladeshi university teachers have already had the mental preparedness to accept EFL websites as a teaching tool just like traditional materials in their classes. T4 explained,

> Along with the existing teaching materials any contemporary and constructive materials can be used in the class. As these EFL websites are rich with helpful activities, they can be integrated in the

**Findings**

Two major themes teachers’ attitudes towards the incorporation of EFL websites in classes and problems of using websites in the class emerged from the interpretation of interview data. These themes are mainly supported by and developed from their subthemes. The findings are illustrated below:

**Teachers’ attitudes towards incorporating EFL websites in the class**

| Teachers’ attitudes towards incorporating EFL websites in the class | willingness to use EFL websites in the class | belief about the effectiveness of incorporating EFL websites in the class |

As the table shows, the major themes of the teachers’ attitudes towards using EFL website as teaching tools in their classes. The subthemes are willingness to use EFL websites in the class and belief about the effectiveness of incorporating EFL websites in the class. The subthemes are discussed in detail below:
classes. The integration will accelerate the learning process.

Even, considering the young generation’s tremendous interest in ICT, using EFL websites in the class will be a fitting practice. This will enhance learners’ motivation to a great extent. Regarding this T2 pointed out that,

The young generation is very much connected to the use of technology. At the same time the conventional classroom practices are undergoing a lot of changes. If teaching takes place through the use of online resources the learners will find it more engaging.

Teachers’ belief about the effectiveness of using EFL websites in the class

The study revealed the teachers’ strong positive belief about the effectiveness of website contents as teaching tools. The teachers mainly indicated that the websites materials are especially helpful for teaching speaking and listening to the Bangladeshi learners. In this regard, T1 stated,

Though a good number of reading and writing materials are available offline, listening and speaking materials are ‘difficult to find’. Teachers can use the EFL websites in classes when the learners will practice listening by accessing activities from those websites.

In addition, the participants believe that the EFL websites will be much more useful than existing materials as there is much flexibility to choose materials according to the teaching and learning needs. This will heighten teaching and learning outcomes. T5 pronounced,

If a specific reading activity doesn’t match the proficiency level of the learners or the personal interests of the learners, the teacher can find a suitable by using the filtering options provided by the websites. Also the websites have stimulating grammar activities that can easily capture the interest of the learners.

However, the study also found that despite having notably positive attitudes, the teachers are still not completely confident in adopting websites in their classes. They are concerned about classroom management challenges and lightened roles of the teacher. T5 pointed out,

The websites should not be too frequently used in classes. Teachers have to finish the syllabus while using websites regularly might hamper this. Teachers may make a combination of online and offline materials.

The findings indicate that Bangladeshi teachers are mentally ready to embrace EFL websites as teaching tools in their class. They are aware of and aspiring to adopt the trends of 21st-century language classes. It can be assumed that these positive attitudes to using the website contents will make it much easier for them to overcome the challenges involved in the process.

Problems of incorporating EFL websites in the class

Table 3. Problems of incorporating EFL websites in class: major and subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems of incorporating EFL websites in the class</th>
<th>Lack of skills among teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructureal deficiencies in universities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 presents the second major theme of the findings which is problems of
incorporating EFL websites in the class. The two subthemes are lack of skills among teachers and infrastructural deficiencies in universities. The subthemes are elaborately analyzed below:

**Lack of skills among teachers**

The study observed that teachers from both public and private universities lack skills to use websites as teaching tool in their classes. The decoding of interview data in combination with the observation of their teaching experiences revealed that the senior professionals both in public and private universities were comparatively less skilled. T5, a private university faculty and the most experienced (11 years' experience) among the participants said that,

> The faculty (T5) lacks adequate skill and knowledge to incorporate EFL websites in the class although the faculty often takes help from internet for teaching. There are needs to improve expertise in more advanced use of technology in EFL classes.

On the contrary, the junior teachers, belonging to the digital generation, are more confident about their expertise. T2, one of the less experienced (3.5 years' experience) participants described,

> Knowing to use websites and internet contents for teaching is a basic skill of a 21st century language teacher. And the faculty (T4) possesses adequate skill and confidence to conduct a class using EFL website.

**Infrastructural deficiencies in universities**

The study has found that the universities in Bangladesh lack adequate logistic supports necessary to incorporate EFL websites in classes. The problems are worse in public universities. T1, a public university teacher, reported,

> The scopes for using this opportunity are absent in the faculty’s university. In most of the classes there is no multimedia. Though there are internet facilities in some of the classes, the speed is disappointing.

Conversely, the facilities are greater in private universities and things are improving rapidly there. T3, a private university teacher strongly claimed that,

> The institution has established satisfactory supports for using online contents in their classrooms.

The above discussion reflects the teachers' dissatisfaction about the obstacles in personal and organizational levels to incorporating EFL websites in the class. While teachers’ positive attitudes may promote the initiative, these restrictions, unless addressed resultantly, will adversely affect the attitudes of the teachers.

**Discussion**

The findings of the study have strong connection with the literature. Bangladeshi university teachers are feeling positive about the effectiveness of the EFL website as a teaching tool. This is in compliance with the findings of Capan (2012), Al-Za‘yideen, Mei and Fook (2010) where Turkish and Jordanian EFL teachers were found to have strong positive attitudes towards the use of ICT in classes.

Albirini (2004), cited in Rodgers (1995), views that the positive attitude is when the teacher believes the technological integration will be useful and easy for them. The participants of current study also believe accessing online materials in the class will be more effective than traditional materials.
The findings demonstrate Bangladeshi teachers’ unwillingness to integrate website materials on a regular basis. Bangladeshi university EFL teachers also prefer to have a combination of offline and online contents in their classes. Chong (2000) has indicated that while integrating internet materials in language classes, it is very natural that it will be accompanied by some problems like, managing the resources and the lessons properly during the class. Also he considers the inclusion of internet resources will be a supplement for the existing practices instead of being a replacement of it.

The findings reveal the teachers’ lack of competence in using websites in their class which is in compliance with the findings of Raman and Yamat (2014). The current study has also found the more experienced teachers to be less skilled. Their study has also found that the older teachers are less interested in and capable of using ICT in their class.

The research discovered that limited logistic support is one of the main barriers to the use of websites in the class. This is similar to the findings of Ghavifekr et al. (2016). In his study, the Malaysian teachers also reported of the lack of adequate resources as one of the major constrains to teaching with ICT.

The uniformity of the findings indicates that the EFL teachers in universities of Bangladesh have the full mental orientation to utilize EFL websites in the class. They are well informed that the approach will enable them to enhance learners’ motivation and learning outcomes by overcoming limitations of offline materials. The similarity in the problems between Bangladeshi context and other countries’ also refer to the fact that Bangladesh is not lagging far behind in realizing modern ambiance in the EFL class.

**Conclusion and implications**

The study gives a glimpse of the prospect of using EFL websites in classes of Bangladeshi universities. At the same time, it focuses on the possible hindrances that should be addressed properly. First, ICT facilities, such as computer, multimedia projectors, high speed internet connection, Open-access Wi-Fi in the language classrooms of both public and private universities have to be ensured. Second, in public universities authorities have to take this as a major concern and invest more on the infrastructural improvements for ICT based EFL teaching. In addition, until the facilities are available, the teachers may instruct their students to use their smartphones and mobile data for using EFL websites in classrooms. Similarly, until the physical facilities can be provided, the government should minimize the cost of mobile data so that both students and teachers feel motivated to use them. Furthermore, both the universities and the governmental bodies should arrange adequate training programs to enhance teachers’ technological skills and confidence and motivation to use EFL websites in the class. Finally, teachers may enhance their own technological knowledge and ability through self-study from different online courses, attending online events or simply asking for relevant instructions in their browsers or their better fellows.

Further research studies have to be carried out to recognize the potentials of the approach from students’ perspectives. The study can be conducted between a control group where the students will be taught with the traditional or offline materials and an experimental group where the learners will be taught using online materials from selected EFL websites. The two groups’ attitudes to the instructional approach and performances before and after instructions
will be compared to determine the possible success of the inclusion of EFL websites in the class.

In short, the study has produced encouraging results regarding Bangladeshi university teachers’ stance on the issue. However, the potentials for getting the best out of EFL website-based class are encumbered by infrastructural incapacity, systematic complications and lack of expertise of the personnel involved. Bangladeshi EFL teachers’ aspiration for adopting 21st century teaching competencies coupled with the universities’ and the governments supports will function as the key factor in the development of the whole nation.

References


Appendix A

Useful Websites

A list of such useful websites along with their links is provided below:

**Voice of America Special English**: https://learningenglish.voanews.com/

**BBC Teaching English**: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/

**Purdue Online Writing Lab**: https://owlenglish.purdue.edu/owl/

**One stop English.com**: https://www.onestopenglish.com/

**Ello**: http://www.elllo.org/

**ESLgold**: http://eslgold.com/

Besides these the teachers can use many authentic online resources as teaching materials, like the following websites:

**YouTube**: https://www.youtube.com/

**The Readers’ Digest**: https://www.rd.com/

**The Daily Star**: https://www.thedailystar.net/

**Google Hangouts**: https://hangouts.google.com/

And the list may go on and on as everyday more and more websites are getting added to the Internet.
Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Which tools and materials do you usually use in your language classroom?

2. Do you think the materials you use in your class are adequate for teaching all (reading, writing, speaking, listening) English Language skills? Why/why not?

3. Do you think using EFL websites in class can help you to overcome limitations of traditional teaching materials? How?

4. Do you think using these websites can make teaching more effective? How?

5. Do you think these websites should be regularly used in classroom? Why/why not?

6. Do you think there are enough facilities in your institution to use ELT websites in your classroom? Please explain.

7. Do you have enough skills and knowledge to effectively use ELT websites in your class? Please explain.

8. Any further opinion on the topic?

Contributor

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Voice Recording in second language outside the classroom: Process and product

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Abstract

In Vietnam, English is a foreign language. Therefore, students do not have many opportunities to practise speaking outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, teachers focus on teaching grammar explicitly. To enable students to practise their speaking skills, Facebook closed groups were employed as a learning platform. Seventeen students were asked to record their speech on suggested topics, post them on Facebook closed groups and comment on their friends’ works within six weeks. The first and final recordings were employed to analyse in terms of fluency and complexity. These students were also interviewed after the course. They supposed that voice recording enabled them to have opportunities to practise their speaking skills. The first and final recordings showed that students improved their fluency and lexical complexity but not for syntactic complexity.

Keywords: Technology, speaking, Facebook, voice-recording, second language

Introduction

Vietnamese high school students are incapable of communicating in English after seven years of learning English at high school and two years at tertiary education (Hoang, 2010). In other words, the required level for students is B1. However, most students are at A1 or A2 (Le, 2013). Therefore, they are unable to maintain basic conversations in English. Students’ lower level of proficiency in English can be explained by the following reasons. First, teaching English in the classroom is orientated towards exams (Le, 2011; Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen, 2011). Because the national university entrance examination is very competitive, and a university degree is regarded as a passport into a better life (Nguyen, 2011), students and parents pursue this exam. However, the national examination focuses on forms especially vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and reading comprehension while the government’s macro-strategy is to equip students with communicative skills.

Language production has been proved to have effects on language acquisition (Swain, 1995, 2005). However, students in the EFL setting do not have opportunities to practise their English skills outside the classroom (Hsu, 2016; Sun, 2009, 2012). Besides, the overcrowded classroom and time constraints lessen students’ chances to
practise their English inside the classroom (Huang, 2015; Sun, 2009). Therefore, voice recording can be advantageous because it creates a channel for practising speaking the target language outside the classroom (Huang, 2015; Sun, 2009). This study aims to explore the process of voice recording, e.g. how students practise their language when recording their voice and the effects of voice recording on student language proficiency, especially fluency and complexity.

**Literature Review**

Skehan (1996) presents three main goals of language learning: complexity, fluency and accuracy. Complexity, fluency and accuracy have been used to measure learners’ language proficiency (Housen, Kuiken, & Vedder, 2012). Complexity refers to the use of more complex structures and vocabulary (Skehan & Foster, 1999). Fluency is related to the processing time (Schmidt, 1992). Accuracy is defined as the ability to produce ‘error-free language’ (Housen et al., 2012). According to Housen et al. (2012), there are three different types of complexity regarding to second language performance: propositional complexity, discourse-interactional complexity and linguistic complexity. Regarding fluency, Skehan (2009) points out three types in oral performance: speech fluency, breakdown fluency and repair fluency (Housen et al., 2012).

Several studies (Hsu, 2016; Huang, 2015; Shih, 2010; Sun, 2009, 2012) have investigated voice blogging for extensive speaking practice outside the classroom. These studies can be classified into two groups. Group 1 examined the process of voice-blogging, and students’ experiences and their self-perceived progress. Group 2 addressed the objective effects of voice-blogging on students’ speaking proficiency. Voice-blogging was perceived to individualize the learning process and improve students’ language skills. In an early study, Hsu, Wang, and Comac (2008) investigated students’ experiences in audio blogs. The students had to set up the blog and record their voice. Then they had to upload the sound file to a shared blog. The study concluded that students expressed that audio blogging could be a good facilitator for their language learning process. Students perceived that they improved their pronunciation, and that the recordings enabled the instructor to individualize the feedback delivery; however, it was challenging for the instructor to have enough time to give feedback to each student. Similarly, Pop, Tomuletiu, and David (2011) conducted a study exploring the potential of an online voice forum to let Romanian university students practise speaking. Students reported that they had more opportunities to practise their English in a less anxious environment. However, these two studies did not examine that when students had more opportunities to practise speaking English, they improved their language proficiency.

Similarly, Sun (2009) documented students’ experiences on voice-blogging at a university in Taiwan. Participants (n = 49) from an oral English class were asked to record and post their voice blogs. Each student was required to post 30 voice blogs and 10 comments on other friends’ blogs by the end of the semester. A pre-and post-questionnaire and interview were employed to investigate students’ experiences of voice blogs. The results demonstrated that students followed five main steps such as conceptualizing, brainstorming, articulating, monitoring and evaluating during their voice blog process. Students perceived that voice blogs could enable them to learn language and increase their social networking. However, they did not space their voice blogs over the
semester but waited for the deadline and posted their blogs all at once. The study did not examine whether recording their voice resulted in student language progress. In the same vein, Huang (2015) examined students’ (n=74) experiences of voice blogging at a university in Taiwan. Each student was asked to make eight blogs and comment on 40 other students’ blogs. Students were encouraged to read online articles to get ideas for their posts. The findings showed that students followed four stages: reading to get ideas, planning, recording, and sharing their videos. Students perceived that their English skills improved especially their speaking, reading and pronunciation. Besides, they had opportunities to construct knowledge together and enhanced their social networking. However, they also faced some technical problems and a time constraint. Shih (2010) examined forty-four tertiary English major students at a university in Taiwan with blended learning. The results showed that peers’ and instructor’s feedback was highly appreciated, and students were satisfied with the video-blogs because they could learn public speaking effectively. The above studies examined students’ process of voice blogging and their perceived improvement. However, the studies have not examined whether voice-blogging has any effects on students’ speaking proficiency.

Hsu (2016) and Sun (2012) investigated whether there was any improvement due to voice blogging in student speaking in terms of complexity, fluency and accuracy. Sun (2012) examined 46 students at a university in Taiwan. Students participated in voice-blogging for one semester (18 weeks). Students were all non-native English speakers and in a public speaking class. Three first and final blogs were rated by two raters: the teacher-researcher and another examiner. The study concluded that there was no improvement in students’ pronunciation, language complexity, fluency and accuracy. However, students perceived that their speaking proficiency improved. Sun supposed that one semester was not long enough to see any improvement. He explained blogs were a free environment; therefore, students focused more on the content without paying attention to language complexity. One of the negative aspects of this study is that human raters may be biased in their assessment or students’ improvement might be too subtle to be recognized by human raters. Similarly, Hsu (2016) also compared the effects of online blogging of students (n = 30) enrolled in an English course at a university in Taiwan. These students had limited time and opportunities for practising speaking outside the class. Students were asked to record and post their recordings via a shared class blog to supplement the limited time in class. Each student was requested to listen to another student’s post and give comments each week for 15 weeks. Students’ recordings in week 1, 2 and week 14, 15 were analysed and compared. The study concluded that the language fluency and accuracy did not show any improvement while syntactic complexity improved because students could produce longer clauses. The shortcoming of this study was that the study did not employ a control group to compare the effects of voice-blogging group with a group without voice-blogging.

Findings from the above studies showed that voice-blogging gave more opportunities to practise English outside the classroom and students had to prepare and practise before recording their voice. They perceived that their language improved especially fluency and pronunciation. Findings on the effects of voice blogging had mixed results. While Sun (2012) found that Taiwanese university students did not show any progress in their speaking skills in terms of language complexity, accuracy and fluency, Hsu (2016) pointed out that
Taiwanese university students improved their syntactic complexity because they could produce longer clauses. Therefore, more studies should be conducted to see how students practise their speaking skills and what effects does voice-blogging have on the development of student speaking skill, i.e., their oral fluency, and complexity.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to investigate how students practise their speaking skills through voice recording and examine whether there is any progress in term of language in the first and the final recordings uploaded on Facebook groups. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are students’ experiences in voice recording?

2. What are the effects of voice-blogging on students’ language fluency and complexity?

Methods

Research Design

The study employed both the quantitative and qualitative approach. The qualitative approach used the interview to investigate students’ experiences before and after six weeks of voice recording while the quantitative approach employed the first and the final recordings to analyse students’ speaking performance. The quantitative data explored the difference in students’ speaking performance between the first recording and the final recording in terms of language complexity and fluency. The study was not an experimental study without a control group; therefore, it did not aim to compare the effects of students’ performance in voice-recording activities with those who did not participate in voice recording. Its purpose was to examine the process and products of voice recording activities in a closed Facebook group.

Participants

Participants were 16 high school students from three different high schools in a district in Vietnam. The researcher went to each school and introduced the project. These students volunteered to participate in the online course. All students were 16 years old and were at Grade 10. These students were divided into three different closed Facebook groups. Students were asked to make one recording in week 1 and week 6. From week 2 to week 5, they had to make two recordings with suggested topics per week. In total, students made 10 recordings. The topics were mainly around two main themes: family and friendship. The first and the final recordings were transcribed for analysis. After 6 weeks, students were asked to participate in the interview to explore their experiences in making the videos or audios.

Procedure

According to Hubbard (2004), students should be well-prepared to work in the computer assisted language learning (CALL) environment so that they can use CALL materials effectively. Lack of technical support can constrain the success of CALL activities (Jones, 2001). A number of studies (Hubbard, 2004; Winke & Goertler, 2008) have pointed out the necessity of technical training for learners to work in the online environment. Following Hubbard’s model, technical training in this study consisted of giving students instructions how to register for their accounts online as well as how to install software or use it effectively. These students were trained how to record their voice, using their telephone or soundcloud.com before sharing in the closed Facebook group.
The training section was also explained in Vietnamese so that the participants could fully understand. The training schedule was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Technical training</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Facebook        | 1. Accept the researcher as a friend in their Facebook friend list  
2. Accept the invitation to join closed Facebook group  
3. Make a trial first in the group.                                                                 |
| Soundcloud.com  | 1. Account registration  
2. Download and install the software  
3. Activate the account  
4. Open and close the application  
5. Make a trial recording with the new application                                                           |

**Analysis**

In this study, language complexity and language fluency are the main focus because students had extensive practice of grammar at school. In addition, communicative language teaching emphasizes on the fluency, not accuracy; therefore, accuracy especially grammar analysis was not taken into consideration. As mentioned in the literature review section above, there are three types of fluency; however, the only speech fluency is employed because Kormos and Dénes (2004) pointed out the strong correlation between the speech rate and perceptions of fluency. Other two measures are not used because while students recorded their own speech, they prepared scripts beforehand. They tried to fix all the pause and breakdown before posting on the Facebook closed group. In addition, linguistic complexity is employed to see any differences in students’ use of language. Many measures have been used to address the language complexity such as syntactic, morphological, lexical analysis (Housen et al., 2012). In this study, the two main measures applied are lexical measures and syntactic measures. For lexical measure, type and token ratio is employed while the length of the utterance is used for syntactic complexity.

The pre-interview and post-interview were employed to compare students’ experiences. For qualitative data, Charmaz (2006) qualitative analysis was used to analyse the transcripts of pre-and post-interview were reviewed before they were coded. Then open coding was applied to the interview transcripts. The iterative process continued until the key themes were identified.

For the quantitative data, students’ recordings for the first recording and the final recording were employed for comparison. Thirty-two recordings from the first and final recordings were transcribed. In transcribing students’ speaking in the recording, some sounds could not be understood, and these sounds were omitted. To investigate any advancement in terms of vocabulary, students’ transcripts were put into the online application “Compleat Lexical Tutor” to analyse the quantity and the quality of their lexical use. Compleat Lexical Tutor gives the number of academic words, the total number of words, the type and token ratios. Percentages of the number of academic words in the first and final recording would be counted to examine the quality of the vocabulary while the type and token ratio was employed to see the lexical diversity. For syntactic complexity, utterance length was used to compared between the first and final recordings. To
evaluate students’ fluency, the speech rate (syllables per minute) in the recordings was calculated. The paired-samples t-test with the alpha level at .05 was employed to see the differences between the first and the last recordings.

**Mean length of utterance** in words is the total number of words divided by the number of utterance (Parker & Brorson, 2005).

**Type token ratio** is the number of different types of words to the total number of words (Johansson, 2009).

Regards fluency measurement, speech rate is used to see any difference between students’ performance in the first and the final recordings.

**Speech rate** is the total number of syllables divided to the number of seconds and multiplied by 60.

**Results**

Two main themes emerged from the interview data.

**Insufficient opportunities for speaking in class**

The interview results show that students did not have enough chances to speak English in their regular classes or to present their ideas due to the time constraint as the time allocation for speaking in a week was limited.

**Example 1:** Dear teacher, there was not enough time in the class (Pre-course interview – student J).

**Example 2:** Yes, not many opportunities to speak, Teacher (Pre-course interview – student L).

One student perceived that the speaking class was so short that he felt that teachers wanted to finish as quickly as possible.

**Example 3:** Speaking lessons were very short, For example, it passed in 10 minutes (Pre-course interview – student B).

Although the time was limited, teachers spent time presenting grammatical items at the beginning of the lesson; therefore, the students felt that they did not have enough time to speak English in the class. Moreover, the overcrowded classroom also limited their opportunities to speak English.

**Example 4:** Mainly (we) learnt structures, more structures, so speaking was very little (Pre-course interview – student E).

**Example 5:** I did not have opportunities to speak, there were no opportunities for every student to speak (Pre-course interview – student D).

Only confident students who raised their hands to speak in front of the class would be called on to speak, while other students who were not confident enough to put up their hands kept quiet in their seats.

**Example 6:** It was very plain, if anyone often raised his/her hand, he/she would be called. For us, we were rather shy, so we were afraid to stand up (Pre-course interview – student I).

In summary, students believed that they did not have enough opportunities to practise speaking in the class due to lack of time. Another reason was that teachers spent a lot of time presenting structures and, in any case, students were afraid of speaking in front of the class. This is consistent with findings by Nguyen (2013) who found that Vietnamese high school teachers only conducted two steps: presentation and practice in the three Ps model (presentation, practice and production). Teachers did not organize free
speaking activities for students to work in groups and pairs for free language production.

**Students’ speaking practice in the online course**

Students perceived that recording their voice gave them more opportunities to practise speaking skills.

**Example 7:** I had more chances practising speaking English (Post-course interview – student I).

**Example 8:** Yes, Teacher, the course gave opportunities to speak English with friends more because as usual, we did not speak English like this (Post-course interview – student L).

Students perceived that voice-recording enhanced their opportunities to practise speaking English outside the classroom. This finding is consistent with findings from previous studies (Huang, 2015; Pop et al., 2011; Sun, 2009) that online voice-blogging can complement the time constraint in the classroom. Students could take advantages of the online environment to practise their speaking. Students tried to prepare their speaking by finding ideas and writing down their ideas before they started their own recording. Some of them even wrote a script before they started their recordings.

**Example 9:** Usually I wrote down in advance, then I spoke but I did not speak according to the script, so I had to redo it according to the script but I still found something wrong and I did it again (Post-course interview – student D).

It is interesting that some students deliberately practised their pronunciation and fluency before they recorded themselves. They also prepared the pronunciation of some uncommon words before they recorded themselves.

**Example 10:** For some difficult words, I looked up the online dictionary, then I practised pronouncing the words, teacher (Post-course interview – student I).

After they were well-prepared for their speech, they tried to rehearse a few times ahead or record many times until they were satisfied with their work.

**Example 11:** Before recording, I read a few times, then I recorded, teacher (Post-course interview – student I).

**Example 12:** I recorded until I felt tired, then I stopped recording (Post-course interview – student D).

During the practice process, students also had the following steps to complete their recordings: planning, practising, recording, and uploading. This finding is in accordance with Huang (2015) who also found that the students followed steps in making their recordings. Similarly, Sun (2009) found that students had to follow 5 main steps such as conceptualizing, brainstorming, articulation, monitoring and evaluating during their voice blogging process.

Students reported that they tried to correct their pronunciation and grammatical mistakes while recording. One student reported that for the first recording, she tried to record thirty times because her mother checked and asked her to redo it to correct her grammatical mistakes and pronunciation.

**Example 13:** I made mistakes and my mother asked me to rerecord, but I made mistakes and my mother asked me to rerecord, I recorded 30 times (Post-course interview – student G).
Even when there was some background noise, or they mispronounced some words, they tried to record their sound files again.

**Example 14:** Yes, for example yesterday when I recorded, there were some background noises, so I had to record again. The second time when I read there were some words, I suddenly forgot their pronunciation.... so I had to do it again (Post-course interview – student K).

Besides, in order to make recordings to upload on the closed Facebook group, students spent a large amount of time practising until they felt their pronunciation was correct. They attempted to correct their word pronunciation as well as the pronunciation of final sounds which were one of the challenging features that Vietnamese learners had (Cunningham, 2013). Students practised these features by looking up the words in online dictionaries and trying to imitate the pronunciation.

**Example 15:** Yes, perhaps, I practised the final sounds a lot (Post-course interview – student I).

**Example 16:** Before I spoke, I checked the pronunciation of some words with ‘s’ but when recording, I found that I mispronounced, it was not good, I recorded again (Post-course interview – student D).

However, if after his best attempts, one student could not pronounce the word, he would speak with his Vietnamese accent.

**Example 17:** If it was easy I could correct (my pronunciation), but if it was too hard, I just spoke like Vietnamese (Post-course interview – student O).

Students practised many times before they recorded their own sound files, or they recorded many times until they felt satisfied with their final sound file before uploading on the closed Facebook group. They also tried to pronounce the word correctly by looking up the online dictionaries. They corrected their final sounds by imitating the native speaker accents.

**Students’ perceived progress after the online course**

Students believed that their fluency increased significantly because they rehearsed many times before they could record themselves. Besides, online speaking practice via Skype also enabled them to speak English more fluently than before the course.

**Example 18:** Perhaps it was more fluent than before the online course (Post-course interview – student G).

After the course, students believed that their pronunciation was better because they were able to recall the pronunciation of the word as well as its spelling.

**Example 19:** Thanks to that I could remember their pronunciation and more words (Post-course interview – student O).

Interestingly, one student even compared the pronunciation which she heard from the website to her teacher’s pronunciation to see the difference, and she tried to imitate the Google translation voice in order to attempt a native-like accent.

**Example 20:** Yes, it was different from the teacher’s pronunciation; some words were similar, but some were not (Post-course interview – student O).

Students also had some problems when recording their own files. For the first weeks, some students did not know how to record their files via SoundCloud and they had to ask me for help. However, they kept sending me the files through Facebook.
messages although they were trained how to use this digital tool. One of the reason was that they did not confirm the account by email. Huang (2015) also found out students in his study had some difficulties in using digital tools and they had to struggle.

Students perceived that their speaking skills improved in terms of fluency and pronunciation because they deliberately practised their pronunciation and fluency when they tried to imitate the accent of the native speaker. They also tried to learn some new vocabulary. The following subsection will analyse the pre- and post-course speaking tests to see whether students developed their speaking skills in terms of lexical, syntactic complexity and fluency.

Effects of online speaking practice

The first and the final recordings were employed to compare student speaking skills regarding language complexity and fluency before and after the course. The result showed that students produced higher lexical density in the final recording compared to the first recording. The ratio between the number of word types and the total number of words (tokens) increased from 0.41 (SD = .106) in the first recording to 0.52 (SD = .054) in the final recording. The p value being .002 indicates a statistical significance in terms of lexical density.

Figure 1 shows that more than 80% of the students had higher type-token ratio after the course, which means that students employed more content words than function words in their final recording and the lexical density increased in the final recording.

In this current study, mean length of utterance was employed to measure syntactic complexity. The longer the mean length of utterance is, the more complex language students were able to use. The findings from this current study showed that the average mean length of utterance did not change between the first recording and the final recording.

In the current study, speech rate is employed as an indicator to measure student fluency. The finding indicated that the speech rate also increased from 91.9 syllables per minute to 113.4 syllables per minute. The paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference (p = .047) between the first and final recordings.

Figure 2 illustrates that more than half of the students had a higher speech rate in the final recording. It means that students were more fluent in their speaking in the final recording.
The findings from this current study are different from the previous studies (Hsu, 2016; Sun, 2012) which reported no progress in students’ language complexity regarding vocabulary use. One possible explanation is that students in this study spent their time practicing many times, and most of them prepared their manuscript before they recorded their own voice; therefore, they had time to select better vocabulary.

**Discussion**

Students reported that they did not have opportunities to practise their speaking skills in the class because teachers did not organize free language production activities, focussing instead on presenting language structures. This finding is consistent with findings from previous studies (Huang, 2015; Pop et al., 2011; Sun, 2009) that online blogging could complement the time constraint in the classroom. Students perceived that their speaking skills improved especially fluency and pronunciation because they tried to imitate the accent of the native speaker. These findings are in line with the previous findings by (Sun, 2012) who found that students perceived their language improvement.

During the practice process, students also had the following steps to complete their recordings: planning, practicing, recording, and uploading although they were not trained to follow these steps. This finding is in accord with the findings by (Huang, 2015) who also found that the students did follow steps in making their recordings. Similarly, Sun (2009) found that students had to follow 5 main steps such as conceptualizing, brainstorming, articulation, monitoring and evaluating during their voice blogging process. However, it is interesting that students deliberately practiced their pronunciation and fluency before they recorded themselves.

Findings showed that students progressed in fluency and advanced their vocabulary but not their syntactic complexity. This is in line with previous findings by Sun (2012) who found that students perceived a language improvement, although their post-speaking test showed no improvement in terms of language complexity, fluency and accuracy. On the other hand, Hsu (2016) also found that language complexity improved after 15 weeks of voice-blogging, but fluency did not show any changes although Hsu (2016) used the number of syllables per minute to measure language fluency which is similar to the measurement employed in this current thesis. Hsu (2016) explained that development of language complexity was traded off for language fluency. However, in this current study, language complexity did not improve while language fluency advanced. The findings support the assumption that constant output practice leads to less progressing time (Gass & Mackey, 2007). Students’ advancement in vocabulary and fluency could be explained in their reported practice since they tried to prepare their speech and rehearsed it many times before they recorded it to upload. Second, they deliberately tried to learn vocabulary to include in their speaking; as a result, their lexical complexity improved while they did not
mention trying to use more complex structures.

The result showed that their speaking skills improved in terms of their lexical complexity and fluency but not for syntactic complexity. One of the explanations was that students volunteered to participate in this course were highly motivated to improve their English skills. Therefore, they did prepare carefully and practise many times before they uploaded their recordings. At the end of the course, they were still motivated to record their voice while participants in the study by Hsu (2016) were discouraged and made shorter recordings at the end of the course. The third reason is that students did read from a prepared transcript; therefore, they might make more corrections on their transcript and choose more advanced vocabulary to perform as well as they could.

**Conclusion**

Voice blogging could enable students to organize their speech through planning, practise, recording and posting. Besides, the empirical data showed students’ L2 performance progressed in terms of lexical variety and fluency. Students perceived that online blogging could help them improve their speaking skills, especially fluency and pronunciation. Therefore, voice blogging could be a good channel for students to have extensive speaking practice outside the classroom as well as interacting with other people in a virtual environment especially in the context where students do not have many changes to practise their English-speaking skills.

Although the study shows some positive preliminary results about students’ L2 performance in speaking especially the language complexity and fluency, the current study only investigated a small number of students for a short period of time (6 weeks), so the result could not be generalized. Besides, this study only examined the students’ improvement in terms of language complexity and fluency without analysing language accuracy. More studies should be conducted to measure students’ accuracy with voice blogging.

In addition, students who volunteered to participate in the study were highly motivated and they tried to improve their English-speaking skills. The future study should be conducted in a larger scale with a higher number of students in intact group in a longer time to see whether there is any progress during their extensive speaking online.

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**Contributor**

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Using technology in teaching English at the S.S.C. level

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Abstract

In this an era of technology, new technologies particularly computer, multimedia, mobile phone and the internet offer possibilities for overcoming geographical and cost barriers in teaching and learning. This study attempts to trace the use of technology in teaching English at the S.S.C. (Secondary School Certificate) level in Bangladesh. It also focuses on the impact of using technology in teaching and learning English. Eight teachers and 60 students from four private schools in Dhaka city were selected to survey the use of technology in teaching the English Language. The researchers employed the mixed-methods research to carry out the study where two sets of questionnaires for the teachers and the students and a semi-structured interview only for the teachers were used to collect data. The findings showed that using technology in teaching has both the positive and the negative impacts. Teachers like to use technology in their classroom but limited time and lack of training and technical support from the authority hamper the mode of teaching. The students also feel comfortable in technology affiliated classroom, but sometimes they fail to catch the concept clearly as they become inattentive due to the lack of proper engagement of the teachers in the classroom.

Key Words: Technology, Internet, Computer, S.S.C., Impact

Introduction

In this era of science and technology, technology has great use in every sphere of our life. Like other spheres, technology is being widely used in foreign/second language teaching throughout the world due to the influence of information technology on today’s modern society. Nowadays, teachers like to use technology in their class to teach the English language effectively. Since the internet is easily accessible and provides necessary resources, teachers are fond of using the internet to collect various language resources for preparing themselves in teaching the English language. As the information and communication technology is being developed day by day, computer and internet have increasingly started to play an important role in education. Singhal (1997) remarks that technology and English language education are related to each other. Technology in
present days offers numerous options for the teachers for teaching the English language more effectively than before.

The teachers mostly use a computer, multimedia projector, mobile phone, sound box, social media, CD, DVD player, and pen-drive in English language class. Internet plays a key role here in operating these tools. The teachers are able to teach the English language effectively by using technology. The World Wide Web increases interest among teachers and students in education and also offers much software that is designed for teachers who want to teach a language. Moreover, the students also get a successful allowance in using technology to learn the language individually or in groups through the internet. In spite of these developments, technology has some drawbacks in both teaching and learning of the English language. The teachers and the students, in most of the cases, face significant challenges in using technology. However, educators have supported the use of technology in teaching and learning despite some disadvantages.

**Objectives of the study**

The teachers use technology in different ways of teaching the English language at the S.S.C. level in Bangladesh. Technology has a high impact on teaching. Therefore, the general objective of the study is to find out the implications of technology on teaching the English language at the secondary level. To specify, the objectives are:

i. to observe the real scenario of using technology in the classroom,

ii. to point out the impact of using technology, and

iii. to provide a research-based solution to the problems faced by the teachers.

**Research Questions:**

i. What types of technology do usually teachers use in teaching the English language?

ii. How do the students feel in the technology affiliated classrooms?

iii. What are the problems of using technology in teaching and learning the English language?

iv. What are the suggestions regarding the negative impacts?

**Literature Review**

Technology has become part and parcel of teaching and learning. We hardly pass a single day without technology. Indeed, technology can boost up our language teaching and learning with its magical power. It can highly help the teachers for teaching the English language at every level of education. It is known that, Bangladeshi students face a great difficulty in learning the English language. Every year a considerable number of students fail in English at the Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C) examination. That is why if the teachers can avoid the traditional way of teaching and use technology in teaching English, it might be easier and beneficial for the students to learn English.

Rahman (2015) conducted a study titled “Challenges of Using Technology in the Secondary English Language Classroom”. The research results showed that students are more responsive, spontaneous and co-operative in the technologically advanced classroom but most of the teachers are not interested in using technology in their class because of the time limitations, lack of knowledge in using or incorporating technology in their lessons, strict school authority rules, electricity problems, etc. The research also found that the learning atmosphere in the classroom could be made more encouraging and productive for the
students by enabling the teachers to take a practical ICT approach in the classroom in Bangladesh.

According to Chapelle (2003), technology is necessary to improve the language ability of students simultaneously inside and outside of the educational setting. Teachers who teach English as a second language recognize the students’ need to use English away from the classroom in order to improve communicative competence. Firm affirmations of the work are shown by various reports. These state that several other improvements in the entire practice, especially in the content and approaches to teaching and learning, are stimulated by technology. Salaberry (2001) examined the impact of YouTube video clips on teaching listening to EFL Taiwanese learners. He points out that through Multimedia and network technology; teachers can offer students not only rich sources of authentic learning materials but also an attractive and a friendly interface, vivid pictures and pleasant sounds, which largely overcomes the lack of authentic language environment and arouses students’ interest in learning English.

Maniruzzaman and Rahman (2008) indicated that lack of teachers training and sufficient audio-visual equipment hamper the use of audio aids in EFL classes. The best educational technologies enable teachers to do more with fewer resources. Communication platforms like Twitter, Facebook, or Tumblr allow effective communication with students. Sahin-Kizil’s (2011) findings suggest “that EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards the use of ICT for educational purposes. However, the responses indicate that insufficient class time and inadequate training opportunities are the major obstacles in the process of ICT integration”. Aydin’s (2013) study indicated that Turkish EFL teachers have little knowledge about certain software and experience difficulties using the software programs and that they suffer from a lack of technical and instructional support, although they have positive perceptions of computer integration and attitudes toward computer use. Kessler’s (2007) findings suggest that “there is a general lack of CALL preparation in teacher preparation program and that there is evidence that teachers obtain a majority of their CALL knowledge from informal sources and personal experience rather than through formalized preparation” (p. 173). He further points out that there is a need for more insight into the role of CALL within teacher preparation (Kessler, 2007).

Bordbar (2010) investigated the reasons and factors behind teachers’ use of computer technology in the classroom. Also, the study aimed to explore teachers’ attitudes towards computer and information technology and how they apply their practical computer-assisted language learning experience and knowledge to their language teaching. The results showed that almost all the teachers had positive attitudes towards using computers in the classroom. The results also pointed to the importance of teachers’ vision of technology itself, their experience with it, their level of computer skill and competence, and the cultural environment that surrounds its introduction into schools and English institutes in shaping their attitudes towards computer technology.

However, it is found that technology is used widely in teaching the English language at different academic levels. The teachers find a computer, multimedia projector, laptop, mobile phone, pen drive, CD and DVD player very useful in teaching the English language. It is also found that teachers and students face various problems in using modern technology. But very few studies have been conducted in Bangladeshi context regarding using technology in teaching English. This study intends to find out the use of technology in teaching
English and how effectively the teachers deal with these in their classroom at the secondary level.

Methodology

To carry out the study, the researchers collected information in both qualitative and quantitative manner. Based on the objectives and the research questions, the researchers chose Mix Method approach to collect and analyze the data. The qualitative method mainly included interview and analysis of the previous study. Quantitative method covered questionnaire, designed following the 5-points Likert Scale (1932), which was served to both the students and the teachers.

Participants

The study focuses on schools of Dhaka city. Four schools including Ideal School and College, Little Flower International School, Shahanori Model High School, and Sher-E-Bangla School and College were chosen to collect data through questionnaire and open-ended short interview session. From these schools eight teachers (five males and three females), and 60 students were selected for data collection. Teachers who have at least a post-graduate degree in English language and/or English language teaching were selected for both interview and questionnaire survey. The teachers were selected on the basis of experience. At least 15 students, S.S.C. (Secondary School Certificate) candidates in 2018, from each school were randomly selected for the questionnaire survey.

Research instrument

Several instruments were used in the present study. It used in-depth interview and analysis of examination related material to collect qualitative data and conduct a questionnaire survey. Two different questionnaires were prepared for teachers and students, each having ten statements with the options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The teachers were interviewed in a formal setting. A mobile phone was used to record the interview with the permission of the interviewees.

Findings from teachers’ interviews

All teachers said that they used different technologies in their English language class. All of them used a computer or laptop, and multimedia projector. In addition, some of them used a mobile phone, internet, tape recorder, and TV as well. One of them did not know about a specific website for language teaching. Another one said that he never thinks of using blogs and Facebook for education.

All the teachers stated that technologies help them to make the language classes interesting and to prepare the class content. As one of the teachers has said, “...Technology, especially the internet, is great support for me to make my lecture interesting and effective.” The teachers get new ideas about teaching English through the internet which shows them various new ways of teaching English in the classroom, and it brings a new dimension to their tasks.

It was found that in technology-affiliated class most of the students feel comfortable. However, in some cases, technologies reduced students’ opportunity of speaking and writing and students become less interested in using technologies. In the beginning, they felt uncomfortable in the class. They take time to adjust themselves in technology affiliated class. So, teachers had to face some problems in using technology in the classroom.

Teachers have said that technologies have a mixed impact. In most of the cases, impact
was positive as the teachers get help from technology. By using technology, they could make the class environment friendly and attractive for the students, but sometimes it had a slightly negative impact on teaching when some students cannot cope up or concentrate on the class, and thus sometimes technology fails to achieve its goal. One of the teachers remarked, “...Technology has a negative impact on time management. It needs time to take a class with the help of technology.”

Teachers mentioned that they faced some problems in using technologies in their class. Teaching-learning system was not fully compatible with the use of technology. Students were not interested to do any activities that will not appear in the examination. “...Most of the students want to get good marks rather learn something new,” a teacher said. Sufficient resources were not available in all cases. Repairing a damaged machine was not easy when technicians are not available. Many teachers were not well-trained to use modern technology properly. They need others’ assistance. Teachers are less paid. Therefore, they usually cannot buy technological machines with their own money.

The teachers suggested some solutions to the problems they usually face. They think that motivation and support from higher authority, proper funding, and more training for the teachers are essential.

Finally, the teachers have said that teachers’ training is very important for every teacher. Training on workshop basis should be given at the beginning of the career of a teacher. A teacher strongly suggested, “...There are no alternative ways except practical training to solve the problems.”

Findings from teachers’ questionnaires

The questionnaire comprised structured questions. Teachers were requested to give their views in a 5-Point Likert Scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Table 1 shows teachers’ perceptions on different aspects of ICT use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Technology is valuable instructional tools for teaching the English language</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I am very confident when I use technology in delivering a lecture</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>6(75%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students pay more attention when I use technology in my class</td>
<td>4 (50%)</td>
<td>4(50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Technology promotes the development of communication skill</td>
<td>8(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I can learn many new things by using technology that enhances my teaching ability</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
In response to the statement one, all eight teachers strongly agreed that technologies are valuable instructional tools for teaching English. In response to the statement two, two the teachers strongly agreed, and other six agreed that they are very confident when they use technology in conducting a class. In response to the statement three, four strongly agreed and the other four agreed that students pay more attention when they use technologies in their class. Then, all eight teachers strongly agreed that technology promotes the development of communication skill. Four teachers strongly agreed and four teachers agreed that technology is too costly in turn of resources, time and effort. All eight of teachers agreed that they face some problems while using new equipment. All the teachers strongly agreed that adequate training in the use of technology could help to solve the problems they face. Six teachers strongly agreed and two of them agreed that teaching with technology would be successful when the shortcoming will be overcome. Finally, two of teachers disagreed and other six teachers strongly disagreed that using technology in teaching language is not necessary.

From the responses given by the teachers, it has been seen that technology is an essential part in teaching English at the S.S.C. level in present time. Teachers largely depend on the mode of technologies to update themselves and to make their classes more interesting and effective. Technology helps them in wide range and they accept the blessings of technology though they sometimes feel problems in using technology. In this situation, to keep pace with the rest of the world, teachers think that, technology should be made friendly in our country. If problems in using technologies can be solved, the impact will be positive, and technology will be useful media for teaching English in our country. For this, first, the authority should come forward. They should think about the development of teaching. They should support their teachers both financially and technically so that the teachers will be encouraged in using technology. Training and workshop should be arranged in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Too costly in turn of resources, time and effort</td>
<td>4(50%)</td>
<td>4(50%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers usually face problems in using technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>8(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Adequate training in the use of technology can help to solve the problem</td>
<td></td>
<td>8(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Successful only when a teacher has access to a computer properly</td>
<td>6(75%)</td>
<td>2(25%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Using technology in teaching English is not necessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2(25%)</td>
<td>6(75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
different phases to make the teachers more active and to make them understand how to use modern technology. Finally, the teachers should be more assertive and technical in choosing different technological tools in the classroom.

Findings from students’ questionnaires

The questionnaire comprised structured questions. Students were requested to give their views on a 5-Point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Table 2 shows students responses.

Table 2: Students’ responses to the questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Technologies help in learning English</td>
<td>18 (30.06%)</td>
<td>30(50.1%)</td>
<td>12(20.04%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Technologies make the language class more interesting</td>
<td>8(13.36%)</td>
<td>40(66.8%)</td>
<td>10(16.7%)</td>
<td>2(3.34%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I pay more attention when teachers use technologies in the class</td>
<td>11(18.37%)</td>
<td>38(63.46%)</td>
<td>8(13.36%)</td>
<td>3(5.01%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Technologies promote the development of communication skill</td>
<td>35(58.45%)</td>
<td>15(25.05%)</td>
<td>10(16.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Technologies have a good impact on my learning the English language</td>
<td>37(61.79%)</td>
<td>15(25.05%)</td>
<td>5(8.35%)</td>
<td>3(5.01%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Using projector in English class is effective</td>
<td>35(58.45%)</td>
<td>15(25.05%)</td>
<td>10(16.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I feel comfortable in technology affiliated classroom</td>
<td>12(20.04%)</td>
<td>38(46.76%)</td>
<td>7(11.69%)</td>
<td>3(5.01%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Teachers use relevant technologies for teaching English</td>
<td>15(25.05%)</td>
<td>39(65.13%)</td>
<td>6(10.02%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers motivate me to use technologies for learning English</td>
<td>23(38.41%)</td>
<td>25(41.75%)</td>
<td>7(11.69%)</td>
<td>5(8.33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Teachers often engage me in using technologies for learning English</td>
<td>28(46.76%)</td>
<td>32(53.44%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Here, the students expressed their own feelings and attitudes toward the technologies used in their class. They showed mixed attitudes. Most of the students (i.e. 50.1% and 66.8%) agreed “technologies help in learning the English language.” and “technologies make the language class more interesting.” Majority of the student (i.e., 63.46% and 58.5%) said that they paid more attention when teachers used technologies in the class and technologies promoted the development of communication skill. Similarly, 61.79% and 58.45% of the students strongly agreed that technologies had a good impact on my learning English language and using projector in language class is effective respectively. The students felt comfortable in technology-affiliated classroom, thought that teachers used relevant technologies for teaching language, and teachers motivated them to use technologies for learning the English language. Majority of the students (53.44%) agreed the teachers often engaged them in using technologies for learning the English language. However, they acknowledged that technologies make the learning environment easy and enjoyable.

The findings showed that all the teachers used different types of technology according to the topic and content. In technology-affiliated class, most of the students felt comfortable. They enjoyed the course with a laptop and projector. However, some of the students felt bored in the class. To make the teachers comfortable with computer and technology and to solve the negative impact, there is no alternative to training. In this regard, all the teachers believe that training is necessary for them to develop their IT skill. Training will help them to understand the advantages of technology and to know the use of different software and e-tools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, some suggestions could be considered for the successful implementation of technologies in English teaching at the S.S.C. level in Bangladesh that helps to solve the problems that the teachers face in teaching English with the help of technology. Teachers should use relevant technological tools to teach different language skills or topics. Topics and objectives should be clarified before using technology so that students can easily understand the various uses of technology. Modern technical ways should be followed in entertaining manners for effective learning and teaching the English language. English teachers should encourage their students to use technologies in developing language skills. Reconsideration of the current textbook, national curriculum, and testing system for technology should be introduced. Training for one-to-one or small group tutoring is a must so that teachers can develop computer literacy skills and can be competent in different modern technologies in their context. Educational institutions should modernize their technical instruction capabilities by using new technologies and laboratories for supporting the teaching process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all the teachers who were interviewed and surveyed for this study used technology though they faced some difficulties to run the tools. Though some of the students felt bored in the technology-affiliated class, most of them enjoyed their lessons when their teachers used technology in the classroom. However, most of the schools were not able to provide sufficient amenities for using technology and most of the teachers were unconscious of this issue. The teachers were also not very aware of the facilities of different...
technologies, and they mainly used computers for typing and browsing the internet. However, this study presents some ideas for using technology proposed by the teachers. Based on the findings, it can be asserted that in Bangladeshi context, technology-based English teaching will be successful and use of technology will be fruitful and effective only if the coordination and understanding between the teachers and the school authorities can be ensured.

References


Appendix 1

Interview sheet (for Teachers)

1) Do you use technology in your classroom to teach the English language?

2) What kind of technologies do you use in your language class?

3) Do you think technology helps you in teaching language more effectively?

4) Do you think the students feel comfortable in technology affiliated class?

5) What are the impacts of technology in teaching the English language?

6) What are the likely problems that the teachers face while using technology in language class?

7) What might be the solution?
8) What kind of training or workshop will be helpful for the teachers to introduce them to different technologies?

**Appendix 2**

(For teachers)

**Questionnaire: Using Technology in Teaching English at the S.S.C. Level**

5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2=disagree, 1= strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes toward technology</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Technology is valuable instructional tools for teaching the English language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 I am very confident when I use technology in delivering a lecture.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Student pay more attention when I use technology in my class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Technology promotes the development of communication skill.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 I can learn many new things by using technology that enhances my teaching ability.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Technology is too costly in term of resources, time and effort.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Teachers usually face problems in using technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Adequate training in the use of technology can help to solve the problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Successful only when a teacher has access to a computer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Using technology in teaching language is not necessary.</td>
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## Appendix 3

(For students)

**Questionnaire: Impact of Technology on Teaching English Language**

5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes toward technology</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Technology helps in learning the English language.</td>
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<td>2 Technology makes the language class more interesting.</td>
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<td>3 I pay more attention when teachers use technology in the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Technology promotes the development of communication skill.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Technology has a good impact on my learning the English language.</td>
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<td>6 Using projector in a language class is effective.</td>
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<td>7 I feel comfortable in technology affiliated classroom.</td>
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<td>8 Teachers use relevant technologies for teaching language.</td>
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<td>9 Teachers motivate me to use technology for learning the English language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 The teachers often engage me in using technology for learning the English language.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Contributors

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Exploring the utilization of technology in teaching English: Practices and impediments

Renu Singh
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Abstract

The utilisation of technology into classroom practices basically promotes student-centered instructions that require teachers to be professionally well trained and confident enough to use various technology tools and resources. This study was conducted to explore secondary school EFL teachers’ experiences and practices of modern technology usage into their classroom pedagogy and possible impediments of utilizing technology tools. Eight EFL teachers were purposefully selected from public secondary schools of the Kathmandu valley. A semi-structure interview was administered to collect the required data. The thematic data analysis revealed that the EFL teachers employed different pedagogical strategies for the effective integration of technology; however, some impediments were identified such as insufficient professional ICT skills and knowledge of EFL teachers, inadequate ICT infrastructure at school, teachers’ workload and time constraint, and digital device among students. This study suggests that EFL teachers need professional development trainings particularly designed on the TPACK framework, adequate ICT infrastructure at school, revised teachers’ workload and time constraint, and supportive school environment to promote technology utilization into EFL pedagogy.

Keywords: Technology Utilization, TPACK, Professional Development, Constructivism, Technology Impediment, EFL

Introduction

The proliferation in ICT has drastically upgraded almost every sphere of human life in the recent time (Horovitz, 2012) (The terms ICT (information and communication technology) and technology are used synonymously henceforth). Particularly, the ubiquitous nature of ICT has greatly penetrated developed and developing countries around the globe to move further in the direction of advancement. Thus, “with the expanding role of information and communication technology (ICT) in all areas of life, Ministry of Education (MoE) considers the use of and knowledge of ICT essential” (MoE, 2016, p.viii) in education. Additionally, it has been mandatory to integrate ICT in school education (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Undoubtedly, the advancement in ICT has opened up new choices, opportunities and
challenges for teachers in general to transform and modify the traditional delivery mode of knowledge based on constructivist approaches. They create an environment for learners where they feel empowered to be responsible of their learning (Cochrane, 2010). Notwithstanding, the role of teachers in this mode with technology integration is still very crucial and they need some sound skill and knowledge of technology to frame the subject content under technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK). It guides teachers on how to integrate technology for teaching/learning purposes (Koehler, Mishra, & Rosenberg, 2013).

The TPCK framework of Mishra and Koehler (2006) emphasizes, as shown in Figure 1 below, the complex interplay of the three bodies of knowledge: content (C), pedagogy (P) and technology (T) (p. 1025):

![Figure 1. The TPACK Model (Mishra & Matthew J. Koehler, 2006)](image)

The complex inter-relationship among the three types of knowledge results in seven types of knowledge, vis-a-vis, content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), technological knowledge (TK), technological content knowledge (TCK), technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) and technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK). Further, Mishra and Koehler (2006) stress that technology professional development should be framed under a wide range of skills that help teachers to develop a deeper understanding of the concepts and skills of pedagogy, content together with technology. However, the ICT trainings so far have been given to teachers are primarily focused on basic technology skills which are not sufficient for them (Varisdas & Glass, 2005). These ICT trainings programs are limited to technical skills, such as how to operate a specific software or something like that rather than making them able to integrate technology in teaching (McKenzie, 2001). Thus, technology use in education is focused on either access, infrastructures and administrative tools or performing low-level tasks like word processing and communication (Gray, Lewis & Thomas, 2010).

**ICT integration in Nepalese education**

Innovative technology integration in the world education system has greatly influenced the education system in Nepal from school to university. Thus, ICT integration in Nepalese education system in general and in the school education in particular is highly significant. Tribhuvan University and other regional universities have already launched the courses: B. Ed and M. Ed. in ICT for pre-service teacher education (MOE. 2013). Similarly, Kathmandu University, School of Education has integrated ICT with special courses in M.Ed. and M.Phil. (KUSOED, 2015). These courses may impart future
teachers the skills and knowledge of ICT integration for their professional development.

Master Plan (MOE, 2013) in the supported initiatives of UNESCO, Bangkok and UNESCO, Kathmandu, mentions that the revised IT Policy (2067/2010), National Plan for Action (NPA 2001-2015), School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP 2009-2015), and Three Year Plan (TYP 2011-2013) of the Government of Nepal worked initially for the development and integration of ICT in education. Similarly, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016 to 2023) through the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2013/2016) has taken some initiatives in order to upgrade schools and teachers for imparting quality education with the help of technology integration in teaching/learning. Particularly, the improved teaching of English as a subject and the professional development of English teachers to integrate modern technologies and the use of multimedia resources (MoE, 2016) are the special initiatives. They may support the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in schools through the integration of ICT tools/resources.

Based on the background of the above scenario, this study was mainly aimed at exploring EFL teachers’ lived experiences and practices of technology integration in teaching English. It also explored some possible impediments of utilizing technology into their classroom instruction.

The following central questions were framed the study under qualitative research design;

- How is the EFL teachers’ experiences and practices of technology integration into their classroom instruction?
- What are the possible impediments of utilizing technology into teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)?

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study were;

- to explore EFL teachers’ experiences and practices of technology utilization into their classroom instruction and
- to find out some possible impediments of technology integration into their teaching practices

**Literature Review**

Some recent empirical studies carried out globally on utilization of technology in teaching/learning ESL/EFL were reviewed to get some insights to guide this study. Moreover, the review consists of pedagogical potentials of modern technologies, ESL/EFL teachers’ and students’ perceptions/experiences and barriers of integrating innovative technologies into their practices.

**Pedagogical Potentials of Modern Technology**

Some studies (Bell, 2010; Pereira-Leon, 2010; Shapley, Sheehan, Maloney & Caranikas-Walker, 2011) found that technologically enthusiastic teachers used technology in project-based learning (PBL) and believed that it provided the students with rich, authentic experiences through dialogical interactions. Additionally, the studies revealed that teachers used technology for professional development, personal purposes, and as a pedagogical tool to foster learning for acquiring some skills of the 21st century; communication, collaboration and negotiation. In their study, Yunus, Lubis, and Lin (2009) found that mostly students manipulated the ICT gadgets for searching words’ meaning and pronunciation, and getting information. Further, they revealed that ICT could “enhance their language learning in
vocabulary, grammar, writing, speaking and allows them to take greater control of their own learning” (p. 1458). On the contrary, some studies (Bude, 2009; Capo & Orellana, 2012; Pereira- Leon, 2010) revealed that more experienced teachers were the most reluctant to infuse technology as an instructional tool because they viewed themselves as the authority or expert in the subject and fixed to teacher-centric approach. Further, they felt threatened in two ways; due to presence of additional source of knowledge available to students and due to techno-savvy students.

Lei (2010) found that social networking sites had positive impact on students to develop the skills of socialization, cultural awareness, collaboration, negotiation of meaning. Additionally, entertainment-exploration use of technology improved their learning habits. Some studies (Lomicka & Lord, 2012; Koenig, 2011) carried out on the use of Twitter in teaching language, found to have positive impacts on students learning French and it promoted collaboration among students in an English class. Similarly, discussion forums, Facebook, Skype, Whatsapp, My Space, email, blogs, wikis, YouTube, power-point presentation etc. were found to have pedagogical values in teaching/learning ESL/EFL. They promoted language skills and aspects (Akdag & Ozkan, 2017; Awada & Ghaith, 2014; Butler, 2010; Okan & Taraf, 2013). Moreover, they were found to be highly motivational for learners to get engaged in maximizing; analytical and critical thinking, learner autonomy, social networking and interaction skills. Shy students were found to be more expressive on their own. However, Butler (2010) reported to have some shortcomings in terms of cyberbullying, sharing inappropriate content and violent content.

### Teachers’ and Students’ Perceptions of Technology Utilization

Several previous studies show that teachers know the potentials of teaching/learning with technology but they are cautious about utilizing it into their practices. They still have some gaps in their technology knowledge and skills (Bingimlas, 2009; Newa, 2007; Thapaliya, 2014).

Afamasaga-Wright and Farita (2008) carried out a study on teachers’ perceptions of ICTs in a secondary school in Soma, found that ICTs were mainly used to support teacher-centered pedagogies. Though the teachers were interested to use technologies in their classes, they showed the lack of ICT skills and insufficient pedagogical knowledge that hindered them. Sime and Priestley (2005) found that when teachers were enthusiastic and dedicated to plan and give students word-meaning tasks on the computer. They were more involved in their learning with technology even with limited resources in a problematic context and, “students thought that the individual teachers’ attitude was the vital factor in determining ICT use” (p. 137).

Similarly Newa (2007) explored teacher effectiveness in relation to work satisfaction, media utilization and attitude towards the use of ICT among public and private secondary school teachers of the Kathmandu valley. He took 300 teachers of different academic disciplines; language, science, mathematics and social sciences. The quantitative analysis of data revealed that both; public and private school teachers exhibited comparable effectiveness whereas language teachers were found least satisfied with respect to job concentrate and economic factors compared to the other teachers. Moreover, both types of teachers believed that ICT could bring changes in teachers’ role to
increase quality of teaching and learning. However, the study could not do intensive research on EFL teachers’ usage of technology integration in teaching.

Thapaliya (2014) conducted a descriptive qualitative study to explore secondary level English teachers’ perceptions and practices of ICTs. Forty seven English teachers were randomly selected from secondary and higher secondary public schools in Kathmandu district. The data was collected through questionnaire were analyzed descriptively in simple statistics. It revealed that mostly EFL teachers used radio, television, mobile phone and computer. Very few teachers used email, LCD, OHP, Google talk, Skype, Web Quest, Web blog, and Web chat in the ELT classroom. Moreover, the study found that ICT could be highly motivational to make students more creative, analytic and constructive. However, some challenges such as inappropriate ICT infrastructure, large class and lack of training to teachers were found to hinder their classroom instruction with technology. The study was carried out on mixed participants that could not determine the ICT practices and experiences of either public or private secondary EFL teachers well. It could only generalize the findings of the study. Therefore, the present study would fill that gap by carrying an in-depth study being focused on public secondary school EFL teachers’ utilization of technology into their classroom pedagogy.

**Barriers of Technology Integration**

Some studies on the barriers of technology integration at schools (BECTA, 2004; Ertmer, 2005) found that teachers’ attitude was not just a personal dynamic, it was strongly influenced by the infrastructure and support available to teachers for integrating technologies into their practices. Similar studies (Nikolopoulos & Gialamas, 2016; Awan, 2012) highlighted that some factors such as access to equipment, training and support of the education community influenced teachers’ attitudes to integrate technology into their teaching. Afamasaga-Wright and Farita (2008) found that the teachers perceived some other challenges to effective integration of ICTs such as insufficient number of computers, time constraints, a user pay system, maintenance and running costs, students plagiarize from the web and access to inappropriate sites along with inadequate teacher professional development training in ICT integration. Similarly, Tella, Tella, Toyobo, Adika, and Adeyinka (2007) found that teachers’ ‘technology refusal happened due to “inadequate knowledge to evaluate the role of ICT in teaching and learning, lack of skills in the use of ICT equipment and software had resulted in a lack of confidence in utilizing ICT tools” (p.14).

Though teachers’ beliefs and attitudes are core factors for successful integration of technology in teaching, ICT infrastructure, training, administrative support etc. are equally required to scaffold them. A study carried out by Mafuraga and Moremi (2017) found that “lack of ICT knowledge along with inadequate ICT infrastructure, limited ICT skill of students and teachers is caused by limited training at teacher training institutions on how to infuse technology into the English language teaching. Generally, the teachers’ knowledge on ICT is not at par with their qualifications and experience in the field” (p. 149).

In short, the review of literature shows that the utilization of modern technology and the Internet in teaching/learning ESL/EFL has underpinned constructivist pedagogy for classroom practices. Moreover, the literature reviewed highlights some barriers linked to external factors such as lack of appropriate ICT infrastructure, technical support, time constraints, teacher
work load, lack of ICT professional development trainings for teachers (Mafuraga & Moremi, 2017; Nikolopoulou & Gialamas, 2016; Awan, 2012). Similarly, some barriers related to internal factors such as ESF/EFL teachers’ self-efficiency, confidence, beliefs and attitudes were found to inhibit their technology acceptance, and are often regarded as more crucial than the external factors (Sime and Priestley, 2005).

The studies so far reviewed were found to have some research gaps in terms of place and participants along with research design. Eventually, no any such qualitative research has been carried out yet that could be solely focused on public secondary schools in Nepal. Therefore, the findings of this study would be highly significant for school stakeholders, researchers and policy makers to promote ICT utilization especially in teaching/learning EFL.

**Theoretical Perspective**

The theoretical standpoint of this study is based on the learning theory of constructivism that underpins Piaget’s (1957) cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivism together they interplay for knowledge construction. Social-cognitivist learning theory works in two ways, “Piaget’s cognitive development theory can frame the tasks in the classroom while Vygotsky’s theory of social interaction can be applied when the students are doing the tasks” (Alsulami, 2016, p. 105). These two are intertwined because they are in reciprocal relationship as society itself does not think and individuals need social contexts for their thoughts to evolve (Fosnot, 1996). Hence, these two strong versions of constructivism have changed the traditional views about teaching and learning.

Moreover, in constructivist teaching/learning approach, technology has been given prime importance to scaffold students’ learning in order to construct knowledge on their own. Asiksoy and Ozdamli (2017) opine, “Information construction does not only happen with the learner interaction in their physical environments, it is also constructed with the interactions in social and technological environments in an active way” (p.134). Thus, the proper use of educational technology can be best practiced in constructivist approach (Hong & Lin, 2010) because the modern technology has potentials to support students and teachers for knowledge construction, reflective thinking, learner autonomy, collaboration and interaction regardless of time and place.

**Methodology**

The study was designed under the theoretical insights of constructivism that advocates for subjective and multiple realities of a social phenomenon. Qualitative research approach was used to explore the subjective experiences and practices of EFL teachers from their everyday classroom instruction. Since a qualitative research is used to explore the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the phenomenon for a deeper understanding (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013), it deliberately employs a small purposeful sampling strategy to collect the relevant data for in-depth studies (Maxwell, 2013). Thus, eight EFL teachers were purposefully recruited on the basis of their technology integrated teaching practices from public secondary schools of three districts; Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur (the Kathmandu valley). Similarly, the schools were also recruited on the basis of purposive judgmental sampling in terms of availability of modern technology tools and Internet connectivity.

Semi-structured interview was chosen as a tool for the data collection. It provides
detailed information for deep understanding of the participants' lived experience (Yilmaz, 2013) and is flexible in nature that gives space for emerging issues during the interview. The interview was guided by a set of twenty one questionnaires based on the objectives of this study.

Participants and Procedures

The eight purposefully selected EFL teachers were given pseudonyms to ensure the research ethics and confidentiality of the research participants. They were selected on the basis of a number of factors such as gender, school location and category, teaching experience with technology utilization. The equal number of male and female EFL teachers (4/4) were selected from public secondary schools of the Kathmandu valley. They were asked for their written consent to participate in the study and made them assured of confidentiality of their responses.

Data Interpretation and Findings

The digitally recorded interview data were in the English language as they were obtained from the EFL teachers. They were converted into the textual form for analysis. Further, they were coded and clustered to generate themes based on the research questions. The following themes were generated from the collected data for analysis under two main categories and sub-categories;

EFL teachers’ experiences and practices with technology utilization

The data collected from the participants being focused on their pedagogical practices with technology utilization and associated factors were analyzed under four sub-themes;

EFL teachers’ preparedness for technology integrated instruction:

EFL teachers’ preparedness for technology utilization in teaching refers to their professional training on technology integrated instruction and their experiences of it. All of the participants were found highly enthusiastic and motivated for technology supported EFL instruction. They agreed that modern ICT tools and resources helped them extensively in order to transfer the traditional instructional mode of ‘Chalk & Talk’ into constructive mode of instruction. One of the participants, Hari mentioned:

For teaching English, computer can be found easier rather than other subjects because many materials can be found easily in the net especially for teaching English e.g. all listening, reading, speaking, writing, and grammar and vocabulary. So if students feel any difficulty in finding the word certainly they will search there in the net and then synonyms, antonyms and some other parts of speech can be found easily.

The EFL teachers’ pedagogical practices with technology were found to be based on their basic skills of computer usage, net surfing for downloading authentic materials, audio-videos from YouTube, using email and social networking sites (SNSs) like Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp, and IMO for informing students about academic activities and assignments. A participant, Gopal stated:

Those trainings were quite the basic trainings just how to operate the keyboard, mouse etc. and then I’ve not gone through any specific trainings like window packages etc. I, myself made effort to study and use those materials ... SMART board, internet etc.
Strategies of integrating ICT tools for teaching EFL skills and aspects

Though the participants were found to have been using computer and the Internet for their classroom practices for a long time, many of them had very basic skills of computer technology. Many of them had taken three months package course and even some had managed such skills informally. Consequently, they were unable to utilize ICT tools and resources to a greater degree for enhancing their pedagogical practices. They revealed that they used technologies for power-point presentation of their teaching contents, downloaded audio, video and other required materials like movies, stories, poems, dramas, biographies etc. related to the EFL course from YouTube and Google. Sarita mentioned:

...some of the poems are there ... collect some of the videos from Google or YouTube and demonstrate here then they can understand the gist very easily than the lecture method. There are some dramas ... these materials, video materials, audio materials from net.

All the participants were found to have recognition of the educative value and potentials of modern technology for transferring traditional mode of instruction to interactive mode for promoting students’ independent knowledge construction. Therefore, they were quite positive and highly enthusiastic to put their personal effort for pedagogical usage of the available technology at their school. Lalita reflected:

For the flip activities mostly I use that documentaries and video clips and then sometimes according to that in our course book there’re some stories also very much related stories ...in a video form, we can find and ...showing them that videos ...in class ‘9’ there’s the one ‘Jhola’ movie, I just took all my students to the ICT lab showed

Thus, all the participants were found to have similar pedagogical strategies for integrating instructional technology into their EFL practices. Almost all used technology for power-point presentation, searching audio, video and textual materials from Google, YouTube, mobile dictionaries etc. for facilitating their classroom practices.

Effect of technology integrated instruction on students’ motivation and achievement/performance

All the participants agreed that technology played a great role to motivate students for their active and interactive participation in teaching and learning activities. Further, they revealed that educational technology could bring noticeable changes in students’ EFL achievement in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, communication and intercultural competence. They could practice EFL skills independently with the help of ICT tools and the Internet. They found authentic materials and exposure of English on the Internet. As Mohan stated:

...teaching with ICT is more effective and more interesting and the students can keep all these things in their memory for long time because it’s visualized.

Similarly, Sohan expressed his view in favor of ICT integration that promoted students’ performance and brought remarkable change in their achievement. He expressed:

...they prefer the visual classes mostly. They were able to store the information in their mind after having the visual of the different items in the class, their achievement level has increased.
Some of the participants reflected that their students seemed smarter than them in operating technology. They assisted them in managing and integrating ICT tools for instruction. Gopal stated:

“They mostly prefer these modern technology and they’re far superior than us … they’re smart and really we’re a bit older in comparing to them.”

Support from school administration, DEO, NCED, DOE, and NGOs/INGOs

Along with EFL teachers’ self-efficiency and confidence for bringing and accepting the global change in pedagogy, they certainly need some support from school administration (admin), District Education Office (DEO), National Center for Education Development (NCED), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)/International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs) and community too. As technology integrated instruction is a recent phenomenon in Nepalese school education, the in-service EFL teachers particularly require continuing professional ICT skills and knowledge, adequate ICT infrastructure at school and research based orientation from education authorities and stakeholders regularly.

All the participants were in-service EFL teachers. They all agreed that their skills and knowledge in terms of technology supported instruction were not sufficient as they had only some basic computer skills. Moreover, they were found to utilize the available ICT infrastructure at school in order to facilitate their classroom practices. They acknowledged that their school admin and DEO were supportive for ICT integrated instruction. Gopal reflected:

“DEO is supportive because sometimes they’re providing us computers and then they encourage us to make our school SMART school because their consent mainly could help us …Samsung company wanted to give us and their consent was necessary that they (DEO) gave …”

In short, EFL teachers’ self-efficacy and confidence in ICT skills and knowledge along with support from school admin, DEO, NCED and NGOs/INGOs were found to be the determining factors for sustainable utilization of technology into their classroom practices.

Possible impediments of technology integrated EFL instruction

The participants were asked for their professional preparedness in order to ICT integrated EFL teaching. They revealed the fact that their technology skills and knowledge were insufficient for classroom practices. Consequently, they were unable to utilize ICT tools extensively in the lack of professional ICT skills and knowledge of classroom instruction that Mishra and Koehler (2006) termed as technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK). Mohan reflected:

“Teachers are not well trained but have good practice … the government organizes one day or two days ICT training programs…”

All the participants agreed that the government had neither given adequate support for ICT infrastructure at school nor given adequate professional ICT training based on the TPACK framework designed by Mishra and Koehler (2006) to EFL teachers for their professional development. They insisted that ICT professional training should be compulsorily given to all teachers in general and should be made compulsory to integrate in their pedagogy. Lalita excitedly expressed:
... first of all this ICT training should be given to all the teachers. It should be made compulsory. ... some of the teachers are learning and some are neglecting this.

Related to students, teachers’ workload and time constraints, and ICT infrastructure at school

Teaching and learning is a process that is related with many factors, not only teachers and school admin but also students, time constraint and workload of teachers, and ICT infrastructure at school. All the participants referred to these factors as integral parts of pedagogy. They expressed their view that at public secondary schools, the majority of students came from lower middle class family that could not afford them ICT tools such as computer, mobile, tablet, and internet connectivity at home. It seemed there existed digital divide among students. Those who had ICT tools at home could practice and do school assignments easily whereas those who did not have either go to cyber or would not practice even if they wanted. Babita reflected:

Most of them don’t have because our source students are from lower middle class so most of them don’t have but some of them have ... they go to cyber to do the assignments ...

The participants viewed digital divide as an impediment in the sense that they wanted their students should practice at home for better performance. Some of the participants indicated one more problem related to students that their low English background could create troubles for them to understand English while they were provided with authentic audio-video materials from the Internet. Sohan stated:

The first challenge, almost all students are not able to catch up the exact pronunciation of the native speakers whenever I show them because I think they don’t have such kind of environment at home. They use English only in my period...

Time constraint and workload at school were also found as posing challenges for EFL teachers to conduct classes with ICT resources. They had time limitation of 45 minutes each period. They had to complete their teaching/learning activities such as managing students sitting in the ICT lab with limited number of computer resources, facilitating about the audio-video activities and having discussion afterwards made them feel to have some more time for ICT integrated instruction. Moreover, the large number of students in each class was also viewed as a challenge for EFL teachers to allow students sufficient practice either in group or individually. Additionally, EFL teachers were found to be fully engaged for 6/7 periods a day that showed the lack of leisure time in regard of planning the lessons for ICT integration. Therefore, they were found to be compelled to have limited frequency of technology integrated instruction i.e. once a week and sometimes once a month even. Lalita mentioned:

Not always, I don’t use ... ICT tools to teach my subject matter, not everyday but sometimes, let’s once a week, once a fortnight ...

Gopal reflected:

... once a week at least I try to use.

Another impediment appeared in terms ICT infrastructure at school. Most of the schools were found to have average availability of ICT tools limited to one room i.e. ICT lab which had 30/40 computers, SMART board, multimedia, laptop, projector, white board, television, CD players, sound systems and the Internet connectivity. Some schools had only 6/7 computers and WiFi connectivity as
minimum ICT infrastructure. The participants found it quite challenging for them to conduct technology supported instruction with minimum technology resources at school even if they were willing to have. Hari reflected:

... so not sufficient amount of tools so we’ve been facing some of the challenges ...

lack of technical support and skill.

Along with ICT infrastructure, all the participants pointed out that as they had limited ICT skills and knowledge in order to handle the ICT tools, they faced some technical problems and the school did not have any technician for ICT lab.

1.1 Related to school admin, DEO, NCED, and NGOs/INGOs

The participants agreed that the role of school administration was crucial to avail the adequate resources and to manage opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) on how technical knowledge should be incorporated into pedagogical content knowledge in order to update teachers’ capacity in general from different resources such as DEO, NCED, DOE, and NGOs/INGOs and community. They revealed that their school admin tried its best to promote technology supported instruction at schools, however, the conventional mode of education system from top to down posed various challenges such as traditional curriculum, large/crowded classroom, training to teacher, limited budget, inadequate ICT infrastructure, teacher workload, product oriented instruction etc. Though, MoE brought ICT policy in education and attempted to train in-service teachers through different recourse centers and departments (DEO, NCED, DOE, CDC), very few got such opportunities and even those training were not effective, as Sarita declared:

From DEO, I got a training, a three month training, not only in case of me, per year they’re trying to give to the teachers... turn-wise. Some of the teachers are getting from the part of DEO or MOE and NGOs/INGOs time to time ... but we’re not getting any effective ideas.

A number of teachers did not get any opportunity for professional ICT training from any organizations as Kabita expressed:

Right now I’ve not participated in any training from those organizations, not at all till now, maybe, they will be providing in future.

Technology supported pedagogy basically requires constructivist approaches for teaching and learning that are process oriented. But the conventional system of education is product oriented that compels school administration to be focused on final examination. Consequently, teachers are compelled to complete their courses in time so that they tend to avoid technology integrated instruction. All of the participants viewed ICT based instruction time-consuming and additionally some of the school administrations did not pay attention for it even if the teachers wanted. Lalita stated:

... time is not there, we’re not allowed then why to go ... we don’t take students frequently in the ICT lab, even though we want ...

Despite these challenges, all the participants were found to be highly motivated for technology integrated classroom practices. Even though they did not have adequate and sufficient professional ICT skills and knowledge for planning their EFL lessons on the TPACK
framework, they were eager to conduct classes utilizing ICT tools and innovative technology along with some support of school administration, DEO, NCED, and NGOs/INGOs.

**Discussion and Implications**

As this study has been grounded under the theoretical prospective of constructivism, the findings were discussed in the light of it. Additionally, the discussion is comprised around two key issues:

i. Technology utilization in teaching English at secondary level

ii. Possible impediments of technology utilization in teaching/leaning

**Technology utilization in teaching English at secondary level**

The theory of constructivism advocates for socio-cognitive aspect of knowledge construction in which technology could play a vital role to support teachers and students (Hong & Lin, 2010). Teaching and learning approaches of constructivism are constructive and collaborative that promote teachers to facilitate their classroom instruction by utilizing technology. Moreover, the findings from the data analysis suggested that EFL teachers at public secondary schools were highly motivated and positive to utilize different ICT tools to facilitate their classroom pedagogy. Similarly, EFL teachers’ preparedness for technology integration revealed that they were highly motivated and enthusiastic to bring pedagogical changes into their profession. However, their professional ICT skills and knowledge were found to be limited to basic computer skills that required to be updated with sufficient and adequate professional ICT trainings.

Furthermore, EFL teachers were found to utilize ICT tools/resources for power-point presentation, downloading audio, video and text or authentic materials from Google and YouTube, used email and some social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Messenger, Whatsapp, Instagram, and IMO for more interaction with students. Their pedagogical utilization of technology, though in a nutshell, promoted student-centered instruction.

All the participants equally agreed that technology supported instruction was greatly motivating for students and increased level of their achievement. They were more active, interactive and participatory in comparison to traditional ‘chalk and talk’ mode of instruction. They stated that their students were highly co-operative, enthusiastic and wanted ICT supported instruction frequently. This finding co-relates with the findings of the previous studies (Afamasaga-Wright & Farita, 2008; Lei, 2010) that highlight technology integrated instruction promotes constructivist approaches of student-centered classroom practices. Further, the study also found that the EFL teachers highly required support from school administration, DEO, NCED, DOE, CDC and NGOs/INGOs for their professional ICT capacity building training orientations, adequate ICT infrastructure at school, curriculum and technology co-relation for effective classroom practices, teachers’ workload and time constraint overview, product-orient approach etc. needed more consideration.

**Possible impediments of technology utilization in teaching/leaning**

The findings on the possible impediments of utilizing technology in EFL teaching/learning brought many issues in light such as insufficient professional ICT skills and
knowledge of EFL teachers, teachers’ workload and time constraint, students’ digital divide, insufficient availability of ICT infrastructure at school, and insufficient support from school admin, DEO, NCED, DOE, CDC, MOE and NGOs/INGOs. These were highly influential external factors that EFL teachers’ recognized as impediments of technology integrated instruction. These findings go in line with some previous studies (Awan, 2012; Mafuraga & Moremi, 2017; Nikolopoulos & Gialamas, 2016; Thapaliya, 2014).

Moreover, the studies (Bude, 2009; Capo & Orellana, 2012; Pereira-Leon, 2010; Sime & Priestley, 2005) revealed that the main barriers of ICT integrated instruction were basically related to internal factors such as teachers’ negative attitudes and perception, lack of confidence, reluctant to accept change, techno-phobia etc. on the contrary, Nepalese EFL teachers of public secondary schools were found to be highly positive, motivated and enthusiastic. Even if they lacked sufficient ICT skills and support, they were still greatly ready to go for technology supported instruction. It is quite praiseworthy.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to address the research gap that existed at public secondary schools particularly related to the EFL teachers’ utilization of technology into their classroom practices and possible impediments of technology utilization in teaching and learning EFL. This study is context specific that is limited to EFL teachers of public secondary schools of the Kathmandu valley and its findings cannot be generalized to all EFL contexts in Nepal. Further, the data analysis of semi-structured interview of eight EFL teachers suggest some findings that although EFL teachers are not professionally well-trained for technology integrated instruction, they are highly positive and motivated. Similarly students are greatly co-operative and enthusiastic for developing communicative and intercultural competence along with linguistic competence through student-centered classroom practices with the help of ICT tools and resources.

The findings also highlights the need of sufficient support from school education authorities and different organizations to empower EFL teachers and schools with required teachers’ professionalism and ICT infrastructure. Additionally, this study recommends for more in-depth studies on EFL teachers’ and students’ perception of technology supported instruction, EFL teachers’ preparedness for TPACK, school/EFL syllabus/curriculum and instructional technology inter-connectedness are the specific areas for future research.

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Content, Language and Technology: Perspectives and Prospects

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Introduction

Language learning is probably as ancient as human kind. Man has been communicating in one form or the other since the tie he evolved. Such means of communication has undergone a process of evolutionary changes to stabilize as language and provide an identity to its user.

With language becoming the principal source of interaction, the man in his curiosity and wisdom, began to analyse it to facilitate teaching/learning of the same easily. The present article is a conclave of such attempts (researches) and takes into account a historical perspective. While doing so an attempt has been made to discuss topics such as Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Information Communication Technology (ICT).

1. Let us begin with Historiography. This has caught the attention of many scholars (Dr Richard Smith is a well known name in the field), and the larger attempt of such research is to provide a perspective on the research in progress. ELT in India is 65 years old. I say this because, the first English Institute was established in 1953 in Allahabad. The founders of this Institute were largely materials developers and strived hard to spread the need for language teaching in a small measure. In the year 1958, another major Institute of national importance CIE (Central Institute of English) was established in Hyderabad. This Institute had the mandate to train teachers of English at the secondary and tertiary levels and the Institute is actively engaged in carrying out this task to date. The Institute also has made pioneering efforts in developing national curriculum and produced textbooks for teaching English at different levels of learning.

The history of the Institute is also the history of ELT in India. The Institute was in many ways responsible for promoting the Structural Approach after it was integrated into the school curriculum. However, the scholars working here soon realised its weaknesses and switched over to promoting communicative language teaching almost contemporaneously with ELT practitioners in England in mid seventies. Jane Revell being one of the pioneers in this field. This brought about a change in the research perspective in terms of teacher
training, materials development and classroom strategies.

Some of the key projects that made a mark are the experiments carried out at Loyola College, Chennai (1975); SNDT University, Mumbai (1978); The Bangalore Project (1979-1981); West Bengal Textbook Board (COST) (1983); TELE - HMPETR Gujarat (1985- 1990); CBSE-CIEFL Project (1993-95); and the Modular Curriculum using CBCE 2000 onwards. CIEFL took the initiative to adopt the cafeteria model for students pursuing their master’s degree in English Language Studies. The curriculum and evaluation practices have undergone several changes and the courses are on offer to date. Researches in each of these areas have taken place in various universities and academic institutes across the country.

2. The second area I have identified relates to theoretical inputs. For a long time ELT was not considered as a discipline and courses were not offered in ELT. For e.g. M A (ELT) programmes were not recognized, while M A Linguistics was considered a respectable degree. ELT formed a small part of Grammar unit/paper or one question in Linguistics unit/paper had some focus on language teaching. With works of scholars like W F Mackey, Halliday and McIntosh becoming available, it was possible to convince the academician for the need to establish separate departments to teach ELT units/papers. The contributions to theoretical perspectives from India has not been much, however, one needs to remember with gratitude the efforts put in by NS Prabhu in formulating the principles of Communicational Approach to Language Teaching and his efforts in developing tasks for teaching English differently. Another major contribution has come from Kumar Vadivelu Beyond Methods.

Research scholars have looked at the contributions from these two scholars in a variety of situations and established their success and suggested some modifications to suit local contexts. It is worthwhile to remember what David Carver said when he was working with the West Bengal Textbook Board Project. He coined two acronyms COST and TENOR. Both are significant in the Indian context and reflect on accepting the theoretical propositions blindly. COST stands for Communication Oriented Structural Teaching. He discovered that teachers in Indian schools were comfortable with the use of Structural Approach. To wean them away completely from such practices, and forcing them to adopt new ways seemed unreasonable if not impossible. He therefore devised certain strategies of modifying materials and strategies whereby the teachers could gradually adopt themselves to using communicative tasks in the classroom. The exercises designed by him can be found in course books produced at that time called Learning English. Exactly similar exercises have been developed by others scholars pursuing research in their attempt to make the prescribed textbooks to improve their teachability. The second acronym TENOR was coined by him, when he discovered that several researches in the area of ESP largely dealt with nitpicking rather than focus on content and language development. TENOR stands for Teaching English for No Obvious Reason. His stand was that, we first need to develop general proficiency in English. Once, a learner has a good grasp of the language, using English for
specific or special purpose becomes a matter of adaptation. This statement of his is axiomatic and hence can be accepted as a theory.

3. The third major area of research which is popular among the Indian scholars has a focus on Second Language Acquisition. Interest in this area picked after 1985 a little after Rod Ellis published his book with the same title. The situation seemed to be extremely conducive to the Indian situation, and the multilingual context created an excellent laboratory like situation for conducting research. Earlier to this period, most research focused on contrastive analysis and non-contrastive approaches to language teaching. One major contribution of research in SLA has made is seen in giving the mother tongue its due respect. Teachers began to understand that all languages are learnt alike and they behave alike. Taking support from mother tongue while learning a new language does not damage either of the languages.

Of late, research in SLA has a focus on levels of task complexity leading to learning problems and using mother tongue support in completing the tasks. Further, attempts are also being made to study the interface as it exists between cognition and psycholinguistics. The application of such research is seen in teaching vocabulary in terms of word chunking and further leading to reading comprehension using eye-tracking movements. Translanguaging is another offshoot of SLA research where learners are allowed to express their ideas in mother tongue and subsequently translate the same into English with peer help. This is particularly evident while teaching writing employing group work strategies and using Think Aloud protocol for data elicitation.

Contributions from scholars like Ajit Mohanty and Minoti Panda in this context are noteworthy. Both scholars have shown genuine concern in the multilingual structure of the Indian academic set up. Their main focus has been on language conservation along with language development.

4. A recent phenomenon in research deals with Continuing Professional Development which is an offshoot of teacher education strategies. Like it took time to recognize ELT as a discipline, it took longer time to recognize teaching as a profession. Reasons given for not considering teaching as a profession were far too dubious. However, of late, adequate recognition is received and teaching is not only a respectable job, but also a much sought after job.

It is necessary to thank a person like Tony Wright for instilling this sense of professionalism in us. In his book *Roles of Teachers and Learners*, he has elucidated the number of roles a teacher needs to play in the life of a learner and the society at large. Other things being equal, this lends a sense of responsibility and respectability to the teacher. The book tacitly advocates the traits that need to be developed among student teachers during the course of teacher education. Such qualities in teachers makes them real professionals. This concept has been explained and the need for CPD established by scholars like Rod Bolitho and others. A group of teachers from India have also worked in this area and some SIGs and TDGs are established across the country. NELTA here is a case in point.
Research in the area is not scant either. The latest research in the area dealt with using ICT strategies to develop reflection among pre-service student teachers and the work has received good appreciation.

5. Finally, I would like to talk about a few developments that have taken place in the field of ICT. ICT is today a buzzword and almost seen as panacea for all ills in our society – including teaching. Efforts to introduce computers in language teaching began in the year 1985 when the systems worked on DoS environment with 32/64 MB rams. Computers were largely untouchable by ordinary mortals, and one was required to undergo special training programme to use a computer. NCERT, a premier institute established by the government of India to promote school curriculum and also offer quality teacher training was harnessed to train master trainers. The training of five day duration provided the participants with adequate knowledge to use computer for creating a file, saving it and print the document when needed. The pedagogy part was not developed though the entire programme was called CLASS – Computer Literacy And School Studies. However, this programme was withdrawn in favour of ‘Operation Blackboard’ for political reasons. The contesting party then thought blackboards can fetch more votes than computers.

DoS environment helped develop some language exercise using BASIC language for teaching grammar and vocabulary. Some initial exercises in reading comprehension were also developed, but these were highly behaviouristic. They facilitated excellent pattern practice. With the ushering in of the Windows environment, several manipulations could be brought about in the use of computers and for the first time the ability of the computer to think algorithmically was exploited to check spelling and grammar rules. Authoring facility, which helped in building interactive exercises were introduced, and attempts were made to teach writing. However, this was limited to organizing sentences in a jumbled paragraph. Several aspects of discourse that are crucial to good writing could not be captured.

With further developments in computer programming and the invention of new languages computers were given the ability to think. This is largely realised in harnessing Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing. Developing writing skills with inputs from discourse became a possibility. Another major impact of this was using computers for translation of texts from one language into another.

Computers also facilitated storing dictionaries and other reference materials in soft forms. Soft copies of dictionaries became popular and the added advantage was the inclusion of exercises which are all interactive. The latest edition of ALD with its i-writer is a good example of this. A large number of researchers are looking at ICT facilities in its various manifestations and their applications for teaching in schools. The use of software has extended beyond computers and filtered down to mobile phones. There are instances of research in the area of MALL though it is in its nascent stage.
It is necessary to mention the phenomenal contribution made by Paul Nation to ICT. He has developed software to test the vocabulary size of the test taker. He has also developed strategies by which a text can be analysed for its word count, sort it into types and tokens, and also provide concordances for any word as it is used in the text. This provides for greater understanding of the word, and a better strategy to develop one's vocabulary.

Research in ICT is fairly popular among the research scholars in India. Of late, several scholars have taken up work on using ICT intervention for creating tests, evaluate them, analyse the scores and build data bases for future use. Attempts are also made to use ICT for Dynamic Evaluation by offering online tests and allowing the test taker to stay in touch with the administrator throughout the period of test. But this is still in a nascent stage.

Conclusion:

The present article takes a look at the nature of research that has taken place to date. What does language teaching research hold for us tomorrow? The answer to this question is not simple. With ICT playing a major role and with the ushering in of Artificial Intelligence (AI), we may move towards creating learning capsules with narrowly specific objectives. These capsules can be administered online or may be through some other process yet to be discovered. This ushers in a new journey for both the teachers and teacher educators with differently defined roles.

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Teaching a five-paragraph essay

Ganesh Kumar Bastola

Writing an essay requires us to think through what we are going to do. Every essay has a beginning, middle, and an end (Levin, 1997). In a five-paragraph essay, the first paragraph is generally understood as introduction. An effective introduction demands readers’ interest and give them a sense of the topic and purpose (Gardner, 2005). The next three paragraphs consist of the body of the essay. The body of the essay explains and supports the thesis with details; further develops ideas in a clear sequence. The fifth paragraph is conclusion. It incorporates the importance of the thesis statement, reflects on the larger significance of the topic, and brings the essay to a logical manner (Gardner, 2005).

In an essay, a thesis statement is a complete sentence that contains one main idea. This idea controls the content of the entire essay. Moreover, the thesis statement should express a complete thought. It is often placed at the end of the introductory paragraph which is usually one sentence. The subsequent paragraph begins with a topic sentence. There are almost three paragraphs in the middle part where each of the paragraphs begins with a topic sentence. The topic sentence is substantiated by different examples, facts, and supporting details. Finally, a conclusion is drawn where the thesis statement is desired to be restated.

Proficiency Level: Intermediate to advance
Age Group: Young/adult
Teaching Hour: 90-100 minutes

Objectives: On completion of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. share their personal experiences about essay writing, 2. define the components and forms of essay writing, 3. learn how to write thesis statement and some topic sentences, 4. learn how to support the topic sentence with other supporting details, 4. write conclusion for an essay and reflect on the entire essay, 5. engage, discuss and complete an essay.

Resources: Handouts and worksheets

Procedure

1. Scene setting: (10 minutes)

Start by sharing that essay writing can have different forms. Share your own understanding and experience about essay writing (three paragraph and/or five paragraph essay). Then, distribute the worksheets and ask students to read the sample of a five paragraph essay (See appendix-1). After a while, ask students to read the information provided on the back of the page. Once the students complete their reading, ask some questions related to their understanding. Make sure students have been aware of essay writing and its various components.
2. Pre-writing activities: (15 Minutes)

Divide the students in pairs and ask the pairs to discuss what an essay is and elicit their opinions. You can facilitate this by allowing them to use their cell phones or the internet. Each pair shares their understanding with the whole group. Ask them to share about their understanding and different components of essay writing. Once the pairs become ready accomplishing their prescribed task, hold a discussion on the various components and forms of essay writing (three/five paragraph). The class listen to their understanding about essay writing. To summarise the activity and conclude this activity, deliver a short instruction about thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting details, and concluding part of the entire essay.

Discussion

We can make a specific discussion on the following types of questions:

i. What types of essay is this?

ii. What is the essay about?

iii. Which is the thesis statement in the paragraph? Is it appropriate and meaningful in the first paragraph?

iv. What is the topic sentence in each paragraph? Do you find sufficient supporting details for each topic sentence? Do they create a flow in writing?

v. What about the last paragraph? Does this sentence conclude the main idea of the topic?

3. While writing activities: Generating ideas (35 minutes)

Prepare your students to write on some topics, for example; The Turning Point of My Life, Role of Youth in National Development, Use of Mobile Phone in Classroom, etc.

i. Thesis statement: (10 Minutes)

Divide the whole class into different groups. Ask them to discuss the possible sentences for thesis statement. When they become ready with thesis statement, they present in the class and get feedback from teacher.

**Thesis statement**

A thesis statement is a complete sentence that contains one main idea. This main idea controls the content of the entire essay.

A thesis statement contains sub-points and helps a reader know how the essay will be organized.

A thesis statement gives direction to the paper and limits what you need to write about.

All paragraphs of the essay should explain, support, or argue with your thesis.

A strong thesis statement is usually one sentence and often placed in introductory part.

ii. Topic sentence: (10 Minutes)

When the thesis statements are created, divide the students in pair and offer them the above-mentioned topics, one for each. Most of the essay topics take the form of a direct question to answer, a statement to discuss, or a task to carry out.(Levin, 1997).
Instruct them to work in pair to write a topic sentence for each title. As soon as they present their topic sentences in the class, ask other pairs to give feedback. You also provide some constructive feedback.

### Topic sentence

- Topic sentence also called the controlling idea of the paragraph.
- Every topic sentence has a topic (what we talk about) and controlling idea (what we say on a topic).
- Include about main points to support your topic sentence within the paragraph.
- It is written in a single sentence.
- It is simply written at the beginning of the paragraph, but sometime it can be in the middle or at the end of the paragraph.

### iii. Supporting details: (10 minutes)

Instruct your students to write supporting sentences for the topic sentence they have already produced. Let each pair present their supporting details in the whole class and have discussion over each presentation. And discuss how the topic sentence is substantiated or supported by other details.

### Supporting details:

- Supporting details contain facts, statements, examples, which guide us to conceptualize the main idea that the thesis statement indicate.
- Supporting details clarify, illuminate, explain, describe, expand, and illustrate the mains points.
- Supporting details are asserted immediately after the topic sentences are written.
- They demands cohesion and coherence in our entire essay.
- They justify the thesis statement and maintain a flow in our entire essay.

### i. Concluding paragraph: (10 minutes)

You ask them to write a concluding paragraph for what they have written. Students are encouraged to write and ask them to present, and give feedback on them.

### Concluding paragraph:

- It is the last paragraph of the essay.
- It summarizes the details.
- It is not the place to insert new ideas; rather it gives you an opportunity to wrap up your essay coherently.
- It can be sumed up either with the use of a closing statement or restating the thesis statement or summarizing.
- It has to remind the reader of the main points from each of the body paragraphs.
Proof reading and Editing: After the student prepare their first draft; ask them to work in group or pair. Students work in groups or pairs to edit their first drafts. They look at spelling, punctuation, grammatical correctness, and appropriateness. Likewise, the teacher asks them to revise their paragraph writing in terms of appropriate topic sentence, its supporting ideas, and conclusion. The teacher instructs them very clearly about connectives, transition, cohesion and coherence. The students try to practise as per the instruction.

Feedback Session: In this session, the teacher asks student exchange their produced essay. The members in each pair will be exchanged and are asked work sincerely to provide feedback. All the participants offer feedback on essays. Finally, the teacher provides constructive feedback and they correct their errors accordingly.

Further practices: (10 Minutes)
The teacher offers students some topics for short essays such as;
- My culture; My pride
- National Heritage of Nepal
- English as a Medium of Instruction
- Computer Assisted Learning
- Cell-phone Free Classroom, etc.

Reflection:
In this step, students practise essay writing as a process not as a product. They reflect on the processes they went through to produce an essay. Teacher further summarize the processes of writing an essay.

References:


Appendix 1
When I was young, I always knew that I wanted to become a teacher someday. When I played, I would often gather my dolls together and pretended to teach them how to do math problems or how to read a book. As I grew older, my desire to become an ESL teacher became clearer as I did come volunteer teaching overseas and in the United States. As I look on my reasons for becoming a teacher, there are three reasons that stand out. There are - my love for the English language, my innate interest in how people learn, and my desire to help other people.

I was much anxious about my career. I practise hard since I was very weak in English. I wanted to watch English movies from my childhood. My schooling was also very comfortable in English. I became habituated learning and practicing in English. I read the novels, watched English videos and practise a lot. In doing so, I happened to fell in love with love of English language to strengthen my personal career.

Interestingly, I was really worried on how people learn language all over the world. I didn’t give up in my learning rather I tried my best to be the best kind of person I could personally be. I had a passion and a determined aim to be an EFL teacher. I struggled a lot whilst learning English language but I didn’t hesitate to practise. I often tried to listen to my innate heart not what other people say.
I had experienced tension and troubles of learning English language. I had experienced the experiences of people’s difficulty in obtaining the better proficiency in English language. I had a hope and a strong zeal to help others. I wanted to help other people learn better. I did always think the best ways for enhancing English for my personal as well as professional life. However, I believed that the rigorous practice make anyone successful in his/her life.

Finally, after several hardships and struggle, I happened to gain a better and greater personal enhancement in English language. I felt as if I have achieved the goal I had targeted due to my own inner interest and desire. I was determined in such a way that I would not just learn English language rather I would help other people as well to learn. Thus, my inner interest, hard work and my love towards English language, etc. were the reasons for me to be an English teacher.

[In the above example, the italicised sentence in the introduction is the thesis statement. The bolded sentences are topic sentences in each of the three paragraphs and the last sentence of the essay is restatement of the thesis statement.]

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Teaching communication skills: Getting things done (Requesting and responding)

Rajendra Joshi

Making communication meaningful in English as a foreign language (EFL) context like Nepal is very essential. This lesson focuses on socializing, where students make requests and respond to the requests made.

**Proficiency level:** (Post-Secondary)

**Age Group:** 14-18 years

**Class time:** 2 hours

**Objectives**

The activities presented below seek to:

1) Make students able to ask someone to make requests and respond to the requests.

The students are given handouts of some conversations of requests and their responses. They are asked to read those conversations and highlight the requests made and their responses. The students are then divided into pairs or groups and asked to make conversations with their friends, and finally they are asked to perform the role-plays.

**Resources:** Audio visual clips, handouts.

**Procedures**

1. **Introduction** (10 minutes)

The students are asked to make requests and respond to those requests. A pair can be invited to the front and one of them is asked to make a request. For instance, he or she may ask his friends for (say) a pen, a book or other such things, and the other partner responds to his/her request.

2. **Class discussion** (25 minutes)

The teacher leads the class by giving feedback to their requests and the responses made by their mates. The students are given time to think and prepare dialogues expressing requests along with the responses. The things such as how they initiated, how it went on and how it was ended must be taken into consideration. Later on, they are asked to present (act out) their dialogues in front of the class. The language exponents used by each pair or group is noted down on the board.

3. **Key expressions** (25 minutes)

On the board, the teacher adds some more examples of the language exponents that have been mentioned in the dialogues of the students. e. g. Would you mind opening the door?....., “Could you please switch off the fan?” ...., “Is it all right if I ...?” The class then prepares the possible list of language exponents for requesting and responding. Likewise, the possible expressions of responding to those requests are also discussed. e. g. “It’s okay”, “Here you
are”, "why not?”, “Sure...” and so on. Finally, the responses are categorized in terms of their politeness.

4. Activity (15 minutes)

The teacher shows some video clips or makes them listen to some audio clips from the book or from the internet. (www.oxfordlearn.com/login) and the discussion is made on the basis of following questions.

**Conversation 1**

- How does Rahul ask his friend to switch off the fan?
- How does his friend respond?

**Conversation 2**

- What expression did Harish use to ask for a pen?
- How did Shyam respond?

**Conversation 3**

- What exponent does Aditi use to respond the request positively?
- How does Ramu respond to the request politely?

**Conversation 4**

- How are the language exponents used by the speakers to respond to the request positively?

**(Script Appendix 1)**

The teacher shows some videos from the internet showing the requests and their responses in both ways. The students analyze the conversation shown with their classroom discussion.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=944tbwim


5. Activity (20 minutes)

The students prepare a role play on the basis of discussion and the audio-visual scripts. The role-play is designed to incorporate the discussed key expressions. They also modify their drafts and make changes to create a successful conversation. After the completion of the drafts, they get ready for the role play in the same pair or group. Finally, the students are asked to perform the role plays.

6. The art of small talk (15 minutes)

The students are made to watch and listen to the audio-visual clips or read the handouts containing the tips to creating a conversation. The students then read and/or watch those tips individually and select a few most useful tips. The teacher provides the handouts to the students containing a few tips to create a successful conversation. The teacher then selects a few students and asks them to share the tips that they select and why they select them.

7. Conclusion (10 minutes)

The students are given some time for a short oral presentation. They are asked to summarize what they have learned and how they would apply them in their regular conversation. The teacher concludes the lesson by summarizing everyday polite and appropriate language expressions.
Appendix 1

Conversation 1
Rahul: Excuse me, would you mind switching off the fan?
Ashim: Okay, Sure
Rahul: Thank you, Ashim
Ashim: You are welcome.

Conversation 2
Harish: Shyam, could you please lend me your pen for some time?
Shyam: Okay. Here you are.
Harish: Thanks.
Shyam: It’s my pleasure.

Conversation 3
Prem: Would you like to go swimming with me?
Aditi: Why not. I’m ready.
Prem: What about you Ramu?
Ramu: I’m sorry. I have to help my mother at home.

Conversation 4
Alan: Would you please bring me a glass of water?
Mohan: Oh, certainly
Alan: Thank you very much.
Mohan: Mention not.

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Interactive Teaching and Learning Techniques

Manita Karki

Many teachers still follow the traditional method of lecturing to teach English as a foreign language rather than making students actively engage in learning processes. This lesson focuses on different activities to engage beginners actively to learn English language.

Content: Identifying the objects
Level: Beginner
Skill: Understanding, Listening, Speaking
Teaching resources: A set of picture flashcards with the word included
Product: Vocabulary, Simple answer
Activities: Drilling, game, use of pictures on the board or flashcards,
Language/Structure: What’s this?/Is it a ......?, (This is a .......... ./Yes it is/No it isn’t)
Time: 45 – 50 minutes

Objectives:
The interactive technique of teaching enables students to: 1. recognize the pictures and their names, 2. reply the question in simple sentences, 3. actively engage in different classroom activities.

Lead – in

1. When you, the teacher, enter the classroom, greet the students and wait for their response. If they reply, encourage them to use the right responses and repeat the greeting again.

2. Warm-up the students by singing a song (See below) with proper gesture and posture. At first, teacher asks all the students to stand-up and do some bodies stretch to get ready to sing. Then, the teacher asks them to follow. During singing activity, students may pronounce some word incorrectly, so to minimize the pronunciation difficulties of the students, the teacher need to sing in normal speed with a clear voice. You can also repeat the song if needed.

Note: This helps to attract the attention of the students towards the lesson and the activities.

Example:

Hello….. Say Hello!!!
Hello….. Say Hello!!!
When you meet someone.
You will say “Hello”
When you pick up the phone
You will say “Hello”
If you want to make a friend
You just say “Hello”
Hello….. Say Hello!!!
Hello….. Say Hello!!!
Don’t be shy…. Come and smile
And say “Hello”
If you don’t know what to say
You can say “Hello”
Hello….. Say Hello!!!
Hello….. Say Hello!!!
You can make a lot of friends
If you just say “Hello”.
Hello…. Say Hello!!!
Hello…. Say Hello!!!Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1LcqrO4u0c

Main Activity

3. To begin, show them the flashcards one by one and ask each student to guess the name of the picture. They might reply the answer but in their mother tongue. Therefore, you name the pictures in English and ask them to repeat the name.

4. To make them clear, show them your own body parts like: hand, foot, ear, mouth, eyes, nose, arm, body and head. While showing your body parts, you can even make interesting activities so that students can easily remember those words.

   Example:

   Teacher: This is my hand. Show me your hand now? Now let’s make a clap. (Clap, clap, clap….).

   Teacher: Where is your foot? (Pause for a while). Great, let’s make a walk around the room in circle (if there is lack of space then, ask them to make sound by tapping the feet or ask them to do other possible activities.)

   This way, teacher shows each body parts and asks every students (one by one or in the whole group) to show their body parts too. Try to make this as much fun as you can while demonstrating. But remember not to spell the words. Just make them understand and pronounce the words in English.

5. Ask the students to stand up and stretch their body once again. Teacher demonstrates first and asks students to follow the teacher. Then make the class lively by singing a song with full of gesture and posture. Tell the students to sing with you. Teacher can repeat the song too if needed.

   Example:

   Two Little Eyes
Two little eyes to look around.
Two little ears to hear each sound.
One little nose to smell what’s sweet.
One little mouth that likes to eat.

   Source: www.english-time.eu

FOLLOW – UP

6. In this part of the lesson, the teacher can crosscheck the level of their understanding by asking few questions. For this, the teacher can show them flashcards of body parts and ask them some questions to identify the right parts. Certain language structures can be used to ask and respond.

   Question: What is this? Or, Is it a …….?

   Answer: This is a ……. . Or, Yes it is/ No it isn’t.

7. Then after, the lesson progresses towards the function of each body part. At this point, the teacher again asks the question and waits for the answer. At first, the teacher has to wait for their answers and then he or she replies the answers just in a word or phrase. For example;
Question: What can we do with our hands? (Ears?/Eyes?/Nose?/Mouth?/Foot? Etc.)

Answers:

Clap. (Teacher: Let’s make a clap. Clap!!! Clap!!! Clap!!!)

Listen. (Teacher: Let’s listen to a song. La!!! La!!! La!!! …….)

See. (Teacher: Oh I lost my pen. Have you seen it? Let’s search!!! Let’s search. Yes, I can see my pen now, it is under the desk.)

……… and So on.

8. Finally, involve students to play a game. For example, the teacher lines-up the flashcards with the name of the body parts (see appendix 1): hand, foot, ear, mouth, eyes, nose, arm, and head on the floor. Then line up another set of flashcards (see appendix 1) with function for those parts. Just pick one flashcard at a time and read aloud the written word. Show the students the card, then randomly call a student and ask him/her to match the flashcard with the function arranged on the floor. Once the student matches it correctly, then clap. If they do not, help them to find the correct match. Repeat the same process to match other flashcards too.

Additional information

Primary level English curriculum also focuses on ‘a happy atmosphere where the children hear and speak English in a natural way through a variety of activities. It further aims of having a variety of activities, suitable for the children’s age and interests. These can include: use of sound(s), and look and say but no spelling aloud, and actions to aid word retention’. Therefore, keeping this in mind, these activities intend to help young learners engage as much as possible. Furthermore, the activities motivate learners to learn language in a natural environment meaningfully.

Reference


Appendix - 1

Flashcard Set 1: Name of the body parts

Appendix 2

Flashcard Set 2: Function of body parts

Source: Drawing Art Gallery
https://drawinglics.com/s/body-parts-pictures-for-kids.py

Contributor

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Book Review - 1

Is transmission of knowledge more important than child-centeredness in early grades?

Madhu Neupane
Hong Kong Polytechnique University


In present-day educational context, individualized instruction, child-centered curriculum, and skills development for early grade learners are taken for granted whereas transmission of knowledge and centralized curricula are criticized as lock-step teaching, indoctrination, and one-size-fits-all policy. Is our understanding of early grade education well founded? No, says Hirsch the author of the book Why knowledge matters: Rescuing our children from failed education theories.

Hirsch, in the prologue of the book, The tyranny of three ideas, declares that widely acclaimed theories and cherished truisms (i.e., naturalism, individualism, and critical thinking) about education and child development are WRONG. He exposes their negative and unintended consequences by drawing on data from neuroscience and evidence from educational reforms in France, Sweden, United States, Britain, and Germany and shows how they deprive the children of much-needed knowledge to succeed in academia and widen achievement gaps.

The book is organized around six educational frustrations (i.e., over-testing of students, preschool fadeout, the narrowing of the elementary curriculum, the low verbal scores of high school graduates, persistent educational achievement gaps, and the tribulations of the common core curriculum) in the US context. These frustrations, claims Hirsch, are the inevitable results of widely held, well-intended but flawed theories of education based on Dewy’s progressive philosophy. The author has spent most of the space in discrediting naturalism, individualization, and skill-centrism and endorsing communal education, common core curriculum, autonomy and equality of opportunity. He questions the claims that problem-solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, and cooperative thinking skills are all purposive and general because they are dependent on domain-specific knowledge and expertise. He strongly emphasizes that social impositions (not natural unfolding) are the most natural things for human development.
Hirsch claims that skills-based reading comprehension tests are invalid because they are not based on what is taught to students. Any test of reading, in his opinion, is about testing students’ general knowledge and vocabulary. Therefore, a content-rich coherent curriculum rather than skill-focused approach would develop students’ reading skills. He condemns the scapegoating of teachers as it blames them for the harms caused by flawed theories. He argues, “The real problem is idea quality, not teacher quality” (p. 37) and blames education schools for adopting underqualified students and offering programs heavy in pedagogy and light in content. His contention is that coherent knowledge-based curriculum is more important than effective teachers because a teacher can perform effectively in a coherent system. Hirsch believes that the lack of sustainability of gains made in preschool or elementary schools is the result of a fragmented curriculum and a knowledge-based curriculum would undoubtedly overcome this problem.

Hirsch draws on French educational reform to illustrate the detrimental effect of individualized content-diluted elementary curriculum, which has not only prevented learners from developing background knowledge and vocabulary required for reading but also widened achievement gaps between students belonging to different socio-economic strata. He argues that transmission of (shared public) knowledge is universal, natural, and essential for human development and equality of opportunity in a democracy. In contrast, hyper-individualism in language arts curriculum does more harm than good for children, places enormous pressure on teachers, deprives children of much-needed reading skills, and widens achievement gaps. Knowledge is crucial not only for developing children’s reading skills but also for promoting their individuality. Therefore, according to Hirsch, language curriculum should be full of content like history, math, arts and science. He considers verbal skills of primary importance among twenty-first century skills. In this regard, reading ability “serves as a rough proxy for verbal expertise” (p. 85) and “Well-rounded education is the best means of attaining all-round reading skill” (p. 87). Hirsch underscores that almost everything is available in the Internet does not mean that almost everyone is ready to grab it. As money is required to earn money, knowledge is required to gain knowledge. The main reason for the persistence of achievement gap is the result of a fragmented curriculum, which makes poor children even poorer thereby widening the achievement gap. In Hirsch’s view, the main aim of preschool education should be to enhance students’ knowledge. In contrast, “Encouraging students to follow their interests leaves them with big holes in their knowledge and vocabulary” (p. 100).

Hirsch, in arguing that students’ verbal abilities depend on their knowledge and vocabulary, finds skill-based reading instruction a delusion. Only through reading an adequate number of informational texts on a single domain for a sustained period can learners develop their reading skills. Discrediting naturalism in education, he argues that education “is a struggle against nature, to dominate it and produce the ‘up-to-date’ person of the new era” (p. 124). To justify his argument, Hirsch highlights that harm done by individualized instruction in France should be a revelation about three disastrous pedagogical theories (i.e., naturalism, individualism, and skill-centrism) so that the infection does not spread further. Hirsch claims, “Individualism in the early grades disables many individuals” (p. 158) as is evident in the case of “United States, Britain, France, and Sweden” (p. 158).
The author enthusiastically promotes the knowledge-based schools. In his opinion, only such schools help students learn the language of power, feel empowered (as is the case in Japan and Finland), overcome inequality, gain further knowledge, and promote their language competence on an incremental basis. He repeatedly emphasizes that students need more knowledge than skills and claims that overemphasis on individuality in early year inhibits individuality because individuality comes from the mastery of shared conventions. He hopes that his book will play a role in intellectual liberation.

In the epilogue of the book, Breaking free, Hirsch admires Asian nations for being able to resist romantic philosophy of individualized instruction and doing well in education. He argues, the romantic philosophy of individualized instruction should be dethroned, the myth of imparting all-purpose skills should be broken, communal curriculum for each child should be ensured, and domain-restricted growth of expertise should be acknowledged for any meaningful educational reform to take hold. He highlights, “Only a well-rounded, knowledge-specific curriculum can impart needed knowledge to all children and overcome inequality of opportunity” (p. 191) and ends the book in optimistic note writing, “This will happen” (p. 191).

There is much to appreciate in Hirsch’s book. Particularly worth considering for us, as language teachers are the importance of knowledge-based language curriculum, the significance of language competence to succeed, and centrality of reading for developing communication skills. As Hirsch claims, knowledge is important, a coherent curriculum is better than a fragmented one, certain knowledge is prerequisite for gaining further knowledge or even ‘looking thing up’ in the Internet, and reading is the best way to develop communication skills as well as vocabulary on gradual and incremental basis (Bruce, 2017; Derry, 2017; Joseph, 2017; Smith, 2018). Similarly, no one would dispute that teacher education should prepare teachers for the content they need to teach, the achievement gap in education should be minimized, and domain-specific expertise in knowledge is necessary for critical thinking and creativity.

However, one might dismiss some of the ideas advocated in the book. Hirsch goes too far in discounting naturalism, individualism, and skills centrism in reducing them as a fragmented curriculum and creating dichotomies between natural development over communal knowledge, individualization over a common curriculum, and skills over knowledge (Bruce, 2017). These aspects are complementary to each other rather than being mutually exclusive. Taking knowledge-based curriculum as a panacea for all educational ills from increasing students’ educational achievement, maintaining cohesion in a society, to eradicating inequality is too simplistic. Hirsch also loses his balance in giving priority to knowledge over critical thinking and creativity as the scholars advocating critical thinking and creativity do not disregard the role of knowledge (Bruce, 2017). Besides, the author does not make it clear about the purpose of knowledge and role of an individual in its creation. Unlike Hirsch claims, child-centered education does not begin and end with children’s interests but respects children’s curiosity (Joseph, 2017). Furthermore, developing learners’ reading skills involves much more than teaching a prescribed curriculum (Smith, 2018) because how learners grasp the concepts are of equal importance (Derry, 2017).
In conclusion, the book is thought provoking and worth reading. It makes us see the other side of the coin and reexamine our widely held beliefs about education. Hirsch’s plea for knowledge-based curriculum deserves respect and attention. However, we should not forget that knowledge-based curriculum could go along with child-centeredness and skill building. Knowledge matters but it is not the only thing that matters in education. Neither is a knowledge-based curriculum a panacea for all educational problems!

References


Book Review – 2

A method does not deskill teachers, rather it empowers them.

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Introduction

Every teacher has certain thought in their mind and they use the thoughts into actions that is, in teaching and learning language. According to Larsen-Freeman, ‘the actions are the techniques and thoughts are the principles’ (p. 1). From the combination of these two terms, she named a book entitled “Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching” which aims to uncover the thoughts of teachers or language educators on which they stand to carry out the action; and, to introduce the variety of teaching techniques for language teaching and learning. Though the book contains only 189 pages, it is an appropriate and illuminating gift for the language teacher and educator in terms of language teaching methods and techniques.

Background information

This book is based on the personal experience of Diane Larsen-Freeman in teaching the methods and approaches course at the school of international training. As stated above, she wants to go to the field and see how the action and thought are linked together. In other words, how language teaching method is practiced. There are 12 chapters in the book. The first chapter is an introduction chapter in which she describes the overview of the book in general. From chapter two to nine, there is a detailed explanation of only one method in each chapter. Chapter number is arranged on the basis of gender: ‘in the even number of chapter, the teacher is female; in the odd number chapter, the teacher is male’ (p. 8). All the chapters start with the introduction of the method, followed by real classroom experience. Then, she writes about her observation and draws the principle out of the observation. After that, she has set 10 questions to check the general understanding of the readers. She
asks about goal, role of teachers and students, characteristic of teaching and learning process, nature of teacher student interaction and student to student interaction, feeling of the students, view on language and culture, skill and aspect focused, role of students native language, techniques of evaluation and views on errors respectively. She revises the techniques adopted by the teachers in teaching the real classroom. At last, she draws conclusion of the chapter followed by two types of question: checking understanding and application in real life situation. But, chapter ten and eleven consists of three methods. Chapter ten is grouped on the basis of the theme that language can be best learnt through communication whereas chapter eleven on the theme that language acquisition can be enhanced by working not only the language but also the process of learning. In these two chapters, techniques, conclusion and activities are not clearly stated. In chapter twelve, she has modified the previous edition’s ‘epilogue’ into conclusion chapter of its own.

She has discussed on grammar translation method in chapter two. In it, she observed high-intermediate level English class at a university in Colombia where 42 students were taught two hours classes three times in a week. By the observation of the class, she has drawn the principles and suggested the possible techniques used in the method. In chapter three, she has discussed about the direct method. It is a method of teaching foreign or second language in which ‘meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids with no recourse to the students native language’. (Diller, 1978 as cited in p. 23). For this, she has observed a lower secondary school level English teacher’s class in Italy. The class had 30 students who attended English class for one hour, three times a week. On the basis of her observation, she has developed principles and recommended techniques for foreign language teaching.

Chapter four is on Audio-Lingual method. It is a method of teaching foreign or second language teaching in which language is learnt through conditioning- direct association between stimulus, response and reinforcement. In order to understand this method, she has observed beginning level English class in Mali. There were 34 students of 13 to 15 years of age. The class met one hour a day, five days in a week. From her observation, she has drawn principles of language teaching and suggested drill and pattern practice as main techniques of language learning and teaching. Similarly, she has explained silent way, desuggestopedia, community language learning and total physical response in chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 respectively.

Chapter nine is about communicative method; the current foreign language teaching method which aims to develop communicative competence of learners by communicating in the target language. She has visited a class being conducted for adult immigrants to Canada. These 20 people had lived in Canada for two years and were at a high-intermediate level of English proficiency. They met two evenings a week for two hours each class. She has observed the class and drawn principles. She has advised five techniques of it: authentic materials, scrambled sentences, language games, picture strip story and role play. In chapter ten, content-based, task based and participatory approaches are discussed. Though these methods make communication as central but there is slight difference between communicative method and these approaches. It is a matter of focus. These methods do not begin with language function. Instead, they give priority to process over predetermined linguistic content. In these approaches, students use English to learn content rather that leaning to use English. (Howatt 1984). Learning strategy training, cooperative learning, and multiple intelligences are not comprehensive method of language teaching, but they
complement the others method and reflect interesting methodological practice. The last chapter presents the summary chart of the entire chapters. Different methods are vividly compared and contrasted followed by selecting the language teaching method in a classroom teaching. He concludes the book with the development of the methodology.

Evaluation

Everything has positive and negative aspects. This book is evaluated in terms of reader’s perspectives.

Positive aspects

I. Real experience: - the writer goes into the real classroom to observe the teaching and learning activities of the teacher and students and then she draws conclusions from there. So, this book is the product of real experience.

II. Practicality: all the principles and techniques described in the book are still in use in teaching and learning activities in the classroom because it is a practical outcome of her experiences.

III. Content: the contents are presented in chronological order; method that were used in past till the present.

IV. Level of difficulty: the language she has used is simple. Not only the language teacher but general students also can easily comprehend the content.

V. Purpose of writing: her purpose was to teach how to put the thoughts into action. She is able to do so by practically observing the class the deriving the principles and techniques out of it.

VI. Layout: since I have only digital photocopy of the book, I can’t say more about it. However, it’s size and design is comfortable for the readers.

VII. Date: though this book has been published in 2000, it talks about the current methods and techniques used in language teaching and learning today.

Negative aspects

I. Unconvincing: teachers do not think about the method while they are planning their lesson (Long, 1990) because methodological level tells us little about what really occurs in the classroom.

II. Prescription of classroom behaviours: only one method and technique is not applicable in all classrooms in the world. It might vary according to the context. The context of Canada and Nepal is totally different. The thing that is perfectly applicable in Canada can be failure in Nepal. So prescribing technique in terms of observation in one context does not fit in others.
III. Search for the best method is ill-advised (Prabhu, 1990): method is a tool in the hand of carpenter. She can make furniture on the basis of her skills. Similarly, teacher also selects his own activity to make the best. So, one can’t suggest the best method to others.

IV. Redundancy: first she talks about the experiences of the class and again she describes about in the observation and principles. She further describes the same in reviewing the principles in 10 questions and techniques which is redundant.

V. Parts of the book: index and glossary part is missing in the book which is really essential for the novice learners or teachers.

Suggestions and recommendations

Method does not deskill the teachers. It rather helps them articulate and transfer their understanding of teaching and learning process. Since a method is more abstract than a teaching and learning activities, we should not follow it as a recipe for preparing a food because how to implement in the classroom depends on nature, background of the student, teachers expectations, institutional constrain, sociopolitical inequalities and socio-cultural context. Therefore, my suggestion is to follow the eclectic method that fits into your classroom.

Borrowing the word from series editor, I want to say that this book is her serious and deeply personal thought devoted to complex pedagogical issues and her incomparable ability to make this matter come alive with great clarity for the widest professional readership.
Book Review – 3

Language teaching evolves through the processes of language policy, curriculum and instruction, and evaluation.

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Introduction

The book entitled “The Context of Language Teaching” written by one of the famous and leading methodologists in English Language Teaching, Jack C. Richards. The book is illustrative of the scope and depth of the issues involved in the language teaching process and engaging teaching practices. One of the important aspects of his book is its approach of dealing with the issues of language teaching. The book has covered a broad link in the field of English language teaching. The topics covered include syllabus design, methodology and methods, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and grammar. The author presents broad issues of ELT and applied linguistics, and provides their succinct summaries by exploring their practical implications. The book also addresses the specific issues related to English language teaching illustrating the need for an integration of theory into practice. It has fourteen units, each focusing on a different relevant area of language teaching, which deals with some of the practical issues in language teaching. It assists teachers, teachers in training and students of applied linguistics to arrive at a clearer understanding of a wide range of important topics in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. The chapters are grouped around several complementary themes. The context of language teaching gives an overview of language teaching and traces the ways in which language teaching practices evolve, from the level of language policy through the curriculum and instructional process to evaluation. It gives an emphasis on different level of planning and organizing a successful language teaching entails.
Strengths of the Book

The chapters are organized in such a way that they give a clear understanding of English language teaching and planning. The first unit deals with the nature and scope of English language teaching and considers the ways in which the field of teaching English to the speakers of other languages. It also deals with the practical realities of language teaching. The first unit is very useful to the educational planners, researchers, teachers and learners. It gives different levels of planning, organization instructional activity, and assessment that constitute the applied linguistics of language teaching.

The second chapter deals with the method: approach, design, and procedure. This unit makes a clear description of language teaching in the past and present. Apart from this, this chapter relates theory to practice by focusing assumptions in teaching, and on the programs and practices that relate to these assumptions. It also shows how the reasonably fine analysis that the present model of teaching directs can help provide important insights into the internal adequacy of particular methods, along with the similarities and differences that exist between alternative methods in different periods of time.

Similarly, the third chapter deals the history of language teaching which the history of ideas about what language is and how languages are learned. It analyses and provides explanation why certain methods appeared and died in the course of time and situation. Here, the author tries to draw readers’ attention to the broader issues of curriculum development in language program and to the weak empirical basis on which methods are founded. In the same way, the fourth chapter deals with a non-contrastive approach to error analysis which brings the clear thought of early seventies and began a paradigm shift in how second language learning processes were viewed. This unit clearly emphasizes the error analysis occurring in different time and situation. The analyses major types of intralingual and developmental errors - overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and the building of false systems or concepts. It also focuses on the fact that interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in second language learning, and contrastive analysis has proved to be valuable in locating areas of interlanguage interference. The chapter also gives an idea of teaching techniques and procedures that take into account the structural and developmental conflicts in language learning. The fifth unit, error analysis, interlanguage analysis, and second language acquisition research which have not been motivated by interest in issues of immediate practical application to language teaching. Similarly, it focuses on the applied linguistics perspectives to the applicability and value of much of the research in the field of language teaching and learning.

The next four chapters shift from a psycholinguistics to a sociolinguistic focus and illustrate their relevance to language teaching of conversational analysis, discourse analysis, and speech act theory. In chapter six, for example, communicative needs in second and foreign
language learning are discussed, where several components of communicative competence are discussed. Here, learning a second and foreign language is seen to be influenced by communicative goals and processes. Learners express meanings, which are shown to influence the nature of their discourse. The need of the learners to acquire conventional ways of expressing meaning is analysed, along with the importance of acquiring alternative ways of expressing speech acts. The chapter illustrates that conversation is a simple process that reflects the interaction between a speaker, a hearer, language and a message. Similarly, the author describes the five assumptions of verbal communication, which are - communication is meaning based, conventional, appropriate, interactional, and structured. It reflects that language as a system of communication, a way the dynamics of the communicative process influence the form of verbal communication, is seldom fully appreciated. In other words, here, what we understand of the effects of communicative needs on non-native speaker discourse should make us more understanding of our students’ difficulties in using English.

In chapter seven, “Answers to Yes/No Questions,” which is also a grammatical rule commonly taught in introductory ESL/EFL textbook, is tested against conversational and other data for its communicative authenticity. The chapter also covers the considerable gap found between the rules learners who are required to master in textbooks and the rules what native speakers use conversationally when they answer yes/no questions. Therefore, this chapter offers caution against relying on the intuitions, of textbook writers when it comes to accurate representation of features of conversational discourse. In addition, it illustrates how teachers in training can be involved in data collection and discourse analysis as part of their preparation to teach English.

Chapters eight and nine talks about speech acts and second language learning and cross-cultural aspects of conversational competence, expanding on some of the issues raised in chapter six. He suggests that conversational competence is discussed in terms of rules of speech act and conversational management. He explores the notions of differences between English and the native language with respect to realization of speech acts, expression of directness, topic behaviour, expression of politeness, and use of conversational routines, which are shown to have a potentially important influence on the processes of learning and communication. Similarly, this book provides an analysis of the growing interest in communicative issues in language curriculum development in recent years, while re-evaluating the role of grammar in language teaching. The author cautions that growing importance of communicative language teaching does not mean that grammatical questions are no longer of concern to teachers or textbook writers.

Similarly, chapters ten, eleven, and twelve deal with grammatical topics. The status of grammar in the language curriculum is discussed from the viewpoint of its contribution to language proficiency. The author also focuses on the theory of language proficiency which is seen as the starting point for curriculum development and for determining the importance of grammar at any given stage in a language curriculum. Therefore, this book is useful to syllabus designers and teaching materials developers.

In the next two chapters, the author focuses on the approaches to the teaching of grammar. Here, he tries to involve and minimise potential learning problems by relating each grammatical form to its uses where it is communicatively appropriate and functionally motivated. Similarly, the last two chapters consider the teaching of vocabulary and listening
comprehension. These two units discuss the theme of lexical knowledge and vocabulary teaching. Teaching techniques are examined according to the way they attempt to build these aspects of vocabulary knowledge. For the language teachers and learners, the final chapter is very useful because it talks about the three dimensions of teaching of listening comprehension.

Weaknesses of the book

Though the book has covered most areas of language teaching, it fails to address specific issues of language teaching and planning. The book has covered major issues like teaching methodology, curriculum development, and history of language teaching, error analysis, contrastive analysis, second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, grammar, syllabus design, and language skills comprehension and so on. All these areas are broad and need specific planning and implications. The chapters/units mostly discuss about teaching and learning issues in general, and therefore, lack their specific implementation in different contexts. If the book had provided instances of implementation of the broad theories presented in specific contexts, then the readers would find it more useful in reading and implementing them in their own contexts. In other words, although the book has covered most, theoretical standpoints, it fails to provide their specific implications in different educational contexts. In spite of these few lacking, I really enjoyed reading the book. I encourage language teachers and ELT practitioners to read the book in order to gain theoretical bases for what they do in their English language classrooms.

References

From the ELT Blog

1. ELT Planning

To those novice and experienced teachers who are on the look for adventures and new ideas, the blog ELT Planning offers a range of materials on a variety of categories.

While ELT Planning covers a lot of ground in its wide range of posts, you can easily find what you are looking for because the categories provided in the tabs labelled ‘General’, ‘Lesson Ideas’, ‘CELTA Tips’ and ‘DipTESOL Tips’ make for easy navigating. ELT Planning’s blogger

You can contribute to the blog with your own teaching experience and teaching ideas, like Pete.

Pete Clements is a regular contributor to ETp and MET and wrote the informative article ‘I Blog, Therefore I Am’ in the May issue of our magazine.

Recent posts on ELT planning include:

- Lesson idea:
- Pronunciation articles
- Insight into a synthetic syllabus
- 20 great video sites for the EFL classroom
- My tree octopus fake news fail

In order to take part in the blog, please visit: https://eltplanning.com

2. Lesson plans digger

This blog, lesson plan digger, is for those who are often surfing the net to find useful lesson plans for teaching almost everything. This is most useful way to supplement your text (course) books.
'If you are bored, or simply unconvinced by the way your course books are dealing with articles, modal verbs and vocabulary revision, you might find yourself ploughing through the internet digging for better lesson ideas. Consider Lesson Plan Diggers as your first port of call for finding the lesson plan that might inspire you and your learners. Gosia Kwiatkowska’s blog is beautifully laid out and filled with ideas from Day One Ice-Breakers and problem-solving speaking activities to games for exam classes and ways to use cartoons in your lessons.

As for the digging...

Every teacher knows that complementing our course books is what we do often (if there even is a course book!), and what even more often means hours of researching, downloading, editing and tailoring whatever we had found; the practice to which I like to refer as lesson plan digging. My digging adventure might have started out of necessity, but as I have been gaining classroom experience, making my own lesson plans or adapting already existing resources for the particular needs of my students (fine-tuning might be the word!) has become very rewarding. It is great to see my students enjoy the class and learn using activities I have prepared myself (although they usually make fun of my choices of visuals!). This blog aims at providing fellow lesson plan diggers with useful teaching materials and ideas.

To take part in the blog, please click on the link: https://www.lessonplansdigger.com/

3. That ELT Blog
There is something uplifting and refreshing about That ELT Blog. Written by a relatively new teacher who is currently doing her Cambridge DELTA, Sanchia Danielle takes us on her journey in ELT, sharing her fears and successes, her lessons and her reflections.

The blogger frequently refers to the Italian contexts, as she is herself from Italy. The tips and ideas are, nonetheless, useful for teachers everywhere. Some the areas the blog address include: career, CLIL, conference, curriculum/syllabus, Delta, EFL, ELT, examexperience, FCE, feedback, grammar, IGCSE, international houselesson, lesson materials, lesson plan, lexis, listening, speaking management, observation, professional development, reflection, teacher life, teacher training, professional development

Please click on the link to take part: https://thateltblog.wordpress.com/

4 Anthony Teacher.Com

This blog has an academic touch to ELT blogging. While not complicating ELT matters, this one challenges your perspectives and provides useful explanation for any alternative ways and techniques to teaching.

‘Combining research summaries, self-confessed rants, and practical advice in a myriad of highly entertaining blogposts, AnthonyTeacher.com manages to bridge the gap between research and practice for the rest of us, while keeping the tone light and personable. Alongside the thought-provoking topics such as the relationship between introversion and culture, the limitations of formulaic writing, and the on-going debate about the usefulness of coursebooks, are practical tips on using activities and tools like Pecha Kucha, Wikipedia, Academic Reading Circles and Corpora. Anthony Schmidt is also the founder and contributor to Research Bites (along with Mura Nava of previously mentioned EFL Notes), which is dedicated to sharing teacher-friendly summaries of ELT research’.

Recent Posts include:

- Statistics: What does the data mean?
- Statistics: Know your limits
- Statistics: When size matters
- Ants on a Blog – Specialist Corpora and ESP
- Playing with PlayPhrase
- Making History: Supporting Language through Content in Intensive English Programs
- Never Trust a Pyramid
5. Tekhnologic

We have kept those teachers who are techno-experts in mind as well. If you like challenging yourself in using technologies for teaching purposes, this blog is definitely for you.

‘Packed full of lesson ideas, Tekhnologic shows us just what Powerpoint can do for us in the classroom. From more traditional games like Bingo and Family Feud to adapted games like Spaceman and Finger Twister and ELT games like Find the Lie and Grammar Auction, Tekhnologic reminds us of the fun we could be having in our language classrooms and provides a huge array of Powerpoint templates to help us turn our classrooms into an impressive game show’.

To try some of their tips and to find more about them, please visit: www.tekhnologic.worldpress.com.
From the ELT world

XIII International Conference on Foreign Languages, Communication and Culture (WEFLA) & XIII International Seminar on Canadian Studies (SECAN)

The conference will foster international cooperation by providing an opportunity to examine and share the state-of-the-art research and best practices in the field of applied linguistics as well as in Canadian Studies.

Date: 24-26 April 2019
Location: Holguin, Cuba
Abstract submission deadline: 28 February 2019
For further information: https://wefla2019.sciencesconf.org/resource/page/id/1
For abstract submission: https://wefla2019.sciencesconf.org/resource/page/id/2

II International Conference on Child Foreign/Second Language Learning (CFSLL)

The conference is intended for all those interested in the teaching and learning of foreign languages at an early age, both pre-primary and primary (up to around 14 years of age).

Date: 26-28 September 2019
Location: Cracow, Poland
Abstract submission deadline: 30 March 2019
For further information: https://childrenforeignlanguageconferenceeng.weebly.com/call-for-papers.html
For abstract submission: https://childrenforeignlanguageconferenceeng.weebly.com/abstract-submission.html

Fifth Saarbrücken Conference on Foreign Language Teaching

The theme of the Fifth Saarbrücken Conference on Foreign Language Teaching is productivity in linguistics and language teaching.

Date: 29-31 October 2019
Location: Saarbrücken, Germany
Abstract submission deadline: 31 August 2019

For further information: https://5saarbrueckerfremdsprachentagung.blogspot.com/search/label/1%20English

For abstract submission: fremdsprachentagung@goolemail.com

6th International Conference ‘Cross-Curricularity in Language Education’

This three-day conference offers a meeting place for researchers and practitioners interested in applied linguistics, especially in cross-curricular language learning and teaching.

Date: 12–14 September 2019

Location: Krotoszyn, Poland

Abstract submission deadline: 30 July 2019

Information about Journal of NELTA

This page contains information about (a) the Journal, (b) submission categories, (c) submission guideline, (d) copyright policy, and (e) general information.

A. About Journal of NELTA

First published in 1996, the Journal of NELTA is a premiere publication of Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA). The journal, an integral part of NELTA’s mission of enhancing the quality of English language teaching and learning through professional networking, supporting ELT practitioners and collaborating with ELE institutions and organisations, is a means of achieving Association’s goal of providing a ‘forum for exchanges of ideas and experiences at national, regional and international levels’.

Journal of NELTA is a peer-refereed journal devoted to publication of quality materials on the theory and practice of English language teaching (ELT) in developed as well as under-resourced contexts. It publishes articles, research reports, practical teaching ideas, book reviews and other useful materials which have local, regional and global relevance. As the premium publication of Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA), the Journal particularly welcomes contributions that add to the contemporary discourses on ELT practices. Contributions that deal with ELT theories and methods will serve the professional community only when they are situated in the authors’ own practices and/or in the contemporary educational and social contexts. Therefore, materials published in the Journal of NELTA are relevant to and situated in local, national, regional, and/or contexts.

The Journal considers contributions on any aspect of the ELT theory and practice, including but not limited to the following:

- **ELT theory**: works that discuss or interpret ELT theory critically from local/regional perspectives

- **Innovative teaching and/or research practices**: works that describe and explore how authors have developed or adapted any innovative methods or practices in ELT

- **Professional development practices**: works that raise new issues of ELT that deserve the attention of the professional community, government, or society (e.g. ‘reconceptualising teacher education’)

- **Success stories**: scholarly articles that narrate and reflect on successful implementation of ELT theory, method, or practice,

- **Any other ELT related issues/subjects** that is relevant to ELT professional community.
B. Submission Categories

Contributions may be submitted for one of the following categories

Full Length Articles/Reports (5000-6000 words):

- **Empirical studies**: full length articles based on the fieldwork on issues of ELT, language education, teacher development or training, language testing and other relevant issues of language teaching. Because local practices have been relatively little researched outside the university context, submissions that represent this area will get high priority for the publication.

- **Knowledge-based perspectives**: articles that articulate a comprehensive and critical discussion of innovative ELT concepts. Such articles must present the author’s clear voice on the perspective that is of interest to the readers of the Journal.

- **Classroom research and teacher reflections**: articles coming directly out of the classroom teaching or teacher’s own reflection of his/her teaching. These can be stories in the form of narrative descriptions or they can follow the typical format of cyclical action research reports.

Practical Pedagogic Ideas (2000 words):

- Many teachers look for ideas on the daily/regular basis which they can quickly adapt and put to practice. A short and simple teaching idea, which is illustrative and supported with relevant activities and materials, can address the need.

- A pedagogical idea addresses any element/aspect/skill of the English language. As a micro-level teaching tip, the idea is purposeful and principled in the sense that it addresses a particular teaching objective and is based on or guided by some pedagogic principles.

- The write up of the idea may be 1500-2000 word long plus references (3-5 references only) and appendices.

- Ideas that are useful for teachers in the classroom (e.g., tips for teaching particular skills/aspects of language, lesson plans, tasks for teaching poetry, etc.) may be submitted under this category. A template is available in the Journal of NELTA website.

Book reviews (1500 words):

- Reviews of recently published ELT books that are of professional significance to the readers. Reviews should generally provide a short introduction of the author and the purpose of the book, its descriptive summary, followed by its evaluative comments and its significance to the researchers and practitioners in Nepal. Reviews should not exceed 1,500 words including references.
Action Research Reports (3000 words)

This new section of the Journal of NELTA includes well-written action research report. The report may be 3000 word long and should include succinct description of (a) the research context, (b) brief literature review (a) research methodology (d) Data collection, (e) data analysis and interpretation, (f) discussion of findings and implication, and (g) references. These reports are not peer reviewed; however, they will be reviewed and edited by the editors.

Journal of NELTA Forum

The Journal of NELTA is also a platform for its readers to interact and share their ideas and opinions. For this reason, the Journal publishes an opinion-based article and invites its readers to send comments, responses, or critiques of the position of the author, which may be published, in the following issue of the Journal. The requirements for this article are the same as the full-length article but it may be shorter in length.

C. Submission Guidelines

Submissions must follow the guidelines provided by NELTA. To access submission guidelines, authors should visit the Journal of NELTA website under www.nelta.org.np. Manuscripts must be submitted as an email attachment accompanied by a well-written cover letter to the editorial address: neltaeditorialboard@gmail.com. The cover letter email should include author’s full name, institutional affiliation, title of the paper, and any other pertinent information.

D. Copyright Policy ©

The Journal of NELTA is copyright by Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA). Apart from citing/referencing in academic works, no part of any materials may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from its copyright owner – NELTA. Requests and enquires concerning reproduction and rights may be addressed to NELTA or the editorial board at neltaeditorialboard@gmail.com.

E. Submission Review (Policy) Process

Submissions received for Journal of NELTA undergo through a rigorous three-stage review process. In the first stage, the editorial board screens submissions which meet the requirements of originality, and appropriateness, and follow the Journal of NELTA style and format for the second stage. In the second stage, the articles are sent to two external reviewers for their blind reviews. Depending upon the review reports, articles are either rejected or selected for the next stage which may involve revisions. In the third stage, the re-assigned reviewers and the editorial board decide if the submissions meet all the Journal of NELTA requirements. All selected submissions areedited for language clarity and space. All short-listed articles go through a plagiarism check before they are considered for acceptance.
E. General Information

(i) Frequency: Currently, Journal of NELTA is published once a year.

(ii) Rates and subscription: Its Owner decides the subscription rate of the Journal on the yearly basis. Readers interested in subscribing the Journal should write to the Central Committee of NELTA or its editorial board.

(iii) Ownership: The Journal of NELTA is owned and published by Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA).
Submission guidelines for Journal of NELTA

Submission Guidelines

As a peer reviewed professional journal, the Journal of NELTA requires contributors to follow the guidelines given below for their submissions to be considered for publication by the editorial board. Please note that selection for consideration for publication does not guarantee publication. Contributors are encouraged to work with the Editorial Board to make their work publishable.

Articles

1. Please do not write author’s name in the manuscript until the editorial board has selected the article for consideration towards publication.

2. Articles should be 5000 words (excluding references and appendices).

3. Articles should be related to an area of Applied Linguistics, ELT, SLA, Sociolinguists, Teacher Education, Training and Development and their professional development. In addition, we also accept practical training session plans to teach any skills and aspects of language and reflections on any teacher training program, articles coming out of classroom teaching experience or professional collaboration in ELT. Any article must be original, professionally relevant, and intellectually engaging.

4. The manuscript should be typed in Time New Romans, 12 font size, with double space, and printed or printable in A4 size paper. Manuscript should be sent as an e-mail attachment in a MS Word file.

5. If the manuscript includes any special fonts, please send the fonts attached along with the manuscript.

6. The deadline for submissions is August 31. However, we encourage authors to submit the article as soon as possible. Reviewers will be able to give you more substantial feedback if you submit early, although early submission will not affect the selection process itself.

Practical Pedagogic Ideas:

- The writing of the idea may be 1500-2000 word long plus references (3-5 refs only) and appendices.

- Ideas that are useful for teachers in the classroom e.g., tips for teaching particular skills/aspects of language, lesson plans, tasks for teaching poetry, etc. may be submitted under this category. A template for this may be provided upon request.
Book reviews:

- Reviews of recently published ELT books that are of professional significance to the readers. Reviews should generally provide a short introduction of the author and the purpose of the book, its descriptive summary, followed by its evaluative comments and its significance to the researchers and practitioners in Nepal. Reviews should not exceed 1,500 words including references.

Publication Process

In order to improve the quality and professional rigor of the journal, submissions will be taken through a review process followed by subsequent revisions and improvements after their initial submission. The editorial board will make the initial selection completely anonymous and will continue to do so, as much as practicable, when the submission is sent back to the author for revision.

- We will acknowledge the receipt of each manuscript.
- The manuscript will be peer reviewed by two anonymous reviewers.
- The acceptance or rejection of the manuscript, based on the feedback from the reviewers, will be notified to the author within 5-7 weeks of submission.
- Comments of the reviewers will be forwarded to the author for final submission of the article (if the work is accepted in subsequent assessments). Initial consideration for publication based on one or more rounds of revision of a work will not guarantee the final publication of a work.
- Authors must submit a revised draft within one week of receiving the comment on the first draft. A second round of comments, if deemed necessary by the editorial board, may be offered to the author with five more days of extended time. Late submission, at any stage of the review process, may be considered as opting out of the publication process.

Submission of manuscripts

Manuscript must be submitted as an email attachment accompanied by a well-written cover letter to the editorial address: neltaeditorialboard@gmail.com. Cover letter email will include author’s full name, institutional affiliation, title of the article, and a short biodata.

A manuscript will be accepted on the understanding that it is an original contribution which has not been published previously and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Contributors must make sure to abide by scholarly practices including intellectual property and copyrights standards in the strictest manner. They are also encouraged to read past NELTA journals and build upon both the conventions and scholarship of the association. Some issues of the journal can be accessed online at Nepal Journal website page (http://www.nepjol.info/index.php/NELTA/issue/archive) as well as at NELTA’s homepage (http://www.nelta.org.np/- via the link “journals” on top right).
Manuscript specifications

1. FORMAT

The entire manuscript, including the abstract, the reference list, and any tables or figures and their captions, should be presented as A4 doubled spaced typescript.

- **Sections**: A manuscript should begin with a title page that includes the full title of the article, a suggested shorter title for running heads, and a list of keywords.
- **Notes**: Footnotes must be avoided.
- **Structure**: The structure of the manuscript depends on the type of article. For example, if an article is research-based, it might include research questions or objectives, rationale and significance of the work, a review of literature along with the theoretical framework, research design and procedure, findings of the study and discussions. Similarly, if an article is a knowledge-based theoretical one, it might begin with a general introduction that clearly states what the article is about and how the author is going to organise his/her writing, followed by the sub-headings that connect the section and expand the central issue.

**However**, all articles must include the following sections/components:

2. SECTIONS

- **Title**: Title of the work must be precise and suggestive of the work’s main idea. It must be in keeping with the tone of the work (but not cute or fancy).

  (Please note that a work’s title can only be changed if approved or suggested by the editors after acceptance).

- **Abstract**: No more than 200 words.

- **Key words**: Authors should list up to five keywords related to their article.

- **Style of Documentation**: APA style should be adopted throughout the manuscript.

- **Uniformity**: For uniformity please follow the same spelling, punctuation and other mechanical and format conventions throughout the manuscript. For example, if you spell a word as ‘organisation’ in the beginning please do not write ‘organization’ next time in the same manuscript.
Tables: If authors have table in their manuscripts, they should be numbered and given a brief title.

Figures: If there are figures and maps in your manuscript, please include under each figure a clear and brief caption describing it.

3. STYLE OF REFERENCE/DOCUMENTATION REFERENCE ENTRIES

Journal Articles:


Books:


Edited books:


Chapters in Books:


Online resources:


IN-TEXT CITATION

Short Quotations (less than 40 words)
Lave and Wenger (1991) argues for ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (p. 34).

**Long Quotations (more than 40 words)**

Eckhert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) define community of practice as follows:

An aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour. Likewise, there must be a mutual interaction among the members. (p. 464)

**Paraphrasing:**

**Single author:**

The construction of teacher identity is a process in which teachers engage in interaction not only with other members but also with broader socio-cultural context (Wenger, 1998).

**Multiple sources/authors:**

Identity is constructed through the reflective practice in which teachers listen to opinions of students in the classroom and change contents and methods of teaching for better learning (Richards, 1990; Bartlett, 1990).

**(Note: if you are citing more than one work of the same author published in the same year, please put a, b, c after the date of the publication in a chronological order).**

**Three to Six Authors**


**More Than Six Authors**


**Newspaper article:**


**(Note: For more details on APA style, please go to http://www.apastyle.org/).**