Journal of NELTA

Volume 22  Number: 1-2  December 2017

Board of Advisors

Professor Abhi Subedi, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Professor Jai Raj Awasthi, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Professor Tim Cauldery, Emeritus, University of Aarhus, Denmark
Professor Selma Sonntag, University of Colorado, USA
Professor Z. N. Patil, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India
Professor Zakia Sarwar, Hon. Director, SPELT, Pakistan
A/Professor Ahmar Mahboob, University of Sydney, Australia
Dr. Lilly Yazdanpanah, RMIT University, Australia
Dr. Christine Manara, Atma Jaya Catholic University, Indonesia
A/Professor Motikala Subba Dewan, Tribhuvan University, (President of NELTA, the chair of the board of advisors)

Board of Editors

Editor-in-Chief
Ram Ashish Giri, PhD, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia
Deputy Editor-in-Chief
Binod Luitel, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Editors
Purna Bahadur Kadel, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Madhu Neupane, PhD Scholar, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong
Ashok Raj Khati, MPhil Scholar, Kathmandu University, Nepal
Suman Laudari, PhD Scholar, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

Guest Editor
Professor Z. N. Patil, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India

Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA)

GPO Box No.: 11110, Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone: 977-1-44720455
E-mail: ccnelta@gmail.com

Journal of NELTA has been indexed in:

- Academicindex.net
- Journalseek.net
- Linguistlist.org

Price Rs. 650/-
Board of Reviewers

Ammar Raj Joshi, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Anamika Sharma, PhD, Monash University, ELC, Australia
Anand Sharma, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Annie Guerin, PhD, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Bal Krishna Sharma, PhD, University of Idaho, USA
Bal Krishna Sharma, Kathmandu University, Nepal
David Perrodin, Eastern Asia University, Thailand
Dianne Molly, PhD, Monash University, ELC, Australia
Ellen Abakah, PhD Scholar, University of Technology Sydney, Australia
Ganga Ram Gautam, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Gopal Prasad Pandey, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Hai Nguyen, PhD, Monash University, ELC, Australia
Hem Raj Kafle, PhD, Kathmandu University, Nepal
Hemanta Raj Dahal, Siam Technological College, Thailand
Hima Rawal, PhD Scholar, Michigan State University, USA
Jeevan Karki, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Kalyan Chattopadhyay, Calcutta University, India
Kamal Poudel, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Karna Rana, PhD Scholar, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
Karuna Nepal, Pokhara University, Nepal
Khagendra Raj Dhakal, King Mongkut’s University of Technology, Thailand
Laxman Gnawali, PhD, Kathmandu University, Nepal
Mohan Singh Saud, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Navaraj Neupane, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Oksana King, PhD, Monash University, ELC, Australia
Pingo Zablon, PhD Scholar, University of Technology Sydney, Australia
Pramod Sah, PhD Scholar, University of British Columbia, Canada
Praveen Kumar Yadav, Mahidol University, Thailand
Prem Prasad Poudel, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Prem Phyak, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Prithvi N. Shrestha, PhD, Open University, United Kingdom
Rishi Ram Rijal, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Roby Marlina, PhD, RELC University, Singapore
Saraswati Dawadi, PhD Scholar, Open University, United Kingdom
Shurabhi Bharati, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India
Shyam Bahadur Pandey, PhD Scholar, Purdue University, USA
Sovia R.J. Singh, Chitkara University, India
Tikaram Poudel, PhD, Kathmandu University, Nepal
This volume is a new-look issue of the Journal of NELTA. With a view to meeting the growing interest and demands of NELTA members, the newly constituted editorial board of NELTA, in consultation with NELTA leadership, has introduced some changes in the presentation of the Journal. The first and foremost change is the way in which the contents of the Journal have been presented. They have been organised in five different sections. The first section is comprised of feature articles. There are ten articles in this section authored by highly experienced teachers and teacher educators from home and abroad. These articles broadly address four major themes of English language teaching: teachers and teacher education, teaching methodology, e-learning and media use, and teaching and learning resources. The findings and implications reported in these articles are valuable and worth exploring.

Second, a sizeable number of NELTA members look on a regular basis for ideas and teaching tips that help them in their day-to-day teaching. More than theoretical issues, they are interested in ideas that they can put in practice without having to do much preparation. In order to help such teachers, a new section, “Practical Pedagogic Ideas,” has been introduced. Ideas included in this section are ones developed by practicing teachers and/or teacher educators. We hope that readers get inspired to practice these ideas and contribute to the Journal by submitting their own practical teaching ideas.

In addition, the advent of ICT and Internet has made it possible for ELT practitioners from all over the world to connect. The technology has changed the way we interact and share our ideas with individuals and organisations located in every corner of the globe. Online media has enabled us to participate in any professional event no matter where it takes place. With a view to assisting NELTA members in this regard, the Journal has included a number of useful ELT related blogs for them to get involved in, as well as guidance of how to take part in conversations therein. With a similar objective, we have introduced the section “From the ELT World,” which contains information on regional and international conferences. Many of these organisations may have sponsorships for emerging and early-career professionals. Interested NELTA members should contact the organisations directly. Finally, we have re-introduced the section “Book/material Reviews,” which offers reviews of recent and relevant books/resources published in the field of ELT. One covert aim of this section is to encourage readers of this Journal to read and write their own reviews of books and other appropriate materials.

The Journal is also a platform for its readers to interact and respond to the materials published, and to share their views on them. To this effect, we introduce a new feature called “Journal of NELTA Forum,” under which opinion article(s) will be published. Readers can write their informed response.
to the articles, a selection of which will be published in the next issue of the Journal.

With a view to facilitating the publication process, we have brought in a change in the Journal’s editorial panel. The Journal now has an Advisory Board which consists of ELT professionals from around the world. The Advisory Board provides advice on matters related to the publication of materials. We are grateful to the members for agreeing to serve on the Board. The Editorial Board will continue to seek their support and advice on how to make the Journal better in the years ahead. The Reviewers Panel has also been expanded with more domestic and international experts to ensure rigorous and quality review of the materials received. We welcome our advisors and reviewers. Similarly, in order to make the editorial process more transparent and accountable, the members of the editorial board are also now section editors. In addition to the feature articles and conference proceedings, they are also responsible for an allocated section for which they receive, review and edit submissions.

We hope the changes introduced in the editorial process help to make the Journal a complete and quality journal, a journal its readers enjoy and are encouraged to be a part of. We also hope that its authors and reviewers feel pride in associating with it. We take this opportunity to thank the authors for submitting their valuable work and for maintaining patience during the long review process. We thank our reviewers for taking time out of their busy schedule to review the submissions. Their work helps us improve the quality of the Journal. We also thank Deborah Silver, for fixing the language anomalies, our guest editor Prof. Z. N. Patil for his guidance and Prof. Motikala Subba Dewan, president of NELTA, for her support.

Happy reading!

The Editorial Board
From the Guest Editor’s Desk

Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association is probably one of the most active and cohesive associations in the English language teaching world. NELTA international conferences provide a platform for syllabus designers, materials writers, practising teachers and researchers working at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. I had the privilege of delivering a keynote address and a couple of plenary addresses before the highly motivated, interested and disciplined audiences that NELTA conferences have always attracted. Now I feel doubly honoured to serve in the capacity of the Guest Editor for this year’s Journal of NELTA.

Reading the articles in this volume was an intellectually satisfying and professionally educative experience. A majority of contributions to this volume are theoretical papers and research articles which have used research tools such as classroom research, observation, questionnaires, interviews, and journal writing. The researchers have made use of quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures.

However, we find some practical papers and teaching articles as well in this collection. The journal includes about half a dozen brief articles which offer practical tips on the teaching of paragraph writing, poetry, communication skills, grammar, and reading. Thus NELTA proves, to use Shakespeare’s words from Othello, that its dedicated team and the scholarly gathering it assembles is not a “bookish theoretic” and that the Journal of NELTA is not “mere prattle without practice”.

The volume covers a wide range of topics such as reading, speaking and writing skills, communication skills, pedagogical methodology and instructional materials, continuous professional development, native and non-native speaker teachers, English for general purposes and English for specific purposes, face-to-face learning, online educational delivery, and blended learning, learning strategies, teacher beliefs/ views/ needs and practices, the use of technology in the English language teaching classroom, the use of learner’s mother tongue as a resource to facilitate the teaching of English, the benefits of journal writing, the use of journal articles as teaching materials, and cooperative learning.

This issue of the Journal of NELTA, like any other NELTA publication, makes an academically and professionally enriching reading and is worth having in the bookshelves of institutional as well as individual libraries.

Professor Z N Patil
Guest Editor
## Table of contents

   - Abdul Rouf and Abdul Rashid Mohamed  
   - Page 1

2. Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning for Improving Learners’  
   Proficiency Level of English Language in Secondary Level  
   Education in Nepal  
   - Keshab Kumar Sijali  
   - Page 13

3. Using the First Language (L1) as a Resource in EFL Classrooms:  
   Nepalese University Teachers’ and Students’ Perspectives  
   - Pramod Kumar Sah  
   - Page 25

4. The Relationship between Reading Strategy Use and EFL Test Performance  
   - Saraswati Dawadi  
   - Page 38

5. Should we Bend towards Blending? How?  
   - Madhu Neupane  
   - Page 52

6. Journal Writing in the EFL Classroom of Nepal  
   - Gyanendra Yadav  
   - Page 67

7. Teaching ESP at the Tertiary Level in Bangladesh: A General Perspective  
   - Sharmin Siddique  
   - Page 75

8. Student Teachers’ Views on Grammar and Grammar Teaching, and its  
   Communication to their Students  
   - Bal Ram Adhikari  
   - Page 88

9. Exploring ‘New World’ through New Media in ELT classrooms  
   - Julijana Zlatevska and Suman D C  
   - Page 102

10. Use of Journal Articles in English Language Classroom  
    - Sagar Poudel  
    - Page 109

### Journal of NELTA Forum

Non-native English Speaking Teacher (NNEST) and their Delivery  
- Laxmi Bahadur Maharjan  
- Page 116

### Practical Pedagogic Ideas

Teaching Communication Skill: Socializing (Making Small Talk)  
- Sangita Sapkota  
- Page 126
Paragraph Writing: A Process Based Model  
- Batuk Lal Tamang  129

Teaching Poem: Exploring Life Skills  
- Sarita Dewan  134

Teaching Three Forms of Adjectives  
- Jeevan Karki  139

A Learner-Engaging Reading Lesson  
- Laxman Gnawali  142

Book/Material Reviews

Making and Using Machinima in the Language Classroom  
- Sagun Shrestha  147

Myths and Facts about Successful Learning  
- Madhu Neupane  150

Creative English Teachers can Make the World a Better Place  
- Motikala Subba Dewan  154

From the ELT Blogs  157

From the ELT World  161
Secondary EL Teachers’ CPD: Present Practices and Perceived Needs

Abdul Rouf and Abdul Rashid Mohamed

Abstract

The present paper reports a study that aimed to explore secondary school (SS) English language (EL) teachers’ present practices of and perceived needs for continuing professional development (CPD) in Bangladesh. In 21st century worldwide educational settings, ‘change’ is the only constant trend. Consequently, EL teachers need to be continuously updated in their professional knowledge base and skills. They must be engaged in effective CPDs to keep abreast of innovations in language learning and teaching for their own career development and better learning outcomes for learners. Using a semi-structured questionnaire qualitative data was collected from 10 secondary EL teachers. The findings show that overall scenario of SS EL teachers’ CPD is not encouraging. The paper also discusses some implications for teachers’ professional learning.

Key words: Secondary EL Teachers, CPD, Practices, Needs

Introduction

In research literature, teachers’ continuing professional development (CPD) has been defined in various ways. CPD is used as an umbrella term to indicate professional growth, learning, and development of teachers. Hayes (2014), for example, explicated CPD as a life-long, many-sided experience that occurs inside or outside the workplace and covers both teachers’ professional and personal life. In a broader sense, CPD refers to diverse educational experiences connected to an individual’s work. Professionals take part in CPD activities to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that help improve their performance (Mizell, 2010).

According to Richards (2017), English is accorded a special position in many parts of the world, which necessitates supply of a good number of quality English language (EL) teachers; Bangladesh is no exception. Most of the secondary school (SS) EL teachers in Bangladesh are non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). They need continuous training for keeping themselves updated in their knowledge base and skills. In this context, CPD can play an important role in teachers’ professional development (PD). As teaching is not an inert profession, CPD would create opportunities for them to be engaged in reflective practice, to enhance knowledge and skills, and to collaborate with other teachers (Davidson, Dunlop, Soriano,
Kennedy, & Phillips, 2012). Mizell (2010, p. 18) commented, “Good teaching is not an accident.” According to him, EL teachers are supposed to engage themselves in an ongoing cycle of PD, both at organizational and personal level.

As teachers exert much influence on learners’ learning and achievements, PD of teachers is getting more attention internationally (Ambler, 2016; Kennedy, 2005). CPD activities improve teachers’ instructional practices in classrooms and help students perform and achieve better results (Barlow et al. 2014 cited in M. S. Zein, 2016). Moreover, PD can contribute a lot to the improving performance of schools (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & McKinney, 2007). Without effective professional training, teachers’ knowledge and skills are not enhanced. They become outdated in their knowledge base and classroom practices; thus, learners suffer significantly.

Teachers engage themselves in CPD not only to improve the performance and results of their schools and learners but also to gain professional knowledge and skills for their career development (Evans, 2014). Teacher Educators (TEs) and other stakeholders should not always try to establish a direct link between learners’ result and teachers’ trainings, as the basic target of teachers’ PD is to enhance their professional competencies. One common problem is the education bureaucracy’s expectation to see immediate impact of teachers’ PD on learners’ learning outcomes (Narkar, 2013).

In 21st century educational settings, change occurs rapidly, making teachers’ engagement in CPD obligatory. There are fast and unanticipated changes in knowledge, teaching-learning and technology (Jamil, Razak, Raju, & Mohamed, 2011). CPDs help teachers keep updated in their knowledge and skills, so they can teach young learners effectively (S. Zein, 2015). They cannot become fossilized as they continue teaching new learners with the latest ideas. They must move forward with time and equip themselves with knowledge and skills demanded by contemporary society and learners. Faced with ever changing challenges and demands, CPD has become more significant as this is the only way for teachers to remain efficient (Padwad & Dixit, 2013).

Teachers are supposed to be lifelong learners and continuously update themselves (Ambler, 2016). It is crucial for teachers to comprehend that they are learners first, then teachers. This instinct of continuous learning and development must be rooted in every teacher. Once teachers themselves are updated in their professional knowledge base and practices, they are morally in the right position to teach their learners (Alexandrou & Swaffield, 2012). They also need PD for providing guidance and direction to novices in the profession, and for avoiding burnout; CPD then helps augment teachers’ professional capacity by highlighting their weak areas and recommending necessary trainings (Khan, 2009). Moreover, when teachers involve themselves in PD activities, teacher leadership is created among them and they can apply teachers’ agency. Exercise of teachers’ agency positively impacts learners’ learning and achievements (Alexandrou & Swaffield, 2012).

This paper is organized in six sections. It starts with a brief introduction to the topic of the study and gives its background; the second part presents a concise review of relevant literature; the third part is about methodology used; the fourth and fifth parts depict the findings and discussion respectively. Finally, it ends with presenting some implications for EL teachers’ CPD, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.
Literature Review

Ifanti and Fotopoulopou (2011) studied in-service primary teachers’ concerns and thoughts regarding professionalism and PD in Greece. The respondents believed that CPD would certainly enhance teachers’ professionalism and the training model is the best option for PD. They mentioned that teachers’ knowledge and skills, as well as their willingness to keep up with the current educational issues are key factors for professionalism and PD.

Narkar (2013) investigated the impact of a District Centre (DC) in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, India on EL teachers’ training. The teachers claimed that CPD trainings exposed their weak areas as teachers, and they could develop language proficiency and other skills through study and practice in a collaborative way. In the post-intervention phase, when the DC was closed, the teachers organized themselves by forming English Teachers’ Association (ETA) to continue their PD. Thus, an initial top-down process resulted into bottom-up initiatives taken by the teachers themselves.

In a study by McMillan, McConnell, and O’Sullivan (2014) in Ireland, teachers opined that teachers themselves are mainly responsible for their PD. They mentioned personal interest, career progress and practice improvement as the main personal motivating factors for attending CPD. For school-related factors, feedback from colleagues and school policy were the main factors. System-wide motivation factors included the mandatory nature of PD programs as organised by schools or subject organizations. They also pointed out some barriers to CPD such as schools’ lack of interest, teachers’ financial constraint, and limited training budgets in schools. As CPD is for teachers, policy makers should listen to teachers’ voices on CPD.

S. Zein (2015) found that most of the elementary EL teachers in Indonesia did not have any exposure to in-service training. Another setback reported was the mismanagement of training programs organised by government training institutions. The content of the training programs was selected by the education bureaucrats, who ignored the practical aspects of teaching English and highlighted theoretical features. Training participants’ selection then was not transparent, rather “based on favoritism and connection” (p. 431). While selecting teachers for training, teachers of low status schools were often ignored.

Yook and Lee (2016) surveyed Korean EFL teachers’ perceptions of how teacher education programs affected their classroom teaching. The findings show that pre-service teacher education programs had little impact on teachers’ classroom practices as these programs were predominantly theory-oriented. On the other hand, teachers reported that in-service teacher education trainings were more helpful as they increased their speaking skills and knowledge of new methods for EL teaching. In addition, teachers mentioned that the washback effect of Korea Scholastic Aptitude Test was a barrier to implementing ideas they learned from the trainings as they had “to teach to the test” (p. 10).

Through a case study, Nawab (2017) reported that after attending an in-service course, there were some positive changes in the attitude and practices of the trainee teacher in rural Pakistan. However, gradually the teacher lost his enthusiasm for various reasons, such as lack of resources and space, time constraint, workload, no encouragement from other teachers, no collaboration and support, and lack of logistic support from education officials; consequently, the class went back to previous practices.
Power, Shaheen, Solly, Woodward, and Burton (2012) looked into effectiveness of English in Action’s (EIA) school-based teacher development (SBTD) initiative in Bangladesh. EIA provided teachers with educational mobile technology, innovative materials, and school-based support, both by school and project experts. Because of the interventions, primary and secondary EL teachers’ class performance improved, and they used English more frequently inside classes. The writers argued that SBTD may play an active role in enhancing teachers’ performances.

Studies reviewed above were carried out in Greece, India, Ireland, Indonesia, Korea, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and focused on different aspects of CPD. However, very few studies are available on SS EL teachers’ CPD in Bangladesh. The present study addressed the gap in existing literature as far as SS EL teachers’ engagements in CPDs and their perceived needs are concerned in Bangladesh.

**Research Methodology**

The study reported here was carried out using a multiple case-study approach following the qualitative paradigm (O’Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014). Among different approaches of qualitative research paradigm, researchers often choose case studies for conducting their research (Yazan, 2015).

**Research Objective and Question**

The overall research objective of this study was to explore SS EL teachers’ present practices of and perceived needs for CPD. Consequently, it addressed the following research question:

- What are the present practices of and perceived needs for secondary EL teachers’ continuing professional development (CPD)?

**Participants**

Following a purposive sampling technique, 10 EL teachers were selected from three SS, two non-government and one government in Dhaka. Three teachers were selected from the government SS and the rest (n=7) were from non-government SS. Initially, the participants were informed about the objective of the study. They were briefed on how their privacy would be preserved. They could withdraw from the study whenever they wanted (Chenail, 2011; Hamid, 2010; Praag & Sanchez, 2015). To ensure anonymity, alpha-numeric identity (T1-T10) has been used for all participants involved in this study (Ambler, 2016; M. S. Zein, 2016).

**Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

One-to-one individual interviews were conducted with the EL teachers to collect in-depth data by using a semi-structured interview (Merriam, 1988). All the interviews were audio-taped and securely stored. Collected qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis (TA) as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). As the interviews were conducted in Bengali, used excerpts have been translated by the first author; however, a few excerpts are directly quoted from teachers’ interviews.

**Findings**

**Limited opportunities and sporadic nature of CPD**

There are limited opportunities for SS EL teachers’ institutional PD. Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education supervises SS teachers’ CPD through its affiliated bodies such as National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) and Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs). Thana Education Officer (TEO) does the field work.
to decide who will get CPD trainings in consultation with respective school authorities. Teachers have attended 1-4 CPDs organized by NAEM, TTC, projects like English in Action (EIA), and English Language Improvement Project (ELTIP). These CPDs predominantly focus on teaching methodology; teachers are taught how they can implement a lesson successfully.

**In CPDs teachers learn how to deliver a lesson effectively.** (T2)

Present organizational CPDs are designed by foreign experts and education officials, and delivered off-site by external experts. Thus, a top-down approach is followed for teachers’ institutional CPD. Teachers pointed out that the foreign experts are not familiar with the social and classroom realities in Bangladesh.

*CPDs are designed by foreign experts; they do not understand the realities of our country. We work according to our realities and standards of school.* (T3)

As these CPDs are pre-planned, individual EL teachers’ professional needs are not taken into consideration. Teachers argued that it is difficult to arrange school-based CPDs as schools do not have experts to train teachers. They also have to develop training facilities.

*CPDs can be arranged in schools but the problem is that we do not have experts and technological facilities in schools.* (T3)

However, some schools arrange in-house training for teachers on ICT by internal experts who were earlier trained by external experts.

One striking reality is that institutional CPDs are sporadic, not continuous. When a new project is launched, changes are made in curriculum and policies, and teachers are trained on that; there is hardly any follow-up training. Thus, most of the CPDs are project based with a top-down approach.

**Table 1. Relevant information on the participating EL teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Teaching Experience (Years)</th>
<th>School by Management</th>
<th>Number of CPD Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>No CPD</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rare personal initiatives for CPD**

Apart from the meager institutional initiatives, teachers take rare personal initiatives for PD. Teachers do not use systematic ‘reflection’ as a strategy for enhancing their classroom performance. They are not engaged in research as the ‘research culture’ is missing in schools. Moreover, they do not read relevant journals as part of their professional learning. Teachers even do not use online materials for their professional learning. They mentioned that they cannot take personal initiatives for PD because of intense workload and lack of time.

*I am not engaged in research; I do not read academic journals. The main obstacles are lack of time and low salary. To earn additional money I do private tutoring.* (T9)
Difficulty with implementing ideas learned from CPDs

Teachers cannot easily implement ideas they learn from CPDs as they face different difficulties in classrooms. First, the number of students – around 60 or more per class – makes it difficult for teachers to manage their classrooms, let alone implement ideas learned from CPDs.

Training is one aspect but reality is different. We cannot implement ideas from CPDs. Even many ideas are not fruitful for our country. For example, class size; CPD trainers advocate that the number of students in a class should be 30 but we have 70 or more students in our classes. (T8)

In addition, according to the teachers, both learners and their guardians are interested in good grades not in learning language skills. This makes teachers focus on the tests, ignoring all methodological innovations they learn in CPDs.

The examination system is different. If we follow all those techniques, we will then not be able to complete the syllabus. The guardians want good result but we want to teach language skills .....there are divergences. (T9)

Teachers learn to make their class participatory and communicative. However, the prevailing examination system does not encourage communicative classroom environment. Moreover, the fixed seating arrangement in classrooms makes it difficult for teachers to carry out group work and pair work.

We cannot do group work and pair work because of the seating arrangement; doing group work and pair work kills our time and we cannot finish the syllabus. If we cannot complete the syllabus, guardians will complain against us. (T1)

The class duration of 30-40 minutes with 60 or more students is not adequate to carry out effective lessons.

Within the limited time we cannot deliver effective lesson. Most of our classes have 60 or 70 students.....Managing these large classes, we cannot use all techniques. For example, I cannot evaluate students in my class. (T10)

Collaboration with other Teachers

EL teachers work as isolated islands as they do not collaborate with one another. Teachers have professional organizations, but these organizations try to materialize different demands such as salary hike, nationalization of jobs; however, they do not take any initiative for members’ PD. Moreover, teachers never visit other schools for professional learning.

We have cordial relationships among ourselves but we do not collaborate on professional development. We do not visit other schools for professional learning. ............ Teachers’ organizations work only for materializing teachers’ professional demands. (T6)

Teachers mentioned that school authorities have a positive attitude towards teachers’ CPD and when there are arrangements, school authorities send them for off-site CPDs. However, some schools do not send teachers for CPDs as this hampers the school routine. In some cases, school authorities do not either encourage or discourage teachers to attend CPDs.
Future CPDs for Teachers

EL teachers claimed that they need more CPD activities particularly on ICT and language skills. They argued that institutionally there should be more opportunities for CPD. One aspect that teachers repeatedly mentioned is that CPD activities must be continuous not sporadic as is the present practice. They opined that there should be arrangement for teachers’ annual CPD.

_It (CPD) should continue and all the teachers should be included there and annually teachers should be trained._ (Directly quoted from T2)

Challenges to Teachers’ CPD

SS EL teachers face different challenges with regard to attending CPD. One vital barrier is their lack of time as they teach on an average six classes per working day. Frequently, they also teach proxy classes when concerned teachers are on leave or busy with other duties.

_No teacher should have more than 20 classes per week. Some teachers have 26 classes per week._ (T10)

They also pointed out lack of adequate institutional opportunities for taking part in CPDs. Moreover, many of them are busy with private tutoring and coaching to earn additional money as the salary they get, according to them, is not enough for maintaining their family expenses. However, teachers agreed that engagement in private tutoring and coaching kills much of their time that they could invest in CPD activities.

Many teachers do not see teaching as a profession rather as any other job. This mindset does not encourage teachers to take initiatives for further professional learning.

_……sometimes I think whether I am an employee or a teacher. These feelings work in me._ (T7)

_I think we learned there and left those things at the training spot. For some days we tried to use them in classrooms, then no more implementation._ (T5)

EL Teachers’ Perceptions of and Commitment to CPD

Teachers believe that they should be regularly updated, and CPDs enhance their knowledge, skills, and confidence.

_Teachers should be updated through professional development. As things are changing rapidly, e.g. technology, teachers cannot lag behind. CPD enhances teachers’ knowledge, skills and confidence. I learned a lot from CPD. I had to do presentation in English in front of other teachers and trainers._ (T1)

_It (CPD) is very effective as I will learn many things from CPDs._ (T4)

They consider CPDs as indispensable parts of their professional life, not as additional aspects. When teachers are required to go on continually teaching classes without any professional training, they lose their motivation.

_Sometimes classroom teaching becomes monotonous; training can enhance teachers’ motivation._ (T6)

Teachers also highlighted that there should be monitoring after they attend CPDs to ensure that teachers implement new ideas from CPD in their classrooms. They also
opined that CPDs may be school-based; both internal and external experts can facilitate school-based CPDs. Frequently, teachers mentioned that CPDs have to be regular.

*As suggested by the name, CPD has to be continuous.* (T7)

Teachers reiterated their commitment to PD; however, they mentioned time constraint and workload as factors that inhibit their professional learning.

**Discussion**

Secondary EL teachers do not get adequate opportunities for professional learning. Ambler (2016) argued that teachers have to be lifelong learners, and they need to be updated continuously. At present teachers’ CPD is defined in a narrow sense. Some teachers have attended four CPDs whereas some are yet to attend any official CPDs. An effective monitoring system to equally distribute CPDs among teachers is missing. Moreover, the present CPD trainings exclusively focus on teaching methodology instead of taking a holistic approach. Teachers believe that they need CPDs for their professional growth, and CPDs enhance their knowledge, skills and confidence (Ifanti & Fotopoulopou, 2011; Narkar, 2013; Nawab, 2017).

A top-down approach is followed for teachers’ institutional CPD. From design to delivery, foreign experts and education bureaucrats play a big role in teachers’ PD, assigning teachers a marginalized role. As CPDs are arranged for teachers, their voices must be heard while making decisions on professional learning (McMillan et al., 2014). EL teachers should be encouraged to take bottom-up initiatives for CPD as has been done by teachers in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, India (Narkar, 2013). The problem with foreign experts is they are not familiar with the social contexts and classroom realities in Bangladesh. Moreover, external experts focus on theoretical knowledge, following a knowledge transmission model of CPD (S. Zein, 2015).

SS in Bangladesh usually do not take any initiatives for teachers’ PD. In Malaysia, schools are encouraged to conduct in-house PD programs for improving teachers’ knowledge and practices according to their needs (Jamil et al., 2011). Schools can arrange in-house CPDs for teachers by both internal and external experts. Schools have to groom their own experts and develop logistic facilities for training. Important lessons can be learnt from English in Action’s (EIA) school based teacher development (SBTD) initiative in Bangladesh (Power et al., 2012). EIA facilitated teachers’ school-based PD by involving experts from both schools and their project. This project had a positive impact on primary and secondary EL teachers’ classroom performance and their use of English.

In addition, EL teachers lack personal initiatives for their PD. They are now totally dependent on organizational CPDs. In a developing country like Bangladesh, teachers should be encouraged to take responsibility for their PD. Indeed, teachers themselves should be mainly responsible for their PD (McMillan et al., 2014). For updating their knowledge skills, EL teachers need CPDs both at organizational and personal levels (Mizell, 2010). If teachers do not take personal initiatives like researching, reading journals, using online materials, attending conference, workshop, and seminar for PD, they will go on
teaching in traditional ways. This echoes the significance of the comment by Ur (1996), who commented that “it has been said that teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two categories: those with twenty years’ experience and those with one year’s experience repeated twenty times” (p.317). Because of workload and lack of time, teachers cannot attend CPDs; however, many teachers are involved in private tutoring and coaching.

Teachers also hardly collaborate with one another on PD. They just see themselves as employees, not as professionals. This mindset is a major obstacle for collaboration among teachers. Through collaboration, teachers can easily share their knowledge with one another. Only teaching the best practice in isolation will not work; rather, CPD practices need to be connected to teachers’ and learners’ everyday classroom contexts (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). There are many professional organizations of teachers but these organizations do not work for teachers’ PD. Their activities are limited to materializing different job-related demands from the government such as salary hikes.

Teachers face various problems when they try to implement ideas and techniques they learn from CPDs. One main barrier is class size with more than 60 learners. Teachers get only 30-40 minutes to complete a lesson. Moreover, learners and guardians are more interested in passing the national exams with good grades. Thus, because of the wash-back effect of national exams, teachers are sometimes compelled “to teach to the test” (p. 10), ignoring language skill practices in classrooms (Yook & Lee, 2016). Teachers categorically mentioned that the prevailing examination system in Bangladesh does not encourage a communicative classroom environment.

Implications for SS EL Teachers’ CPD

Based on the findings of the present study, the authors would like to put forward some suggestions for policymakers, CPD designers, school authorities, and EL teachers:

a) More institutional CPDs need to be arranged for secondary EL teachers.

b) An effective monitoring system should be in place to ensure that all EL teachers get PD trainings, and teachers implement ideas and techniques they learn from PD.

c) While designing CPDs for EL teachers, teachers’ voices must be heard.

d) Along with the present off-site CPDs, schools must arrange in-house CPDs. Each school should build a team of teachers for managing CPDs.

e) EL teachers must take personal initiatives for PD.

f) More collaboration on PD is needed among teachers.

g) Teacher organizations have to develop mechanisms for their members’ PD.

h) It is vital to gradually change classroom realities: seating arrangement, class size, and class duration for effective implementation of ideas from CPD.
i) Wash-back effect of national exams should not dominate classroom English teaching-learning practices.

j) For providing effective and necessary CPDs, it is fundamental to carry out a needs-analysis among EL teachers before designing any PD program.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

Case studies do not target generalizations of findings; future researchers should work with a larger sample of EL teachers so that the findings can be generalized. This study then used samples only from schools in Dhaka; interested researchers can work with teachers from different areas of Bangladesh. Future studies on teachers’ PD should involve other stakeholders such as policymakers, CPD designers, teacher trainers, and school authorities.

Conclusion

SS EL teachers play a significant role in imparting quality L2 education for learners in Bangladesh. To ensure quality classroom instruction and teachers’ PD, there should be a mechanism in place to deliver effective CPDs. As UNESCO (1996 cited in Nawab, 2017) recommended, one-time pre-service training cannot prepare teachers for their whole career as new ideas and practices influence teaching-learning frequently. Teachers are supposed to try constantly to keep abreast of emerging trends and techniques by attending ongoing in-service trainings. All modern educational reform initiatives emphasize quality PD as it has become obvious that the quality of schools cannot surpass that of the teachers and officials who work there (Guskey, 2010).

Acknowledgement

The study reported here was funded through a GA scheme by Institute of Postgraduate Studies (IPS), Univesiti Sains Malaysia.

References


recommendations. *Academic Medicine, 89*(9), 1245-1251.


**Contributor**

**Md. Abdur Rouf** (corresponding author) works as an assistant professor in English at Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He did his first MA in English Literature and second MA in ELT from University of Dhaka. Currently he is doing his doctoral research at Universiti Sains Malaysia in Malaysia. His research interests include second language teacher education (SLTE), ICT in language teaching, and 21st Century Skills.

**Professor Dato’ Dr. Abdul Rashid Mohamed** is a consultant to the Malaysian Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Maldives. A senior professor at Universiti Sains Malaysia, he holds a PhD in TESOL from East Anglia University in the UK
Effectiveness of Cooperative Learning For Improving Learners’ Proficiency Level of English Language in Secondary Level Education in Nepal

Keshab Kumar Sijali

Abstract

This longitudinal research study aims at investigating the effectiveness of cooperative learning (CL) for improving learners’ English language proficiency (ELP) level in secondary level education in Nepal. The study comprises 150 learners from grade 10 in the academic session of 2017 among whom 78 learners were chosen for experimental group while 72 for control group. The instruments of proficiency test, questionnaire and interview were used to obtain data that were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U-test and bar graphs. The result shows the effectiveness of CL for improving learners’ ELP level that the overall performance of experimental group of students (M = 26.71, SD = 4.478) in English language was found far better than that of control group of students (M = 16.50, SD = 5.619) with significant difference (p < 0.001).

**Keywords:** Cooperative learning, English language, English language proficiency, Secondary level education, Nepal

Introduction

Cooperative learning (CL) is an instructional method in which learners in small group work together to complete the assigned task. Jacob (1999) mentions that cooperative learning is an approach of having systematic, structured and diverse types of instructional methods in which small groups of students work together and aid each other in completing academic tasks. In this approach, learners are provided opportunities to enhance social strategies and foster a high degree of autonomy (Jacobs & McCafferty, 2006). Due to its focus on the completion of task in a structured form of group work, learners can increase retention and improve their problem-solving ability (Millis, 2012). Learners in this approach are found to be intrinsically highly motivated with “high commitment to achieve and high persistence with maximum strategies to deal with anxiety and stress” (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1995, p. 18). A great strength of CL is that “it provides teachers with many opportunities to instruct children in the social, emotional or moral domains at a time when such instruction is immediately relevant” (Battistich & Watson, 2003, p. 25).
There has been much research done on CL (see Ahmadi, Motallebzade, & Fatemi, 2014; Aicha, 2012; Almuslimi, 2016; Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Chukwuyenum, Nwankwo, & Toochi, 2014; Keshavarz, Shahrokhi, & Nejad, 2014; Khan & Ahmad, 2014; Lin, 2009; Mohammadi & Davarbina, 2015; Ning, 2010; Siddique & Singh, 2016; Soraya, 2010). However, no research is found to have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of CL for the improvement of learners’ English language proficiency level in the context of Nepal. Hence, the goal of this study is to fill this gap in the literature.

**Theoretical foundation of CL**

John Dewey’s brainchild of group activities is considered the foundation of the concept of CL in which learners work together in small groups, cooperating with each other “instead of competing for acknowledgement” (Alharbi, 2008, p. 1). CL is supposedly grounded on the behavioral learning theory, cognitive theory and social interdependence theory (Keshavarz, Shahrokhi, & Nejad, 2014). Behavioral learning theory assumes that cooperation takes place if learners are reinforced to work in groups to complete the assigned task (Aicha, 2012). Cognitive theory for CL has been rooted with Piaget’s theory and Vygotsky’s scaffolding theory. Piaget focuses on social interaction in the improvement of student achievement, and Vygotsky’s scaffolding theory asserts that learners in group learn best if there is peer support while learning (Lin, 2009). Social interdependence theory contends that learners learn best in cooperation rather than competition (Keshavarz, Shahrokhi, & Nejad, 2014).

**Basic Components of CL**

CL consists of five basic elements, namely positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, face-to-face supportive interaction or opportunity, necessity for interpersonal and small group social skills, and engagement of cooperative groups (Cotterill, 2012). Positive interdependence means the equal effort of each of group member to achieve the common goal (Aicha, 2012). In CL, each of the members should have an equal role for the completion of an assigned task. In the same way, the group members are held accountable for contributing to group work, thus ensuring their active involvement in the learning process (Soraya, 2010). Group members also promote each other’s success by supporting and encouraging the achievement of a common goal (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014). In cooperative learning, learners learn not only the language, but they also learn how to work together to facilitate teamwork with the creation of positive attitudes among the members (Chen & Wang, 2013). Group processing occurs through reflection on a group session, review of the effectiveness of each group member’s role, and redefinition of roles if necessary in order to enhance the groups’ collaborative efforts and success completion of its task (Lin, 2009).

**Principal Features of CL**

One of the major features of CL is that it develops the spirit of positive interdependency among students and discourages the notion of individuality and competition (Agarwal & Nagar, 2011). It also helps learners improve their “self-esteem, their attitude toward school and their ability to work with others while
learning with CL” (Farmer, 1999, p. 1). Such collaborative work provides them with opportunities to enhance their social skills through acknowledging another’s contribution, asking others to contribute and keeping the conversation calm (Sharma, 2010). CL helps learners enhance their communicative competence through authentic interaction. In other words, it is “effective in terms of providing opportunities for increased meaningful language production, and allows learners to use the language in a natural, supportive and safe environment (Ning, 2010, p. 13).

**Types of CL**

Cooperative learning can be classified into three types: informal CL, base group CL and formal CL. Informal CL comprises learners working together “to achieve a joint learning goal in temporary which is especially useful during direct teaching” (Aicha, 2012, p. 12). Base group CL refers to a long-term group with stable membership that aims at “providing constant support and motivation that group members need to achieve educational success instead of working together on a specific learning tasks assignments” (Ning, 2010, p. 25). In, formal groups, which can last from several minutes to several class sessions, learners “work together in order to achieve shared learning goals and complete a specific tasks or assignment” (Aicha, 2012, p. 11).

**Cooperative Learning Activities**

One very common CL activity is think/pair/share (TPS) in which students think about a topic provided by the teacher, pair up with another student to discuss it, and then share their thoughts with the whole class (Grundman, 2002). This technique is found to significantly improve students’ achievement (Sumarsih & Sanjaya, 2013).

Jigsaw is another CL method that can be effectively applied in teaching language. It was first designed by Aronson and his colleagues in the 1970s and later redefined by Slavin. In this activity, learners are divided into heterogeneous home groups and given a particular aspect of a topic to study and explore; the groups are then reconfigured into new groups so that members from each group share their learning with other groups (Ning, 2010).

A second CL method is group investigation in which learners in their teams determine a general topic and subtopics for investigation, plan for the investigation, carry out the investigation through interaction and interpretation with their teacher, teammates and other teams, and present their findings after which an evaluation session is launched (Aicha, 2012).

Round robin and roundtable are two additional activities. In round robin, each learner in turn shares something with his or her teammates, while in roundtable, each learner in turn writes one answer on a paper, and then pencil and paper are passed around the group (Kagen, 1993, cited in Grundman, 2002).

**The methodology**

The objectives of the present study are to find out the effectiveness of CL for improving learners’ English language proficiency in secondary level education in Nepal.
**Hypothesis:** The study plans to test the following null hypothesis:

There is no significant difference between the ELP level of cooperatively and traditionally taught learners.

**Research question:** The study primarily attempts to answer the following question: Is CL effective for the improvement of learners’ proficiency level of English language?

**Participants:** Regarding participants, the study is comprised of 150 learners among whom 78 were randomly chosen for the experimental group with the rest in the control group. The experimental group of learners was taught using the CL approach while the control group of learners was taught in a traditional way for 12 weeks. The cooperative learning activities for the experimental group included TPS, jigsaw, round robin/roundtable and group investigation. Each of the four language skills received the same amount of time. The researcher himself taught both, the experimental and the control groups.

**Instruments:** With reference to instruments, the study consists of the following three instruments:

1. **Proficiency Test:** The proficiency test consisting of four papers, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, was administered to both the experimental and control group of learners after the 12-week period. CL Total score allocated for the test was 40 with equivalent weighting of 10 marks for each of the language skills.

2. **Questionnaire:** After the practice of CL, the experimental group of students was administered a set of questionnaires with 5 items consisting of the 5-point Likert scale with their specific value ranging from strongly agree = 1; agree = 2; undecided = 3; disagree = 4 and strongly disagree = 5 to assess their attitudes regarding the effectiveness of CL to improve their ELP level. The questionnaire was also administered to the control group of students to evaluate their attitudes regarding improvement in their English due to the traditional way of teaching.

3. **Interview:** With a view to investigating students’ views on the effectiveness of the CL and the traditional approaches, a semi-structured interview was conducted on the two groups of students. Seven randomly sampled students from the experimental group and only two students from the control group participated in the interview. The interview, which was optional for ethical reasons, was conducted in English.

**Validity and Reliability**

Due attention was given while designing the questionnaire instrument to cover content validity. Further, two researchers from the area of ELT were consulted to establish the face validity of the instrument. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha that comprises the internal consistency of .916, which indicates high reliability. The technique of test-retest was used to establish the reliability of a proficiency test with r = .76, which shows the high correlation. The time interval between these two tests after the practice of CL was 5 days.

**Data Analysis**

Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data obtained from the proficiency test for comparing the score and Mann-Whitney U-test of non-parametric test in order to find the significant difference between the proficiency level of experimental and control group of learners.
The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using bar graphs. The researcher used the technique of inductive analysis for analyzing the data obtained from interview. The result obtained from qualitative and quantitative data was mixed adopting the method of concurrent triangulation.

**Result**

The result of the study is presented in this section, which provides the detail findings at four different levels of language skill: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Further, it presents the overall proficiency level of learners.

**Learners’ Listening Level**

The result in Table 1 shows that the experimental group of students ($M = 8.63$, $SD = 1.280$) performed better than the control group of students ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.912$) in listening skill in English with significant difference ($p < 0.001$), which is evidence that CL plays an effective role in improving the listening skill of English learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Teaching</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>1.280</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Method</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5.08</td>
<td>1.912</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>2.397</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Learners’ listening level*

In fig. 1, the majority of the experimental group of students have shown their positive attitudes in the role of the traditional way of teaching in improving their listening skill in English.

**Learners’ Speaking Level**

The result in Table 2 shows that the average score of the experimental group of students ($M = 6.01$, $SD = .974$) is higher than that of the control group of students ($M = 4.12$, $SD = .978$) in speaking skill in English with significant difference ($p < 0.001$), which is evidence that CL is effective in improving the speaking skill of English learners.
Table 2. Learners’ speaking level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Teaching</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>6.01</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Method</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>1.357</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 2, the majority of the experimental group of students have shown their positive attitudes in the role of CL while the majority of the control group of students have shown their negative attitudes in the role of the traditional way of teaching in improving their speaking skill in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Teaching</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>1.571</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Method</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>1.976</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>1.932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 3, the majority of experimental group of students have shown their positive attitudes in the role of CL while the majority of the control group of students have shown their negative attitudes in the role of traditional way of teaching in improving their reading skill in English.

Learners’ Reading Level

The result in Table 3 also shows that the average score of the experimental group of students (M = 6.15, SD = 1.571) in reading skill is higher than that of the control group of students (M = 4.61, SD = 1.976) with significant difference (p < 0.001), which is an evidence that cooperative learning is effective in improving learners’ reading skill in English.

Table 3. Learners’ reading level
Learners’ Writing Level

As shown in Table 4, the average score of the experimental group of students (M = 5.91, SD = 1.949) in writing skill is higher than that of the control group of students (M = 2.68, SD = 2.318) with significant difference (p < 0.001), which is evidence that cooperative learning plays a crucial role in improving learners’ writing skill in English.

Table 4. Learners’ writing level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Teaching</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>26.78</td>
<td>4.478</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Method</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>16.50</td>
<td>5.619</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>21.81</td>
<td>7.182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall Proficiency Level of Learners

The result in Table 5 shows that the overall performance of the experimental group of students (M = 26.71, SD = 4.478) in English language is far better than that of the control group of students (M = 16.50, SD = 5.619) with significant difference (p < 0.001), which rejects the null hypothesis mentioned in the section 3.2.1; it can therefore concluded that CL plays an effective role in improving learners’ proficiency level of English language.
Table 5. Learners’ overall proficiency level of English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Teaching</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>1.949</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Method</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.318</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>2.673</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 5, the majority of the experimental group of students have shown their positive attitudes in the role of CL while the majority of the control group of students have shown their negative attitudes in the role of traditional way of teaching for the overall improvement of their ELP level.

This result is also supported by the view of experimental group of students (EGS) that they have expressed their positive attitudes in the role of CL in the improvement of their ELP. Some of the excerpts can be extracted as:

Cooperative language learning has a vital role in improving my English language. My English language has been improved due to support of my friends while working in group. I think cooperative language learning is the best way of improving English language. [EGS1]

The following excerpt of a participant is also consistent with the above-mentioned view as:

Cooperative learning is helpful in improving my English language. In previous year, I didn’t have good capabilities to read, write and speak in English. After the practice of cooperative learning, my speaking, reading, writing and listening has been improved a lot. I prefer cooperative learning. [EGS2]

Another participant points out the role of CL not only for the improvement of ELP level, but also for the enhancement of social skills as:

Cooperative learning has played an important role for the improvement of my English language. With the support of interaction with group members during class activities; it has increased my level in different skills of English language. It has also helped to maintain good relation among group members which has highly helped for the improvement of English language. [EGS3]

Along with the improvement of English language, CL was also found to be interesting, effective and supportive in working in teams as:

I like the way of learning through cooperative learning. It has a vital role in improving my English language. My speaking skill in English has been improved a lot due to cooperative
learning as compared to old days. Not only this, but it has helped me to improve listening skill, reading skill and writing skill. It is also helping me to bring team work and mutual understanding with my friends. It is enjoyable, useful and advantageous too. [EGS4]

The following excerption also advocates in favor of CL for improving ELP level and raises a voice against the traditional way of teaching as:

Cooperative learning has helped me in improving my overall reading, writing, speaking as well as listening in English. The traditional way of teaching was boring and ineffective. I think teaching must be interesting, effective and useful. I have found cooperative learning as very practicable, effective and interesting. [EGS5]

The following view of another participant is also consistent with the aforementioned view regarding the role of CL and adds its effectiveness in problem-solving while learning team work as:

Cooperative learning has a great role in improving my English language as it has given me opportunities to share knowledge with others in English. In my view, this way of learning is effective as I don’t feel bored while studying in the class. Studying and working with friends makes my mind refreshed and able to solve the problem using each other’s support. [EGS6]

Beside the significance of CL in improving ELP, the learners also find it supportive in handling the challenges and obstacles encountered while learning as:

In my view, cooperative language learning has helped me to improve all my language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. Many challenges and obstacles are seen while learning. Through cooperative learning, I become capable of handling them easily while working with the members in group. [EGS7]

In the same way, the control group of students (CGS) was also interviewed to gather information regarding the improvement of their ELP. In contrast to the views of EGS, CGS expressed their negative perception in the role of the traditional way of teaching. They expressed their views that the traditional way of teaching is not sufficient enough to enhance ELP. They have experienced the need for other methods of teaching rather than traditional ways. For instance, an excerpt of a student in the CGS can be extracted as:

In my view, the traditional way of teaching is not sufficient for improving my English because it doesn’t provide the opportunity to take part in the activities. I think, modern techniques should be used in the class. [CGS1]

The view of another student belonging to CGS is also consistent with the abovementioned view as:

I don’t get chance to practice in English language. I have to just listen only the lecture of teacher in the class. I feel traditional way of teaching doesn’t support to improve my English language. [CGS2]

In such context, with reference to the views of EGS, CL seems to be effective for the enhancement of their ELP level.
Discussions and Implications

After the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, the result shows that CL is effective in improving learners’ ELP level. This result is consistent with the previous research (see Ahmadi, Motallebzade, & Fatemi, 2014; Aicha, 2012; Almuslimi, 2016; Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Chukwuenum, Nwankwo, & Toochi, 2014; Keshavarz, Shahrokhi, & Nejad, 2014; Khan & Ahmad, 2014; Lin, 2009; Mohammadi & Davarbina, 2015; Ning, 2010; Siddique & Singh, 2016; Soraya, 2010). But, the peer-mediated model of learning is criticized to be a “failure to address the needs of the more able pupil who may require more independent learning and flexibility” (Jolliffe, 2007, p. 14). However, it is suggested that ELT practitioners implement CL since it develops the “spirit of positive interdependency among students and discourages the notion of individuality and competition creating a positive classroom climate” (Ghaith & Kawtharani, 2006). There are, however, a number of factors to take into consideration while applying this approach, such as classroom management, clear definition of the specific tasks, group assignments, instruction on group processing, and monitoring and assessment (Farmer, 1999). One more aspect to be paid due attention in the application of CL is grouping students. While grouping learners for CL, Murdoch & Wilson (2007) suggest different ways such as teacher- and student-selected groups, and long-term ‘base’ groups. The important point is that students are placed in “an all-win atmosphere” (Farmer, 1999, p. 1).

Conclusion

This 12-week longitudinal study, based on a mixed-method approach following the paradigm of pragmatism, aimed to find out the effectiveness of CL for improving learners’ proficiency level of English language in secondary level education in Nepal and successfully investigated the determined objective. The findings of the study indicate that CL is more effective than the traditional way of teaching as a means to improve ELP.

Limitations of the Study

This study is not beyond its limitations since it consists of a small sample size. Second, the results could reflect the genuine improvement in the proficiency level of experimental group of learners if a pre-test was conducted before the practice of CL. In such context, their previous linguistic background might have also influenced the result. Third, the instrument of the proficiency test includes a writing part for which multiple marking techniques were implemented in order to increase the reliability in the writing score. However, there might be the subjective influence of the checker while assessing it.

Suggestions for Future Research

While measuring the effectiveness of CL for improving learners’ ELP, the study has been confined only to the view of learners. The research could be enriched if the voice of English teachers’ regarding the effectiveness of CL were given a position in the study. Hence, future research could be carried out including the view of English teachers. In addition, the present study examined the effectiveness of CL in secondary-level education; future research could also investigate the effectiveness of CL in another level.
Acknowledgements

The present study has been possible only with the kind support, long patience and cooperation of research participants. Hence, the grade 10 students in the academic session of 2017 belonging to Gauri Shankar Higher Secondary School, Nigharh-8, Bara deserve special thanks for their active participation in the study.

References


International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, 5 (8), 68-70.


Sumarsih, M. P., & Sanjaya, D. (2013). TPS as an Effective Technique to Enhance the Students’ Achievement on Writing Descriptive Text. elt, 6 (12), 106-113.

Contributor

Keshab Kumar Sijali is currently a PhD scholar in ELT and the head of the Department of ELT, Shree Gauri Shankar Higher Secondary School, Nijgarh-8, Bara. He is a life member of NELTA and Joint Secretary of its Bara Branch. He has taught English at graduate and undergraduate levels for a decade, and published more than half a dozen research articles on ELT issues in different international peer-reviewed journals. His research interests include ELT issues and ICT in teaching English.
Using the First Language (L1) as a Resource in EFL Classrooms: Nepalese University Teachers’ and Students’ Perspectives

Pramod Kumar Sah

Abstract

While challenging the widely held belief that students in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom prefer their teachers not use the first language (L1), the study examined attitudes of university teachers and students towards using L1 and reasons for giving up on English and reverting to Nepali in English-medium lessons. Drawing on a mixed-method study that used survey questionnaire (N= 50) and interviews (N=15), the researcher identified a number of classroom speech acts that are performed by teachers’ and students’ in their L1. The findings revealed that both teachers and students had a positive attitude towards using L1; however, they held the belief that the overuse of L1 may impede language learning. Although the teachers seemed to discourage the use of Nepali (L1) in lessons aimed at developing learners’ communicative competence, they used Nepali to help learners comprehend complex concepts of grammar and lexis. Although the excessive use of Nepali was seemingly associated with teachers’ lack of communicative competence and creativity in delivering EFL lessons, students preferred their teachers to use the L1.

Keywords: First language (L1), English as a foreign language (EFL), Speech acts, Codeswitching

Introduction

One of the crucial factors that has historically been ignored in English language teaching is that students in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms already speak at least one language other than English. It is a common phenomenon in most EFL contexts, where teachers and students often share the same language and have adequate proficiency in two different languages, that “the first language (L1) alternates with the second language (L2)” (Neokleous, 2017, p. 314). Such practice is termed as codeswitching (CS) in literature, which, in particular, involves using two or more languages within an utterance, or between utterances. In the spirit of L1-as-a-resource orientation (Ruize, 1984), researchers and practitioners identify such practice of recognizing students’ diverse linguistic repertoires in EFL classrooms to be beneficial from both target language (TL) learning and linguistic
rights perspectives (Carroll & Morales, 2017; Skutnab-Kangas, 2000). In fact, this primordial notion of switching between languages is “entirely natural” in EFL contexts as students as well as teachers are seen “negotiating meaning by using a communicative strategy to compensate for lack of linguistic knowledge” (Macaro, 2005, p. 67). In this view, codeswitching facilitates the use of the L1 repertoire to complement meaningful communications in the TL. The use of L1, however, is a contested notion, in that many believe an ideal language learning and teaching environment is created in the TL, and L1 should have a minimal use—if not completely excluded (Macaro, 2001). Therefore, despite research indicating positive effects (e.g., Carroll & Morales, 2017; Neokleous, 2017; Vu, 2017), the use of L1 is hardly recognized in language-in-education policies in most non-English speaking countries, and the monolingual ideologies are still dominant (Barnard & McLellan, 2014).

Similarly, in Nepal, a multilingual and multicultural country, the discourses of mainstream education are greatly influenced by an English-only policy. While language-in-education policy requires English to be taught only through the medium of English, other academic subjects in higher education are also being taught in English (MOE, 2016; Sah & Li, 2017). Therefore, while shedding light on student and teacher attitudes towards L1 integration in EFL classrooms, this study aims to explore the purposes that participants’ use of L1 serve in the discourse of teaching and learning English. The article begins with a literature review on one of the most long-standing debates in the history of second language education—whether or not to use L1 in L2 teaching—and explores a more recent shift to seeking better approaches and strategies to using L1 (Lin, 2013).

**Using L1 as a Resource: A Literature Review**

In the last decades of the 20th century, the use of students’ L1 was largely discouraged because scholars defined an ideal classroom as one that made minimal to no use of L1 in L2 teaching (Cook, 2001; Chambers, 1991; Halliwell & Johns, 1991). This ideology of minimizing students’ L1 was linked to the Grammar-Translation Method, which was believed to impede learners’ opportunities to develop communicative competence because of the use of L1 (Neokleous, 2017). The later introduction of the Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method emphasized the use of only TL, underlining that the use of L1 was a barrier to L2 learning and L2 oral proficiency development (Macaro, 1997). Such belief was primacy to an assumption that the L1 approach was an easy approach to understand and did not involve much mental exercise. In this regard, Cook (2001) argued that the TL can be developed without any reference to the L1. Halliwell and Jones (1991) similarly suggested encouraging learners to take risks in both speaking and understanding the TL was a means to achieving success in their language learning.

In contrast, recent studies (Kyeyune, 2010; Barnard & McLellan, 2014) have advocated the use of L1 as a specific language learning and teaching strategy. With the increasing growth of globalization today, increasing numbers of people are bilingual rather than monolingual, and the number of languages
one speaks plays an important role in determining the rate of success one might achieve (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009). The rise of multilingualism has, therefore, directed attention to CS, which primarily occurs not because of lack of knowledge, but for different communicative purposes such as to establish multicultural identities among themselves (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2007), carry out cognitively demanding tasks (Reyes, 2004), mediate understanding during peer interaction (Sah, 2014), and convey the meaning of the intended idea more accurately (Zentella, 1997). This has received a greater attention from researchers to investigate the effectiveness, conditions, and purposes of using students’ local languages in EFL classrooms.

For example, Barnard and McLellan (2014) have compiled extensive studies on the use of L1 that signify a paradigm shift in the pedagogical orientation of Asian EFL classrooms. These inclusive studies find using L1 as a useful tool for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of English language teaching, however insufficiently recognized by policymakers and less desired by some teachers. Nordin, Ali, Zabir, and Sadjirin (2013) analogously found that the students in Malaysia overall maintained a positive attitude towards the practice of CS in EFL classrooms, and believed it helped them learn the vocabulary of the TL through better understanding of the words. Their study also suggested that the exercise of CS enables learners to master the English language with more confidence, which also overlaps with an earlier study of Macdonald (1993), and forces learners to communicate in the TL with their limited acquired language.

Many argue that more exposure to the TL assists learners in acquiring the language successfully and, in fact, no one denies the importance of TL exposure. However, the exposure to L2 may not always work effectively (Ellis, 1994; Richards and Rogers, 2001). Also, language teaching is not only about providing input to learners, but is equally important to convey information successfully. Using students’ L1 in this respect helps teachers transfer information to learners effectively (Skiba, 1997). Similarly, as Sah (2014) explored in his research with Chinese EFL students, the use of L1 facilitates peer interaction, in which students mediate their understanding to one another for better learning to happen. This indicates that we should not insist on an English-only ideology, which may lead to frustration and anxiety if the information does not provide learners with enough comprehension (Lo & Macaro, 2012; Kyeyune, 2010). The use of L1 can help learners relax and enhance their comprehension of the input during the learning process (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009).

There are also some studies that have investigated attitudes towards and reasons for using L1. Studies have shown varied attitudes towards using L1 that largely depends on learners’ and teachers’ proficiency levels, and types of lessons that are being delivered. For example, both teachers and students hold positive views if L1 is used to support low ability learners (Al-Nofaie, 2010; Franklin, 1990), to create a rapport with learners (Franklin, 1990; Macaro, 1997), to help learners with better comprehension in L2 (Alenezi, 2010; Cahowdhury, 2012; Ibrahim, Shah & Armia, 2013; Moghadam, Samad & Shahraki, 2012 ), to explain difficult vocabulary and grammar (Bilgin, 2013;
Harbord, 1992; Howatt, 2004), and to encourage oral participation between teachers and students (Cipriani, 2001; Sah, 2014). There are also negative opinions for using L1 when it relates to teachers’ inadequacy to communicate in L2 (Canh & Hamied, 2014) and is practiced beyond pedagogical purposes. Similarly, Crawford (2004) finds that such inadequacy depends on the degree of experience.

Since the integration of L1 has proved to be beneficial, the last decade has witnessed a shift in the discussion from whether or not to use L1 to seeking effective strategies and approaches to use L1 meaningfully to teach the TL (Lin, 2013). To this end, different concepts, both societal and pedagogical, have been suggested, such as “code-switching”, “translanguaging” (Garcia, 2009), “code-meshing” (Canagarajah, 2011), code-mixing, and bilingual pedagogy. Among these concepts, translanguaging, which started as a pedagogical practice in Welsh bilingual classrooms, has received greater attention today. Translanguaging is used through strategic classroom language planning that combines two or more languages in a systematic way within the same learning activity (Ayash, 2013). Distinguishing it from CS, in translanguaging practices, two or more than two languages are used flexibly and strategically so that classroom participants can experience and benefit from the permeability of learning across languages. It seems to assist multilingual speakers in making meaning, shaping experiences, and gaining deeper understanding and knowledge of the languages in use and even of the content that is being taught (Cenoz & Gortez, 2011; Lewis, Jones & Balcer, 2012). It also creates a social space for multilingual speakers “by bringing together different dimension of their personal history, experience, and environment, their attitude, beliefs, and performance” (Wei, 2011, p. 1223).

Despite research suggesting the usefulness of L1 and shift to L1-based pedagogical approaches, a zero-tolerance policy of CS is still dominantly imposed in many Asian education systems by ministries of education and other stakeholders (Barnard & McLellan, 2014). This embargo on the usage of L1 can somehow be justified since learners are aware that whatever is mediated in the TL will later be translated in the L1, and they will apparently stop paying any attention to the TL input. Nevertheless, the manipulation of L1 in EFL classrooms can maximise the learning opportunities, provided it is used wisely with some limitations. At the same time, this may not be generalized in all contexts, and therefore needs studies focused on specific contexts.

Methods

In order to contribute further to the discussion of using students’ L1 in teaching English—not only from students’ perspectives but also from teachers’ perspectives—and provide some pedagogical suggestions for Nepalese EFL contexts, this study has addressed the following research questions:

- What do Nepalese college EFL students and teachers believe regarding their use of L1 in EFL classrooms?
- Do teachers and students use the L1? If so, when and for what purposes?
To answer these questions, the study used a mixed-method inquiry that used survey questionnaires and interviews to collect data on the perspectives of Nepalese university EFL teachers and students towards the use of students’ local language in EFL classrooms. A total of 20 university teachers (16 males and 4 females) and 30 university students (18 females and 12 males) were involved in this study. While all the participants gave their consent to participate in the questionnaire, only 5 teachers and 10 students agreed to take part in the interview. Different questionnaires were given to teachers and students. Grounded in Macaro’s (2001) framework, the questionnaires contained questions to determine the participants’ attitudes towards and reasons for reverting to L1 within their teaching and learning context. The closed questions prescribed the range of responses from which the respondents chose the options referring to their attitudes. The question format was multiple choice, so as to get the respondents to reveal data by making a comparison between the given choices.

The study adopted the method of triangulation in order to increase the validity and reliability of the study. Triangulation is a validity test of data in which data from multiple sources is used in an investigation to validate and enhance their reliability. Ten students and 5 teachers were interviewed to reflect on their responses and overall views towards using L1. Each interview lasted about thirty minutes. The interview was semi-structured and consisted of open-ended questions. It was audio recorded and further transcribed and coded to produce data. The interviews allowed the researcher to explore issues in greater depth and encouraged the interviewees to express opinions in their own words. An attempt was made to understand from the interviewees when and why they used CS and how beneficial they thought it could be for Nepalese EFL classrooms. Further, the data collected through survey questionnaires were analyzed manually. First, the responses were manually transferred into a spreadsheet, then the answers were counted and coded. This calculation was then presented graphically.

**Findings**

The questionnaires and interviews revealed the participants’ responses on a number of issues that are depicted as below:

**Attitudes towards the use of L1**

![Figure: 1 Students attitudes towards L1 use](image)

The responses to the questionnaire revealed that the students had positive attitudes towards using Nepali in EFL classrooms. The majority of students, 43.33% of them always, and 23.33% of them equally often and sometimes, preferred their teachers to use Nepali. They found their teachers using Nepali enhanced their comprehension,
especially when they struggled to understand complex concepts. At the same time, about half of them believed that they expressed more confidently and easily in Nepali. 45.8% of the students additionally thought that they understood the meaning of vocabulary better and more clearly when explained in Nepali. 43.33% always, 26.7 often, and 16.7% sometimes, wanted their teachers to explain English grammar in Nepali. Similarly, a large number of students always and often used Nepali to ask questions since it made interaction with the teacher and other students easier. They also (66.7% always and 20% often) used Nepali when involved in group work. These statistics indicate a high frequency of CS taking place in Nepalese EFL classrooms. However, they showed the awareness that the use of Nepali (43.33% often and 26.7% always) prevented them from learning English. They accepted that they should minimize the use of Nepali in order to enhance fluency and to practise English language intensively inside the classroom.

As one of the students shared in the interview, “using Nepali makes me confident in sharing ideas in the classroom and interacting with my teacher and peers. So, I think using L1 is a good idea. It is better to use Nepali than remaining quiet in the classroom.”

Although the students preferred a maximum use of English in the classroom, they looked for some spaces for Nepali to fully engage in discussions. The use of Nepali allowed them a chance for their active participation in classroom discourse socialization. Aligning with the notion of L1-as-a-resource, the students seemed to be aware that, through the use of L1, they were able to use their repertoire from Nepali in situations when they felt short of English competence.

Both teachers and students appeared to have positive attitudes towards the use of Nepali. In line with the majority of students’ preference for Nepali, 40% of the teachers used Nepali sometimes and an equal number used it often. This revealed that, although teachers used Nepali, the frequency depended on the requirements of the individual classroom. 50% of the teachers sometimes, 30% often, and 15% always made a conscious use of Nepali when required but 5% of them did not like to consciously use the L1 at all. Similarly, 60% of the teachers thought that the use of L1 was an effective strategy for language learning and teaching. Equally, most teachers believed that the use of L1 aided comprehension.
In line with the student belief, one of the teachers added that:

I intentionally use Nepali as I believe that it is important to some extent. It can be useful if it is used moderately and where needed. It is better to use it for students who are not able to understand instruction in L2.

This represents the common belief and indicates that the teachers were cautious about the random use of L1. They seemed to be strategic as they thought that, while L1 fosters L2 learning, L1 needed to be used only in a situation when it was required, especially with students who struggled to understand the instruction in English. In contrast, another teacher did not find it beneficial to use L1 in EFL classroom; he, rather, suggested teachers be creative in order to make the lesson comprehensible enough that the students did not feel the need for L1 in the classroom. As he mentioned, “It is not always a good idea to use Nepali in a foreign language classroom; we should rather create comprehensive contexts for understanding in the target language.”

Further, the participants divulged a number of factors that caused them to use Nepali in EFL lessons. The majority of students expressed that the major motivation to opt into L1 related to their low-level proficiency in English. They used Nepali while asking questions if they lacked the vocabulary to express their ideas, if they could not pronounce some English words, and with their peers for fun. In contrast, two students stated that they tried to follow their teachers’ instruction of not using Nepali since they needed to practise the TL to become more proficient in English. This also related to the lack of a policy in terms of language use. As one of the students mentioned:

There is not any strict rule for using Nepali or English in and outside the classrooms. So, we use Nepali whenever we like to use, and we try to use English when our teachers strictly command us to do that.

As the teachers advised, they seemed to code-switch when they realized that their students were not following their instruction in English. One teacher also admitted that he wanted to discourage the use of Nepali, but he was forced to use it to make his points clear to students. What follows next is the discussion on the functions of L1 use.

**Functions of code-switching**

The respondents advised a number of functions of code-switching in EFL classrooms.

1. **Comprehensibility**

Almost all participants had a common stance that they liked to use Nepali for better comprehension; however, two teachers disfavoured the use of L1. They tended to give up on English and use L1 to enhance their comprehensibility. One student asserted that “when our teacher explains some complex concepts in Nepali, it helps us internalize the concept in memory so that we can write in examinations.”

Although most participants favoured the use of L1 in order for developing comprehensibility. One of the teachers contrastively mentioned that:
Using L1 might negatively affect learning. I think that teachers should create comprehensive contexts for understanding in the TL. We should help students use the foreign language more effectively and to become accustomed to its use. Learners need to practise English, not Nepali if they want to develop their fluency.

2. Explanation of vocabulary and grammar

A large number of students reported that they understood the meaning of vocabulary and complex concepts better and more clearly when they were explained in Nepali. Similarly, the majority of them wanted their teachers to explain English grammar in Nepali. Nevertheless, most teachers advocated such use of L1 with low-level learners. For example, one of them said that “there is no harm in using L1 with beginners but as they keep developing their proficiency level, the use of L1 needs to be minimized simultaneously.”

3. Classroom interaction

A large number of students reported that they often used Nepali to ask questions since it made the interaction easier with teachers and their peers. The teachers, however, seemed to prohibit students from using Nepali, yet the students used Nepali if the communication with their peers in English was too difficult. About 70% of the students additionally indicated that they used Nepali while doing their group work when they found it difficult to interpret the information in English while carrying out some tasks with their partners. One of the teachers explained the significance of using Nepali as he said that “as long as the students participate and engage in classroom discussion, the use of Nepali is far better than not participating.”

The use of English also fostered their confidence to contribute to classroom discussions. In this regard, one student viewed that:

In some lessons, when my teacher strictly forbids the use of Nepali, I do not feel confident enough to speak in the English language. But, I am confident and share my ideas in some lessons when they allow using Nepali.

**Teachers’ ability to use English and its relation to code-switching**

Most students overwhelmingly disagreed that their teachers used Nepali due to lack of proficiency in English. However, the majority of teachers agreed that it was true in some cases that the teacher’s use of Nepali reflected a lack of proficiency in the TL. While illustrating the lack of teachers’ proficiency, one of them added that:

Some teachers are not creative and use Nepali in the absence of being able to apply successful techniques for engaging learners in English. There are some teachers who do not know how to speak English well and do not have the self-confidence to use English.

In contrast, another teacher advocated the use of English. He mentioned that “Nepali is one of the tools that the EFL teachers use to deliver the information more
comprehensively, rather than using it because of a lack of proficiency in English.”

**L1 as a barrier to learning**

Although most participants viewed the use of English as a prominent tool for language learning, many of the students showed awareness that the use of Nepali prevented them from learning English. They accepted that they should minimize the use of Nepali in order to enhance fluency and to practice the English language inside the classroom. Similarly, those teachers who disfavoured the use of Nepali felt that the use of Nepali might negatively affect learning. In line, one teacher said that:

> I do not think we should let students use Nepali in EFL classes that focus on developing students’ proficiency. Nepali should be prohibited in order to force learners to listen and speak in English. We should also discourage a reliance on translation.

**Discussion**

This study revealed that both teachers and students had positive attitudes towards using Nepali in EFL classrooms, which asserts the findings of some recent studies (e.g., Barnard & McLellan, 2014; Magid & Mugaddam, 2013; Nordin, et al., 2013). The choice for code-switching is largely linked to increased comprehension for knowledge transformation, which also aligns with Humphries and Stroupe (2014).

The study also identified the situations in which teachers code-switched and the reasons for doing so. The teachers switched to Nepali to enhance the students’ comprehension since learners with a lower level of proficiency in L2 struggled to understand lessons. Halliwell and Jones (1991) argued that learners should take risks when speaking and they should attempt to understand in the TL. However, in this study, the teachers believed that incomprehensible input was not helpful in learners’ acquisition of a second language. According to Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, the language received by learners needs to be comprehensible. Therefore, using L1 moderately with lower-level learners might be useful. This view replicates Nation’s (2003) proposal of using L1 if students are not competent language users. Additionally, the teachers also stated that they used Nepali in limited contexts such as for grammar and vocabulary teaching, which is also akin to Canh and Hamied (2014). This is in contrast with Harbord’s advice (1992) that the use of L1 in grammar lessons should be strictly prohibited. This researcher believes that L1 should be avoided while students are working on the language used in specific contexts such as exploring grammatical structures but that the use of L2 is not counter-productive if, by doing so, the teacher helps learners to understand patterns in the TL. Moreover, the students, here generally used Nepali because of their low language competence. Firstly, they used Nepali to ask teachers questions, which in Cameron’s (2001) terms is seeking help from their teachers and peers. Secondly, they used Nepali when they lacked vocabulary and structures in the TL and, in agreement with Chaudhery (2012), for ease of communication with peers while involved in group activities. They also used L1 to transfer information to their peers, in agreement with Olmendo’s (2003) and Humphries and Stroupe (2014) findings. They also switched to Nepali when they were not able to pronounce particular sounds.
There is conflicting evidence in the literature that the use of L1 reflects teachers’ lack of language proficiency. While the students in this study disagreed with this view, the majority of teachers, perhaps surprisingly, agreed to some extent, which is in alignment with Canh and Hamied (2014). One of the teachers, who was relatively inexperienced, said that he used L1 a great deal as he was not very creative in English. A similar view was proposed by some teachers who believed that teachers use L1 as they are not able to put the meaning across sufficiently clearly in the TL. This does not concur with Harbord’s (1992) research that L1 is also used by teachers who are competent speakers.

**Conclusion**

The present study looked at the attitudes of both teachers and students towards using L1 in university EFL classes in Nepal. It also ascertained the situations in which both teachers and students switch from English to Nepali. This study revealed a positive attitude of both teachers and students towards CS. They tend to use L1 as they believe it helps language learning in a number of ways, such as it aids ‘comprehensibility’, ‘understanding of vocabulary and grammar’, and ‘classroom interaction’. They, therefore, believed that CS can be a prominent tool for teaching EFL, particularly when teaching lower-level learners. The majority of students believed that their teachers switching from English into Nepali and vice versa helped them understand the concepts better. The higher level of comprehension also motivated them to learn the TL. However, some students thought that it often prevented them from learning the TL. These views were mirrored by the teachers, most of whom argued that CS had been beneficial for their students, with only a few viewing it as harmful to L2 language learning. Teachers also added that their students often feel more comfortable and more confident about contributing to the class discussion when speaking in Nepali.

It is recommended that future studies be undertaken with larger samples to gain more insights into teachers’ and learners’ attitudes towards using Nepali in Nepalese universities when teaching English. Observation-based qualitative research, combined with quantitative measurement of learners’ progress over time, could be used to ascertain whether the use of L1 assists in L2 language learning. Moreover, future research should investigate the relationship between the learners’ use of L1 and their level of motivation. It would also be productive to ascertain the attitudes of advanced level learners and their reasons for their CS.

**References**


**Pramod Kumar Sah** is a doctoral student in Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, Canada. He earned his MA TESOL with Applied Linguistics from the UK and MED in English Language Teaching from Nepal. In addition to his teaching experience in Nepal, China, England, and Canada, he has published scholarly pieces in the field of English language education. His major research areas include language planning and policy, political economy, English medium instruction (EMI) policy, language ideology, and critical literacies. pramodtesol@gmail.com
The Relationship between Reading Strategy Use and EFL Test Performance

Saraswati Dawadi

Abstract

There has been a steady interest in investigating the relationship between strategy use and English as a foreign language (EFL) test performance. Despite numerous studies on strategy use, the relationship between the two is still not clear. This paper reports on a study that investigated the use of reading strategies in the Secondary Education Examination English reading test and the relationship between reading strategy use and the test performance. A sample of 312 EFL learners studying at Grade 10 in Nepal participated in this study. They were asked to take the test and then respond to a reading strategy questionnaire. The quantitative software SPSS (version 20) was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that participants were active strategy users, and they used cognitive strategies more frequently than metacognitive strategies. A significant relationship was identified between reading strategy use and EFL proficiency; high-proficiency learners reported significantly higher use of reading strategies than moderate-proficiency learners, who in turn reported higher use of those strategies than their low-proficiency peers. Implications of these findings for EFL teaching and recommendations for further research are discussed.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, Cognitive reading strategy, Metacognitive reading strategy, Proficiency

Reading is “a cognitive process in which readers interact with the text, forming hypothesis, predictions and using their background knowledge to construct the meaning” (Sungatullina, Zalyaeva, & Gorelova, 2016, p.2). It can be seen as a constructive process in which readers, texts, and contexts interact with each other. It is very much an individual, complex cognitive process – what Bernhardt (1991) has called “an intrapersonal problem-solving task” (p. 6). Therefore, performance variation in a second language (L2) reading test occurs due to learners’ individual differences (Cohen & Upton, 2007).

It is usually argued that low-proficiency learners and high-proficiency learners process information differently and use different strategies to understand a reading text. Zhang, Aryadoust and Zhang (2014) claim, “skilled readers are distinguished from unskilled readers by their conscious awareness of strategic reading processes and their actual use of reading strategies”
Additionally, Cummins (2000) argues that learners need to develop a certain level of proficiency in the target language in order to be able to read a text effectively. Therefore, it seems important to explore strategy types that L2 learners with different linguistic proficiency use to interact with a text, and how strategy choices influence their performance.

Bachman and Palmer (2010), having highlighted the role of strategy use on L2 learning, present a framework and elaborate two sets of learners’ characteristics: focal and peripheral attributes. Focal attributes refer to learners’ language proficiency, which involves language knowledge (including grammatical, textual, sociolinguistic and functional) and strategic competence – the “higher-order metacognitive strategies that provide a management function in language use” (p.48). Peripheral attributes refer to test-takers’ personal attributes including cognitive strategies which refer to the ways in which test-takers “execute plans in actual language use” (p.35).

Cognitive strategies refer to the strategies that require specific actions and goal-oriented cognitive steps that learners invoke when reading an L2 text. They are ongoing conscious mental behaviours used by L2 learners to perform better in the language. They are, according to Phakiti (2008), composed of three strategies: comprehending (understanding a text, identifying main ideas in the text and making inferences), memory (storing information), and retrieval (recalling information, such as relating the information from a text to prior knowledge, guessing meanings from a context, and applying grammatical rules). Beside these cognitive strategies, L2 learners also seem to use metacognitive strategies to understand a text.

Metacognitive strategies refer to some cognitive steps that L2 learners take to monitor or regulate their cognitive processes when reading a text. They are grouped into three broad categories: planning, monitoring and evaluation (Zhang, et al., 2014). Each of these is considered in turn. Planning strategies are test-takers’ actions of previewing or overviewing a task and making decisions about how or when the task should be done and the order of steps to be taken to accomplish the task. They also involve setting a speed at which the task should be done in order to be able to accomplish the task within the limited time frame. This in turn supports learners to perform the task successfully (Yayli, 2010). Monitoring strategies refer to test-takers’ deliberate actions to monitor their own performance and to ensure that tasks are properly executed; these strategies are used for “checking and regulating performance” (Zhang, Goh, & Kunnan, 2014, p.78), whereas evaluation strategies are the strategies that L2 learners use to reflect on or respond in some way to a reading task. The learners use these strategies to check or evaluate how well they have completed the task.

**Literature Review**

There has been a steady interest in investigating the relationship between strategy use and L2 test performance (e.g Cohen & Upton, 2007; Phakiti, 2003, 2008; Purpura, 1997,1998; Song and Cheng, 2006; Zhang, et al., 2014; Zhang, Liu, Zhao and Xie, 2011). Some studies support a connection between strategy use and L2 test performance, while others do not. I will
illustrate the current state of related research with key examples.

Phakiti (2003) examined the relationship between cognitive and metacognitive strategy use and reading performance on an EFL reading comprehension test. In the study, 384 English as a foreign language (EFL) learners responded to a reading strategy questionnaire after they took an EFL reading test. Then, eight of the learners (four highly successful and four unsuccessful) took part in a retrospective interview. The results indicated a positive relationship between cognitive and metacognitive strategy use and the test performance, and highly successful test-takers “reported significantly higher use of metacognitive strategy than the moderately successful ones who in turn reported higher use of these strategies than the unsuccessful test-takers” (p.26). Likewise, Zhang and Zhang (2013) found that high-proficiency learners use more and multiple strategies to facilitate reading comprehension relative to low-proficiency learners in the Chinese context. Having reported similar results about the Chinese EFL learners, Aryadoust and Zhang (2016) further argued that learners’ with higher-proficiency use reading strategies more frequently than the students with lower-proficiency. Additionally, Sungatullina, Zalyaeva, and Gorelova (2016) established a connection between success in an EFL reading test and the degree of students’ metacognitive awareness and strategy use.

However, there are other studies around the globe which report little or no connection between strategy use and L2 test performance. For instance, unlike the findings of Zhang and Zhang (2013), Purpura (1997, 1999) reported that low-proficiency EFL learners use more strategies than the high-proficiency learners. Among the 15 strategy types included in the questionnaire, the high-proficiency group reported using only five strategies (inferencing, linking with prior knowledge, monitoring, self-evaluating and practicing naturalistically) more frequently than the low-proficiency group; all other strategies were reportedly used more frequently by the low-proficiency group. The results revealed that neither cognitive nor metacognitive strategy use had a direct effect on the test performance. Similarly, Ghaemi and Ghaemi (2011) also found no significant relationship between strategy use and an EFL reading comprehension test performance in the Iranian context. Similarly, Dawadi’s (2015) study on the use of reading strategies on the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) reading test revealed that both successful and unsuccessful test-takers used similar strategies to respond to the test. She argued that successful completion of a test depends on how strategically L2 test-takers can use reading strategies, but not necessarily what or how many strategies the test-takers use. However, her major focus was only on cognitive strategies use and the test validation, not on the strategy use and the test performance.

As discussed above, an extensive body of research has investigated the relationship between strategy use and L2 reading test performance. However, what is still a moot point is whether strategy use enhances L2 test performance (Zhang, et al., 2014). Additionally, almost no research has explored how Nepalese EFL learners respond to the Secondary Education Examination (SEE) reading test – a national level test conducted at the end of 10-year secondary school education in Nepal. Thus, this study was conducted to
investigate current beliefs about the links between reading strategy use and EFL test performance, and also to investigate the reading strategies used in the SEE English reading test.

**Research Questions**

The study addresses the following three research questions:

1. What type of reading strategies are used in the SEE English reading test?

2. Are there any significant differences between high-proficiency, moderate-proficiency and low-proficiency test-takers in the use of reading strategies?

3. What relationships, if any, exist between reading strategy use and the test performance?

**Participants**

A total of 325 (male=172, female=153) EFL learners studying at grade 10 in Nepal participated in the study. They were randomly selected from seven public secondary schools in Nepal. Their age ranged between 14 and 17 years (M=15.13, SD=.68). All of them were Nepali native speakers, who had learned English for an average of 11.36 years (SD=1.45). At the time of the data collection, they were preparing for the SEE.

**Instruments**

Two different instruments were used in the study: a reading test and a questionnaire. Participants were asked to take a reading test (one of the SEE reading tests of the academic year 2015-2016) and based on their test scores, they were divided into three groups: high-proficiency (74), moderate-proficiency (151) and low-proficiency (87). Following Phakiti (2003), students who obtained 70% or above, between 46 and 69% and below 45% on the test score were grouped as ‘high-proficiency’, ‘moderate-proficiency’ and ‘low-proficiency’ students, respectively.

The questionnaire was adapted from Phakiti (2008) as the questionnaire in Phakiti’s study was designed for EFL learners. As a result, it seemed very appropriate for the participants in this study. However, it was translated into Nepali, which participants were comfortable with or most proficient in. It was translated back to English to cross check whether the translation caused any distortions in the intended meaning. It consisted of 30 cognitive and metacognitive strategy items designed on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), and 5 (always) (See Appendix A). Then, it was piloted with 10 students studying at Grade 10 in a public school in Nepal to ensure instruction clarity and content appropriacy.

**Data Collection, Scoring, and Preparation**

After obtaining their consents, participants were asked to take the test first and then fill out the questionnaire. It was ensured that they had not practiced the test before they were asked to take it as part of the study. Each student’s responses to the test items were scored. Each answer was marked and double-checked to ensure that each item was scored accurately. Then, the scores along with the responses to the questionnaire were entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20 software for further analysis.
Several statistical procedures were routinely carried out with each data set, whether it involved item level analysis or sub/scale level analysis, to ensure reliability of the findings. First, descriptive statistics were examined at item level (the means, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis) to obtain how participants reported using these strategies and to ensure that all values of skewness and kurtosis were within the accepted range (± 2) for a normal distribution (Zhang & Zhang, 2013). Then, internal consistency reliability estimates were computed for the strategy variables both at scale and subscale levels. The overall reliability coefficient (α = 0.882) ensured the general reliability of the study. The internal reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) for the two main categories (scales) and their subscales are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Taxonomy of cognitive and metacognitive strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processing</th>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive strategies</td>
<td>Comprehending</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>0.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 14</td>
<td>0.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieval</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15, 16, 17, 18, 19</td>
<td>0.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>0.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20, 21, 22, 23, 24</td>
<td>0.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30</td>
<td>0.520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.882</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then, the patterns of strategy choice at individual and sub/scale levels were analyzed by examining the means and the standard deviations within the whole group. Then, a factorial ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether the mean differences between the three groups were statistically significant. In order to examine students’ strategy use in terms of the Likert scale that ranges from 1 to 5, following Zhang (2009), this study employed three levels of usages, that is, high (mean of 3.5 or higher), moderate (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (mean of 2.4 or lower). Finally, a regression test was conducted to examine the relationship between strategy use and EFL proficiency.

**Results**

The results indicated that participants frequently used many of the available reading strategies. On the whole, they reportedly used the available reading strategies at a high frequency rate (M = 3.502, SD = 0.632). Among the 30 strategies included in the questionnaire, 18 (60%) fell into the high usage level (M ≥ 3.5) and 10 (33.33%) fell into the medium usage level (M ≥ 2.5). However, two of them (6.66%) fell into the low usage level (M < 2.4).

Closer inspection of the data at item level reveals an interesting picture. Among the
five most frequent strategies, three of them (Items, 1, 2 and 6) were metacognitive strategies, whereas two others (items 7 and 15) were cognitive strategies. But all the five least frequent strategies were metacognitive strategies, particularly evaluating strategies. Further digging into the data indicated that almost all the cognitive strategies fell into the high usage level. However, only six of the metacognitive strategies went to the high usage level. Among the three subscales within metacognitive strategies, planning strategies fell into the high usage level. Nonetheless, all of the monitoring and evaluating strategies went into the medium usage level; except two evaluating strategies that went into the low usage level. Table 2 presents an overall picture of strategy use by participants in this study.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the cognitive and metacognitive strategy use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Subscales</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive strategies</td>
<td>Comprehending</td>
<td>3.853</td>
<td>0.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>3.718</td>
<td>0.869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieval</td>
<td>3.632</td>
<td>0.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>3.727</td>
<td>0.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>3.800</td>
<td>0.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>3.193</td>
<td>0.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>2.891</td>
<td>0.732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>3.301</td>
<td>0.667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to answer the second research question, a factorial ANOVA test was conducted, which indicated a significant difference across the three groups, $F (2, 309) = 423.356$, $p=.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.733$. Table 3 presents the mean score of each group.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics by success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EFL reading performance</td>
<td>4.258</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.628</td>
<td>.386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.708</td>
<td>.320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive strategies</td>
<td>4.422</td>
<td>.261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.861</td>
<td>.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.948</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive strategies</td>
<td>4.132</td>
<td>.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.449</td>
<td>.412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.524</td>
<td>.393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High-proficiency test-takers reported higher use of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies than the moderate-proficiency test-takers, who in turn reported higher use of the strategies than their low-proficiency peers. The factorial ANOVA test results indicate a significant difference between the mean scores, as indicated in Table 4.
Additionally, Scheffe post-hoc test was conducted, which indicated a significant difference among the groups.

Table 4. Factorial ANOVA results for success levels

Additionally, Scheffe post-hoc test was conducted, which indicated a significant difference among the groups.

Table 5. Scheffe post-hoc test of differences across the success groups

In order to address the third research question, a regression analysis test was performed with test performance as a dependent variable and reading strategies as independent variables. The standardized regression co-efficient values for all the six strategy scales were statistically significant t (305)- > 2.138, p < 0.033. The Beta values (comprehension, .082; memory, .133; retrieval, .246; planning, .224; monitoring, .181 and evaluating, .205) further indicate that retrieval and planning strategies were the best predictor of EFL reading test performance.

Discussion

The study set out to investigate EFL test-takers’ reading strategy use in a standardized EFL reading test. The results indicated that they, on the whole, displayed characteristics of active strategic readers. Frequent use of multiple strategies may have been associated with the challenging demands of the test, which called for students to deal with both language and test task demands. Simultaneously, frequent use of multiple strategies might be associated with English teaching and learning practices in the Nepalese classroom context. Most teachers in Nepalese schools give explicit explanations when teaching English grammar, vocabulary and discourse structures. Thus, classroom instructions could help students develop awareness about English reading strategies, and this might have contributed to
facilitating students’ awareness of reading strategies in English (Zhang & Wu, 2009).

With regard to the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, consistent with Phakiti’s (2003) findings, test-takers reportedly used more cognitive strategies than metacognitive strategies. However, the results did not corroborate Song and Cheng’s (2006) claim that EFL learners use more metacognitive strategies than cognitive strategies. Nevertheless, the differences between the current study and Song and Cheng’s study should be considered. For instance, Song and Cheng employed Purpura’s (1999) reading strategy questionnaire but this study employed Phakiti’s (2008) questionnaire. The two questionnaires differ in terms of the number of items and the subscales of reading strategies. Additionally, the current study was conducted in the Nepalese context but Song and Cheng’s study was in the Chinese context. Therefore, there might have been some effects of test-takers’ academic background and native language on strategy use (Zhang & Wu, 2009).

A closer look at the strategy use at the sub-scale level indicates that comprehension strategy was reportedly used with the highest frequency. It might be plausible to interpret the finding in relation to English teaching and testing practices in Nepalese public schools. Very similar to the Chinese context (Zhang & Wu, 2009), most English teachers in Nepal employ a comprehension-testing type of teaching strategy and they mostly use comprehension passages to test their students. Those comprehension exercises may offer opportunities for students to be aware of various comprehension strategies in reading and to practice using those strategies. As a result, it is possible that participants learnt comprehension strategies through their experience of doing comprehension-testing exercises in their classroom contexts. However, this does not mean that text comprehension-oriented teaching and testing practice is good enough to enhance EFL proficiency. There might also be a case that the strategies they used during the test might be simply test-taking strategies, which are different from reading comprehension strategies for effective reading. Those test-taking strategies might have helped them to perform well in their test without necessarily improving their proficiency for in-depth understanding of the reading materials (Cohen, 1998). This aspect of teaching and testing practice needs further investigation.

Among the five most frequently reported strategies, three (Item 1, 2, and 6) involved task planning; one (Item 7) was concerned with comprehending the material (i.e. understanding the relationships between the ideas in the text and tasks), and another (Item 11) was concerned with interpreting the hidden meaning of the text. The result might suggest that EFL learners tend to plan their performance and also use comprehension and memory strategies to comprehend EFL texts.

The five least used strategies were all evaluating strategies. Two main reasons might account for this finding. Firstly, time constraints to complete the test might have impacted on the use of those strategies. Participants might have been in a rush to complete the test and they might not have got enough opportunity to evaluate their own performance. Secondly, strategy use might be associated with participants’ proficiency level in English. Only a few participants (22.12%) were high-
Low-proficiency learners might have been discouraged from using evaluation strategies because of the lack of evaluation skills or knowledge in English. For instance, item number 30 (I immediately corrected my understanding or performance mistakes when found) was the least frequent strategy among the 30 strategies included in the questionnaire. It is likely that low-proficiency participants might have been discouraged from using this strategy thinking that they would be unable to correct their answers. In other words, those low-proficiency learners had low appraisal confidence (Phakiti, 2016) to use evaluation strategies.

Consistent with the findings of some previous studies (e.g.Aryadoust & Zhang, 2016; Phakiti, 2003; Zhang & Zhang, 2013), high-proficiency participants reportedly used more strategies than moderate-proficiency participants, who in turn reported using more strategies than their low-proficiency peers. This finding suggests that “skilled readers are distinguished from unskilled readers by their conscious awareness of strategic reading processes and their actual use of reading strategies” (Zhang et al., 2014, p.77). However, the results did not corroborate Purpura’s (1997, 1998) argument that low performers use more strategies than high performers.

Furthermore, consistent with Phakiti’s (2003) findings, the overall results indicated a very strong relationship between strategy use (both cognitive and metacognitive) and the test performance. Additionally, it was found that each of the six strategy categories had strong relationship with the SEE reading test performance. Nevertheless, retrieval and planning strategies were the best predictors of the test performance. However, it should be noted that there are a number of reasons to be cautious in interpreting this finding. Three are outlined here before considering the limitations of the study. Firstly, caution is needed in interpreting the findings because reading comprehension in a foreign language may depend on a number of cognitive and non-cognitive factors. These include reading proficiency and grammar proficiency (Purpura, 1997, 1998), vocabulary, morphology and syntax (Kunnan, 1998), learners’ language proficiency (Bachman & Palmer 2010), individuals’ working memory capacity (Robinson, 2001), the levels of linguistic thresholds in a particular context of language use (Cummins, 2000), reading attitude (Kim, 2016), test tasks, task difficulty, task demands and constraints (McNamara, 1996), test-takers’ native language, gender, culture, attitude, and learning styles (see, Kunan, 1998, for detail). The second reason for caution in the interpretation of the findings relates to the level of anxiety that students would have experienced. In this study, students were told to treat the test like a real test and most of the SEE exam rules were followed. However, the level of anxiety might still have been higher in a real test situation, which might, in turn, have had an effect on strategy use as claimed by Alderson (1990). Thirdly, there might be some issues regarding the participants’ understanding of the reading strategies presented to them. Although the pilot study indicated that most students had similar understanding of the strategies, there might be a case that students with different background interpreted those strategies differently.

It might be equally important to examine the nature of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in relation to the test
performance. The strategies might need to be viewed as two interactive facets of the same mental processes that do not occur independently of each other. There are difficulties in distinguishing cognitive strategies from metacognitive strategies as they may overlap in some contexts (Bax, 2013). The same strategy can be considered as either a cognitive or a metacognitive strategy depending on the purpose for using that strategy. For instance, one of the items in the test requires test-takers to read the text and order the given sentences correctly. In this context, one might go back to the text to find out those statements as a scanning strategy (cognitive strategy), or as a way of checking answers or making sure that the sentences are correctly ordered (metacognitive). Therefore, as Phakiti (2003) argues, “the same strategy in one occasion may be cognitive while in another occasion it may be metacognitive” (p.43), suggesting that participants could have some difficulties to make decisions with regard to their strategy use.

Limitations of the Study

The study has revealed some interesting findings with regard to reading strategy use in the SEE reading test. However, they are certainly not conclusive or comprehensive. Given the vague nature of reading strategies, the relationship between strategy use and the test performance could have been much more complicated than what has been found (Song & Cheng, 2006). Therefore, this study may have a number of limitations. The first limitation concerns accuracy of the reading strategy questionnaire used in the study as it may have failed to capture the full array of complicated mental processes that the test-takers went through when taking the test. The second limitation concerns the reliability of the questionnaire responses. Although test-takers reported high usage of the available reading strategies, it is hard to know whether they were actually using those strategies. Another limitation concerns its sample size, which was limited to 312 students from Nepalese public schools. This may limit the generalization of the results to other circumstances. Future research in this area with a larger sample obtained from the same or similar population or learning conditions is recommended to validate the results of the current study.

Implications of the Study

The study has some practical implications for classroom instruction. The study found a strong relationship between strategy use and the test performance. This finding might indicate that EFL reading is not only a language problem but also a reading problem, as argued by Alderson (1984) and Carrell (1991). Thus, it might be plausible to argue that informed training on reading strategy use can be useful in helping EFL learners enhance their reading proficiency, with a potential of leading to improvement in their overall English proficiency (Zhang & Wu, 2009). Therefore, what EFL teachers need to do is to find out whether their students are aware of different reading strategies and/or how effectively they are using those strategies. Then, teachers need to give them guidance accordingly. It seems that poor learners need more help in increasing their knowledge about strategy use. Teachers in EFL classrooms need to take into consideration timely provision of reading strategies in their instruction as strategy-based instruction is expected to contribute to autonomous reading behaviors (Aghaie & Zhang, 2012) and high achievement in the target language. It can
be hypothesized that low-proficiency learners will benefit from an informed strategy training course that guides them to think about their reading processes, identify their weaknesses, and take remedial measures, as suggested by some researchers who have reported positive effects of strategy training on EFL and/or ESL learning (Aghaie & Zhang, 2012; Lee, 2007; Mardi, 2013; Salataci & Akyel, 2002).

**Conclusion**

The study was carried out to investigate the reading strategies used in the SEE reading test and also to investigate the relationship between strategy use and the test performance. The findings of this study reveal that the Nepalese EFL learners are active strategy users; they used more cognitive strategies than metacognitive strategies. The study also indicated a close relationship between strategy use and the SEE test performance. This means, a higher level frequency of strategy use corresponds to better test performance. Thus, using reading strategies seems to affect EFL tests performance. Retrieval and planning strategies at the subscale level were the best predictors of their SEE test performance. However, it should be noted that learners, in other contexts, “might use different strategies with different test tasks” (Song & Cheng, 2006, p.260).

The study has some practical implications for EFL reading-strategy instruction in the Nepalese context or in other educational settings that share similar characteristics. First, high proficiency learners seem to be distinguished from their low-proficiency counterparts in terms of their strategic knowledge. Therefore, the study advocates for an incorporation of explicit strategy training into the usual reading instruction procedures. Besides using comprehension-testing exercises, it seems necessary to make EFL students, particularly low-proficiency students, aware of reading strategies. The major focus is ascribed to evaluation strategies (the least used strategies) and retrieval strategies (the best predictor of EFL test performance). However, due to some limitations associated with the methods of the study, the generalization of the findings to the entire SEE test-takers or to other reading tests might be restricted. Additionally, EFL test performance might also be affected by several other factors such as gender, cultural background, learner attitude, and motivation. Therefore, it is recommended that more research is carried out to validate the findings of the study and to obtain an all-inclusive picture of the relationship between learners’ variables and EFL test performance in various cultural settings.

**References**


**Contributor**

Mrs Saraswati Dawadi is currently a PhD student at the Open University, England, researching into the power of the Secondary Education Examination English test in Nepal with a particular focus on the impacts of the letter grading system on students and parents. She has earned master’s degree in ELT from Tribhuvan University, Nepal, and MA: TESOL from Lancaster University, England, as a Hornby Trust Scholar 2013/2014. Prior to starting her study in England, she was a lecturer at Tribhuvan University, Nepal. Her interest sits broadly within language assessment, second language acquisition and English language teaching.
Appendix A

Cognitive and metacognitive questionnaire

Part One: Some information about you
ID: _______________ Age: ____________ Gender: ___________ Year of the English study (in years): ________

Part Two: Cognitive Strategies for language learning

A number of statements which people use to describe themselves when they were taking a reading test are given below. Read each statement and indicate how you take the SLC reading test. Choose 1 (Never), 2 (Sometimes), 3 (Often), 4 (Usually), and 5 (Always).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Your thinking</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I planned what to do before I began to complete this reading test.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I made sure I clarified the goals of the reading test tasks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I considered essential steps needed to complete the reading test.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I made sure I understood what had to be done and how to do it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I knew what to do if my intended plans did not work efficiently while completing this reading test.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I flipped through the reading test before I actually started to complete it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I tried to understand the relationships between ideas in the text and tasks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I tried to understand the content of the text and tasks without looking up every word.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I thought what was going to happen next while I was reading the text.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I analyzed what the author meant or tried to say in the text.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I tried to interpret hidden ideas/meanings in the texts.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I translated the text, tasks or questions into my first language.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I summarized the main information in the text.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I reread texts or tasks several times when I felt I did not understand them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I related the information from the text or tasks to my prior knowledge or experience.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I knew which information was more or less important.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I identified or guessed meanings of unknown words using context clues.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I applied my learned grammar rules while reading and completing the reading tasks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I guessed meanings of unknown words using root words.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I was aware of the time limitations and constraints in this test.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I knew how much of the reading and test tasks remained to be done while taking the test.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I knew when I lost concentration while completing this test.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I was aware of my ongoing thinking process.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I knew when I felt worried, tense or unmotivated to complete this reading test.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I checked if I understood the texts and reading tasks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I knew when I should read or complete the test more quickly or carefully.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I double-checked my reading comprehension or performance.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I immediately corrected my misunderstanding or performance mistakes when found.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I evaluated my plans or goals of my reading tasks constantly.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I checked my own performance and progress as I moved along the test tasks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Phakiti, 2008)
Should we Bend towards Blending? How?

Madhu Neupane

Abstract

Blended learning that combines face-to-face and online educational delivery can occur at activity, course, program, and institution level. In this study, course-level blending in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) course was examined. The students of face-to-face mode were enrolled in Moodle. However, their participation in Moodle was optional (i.e. low level of blending). Data collected from a class test and end-of-semester questionnaire survey suggest that blending does have a positive effect on learning achievement and students do perceive blending positively. Overall, the study shows optimism towards the prospects of blended learning. However, for the successful integration of Moodle, easy access to the Internet and orientation for using Moodle are to be ensured.

Keywords: Blended learning, Educational media, Frameworks for blending, New innovations

Introduction

In blended learning, a course involves more than one mode of delivery, that is, face-to-face mode and online mode (Agosto, Copeland, & Zach, 2013; López-Pérez, López-Pérez, Rodriguez-Ariza, & Argente-Linares, 2013; So & Bonk, 2010). Therefore, a blended course design can also be referred to as a hybrid or mixed modality course design or a flipped classroom (Auster, 2016). With an increasing number of students in higher education, concerns for quality are raised from all sectors of life. Similarly, “limited resources, technological advances, and the shift toward faculty accountability and assessment of student learning requires that institutions of higher education and faculty consider more attractive and successful models of teaching and learning” (Luna & Winters, 2017, p. 116). At the core of such models is “students’ active involvement in teaching learning activities for finding knowledge, interpreting results and testing hypothesis” (Laurillard, 2002, p.81). As blended learning offers better opportunities for learning in terms of student involvement, it is seen as one of the most important recent advances in education (Grguroviæ, 2011) and has been discussed as a promising alternative to traditional instruction and training (So & Bonk, 2010).

Using technologies in class not only better prepares learners to use technologies in their workplace, but also offers several learning and social benefits such as
acquiring increased domain knowledge, gaining advance critical and problem solving skills, and understanding how people interact in online information environments (Agosto et al., 2013) by bringing traditional physical classes with elements of virtual education together (Akkoyunlu, & Soylu, 2008). In a survey conducted by Center for Digital Education (2012), respondents agreed that blended learning offers alternate learning opportunities, distance learning programs and increased student engagement, increased academic achievement and student retention, better use of classroom capacity, and reduced costs as benefits. In the same survey, students reported that blended learning increased their understanding and retention of content as well as increased their test scores (Center for Digital Education, 2012). Therefore, blending has been a common phenomenon in higher education at present context as many universities and colleges today are using online and/or blended learning in many course offerings (Hilliard, 2015).

While face-to-face classroom discussions are familiar, comfortable, and rich with secondary attributes (like body language, tone, and so on), they can be “fast paced, spontaneous and fleeting” (Garrison et al., 2010, p. 6). Similarly, classroom discussions are more social and less deliberative and the time boundaries of a class often prevent or discourage complete participation. Moreover, some students are reluctant to speak in public spaces like classrooms. In contrast, successful discourse in online environment can be extended over a much longer time, is more nuanced, is supported with sources, and has a much greater permanence as it is in written form. Students can read through a conversation at any time in the discussion schedule. Participation in asynchronous (i.e. not occurring at the same time) discussion thus tends to be stronger and richer (Warner, 2016).

**Framework for blended learning**

Different frameworks have been forwarded for implementing blended learning. Blending can occur at *activity, course, program,* and *institutional* level (Agosto et al., 2013). As Auster (2016) views, there are two models of blending: *replacement* model and *supplemental* model. In the replacement model, the amount of time that students spend in online mode is reduced from face-to-face class time. In contrast, in supplemental model, students are engaged in online activities (e.g. discussion forum, quizzes, etc.) outside the class for supporting their learning with the face-to-face class time remaining the same. For supporting students’ learning in online mode, different educational media can be used. Based on learning experience they provide for learners, Laurillard (2002) has classified educational media into five types: *narrative* for attending and understanding (e.g. printed materials and video), *interactive* for investigating and exploring (e.g., digital library resources and weblinks), *communicative* for discussing and debating (e.g. online discussion forum and video conferencing), *adaptive* for experimenting and practicing (e.g. quiz providing feedback and virtual laboratory), and *productive* for articulating and expressing (e.g. blogs and wikis). Studies have shown that among these different educational media, narrative and interactive media are predominantly used in online mode to offer students access to digital contents (Lameras, Levy, Paraskakis, & Webber, 2012).
Neumeier (2005) has suggested six parameters to define the nature of blended learning especially in language teaching: (a) mode; (b) model of integration; (c) distribution of learning content and objectives, and assignment of purpose; (d) language teaching methods; (e) involvement of learning subjects (i.e. students, tutors, and teachers); and (f) location. As it has already been established, two modes in blended learning are face-to-face and online modes. First, one of the modes in blended learning can be dominant (i.e. lead) while the other non-dominant (i.e. peripheral). Second, two modes can be sequenced alternatively or parallel in manner and there can be high level (both modes obligatory) or low level (one of the modes optional) of blending. Third, learning contents and objectives in blended learning can be parallel (incorporated and practiced in both modes) or isolated. Fourth, the choice and used of teaching methods used in blended learning are influenced by multiple factors such as online materials, the online tutor, and the face-to-face teacher. Fifth, there can be the use of different interaction patterns: human-to-human, human-to-computer, and human-to-human through computer. Similarly, teachers and learners may assume roles that are different from that of face-to-face class (i.e. teachers as tutor and students as autonomous learners). Sixth, unlike in traditional classes, blended mode will allow for learning to take place elsewhere.

This research has been informed by theoretical frameworks reviewed in this section (i.e. Agosto et al., 2013; Auster, 2016; Laurillard, 2002; Neumeier, 2005) for designing blended learning. The research followed a supplementary model for introducing blended learning at course level in CDA course and made use of narrative, interactive, communicative and adaptive media technologies. Similarly, face-to-face mode was lead mode as it was dominant and the integration was of low level as participation in the Moodle was not mandatory. In the same way, the materials in the Moodle were distributed in parallel manner.

Literature review

Though blended learning is quite new in the context of Nepal, it has drawn wider attention worldwide. Previous studies on blended learning have examined experts’ perceptions of blended learning (e.g. So & Bonk, 2010), students’ perceptions of blended learning (e.g. Auster, 2016; Warner, 2016), and effects of blended learning on students’ performance (e.g. Luna & Winters, 2017). These studies have shown that supplementing traditional classes with online activities has positive effects on students’ performance.

So and Bonk (2010) examined current practices and the future of blended learning by using a Delphi study (see So & Bonk 2010 for more information about Delphi study) involving a panel of experts from different parts of the world. The research identified three themes in the process: pros and cons of blended learning, blended learning for collaboration in various contexts, and the future of blended learning. The experts viewed that blended learning approaches are useful for communication and knowledge construction; they have the advantages of flexibility and time efficiency when there is correspondence between face-to-face and online courses, and they foster collaboration in different contexts if the course is designed in such a manner. They also claimed that, in the future, there will
be no bipolar distinction between on-line and off-line learning, rather all learning will be blended.

Previous research has shown that students have positive perceptions of blended learning. Waha and Davis’s (2014) exploration of students’ expectations, perceptions, and satisfaction of appropriate mix of online and face-to-face activities showed that students were positive about blended learning; liked the flexibility as well as personal interactions with peers and teachers for sharing information and collaboration; gave preferences to asynchronous communication (e.g. email) rather than synchronous communication (e.g. Skype); and considered blended mode to be an appropriate mode of study. Similar positive perceptions were observed in Auster’s (2016) study as well. Auster (2016) examined students’ perceptions of the use of screencasts in an Introduction to Sociology course. The screencasts were designed by the researcher herself and were used to introduce concepts and theories so as to provide students more time to review concepts and theories outside class and more time for discussion in class. To make the screencasts more interesting, as per students’ suggestions, music, videos and images were also incorporated. The students’ perception of screencasts was examined by using an end of class survey in which students (more than 80%) viewed that screencasts provided them with enhanced learning opportunities and better prepared them for final exam. They wanted to have similar blending in subsequent classes as well. Previous research has shown that students’ learning styles and students perception of blended learning are related (e.g. Akkoyunlu & Soylu, 2008). Further research has investigated if blended learning has any effect on students’ learning achievement. In this regard, Lim and Morris (2009) observed a direct influence of blended instruction and learner variables on learning outcomes, and similar positive influence was reported in Grguroviæ (2011). Grguroviæ’s (2011) study showed that all the skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) can be practiced in blended modes; students have more control of their learning in such an environment; and even shy students can benefit from online practice. In the same way, Agosto et al.’s (2013) study based Zach and Agosto’s (2009) framework for maximizing collaboration through blended learning found that blogs successfully supported collaboration and community building. Similar positive results were reported in two recent studies (i.e. Luna & Winters, 2017; Warner 2016). Warner’s (2016) study on blended learning that made use of short recorded lectures followed by online discussion forums showed that such discussions allowed students to take charge of their own learning; made learning easier and more productive through collaboration and discussion; increased students’ satisfaction; and brought improvement in students’ writing performance as they got exposure to others’ ideas and learnt to ask good questions. However, some students who liked being directly told what to do did not like online discussion and considered it to be an extra burden to their already overloaded schedule. In the same way, Luna and Winters’ (2017) quasi-experimental study using a flipped classroom using a replacement model (one third of the class time online) did not show statistically significant difference between the performance of two sections. However, in some sections of the test, students in blended mode performed better than the
students in lecture mode, leading the researchers to conclude that blended learning with flipped classroom may produce better results than lecture mode.

**Gap in literature**

The brief review of research shows that blended learning is taken positively and does influence learning positively. However, it has not yet been established whether blended learning has any significant impact on students’ learning. Though digital technologies and their use in education is growing very fast, there is a lack of research on how these technologies support learning (Lameras et al., 2012). Therefore, it is of great interest to the entire university community as well as other stakeholders to be aware of the impact of web-based learning technologies on learning outcomes when used as a complement to face-to-face learning (López-Pérez et al., 2013). As study contexts are always different, findings obtained in one culture and context may not be generalized in other contexts. In the context of Nepal, the research on blended learning is virtually non-existent. This lack of research warrants further research in this area.

Moodle Platform has been established in TU by a project supported by the Norwegian Program for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development (NORHED). As there are very few students enrolled in online mode, the platform can be better utilized and its sustainability can be ensured if students enrolled in face-to-face mode are provided with the opportunity for blended learning. Therefore, I used a blended learning approach in a CDA course in the Master of English Education program at TU with the hope that it will increase students’ active participation in the course and will have a positive impact on their learning. More specifically, the blending was introduced with the following objectives:

1. To assess students’ access to ICT.
2. To compare students’ test performance in terms of their participation in Moodle.
3. To identify the status of student use of ICT and Moodle.
4. To explore students’ views regarding the integration of Moodle in face-to-face classes.

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. Do students have access to ICT (computer and the internet)?
2. Do students who access Moodle perform better than those who do not?
3. What is the status of students’ use of ICT and Moodle?
4. What are students’ views regarding the integration of Moodle in face-to-face classes?

**Methodology**

This study was based on action research design. The main aim of action research is to bring improvement to a current situation, generating theoretical as well as practical knowledge about the practice and self-development through continuous inquiry (Burns, 2015). Common phases of action research (i.e. planning, action, observation, and reflection) were followed in this research as well.
In the beginning, I felt that students — even in the semester system which has recently been introduced in TU -- are not as engaged in their study as they should be and we teachers could do more to increase their engagement. My plan was to facilitate students’ learning by utilizing the recently installed Wi-Fi and Moodle platform in the Faculty of Education.

In the beginning, I collected email addresses from the students in two sections where I was teaching CDA and created a Google group. Then, I shared course plan, assignments, PowerPoint slides of presentation and other supporting materials through the group mail. I also enrolled the students to Moodle platform. I informed them about the Moodle and instructed them how they can log on and participate in one of my face-to-face classes. I provided all prescribed materials, presentation slides, some links to useful videos, and questions for discussion in the Moodle. I uploaded five quizzes (Week 1, Week 2, Week 3, Week 7, and Week 10) for the duration of the 16-week semester. Time and again, I encouraged the students to log on the Moodle and participate in it. Quizzes in first, second, third, seventh and tenth week were attempted by 30, 37, 24, 22 students respectively. During the semester, students submitted two written assignments, took one class test and made one group presentation. For reflection, students were provided with a questionnaire survey at the end of semester.

Tools for data collection

Class test

For the collection of data regarding students’ performance, a class test was administered at the end of the semester. The test contained 20 objective questions covering the whole course of CDA.

Questionnaire survey

For collecting their reflections about the course, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire which included demographic information and close-ended questions, as well as one open-ended question. Questions in the questionnaire were divided into different categories: access to ICT, overall impression of the class, assignments, class test, presentation, feedback, and ICT support and Moodle for learning. However, in this paper only two aspects, access to ICT and ICT support and Moodle for learning, have been discussed. Students also had an opportunity to express their views about Moodle through an open-ended question included at the end of the questionnaire. The students filled out the survey questionnaire anonymously at the end of the semester.

Setting and participants

I introduced blended learning in CDA course in two sections that I taught at the Department of English Education, TU in 2016-2017. Altogether there were 93 students in two sections. All the students took part in the class test. However, only 64 students (i.e. 68.08%) responded to the questionnaire survey.

Data preparation and analysis

To prepare the data collected from objective test and questionnaire for analysis, three main steps were taken. First the data was entered in SPSS version 22 for PC. Second, the reliability of the research instruments (i.e. objective test and questionnaire) was calculated by using Cronbach’s alpha.
To address research question 1 (i.e. to find out students’ access to ICT), frequency and percentage were calculated. Similarly, to answer research question 2 (the differences between students’ performance in terms of their participation in Moodle), a one-way analysis of variance (hereafter, one-way ANOVA) was used as it is more robust than an independent sample t-test (Field, 2009; Phakiti, 2014). In the same way, to answer the third research question (i.e. the status of students’ use of ICT and Moodle), percentage was calculated. Finally, to answer the fourth question, students’ answers to an open-ended question were analyzed thematically.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analysis of research instruments

First the preliminary analysis of the research instruments (i.e. the class test and the questionnaire) was calculated. The reliability of the questionnaire was good (i.e. á = 0.71). However, the reliability of the class test was not so satisfactory (i.e. á = 0.34). The low reliability of the test might have been caused by the lack of homogeneity of items in the test as they were testing quite different concepts related to CDA. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the class test. The skewness and kurtosis statistics for test were within the range of ±1 indicating that the data were normally distributed. After the analysis of instruments, data were analyzed to answer the research questions raised in the study.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of test performance (N = 93)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test performance</th>
<th>Min.%</th>
<th>Max.%</th>
<th>Mean%</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>90.00</td>
<td>68.91</td>
<td>11.04</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research question 1: Do students have access to ICT (computer and Internet)?

The first research question was raised to find out students’ access to ICT. For this purpose, there were four questions that asked students whether they have an email identification (id), access to a computer (a desktop or laptop) and access to the Internet. Altogether 64 students answered the questions, Figure 1 and 2 show the status of students’ email id in the beginning and at the end of the course respectively.
As indicated in Figure 1 and 2, 50 (i.e. 78%) students had an email id before joining the course while at the end of the course, the number reached 60 (i.e. 94%). However, it is interesting to note that few students (i.e. 6%) still did not have an email id. We can assume that those who did not have an email id did not have access to Moodle. It points out that the use of ICT, even in its simplest form like email, cannot be taken for granted with students in Master level in the context of Nepal.

As indicated in Figure 3 and 4, 28 (i.e. 56%) students had access to a computer while 54 (i.e. 86%) students had access to the Internet. It shows that students have mobile subscription for accessing the Internet, a common and growing phenomenon especially in the context of developing (or underdeveloped) countries like Nepal.

**Research question 2: Do students who accessed Moodle perform better than those who did not?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessing Moodle</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>73.85</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67.31</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>69.14</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second research question examined if there was any difference between the students who accessed the Moodle and those who did not. Table 2 shows the results.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics of group differences in test performance**

Table 2 shows that out of 93 students who were involved in the study 26 students accessed the Moodle while the remaining 67 did not. As indicated in Table 2, those who accessed Moodle performed better on tests (mean score 73.85%) than those who did not access the Moodle (mean score 67.31%). To find out whether the differences among groups were significant, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Table 3 shows the result of one-way ANOVA.

**Table 3: ANOVA of group differences**
Table 3 displays that there were statistically significant differences between two groups of learners in terms of test performance ($F[1, 91] = 6.78, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.06$). The eta squared ($\eta^2$) of 0.06 shows that only 6% of differences in test performance can be explained by students’ access to Moodle. However, this research does not make it clear whether the students who were better at their study accessed Moodle or whether they performed better because they were accessing Moodle. However, this finding is in consonance with previous literature, which has shown that blending Moodle in face-to-face learning engenders better results (e.g. Luna & Winters, 2017; Warner, 2016).

**Research question 3: What is the status of students’ use of ICT and Moodle?**

To answer the third research question, a questionnaire survey was used. The students were asked about their use of ICT and Moodle. The analysis of questionnaire in percent terms is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Students use ICT and Moodle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICT Support and Moodle for Learning</th>
<th>Yes%</th>
<th>No%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I got PowerPoints and other reading materials through group mail.</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Email helped me to communicate with my teacher even outside the class.</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I attempted the quizzes uploaded in the Moodle.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I made use of reading materials uploaded in the Moodle.</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I took part in the discussion forums in the Moodle.</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I watched the videos provided in the Moodle.</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I could not access Moodle because I do not have access to the Internet.</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, a great majority of the students (i.e. 89.1%) agreed that they got PowerPoint slides of class delivery and other reading materials through group mail. Similarly, for a majority (i.e. 81.2%), email was useful for communicating with their instructor without the limitation of time and space. In the same way, 50% of the students said they attempted quizzes uploaded in the Moodle. However, their participation in the discussion forum was not encouraging as very few of them (i.e. 26.25%) took part in the discussion. The majority of students (i.e. 79.7%) denied that the lack of access to the Internet barred them from participating in the Moodle.

**Research question 4: What are students’ views regarding the integration of Moodle in face-to-face classes?**

To get students’ views regarding the integration of Moodle in face-to-face class, students were asked an open-ended question. Two different themes emerged while analyzing their views.

*Moodle is useful for learning and should be used in other subjects.* Students shared their views that Moodle was useful for them. They used positive words like beneficial, useful and satisfied to describe their experience of using Moodle. Following examples illustrate their views:

*I used it with my group and enjoyed it a lot. All the things there in the Moodle are beneficial for students/us.*

*Moodle was very useful for me especially in dealing with objective questions. It also provided me good*
reflection of different topics related to course. I would like to suggest to provide more quizzes and make the forum more interactive among the learners where queries and their answers can be provided.

I am very satisfied with your Moodle however sometimes error occur due to technical problem.

They viewed that it would be better if Moodle was integrated in other subjects and other semesters as well. Following examples illustrate their views:

All the students of all sections should have access in Moodle in all subjects.

It would be very good if you enroll us in the Moodle in the coming semester as well.

Moodle should be made easily accessible. For some students, Moodle was not accessible as they did not have Internet connection that was strong enough to access the Moodle while for others the instruction for using the Moodle was not clear.

I could not access Moodle because I have no computer or laptop and mobile connection is very slow in my mobile.

Better orientation should be given to join the Moodle.

The views expressed by students show better prospects for blended learning if the access is ensured.

**Pedagogical Implications**

I used blended learning enrolling the students of face-to-face mode to Moodle platform and sharing materials through a Google group in two sections of CDA course. Overall, the result of the assessment based on students’ class test performance shows optimism towards the prospects of blended learning. Students did view materials uploaded in the Moodle, took part in quizzes and found them useful. They expressed increased enthusiasm for blended learning as they said they want to get enrolled in Moodle in other subjects and other semesters as well. More importantly, students’ access to Moodle was associated with positive gains in learning.

Therefore, it can be suggested that TU should create an environment for blended learning, a new innovation in teaching. Rogers (2003) underscores that adaption of an innovation is a slow and time-taking process. Adaption of innovation, according to Rogers (2003), goes through five different processes: agenda-setting (gathering required information for planning); matching (selecting appropriate innovation); redefining/restructuring (modifying innovation to fit the organizational need); clarifying (making widespread use of innovation in gradual basis with proper framing for generating common understanding for avoiding abrupt rejection), and routinizing (incorporating innovation in regular activities and making it sustainable through wider participation of different stakeholders). None of these stages can be escaped and earlier stages are prerequisite for the latter ones. Therefore, use of blended learning requires solid policy framework on the part of TU to start with.

Graham, Woodfield, and Harrison (2013) divide institutional policy for blended learning into three categories related to strategy, structure, and support. Policy should specify the reasons for adopting
blended learning: “(1) enhanced pedagogy, (2) increased access and flexibility, and (3) improved cost effectiveness and resource use” (Porter, Graham, Spring, & Welch, 2014). This research is in line with previous research (e.g. Luna & Winters, 2017; Warner, 2016) in showing that blended learning can contribute to enhanced pedagogy. The concerned stakeholders such as administrators, faculty members, or student representative should advocate the benefits of adopting blended learning. Without such advocacy innovations are unlikely to be introduced.

Structural support for infrastructure development required for the effective delivery of blended learning, budget allocation is a must (Graham et al., 2013). Though installing infrastructure is expensive in the beginning, it proves to be cost-effective in the long run. Similarly, plan and schedule should be in place to decide which courses are to be offered in blended mode and what are the prerequisites for students to get enrolled in such course. There should be a body to approve the courses that are designed and delivered using blended mode. Frequent evaluation of such courses to monitor effectiveness is also of great importance to ensure institutional learning. At the same time, professional development of the faculties for effective handling of such courses should also be in place (Porter et al., 2014).

Once the system is in place, regular technical as well as pedagogical support for faculties, staff and students should be in place for effective implementation and sustainability. Without such support, faculties may give up their motivation for using blended learning and the students who are not good at using such technologies may be disadvantaged. Similarly, because it requires extra time and effort for faculties to design courses in virtual environment and deliver them, certain incentives can be provided to motivate them. Such incentives may be non-monetary (such as apportioning release time, increasing the weight of blended learning courses in workload calculations, allowing faculty to hire teaching assistants, or considering these matters in promotion) or monetary (such as workload compensation, blended learning implementation stipends, or financing for technological equipment) (Graham et al., 2013).

In this research, students most actively took part in quizzes in the Moodle and expressed their desire for quizzes on a weekly basis. Perhaps quizzes received most attention because they provided additional opportunity to students to review the materials discussed in class and did not require them to type anything; they could attempt quizzes through their mobile and receive immediate feedback. This suggests that for students who are still learning to make use of technology for learning purposes, tasks that are less demanding in terms of use of technology seem to be appropriate. As discussed under research question 1, a significant percentage of students (i.e. 44%) did not have access to a computer, though a greater majority (86%) had access to the Internet through mobile connection. Therefore, the tasks that were interactive like quizzes but did not require typing and creation of a word file were more accessible to them. Other examples of such activities include games and puzzles (Antonoglou et al., 2011; Gedik et al., 2013; McKenzie et al., 2013). They might also be asked to present thought-provoking questions regarding reading materials which can then be
discussed in class. In the same way, to build in variation, we can provide students with multiple forms of resources or learning materials, allowing them to select and utilize the materials that are most suitable to them and to work at their own pace (Boelens et al., 2017). Slowly and gradually when students become habituated to the system and have access to typing facilities, they can be asked to take part in discussion forums which require more elaborated writing.

However, for making blended learning effective, students suggested that they should have easy access to technology and better orientation should be provided to them. Access is a great issue regarding blended learning, especially in least developed countries like Nepal. Gunga and Ricketts (2007) rightly observe "connectivity, capacity and content" to be the "three pillars of ICT revolution" (p. 898). However, such a revolution is nascent if not non-existent in the context of TU. One of the ways of addressing these issues can be collaboration or partnership among like-minded institutions (Tossy, 2017) because "[p]artnerships bring together innovative minds including experts from governments, business, civil society, academia and the international organisations" (Gunga & Ricketts, 2007, p. 902). There can be collaboration for funding for developing infrastructure and for human capacity building and research. One example of such collaboration is a NORHED project for enhancing access and quality of teacher professional development using ICTs and distance delivery modes. The project is in progress (2014-2019) and involves TU, Nepal; Kathmandu University, Nepal; and Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway. This collaboration has supported connectivity, human capacity development, and development of gender-friendly learning content in the partner institutions. Virtual learning platform in TU is example of this collaboration. There should be other collaboration of a similar nature. Furthermore, universities should keep ICT access and blended learning as a priority for producing career ready graduates.

However, access alone does not ensure students’ use of blended learning. For better utilization, students need orientation regarding information about blended learning (e.g., learning outcomes, attendance, assessment of performance, etc.), expectations in blended learning (e.g., reading materials, watching videos, taking part in discussion forum, attempting quizzes, etc.), and use of technology (e.g., registering for the course, navigating Moodle learning environment, using available tools, etc.) (Boelens, De Wever, & Voet, 2017; Stubbs, Martin, & Endlar, 2006). Such orientation can be provided with a guidebook (printed and/or online) containing an overview of the program and a step-by-step guide with instruction, and exercises with clear objectives, directions and deadlines (Cooner, 2010, p. 276). However, face-to-face meetings and hands-on experience can be better for orienting students because students can raise questions and ask for clarification in such meetings (Antonoglou, Charistos, & Sigalas, 2011: Cooner, 2010, p. 276).

**Limitations and suggestions for further research**

This research had some limitations in terms of design and delivery of blended learning. It was applied in only two sections of CDA course, and students’ participation in the Moodle was optional. As their participation
in the Moodle did not make any difference in their grades, only self-motivated students actively participated in the Moodle. Therefore, further research on blended learning should use different modes of blending involving more students to better understand its effect on students’ performance. Similarly, as blended learning is new in the context of TU, it is necessary to identify familiarity as well as perceptions of stakeholders including policy makers, administrators and faculties regarding blended learning. Furthermore, research on experiences of stakeholders in institutions that have used blended learning in the context of Nepal might be useful for formulating policy as well as designing blended learning in TU.

References


Warner, A. G. (2016). Developing a community of inquiry in a face-to-face class: How an online learning framework can enrich traditional


**Contributor**

**Madhu Neupane** is a lecturer at the Department of English Education, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. She has completed M.Ed. in ELT and M.A. in English literature from Tribhuvan University, Nepal and M.Ed. TESOL from the University of Sydney, Australia. At present, she is a PhD scholar at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong. Her research interests include ESL reading, academic writing, self-assessment, self-regulated learning, and technology enhanced learning.
Journal Writing in the EFL Classroom of Nepal

Gyanendra Yadav

Abstract

Based on classroom research, this paper explores the use of journal writing as a multi-purpose tool in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom of Nepal. In the first part of the paper, the author introduces readers to the concepts of journal writing and also shares his own experience of writing reflective journals as a university student. This section also explains how he applied the same task among children in the classroom. The second part of the paper discusses the opportunities and challenges of using journal writing in the EFL classroom. The results suggest that journal writing can serve multiple purposes in the English language classroom. It is found to be an effective technique to make students reflect on what they have learnt and enhance their writing skill as well.

Keywords: Journal writing, EFL (English as a foreign language), Reflective practice, Language development, Nepal

Background

In the first class of the Academic Writing course in my Master of Education program, we were asked, “Have you ever written anything except in examination?” The whole class remained silent for a while. I was forced to reflect on my journey as a writer and realized that I did not have good writing experience besides taking notes, summarizing and answering the questions given in the textbooks. In fact, the writing practice I had done till then was mostly for preparing and passing examinations. The facilitator noticed that most students lack the writing habit in the Nepali context. Thus, he assigned us to write a reflective journal regularly, which continued throughout my master’s degree program in the writing course and other courses as well. After two years of such practice, when I looked back at the journals I wrote during this period, I felt that I had significantly improved my writing. I could express myself efficiently, record my critical moments as a teacher, and be reflective in my writing. More importantly, writing became a habit, not just a medium of writing an examination paper as it was in the past.

As language teachers, we might face situations where EFL learners are found demotivated to write and, hence, unable to develop a writing habit. In this context,
journal writing can contribute to improve students’ writing skills for the sake of writing, expressing, learning and being reflective in the language classroom. I realized the importance of journal writing and introduced the concept in the school where I have been teaching as an English teacher. After one year of such writing practice, I analyzed the significance of writing journals in the language classroom. With this backdrop, I share my experience of using journal writing in the EFL context of Nepal, where writing appears to be a neglected skill in most cases.

Concept of journal writing

Before I share my experience of using reflection in the EFL classroom, first, I will discuss the theoretical component. Journal writing, also known as journaling, diary writing, and reflective journal, is a means of recording daily activities, learning, and feeling through writing. Denne-Bolton (2013) defines journal writing as a written conversation between a teacher and students on a particular topic, including reactions and reflections on what they have been reading and hearing. He also adds that journal writing provides students ample opportunity to practise writing regularly without any fear. Journal writing can be taken “both as means and an end” (Ur, 1991) of writing as it serves the dual purposes of writing: “writing for writing” and “writing for learning” (Harmer, 2007). In other words, through journal writing, we can reflect in action, thinking during an event, and on action, the thought process after an event (Schon, 1987, as cited in Shin, 2006). In short, journal writing can help students enhance their writing skills besides being an effective tool of reflective practice for an EFL teacher.

The idea of journaling seems to be congruent with the expressivist approach, which views that writing can be developed through activities engaging in reflection, expression, and discovery (Thomas, 2017). It can be said that the more students express their ideas, emotions, and feelings in their writing, the more they get immersed in the writing process. It appears to be a kind of dialogue with oneself where students give voice to their activities, experiences, observations, events, and learning. In doing so, they are engaged in a meaningful interaction with their teacher, which in turn can help them enhance their academic performance besides developing writing skills.

Journal writing has been a fascinating area for teacher researcher to study learners’ language development in kindergarten (Hipple, 1985) and elementary schools (Kintisch, 1986). Likewise, it was explored as a significant tool for developing writing skills in writing courses (Heath, 1988) as well as a variable to improve performance in different courses (Cicero, 2006). More recently, journaling is done through online blogs and is investigated as a means of voicing students’ challenges (Thomas, 2017) in this technological era. Above all, most studies carried out on journal writing reveal that journaling can be an effective way to record language development in young learners, enhance writing skills and course performance, and give voice to students’ challenges.

However, these studies focus on one aspect at a time and overlook the numerous purposes journal writing can serve in a language classroom. Therefore, in this
paper, I seek to explore journal writing as a multi-purpose tool in the EFL classroom of Nepal. In the following section, I share how I used this tool in a secondary level EFL classroom of Nepal.

The study

Although journal writing is common in language teaching, it appeared to be a new strategy for teachers in my current school. We introduced journal writing as an essential component in each academic subject. We also incorporated journal writing in our testing system as a part of an internal evaluation. In the beginning of the academic year, we had a sharing session among all the teachers on how to use reflective writing in the classroom. Students were given some samples writing and were asked to write in a journal after each lesson. They were given feedback on their writings.

After a year of practice, I attempted to discuss and analyze the use of journal writing in the language classroom. The data for the present study were collected through interviews, artifacts and were supported by my observation as a journal writer and an English teacher. First, I collected reflections written by the students throughout the academic session and analyzed them. Those reflections were written by secondary level students. Then, I purposefully selected six students as participants for the interview to required information. Then, I generated different themes for the discussion and presented at the end.

Importance of journal writing

After analyzing the data, I developed four different themes under the importance of journal writing in the EFL classroom.

Enhancing reflective practice

Journal writing is found to be an effective means of reflective practice both for the students and the teachers engaged in this process. It helps students to be reflective on their learning. Most participants noted that they understand better when they write about what they learnt in the classroom. They expressed that journaling made them think about the topics they studied in the classroom. One of them stated that writing reflections enabled him to be confident about the content in the book, meaning he could get the main ideas of the lessons once he reflected on them. This understanding of my participants was in line with Baxter (2009), who believes that keeping journals makes students think about learning and clarifies their thoughts and understanding. They become better learners when they become engaged in the process of writing.

Likewise, teachers receive the opportunity to reflect on their actions and their teaching practices. After going through students’ writings, they get different ideas, perspectives and feedback on teaching and learning processes in the classroom. In my own case, a participant wrote in her reflection:

Sometimes, I feel that my teacher is too much friendly with us, compared to other teachers. I and my classmates do not feel afraid of him. Our class is full of laughter, fun and activities rather than merely being attentive.

This way, we can get feedback on teaching and learning processes inside the classroom with the help of students’ journals. Another participant critically analyzed my
classroom activity while I was teaching Malini, a famous play by Rabindranath Tagore. She stated this way:

In the beginning, my teacher wanted to make us perform the play and asked to choose the role of several characters we like. But many of us did not get motivated to do so. Then my teacher decided that we were not performing at the beginning.

When I went through this writing, I realized that drama can be better performed at the end when students have fully understood the plot and characters of the play. Journal writing assisted me in reflecting on particular plans and how they could be implemented more effectively in the future. In this sense, “journals can function as a window into the learner’s mind if the teacher reads them” (Denne-Bolton, 2013, p.3).

Developing writing skill

Teaching writing, especially to EFL learners, can be a daunting task for many teachers (Shin, 2006). This applies to the Nepali EFL context, too. In my experience, reflective journals appeared to be an effective way to practise writing skills on the part of EFL learners. My students’ journal artifacts showed that they developed their writing skills as a result of journaling; they could express their ideas effectively, confidently and in an organized way. I traced the gradual development in their writing throughout an academic year. Reflective journaling not only recorded students’ learning, but also reflected the development in their writing skills. Regarding how students benefitted from journal writing, a participant articulated his voice this way:

With regular practice, I expanded my vocabulary and learnt to use them appropriately. Further, I could use variety of sentences more effectively with different grammatical structures than earlier. Most importantly, I learnt to maintain the flow (coherence) of ideas in different forms of writing.

The improvements in my students’ writing seem to be in line with Denne-Bolton (2013), who states that “some of these benefits (of journal writing) are increased motivation to write, greater fluency in writing, increased confidence as writers, and the ability to use writing as a means to communicate and express complex ideas” (p. 10). The practice of writing journals seems to have made their writing much better and reflective. They even learnt to use rhetorical devices like similes and metaphors. Thus, reflective journal was found helpful in enhancing the writing skill of students.

An effective means of expression

Journal writing was commonly perceived by students as a means of expression in which they could give voice to their feelings and emotions, pain and problems. Most students had a common remark that journal writing is an effective means of expression. They could express themselves freely, and their journals became a kind of memories box for them where they could deposit their feelings, emotions, and learning.

About writing a journal, a participant mentioned; “I think I can express myself better through writing reflection now. I feel that it is an interesting and easy way of practicing writing.” In their reflections, I found that they were often sharing
remarkable events like participating in different competitions, doing projects works, visiting new places, thinking about childhood memories and so on. They even recorded their critical moments, for instance, how they felt when they first made a presentation in the classroom or first sang a song in their class. It shows that journal writing seems to be a means of expression which can also promote self-understanding (Garmon, 2001) when they read their product themselves.

A few students also realized that journal writing made them feel relaxed after putting their emotions and feelings on the paper. In this regard, a participant expressed as below:

Sometime I have some secret in my heart which I do not want to share with my parents and friends but often express in my writing. When I express my emotion and feeling through writing, it makes me feel comfortable as if it has reduced my tension.

When others wrote in their journals, they considered themselves particular characters from the text they had read. For instance, a girl mentioned that she felt like Helen, a lead character in the story “The Gardener,” who faced a number of obstacles in society while keeping a secret about her relation. Journaling appears to perform a cathartic function (catharsis refers to a taking away of emotions, purification and sometimes a renewal resulting from pity, sorrow, sympathy or even laughter) for some students by providing an opportunity for emotional outlet (Hipple, 1985). This supports the long-established view in psychology that writing can be a cathartic process of releasing our strong emotions.

**Building rapport**

Rapport, the relationship between the students and the teacher, depends on “the way we listen to and treat the student” (Harmer, 2007, p. 25). Reading students’ journals can be a significant way to listen to students and understand them. A respondent put his views as following:

Sometimes teachers might not understand students in relation with their interests, feeling, emotions, and difficulties they are facing in their learning. They just make general assumption about us. But when we started submitting our journals to teachers, they read those journals and understood us better than they did before. Now they listen to us and talk in person too. It helps us to do better and keep ourselves inspired.

Journaling “creates bond of trust and understanding” (Thomas, 2017) between students and teacher. Journal writing is not only a way to improve student writing, but also a means for teachers to get to know their students and their learning processes, which helps teachers to better serve their learners’ needs (Miller 2007; Hansen-Thomas 2003; as cited in Denne-Bolton, 2013). Students’ journals helped me as a teacher to respect their identity and design my tasks based on their learning styles and preferences in order to facilitate better learning.

**Challenges in Journal Writing**

In my experience, engaging students in writing activities often is a challenging task in the EFL classrooms of Nepal. I found two major challenges while implementing the concept of journal writing in my school.
Initiating journaling

Journaling is commonly used in EFL classrooms around the world, however, for me initiating journaling in my school was the first challenge. The teachers were found to be confused as to how to help students in writing and how to assess such writing for awarding marks. This daunted them even further as they had to check so many writings besides their daily work (Denne-Bolten, 2013). For students, writing journals felt like an extra burden apart from doing classwork and home assignments.

Demotivation

Secondly, a few students were not motivated by writing journals. They felt bored to write the same thing again and again, especially when they could not be reflective. They would find each journal entry just as a record of activity done in the classroom; the same routine activities performed by the teacher and students in the classroom. I observed that some students wrote journals just to achieve grades as the requirement for internal assessment. It could also be challenging when many students demonstrate little reflective thinking in their reflective journals and show less motivation for writing such task (Cisero, 2006).

To minimize challenges, I shared my own experience and aroused interest in teachers and students during the initial phase. Further, teachers in the school allocated certain grades or marks for journaling as a part of internal assessment, which encouraged them to sustain student motivation. Selecting some of the best writings, awarding them and making publication of journals can also minimize the above-mentioned challenges.

Conclusion

Reflecting on my journey as a student to teacher, I realized that journal writing can perform multifarious tasks in the EFL classroom. First, it enables students to be reflective and confident about their academic work by recalling and writing every day. Journal writing provides students ample opportunity to improve writing skills by using rhetorical devices, appropriate diction and various structures in writing. The study also shows that journal writing helps students to develop flow of the ideas in their writing.

In the same way, journaling becomes a tool for recording (memory box) and expressing students’ feelings, emotions, pain and pleasure. For teachers, reflective journals helps establish good rapport with students and facilitates teaching learning process. Likewise, it acts as a mirror for teachers to reflect on their own teaching and helps to improve the teaching practices. Initiating and sustaining motivation in writing might be challenging in a few cases. However, journaling could be one of the most powerful strategies to enhance writing skills and reflective practice in the EFL classrooms of Nepal.

References


**Contributor**

**Gyanendra Kumar Yadav** is a research scholar at Kathmandu University and teaches English language at different colleges in Lalitpur. He is pursuing his M. Phil. in English Language Education from Kathmandu University, School of Education. He is also a life member of NELTA, and has published several journal articles and presented papers in NELTA conferences. His areas of interest include teaching English through literature, teachers’ professional development, and critical pedagogy.
Appendix 1: My journal

Day 15

10 August, 2015

It was the last day of two years M. Ed. ELT program. We organized a small get-together program and invited all professors. They taught us from the first semester to the fourth. It was a kind of small tribute for what they have done for us. I was little sad since a few professors could not make time for it. But at the same time I was very excited as I had been given responsibility of master of the ceremony (MC). It was really a wonderful experience to have such a gathering. It made me feel like we belong to the same family and I will always be proud to be a part of it. I may go far away once we leave the university, but I will always be connected to our Gurus (teachers).

The academic and professional lives that I have shaped today is because of my Gurus. They guided me in every spheres, inside and outside the classroom. They helped us develop professionally. Therefore, I want to say to my Gurus that:

You helped us to develop our wings and now it is time to fly. No matter wherever I go and whoever I be, I will never forget what you have done to me. I was no one before you came into my life and I will be nowhere without your support. Thank you very much for being the part of my life.

Appendix 2: A students’ journal

[Image of a handwritten journal entry about childhood memories]
Teaching ESP at the Tertiary Level in Bangladesh: A General Perspective

Sharmin Siddique

Abstract

English is a foreign language in Bangladesh, and the tertiary students of private universities of different departments come with different vocational needs. General English courses cannot cater to the specific needs of the students of different departments. Moreover, at a tertiary level, English language courses should be designed not only to help students receive good grades, but also cater to their future workplace needs. In these cases, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is more applicable than General English language courses. On the other hand, teaching ESP courses is more challenging and difficult than teaching General English courses. The article aims to characterize ESP, analysing its need in Bangladesh and identifying teachers’ roles in its teaching. A survey was conducted for data collection in which two different sets of questionnaires were used for teachers and students. Twenty English language teachers and 64 undergrad students from the Department of Civil Engineering from different universities participated in the survey. Results of the survey have been presented with some recommendations for its pedagogic management.

Keywords: English for Specific Purpose, Tertiary level, Role of teachers, Needs analysis

Introduction

In Bangladesh, all private universities at the tertiary level offer some language courses (credit, as well as non-credit, which include Basic English or English Fundamentals, English Composition, Public Speaking, Technical Writing and Communication, Advanced Reading Strategies and Writing). These language courses, in theory, are designed according to the demand of the students of different departments so that the students not only pass exams and receive good grades, but also obtain professional development at work, for language learning is not only having knowledge of a language but also knowing how to function using it in the real world. Although all private Universities in Bangladesh offer mandatory English language courses, after completing these courses very few students achieve enough
proficiency and accuracy in English to apply it in the job market. In this regard, Long (2005) states:

General (language for no purpose) courses at any proficiency level almost always teach too much, e.g., vocabulary, skills, registers or styles some learners do not need, and too little, e.g., omitting lexis and genres that they do. Instead of one-size-fits all approach, it is more defensible to view every courses as involving specific purposes (p. 19).

As English is a foreign language in Bangladesh, tertiary-level students come to private universities not only from different levels of language competence but also with different needs. For example, the skills that a Microbiology student needs varies from the needs of a Business Administration student. Thus, General English courses cannot cater to the language needs of the specific students (Huq, 2011). Furthermore, a foreign language learner would feel more confident if he/she knew the appropriate vocabulary related to a particular job. In this regard, ESP is more applicable than General English courses to the vocational needs of non-departmental students.

The article discusses some of the pertinent features of ESP, analyses its needs for Bangladeshi tertiary students and, based on the survey results, suggests ways to meet and for teachers to cater to students’ needs.

**What is ESP?**

ESP is not a product but an approach to language learning where the content and the method are based on the learners’ particular needs to learn the language (Hutchinson and Waters, 2002). In ESP, the purpose of learning the language is principal, and it is directly related to the vocational needs of the learners. Harding (2007) defines ESP as:

Whereas ‘General English’ is sometimes, perhaps unfairly, labeled English for no obvious purpose, in ESP- English for Specific Purposes-the purpose for learning the language is paramount and relates directly to what the learner needs to do in their vocation or job (p. 6).

In all definitions of ESP, two elements are obvious: the sense of purpose and the sense of vocation (Harding, 2007). Coffey (1984) discerns that ESP is a rapid and cost-effective use of the English language to carry on a course of academic study (EAP) (Coffey, 1984). Lorenzo (2005, p.1) states that ESP “concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures.”

Dudley-Evans and John (1998) describe some absolute and some variable characteristics to define ESP. According to them, ESP has the following absolute characteristics:

- ESP is intended to meet specific needs of the learners.
- ESP uses the fundamental methodology and activities of the disciplines that it serves.
- ESP is focused on the language suitable to the activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skill, discourse and genre.

Similarly, variable characteristics include:
- ESP may be linked to or planned for specific disciplines.
- ESP may use a changed methodology from General English.
- ESP is estimated to be designed for adult learners. It may be designed for secondary school level learners.
- Usually, ESP is designed for the intermediate or advanced students.
- Some basic knowledge of the language systems is expected in most ESP courses.

The term ESP emerged in 1960’s as general English language courses could not meet the needs of the learners. After the end of Second World War in 1945, English was accepted as an international language. The rise of the United States as a superpower in technology and commerce, the revolution in linguistics (shifting attention away from defining the formal features of language usage to the ways in which language is used in real life), and the shifted focus to learners were identified as the three main reasons for the emergence of ESP (Hutchinson & Waters, 2002). Nowadays, in EFL countries, the demand for ESP is growing rapidly for the following reasons. First, vocational learning and training throughout the world is increasing as education turns into less academic and more practical- and application- oriented. Second, spreading globalization, which includes politicians, business leaders, academic professors, hotel receptionists, nurses and site forepeople, has chosen English as the language of international communication. Third, throughout the world, primary education covers the General English syllabus; thus, students do not wish to repeat the same coursework at secondary and tertiary levels. (Harding, 2012, p. 7)

In this regard Burton (2009) states:

ESP is not a monolithic universal phenomenon. Rather, it has developed at different speeds in different countries of the world and all the phases of development can be found functioning somewhere in the world at the present time. It could be said that ESP has increased over the decades as a result of market forces and a greater awareness amongst the academic and business community that learners’ needs and wants should be met wherever possible (p. 12).

Because of the increasing needs of ESP in Bangladesh, most national and international companies, banks, non-government organizations, and software companies are arranging in-house language training programs. These companies focus on their immediate language needs. In Bangladesh, ESP training is not only limited to Business English, but also established in the fields of science and technology, aviation, marine navigation, medical professionals, etc. (Huq, 2011, p. 269)

**Needs Analysis and Target Situation Analysis**

Needs analysis is an essential and fundamental part of ESP, and has come through many stages. In Munby’s Communicative Syllabus design in 1978, situations and functions were the framework of needs analysis where communicative needs were the basis for needs analysis. Based on the work of Munby, we also became familiarized with the term Target Situation Analysis (Songhori, 2008).
Hutchinson and Waters (2002) distinguish between target needs and learning needs. First of all, the instructors have to make a basic distinction between the target needs (what the learners need to do in the target situation) and the learning needs (what the learners need to do to learn). They also classify target needs into necessities, lacks and wants. Necessities are the skills that the learners think they want to improve. Lacks have been defined as the gap between the target proficiency and the existing proficiency in English. Wants are individual lacks of the learners in the target language. They also provide the framework of needs analysis which is called Target Situation Analysis (TSA).

To analyze the target needs the following checklist can be used:

- Why is the language needed?
- How will the language be used?
- What will the content areas be?
- Who will the learners use the language with?
- When/Where will the language be used?

Similarly, to understand the learning needs, the following checklist can be used:

- Why are the learners taking the course?
- How do the learners learn?
- What resources are available?
- Who are the learners?
- When/Where will the course take place?

Munby’s Communicative Needs Processor

Communicative Need Processor (CNP) (Munby 1978) is a set of need exploring procedures, which according to Waters (2002), provided a turning point in the development of ESP. The CNP, as a framework, enables teachers and/or course designers in identifying needs of a particular group or groups of learners.

The CNP model considers the following elements: participants, communication needs processor, profile of needs, meaning processor, the language skills selector, the linguistic encoder, and the communicative competence specification.

Besides, the CNP includes eight parameters which give a description of specific communication needs. The parameters include purpose domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, communicative event, communicative key, target level (for a detailed discussion of the parameter, see Munby, 1978).

The CNP has been criticized by many researchers. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001), for example, claimed the CNP model to be simplistic which merely generated a simple idea about learners’ needs. These models did not characterize needs of all stockholders (i.e. teachers) and only identify some of learners’ biographical information. West (1994) mentions the shortcomings of CNP due to its complexity, learner-centeredness, constraints, and language, the teaching establishment, and the user – institution.

Situation Analysis

According to this approach the sources of information are the students. Dudley-
Evans and John (1998, p.125) state that “PSA estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills, learning experiences.” The background information and the level of education about the learners can provide us with information about their present abilities.

According to Dudley-Evans and John (1998), there are eight components of needs analysis which have been grouped into four areas including: (target situation analysis and objective needs analysis, linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, and genre analysis, subjective needs analysis, and present situation analysis.

**Roles of ESP Teachers**

The role of ESP teachers involves much more than teaching, because teaching ESP is more challenging and difficult than teaching General English. Dudley-Evans and John (1998) propose following five key roles of ESP teacher: teacher, course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator. Firstly, the teaching of ESP becomes more targeted. The ESP teacher, for example, identify certain students’ needs, design and develop the course/material accordingly, and then help students attain the material. The teacher’s role, in this sense, is to create authentic, communicative environment in class in which students learn the content. Secondly, and in corollary to the first, the ESP teacher is not only a selector or adaptor of authentic materials but also a developer of their own materials. To devise the materials, the ESP teacher may survey the availability of the material, select units from the course book to adapt if required, and add a number of extra units. He/she can provide a whole set of material only where no suitable material is unavailable.

The teacher then becomes a material provider and designer of the course (Huq, 2011, Dudley Evans & John, 1998). Thirdly, ESP teachers might have to work with the cooperation of sponsors or subject specialists. ESP teachers have to anticipate potential problems and avoid them, while creating a harmonious working arrangement. The collaboration should be a two-way process. The subject teacher can assist to learn more about the learner’s target situation; on the other hand, the ESP teacher can make the specialist aware of the language problems learners face (Huchinson and Waters, 2002). In addition, teachers should research the aim that they want to achieve. Then, they should design a course, arrange materials, and find out the particular interests of the students. At the same time, ESP teachers should research the content and context of the course to fulfill the needs of the students. Sometimes they are left with no options than to design and develop their own materials (Bracaj, 2014). Finally, General English courses are well-studied and improved by methodology specialists. On the other hand, an ESP course is unique; thus, it is not possible to design an ESP course to satisfy all ESP students. Therefore, ESP courses need continual evaluation in which teachers have to get involved. They have to evaluate the students’ progress and teaching effectiveness. Additional evaluation of course and teaching materials are also crucial in ESP classes (Bracaj, 2014).

**Purpose of the Study**

As it is outlined above, both teachers and students face challenges in an ESP class. For this reason, the present research has been undertaken to support the teachers as a means to comprehend the needs and the challenges of an ESP class. The study is an
attempt to find out the role of ESP teachers to facilitate learners to achieve their ESP needs. This is also an endeavor to identify some strategies to apply in an ESP class to make it more effective to motivate ESP learners.

Methodology

This is descriptive exploratory research that maintained survey method for data collection. The purpose of the study is to identify the purpose of Advanced English Language classes, the areas of language the students want to develop, and the types of logistic support and class the students want. The study also intends to investigate the role of the teachers, when students should enroll in the course, the type of material that the students think should be included in the course, and so on. For the primary data collection process, two separate sets of structured questionnaires were designed. The first set of questionnaire was designed for the students (see appendix A), and the second set of questionnaire was designed for the teachers (see appendix B). The sources of secondary data collection process were publications, research studies and journals. After analyzing the data the responses were counted, tallied and calculated into percentages.

For the questionnaire survey, 64 undergraduate students from the Department of Civil Engineering of Stamford University Bangladesh and East West University, and 20 teachers from the same universities have been selected. The experience of the teachers varies from 2 to 12 years. Among the participants, 10 are assistant professors, 6 are senior lecturers, and 4 are lecturers. The universities, teachers, and students were selected randomly for the survey.

Data Collection Tools

For collecting information, questionnaires were prepared for both the students and teachers. The questionnaires for the students contained 12 fixed alternative questions, and for the teachers 5 fixed questions with one open-ended question. In the open-ended question, the teachers were allowed to provide their comments and suggestions. After collecting the survey results, the responses were counted into percentage into two tables. In this research, opinions and feedbacks of the respondents were given priority.

Findings

Responses from students

This study aimed to evaluate the responses collected from the tertiary level students of the private universities. In the questionnaire (See Appendix B), the first question was about students’ current level of proficiency in English. In reply, 46.875% answered they have average level of proficiency in English. In reply, 46.875% answered they have average level of proficiency level in English. From the reply of the second question, it has been found that 25% students preferred study, 12.5% students preferred research, 12.5% students preferred social purpose, and 25% students preferred profession, whereas 25% students preferred study abroad option as the immediate purpose to learn Technical Writing and Communication course. The third question was about when the students use English. In reply, 53.123% students use English when studying. Similarly, the next question asked about the areas the students wish to develop more. 37.5% students chose speaking, 3.125% students selected listening, 18.75% students selected to develop reading, 6.25% students preferred writing, 15.625% chose
vocabulary, 6.25% students preferred grammar. In the next question, the students were asked if they knew the reason of doing Technical Writing and Communication course. In reply, 56.25% students replied they want to develop professional communication in writing and speaking.

![Figure 1. Reasons for an ESP course](image1)

Similarly, the next question asked was if they knew how the students want the instructional materials to be delivered. 43.75% students wanted the instructional materials to be delivered face to face, and 57.25% students wanted the instructional materials to be delivered through online and multimedia. In the seventh question, the students were inquired of the type of classroom they want for the Technical Writing and Communications course. In reply, 37.5% students preferred classroom with white-boards and OHP, 12% students wanted classroom multimedia facilitated with sound system, 25% demanded internet and multimedia facilitated classroom with sound system, and 25% students desired internet and multimedia facilitated classroom with sound system and decorated with posters and maps. In the eighth question, the students were asked what kind of English class the students like. In reply, 87.5% students preferred class with lot of activities, pair/group work and projects. Then the participants were asked whether English courses should use materials more relevant to their major courses. In reply, 75% students selected “Yes” option. The following question was about the role the students like teachers to play. 62.5% students answered teachers should play the role of facilitator and guide.

Next, the students were asked about the time of enrollment in this course. In reply, as the figure below illustrates, 62.55% students opined the course should be offered in the beginning of the program.

![Figure 2. Students’ want of time enrollment in ESP course](image2)

In the last question the students were enquired about the type of material they think the course should include. 12.5% students think the course should include textbooks, instruction/equipment manuals, CDs, DVDs, videotapes, 25% students think that the course should include materials used on a job, such as work forms, charts and samples of relevant course assignment and relevant papers, 31.25% students opined the course should include materials from websites like business letters, emails, resume, memos, press releases, dialogues, telephone conversations, and so on, and 31.25% students selected combination of all options.

**Responses from teachers**

After collecting data from the teachers’ questionnaire (See Appendix C), it has been
found that, 100% teachers considered Advanced Reading Strategies and Writing/Technical Writing and Communication course to be designed to cater the vocational needs of the students. Similarly, 80% teachers wanted the instructional materials to be delivered through on line and multimedia. etc.

In addition, most of the (80%) teachers wanted classroom to be equipped with internet, and multimedia with adequate sound system. Agreeing with students, 60% teachers want the students should enroll at the middle of the program. The survey also found that, 80% teachers thought the course should include materials used on a job, such as work forms, charts and samples of relevant course assignment and relevant papers, and the course should incorporate materials from websites like business letters, emails, resume, memos, press releases, dialogues, telephone conversations,

**Recommendations**

On the basis of the analysed data and the findings, and the open-ended question set for the teachers, the following suggestions can be recommended. The implementation of these recommendations may help to bring about some positive changes in teaching English for Specific Purpose at tertiary level.

1. Needs analysis of the students should be done at the beginning of the course to develop the curriculum content, teaching materials, and methods, and to bridge up the gap between classroom material and requirements of the workplace.

2. ESP learners do not require all topics of General English, instead they should be taught limited and specific topics according to their professional needs. To bridge the gap between what is written in the textbook and what is needed in the workplace, the educators should cover the specific academic and occupational areas, so the learners can face the real world when they enter the job market.

3. Teachers have to know the specific purpose of the learners that they use in professional life, and have to simulate those activities in the classroom.

4. The students of the particular department can be supplied materials according to the professional needs of their own fields.

5. Teachers can adapt ideas about those professionals and organize the materials accordingly. For example, the students of Pharmacy and Business may attend the same course but with different materials. The teacher may get a clear idea what type of communication bankers, pharmacists, multi-national executives need in their profession.

6. The course can be helpful for the students if it is designed according to
the needs, level and objectives to the students.

7. Instructors should have professional job experience or training to provide maximum output. The concerned universities should take responsibilities to offer ESP training for existing and future teachers.

8. At the tertiary level, students are well aware of grammar rules and errors; they can learn easily with classroom activities by using real-life communication.

9. Instead of enrolling in the beginning or at the end of the program, students should enroll in ESP courses at the middle of the program.

Limitations of the Study

Although the objective of the study was well defined, some limitations need to be mentioned for future improvement. Only private universities have been selected for data collection. Inclusion of public universities might present a different scenario all together. Monetary and time constraint acted as a barrier to conduct the research in a large scale. The research was conducted on a small group of students (64) and teachers (20). Study was conducted only in the capital city of Dhaka; universities situated in other large cities could be included for more applicable generalization. The research of limited context can act as a sample parameter to carry out future research of a larger scale.

Conclusion

The article is an attempt to provide an overview of ESP, its characterizing features, needs analysis and the roles of ESP teachers. The role of an ESP teacher is more complex and difficult than a General English teacher. Teachers should be given some special training according to the vocational needs of students. The syllabus should be properly designed and material should be appropriately developed to cater all the components of the future workplace of the learners. Furthermore, rather than being a traditional teacher, an ESP instructor should play the role of a guide and facilitator to get learners involved.

References


Huq, S, ATM. (2011). Opportunities and Challenges in Teaching ESP in Private Universities in Bangladesh. Crossings:
Appendix A: Designing a Course Outline to teach Technical Writing and Communication for Civil Engineering

Aims and Objectives

This course is primarily designed to provide the opportunity for understanding and improving communication skills: specially reading and writing

• to become an informed reader and critic of any text written in English
• to gain an understanding of the underlying principles of effective writing styles

Syllabus

• Writing notes
• Writing messages (condolence, thanks, and congratulations)
• Writing E-mail
• Writing Memo
• Press Release
• Writing advertisement & notices
• Graph Analysis
• Business Letter (Claim, Adjustment)


NELTA

• CV & Cover Letter
• Learning technical vocabulary
• Editing/Correction
• Reading Comprehension

Materials

Required Textbook:

2. How to Write First-class Business Correspondence. L. Sue Bough. NTC Publishing

Course Assessment

• Class Work
• Home Work
• Group Activity
• Class Test
• Peer Evaluation
• Reports
• Library Research
• Written and Verbal discussions with supervisor/instructor
• Assignments etc.

Grade Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks (%)</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00-39</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Target Situation Analysis

Moving ahead from the basic reading and writing techniques introduced in COMPOSITION course, a more critical, thorough, creative and analytical responses are sought in Technical Writing and Communication. This course is designed to cultivate an understanding of the psychological, social, political and practical significance of communication in English with special emphasis on students’ spontaneous judgment and articulation.
Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire for the Students and their responses:

Table-1: The MCQ questions asked to the students and their responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Topic</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is the level of current proficiency level in English?</td>
<td>Excellent: 3.125% Very good 6.25% Good 28.125% Average 46.875% Poor 8.125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is the immediate purpose to learn Technical Writing and Communication course?</td>
<td>Study: 25% Research: 12.5% Social purpose: 6.25% Travel: 16.25% Profession: 25% Study abroad: 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When do the students learn English?</td>
<td>Studying: 53.123% Socializing: 9.375% At home: 3.125% Others: 18.75% Studying and socializing at home: 9.375%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the areas of language the students want to develop?</td>
<td>Speaking: 37.5% Listening: 12.5% Reading: 18.75% Writing: 6.25% Vocabulary: 15.625% Grammar: 6.25% Speaking and reading: 3.125% Speaking and vocabulary: 3.125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What are the reason of doing Technical Writing and Communication course?</td>
<td>To develop professional communication in writing and speaking 56.25% To develop skill in writing business correspondence 9.375% To develop job interview skill 15.625% To develop presentation skill 9.375% A &amp; C: 3.125% B &amp; D: 6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How do the students want the instructional materials to be delivered?</td>
<td>Face to face: 43.75% On line and multimedia based: 57.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What type of classroom the students want for the Technical Writing and Communications course?</td>
<td>Classroom with white-board and OHP: 37.5% Multimedia facilitated with sound system: 12.5% Internet and multimedia facilitated with sound system: 25% Internet and multimedia facilitated with sound system and decorated with posters and maps: 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Kind of English class the students like</td>
<td>Class with lot of activities, pair/group work and projects: 87.5% Teaching only by the teacher and no activity by the students: 12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Whether English courses should use materials more relevant to their major courses</td>
<td>Yes: 75% No: 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. What kind of role the students like teachers to have?</td>
<td>Teacher as a facilitator and guide: 62.5% Traditional role of teacher who controls everything in the class: 37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Time of enrollment in this course</td>
<td>In the beginning of the program: 31.25% At the middle of the program: 62.5% In the last trimester: 6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. What type of material the students think the course should include?</td>
<td>Textbooks, instruction/Equipment manuals, CDs, DVDs, videotapes: 12.5% Materials used on a job, such as work forms, charts and samples of relevant course assignment and relevant papers: 25% Materials from websites like business letters, emails, resume, memos, press releases, dialogues, telephone conversations, etc: 31.25% Combination of all: 31.25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire for the Teachers

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

Table-2: The MCQ questions asked to the teachers and their responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Topic</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Should Advanced Reading Strategies and Writing/Technical Writing and Communication course be designed to cater the vocational needs of the students?</td>
<td>Yes 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do the teachers want the instructional materials to be delivered?</td>
<td>Traditionally face to face 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What type of classroom teachers want for the Advanced Reading Strategies and Writing/Technical Writing and Communication course?</td>
<td>Classroom with white-board and OHP 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multimedia facilitated with sound system 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet and multimedia facilitated with sound system 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internet and multimedia facilitated with sound system and decorated with posters and maps 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When the students should enroll in the course?</td>
<td>In the beginning of the program 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the middle of the program 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the last trimester 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What type of Material the teachers think the course should include?</td>
<td>Textbooks, instruction/Equipment manuals, CDs, DVDs, videotapes 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materials used on a job, such as work forms, charts and samples of relevant course assignment and relevant papers 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materials from websites like business letters, emails, resume, memos, press releases, dialogues, telephone conversations, etc. 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combination of all 80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contributor

Sharmin Siddique is an Assistant Professor in the department of English at Stamford University Bangladesh. She obtained B.A. (Hon’s) and M.A. (Literature) from National University. She also completed M.A. (ELT) from Presidency University. At present she is pursuing M.Phil. at Bangladesh University of Professionals. Her areas of interest include ELT Management, Language Skills, Syllabus Design and Material Development.
Student Teachers’ Views on Grammar and Grammar Teaching, and its Communication to their Students

Bal Ram Adhikari

Abstract

The present article builds on the study entitled “English Grammar: Views of Student Teachers and Communication of Grammar to their Students” carried out under and submitted to University Grants Commission, Nepal. The study adopted the mixed-methods of questionnaire and semi-structured classroom observation. Against a brief theoretical background of grammar and grammar teaching and review of the related literature, the article presents respondent teachers’ views on grammar and grammar teaching collected by means of a set of questionnaire. Their views are further compared with the classroom data collected by observation. It is found that there is a lack of congruence between the teachers’ views, and their actual classroom practices in the areas, such as methods, techniques, resources and activities. Finally, the article presents conclusion and some pedagogical recommendations for teachers and teacher educators.

Keywords: Grammar teaching, Student teachers, Classroom practice, Methods, Resources

Introduction

The importance of grammar in teaching English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL/) cannot be overrated. However, the existing literature reveals conflicting views prevalent among English teachers, ELT trainers, textbook writers, and syllabus designers as to its place in ESL/EFL courses and its role in learning English. In the words of Thornbury (1999), “Grammar teaching has always been one of the most controversial and least understood aspects of language teaching” (p. ix). Changing views on language, language learning and language learners show that grammar teaching has a checkered history, occupying both central and peripheral positions in different ELT approaches and methods.

Different degrees of importance to grammar have been attached by different approaches and methods of second language education over the history and across the globe. The Grammar Translation Method, for instance, equates study of a language with study of its grammar and vice versa. Conversely, the Direct Method
eschews explicit teaching of grammatical items and advocates for the inductive way of teaching. Firmly grounded in the linguistic theory of structuralism and psychological theory of behaviorism, the Audiolingual Method also rejects explicit instruction on grammatical points. Likewise, the school of thought led by Krashen (1985) sees no value of grammar explanation to language learners. Krashen and others argue that effects of formal instruction on grammar learning are “peripheral and fragile” (as cited in Thornbury, 1999, p. 14) because learned grammar knowledge does not become acquired knowledge and it cannot be at users’ disposal when required for normal communication.

The arguments that disregard explicit teaching of grammar, however, cannot be accepted without questioning. Cognitive approaches, namely McLaughlin’s information-processing model, Anderson’s Active Control of Thought (ACT) and connectionism, and Long’s interaction hypothesis and Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory (Mitchell & Myles, 2004) question Krashen’s contention that grammar teaching is not only futile, but also harmful in the learner’s overall language achievement. In this regard, Mitchell (1994a p. 90) cites Rutherford (1987) who argues “for a productive role for ‘grammatical consciousness-raising’ with respect to critical features of the target language system”. Rutherford’s argument conforms to what Richards and Rynandya (2004) 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)

Highlighting the role of grammar in language learning, Nunan (1988) also quotes Rutherford (1987), who maintains that, “the abandonment of grammar as the pivotal element in the syllabus may be premature” (p. 34).

A similar view echoes in the recent learner/learning-centered approaches, such as Long’s (1997) Task-based Language Teaching, VanPatten’s (1996) Processing Instruction, and Nunan’s (1998) Grammar in Context (Cowan, 2009, pp. 34-36) that emphasize the balance between fluency (meaning) and accuracy (form) accompanied by restructuring. The balance can be achieved by relating form to meaning via meaningful and context-sensitive instruction. These approaches redefine nature and role of grammar instruction in learners’ overall language development. The current trend of grammar teaching underlies what Thornbury (1999) calls “paying-attention-to-form argument” (p. 24). This argument subsumes the two influential theoretical concepts in teaching grammar: consciousness-raising and focus on form. The former requires learners to notice grammatical points and the latter to use them in meaningful activities. There are different ways of promoting students’ noticing. Input flooding, text modification, teacher-student interaction and peer interaction are some of the frequently used activities by the teacher for this purpose.

As a teacher educator, I taught an advanced grammar course ‘English Grammar for Teachers’ to master’s degree students for six years. The course has now
been replaced by a similar course ‘English Usage and Use’. The theoretically motivated course exposed the student teachers to a) theoretical knowledge of grammar in general, b) theoretical knowledge of pedagogical grammar, c) theoretical knowledge of English grammar, and d) practice on English grammar. The course expected the students to teach English grammar to the students through communicative and task-based activities by exploiting a wide range of resources and techniques. Against the theoretical background presented above and the objectives of the course, I wanted to find out what these trainee teachers thought about grammar, grammar teaching, and how they communicated grammar knowledge to their students in the actual classroom context.

**Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following questions:

i. What were the student teachers’ views on grammar and grammar teaching?

ii. What types of methods, techniques, activities and resources did they use to communicate grammar points to their students?

iii. To what extent were they communicating grammar knowledge to their students the way they thought it should be taught?

**Literature Review**

Williams (1994) surveys teachers’ views of grammar prevalent in the ELT community. These views are summarized as: a) grammar as a collection of shibbolethic rules; b) grammar as parts of speech; c) grammar as a set of rules; and d) grammar as the relationship between forms and functions.

To elaborate each, the first view prescribes standard rules while the second view confines grammar to sentence level. Similarly, to follow the third view is to treat grammar as a set of rules that characterizes well-formed sentences. This structural view focuses on word order, and structural elements of the given sentence, without making any explicit reference to meaning. The last view transcends sentence grammar and encompasses discourse grammar. This view is primarily concerned with the interaction between structures and their functions in real life use.

From the pedagogical perspective, communicative grammar should be given priority over other grammars, for it is not only about the rules of a language, but also about the rules of language use that takes into account of sociolinguistic and discourse factors. Moreover, it treats grammar as a skill.

To move to teachers’ views of how grammar should be taught and how it is actually taught in the classroom, Mitchell’s (1994 b) study shows a lack of congruence between these two aspects. Drawing on the findings, Mitchell concludes:

The foreign language teachers generally claimed to teach in a ‘communicative’ way, with a pupil-centered, topic-based approach. However, almost all were following course books with a syllable based on a systematic grammatical progression, though it appeared that the structures of the syllabus were
generally taught inductively, using a traditional three-part cycle of presentation-practice-exploitation. (p. 216)

This suggests that the teachers in Mitchell’s study were not practicing what they were preaching. Zain (2007) has a similar finding to report from the Malaysian context. Based on the findings, Zain has come up with three patterns of relationship between the teachers’ views, and two stages of teaching: planning and implementation: some aspects of their beliefs which were not reflected at the planning stage were reflected during instructional implementation; some aspects of their beliefs were incongruent at both stages of teaching, and other aspects of their beliefs were congruent at both stages of teaching.

In this regard, Richards (2008) makes a similar observation. To write in Richards’ words, “Recent research (e.g. Bartels, 2005) shows that teachers often fail to apply such knowledge (knowledge about language and language learning) in their own teaching” (p. 5). Indicating at the incongruence between thoughts and actions, Richards further writes, “Despite knowing the theory and principles associated with Communicative Language Teaching, for example, teachers are often seen to make use of traditional ‘grammar-and-practice’ techniques in their own classrooms.”

The gap between what teachers learn in academic courses and how they transfer their learning to teaching has been indicated by Karn (2006) as, “It is very unfortunate that the theoretical knowledge obtained from ELT courses is not put into practice during real teaching” (p. 77). In a similar vein, Adhikari (2010) concludes that even the teachers, who had sound theoretical knowledge about current teaching approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching were mostly, used the deductive approach while teaching English to their students.

Commenting on the current trends of classroom practices of grammar teachers, Savage, Bitterlin and Price (2010) maintain that “more and more practitioners realize that the two orientations – grammar-based and communicative – have elements that complement each other and that, when combined, can result in an eclectic approach that is effective in teaching grammar to adult students” (p. 10). This middle-way teaching approach calls for the active involvement of the teacher as a wise-synthesizer rather than a mere follower of the expert-prescribed methods. In the view of Larsen-Freeman (2004, p. 183), such principled eclecticism requires the teachers to blend their thoughts with actions accompanied by regular reflection on their own teaching in light of how they view language learning and teaching and what they actually do in the classroom.

Recently, there has been a shift from expert-driven teaching methods to classroom-oriented pedagogy. Such a shift has been not only indicated but also strongly suggested in the works of Prabhu (1987), Brown (2001), Kumaravadivelu (2006), and Holliday (2006). The shift from experts to teachers has been felt necessary because of the gap between what experts, while designing ESL/EFL courses, think about the ‘best way’ of teaching, and how teachers perceive what they teach and how they actually teach it to their students. The changing trend also foregrounds the democratic approach to second language pedagogy which underlines the
involvement of key stakeholders in any decision-making process. Teachers, no doubt, are one of such stakeholders whose role is of paramount importance from policy level to classroom implementation.

Mitchell (1994a) is of the opinion that the role of grammar in language teaching has to be studied from the teacher’s perspectives. In this regard, Mitchell takes the stance as “the translation of methodological advice into the actual classroom experiences of language learners remains the responsibility of teachers, not ‘expert’ methodologists” (pp. 90-91). It is therefore important that we analyze what English teachers think about grammar, grammar teaching and how they actually teach it to their students. This argument runs in line with what Mitchell posits “teachers are by no means ‘implementation machines’ as far as innovatory methodological advice is concerned” (p.91). This study was directed towards these areas of grammar pedagogy previously not touched by any researchers in Nepal.

Research Design and Procedures

The study adopted a survey design with the mixed-methods of questionnaire and classroom observation. The student teachers who had studied the course “English Grammar for Teachers” at Master’s level and who were teaching English at secondary level in Kathmandu Valley formed the total universe of this study. Altogether 30 teachers were selected by using purposive sampling, and out of them 15 respondents, after the administration of the questionnaire, were selected by using the same sampling strategy for the purpose of class observation. The use of this sampling strategy was motivated by the practical factors, such as geographical proximity, availability of respondents at a certain time, easy accessibility, and their willingness to volunteer (Dornyei, 2007). The questionnaire comprised close-ended and open-ended items (See App. A). Moreover, a semi-structured observation scheme was developed to collect information about the teachers’ classroom practices (See App. B). The observation was also supplemented with notes and audio recording. Two lessons of each selected teacher were observed to ensure consistency of information. Ethical factors such as taking prior consent, clarifying the purpose of the study, and ensuring their confidentiality were taken into account before data collection. The data were analyzed with the help of simple descriptive statistics and narrative analysis. Percentage was used for the former while the thematic analysis was used for the latter.

Findings and Discussion

The respondents’ views on grammar and grammar teaching, and the methods, techniques and resources they claimed that they used while teaching English grammar are discussed in light of their congruence or incongruence with the actual classroom teaching.

Views on English grammar

Seventy percent respondents agreed that English grammar is a set of rules that prescribes what is right and what is wrong in English, while the rest disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. For the 90% of respondents English grammar is a skill that enhances competence in other skills in English. Table 1 below summarizes their views on grammar:
Table 1. Views on English grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English grammar</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set of rules</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill for learning other skills</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the student teachers’ inclination to the communicative dimension of grammar rules. These views concur with that of Larsen-Freeman’s view of grammar as ‘a fifth skill’ (2007), a separate skill that contributes to acquisition of other four major language skills.

One might expect that those who regarded grammar as a skill would communicate grammar points to their students by encouraging them to what Vale and Feuntuem call “experience and experiment” (2010, p. 28). The teachers with the communicative awareness of teaching would engage the students in group work and pair work. However, their actual teaching did not reflect many of such tenets of the communicative and experiential approach. The majority (80%) of the teachers resorted to whole-class teaching. As a result, pair work and group work were missing from their lessons which pushed student participation to the fringe. Only 20 percent of the observed lessons incorporated pair work and group work. The majority of the lessons were found to be less congruent with their views on grammar.

Methods and techniques of presenting grammar

The majority agreed with the statement that grammar points are best presented inductively and only a small number of respondents believed the opposite. Table 2 below summarizes their responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inductive</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-based</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Methods of presenting grammar points

This shows that the teachers gave more priority to the indirect (inductive and task-based) ways of presenting grammar points to their students. These views seem to be in line with their views on grammar as a skill discussed above. The respondents were in very much of the opinion that the students should be engaged in what Thornbury (1999) calls “the rule-discovery path” instead of “rule-driven path” (p. 49).

To go deeper into the matter, the respondents were also asked to mention any two methods that they preferred to use while teaching grammar. They came up with a number of methods ranging from grammar-translation to the communicative. Table 3 below summarizes
various methods they mentioned that they
would use to communicate grammar points
to their students:

Table 3. Methods preferred by the
respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inductive</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deductive</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-based</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 3, the vast majority of
the respondents claimed that they used the
inductive and meaning-first methods of
teaching more than direct and explicit
presentation of rules. For instance, the
inductive, the communicative and the task-
based were the most preferred methods
whereas deductive and grammar
Translation were the least preferred ones.
Interestingly, one can see the congruence
between respondents’ views on English
grammar, their views on the best ways of
presenting grammar points, and the
methods they claimed to use to teach
grammar points to their students.

However, their views and preferences, or
claims, contradicted with the methods they
actually adopted in the presentation of
grammar points in the classroom. Contrary
to the variety of methods they suggested,
inductive and deductive were the only two
that dominated all the lessons. Of them, 80
percent of the lessons were based on the
deductive way of rule presentation. For
many teachers, talking about the rules
explicitly seemed a norm. For example, the
following are some of the ways the majority
began their grammar lessons:

- What is a conditional sentence?
- How many types of conditional sentence are
  there?
- Do you know where ‘be going to’ is used?

Okay, look at the structure of simple
present on the board.

Only the 20 percent of the observed lessons
were based on the inductive method. Those
who adopted an inductive way of
presentation often began their lessons by
setting up the context and eliciting the
target structures from the students.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked
to mention any three techniques they
preferred to use to teach grammar. This
item elicited a number of techniques which
are presented below in Table 4:

Table 4: Techniques preferred by the
respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dramatization/Role-play</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group discussion/Group work/Pair work</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total physical response (TPR)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drilling</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story-telling</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gap</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
would engage their students in communicative practice to enhance “structure-social function match and structure-discourse match” (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988, p. 13).

Despite their preference, the majority of them heavily inclined to whole-class teaching via the structure-focused technique of explanation. Table 5 below presents the techniques that the teachers mostly used in the classroom:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Techniques used in the classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation (demonstration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration (explanation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicitation (explanation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the observed lessons, 40% were dominated by the explanation technique. After explaining the grammar points, the teachers demonstrated them on the board, sentence cards or flipcharts. In 33 percent of the lessons the teachers first demonstrated the grammar items on the board, sentence cards or flipcharts and then explained each in detail before engaging students in practice. These two techniques were used to present grammar points directly to the students. On the other hand, those who presented grammar points indirectly resorted to the elicitation technique. The teachers first set up the situation and then elicited the relevant sentences from the students. The elicited sentences were further explained by the teacher again. In all cases, explanation occurred either as a main technique or subordinate technique.

Grammar practice activities

The notion that grammar points should be practiced in meaning-focused activities such as drama activities, interview and role-play was strongly agreed by 33% and agreed by 50% of the respondents. Sixty percent of the respondents rejected the notion that grammar points should be practiced in structure-focused activities, such as fill-in the blanks, transformation and true/false.

Their views on the practice activities largely concurred with their views on and preference to the methods and techniques. Methods and practice activities both, as they opined, should be meaning-focused and learner-centered. However, the classroom observation shows a different picture. That is, there was incongruence between their views on the nature of practice activities and the actual activities that their students were engaged in.

Contrary to their emphasis on meaning-focused activities such as role-play, storytelling, pair work and group work, most of the time their students were practicing in structure-focused activities, such as Changing the Sentences According to the Examples, Matching, Making Sentences for the Patterns.

Models of integrating grammar points

Two of the statements were concerned with the ways of integrating grammar points into the overall lesson plan. Table 6 below presents their views on the models of integrating grammar points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models of integration</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The PPP model</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The TTT model</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Models of integrating grammar points

Their views on the PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) model concurred with the actual classroom practice. All the observed lessons were exclusively based on this model i.e. the teachers began their lessons with the presentation of the new grammar points either deductively or inductively; the students practiced the presented points in a controlled way by means of different activities, and they were involved in less controlled activities. So far as the second model of integration i.e. TTT (Task-Teach-Task) is concerned, no teacher was found following it despite the majority agreeing with the notion that grammar points should be integrated by engaging the students in task performance.

Resources for teaching grammar

The respondents were asked to mention any three resources that they most frequently used for teaching grammar. Stories, games, and songs/verses were the most preferred resources while newspapers were the least preferred one. Drama and dialogues fell in between them. The types of resources they mentioned are given below in Table 7:

Table 7. Resources preferred by the respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama and dialogue</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs and verse</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures/Realia</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As to teaching, most of these resources were found in use although with low frequency. The resources such as drama and games were not used at all, while textbook example sentences were the mostly used resource. However, no teacher had made the mention of this resource while responding to the open-ended questionnaire items that asked them to list any three resources that they preferred to use. Table 8 below presents the resources they used:

Table 8. Resources used in the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used resources</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogues</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook example sentences</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows that textbook example sentences were the mostly used and newspapers were the least used resources to introduce and practice grammar points. The resources such as stories, dialogues, pictures and newspapers were used mainly to introduce the points inductively while the example sentences were used to orient students directly to target structures. Stories and dialogues were used directly from the textbook itself. Pictures were of two types: those given in the textbook and those from the teacher’s own collection. A large number of grammar lessons mainly exploited the sentence-level resource, possibly because they were easy to use and they did not require preparation time. Also, such sentences helped the students establish one-to-one relationship between
examples and the target grammar points easily and quickly.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the foregoing discussion, I draw the following conclusions and make some recommendations for teachers and teacher educators:

- The surveyed teachers' views on grammar and grammar teaching echoed most of the tenets of the current trends in grammar teaching such as learner involvement, collaborative learning, and task-based activities. However, their grammar teaching was inclined to the traditional and teacher-centered approach lacking in learner-centered activities.

- Despite their perception of grammar as a skill and heavy inclination, in their views, to the communicative dimension, they were treating grammar as a set of rules rather than a skill in the actual classroom. One of the possible reasons could be the setting of the classroom itself, as in terms of arrangement all the classrooms were traditional (i.e. having immovable furniture arranged in rows) calling for whole-class teaching and preventing easy mobility required for pair work and group work. It is important that we train our teachers to capitalize on the classroom constraints to increase students' active involvement through pair work and group work. Each bench, for example, can be treated as a group, or four students sitting together can be put in two pairs while carrying out the given task.

- Contrary to their claim and preference, almost all teachers were following the deductive way of teaching and using the teacher-centered techniques such as explanation and demonstration. The teachers should think of how they can engage their students in the communicative practice through such learner-centered techniques as dramatization and problem-solving.

- Despite their high opinions of the recent trend of teaching grammar through task performance, all the teachers were teaching grammar using a three-part cycle of PPP. When interpreted their inclination to this model in light of the textbooks they were teaching, it is the model clearly outlined for the teachers to follow by the textbook writers.

- Many teachers seemed to be aware of the recent trend of integrating grammar points into the language lesson through tasks. However, they failed to translate this awareness into classroom practice. Since the textbooks present grammar in the traditional PPP model, the nature of the books itself seems to be one of the causes of disparity between their views and actual classroom teaching. In such a case, the only option for them is to use the existing textbooks as reference materials and design their own grammar lessons that require the students to work on the given task.

- Most of them relied on the textbook rather than using the resources from the library and the Internet. Grammar teaching should expose the students to the three different dimensions of grammar: form/structure, meaning and function. For this, the teachers should present grammar points
through a variety of resources such as pictures and realia for structure-meaning match, drama and dialogue for structure-social function match, and stories, anecdotes, essays and newspaper articles for structure-discourse match. Moreover, teachers should decrease their dependency on the textbook and look for other resources available in the library and on the Internet to bring a variety and the outside world into grammar class.

Finally, this study was limited in its scope in terms of the number of respondents, the number of lessons observed and the issues covered. A further research is therefore necessary to explore all the relevant factors that might have contributed to the gap between teachers’ views on grammar and grammar teaching and their actual classroom practices. That is to say, it is necessary to carry out more comprehensive and qualitative type of study to explore Nepalese teachers’ beliefs, and their way of teaching grammar with reference to instructional and contextual constraints.

References


Appendix A

Teachers' Views on Grammar and Grammar Teaching

*Direction:* Please read each questionnaire item carefully and put a tick in the box under the given heading you agree with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. English grammar is a set of rules that prescribes what is right and what is wrong in English.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. English grammar is a skill that enhances competence in other skills in English.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Grammar points are best presented inductively (teaching grammar from examples).</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grammar points are best presented deductively (teaching grammar from rules).</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Grammar points are best presented when they are integrated in the context through texts.</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Students should practice grammar in meaning-focused activities (e.g. dramatic activities, interview, role play, etc.).</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Students should practice grammar points in structure-focused activities (e.g. fill in the blanks, transformation, true/false, etc).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Grammar points are best integrated through the Presentation-Practice-Production model.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Grammar points are best integrated through the Task-Teach-Task model.</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Mention any two methods you prefer to use to teach grammar to your students.
   i.  
   ii. 

2. Mention any three resources (e.g. songs, verse, games, dramas, stories, etc) you prefer to use to teach grammar to your students.
   i.  
   ii.  
   iii. 

3. Mention any three techniques you prefer to use to teach grammar to your students.
   i.  
   ii.  
   iii.  

--
Journal of NELTA, Vol 21 No. 1-2,  December 2017  101
The researcher will be reached at balaramadhikari77@gmail.com if you wish to know more about the study.

The researcher will send you the findings of this research if interested.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix B

General Scheme for Classroom Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods/Ways of teaching</th>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Practice activities</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Model of integration</th>
<th>Approaches to treating grammar points</th>
<th>Mode of interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Contributor

Bal Ram Adhikari is a Lecturer of English Education at Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tahachal, Tribhuvan University. Mr Adhikari is a Translation Studies researcher, translator and editor. He is involved in designing ELT courses, course-books and editing academic reading materials for universities in Nepal. He carried out a research on Tradition of Nepalese Translation under a Special Project of Nepal Academy. He is the editor of Trilingual Dictionary of the Magar Language (2011). He has served SAARC Cultural Centre in his capacity as a country editor of SAARC Collection of Poems (2012 & 2013). Email: balaramadhikari77@gmail.com
Exploring ‘New Worlds’ through New Media in ELT classrooms

Julijana Zlatevska and Suman D C

Abstract

This article is based primarily on a shared virtual classroom of Macedonia, Europe and Nepal, Asia, and secondarily on a talk presented in Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association 19th International Conference 2014 held in Kathamndu, Nepal. It discusses how instructors and students had applied “New Media” in ELT classrooms with the aim of enhancing students’ English Language skills including 21st century literacies through a virtual cultural exchange session between Macedonian and Nepali classrooms. In other words, it explores how learning process can be optimized by using internet, computer, multimedia and mobile. Moreover, these tools can become a means to explore “New World(s)” which exists beyond one’s physical classroom.

Keywords: virtual classroom, New Media, ELT literacy, Macedonia, Nepal, New world

Introduction

The context of this project began in 2013 with E-Teacher Scholarship, which was a ten-week online professional development course from University of Oregon funded by the U.S. Department of State, Regional English Language Officer, U.S. Embassy. Both of the instructors (authors of this article) were awarded a course ‘Introduction to Pedagogy and Practices for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.’ There were 23 candidates from all around the world. They learned, shared and networked. During a discussion session, Julijana Zlatevska from Macedonia initiated the idea of connecting classrooms; both of the instructors agreed immediately. Consequently, on 17th May 2013, one of the classes in Nepal, Asia, was successfully connected to one of classes in Macedonia, Europe, through the social networking site Skype.

The primary aim of this online class was to make online intercultural projects a productive way to improve the teaching and learning of English (Dart, 2015). Secondary goal of this class was to enable our students to explore new worlds along with learning English language.

At the beginning, the instructors had established a number of memorandum
understandings for the session. They are as follows:

- The students will be of a limited number—no more than ten students—who are at the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) intermediate level B1 (Council of Europe 2001).

- Participating learners will talk to their counterparts on a one-on-one basis, turn-by-turn in the form of online conversation.

- Once the session is started, students will occupy most of the session under the instructors’ observation.

Methods

The idea of sharing culture is one of the teaching tools/methods which is widely practised in ELT classrooms. The classroom practices must go beyond the traditional practices, so the students will learn about cultural aspects all around the world though the students might not travel outside their country. However, the world has become a global village. By taking all these elements into account, the educators agreed that students can refine their understanding about their own culture by comparing it to each other’s culture. Such type of exchange programs will definitely activate students’ as well as teachers’ cultural awareness. Every human being is different, and such type of activities will enhance students’ interpersonal communication, social understanding, interpretive skills, and cultural literacy.

21st century Literacy and Language Learning

Most people widely believe that being “literate” means being competent in reading and writing in target language. But the people who are “literate” in the context of Macedonia and Nepal are hardly aware that the definition of being “literate” has changed drastically, especially in the 21st century. According to NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English), a literate person must have the ability to:

- assist learners to gain proficiency with tools of technology with regular practice.

- develop relationships with others, and confront and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally.

- design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes.

- manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information.

- create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts.

- attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

To integrate these literacies, for instance, our participants analyzed and evaluated the web-based materials related to each other’s countries and synthesized it in posters to show each other. In this ways, pictures or images also provide students an opportunity to interact with the phenomena from all around the world.

The teachers were all aware of the Chinese proverb ‘a picture is worth a thousand words.” They could pass on various e-books and online articles to each other’s students to learn about ‘target cultures,’ but the
instructors preferred pictures in the form of posters to integrate 21st century literacy—visual literacy. The first reason for using posters is that research shows that the human brain reads pictures quicker than the words. Another reason for using visual images is that learners of this modern age grew up in a world where using smart phones, laptops, and social media are part of everyday life (Prensky, 2001).

The Role of New Media

Bailey Socha and Barbara Eber-Schmid (n.d.) define new media as “new media is related to the internet and the interplay among technologies, images and sounds. In fact, the definition of new media changes daily and will continue to do so.” Being ELT practitioners, the educators believe that new media should be an integral part of our classroom for 21st century literacies. In addition, the trainers cannot ignore the fact that they need to incorporate sociocultural factors into their classrooms (Palmer and Sharifian, 2007).

Material development

One of the challenging tasks was to develop materials that could be used during the session. Instead of doing this task by teachers alone, which is the conventional way, the educators decided to encourage their students/learners to do so with the help of teachers’ guidance.

Designing and sharing material are not easy tasks for students when they are not facilitated well. One of the advantages of involving learners in designing materials is that it helps teachers use their time in the best possible manner (Fisher & Frey, 2011). For this, the educators had to first believe in their learners’ ability. Then, they set certain goals or activities as listed earlier. In addition, the instructors had to help their learners with certain examples. For example, the local dances of Macedonia and Nepal are Oro and Deuda respectively, and the national monuments of both countries had been named as listed in national/world heritage sites. Next, the learners went through the process of making and remaking in order to use those materials during the session. Later, those materials were stored in the libraries or resource centers of the respective academic institutions.

Cultural exchange in ELT

During the session, the educators were aware that participants would receive each other with mindfulness. After deciding to apply new media in our classrooms to connect, the instructors started to explore each other’s target cultures, their differences and ways to improve cultural awareness.

But the question comes: What is culture? Anthropologogist John H. Bodley (1994, p. 22) defines culture as “what people think, make, and do.” Another intriguing concept of culture comes from Edward T. Hall. According to Hall, culture is an “iceberg.” In other words, a culture has its deep culture under water with surface culture visible to everyone. The teachers tried to analyze the surface cultures as well as the deep cultures of Nepal and Macedonia. One example that the students shared was how they say their names in their local language. The ways are as follows:

- JAS SE VIKAM SACHITA. (Macedonian)
  (My name is Schita)
- MERO NAAM ANNA HO. (Nepali)
(My name is Anna)

Figure 1. Sharing of names

According to the participants, one of the interesting parts of the session was the moment when the learners of Nepal and Macedonia performed their cultural dances: Deuda and Oro respectively.

Along with this, the teachers had discussed a number of topics. Some of the topics are as follows:

- Landscapes
- Famous cities
- National dress
- Dance and music
- National Flag
- National Heroes
- Local languages
- Typical names of persons
- Mountains
- Religion

At the end of the session, the instructors had a short feedback session with students. The learners reported that they had learnt a lot about each other’s countries and their cultures in spite of technical issues. The teachers also shared their views with each other and ended the session in a positive note. This has inspired the teachers to connect professionally.

Challenges

The class had been planned a week before all got connected. One of the biggest challenges the educators faced during the execution was technical issues. Though the session was planned for 90 minutes, the class lasted four hours due to a number of technical disturbances. Thanks to everyone’s patience and curiosity, they stayed with the class.

Moreover, it was very difficult to address cultural learning in an English language classroom because the students had a language barrier to some extent, and the learners had not been exposed to each other’s cultures before. In this case, use of new media was not enough, and it was challenging as well.

Solution

The educators enhanced their own cultural awareness by talking to each other and researching the target culture through the internet. Then, they followed these steps:

The teachers had determined the topic they were going to discuss in their virtual classrooms, including national heroes,
dances, languages, religions, and so on. They had assigned their students to make posters and reports in their own way to show each other’s classroom. Some of the posters made by students of Nepal and Macedonia are as follows:

1. With the responsibility of the facilitators, the teachers observed students’ activities and helped them find and organize the content. The teachers also suggested to their students a few web sites where they could conduct research about the target culture.

2. The instructors prepared the questionnaire to be discussed in the classroom about the topics mentioned earlier.

3. In the end, students were facilitated in the classrooms, and they performed accordingly.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the instructors ended up with the notion of exploring new worlds and their cultures by exchanging information about cultures so students could reflect on both cultures in a communicative way as both are simultaneously the target cultures. In other words, students were talking to other students whose existences were not in their cognitive sphere. In addition, “learning to be intercultural involves much more than just knowing about another culture: it involves learning to understand how one’s own culture shapes perceptions of oneself, of the world, and of our relationship with others” (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009).

After the completion of this session, the educators realized they can connect their classrooms beyond geographical boundaries by using internet and social networks. It not only helped to refine the learning process but also provided instructors with a platform to explore ‘new worlds.’ In this way, the teachers had...
NELTA successfully connected their overseas classrooms—Macedonian and Nepal—to each other through the social network site Skype and helped their students to explore the cultures of Macedonia and Nepal.

References


Contributors

Mr Suman D C is an English Language educator, who has been teaching English to speakers of other language for more than eight years. He is the Founder/Executive Officer of Institute of Professional Development and Research Center (IPDRC). Mr. D C has a special interest in information and communication technology (ICT) in education, new literacies and English for Specific Purpose (ESP). He has authored a number of articles for English national dailies and journals in Nepal. He is also a Life Member of Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA). He has been awarded E-Teacher Scholarship, a professional development course offered by University of Oregon, USA, that was funded by Regional English Communications and Technology Journal 30 (4): 195-232.
Language Office (RELO), US Embassy, Nepal. He can be reached at dchemant123@gmail.com.

Ms Julijana Zlatevska has been working as an English teacher since 2005 when she graduated from the state university St. Clement of Ohrid in Skopje, Macedonia. She’s been working in the private and the public sector, but has dedicated her MA studies to the contributions (impact) that new technologies have on the development of English language to the students of rural areas. She has done online classes with schools from the U.S. for a couple of years, which has had tremendous success on her students’ skills development. She was the recipient of E-Teacher Scholarships from the U.S. Department of State, RELO, U.S. Embassy. She can be contacted at georgievskajulijana@yahoo.com.
Use of Journal Articles in English Language Classroom

Sagar Poudel

Abstract

Teaching English without any instructional materials may be difficult or even impossible. There are lots of materials which facilitate both the teachers and students in language teaching and learning. As with other teaching materials and resources, journal articles are also an important source for language teaching. Taking this into account, this article tries to explore how EFL teachers perceive the value of journal articles and how they use them in their classrooms. More specifically, the article tries to explore whether and to what extent journal articles can be used as instructional materials, and what strategies teachers employ to use journals articles to enhance language proficiency of their students.

Keywords: Journal, Articles, Sources, Levels, Academic writing

Introduction

Teaching English is a challenging job for teachers of English as foreign language (EFL) in Nepal. They basically depend on prescribed textbooks as they believe that textbooks are the sole source of learning materials. Instead of creating a motivational and encouraging environment, these teachers promote rigid and rigorous practice of course-book learning in the classroom. On the other hand, there are teachers who are conscious of the usefulness of academic/professional journals and articles and judiciously use them in their classroom. Due to advancements in science and technology, a variety of instructional materials such as books, journals, newspapers, and magazines are available in cyberspace. Teaching can be made more effective and meaningful by adapting these materials and various techniques for teaching them. Teachers can guide their students to benefit from an extensive use of such materials, and journal articles could be one of those materials. Morrow (2009) believes that the use of journals improves writing fluency, provides practice with the mechanics of writing, and helps students choose topics and reflect on ideas. Harmer (2007) suggests that it is also always interesting to know what is going around us, and journal articles help students make better sense of that social context through learning. Similarly, Farmer (2008) suggests that news articles can also serve as a great teaching resource in the EFL classroom if they are structured well. Teachers can choose their own articles from newspapers or
magazines based on the content to be taught, or as Dheram and Rani (2003) suggest, newspapers may be used for promoting learner autonomy in an international classroom with varying levels of English proficiency.

In addition, journal articles discuss current issues and, therefore, can be a valuable source of knowledge. By using journals as reading materials as well as a writing tool, students can feel connected to the social context and realities around them. The issues discussed in the journals help them absorb knowledge which is essential to them. The journals written on scientific, linguistic, ELT (English Language Teaching), sociology, business and the like, for example, can be beneficial for them to accomplish their goals of learning.

As a lecturer, the author of this article has used journal articles in the academic writing classes of the pre-service teacher education program for the last two years. Most contents in the program are about formal writing (i.e. how to write academic essays, how to conduct research and write report in English language and so on). Like any other novice teacher, the author initially looked for materials and resources to supplement the prescribed text of the course. The articles published in different academic journals were found to be useful and interesting to teach writing. The professional journals, for example, follow certain formats and include research and knowledge-based articles. Similarly, the articles which are published in English language journals usually follow the APA formats. For example, NELTA publishes academic, research-based articles. These articles benefit students in their personal and professional growth in that, as Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010) suggest, the affective/emotional involvement in academic activities with instructional materials is one way to sharpen knowledge. In this sense, the journal articles are more likely to connect the advance level students with various areas particularly related to teaching the English language. This article looks at the way English language teachers perceive the usefulness of journal articles and what strategies they employ to exploit them.

**Literature Review: Theoretical Framework**

Richards and Rodgers (2010) state that instructional resources perform a pivotal role in language teaching where task-based learning approaches exert an ample contribution to language learning and provide a basis for designing activities to practice language learning. Similarly, the use of instructional materials increases STT (Student Talk Time) and allows teachers to talk less i.e. minimizes TTT (Teacher Talk Time). Tomilson (2011) expresses the view that the materials that are used in the classroom provide authentic input for developing language skills. Therefore, instructional materials are needed to support teachers in teaching the students to integrate all language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In a similar vein, Kitao and Kitao (1997) state that success in teaching is determined by the teaching resources, which are a fundamental asset in impacting what happens in the class.

There are different types of instructional materials that can be used in English language classrooms, in particular writing classrooms. Rai (2002) has discussed instructional materials under three main categories.
Audio materials are typically used for developing listening skill of the learners; however, teacher can also teach other skills with the help of audio materials. Audio materials can be of different types such as radio, audio or voice recordings, CDs, tapes, etc. Visual materials include different materials that are easily available locally or can be prepared by teachers; they include maps, charts, photos, pictures, displays, posters, cards, magazines, newspaper, journals, handouts, postcards, pamphlets, brochure, manuals, officials’ letters, notices, advertisements, and so on. (not relevant here). Audio-visual aids include both the sound and the visualization of pictures, television, video clips, music, documentary, films, and so on. These materials appeal to both hearing and seeing. Articles or pieces of writing published in academic or scholarly journals with their standard format are known journal articles. Journals are periodical publications where scholars contribute or write on a particular discipline focusing on their research or a particular subject matter. Journals follow their predetermined formats. The articles published in such journals support learning and advance language skills as they relate to the learning of academic language through reviewing books and articles, writing essays, writing reports after field work, and conducting research. The present study attempts to explore how teachers teaching academic writing in English at various levels make use of some of these materials, especially journal articles.

Research Questions

The present study is based on the following research questions.

1) How do the journal articles help the students to learn English language?

2) What subject matters can be taught by using journal articles in EFL classes?

3) What kinds of changes can be brought in students’ academic/formal writing by the use of journal articles?

Participants and Research Tool

In this research, a small scale survey was used where the information obtained from the participants was descriptively analyzed and discussed. The primary source of data was information from three teachers teaching English in higher secondary and bachelor levels in Kathmandu Valley. The participants for the study were teachers teaching in higher secondary and bachelor levels. For the purpose of collecting information, a purposive sampling procedure was adapted. Interviewing was employed as a research tool to collect information from the participants. Similarly, a small scale analysis of secondary sources like books, articles and other research studies was also conducted for supporting the discussion.

Findings

As discussed above, the objective of this study was to find out the usefulness of journal articles in Nepalese EFL classrooms. In this section, the information obtained from the primary sources are analysed and discussed. It consists of the information gathered by the open-ended questions. Open-ended questions on the use of journal articles were developed to get information from the teachers who are teaching in higher secondary and bachelor levels. The information obtained from the participants is discussed with the following themes.

Journals as a source of materials
The EFL teachers teaching in different levels used various resources to facilitate their students’ learning of the target language. This included any materials, programs, or software that helped the teacher present or explain his/her lesson better (Tomlinson, 1993) because the materials do not only support the teacher to present his/her lesson effectively, but also help the students to understand the text clearly and meaningfully. All teachers who participated in the survey used journal/newspaper materials to enhance student learning. For example, Shiva Neupane, (pseudonym), an EFL teacher for higher secondary/bachelor levels, responded that he used the materials which were available in the library or on the internet and that could be useful to the subject matters, including materials such as reference books, theses, postcards, etc., in general and newspaper, magazines, journals, and periodicals in particular. Similarly, Dinesh Khanal (pseudonym), another teacher, who taught primarily Bachelor of Education students, also said that he used the materials or resources which helped students develop language skills. He also used materials which could be bought from the market such as maps, charts and so on. He asserted that he checked the internet, audio/video clips, magazines, journals, encyclopedia and sometimes multimedia on a regular basis for articles and news clips. Another EFL teacher, Ramesh Shrestha (pseudonym) responded that he used the materials of his interest and as well as of his students from inside and outside the classroom. Besides this, he used newspaper, journals, periodicals, research papers, and magazines which he selected in accordance with the nature of the content he had to teach for a particular lesson. These practices show that the EFL teachers generally used such materials as newspaper, magazines, reference books, and audio/video, and in particular they used journals as a resource for teaching English language skills.

All teachers interviewed for the study believed that materials available on the internet and/or in journals are authentic materials. This is in line with Young (1999), who suggests that a regular use of journals with related courses builds the practical knowledge of both the students and teachers in the course of learning. The participating teachers used journal articles as a resource for teaching English language differently at different levels. One of them suggested that those articles could be used in higher secondary level as well, though to a limited extent all of them preferred to use journal articles for teaching advanced language skills with their advanced (Bachelor) level classes. It is evident that teachers preferred to use journal articles at an advanced level because of students’ ability to interact and work with such materials.

Subject matters taught using journal articles

Articles are of various types and are written for different purposes. The articles included in academic/professional journals can be research-based, knowledge-based, experience-based, or they can be reviews of important works such as books, articles and so on. As Harmer (2007) views, teachers can make use of them for teaching various course contents because journals offer varieties, novelties, and motivation which can be supportive of teaching to write letters, reports and essays, make oral or written presentations, and write reviews and articles. More importantly, teachers can help students explore the experience to
make them aware of the possibilities and opportunities regarding language learning.

Shiva, for example, used journal articles for teaching academic writing, i.e. formal writing. He affirmed that he used journal articles as a resource when the subject matters were writing essay, doing research, preparing reports, making citations, and listing references, reviews and so on. Similarly, Dinesh also made use of journal articles in most of his English language classes. He used research works published in journals for teaching formats like APA and MLA, for preparing research reports, and for teaching the formal features of writing. Ramesh also used them for teaching formal academic writing such as reports, essays, book reviews, or article reviews, and for teaching different formats as well. However, he expressed the view that the use of journal articles depended on the teachers’ ideas and creativeness. He added that journal articles, for example, may be used to teach stylistics and sometimes literature as well since they are rich in literary features. As it can be deciphered, teachers generally used journal articles as a resource to teach various formal writing skills, but at the same time they used them for exploiting stylistic feature of the materials as well.

Journal articles to support language learning

As Wright (1976) asserts, resources of teaching language help learners to facilitate self-discovery and problem-solving, and support further improvement and progress in language development. In the present study, Shiva agrees with this view that use of journals articles enhanced students’ language learning experience. He affirmed that the use of journal articles increased students’ vocabularies, and helped explore personal experiences and creative writing.

For Dinesh, journal articles helped his students learn formal writing style, and explore ideas for reporting research, writing essays, and reviewing books and articles. They learned the formal writing formats, as well as citation and referencing styles. He further said that journal articles helped students develop their creative writing abilities, vocabulary stock, ideas of exploring personal experiences, and so on. Similarly, Ramesh said that the articles included in the journal were of advanced level and covered a wide range of issues and, therefore, supported the students to develop formal English language writing abilities together with the ability to report research studies.

Changes observed after the use of journal articles

It is evident from the above discussion that use of journal articles as a resource makes a difference in both teaching and learning. Regular and sensible use of such resources facilitates students’ learning and helps to bring change in the classroom as well as in the students. Shiva, for example, observed that the use of journal articles encouraged students to get started with writing. He pointed out that his students started writing their stories and essays on the patterns they observed in various types of journal articles. In addition, his students developed the habit of practicing reflective writing based on their own experiences. Similarly, Dinesh found that his students started following the formats and structures of the journal articles. He further said that the students also learned the formats of reporting, citation and referencing when he provided exposure to
the journals. More importantly, they became aware of formal writing styles. In the same way, Ramesh noticed changes in his students’ writing. His students became more aware of the formal features of academic writing and followed them while producing their own academic assignments.

**Summary of Findings**

The survey found that the teachers used a range of resources such as reference books, newspaper, magazines, journals, periodicals, theses, internet and so on. However, the use of journal articles, together with other materials as a resource of teaching English, was most rewarding. The survey also revealed that the participants used journal articles in the advance level, i.e. in the bachelor’s rather than the higher secondary level. This is understandable because, given the sophisticated style, language and content used in such materials, secondary level students simply cannot interact and engage with such materials fruitfully.

Similarly, the participants used journal articles to teach various language skills, particularly formal writing skills Basically, they used journal articles for teaching contents of academic writing such as essays, book/article reviews, and so on. One of the participants exploited the literary aspects of the journal materials as well, which is a creative use of such resources.

The participants found that the use of journal articles increased students’ vocabulary, and helped students explore writing about personal experiences, develop critical and creative thinking, and learn how to write in a formal style. It also provided guidelines for reviewing books and articles, and helped them learn style of citations and referencing. The participating teachers observed notable changes in their students, many of whom started engaging more in the class and writing academic assignments in the observed/discussed patterns or formats. For example, they wrote their essays in a more academic manner and learned the formats for reporting their own studies.

**Implication for Language Teachers**

The study has some limitations. Firstly, only a small number of teachers from one institution participated in the study. Secondly, the findings discussed in this study are based on their observations, and concrete examples for most of the claims made are not substantiated. Finally, the generalizations suggested or conclusions made may have limited applicability. Nevertheless, the study does provide instances that use of journal materials as a resource for language development has its merits. It has the following implications for teaching in EFL contexts. Firstly, journal materials are a useful resource for teaching English language skills in the Nepalese EFL setting. Such resources may be used in conjunction with or as a supplementary to other prescribed texts. Similarly, teachers may adopt and/or adapt journal articles in accordance with the need, demand and interest of the learners. Such articles as a teaching resource may be more useful for tertiary-level students, rather than secondary-level students. Therefore, teachers teaching advance-level students are likely to benefit more from their use. One other implication is that the use of journal articles is a way to enrich vocabularies, promote critical thinking and encourage creative writing. Teachers can use them to help students explore their
experiences of language learning, provide ideas for academic writing, apply guidelines for writing academic assignments using formal writing patterns.

References


Contributor

Sagar Poudel is an M. Ed. graduate from Tribhuvan University and is pursuing a M. Phil in ELE at Kathmandu University. He is currently working as an English Lecturer at Aadikavi Bhanubhakta Campus, Tribhuvan University, Tanahun. He is also a Life Member of NELTA. His fields of interest are second language acquisition, sociolinguistics and English language teaching. Email - poudelsagar1985@gmail.com
Journal of NELTA Forum

[The present somewhat opinionated article has been included in this issue of the Journal with a view to creating a forum for its readers. Readers wishing to respond to the article may send their response or opinion to the editorial board. Selected responses will be included in the next issue of the Journal- Editors]

Non-native English Speaking Teacher (NNEST) and their Delivery

Laxmi Bahadur Maharjan

Abstract

This article attempts to display the characteristics of the non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) and focuses on the need for the transition of their potentialities in various circumstances of their career. It also describes some of the issues related to their shared difficulties and insecurities, and uncovers the strategies that help them to build up their mind and vision. The non-native speakers of English are definitely in a strong position as teachers in that they can use their experiences to bring quality to teaching and become more effective speakers of English. In addition, the article highlights the non-native speakers of English scenario with the intention to promote further in-depth research on this unexplored area of “nonnativesness.” The article also makes a brief description of the problems the Nepali NNESTs face in their classroom delivery processes and discusses ways to overcome them.

Keywords: NNESTs, Proficiency, Fallacy, Nativeness, Delivery

Introduction

NNEST (/nÈn[st/ en-NEST) is an acronym that refers to the growing body of English language teachers who speak English as a foreign or second language. An NNEST is obviously one whose mother tongue is not English. Moreover, an NNEST is a teacher who works in an EFL environment and who speaks the same native language as his or her students (Medgyes, 2001). However, Medgyes writes that the language proficiency of an NNEST is the “bookish” one. He/she speaks poorer English and tends to focus on accuracy, not fluency. Nowadays, definitions of native speaker and non-native speaker are outdated. Many people today are bilingual and speak two languages or more proficiently. Non-native speakers have learned English in a classroom, and so are more equipped to teach to others. There are several issues raised related to NNESTs which are of interest to all today. They have attracted the attention of language teachers, language specialists, teacher educators, and graduate students from all over the world.
In second/foreign language education, teachers come from a myriad of backgrounds such as native English speaking teachers (NEST) and NNESTs. Ebata (2008) balances the two by saying that NNESTs are able to prove that they are as capable of teaching as NESTs, and are able to alter the students’ behaviors toward them. Needless to say, “NESTs were the panacea for all their language ills” (Kiczkowiak, 2014). Moreover, NESTs can teach their cultures, values, and histories related to the target language. Oprea (2010) also talks about them: “NNESTs tend to be a lot more knowledgeable grammar-wise whereas NESTs have the upper hand when it comes to vocabulary and pronunciation.” Oprea (ibid) goes on saying, “NNESTs have a lot of opportunities to become more proficient in the language through the effective use of the technology that is available these days.”

Kekir and Demir (2013) writes, “There is a widespread prejudice that NNESTs often lack linguistic command in order to be proficient English teachers...” In other words, there is a remarkable campaign and bias against NNESTs, only because they are not NESTs. Kekir and Demir continue, “There’s still a global prejudice against NNESTs. Especially in recruitment issues in ELT field, despite the worthy effort made by TESOL and some other institutions against unfair hiring practices, employers still have a positive bias in favour of NESTs.” However, accepting such bias of favouritism of NESTs against NNESTs, we are required to explain the language proficiencies of NNESTs and suggest ways to overcome the deficiencies noticed during the process of transition from their mother tongue to English.

Hypotheses

This article seeks to build upon the following hypotheses:

i) Native English speaking teachers (NESTs) are better in all language abilities, but non-native English speakers (NNESTs) are more practised in relation to their students through their shared difficulties and insecurities.

ii) NNESTs are at an advantage in teaching English in many ways.

iii) A strength of NNESTs is not only their ability to predict their students’ difficulties, but also to estimate their potential.

iv) Only NNESTs can serve as models of what a successful learner should be.

How are NNESTs Characterized?

An NEST possesses a number of features. According to Medgyes (1999), NNESTs are characterized by the fact that English is their second or foreign language, their students are monolingual groups of learners, they work in an EFL environment, they speak poorer English, they use “bookish” language and more L1, and they speak the same native language as their students. Likewise, Medgyes (1994) says that there are several assumptions associated with NEST and NNEST groups of teachers: first, NESTs and NNESTs differ with regard to their English language proficiency, and secondly, the discrepancy in their English language proficiency accounts for most of the differences in their teaching behaviours. Suarez (2000), in his article entitled “‘Native’ and ‘Non-native’,”
states that it is not only a question of terminology, supporting this with his argument that “Anything following the negative prefix non is bound to be negative. It seems unfair, to say the least, to group into a non- category the vast majority of English teachers in the world (according to reliable estimates approximately 90% of English language teachers are not L1 speakers of English).”

In the same way, NNESTs possess many other features. An NNEST uses English less confidently. He/she does not place emphasis on language use, but he/she is more insightful, and his/her grammar is typically very strong. However, we should better know that an ideal NNEST is the one who has achieved near-native proficiency in English (Medgyes, 1994). Moreover, an NNEST is stricter and assigns more homework.

NNESTs and their Strengths

In the field of English language teaching (ELT), a growing number of teachers are not native speakers of English. There are many ways in which nonnative teachers are at an advantage in teaching English. Phillipson (1996), for example, points out that nonnative speakers can learn to use idioms appropriately, to appreciate the cultural connotations of the language, and to determine whether a given language form is correct.

NNESTs’ strengths cannot be underestimated. Rosie (n.d.) writes that the strengths of these individuals as ESL teachers are still somewhat unknown and are often underestimated by their colleagues and students. In relation to this, Simpson (2015) views that the non-native teachers are certainly not worse and should therefore be given the same employment opportunities in ELT as NESTs are. Phillipson (1996) seems to be inclined to the NNESTs’ side. By means of the phrase “the native speaker fallacy,” he also talks about unfair treatment of qualified NNESTs being used throughout the ELT field. Many authors, including Simpson (2015), have shown evidence that the students are very much aware of and have started to appreciate NNESTs for their teaching skills rather than basing their opinions on negative stereotypes. This we can notice from Oprea’s (2010) writing: “... NNESTs tend to be a lot more knowledgeable grammar-wise...” Moreover, Filho (2002, cited in Ebata 2008) states that “a big strength NNSs have is being able to not only predict their students’ difficulties, but also to estimate their potential.”

Simpson (2015) sums up there is no doubt that NESTs can be good English teachers and that they have many strengths. However, so do NNESTs, and we hope that the ELT hiring practices will soon start to reflect the fact that the mother tongue neither makes nor breaks an English teacher. Because the ideal situation, the best of both worlds, for any language school, as well as for the students, is to have both NESTs and NNESTs.

However, the native speaker fallacy has created a number of challenges with which NNESTs must contend in the workplace and in their daily lives. Although the majority of English teachers in the world are not native speakers of English, NNESTs struggle for equal treatment in the ELT profession. They face a number of challenges, including those related to accent and credibility in the workplace. Overall, a lot more
research needs to be conducted in order to find out what students actually want from their teachers. Evidences show that students do not have clear preference either for NESTs or NNESTs.

**NNESTs in Great Advantages**

NNESTs have a great advantage. They are not only better in providing learner models but also can teach language-learning strategies more effectively. They utilize this proficiency to claim they are more sensitive to their students. They have amassed a wealth of knowledge and deeper understanding of the prevalent circumstances which have made them able to supply more information about the English language. The deeper insights to dig into what is easy and difficult in the learning process have also made them more responsive to the students’ needs. Despite all this, sometimes, NNESTs are in stress. Medgyes (1992) argues that “non-native speakers can never achieve a native speaker’s competence (cited in Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012, p. 2),” and their I ELT research findings are indeed full of challenges. However, non-native English speakers need not instantly worry; instead, they will be known for being ideal NNESTs. Medgyes (1994) defines an ideal NNEST as the one who has achieved near-native proficiency in English. Next, Medgyes has not talked about the parameters that can really assess the native speaker’s competence. Non-native speakers are no less competent than native speakers in their delivery strategies.

Moreover, the research findings suggest that NNESTs have, to some extent, a negative impression for all their language abilities compared to NESTs; however, their teaching changes the students’ attitude towards them. Ebata (2008), in his “Nonnativeness,” writes that NNESTs prove that they are capable of teaching as professionally as NESTs, and their non-nativeness becomes a nonfactor in a language class.

**Scenario of Non-native Speakers and English Language Learners**

The following facts present a rather remarkable scenario.

“English has become the second language of everybody...It’s gotten to the point where almost in any part of the world to be educated means to know English” (Mydans, 2007, Across Cultures, English is the Word, para. 14).

“The number of English language learners worldwide is up to 1.5 billion” (Knagg 2014, cited in Bentley, 2014, Billion English Learners Worldwide, para. 2).

“In 2015, out of the total 195 countries in the world, 67 nations have English as the primary language of ‘official status’. Plus, there are also 27 countries where English is spoken as a secondary ‘official’ language” (Shubnell 2017, June 2, Languages, para. 3).

“Non-native speakers of English now outnumber native speakers by a ratio of 3-1” (Crystal, 2003, cited in Power, Not the Queen’s English, 2005, para. 4).

We are closing in on three billion English speakers in the world, and the overwhelming majority of them are non-native speakers. The situation of growing number of non-native speakers is beyond the level of imagination. It is interesting to note that the number of non-native English
speakers nearly doubles the number of native English speakers, making it the world’s most learned and spoken foreign language (Ceo, 2016). It is the language of globalization, international business, politics and diplomacy. It is the language of computers and the Internet. It is everywhere. Johnson (2009, p. 131) writes that a billion are learning it, about a third of the world’s population are in some sense exposed to it, and by 2050, it is predicted half the world will be more or less proficient in it.

Will the native English speakers be able to handle these billions of learners of English who have come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds? The responsibility of NNESTs tomorrow cannot be imagined; they will be overloaded! Even ‘non-nativeness’ can be a subject worthy of study. Medgyes (2001, p. 441) rightly says, “The study of the NNEST remains overall a largely unexplored area in language education.” There are some thoughts and feelings about this potential subject to be explored and discussed consciously and with greater interest.

It’s an open subject, a new area that the whole world can concentrate their research on. Since there are millions of NNESTs in the world, an infinite amount of research can be carried out on these precious teachers and their professionalism!

**NNESTs Delivery**

NNESTs can relate to their students through their shared difficulties and insecurities. But still many of them face the insecurity of not being fluent enough to teach English. Therefore, it is suggested to genuinely study the following observations made on the teaching English methodology adapted by some Nepali speaking teachers of English in their classroom English practices.

**From Mother Tongue to Other Tongue?**

We are definitely moving from our mother tongue to the foreign tongue! During this process of transition, Nepali speaking teachers of English face numerous problems. It is found that many teachers in Nepal are still facing challenges in the lesson delivery process. Regarding this, Khati (2016) in a NELTA editorial writes, “Fresh university graduates who have successfully completed pre-service teacher education program have been unable to deliver English lesson really effectively though having authorized license to teach.” Now that the teacher is full-fledged with the theory and experiences, it is his/her primary responsibility to seriously deliver the content through language, the English language.

The English language teaching situation is just beyond our expectation and is pitiable. It is quite common that there is excessive use of the mother tongues such as Bhojpuri in Birgunj, and Maithili in Janakpur, along with Nepali throughout the educational institutions of the country. However, we will not find the Newari speaking teachers of English in the country, even in the Kathmandu valley, teaching English through Newari! Called upon for the reason for using mother tongues while teaching English, Nepali/Maithili/Bhojpuri speaking teachers of English simply use ‘the logic that the students’ foundation of English is very weak; they don’t understand English when they teach through English.
Now, the issue of whether or not to use the mother tongue (L1) in the English language (L2) classroom is complex. In his book *Teaching Monolingual Classes*, Atkinson (1993) talks about “a careful, limited use of L1” to help students get maximum benefit from activities which in other respects will be carried out in the target language.

A Nepali speaker of English should, however, think that his mother tongue and the target language are two different and significantly distinct languages. When you teach English through one of your mother tongues, you will be accomplishing your job only from your side. You should think over what the consequences would be on the other side!

**Shift from Syllable Timing Delivery to Stress Timing Delivery**

Nepali is a syllable-timed language whose syllables take approximately equal amounts of time to pronounce. In Nepali language (as in Hindi and French for example), the distance between one syllable and another is always equal. It sounds as though Nepali speakers of English are stressing *EVERY SYLLABLE EQUALLY*. Compared with English which is a heavily stress-timed language and where there is approximately the same amount of time between stressed syllables, Nepali learners often have problems recognising and then producing complicated features of English. In this regard, the meaning in the quote, “learners whose first language can be described as syllable-timed often have problems recognising and then producing features of English such as contractions, main and secondary stress, and elision,” is seriously worth keeping in mind (sites.google.com). In these unlikely situations between two languages, the teacher must pay attention to the intricacies of English rhythm and prosody; English is, after all, a most difficult language for non-native speakers of English, including Nepali native speakers.

Stress patterns and rhythm does not mean much in Nepali, as is the case in Indo-Aryan languages. There are some universal characteristics of the Indo-Aryan languages including Nepali, such as all of them have aspirated stops, both voiced and voiceless. However, Nepali speakers should not quit the fact that aspiration is phonemic in Nepali, cf. [pʰ], [tʰ], [kʰ] — phonetic in English and [ph], [th] and [kh], phonemic in Nepali.

Most people speak English without caring about stress, rhythm and intonation, yet their communication is very much appreciated unless it hinders in comprehending the message. In written English, these suprasegmental features do not pose any problem while shifting from syllable-timing delivery to stress-timing delivery, but it is most essential in spoken English. If we claim we are teachers of English, we must follow all the stress patterns and prosody which are prevalent in the English language. And this could be a most uncomfortable job for every Nepali learner of English! This also might be a hindrance in automaticity and in word recognition but increase fluency while speaking.

**Fluency Matters in English**

Strictly speaking “fluent” in relation to speech means only that it flows smoothly and easily. However, “fluent” is the highest level when describing someone’s English (English.stackexchange.com, 2017).

Fluency in a language means speaking easily, reasonably quickly and without
having to stop and pause a lot, but fluent in a language can take many years. Of course, non-native speakers also speak fluent English. Crystal (2006) clarifies this by saying, “Just look at the amount of non-native speakers who work at our English school in London, but speak fluent English” (How Many People in the World Speak English? para. 7).

Whatsoever, fluency is the beauty of communication in English. One example is “She spoke in beautiful English,” which means a very high standard, excellent English. Therefore, fluency matters in English. Fluency, an act of delivering information quickly but with expertise, requires ‘automaticity’, ‘prosody’ and ‘accuracy’ as the three essential components.

Non-native speakers of English, including Nepali learners of English, have problems in keeping up with fluency in speech. Therefore, you are as far as possible required to maintain the following components of fluency:

**Automaticity** might require practicing English a lot. Ford (n.d.) writes, “Automaticity is usually measured as reading rate or the number of words a student reads per minute (WPM). You can measure rate at the same time that you assess a student’s reading accuracy.”

**Prosody** is frequently heard in discussions of fluency. Prosody refers to the appropriate use of intonation and phrasing in reading. Ford (ibid) explains prosodic reading as “an act of paying attention to punctuation signs like commas and periods, assigning appropriate stress to individual words within a sentence, and raising or lowering voice intonation…”

**Accuracy** refers to the percentage of words a reader can read correctly in a given text. Measuring accuracy allows teachers to choose texts at an appropriate difficulty level for each student.

Overall, a fluent reader reads with accuracy, automaticity and prosody.

### Rules not Matching Speech

Nepali speakers of English have studied the prosody of English—rhythm, stress and intonation. Regarding this, there is a relationship between stress and vowel quality; where a syllable is unstressed, it receives a schwa vowel [Y] or sometimes one of the weak monophthongs /j/, or /u/ or very rarely some vowels other than [Y], [j] and [u]. Likewise, in rhythm, function words are pronounced quickly with a low pitch because in a connected speech they are considered less important. In intonation, one of the stressed syllables receives rising tone, not that in rising intonation you pronounce the final syllable in the sentence with rising tone. But in practice, they have been unable to match the rules learnt with their speech. For example, “Is it impor*‘tant?”

For example, one is reasonably sure that in the phrase, “I mean to say,” to *rhythmicise* it, one has to stress only the content words in it. But in speech, Nepali speakers make ‘I’ and ‘to’ strong as well, thereby resulting into [“aj ‘min *tu ‘sej] which implies the stress (word or sentence) rules not matching speech.

This must have been guided by the Nepali stress rules. Acharya (1991) writes, “.. the phonetic stress in Nepali words occurs on the word-initial syllable, if the syllables are equal weight, ... (p. 43).” For example, /
'ka:ka:/ [2-2] ‘uncle’. Moreover, Acharya (ibid, p. 46) writes, “Depending on the emphasis on a specific part of the message, the word initial syllable of any of the four words of the sentence /ma a:ja ghara ja:nnna/ ‘I do not go home today’ can be stressed.”

**Stress. ‘Syllable’: [ÉsjlYb(Y)l] not [Ésjl[bcEl] (notice while you make [-I-] and [-bcE-] louder, you are not stressing the first syllable.

**Intonation.** In spite of the primary stress (which) falls on [-ÈpT] and your pitch rises on it, you rather say [jmpT*Ètænt], with the strong vowel final [æ] thereby resulting into a syllable stressed. This is to say that your rules are not matching your speech again.

**Conclusion**

Non-native speakers of English, including Nepali learners are in fifty-fifty positions. *English* is the most highly commodified language at present and the *English* language teaching and testing industry is a multibillion-dollar global enterprise (Mathews-Aydinli (ed.), p. 54). Therefore, they need professionally and personally to prepare to perform the demanding task of educating others. They should seriously practice good models of pronunciation and correct language use. Their delivery should reveal significant implications for classroom teaching practice and teacher professional development. Most importantly, they should work for facilitating the network of NNESTs so that they can develop their communities. Moreover, they should keep on encouraging native English speakers to join the NNEST issues that affect everyone in the profession of teaching.

**References**


From mother tongue to other tongue (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/mother-tongue-other-tongue


Contributor

Laxmi Bahadur Maharjan, PhD, is a Professor in English education, Tribhuvan University. Dr. Maharjan, a leading phonetician, has taught in Tribhuvan University, including various colleges of Butwal, Dhankuta, Birgunj and Sanothimi, Bhaktapur for about four decades. His areas of focus include applied linguistics, phonetics and phonology, English language teaching methodology and educational research. He also authors Bed- and Med-level course books, university curricula and didactic materials. Moreover, he was one of the chapter reviewers of the book, “What is Next in Educational Research?” by Si Fan and Jill Fielding-Wells (University of Tasmania, Australia) (Eds.) in 2016. Dr. Maharjan is chiefly a teacher trainer. He is attached to NELTA, LSN and TESON.
Practical Pedagogic Ideas

Teaching Communication Skill: Socializing (Making small talk)

Sangita Sapkota

English in a real-life situation has become a milestone for the Nepali learners at different levels of their study. Making English contextual and communicative is an essential area to be worked on. This lesson focuses on socializing, where students work on making small talk in English in a new setting.

Proficiency Level: Upper-Intermediate

Age Group: Adults, Bachelor’s Level

Class Time: 2 hours

Objectives: This lesson seeks to: (1) make students aware of communication skills in their personal as well as professional life, (2) introduce students to different aspects of developing a conversation with people, starting a conversation, showing interest, keeping a conversation going on, and ending a conversation, (3) understand the language variation in the art of small talk. In the classroom, students read the given handouts, work on the context relating it to their real-life experience, make conversation with their friends, and finally perform a role-play.

Resources: DVD clips/ audio, hand outs

Procedures

1) Introduction (10 minutes). Ask students to introduce themselves and the first person they talked to in the orientation program from the class. Share an interesting moment from the orientation program during their talk, with each student coming out from his/her seat.

2) Class Discussion (20 minutes). Lead the class, giving reference to their introduction and their talk to their mate in the program. Ask the students to recall how they initiated their conversation with their best friend in the orientation program of their college. The teacher allows them to think and prepare the dialogue they liked, considering how they initiated it, how it went on, and how they ended it. They are asked to present their dialogue in front of class. (They might have talked in Nepali, but now they present themselves in English). The teacher makes note of the language exponents they use on the board, while the sharing of each pair is going on.
3) **Key Expressions** (30 minutes) As the teacher has taken note of the students’ language exponents used while having conversation in the orientation program, s/he, referring to those examples, adds some more exponents for starting the conversation: “I don’t think we have met...,” “I’m...” Gradually, the class prepares the possible list of language exponents for starting the conversation. Likewise, possible expressions of showing interest in the conversation — “Really?” “I see....” — are discussed. In the same manner, keeping the conversation going (“So......,” “I’ve heard ....,” “Is that true?”) and ending the conversation (“See you later....,” “It’s been nice talking to you”) are discussed. Finally, the classroom discusses the difference in our culture for making a conversation successful.

4) **Activity:** (20 minutes) Teacher projects some audio from the DVD-ROM at the back of the text book or from www.oxfordlearn.com/login and students discuss in the following questions:

**Conversation 1**

What does Harry say to start the conversation?

What phrases does he use to end the conversation?

**Conversation 2**

What does Paolo say to start the conversation?

How does Sonia respond?

**Conversation 3**

What two phrases show that the speakers are interested in what the other person has said?

**Conversation 4**

What phrases do Adirain and Adam use to greet each other?

How does Adirain show that she is listening?

What does she say to end the conversation?

**(Script Appendix 1)**

Likewise teacher projects youtube videos for starting the conversation, keeping a conversation going and ending the conversation. Students analyze the video’s conversation with classroom discussion.

1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9h4tbY4pnrI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9h4tbY4pnrI)

2. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uG2bBWpeHPM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uG2bBWpeHPM)

5) **Activity:** (10-20 minutes): On the basis of discussion and videos, students prepare a role play on the script of the previous set of conversations that they prepared in the discussion session. Now, they design the role-play, making their draft polished with discussed key expressions. Students can modify their draft if it missed English language expressions for successful conversation. After the completion of draft, they get ready for role-play in their same pair. Finally, students perform the role-play.

6) **The Art of Small Talk.** (15 minutes) teacher provides a hand-out containing a few tips for making small talk.
Students read it individually and select the five most useful according to their perception. Then, the randomly selected students share what they understood, which five they selected and why they selected them. (Duckworth, M. & Turner, R. (2012). *Business result*. New York: OUP)

**Conclusion (10 Minutes).** Allow time for a short oral presentation by students. They will summarize the class and what they learnt with a promise to apply them in their regular classroom conversation. Conclude with summarizing terms of politeness and appropriate language expressions for successful small talk in English that they will use in their professional life.

**Additional Information**

This lesson is more practical than of the providing theoretical aspects of English language.

**Contributor**

**Sangita Sapkota** is an M.Ed. ELT graduate from Kathmandu University School of Education. Ms. Sapkota has received Vice-Chancellor’s Medal (Gold Medal) for the same degree in 2017. She is involved in ELT in institutions in Kathmandu valley and in teacher training for ELT. She is an Executive member of NELTA.

**Appendix 1**

**Conversation 1**

**Harry** : Hello, I saw you sitting on my table at dinner but I didn’t have a chance to speak to you. I’m Harry.

**Alessandro** : Hi, I’m Alessandro.

**Harry** : Who did you come with? Is this your first company event?

**Alessandro** : Yes.

**Harry** : Oh, well, it looks very entertaining. I think there are some left at the information desk. Are you um, here with colleagues?

**Alessandro** : No.

**Harry** : Well, you will soon get to know people. So, um would you like another drink?

**Alessandro** : No. I’m fine, thanks.

**Harry** : Well, it’s been nice talking to you….erm….Alessandro. You don’t mind if I go and get myself a coffee? See you later.

**Conversation 2**

**Paolo** : Hi, I don’t think we have met. I’m Paolo from Napoli- I work for one of the company’s suppliers.

**Sonia** : Hi, nice to meet you. I’m Sonia ….from France

**Paolo** : Nice to meet you.

**Sonia** : So….. I’ve heard that Naples is becoming very popular for foreign investors- is that true?

**Paolo** : Well, Sonia, it’s interesting that you say that because…….

**References**

Paragraph Writing: A Process Based Model

Batuk Lal Tamang

Paragraph writing generally refers to developing a single idea on a given topic. I think teaching writing a paragraph is not a difficult task at basic and secondary levels (6-10 grades), as the students in Nepali context consider it as such. The skill used to write a paragraph could also be helpful even when one delivers speech on any of a number of topics. Writing a paragraph can be a joyful task if it follows a process-based model. This lesson focuses on teaching writing the paragraph while preparing teachers (pre-service) in post-secondary and bachelor’s level in the university to teach primarily at secondary level.

Proficiency Level: Intermediate

Age Group: Young/adults (10+2 and bachelor’s level)

Class Time: 90-100 minutes

Objectives

On the part of students, the activities aim: 1) to familiarise them with what a paragraph basically is in regard to the secondary-level curriculum, including a grid regarding paragraph writing, 2) to enable them to frame some topic sentences for paragraphs on several topics, 3) to help them learn how to support the topic sentences with other details, and 4) to write conclusions for a paragraph and reflect on the entire lesson.

Resources: handouts and worksheets

Procedure

1) What is a paragraph? (10 minutes)
   Distribute a paragraph (Nepali food: see activity-3) and ask the students in pairs to discuss what a paragraph is and elicit their opinions. Each pair shares with the whole group. Teacher enhances discussion on how the (Nepali food) paragraph begins, develops further and concludes.

2. Secondary level curriculum (5 minutes)
   Provide the information on what the focus is regarding paragraph writing at the secondary level. It includes objectives, major contents, teaching strategies and assessment process.

   In relation to English grid of SEE (secondary education examination), students are asked questions in two ways: Guided writing: Students are provided clues to writing a paragraph, which carries 5 marks and is limited to 75 to 100 words. Free writing: Students are assigned to write on a personal experience on a certain topic. No hints are provided; the paragraph
Nepalese Food

Although Nepal is a small country, it has a large variety in food. Most food we use contain high in carbohydrates and protein which are high calories giving. The common food is rice, lentil gravy called daal, and curry. Some people have dhindo and gundruk (fermented and dried vegetable). Pickle called achaar is another sharp tasty variety of food. Chapati is another famous variety in low land region of south which is known as the bread basket of the country. Meat like mutton, chicken and fish are special dish used with other dishes. Some meats are restricted in our country in particular community such as beef is prohibited in Hindu community and pork in Muslim community. These are the some examples of Nepalese foods which most people eat. Extracted from: (Tamang, 2017)

Discussion

Make a discussion on the following types of questions.

a) What is the title of the paragraph?

b) Which is the topic sentence in the paragraph? Is it the summary of the paragraph? Is this sentence related to the given title?

c) How many sentences are there in between the first and last sentences? Do these sentences support the topic sentence? Do the sentences create a flow?

d) What about the last sentence? Does this sentence conclude the idea of the topic?

4. Writing a paragraph: generating ideas (35 minutes)

Teacher prepares students to write on some topics, for example; Modern Girl, My School, The Dog and The Book.

I. Topic sentence (10 minutes)

Students are divided into four groups and are given the above-mentioned topics, one for each. Teacher tells them to work in their group to write a topic sentence for each title. Students present their topic sentences in the class. The teacher and other groups provide feedback.

Possible topic sentences on the given titles:

- Modern girl: Modern girls are aware of their career.
- My school: My school, Annapurna Secondary School, is a renowned school in Chitwan district.
- The dog: The dog is an obedient animal.
The book: A book is a major source of information and knowledge.

Discuss what a topic sentence is to the whole class.

The topic sentence:

- Topic sentence can also be called the thesis statement/sentence, central idea of the topic/paragraph, controlling idea of the paragraph, general statement of the title, pilot sentence, and key sentence.
- It is written in a single sentence.
- It is generally written at the beginning of the paragraph, but sometimes in the middle or at the end of the paragraph.
- This sentence draws the reader’s attention.

It controls or limits the area of explanation.

II. Supporting details (20 minutes)

Ask them to write supporting sentences for the topic sentence they have already written. Let each group present their supporting details in the class and have discussion over each presentation. Discuss how the topic sentence is elaborated and supported by other details.

Supporting details:

- Supporting details are written after the topic sentence to justify it.

To justify the topic sentence, information is provided through different ways such as evidences, illustrations, clarification, examples, reasons, specific data or facts, personal experience or past stories.

- It is an act of elaboration of the topic sentence
- To make the continuous flow of the ideas/sentences, use transition words, such as therefore, thus, hence, for example, and, for instance, to name, to illustrate, in other words, in particular, specifically, such as, at the same time, moreover, likewise, then, after, and so on.
- Maintaining coherence is an important part of writing supporting details.

III. Concluding sentence (5 minutes)

Teacher asks them to write a concluding sentence for what they have written. Students present their concluding sentences in the class and teacher provides feedback on them.

Concluding sentence:

- It is an ending sentence of the paragraph.
- It summarises the details.
- It is very close to the topic sentence in meaning.
3. **Editing and revision (10 minutes)**

This is the stage when a rough draft of a paragraph is written by each group. Students in a group work to edit the first draft; this includes proof reading for spelling, punctuation and grammatical correctness. Likewise, the teacher asks them to revise their paragraph writing in terms of appropriate topic sentence, its supporting ideas and conclusion. Further, while making revisions, students improve the coherence of the paragraph, including the use of connectives and transition words.

4. **Gallery walk (15 minutes)**

Each group pastes the final version of the paragraph on the wall. The teacher asks them to move around and read the paragraphs of each group. They can make comments on the paragraphs. Later, the teacher generates discussion with reference to the title, the three major parts of the paragraph and coherence.

5. **Further practice (15 minutes)**

The teacher provides students some topics for short paragraphs such as;

- A quarrel you have witnessed
- Exams
- Importance of education and
- Mt. Everest.

In next phase, the teacher presents them with different types of paragraphs apart from descriptive. They are narrative, argumentative and reflective ones (see Appendix 1) and discusses them in the classroom.

6. **Reflection**

In this phase, students will work on how paragraph writing could be better facilitated at secondary and basic levels using a process-based approach. The teacher can ask the following questions: Why is paragraph writing important? What does a paragraph mean? How is it written? What are the opportunities for students following process-based model?

**Additional information**

The lesson is an outcome of my experience of teaching and training in Nepal. It has focused on a teaching plan to write a paragraph at the secondary level and the upper grades of basic level. It has combined practical ideas and a structured lesson, using the process-based model of paragraph writing, with some theoretical ideas in paragraph writing as well for the students of pre-service teacher education programs in the university and post-secondary level.

**Reference**


**Contributor**

Batuk Lal Tamang is the head teacher of Annapurna Secondary School, Chitwan. He was the former chair of NELTA Chitwan branch and a teacher training of English at ETC Bharatpur. Mr. Tamang has been associated with ELT from school to university level and teacher training for one and a half decade in Nepal. He has received a
TEA (teaching excellent award) fellowship for the USA in 2017 spring.

Appendix 1: Sample paragraphs
(from Tamang, 2017)

a. Try to remember the most important event in your life and write it down in a paragraph. (Narrative)

It happened when I used to study at grade six. I was quite shy. I did not use to speak in front of the crowd. I felt difficult to speak formally in public. My school often conducted extracurricular activities in which my friends used to win and receive award in front of other students in the presence of teachers. I was quite fond of it. One day I decided to take part in story reciting competition. Though I was timid to speak formally, I was good at writing. I wrote a nice story and submitted to my class teacher. The program began. I felt very nervous. When the teacher called my name, I nearly fainted. How I completed the job I couldn’t remember all. But I received second prize. Since then I attended the program regularly. My first attempt made me courageous to do a good job.

b. Write a paragraph on ‘Importance of the wild animals’ in about 100 words. Use the clues given below: (Reflective)

Wild animals are vital part of ecosystem. A big portion of ecosystem is occupied with wild animals. Since mankind is a member of ecosystem, our life is directly connected to wildlife. Its absence on the earth causes bad influence to us. Killing its one species is like removing a brick from the wall which ultimately make the wall weak. To make the ecosystem strong, they must be saved from being disappeared. To save them we should preserve their living place, the forest. Killing them without caring must be checked. We must be aware that the wild animals are our co-lives.

c. Write a paragraph on ‘Television is boon for human being’ in about 100 words. Use the clues given below: (Argumentative)

(Advantages of TV, example of some useful TV channels and programs)

Invention of television is a boon for human being. Now we can’t even imagine the life without it. Now it has become an excellent source of information and knowledge. From the books we can get only visual information, but from the television we can get both audio and visual information which is more effective way of learning something. The Discovery and National Geography channels are the international educational channels that impart genuine knowledge and information. Other national and local channels broadcast useful and entertaining programs. The tele-serials and musical programs are the perfect entertaining programs that refresh our mind. Therefore, television is a source of information as well as a means for entertainment.
Teaching Poems: Exploring Life Skills

Sarita Dewan

“Poems offer a rich, varied repertoire and are a source of much enjoyment for teacher and learner alike.” (Joanne Collie & Stephen Slater, 1997)

As a high school teacher, I have always found teaching poems a source of developing language skills and different aspects too, including grammar, vocabulary and even communicative functions. Further, I have a feeling that teaching poems helps to develop creative, critical and analytical skills of students at this level.

Reading a poem is not to try to solve or explain what is written; rather it should be a process of demystification so that the students enjoy reading as well as are encouraged to write their own poems. I have often found the expressions of teenagers in the form of poems — their frustrations, emotions, empathy and inner feelings — to be one way of sharing unspoken words.

This lesson takes an example of a poem from a 10th grade class and focuses on how a lesson on teaching poetry can be taught effectively to enhance creative, critical and analytical skills, and to create awareness of literary devices at secondary and post-secondary levels. The lesson incorporates activities and possible strategies to boost higher levels (analysis, evaluation and creation) of thinking rather than “over emphasizing the language teaching aspects” (Ur, 1996).

Proficiency Level: Intermediate

Age Group: 14-18 years (secondary and post-secondary level in Nepal)

Class Time: 90-100 minutes

Objectives:

The activities presented below seek to 1) elicit preliminary ideas on the poem from students, 2) guess the mood (feeling) of the poet, 3) get the exposure of the contextual use of vocabulary, 4) learn the use of literary devices, 5) motivate students to interpret the poem on their level using critical and creative thinking, and 6) motivate students to write poems of their own.

Resources: DVD clips, You-tube clips, worksheets, posters, realia, audio, songs, strips of poems, word cards, and pictures.

(The poem: “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” by William Wordsworth: CDC class 10)
Procedure

1. **Pre-reading (10 minutes)**

The warm-up activity is to familiarize students with the topic and content of the poem. It further creates curiosity and motivation in students. The teacher starts with a discussion based on the theme of the poem and the poet’s life. Then, the teacher shows the pictures of daffodils because they are not common in Nepal. Play the audio/recitation of the poem. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnqCvDplPeA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnqCvDplPeA))

Discuss the ‘lazy time’ of students. (How they feel, what they usually do and so on.)

2. **While reading activity (50 minutes)**

This phase include rearranging the poems in strips, and dealing with vocabularies, new structures and literary devices. It further comprises the activities to enhance critical and analytical skills.

I. **Rearranging the poem in strips (10 minutes)**

For this activity teacher needs to prepare earlier:

- Type the poem.
- Make copies according to the number of groups required.
- Cut each line of the poem in strips (There will be 24 strips in I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud: CDC class X).

**In class:**

- The strips are given to each group, and the students rearrange the poem in order.
- They compare how they have arranged the given strips with the poem in the textbook.
- The students share their experience of performing the assigned task.
- The teacher writes the experience of the students on the board.

If the poem is longer it can be reduced to stanzas. The activity motivates students to read the poem. Well-prepared reading activities can help to create momentum among students, hence silent or reading aloud must be carried out with purpose. Though reading aloud is less clear and difficult to understand, it can motivate less proficient learners. The teacher can read aloud to the class the first time.

II. **Dealing with words and new structures (10 minutes)**

Students get the exposure of vocabulary by choosing best definitions for the words, finding synonyms and antonyms or guessing the meaning. These activities help students understand the content and create a real impact, so that they are able to infer the meaning of the poem.
Further, students analyse the words, choice of words and phrases used in the poem. The students need to be helped with unfamiliar words, phrases and ‘unusual’ syntactic features.

III. Literary elements and critical appreciation (15 minutes)

Discussion on the literary elements is necessary for deeper appreciation of the poem. In the poem “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” students will be exposed to literary devices like personification, metaphor, simile, the rhyming pattern of ABABCC, and the rhyming couplet in the last two lines of each stanza. The teacher has greater roles to describe and practise those features. Then, the teacher generates discussion to critically analyze the theme based on the culture, historical context, environment, message, and other aspects of the poem, particularly at post-secondary level.

IV. Critical and analytical thinking (15 minutes)

The teacher creates interaction among students with open-ended questions for comprehension and a quick summary of the poem, preferably in students’ own words. He/she asks them to speak out in favor of or against ideas generated by the poem (enhancing debate): nature is the source of happiness, for instance. It will encourage students to use critical thinking or analytical skills. They can compare and contrast stanzas with reference to the content, theme, language, use of vocabulary, rhythm, rhyme, character, and so on. For developing their analytical thinking, let the students appreciate the poem through group discussion and then present to the whole class. They can even compare it with other poems they have learnt before. Students can also give their feedback on each other’s presentations.

3. Post-read activities (15 minutes)

The teacher makes them recite the poem in rhythm together with him/her. Students can perform role play, mime or simulation later. They can act as the poet, cloud and daffodils, and again recite the poem in the class. Converting the poem into illustrations is another interesting activity. The students can draw pictures imagining how beautiful golden daffodils would look to the poet.

4. Class/home assignment (20 minutes)

The teacher inspires students to write short and simple poems of their own in groups, pairs and at an individual level. Review, edit and let them recite to the whole group. Encourage their work to be published in the class or wall magazine, school magazine, blogs created by students, daily newspapers, and online magazines.

Additional information

The above-mentioned activities are based on my own experience of previously working as a teacher and the
faculty head of Little Angels’ School, Lalitpur, and presentations I made in some NELTA branches across the country.

References


Contributor

Sarita Dewan works for NELTA in the capacity of training coordinator. Ms. Dewan is the former head of the English department in Little Angels’ School, Lalitpur. Ms. Dewan is also a member of Asian Teachers’ Creative Writing Group. She has presented papers at national and international forums.

Appendix 1

Types of poem

1. Shape poem: It is a poem that takes on the shape of the thing you’re writing, e.g. to write a poem about a flower, draw an outline of a flower and write inside the outline. It’s a simple way of creativity. Just pick and draw any object and write about it inside the diagram.

2. 5 Senses poetry: It is written using the five senses (see, hear, smell, feel and taste).

3. Acrostic poetry: It is a form of poetry where a word is chosen and written vertically; first letters of each line forms a word or a line.

4. Color poetry: It is formed using colours relating to different events and characters. (effective for metaphor/simile)

5. Alphabet poetry: Each line begins with the letters of alphabet.

6. Opposite words poetry: They can be written using opposite words in a line. For example; I am shy, you are friendly, You like cricket, I like football.

7. Cinquain poetry: It consists of five lines, with two syllables in the first and last line, four in the second, six in the third, and eight in the fourth line. Cinquains do not need to rhyme.

8. Limerick poetry: A limerick also has five lines. The last words of lines one, two and five rhyme. Similarly, the last words of lines three and four rhyme. A limerick has to have a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

9. Free Verse poetry: A Free Verse Poem does not follow any rules. The creation is completely in the hands of the poet. The use of literary devices like metaphor, simile, rhyming, syllable count, punctuation, number of lines, number of stanzas, and line formation can be done in order to convey the idea.
10. Rhyming Couplets: It consists of two lines of verse which rhyme and form a part of a poem.

11. Autobiographical poetry: It is written about oneself in a poetry form.

12. Haiku: It is a poem composed of three lines, and does not rhyme. The first line has five syllables, the second line has seven and the third and last line has another five. Traditionally, there is a seasonal reference included in the poem.

13. Alliteration poetry: It is poetry that has repetition of consonant sounds in words in the lines, e.g. Betty Butter, bought some butter, But the butter was bitter....

14. Creative copying: Students copy a poem changing the topic, theme or words in it. It is an interesting activity, but the students have to be made aware of plagiarism.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth

Appendix 2

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Teaching Three Forms of Adjectives

Game: Find Your Family

Jeevan Karki

Adjectives occupy an important space in Basic level school curriculum in Nepal. Teaching three forms of adjectives (base, comparative and superlatives) can be challenging for teachers and boring for students if an appropriate technique or activity is not used. Here is an interesting and fun game for teaching comparison adjectives to beginners.

Proficiency Level: Beginners

Age Group: 7-14 years (basic level in Nepal)

Class Time: 45-50 minutes

Objectives

This information gap activity enables students to:

- Appropriately group the three forms of adjectives together (base, comparatives and superlatives).
- Use and practise the different forms of adjectives.

Resources: A set of flash cards with comparison adjectives, masking tape/glue, blank chart paper, permanent markers etc.

Preparation: Write one adjective in one flash card from the set of adjectives given in the appendix: 1, Set A. You can prepare more or less, then list based on your number of students OR you can buy the adjective flash cards in the market.

Procedure

Introduction and presentation (8 minutes)

The teacher tells students that they are going to play an interesting game called “Find you family.” Then, s/he shows a small demonstration of the game. The teacher calls two volunteers in front of the class. Then s/he asks them to pick any flash card from the set of three cards (teacher holds three flash cards of big, bigger & biggest). Then, the teacher and students show their flash card to the class and asks the class to read each of them aloud.

Now the teacher sticks the three flash cards on the wall in a row and tells the students that big- bigger-biggest are the adjective family. He then discusses how the second and third adjectives are formed with the use of suffix ‘er’ and ‘est’. (Avoid the meta-language comparatives and superlatives here.)
**Instructions (4 minutes)**

Now the teachers tells them that they are going to play the game in the same way.

The teacher tells that each student has to choose one flash card then move around and find their three family members just like the demonstration. S/he reminds them they cannot show their card to one other. They can only talk to each other about what they have, e.g. I have small, what do you have? This also gives them enough chance to practice questioning and responding.

**Activities (Practice)**

**First Activity (8 minutes)**

- Now the teacher asks the students to come in front of the class or make a circle if possible.

- Then s/he asks each to pick one flash card and keep the card secretly in their pockets. (Make sure that number of students is equal to the number of cards. You also can participate if necessary.)

- S/he tells them to move around and find their three family members. S/he also tells them that they cannot show their card to others in the beginning, but they have to talk to each other to find out their family member. For example:

  A : I’ve small, what do you have?

  B : I’ve taller.

  A : Oh, sorry. (Then they move to others to find their family.)

-Once they find all their family members, the teacher asks each family to stand in a different group in a corner.

  Then the teacher notes the first, second and third team.

- When all families are formed, the teacher checks to ensure that they all are in the right place. If not, s/he can help them to find the right family. (Tell them to keep the flash card with them safely as they will need it later.)

- Then the teacher also can announce the first team to form the family correctly as the winner.

**Second Activity (10-20 minutes)**

- After that, the teacher sticks a chart paper on the wall having written “Adjective family” on the top.

- Now, s/he asks all of the students to stand in three rows: first, only the base words; second, the comparative words (‘-er’); and third, the superlative words (‘-est’). Then s/he asks each student from the base word group to stick their adjective flash cards on the chart paper vertically and go back to their line.

- Then, the teacher asks the comparative words group to stick their flash card in the row next to their family name/base word. Likewise, s/he asks the superlative words group to stick their words in the row of their family word.

- The teacher now can discuss a little bit about the degree of adjectives (base, comparative and superlative) if necessary.

- When they finish, the teacher asks them to form a circle.
If the teacher has time, it can also be done:

- Now the teacher asks each family to mime or act on their words while rest of the class guess their words. S/he can also give points to the participant giving the right set of adjectives (all three). Likewise, s/he calls all the family to mime or act out their words. (Demonstrate before they do it, e.g. if the words are tall, taller and tallest, you can mime measuring tallness. But you cannot talk.)

**Final Activity (Production): 5 minutes**

- Finally, the teacher asks them to go back and write as many adjective families as they can and give feedback.

**Evaluation (4-5 minutes)**

Review what has been discussed in the class. Give the base form of the adjectives and ask a few students to tell the other words in the family.

**Variation/Additional Information**

If the number of students is big, the teacher can skip part of the second activity. Likewise, based on the level of the students, the teacher can choose easy to hard sets of adjectives from the appendix 1. In the sets, ‘A’ is easy, while ‘C’ is hard.

**Contributor**

Jeevan Karki is a Teacher Educator (Literacy program) at Room to Read Nepal based in Tanahu district, western hills of Nepal. Mr. Karki has a wide range of experience working with English teachers across the country as a teacher trainer. He is a life member of NELTA and his research interests includes language policy and medium of instruction.

### Appendix 1

**Set: A**

Small- smaller- smallest; thin- thinner-thinnest; long- longer- longest; tall- taller-tallest; old- older- oldest; short- shorter-shortest; hot- hotter- hottest; happy- happier- happiest; etc.

**Set: B**

hot- hotter- hottest; happy- happier- happiest; difficult- more difficult- most difficult; beautiful-more beautiful- most beautiful; dangerous-more dangerous- most dangerous; important- more important-most important; useful-more useful- most useful; etc.

**Set: C**

Thin- thinner- thinnest; long- longer-longest; careful-more careful-most careful; important- more important-most important; good- better- best; bad- worse-worst; little- less- least; much-more-most; etc.
A Learner-Engaging Reading Lesson

Laxman Gnawali, PhD

Teaching reading skill in the EFL classroom in Nepal and other countries with similar contexts is often a teacher-dominant phenomenon. Allowing and facilitating learners to take charge of the interactions with the text cannot only make lessons more interesting but prepare the learners to be in a position to develop independent reading skills for real life situations. This lesson illustrates the teaching of reading in which learners are actively engaged in the whole process while the teacher facilitates the process.

**Proficiency Level:** Intermediate to Advanced

**Age Group:** Late-teens to Adults

**Class Time:** 90 minutes

**Objectives:** By the end of this lesson, students will have: 1. shared their personal opinions and experiences relating to socialization, 2. explored the text with a range of comprehension tasks, 3. completed tasks on grammar and vocabulary and participated in the group discussion, 4. engaged in different classroom dynamics for maximum interaction and sharing.

In the lesson, learners read the text, complete the tasks based on the text, and share their ideas relating it to their real-life experiences. They are engaged in an open discussion with their partners on upbringing and male-female behavior differences, and finally share their outcomes with the whole class.

**Resources:** Hand-outs and worksheets

**Procedure**

1) **Scene setting** (10 minutes)

Start by sharing that men and women behave in different ways with your own examples. Then, distribute the worksheet copies and ask students to read the questions in Task A and think of their own responses. Once the students indicate they are ready, ask the same questions aloud and hold a brief discussion based on their responses. Make sure that students are aware of the real-world context related to socialization before moving on.

2) **Pre-teach vocabulary** (10 minutes)

Divide students in pairs. Ask them to look at the words in Task B and discuss their meanings. Allow them to use mobile phones for looking up the
meaning of these words. Also, ask them to make sentences using these words. Once most pairs seem ready, hold a discussion on the meanings of each word, giving a sample sentence for each. If students have difficulties with particular words, you may need to provide the meanings. At the end, concept-check by asking questions like: How sturdy is this building? How permissive are your parents?

3) Extensive task (10 minutes)

After the scene setting and the discussion on the new vocabulary, students need to be led into the reading passage but cautiously, so an extensive task (a task which is obvious and easy to complete by reading along the lines) will be useful at this stage. Ask students to work in pairs and go through the first two paragraphs of the passage and answer the questions in Task C. Remember in this model of reading, you as a teacher are not expected to read and explain the passage for the students at all, unless the majority has a problem in understanding the text. Once the pairs are ready, lead a discussion on the answers with the whole class. Indicate which particular answer is correct and why.

4) Intensive tasks (20 + 10 + 15 mins)

a. Get students to work in pairs again and read the whole passage and do Task D 1. Once all pairs are ready, hold a brief discussion to decide which answers are appropriate and why. While the whole class discussion is going on, allow students to differ and let them justify their own answers. As above, you will provide the answers and explain the text if and only if most students do not seem to have understood the text.

b. Ask students to read the whole passage and find the original words from Paragraph 4 for the synonyms listed in Task D 2. Follow the same process of pair work, followed by a whole class discussion. Allow variations in the answer where appropriate. This type of discussion on the answers will be an opportunity for meaningful interactions for the students.

c. Ask students to work individually and list as many adjectives as they can from the passage. Each student compares his/her list with their neighbour’s and develops a common list. This will be followed by a whole class discussion. As the class of words can change depending upon where they occur, the students will differ in their opinion about which word is an adjective and which is not. Explain where there is a difference of opinion to establish what is correct.

5) Text related activity (15 mins)

Get students to work in pairs again and share their opinions with each other on the issue raised by the questions. Once all pairs report they are ready, get voluntary pairs to share what they have decided.

If the society did not put pressure of how either sex should behave, what would be the social scenario?
A note on the activity

This model of activity has been used in EFL teacher education programs in Nepal to help the trainees realize that a reading lesson is a reading opportunity for students, not for teachers. In order to develop confidence in their ability to read, students need to be given easier tasks (expensive tasks), which the weakest ones can complete before they engage in more in-depth ones (intensive tasks). Before pushing them to whole class discussion, students need to be allowed to work on the task in pairs and then in small groups. Following the principle of schema activation, a scene setting at the beginning prepares students to be aware of the theme and its connection to the real world. The text-related activity at the end allows students to share their overall understanding on the concept of the text without going back to the text.

Reference


Contributor

A/Professor, Laxman Gnawali, PhD, teaches in Kathmandu University, School of Education, Lalitpur. Dr. Gnawali is the senior-vice president of NELTA and former deputy editor-in-chief of Journal of NELTA. His research interests include language pedagogy, teacher professional development and professional networking.

Appendix 1

Learning to behave

How do we learn society’s standards about appropriate behavior for each sex? Socialization is the general term used to describe the process of learning social roles. Most differences between females and males are learned through family interactions, socialization in schools, and the mass media. (1)

Social learning theory holds that children are rewarded for conforming to their parents’ expectations and are punished for behavior that meets with disapproval. Thus, Johnny’s parents beam with pride when he shows prowess on the basketball court, but gasp with horror if he displays an interest in becoming a dancer. Johnny learns to act ‘like a boy’ in order to please his parents. (2)

The process of differential treatment of girls and boys begins the minute children are born. Adults describe infant girls as ‘delicate’, ‘sweet’, or ‘dainty’ and hold them more carefully. By contrast, boys are perceived as more active and are described as ‘bouncing’ ‘sturdy’ or ‘handsome’. As toddlers and preschoolers, children learn that baseball and trucks are for boys while dolls and ‘dressing up’ are for girls. (3)
A study by Judith G. Tudiver demonstrated the differential socialization of preschool age children. Both mothers and fathers tended to be permissive and supportive with daughters, but did not feel that daughters needed to achieve or perform. However, parents of sons stressed the importance of achievement and independence. Fathers, in particular, were extremely concerned about socializing sons into a rather rigid definition of the masculine role. Tudiver concludes that ‘a great deal of pressure’ is associated with the socialization of sons, which “probably reflects the high value associated with being male in our society”. (4)

Children and adolescents are influenced by the role models available in a society. If they see that most doctors, police officers, and U.S. Senators are male, while most nurses, secretaries, and early childhood teachers are female, they will begin to draw conclusions about which jobs are for them and which are not. ‘Real life’ role models affect children’s thinking; so, too, do the role models presented in literature (including comics and children’s books), film and television. (5)

(From Gardner, 2005)

Appendix 2

A. Read these questions and think of your own answers.

a. How did you know you should behave in a certain way because you are a boy or a girl?

b. Do you sometimes behave in a way that the society does not expect you to? How have people reacted to such behaviour?

B. Discuss the meanings of these words with your partner and make a sentence for each.

beam, prowess, dainty, sturdy, permissive, conform

C. Do the tasks as instructed.

1. Read the first two paragraphs and discuss possible answers with your partner.

   a. What are the sources of learning about male female differences?
   
   b. How do Johnny’s parents react when he shows interest in dancing?

2. Now read the passage again and answer these questions.
a. What different words do adults use to describe boys and girls?

b. What did Tudiver study show?

c. Who, boys or girls, are in a strong pressure to be what they are expected to be?

d. What is the author’s conclusion in the 5th paragraph?

3. These words are the synonyms of the words that appear in paragraph 4. Find the original words.

   survey, show, lenient, sympathetic, accomplish, self-determination, exceedingly, significance

4. Read the passage again and list as many adjectives as you can. Compare your list with your friend’s and develop a common list.

D. Discuss with your partner and share with the class.

   If the society did not put pressure of how either sex should behave, what would be the social scenario?
Book Reviews

Making and Using Machinima in the Language Classroom

Sagun Shrestha

Machinima is a short animated screencast video created in video games or multi-users virtual environments (MUVE) such as Second Life. “Machinima is simply a word composed from ‘machine’ and ‘cinema’, and it has become the collective name for films or videos made in virtual worlds and gaming environments,” the machinimators and the authors of the book, Rainbow and Schneider write. Carol Rainbow is a teacher and teacher trainer, and Christel Schneider is a teacher and founder as well as managing director of CSiTRAIN. The company focuses on language teacher development. The other scholars like Hancock and Ingram (2007), and Kirshner (2005) state that machinima is a neologism of ‘machine’, ‘animation’ and ‘cinema’ having a typo in its original form (at first, derived from ‘machine’ and ‘cinema’) and later the term ‘animation was integrated in it. In this book, Rainbow and Schneider have not dealt with the machinima created elsewhere, however, they have dealt amply with creating machinima in Second Life, a virtual environment/world developed by Linden Lab in 2003. They also claim that the techniques learnt in this book to create machinima can also be used to create machinima in other virtual worlds.

‘Making and using machinima in the language classroom’ has only a Kindle edition (digital version) which can be run in Kindle and other devices such as PC,
Mac, ipad, tab and smart phones through the Kindle application that can be downloaded for free of cost. This book is divided into two sections—the first section talks about a range of machinima that fall under several genres, albeit the list of genre the authors have listed in relation to machinima production does not seem exhaustive, and the second section deals with creating machinima in a virtual world, the challenges of creating machinima and more advanced machinima techniques. Both sections have case studies carried out by authors. The case studies in the first section give learners opportunities to see how machinima were used by authors for language teaching and learning, and they also provide some clues to the readers to use similar techniques in their teaching context. The other case studies in second section reveal how the authors got involved as machinimators. They provide details on different stages of making a video—such as getting an idea, writing a script, the machinima plan, filming, the editing process and post production. The appendices at the end comprise other useful materials for the readers thereby providing lesson plans, details about other virtual environments, downloadable resources and so on. In this sense, this book seems to be a complete package for the machinimators to create their own machinima for language teaching. It is a step-by-step guide for teachers, teacher trainers and other practitioners including students on creating and using machinima in language classrooms.

To involve students in creating machinima for language learning, which authors have mentioned in this book, might sound only ideal in the developing countries as students hardly have access to the resources needed to create machinima in these places. In the developing countries like Nepal, teachers with the support of other machinimators can produce machinima as contextualized video teaching materials and use them for effective language teaching and learning (Shrestha, 2017). In Nepal, teachers mostly have or can have access to all kinds of technology required to create machinima, such as a computer with large storage to run Second Life and to store video clips, screencast software and high speed internet vis-à-vis students’ accessibility to these resources. In such a case, at first, teachers can create machinima as a teaching material with the support from a wider community of practitioners or machinimators available in a virtual world like Second Life or through the available guidebooks on creating machinima; and once the teachers find that their schools have ample facilities to involve students in machinima creation or students are equipped with the technology required to create machinima, teachers can involve students in creating machinima as done by the authors. The goal of doing this will be to teach language through learners’ engagement.

A lot of YouTube links of the examples of machinima that fall under different genres such as idiom machinima, grammar machinima, role-play machinima and so on are presented in this book. Similarly, there are also other web links that connect to other resources such as machinima open studio project sim (MOSP), machinima blogs, etc. Thus, reading this book will be much exciting and we can have a lot of audio-visual experience connecting ourselves to a load of other useful resources if we can remain online. Next, there is also an option of using Aurasma (now HP Reveal, name got changed), the augmented reality program app that can scan the picture in the book if we are reading through e-reader or a printed form (the
The author of this review has not seen a printed copy yet. In this case, through HP Reveal app (formerly Aurasma), we can also have audio-visual experience even if we remain offline. Nevertheless, the readers might not be able to play all the videos through the HP Reveal app, and the readers in some cases might not be able to get the clear visuals of machinima due to the small size of the screen – provided they use the HP Reveal app in their cell phone.

Rainbow and Schneider in the preliminary section ‘Who this book is for’ state, “You do not have to have experience of Second Life® to make machinima though it would help.” Therefore, the readers who are still new to Second Life can create machinima with the support of this guidebook. Readers can enjoy their further journey as a machinimator which means they will be a film director, actor, script writer, editor and publisher all at the same time, aside having their professional role as a teacher or a teacher trainer or a language learner.

References


Sagun Shrestha is an MA graduate from the university of Warwick, Coventry UK. He obtained his degree in English Language Teaching (Specialism in ICT) as the Hornby Scholar 2016/17 from Nepal. His areas of interest include teacher professional development and ICT, affordances of ICT and materials development using technology.
Myths and Facts about Successful Learning

Madhu Neupane


There is no point in asking students to solve problems before they are taught how to solve them.

Right? Wrong! Say Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roedinger III, and Mark A. McDaniel, the authors of the book make it stick: The Science of Successful Learning. The book brings the nectar of research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience out of the lab, making it readily available for students, teachers, lifelong learners, and trainers. Divided into eight chapters, the book refutes intuition-based claims (some of them outlined at the beginning of this review) and presents research-based evidence about learning.

No one, I suppose, denies that “If you are good at learning, you have an advantage in life” (Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, 2014, p.2). However, according to the authors, how meaningful learning takes place is largely misunderstood. The first chapter (Learning is misunderstood) presents and refutes some commonly held intuition-based misunderstandings about learning. Some of those misunderstandings are

Repeated practice is a good learning strategy.

Creativity not knowledge is important.

We learn better when we practice and master one kind of problem before moving to next.

We learn better when the material is easier, well organized, and poses no difficulty.

Being able to read a text fluently is an indication of the mastery of the text.

We learn better when instruction matches our learning style.

Our level of intelligence is pre-determined and our ability to learn decreases with our age.
placing importance on massed practice or cramming (i.e. repeatedly reading a material until we feel like we have mastered it) and rereading. These strategies, according to authors, not only waste time but can also be counterproductive. Some good learning strategies that are elaborated in the following chapters are introduced briefly in the first chapter.

The second chapter (To learn, retrieve) emphasizes the importance of retrieval practice in learning. Reflection and testing are presented as useful retrieval tools. Personal reflection helps in making sense of what we have learnt, relating it to our experience, creating more connections with previous knowledge and experience, and making knowledge reflexive (i.e. readily and subconsciously available when required). In the same way, testing helps in learning by interrupting forgetting, that is, ‘the testing effect’. The authors caution that emphasis on creativity at the expense of knowledge is plainly wrong; knowledge is the foundation for creativity. Therefore, both knowledge and creativity need to be cultivated. Effortful retrieval through reflection and testing make learning meaningful and knowledge durable. Low-stake or no-stake tests can be used as tools for retrieval practice. As effortful retrieval is beneficial for learning, the tests that require more efforts are certainly beneficial; therefore, open-ended questions are better than closed-ended ones. However, any (self) test is better than no test at all.

Underscoring how practicing one kind of problem before moving to the next (i.e. blocked-practice) is a BAD LEARNING STRATEGY, the third chapter (Mix up your practice) presents spacing (i.e. leaving enough time for forgetting in between practices), interleaving (i.e. switching before each practice is complete), and varied practices (i.e. mixing different types exercises together instead blocked practice) as good learning strategies because they consolidate our long-term memory and develop discrimination skills.

The fourth chapter (Embrace difficulties) is the one that I like the most as it talks about developing positive attitude towards and valuing difficulties that arise during our learning. The difficulties that we can handle with significant efforts are desirable because they consolidate our memory, help us in building mental models of what we are learning by relating them to our personal experience and background knowledge, make us better understand the concepts, make learning more versatile and transferrable, and prime our brain for learning (priming effect). Similarly trying to solve problems before we are presented with solutions requires us to put in more effort, makes our brain active for learning, leads us to deep processing, and makes it easy for encoding the material when the answer is supplied. Making blunders (leaping-before-looking!), that is, not avoiding errors serves learning better! However, the book cautions that making blunders may not be a good strategy for learning in every situation (e.g. para-jumping!).

In the fifth chapter (Avoid illusions of knowing), the authors remind us that “[w]e
are all hardwired to make errors in judgement” (p. 104). However, the good news is that good judgement (i.e. metacognition) can be developed through giving more emphasis to slow and controlled thinking and relying less on our intuition. Our intuitive knowledge, which is subjective and biased, may give us an illusion of knowing something when in reality we do not know it. One such illusion is the feeling of knowing when we can read a text fluently. Sometimes we feel like “I knew this thing very well but could not write about it in an exam.” Has it ever happened to you? It has happened to me many times. The authors say that this is just the feeling of knowing or an illusion of knowing. The bad news is that those who are unskilled are unaware of what they do not know, tend to overestimate their performance, and attribute their failure to their inability rather than lack of effort. However, the good news is that calibration in judgement (i.e. match between prediction and reality) can be developed.

In the sixth chapter (Get beyond learning styles), the authors highlight that the claim that we learn better when instruction matches our learning style is NOT supported by research. Different styles of presentation may be suitable for different subject matters (e.g. visual style for geometry and explanation for poetry). Rather than learning styles, other differences like attitude, intelligence, level of language fluency, and reading ability do matter. However, we do not need to worry about our level of intelligence because it is dynamic (not fixed) and can be developed. How do we learn better going beyond learning styles? The authors suggest: be in charge of your own learning, embrace the notion of successful learning (strive for learning), adopt active learning strategies, distill the underlying principles, and build structures. Read the book for captivating and practical success stories.

In the seventh chapter (Increase your abilities), the authors make the evidence-based claim that our level of intelligence is NOT pre-determined and our ability to learn DOES NOT decrease with our age! Both intelligence and ability to learn can be increased through focus, self-discipline, effortful retrieval practices, and brain training activities. Equally important are growth mindset (Yes I can attitude) and priority to learning goals over performance goals (or grades). The brain retains its plasticity even in our fifties, sixties and more! No worries of being old, at least mentally. Experts are not born but made. Read the book to find your own role model. Sustained, solitary, and deliberate practice does pay off, though it is not enjoyable in the beginning.

So what? Who is this book for? For everyone, indeed. For students, for lifelong learners, for teachers, and for trainers. All of us belong to at least one of these categories. The last chapter (Make it stick) is full of tips (and real examples!) that are plausible, evidence-based, and practical. Students can boost their performance, and lifelong learners can benefit from good learning strategies (e.g. retrieval, spacing, interleaving, and generation, to name but four presented in the book). Teachers can best serve their students by making them
understand how learning takes place, warding off intuition-based misunderstandings about learning and creating conducive environments. Trainers (and conference organizers) should realize that trainings (and conferences, of course) structured around meals and Power Points without practice for retrieval, spacing, and interleaving do not make much sense as participants do not retain much of what they learn. Quizzes and follow-up email might be useful. What about including a quiz at the NELTA conference? I think it would be a cool idea.

What do I like most of this book? Almost everything, actually. I appreciate the positive tone it carries, evidence-based claims it makes, engaging real-life examples from different walks of life it presents (e.g., a neurosurgeon in an operation theater and a teacher in a class), plain language (to describe research studies) it uses, and, most of all, wider practical significance it has. Reading this book made me feel like the authors were talking to me. The takeaway at the end of each chapter (except chapters five and eight) that boils down everything discussed might be the useful place to start for readers who do not have enough time to read the whole book.

I strongly recommend this book for students, teachers, lifelong learners, and trainers as I think the book has the potential to change the course of their lives by making their learning stick, that is, solid and durable.

What could have been done better? Hmm. Nothing is perfect and this applies to this book as well. One of the quibbles is that the book seems to overemphasize the disadvantage of massed practice. Some examples and explanation could also have been shorter in the interest of readers.
Creative English Teachers can Make the World a Better Place

Motikala Subba Dewan


(Reviewer's note - Before I start, I would like to share what made me write this review. Prof. Alan Maley, a famous name in the field of creative writing, requested me in one of his emails whether it is possible to write and publish a review on the book, 'Integrating global issues in the creative English language classroom: With reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals', edited by Alan Maley and Nik Peachey in the journal of NELTA this year. I was in a dilemma; do I write or not? To write a review means to read a whole book first. In the capacity of the president, I was full of responsibilities with the preparation for the 23rd International Conference of NELTA (2018). In addition, it is a very special year as NELTA is celebrating its 25 years, the silver jubilee of NELTA. Finally, I responded to him positively and requested him to send me the book. Prof. Maley sent me a soft-copy of the book and suggested to get me a hard copy from the British Council (BC) Nepal, which I did. I would like to express sincere thanks to British Council for providing a copy of this book which is not available in the market, though it is available online. Then I tried my luck and started in a snail pace. I went through the book. I found it interesting and very useful for the teachers. Whatever I got insights from the book are sincerely presented below)

English Language Teaching (ELT) today is not just teaching the English language but opening a window to the world through which learners can see and learn many things which are not found in their ‘world’,
but which are essential for them to be successful in their life-struggle. The main aim of ELT is undoubtedly to enable learners to communicate with the English speaking people, but with the passing time, its functions have grown into many –from being able to communicate in English to knowing what’s happening in the world, from getting a job easily to develop critical thinking, from helping alleviate poverty to connect oneself with the World. It is difficult, almost impossible, to get recognition for one’s work, scientific or literary without English. The volume edited by Maley and Peachey is therefore a welcome addition to additional functions of ELT.


Each section of the book has a uniform design. They start with ‘Introduction’ which introduces the reader to the concept of the topic to be taught and other useful information about how to use the activities. Introduction is followed by Activities which are subdivided into aims, language focus, SDG focus (except the first one), creative focus, preparation, and procedure. Some of them have additional ideas such as materials or worksheet, resources and references. This uniformity in format is certainly very helpful to the teachers who wish to use the activities. Under the subheadings, creative focus, the level, the age of the learner and the estimated time for the activity are provided to help teachers. One very good thing about all these sections is that they are not theories and principles related stuffs, instead they are all practical activities which can be used in the classroom. They can easily be adopted and/ or adapted by the teachers to suit their contexts.

The volume is certainly good, however in countries like Nepal, teachers need to be made aware of why they should worry about these UNO SDGs issues rather than ‘stick to language teaching’ as they ‘can’t change the world’. In some cases, teachers are often limited with the syllabuses, textbooks and school administration. This is important to let the learners be aware of these important issues along with the prescribed curriculum. The volume maintains to promote creativity, critical thinking and leadership skills. Sometimes, the aims of the activities seem to be broad and their measurability can be questioned. In one section entitled ‘Sustainable Goal 2: End Hunger, Achieve Food Security...’ (page no 35) in Activity 5, last instruction goes like: Ask another teacher to...which confuses the readers if this is for teaching learners or training teachers. Some sections deal with downloading materials which may not be possible in the majority of schools in Nepal and may be many other parts of the world too. However, a creative teacher can think of the many other choices in their context.

All in all, the volume is worth-reading and useful (adopting/adapting) as all the
sections are practical to teachers to act. The editors, Alan Maley and Nik Peachey both are well-known names in the ELT community and their experiences are reflected on the pages of the volume. They contain practical activities with clear instructions followed by worksheets wherever necessary. At a personal level, I enjoyed the book which made me think that I am not only an English teacher to teach English language but a ‘teacher’ to try a bit to help this world a better place. I am sure, English teachers can make a difference once they go through this book and use it appropriately in their own context.

Motikala Subba Dewan is an A/Professor of English in Tribhuvan University Nepal. Ms. Dewan is the president of Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA), Central Committee Member of Tribhuvan University Teachers’ Association (TUTA), Educational/Legal Consultant of Cosmic Education Training and Research Academy (CETRA), Kathmandu. She is a practicing advocate in the Supreme Court of Nepal. She is a trainer, creative writer, translator, rapporteur and interpreter. She has participated and presented papers in many national and international seminars, workshops and conferences, and conducted trainings and workshops as a consultant in different parts of Nepal. She has published many research articles in different journals and magazines, and published books in both disciplines; English and Law.
Because this section is about ELT web pages and blogs, we would like to begin this segment with a quote, which reads “Computers will not replace teachers. However, teachers who use computers will replace teachers who don’t” (Ray Clifford, 2008). The quote hints at the importance of being digitally competent. There are multiple advantages of being technologically skilled and making use of digital tools in the classroom. The digital tools and repositories can contribute to all aspects of teaching English. Especially, in the Nepalese context, which is characterised to have a paucity of physical resources, the use of digital technologies can provide teachers with access to various kinds of teaching materials and resources. Hence, in this section, we have reviewed five very useful ELT websites that teachers of English can draw upon. Please note that the list is not in any order.

1. **British Council Teach/Learn English**

   One of the websites that we recommend teachers of English to see is the British Council teach/learn English. Due to space, we do not discuss the ‘learn English’ page here, but the ‘teach English’. The teach English webpage is dedicated to the teaching of English as a second/foreign language. When you visit the webpage, you can see that it has different sections. Some of these include teaching kids, teaching teens, teaching adults and teacher development. Under each section, you can find resources and teaching tools of your choice and needs.

   Because many of the materials are generic, so you may not find their direct relevance to the syllabus you follow. However, with smalls tweaks, you can use them in your classroom.

   The teacher development section has information that you can use for professional development. This section contains information related to multiple areas of teaching and teacher development. The resources on low-resource classrooms and teaching English radio can be of very good use. If you are looking for supplementary resources to teach listening to high school student, you should explore the teaching English radio. They have audio and sample exercises that you can take to your class and use. You might some of the listening text challenging. In such cases, you can download the transcripts and use them to follow.

   Likewise, the teaching speaking section has some great resources. For example, the section contains video lesson on how to teach speaking or how to train teachers to teach English followed by tasks. The videos contain classroom clips and advice from teacher trainers. Though the videos are based on lessons
in Thailand, the issues that are shown in the video are similar Nepalese classrooms. So, you can learn a lot from the resources on teaching speaking.

To access all of the resources on British Council Teach English, you need to have an account which you can create for free. All you need is your email id. We cannot stress enough that this is a very resourceful webpage if you are looking for authentic resources to teach English.

2. American English

The other recommended page for EFL teachers is American English. The website is managed by ‘The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State. The webpage has two main sections, viz. ‘resources’ and ‘English teaching forum’. The English teaching forum is a journal published and distributed by the U.S. Department, and it contains teaching tips submitted by classroom teachers and their success stories. Whereas, the ‘resources’ section has an array of useful resources that you can use in your pedagogical practices.

Of all the resources that you can find, we favour the resources on ‘reading’ because they have audio books of children’s classics like the ‘The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ and ‘The Gift of Magi and Other Stories’. Speaking from our experience, we can tell that these resources provide a breath of fresh air in the classroom and help to motivate your students. These audiobooks are divided into chapters, each of which has accompanying task sheets. Also, they have transcripts of the stories if you need them.

If you have a smartphone, you can download the audiobooks on your mobile phone and play them in the class with the help of a speaker. Similarly, the web page has resources and information on teaching other sections. You can use the information as reference materials and bring change in your pedagogy.

While the stories and eBooks may have no direct relevance, they are authentic sources to teaching English. They can be used as supplementary materials.

The web page also contains information on MOOCs and Webinar. If you are looking for opportunities for continuous professional development, these are some of the best sources to explore, specially, the ‘Shaping the way we teach’ webinars and the some of the MOOCs on teaching English. So, we recommend EFL teachers and trainers to explore this and see how these can contribute to their professional development.

3. EFL Magazine

Initiated to bring out the best content from the best EFL practitioners in the world, eflmagazine, as its name suggests, is a web-based magazine. It publishes around two articles every week and hosts a large amount of content for EFL teachers. Some of the useful items from the websites are ‘resources’, ‘ebooks’, ‘EFL directory’ and ‘Event calendar’. There is also a ‘jobs’ section if you are particularly interested to find jobs.

The resources section contains information pertaining to grammar, pronunciations, functions, speaking activities, vocabulary, business English, vocabulary and lessons plans. Additionally, it has contents related to
standardized English tests such as IELTS and TOEIC. Each of these sections has other materials, which include lesson plans and hyperlinks to audio files, video files, YouTube videos.

For example, if you clicked ‘resources’ and then the ‘adjective’ section under the ‘beginners’, which is the first tab on the right-hand side, it takes you to a list of resources that you could use to teach adjective. Each of the tabs listed on this page is hyperlinked to other sources on the web, which you may not be aware of. Click one of those hyperlinks, and you will find a list of useful ideas and classroom tips on teaching adjectives.

The other section is the EBooks. This tab contains hundreds of e-books that are useful to EFL/ESL teachers. While some of these books are freely available, others need to be purchased. For example, one of the ebooks, which is freely available, is called ‘Teach Reflect Develop: A month of Reflective Teaching Activities’. The books contain activities for teachers and teacher trainers on reflections. You can use this as a self-help book.

Likewise, there are other useful information, ideas and tips on this webpage. If you are interested in exploring and using the resources from web sources, this is a must visit website.

4. AzarGrammar.com

AzarGrammar is one of our favourite websites. Those teachers and teacher educators who have used the website have reported that they have found it very useful. The website is named after Betty Azar, who is the author of Azar Grammar Series, a very highly-rated resource book in teaching English.

The website contains segment such as classroom materials, my English Lab and Teacher’s guides. Due to space, we cannot discuss all the sections here so we concentrate only on the first section.

‘The classroom materials’ contains resources organized into three sections, beginning, intermediate and advanced. Each of these sections has teacher-created worksheets, expansion activities, resources on vocabulary, song lessons and PowerPoint Supplements that can be used in the classroom. Again, the resources are not designed for Nepalese context. Hence, it is up to your discretion when deciding on what to use. In some cases, you also need to make changes in the content and instructions to fit your needs. Nonetheless, the worksheets and teaching tips, which are usually contributed by classroom teachers, can be used successfully in the EFL classes.

The other useful resource available on Azar Grammar is the ‘Fun with Grammar’ book. The book, as the name suggests, contains fun activities (and the accompanying worksheets) on English grammar. The book covers most of the grammar areas that are taught in Nepalese high schools. Thus, the information in the book can help you diversify the teaching of grammar in your classroom.

If you are looking for teaching tips or resources on grammar and aspects of English language, AzarGrammar is a must visit the webpage.

5. iteslj.org

The other webpage to make to this list is iteslj.org, which is probably one of the first internet-based TESL journals. This
internet journal contains articles, research papers, lesson plans, classroom handouts, teaching ideas and hyperlinks.

Of all things available on the webpage, question segment can be a very useful for the teachers. The section consists of topics that an EFL teacher can assign to students to engage them in speaking activities. The questions are categorised under different headings. For example, the first heading under the speaking section is ‘Accidents at Home’. When you click on this section, it takes you to a page that contains a series of questions that you can ask your students to talk. Those questions can be used for pair work, group work or a whole class discussion in speaking lessons.

Likewise, the ‘links’ and the ‘activities for ESL students’ sections are useful for teachers. The links section helps you explore other web-based resources. If you visit this section, you can see a list of topics and areas in ESL teaching with hyperlinks. If you are looking for resources on teaching skills, you can visit each link and explore what is available.

Similarly, the activities for ESL students contains quizzes on grammar and vocabulary followed by puzzles and links to other useful websites. If you are looking for grammar quizzes that you can use in your classroom as starter activities or if you seeking something to help you review the lessons, then you can visit this section explore.

As stated at the outset of this section, this list is not comprehensive. There are hundreds of web pages that a teacher can visit and find useful information.

To end this section, we present below a short list of some other web pages and blogs that you may find interesting and resourceful.

6. eltblog.net (Jim Scrivener’s blog)
7. Larry Ferlazzo’s Websites of the Day
8. ELT Planning
9. ESLarticle.com
10. TEFLtastic
11. teflgeek.net
12. The Teacher James
13. Busy Teacher (busyteacher.org)
From the ELT World

1. KOTESOL National Conference 2018

Korea TESOL invites interested professionals to submit a proposal to present at the 2018 National Conference to be held at Kangnam University, Saturday May 12th 2018.

The theme of this year’s conference is Crossing Borders: Korean ELT in the Modern World. This is an opportunity for language teaching professionals from across Korea (and beyond) to consider the challenges we face in our various classroom contexts, and explore how we can rise to meet them. The Program Committee will consider any and all proposals that critically engage with this theme in such a way as to better inform teachers on either current thinking and research or best classroom practices. Though the theme is nominally Korea-centric, the committee heartily encourage colleagues from other nations to apply! There are many ‘shared borders’ and global issues that are not unique to the Korean context, and so welcome the valuable perspectives that international contributors bring with them.

Conference: 12 May 2018, Kangnam University, Yongin, South Korea

Abstract submission deadline: 16 March 2018

For more information, visit the following website

https://koreatesol.org/nc2018-CFP

2. The 18th Annual Conference of the Japan Second Language Association

Conference: 16 -17 June 2018, Gakushuin University, Japan

Abstract submission deadline: 28 February 2018 (11:59pm, JST)

Visit the following website for more information


3. Task-Based Learning and Teaching in Asia

The 2018 Task-Based Learning and Teaching in Asia Conference will be held on June 23-24. The aim of this international event is to enable language educators and researchers from across Asia to share ideas and discuss various aspects relating to the theory and/or practice of Task-based Learning and Teaching in Asia.

Conference: 12 May 2018, Kangnam University, Yongin, South Korea
5. The Singapore Education Technology Conference 2018

The Singapore Education Technology Conference 2018 (SETC 2018), jointly organized by East Asia Research and Siam University, will be held in the cosmopolitan city of Singapore.

SETC conference is an exclusive gathering for teacher educators and affiliated organizations of teacher educators in all disciplines who are interested in the creation and dissemination of knowledge about the use of technology in education.

This year’s sessions will look at the changes in the education sector brought by digital disruptions.

Conference: 30-31 August 2018, Holiday Inn Singapore Atrium, Singapore

Abstract submission deadline: 24 May 2018

Visit the following website for more information

https://setc.ear.com.sg/
research, policies and practices in the field of language and culture.

Abstracts are invited for individual (or co-authored) papers and workshops on theoretical or applied aspects of foreign language learning and teaching, including (but not limited to) teaching methodologies, developing (intercultural) communicative competence, assessing language and culture, teacher training and professional development, and language policies.

Dates: 26-27 October 2018, Faculty of Philosophy in Niš

Abstract submission deadline: 1 July 2018

Please visit the following website for further information:

https://tlcnis.weebly.com/

Use the following link to submit your proposal:

https://tlcnis.weebly.com/proposals.html

7. ICT for Language Learning International Conference

The 11th edition of the ICT for Language Learning International Conference promotes transnational cooperation and shares good practice in the field of the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to Language Learning and Teaching.

The ICT for Language Learning conference is also an excellent opportunity for the presentation of previous and current language learning projects and innovative initiatives.

Conference: 8 - 9 November 2018

Abstract submission deadline: 10 June 2018

Visit the following website for more information

https://conference.pixel-online.net/ICT4LL/index.php

8. III International Conference on Teaching Grammar

The conference considers all aspects of the linguistic and sociolinguistic competences and practices of bi-/ multilingual speakers who cross existing social and linguistic boundaries, adopting or adapting themselves to new and overlapping linguistic spaces.

Papers are invited in all areas of research in bi-/multilingualism, whether or not linked directly to the overarching conference theme, including, but not limited to, linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, clinical linguistics, education, and bi-/multilingual societies.

Submission is already open and will close on 15 August 2018. Presenters are requested to include their name, affiliation and email address in the submitted MS-Word documents. All proposals should be sent to: mamp.tallinn2018@gmail.com

Conference: 22-24 November 2018, Tallinn University, Estonia
Abstract submission deadline: 15 August 2018

Please visit the following website for more information

https://mamp18.wordpress.com/

Please visit following link for more information about the submission of proposal.

https://mamp18.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/

9. International Symposium on Bilingualism 12

The 12th annual International Symposium on Bilingualism (ISB12) will take place in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada from June 23 to June 28, 2019. Presentations related to all topics related to bilingualism will be welcome.

The theme of the conference is: The Next Generation, highlighting both the importance of the next generation in language maintenance and survival as well as the importance of the next generation of scholars in moving the field forward.

Papers can be presented in either English or French.

Symposium: 23 – 28 June 2019, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Abstract submission deadline: October 15, 2018

Visit the following website for more information

http://sites.psych.ualberta.ca/ISB12/