

BECOMING AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER IN NEPAL:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY

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AN ABSTRACT

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In this study, I have critically explored, reflected on, and (re)examined the journey of learning and teaching English as my lived experience. For this, I used autoethnography as a research methodology and writing of narratives as a method of inquiry under a multi-paradigmatic research design space. I have employed interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodernism as my main research paradigms. The study aimed at exploring my experiences as a learner and teacher of the English language, transforming myself through education. I have employed transformative and socio-cultural learning theories as my theoretical referents to explore my experiences in this study. The journey has covered my becoming of an English teacher with personal and professional transformation from an under-resourced rural environment to the present state.

In the initial stage my career, I would think that teaching English was all about transmitting knowledge to students. Similarly, as a learner, I would memorize teacher-given study materials to prove myself a good learner. However, my ways of being and becoming (ontology), knowing (epistemology), and valuing gradually transformed to critically viewing my learning and teaching of English and have become a teacher

with transformative sensibility through the exposure of my MPhil studies and ELT seminars, workshops, and training sessions.

This research was oriented to an inquiry into the problems of teacher-centered teaching due to under-resourced rural environments to seek possible ways of improving my pedagogical practices through motivation, extended exposure to ELT approaches and methods in higher studies, seminars, and training sessions envisioning holistic English language learning and teaching that is authentic and empowering.

In the process of my self-reflection, I explored that my professional identity as a teacher is an ongoing journey that gives me energy in my motivation towards teaching English. I realized that I am a product of inspiration both from my parents and teachers along with the confidence from my inner self. Seeing my English teachers enjoying more prosperous lives and having good social reputation made me realize the importance of English at my school then. This was also explored as one prominent reason driving me to become an English language teacher.

The findings show that examination grades and rural under-resourced contexts do not impede students from becoming transforming teachers. They can also develop themselves as transforming English teachers through motivation, self-initiation, and active involvement in organizations that promote training, seminars, and workshops. This profound synthesis of my experiences empowering myself helped to explore and transform my values, beliefs, and practices of becoming a teacher. I believe that my becoming a teacher has helped me promote my professional practices as an English language teacher with a passion for empowering my readers to reflect on their own personal and professional identities.

.....
Laxman Prasad Bhandari, Degree Candidate

September 23, 2022

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This M. Phil. in English Language Education dissertation entitled *Becoming an English Language Teacher in Nepal: An Autoethnographic Journey* was presented by Laxman Prasad Bhandari on September 23, 2022

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated-

To my family, whose perseverance might run in my veins, shaping my persona

To all teachers and students who aspire to make the world a better place with their
knowledge and educate young minds uncompromisingly.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BEd	Bachelor's in Education
CBI	Content-Based Instruction
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
GT	Grammar Translation
I Ed	Intermediate in Education
IATEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISTAR	International Society of Teachers and Researchers
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
MEd	Master of Education
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
NELTA	Nepal English Language Teachers' Association
NESP	Nepal Education
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages
TL	Transformative Learning
TU	Tribhuvan University

PROLOGUE

I had developed a latent desire to study English by listening to my father's words on his every visit to home from India where he served in the police department, "*If I had known English, I would have got a faster promotion and earn better salaries*", my mother's teaching me to recite the English letters, and my teachers' inspiration on the first day of my school. However, it was difficult for me to decide what to study and where to go for higher studies until I passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations in 1995.

As a 17-year teenage boy with unlimited expectations in life grown up in a rural village of Gulmi, my source of knowledge was only the seniors' wisdom. However, I came to understand now that there were limitations in their wisdom, too. In the course of getting such understanding for choosing a subject for my higher education, one of my teachers and distant relatives suggested that I take Nepali or Health and Physical Education instead of English. He further suggested me that only bright students go for English major in college. I still remember his words, "*You have a second decision or a *dwayam* result in SLC.*" Similarly, my senior college students also suggested me to study other easier (so-called) subjects instead of English when I went to college with an aim to pursue my degree in English education. Now, I realize my society perceived SLC¹ results that determined my '*dwayam*', not a student with '*abbal*' (first division) ability in studies.

Although I had got *dwayam* results in my teacher's terms, and he suggested me that I would not be successful in English, I must have been rebellious or that I made a forceful decision and went to Butwal to study English, i. e. to take the path of

¹ School Leaving Certificate

abba students by deciding to pursue higher studies in English education at a college.

Now I feel that I had taken an untrodden path in my academic journey like the speaker in the poem “The Road Not Taken” composed by Robert Frost:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
 And sorry I could not travel both
 And be one traveler, long I stood
 And looked down one as far as I could
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;
 Then took the other, as just as fair,
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
 Though as for that the passing there
 Had worn them really about the same,
 And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 I doubted if I should ever come back.
 I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
 I took the one less traveled by,
 And that has made all the difference.*

Now delving deep into my own memories, I ask: where would I have been if I had followed that trodden path my teacher and others had advised me to take? Would my life be different, better or worse, from what it is like now? Because I stepped up their suggestion to opt for an untrodden path of studying English in the university and becoming an English language teacher, that has made all the difference in my personal and professional lives as a transforming English language teacher.

CHAPTER I

SITUATING SELF IN THE RESEARCH

Among many facets of my life experiences, I concentrate on unpacking my lived experiences relating to my academic and professional lifeworlds both as an English language learner and teacher during my transformative journey as an English teacher in this research.

This introductory chapter is divided into three sections. I begin with my background sharing my view on my identity and how I developed my interest in learning English and becoming an English language teacher. Then I move to the rationale for carrying out this research, the problem statement, the research purpose, the research questions, and the delimitations of the study. In the final section of the chapter, I present my theoretical intent for conducting this research, where I discuss the transformative learning theory and the socio-cultural learning theory as referents to this study. And I wrap up this chapter with the organization of the research report, followed by the chapter essence.

Home: The Beginning of My Education

Children's behaviour pattern is determined by the culture where they grow up; the norms and values of their existing culture shape their mindset. Society and cultural heritage set the child's belief system and worldview until they develop their ability to create their virtues (Shrestha, 2020).

I was born in a Brahmin family in Dimapur City in India, and in 1983, I was brought to our ancestral home in a hilly village in Gulmi district of western Nepal when I was four years old. I experienced various circumstances relating to my family, school, and community throughout my educational journey. My parents often lived in

India, so I spent my early childhood with my grandmother in the village and went to a nearby school. Like other villagers, my grandmother did farming and household chores. I often walked around her and gradually learnt to help her with those chores. This enabled me to work in pairs and groups during my studies and with colleagues during teaching.

I would help my grandmother in any way I could. I helped my grandmother collect the grass she cut and brought with her a little of it to feed our cattle. I remember that I felt happier helping her in the field or with household chores than doing my studies in those initial days of schooling. Seeing me helping her, our neighbours would often remark, "*Tapain ko natile ta khubai sukha dela jasto chha ta, didi. Chhora manchhe bhaer pani gharko kaam sikdai chha.*" (Sister, your grandson seems to make you very happy. Even being a son, he is learning to do the household chores). Perhaps my involvement in those chores helped me develop a deep admiration for all types of occupations.

Although my grandmother was not educated according to the modern definition of education, she would inspire me by telling stories and keeping me on her side during her work at home. She would also ask me about the whole day's activities at school. My grandmother is no more now, but the remembrance of her made me write this poem while reflecting on the foundation of my educational journey.

*A grandmother is such a simple word,
that has always protected me,
and taught me right from wrong,
So loving and wonderful was my grandmother.*

*An enduring guide to mentor my every task
I learnt many things with her care,
with a dependable source of relieving
in times of trouble, safe and sound.*

*My grandmother always made me feel she belongs
for my problems, big and small.*

*I know that what I am today
relates to my grandmother and her care.*

*Her unconditional love made me
happy, secure, and, strong where my heart
is filled with love that enriched my life remarkable
in every way, the word "grandmother" means a lot to me.*

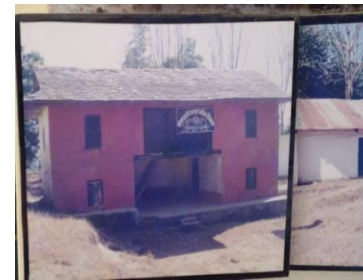
I acquired more opportunities to blend up with the communal activities when my mother joined us after returning from India. She would take me to the neighbourhood during social and cultural rituals, where I would spend hours listening to religious hymns and stories. There I would often wonder *if I could become such a guru* when I would observe adults giving respect and talking about the fame of the priest and discussing the success of the characters in his stories. Similarly, I enjoyed my mother and grandmothers telling me the stories of gods and goddesses we worshipped in our home and exciting fairy tales almost after every dinner. Fairy tales help students learn a language in a non-threatening way (Kholmurodova, 2021). I have now come to understand how happy they were telling me stories without getting irritated even when I often drew my concentration away. All learning transpires in the social milieu of dialogue (Sehlaoui, 2008). The exposure to those stories and social gatherings have helped me develop my sense of mutual respect between interlocutors in my pedagogical and social interactions even today.

Beginning of My Formal Education

My educational journey began at a rural community school in 1983 when my parents brought me to our ancestral home in a hilly village in the Gulmi district of Western Nepal from India. The inspiring family and helpful and well-connected community members in the village helped me learn social, cultural, and educational

values. At the same time, the homely school environment, large classrooms, a big playground, and supporting and encouraging teachers and classmates showcased my ability to work in teams, sing, dance and participate in extra-curricular activities organized at school and the community.

My conscious and unconscious participation in familial, academic, and social activities in my late childhood is the basis for my secondary and university level education. First, I would like to articulate that my perception of formal education concerning my real-life was developed from my experience. My grandmother and mother's fairy tales and stories of gods and goddesses and my mother's teaching of English letters before I went to school made me a curious learner. Abu Zahra and Farrah (2016) shared similar findings that short stories create a positive attitude in learners towards English language learning. Similarly, agreeing with Kinloch (2019), who shared that stories and storying play an important role in focusing on literacy teaching and teacher education, my beginning interest in learning the English language germinated when my father told me his officials' success stories on his every visit to the family on his vacation.



My grandmother's inspiration and teachers' encouragement became the foundation of my educational journey. Although my parents were not educated in the modern definition of education, they encouraged me to read and write. My grandmother would usually be the first to buy books and other stationeries for me when I was upgraded at school. And even during the kitchen works, she would ask me to sit with books. I cannot forget her often repeated words, "*Nati babu, ramrari padhnu parchahai, tyaspachhi dherai buddhi aauchha ani jivan sahaj hunchha.*" (Dear grandson, you need to study well so that you will get your wisdom, and your

life will be comfortable in the future). She often repeated those words referring to my teachers and other socially recognized people in the village in order to inspire me.

I enjoyed listening to folktales during my childhood. Listening to stories from my mother, grandmother, and teachers enlarged my horizon of knowledge enhancing creativity and logical sense in my educational journey. Memories inform, guide, motivate and inspire us (Pillemer, 2003). While listening to my parents' and others' discourses, I often asked myself: *Is the story real? How could the character of the story succeed? Did the character always work hard as my parents and seniors said? Can I do such a thing? How can I become the most successful character in those stories?* Those fairy tales and success stories of different people made me familiar with the complexities and successes of our lives helping me attribute logical reasoning while constructing meaning from my own lived experiences and practices of learning and teaching of English language.

On some Fridays, when one subject teacher remained on leave, the other would ask us to share our views and experiences about our families, neighbours, and relatives in class. This helped me bring my inner talents out in my later days of learning. This, I believe, helped to support my cognitive well-being. In addition, these activities instilled the feeling of cooperation, collaboration, and competition in me which I started realizing during my teaching practices. Perhaps this is why I developed a sense of participation in social activities like helping others personally and through organizations and academic activities through writing, speaking, and training others.

Beginning of my English Language Learning

I was first exposed to English letters from an early age at home by my mother. She had not attended formal school, but she learnt English letters while staying in

India when my father was working in the police department. She taught me to sing the English letters "A for Apple, B for Ball, C for Cat" at home, which helped me cope with classroom learning when I joined our village school in 1983. However, I started learning English as a subject in my school only at nine when I arrived in grade four in 1988. Here, I would like to present my first-day experience of learning English in my formal class in grade four.

It was the first Sunday in April; I was both excited and nervous. We studied only three subjects until we were in grade three, so I was excited that I was going to learn seven subjects, including English, from grade four. At the same time, I was nervous that I couldn't cover all seven subjects! In the first period, a new teacher (to me) entered the class with a few sticks of white chalk, a bamboo cane, and a book. He said to us, "Ketaketi ho, Mero nam Mohan ho. Ma timiharulai Angreji padauchhu. Aaja, ma timiharulai Angrejikkaa akshyarharu sikaachhu. Aa-aafno kalam ra kapi liyer tayaar hou hai ta.." (Hello children! My name is Mohan. I will teach you English. Today, I am going to teach you some English letters. Please be ready with your pencil and paper. First, let me write them on the blackboard, okay.). Responding to him, "Hunchha sir" (Okay, teacher), we started copying the letters. We chanted them after him until almost everyone in the class could write and recite them independently. In English and other subjects, we experienced a similar pedagogy that emphasized translation, memorization, recitation, and writing was used throughout my school education.

My English classes began with writing and memorizing the alphabet, then words and sentences, paragraphs and essays until I completed school, and paragraphs and essays until I completed school-level education. The entire class would go by

listening to the teacher's text translation and copying from the blackboard, which I now understood was not a practical language teaching method. Perhaps the lack of student-centered teaching and learning English courses at my school made me lose confidence in many university English classes (Ramsey, 2004). Similarly, Oxford (2001) states that the segregation of language skills practised in traditional English as a Second Language/ English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) language programs hinders students' interactional and linguistic competencies.

The translation was the prime method of teaching in my class. Translation as a method of disseminating knowledge in a foreign language or second language classes has been widely used for decades (Gutierrez, 2021). During the class,



teachers read the lessons in English and translated the texts into Nepali. During the class, we remained silent, and later by hook and crook, we had to memorize them if we wanted to escape punishment. However, I remember my teachers would praise us when we became successful in recalling the answers. Hence, memorizing the teacher-given answers and reciting them in class was supposed to be the best learning. As a young mind, I would have composed the following poem to represent those school's day learning:

*Even during sleep, I recalled
 The rules of tenses- present, past, and future
 To prove myself in the class, a better creature
 And to be liked by my classmates and the teacher!
 Active to passive with a suitable be verb and by
 Without missing the correct form of verb participle
 Reciting the rules of question tags
 Changing direct to indirect and vice versa*

*And asking friends to check if anything goes wrong!
 The understanding was far away for us
 Memorization and rote learning of those rules were focused
 To get 'a positive pat' from the teacher
 And passing the examinations approaching near.*

Thus, except in some cases in the previous classes, I completed SLC examinations through memorization and rote learning in 1995. I spent most of my study hours memorizing grammar rules such as tenses, voice, reported speech, paragraphs, essays, letters, etc., provided by my teachers.

I always enjoyed attending school because my teachers often praised my memorization skills. The teaching of discrete language skills allowed me to focus more intensive learning writing (Gautam, 2019) and grammar than listening, speaking, and reading. At this stage, I understood that passing examinations by learning by heart wasn't enough for language development. Rote learning leaves no place in developing students' critical or creative thinking skills (Ahmed, 2010). Now I have realized that despite giving less focus on enhancing students' meaning-making process through interaction and communication, memorization and rote learning helped me develop my linguistic competence. Mitchell and Martin (1997) shared a similar finding that teachers adopt the highly structured and controlled quality of observed lessons to sustain students' motivation and confidence.

Journey with the English Language: Motivation Matters

Getting an SLC degree was a matter of pride in my village, and I was one of those few candidates who passed the SLC examination in 1996. Most people would send their boys to the army or other jobs in India after completing grade ten. There were a few conscious and financially-abled parents/guardians who would send their children to college in the nearby cities, and I was one of those who got such an opportunity to pursue higher studies.

Since my school days, I have been interested in pursuing higher education in English because of my parents' regular inspiration and encouragement. On his visit home from India, my father always suggested that I study English to live an improved social and economic life. He would often suggest me, '*English bolna sakeko bhae, maile police ma chhitai promotion pauthe ra salary pani dherai pauthe, tyasaile chhora, timi le English padnu ni collegema*' (If I were able to speak English, I could get faster promotion and earn better in the police. So my son, you need to study English at college). Pandey (2021) shares a similar experience that "[e]ducation has an enormous effect in our lives; it does not only empower us financially, but also helps us by providing emotional, cultural, and social support" (p. xix). Besides, I was impressed with the prestige our English teachers would get in society. I remember that students stayed silent in English teachers' classes; villagers often talked about our English teachers, and they charged even more for extra coaching classes at school. In this regard, Saud (2020) explored English teachers enjoying a new form of cultural and linguistic capital for better opportunities and higher social life standards. Accordingly, as soon as I passed the SLC examination, I decided to go to Butwal with an intense desire to study English at college to become a successful person.

English Major: A Ghost!

Despite my strong interest in choosing English as a major subject at college, one of my school teachers said, "*Laxman, students who pass SLC from government schools of the village with low marks in English cannot study difficult subjects like English, you know.*" Believing that English is the most challenging subject, teachers and guardians compelled their children to spend longer time in it. Teachers and guardians made their children spend longer studying English texts. Timsina (2021) also shares that English is not an easy subject because the students' achievement

seems low at every study level compared to other subjects. Now, I realize that my teacher might not have wanted me to quit or fail the course because of the difficulty of the course. Students' high dropout is a stumbling block for the nation (Roy & Sharma, 2019), and lower academic achievement in school predicts students' drop out of university.

Although my teacher tried to convince me to choose other subjects rather than English as my major at college, my heart was compelling me to opt for English. However, I was compelled to join I. Ed. with Nepali and Health and Physical Education at Butwal Multiple Campus, Butwal, when two other senior students created fear of the difficulty in studying English at college and persuaded me not to choose it. One of the sophomore students helped me fill in the form, and the other advised me, saying, "*Bhai, English is really challenging at university. You're from a community school, and most students from these schools fail in English. So, you'd better get admission in Nepali.*"

Meanwhile, another added, "*Bhai, I haven't been able to pass the first-year English examination.*" Again, the senior students' utterances reminded me of my school teacher's advice to take other subjects rather than English if I wanted to get the degree. Although my *Brahma* did not want to, they convinced me to get admission to I. Ed. in Nepali, and Health and Physical Education. Cuff (2017) also shared a similar finding that peers, guardians, and teachers' perceptions of subject difficulty shape the advice they provide to their students.

English Major: Self-Starter

Joining I. Ed. with other subjects could not stop my intense desire to take English as my major. On the very first day in the second week of June 1996, a notice was announced in my class that our teacher of Health and Physical Education was on

sick leave for a few weeks. So, taking permission from the teacher, I attended a major English class right from the first day of my college. I started taking English classes regularly and decided to pursue English education even though I hadn't been admitted to it. The cooperative teacher and his classroom strategies revived my interest in studying and pursuing a university degree in major English. Here, I present a snapshot of my first-day experience in the major English class:

There were almost thirty-five students in the classroom. I was seated on the second last bench with some fear and hesitation. In his early forties, the English language teacher was tall, plain-looking, and sounded bold in his voice. He just introduced himself, "Students, my name is Ram Prasad Poudel. I want each student to pass the examination".

"Okay, now each of you will tell me your name and the place you come from. It needn't be long. We'll follow the lines up and down from the first desk to the last desk." The teacher said. Then we all said our names and the place of our origin. Every now and then, Poudel sir made a quick comment to our introduction, 'Yes,' 'thanks,' 'Great!' 'I like this place, and so on, but he mostly listened to each of us attentively.

Before I could remember what I said in my turn, the last student's turn was over. After a deep breath, the teacher told us to listen to him quietly and said, "So, let's see if I can remember each of your names right now." Each of us was silent, pin-drop silent! He recalled each student's name as he gazed fixedly at our faces one by one again, from the first student on the first bench to the last student on the last line, following a rhythmic pattern. We were amazed by his nearly perfect performance. He missed no more than three or four of our names. The whole class applauded with enthusiasm. Finally, he said all those

he recalled were proper nouns. I knew that I would like Poudel, sir. I was fascinated by his teaching style. I again felt I could build my career better if I graduated in English, so I decided to continue to study English classes.

Hence, I felt relief when I got a teacher who would motivate his students to learn the English language. His words in the first class of I. Ed. revived my intense desire to learn English. So, I started attending his classes regularly, talked to him even outside the class, and asked for his suggestions for passing the examinations. He often suggested that I take notes in class, write the meaning of unfamiliar words, and write things repeatedly to better my English level. He asked me what I had written that day during every visit with him. He persuaded me to write and memorize the things taught in class if I wanted to build my career in teaching or other important positions. Sherpa (2022) explored that students give more priority to English than other subjects like Nepali as their career-building subject at university. There wouldn't be any day I hadn't written and memorized at least a few unfamiliar words from the English textbook so that I could write the answers to his questions in class. My regular engagement with at least some sort of task helped me do the same in other subjects, as well as helping me to become familiar with other subject teachers.

Gradually I started gaining acknowledgement for my work in the class from my teachers and classmates. So, my confidence in getting a degree in English began to increase. Listening to my English teacher's accent, I often wondered if I could enter into teaching after completing my I. Ed. Hence, as soon as I took my I. Ed. Examinations in 1997, I wandered through private schools inquiring if I could get a teaching job. Eventually, after a week's visit to more than ten schools, I started teaching the subjects of English and geography on May 19, 1998. I experienced tough times adapting to the English medium instruction at school, but I was happy to have

become an English teacher. Being an English teacher gave me a sense of accomplishment that both my family and teachers felt proud of me. And even my teachers at college changed their perceptions to see me that they expected better answers in their classes. This added more responsibilities that I struggled with even better to succeed.

During the initial days of my teaching career, I experienced quite difficult times making myself habituated to English medium classes. Explaining the texts in English was a real challenge because I had only learnt to study through translation and memorization of the texts at my school and in the classes for my bachelor's degree. In his study, Assalahi (2013) found that Arabian teachers translate English texts into their students' mother tongue to simplify the grammar rules. Since everyone had to use only English within the school premises, there was no teacher who hadn't been paid the penalty of five rupees every time for breaching the rule of English use at my school. Private schools apply strict disciplinary and curative measures for developing speaking skills in students to meet the demands of their parents, who expect their children to converse in English (Pandey, 2020). This made me speak less for fear of being fined. Now, I realize that being more conscious of the use of English might have taken me a long time to achieve fluency in English use.

I could not use my full vigour in learning the English language and developing my pedagogical skills during my master's degree in English education for two years after I completed my bachelor's degree in 2001. The effects of Meningitis that I had suffered from during my bachelor's studies made me physically feeble to attend classes and concentrate on my studies. Hence, I completed my Master of Education (M. Ed.) in English in 2006. However, I managed to continue my career as an English teacher in Kathmandu after I completed my bachelor-level studies in Butwal. In

developing my career as an English language teacher, I enjoyed attending various English language teaching (ELT) conferences organized by Nepali English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA).

My first participation in the NELTA mini-conference on different issues in ELT in January 2008 and other such conferences, training sessions, and webinars organized by various institutions changed my perceptions toward teaching English and classroom pedagogies. I was interested in learning about learner-centeredness and student engagement, among other important ELT issues. For Israel (2009), learner-centered approaches are geared towards keeping learners in the centre and motivating their engagement in learning tasks. My teaching experiences of English at school and college and participation in ELT conferences, training sessions, and webinars encouraged me to learn more about my students' behaviour and deal with them, keeping them at center. Hence, my exposure as a student and a teacher of English at different schools helped me improve my English language competence, gradually transforming me into a more learner-centered facilitator than a teacher-centered traditional teacher.

At this stage, being able to change my students' English language skills through their engagement in different learning activities and meaning-making processes, I have started moving towards a transformative teaching journey. At this stage, I wonder how a person like me grew up in a rural village, educated through translation and rote-learning methods and discouraged from choosing an English major at college, transformed into a facilitator and inspiring teacher of English in the urban area. Realizing the financial, emotional, cultural, and social effects of education on my life (Pandey, 2021) and being curious to explore my educational and professional journey as an English language teacher, I decided to conduct this study

My lived experiences since childhood helped me shape my educational journey later. My "painful and gainful lived experiences" (Luitel & Dahal, 2021, p.1) with family, community, and school have significantly shaped my personality in my educational and professional life. This first encouraged me to learn about others; however, on further thought, I realized that I would critically examine my own experiences within my broader cultural contexts. As a result, I discuss those experiences both as an English language learner and teacher in the study, putting myself at the center of the course of becoming a transformative English teacher. In the following sections, I present my transformation in raising consciousness about English language learning and teaching.

Raised Consciousness

My involvement in studies both as a university student and a schoolteacher made me learn English not only to pass the examinations but also to be able to interact and make meaning of the contexts I face. The hardworking environment in the private school where I taught for three years during my bachelor's degree helped me prepare for my college courses. Gradually, teachers and fellow students started recognizing me as a studious student because I could memorize and recall the lessons in the class and interact with teachers to some extent in the class at my bachelor's level.

Arriving at this stage of inquiry, I reflect on how I had been regarded as a studious student if I hadn't been able to remember those grammar rules and texts in English classes. Would I have been able to ask questions and/or interact if I hadn't started teaching at a private school? Had I been able to learn English if I hadn't been encouraged by my parents and teachers? Now, I realize that our community schools could not recognize the learners' hidden talents but simply focus on the examination results. Instead, the school system focused on imposing bookish knowledge on the

students just to prepare them to get pass marks in the examinations that would be taken at the end of the academic sessions. I see the transmissionist approach to teaching still guides our school system, i. e. teacher-centered conventional pedagogy (Pampaka & Williams, 2016), where teachers demand their students to read, repeat, and recall the study materials from their course books only preparing them to pass the examinations.

Another incident I encountered just after passing the SLC examinations made me critically evaluate the socio-cultural influence on education. Since the medium of instruction was solely our mother tongue, i. e. in community schools, English was considered the most difficult in Nepali in community schools English was considered the most difficult subject because it is taught as a formal language rather than a living language in Nepal (Gnawali, 2018). I remember our English teachers at school saying, *Students, you know most students fail the SLC examinations because of English. So, you must memorize everything if you want to pass the exam.* So, getting passing marks in English examinations was considered the most challenging task for students.

Gautam (2018) shares that only the students, not the teachers, are blamed for the failure of English examinations; however, Gnawali (2018) reports teachers' under-performance is often ascribed to their students' failures in English. I struggled to memorize the study materials, even without understanding, just to pass the examinations. Although I passed the examinations, I always feared committing errors in the use of the English language. Thus, I now critically question myself, why can't I excel in English learning? Is learning English difficult, as my teachers often tell us? How can I improve my English and prove that students from Nepali medium community schools also do well in English? Hence, this made me think about the purpose of education- is it just for passing examinations or learning achievement?

Considering the above questions, I recalled my performance in English at school. I often worked hard to mug up answers provided by the teachers in each class and passed the examinations with considerable grades, so the teachers would appreciate my performance. However, the societal perceptions towards community school graduates in choosing an English major and the difficulties I faced in adapting to the English environment at the private school teaching made me reconsider my own performance. Hence, I consider these incidents as important self-awakening moments in my life. I chose English as my major in college education and started concentrating on all language skills rather than just mugging up the study materials to pass the examinations. I started taking English as a language to learn rather than only a subject to pass the examinations. I realized that learning and teaching English covers many of the desired teacher competencies, unfolding skills by assessing learners, individualizing instruction, and respecting diversity (Fillmore & Snow (2000). Gradually, the English language became a part of my life that has helped me survive and connect to the wider world.

An Epiphany on Getting a Job

As a teacher, I find myself reflecting on my earlier experiences. Each student I have taught in my life has been significant to me. However, of all my years of teaching, I remember one of the classes I taught when I had just come to Kathmandu for my master's degree in July 2001, most clearly. Upon completing my bachelor's degree in English language education and a two-day teacher training organized by NELTA, my first ever teacher training, I was full of motivation to teach at a school in the capital city.

After my inquiry and submission of a job application letter at a lower secondary school in Kathmandu, I was assigned to teach in class seven. About thirty

students formed a texture of different castes and ethnic groups. Before I was sent to the class, the school principal said, “*Sir, our students are brilliant, and you need to satisfy them to be selected as a teacher.*” His words were like a splash of cold water on my face (Kindle, 2009), and yet I assured him that I would do my best to satisfy them. With a smile, he asked, “*Would you like to go for an observation class today or tomorrow?*” And I immediately replied, “*Sir, today!*” He handed me a book, 'Gul Mohar Graded English Course for Nepal', asked me to prepare the lesson 'The Clever Shepherd' for about an hour, and sent me to the classroom at 12.30 pm.

After a cordial exchange of our greetings, I wrote the lesson 'The Clever Shepherd' on the whiteboard. First, I asked the students to write unfamiliar words from their textbooks, and I dictated their meanings in the first ten minutes. The text was a short play about an unpopular king John who did not want any of his citizens to prosper better than him in England. Like in the previous school in Butwal, I read the lesson at an average speed and then explained it using familiar words. The students listened to me quietly until I asked them to speak. Finally, I dictated a few questions and their answers, which they happily copied into their notebooks. I told them to read the same at home. The bell rang and my period in the class was over.

In the evening, I got a call from the principal. “*Laxman, sir, you're selected as our English teacher. Please come to school at 9.45 am from tomorrow.*” My happiness had no boundaries! I got a job in Kathmandu on the first attempt! This job was one of the milestones to help me continue my master's level education and develop myself as an English language teacher. Despite the struggles, being admired as an English teacher created a wow moment for me.

Exploration of My Research Agenda

On the first day of my MPhil class, the professor asked each of us, the students in the class, to write a few paragraphs about the topic of our interest. Unlike other friends who immediately started writing, I could not select a research topic that day. Although I had studied a few books on research methodology, I had not conducted any research before. When I showed my interest in the issues like teacher development, task-based language teaching, collaborative learning, and so on with the professor the next day, he suggested:

Mr. Bhandari, don't worry about your research agenda. You will get it well in a few days as you continue studying different research methodologies. But for now, you can take any issue, like task-based language teaching, as you talked about, and go on rethinking it. If so, think about who you are, how you were taught English as a student, and how you have been teaching English. What are your experiences as a student and as a teacher? How was the classroom context when you were a student? And how were/are the socio-cultural and economic contexts? If you sit alone and think about it, these issues may represent the context of your research.

As I continued taking research classes and reading research papers and books on task-based language teaching, I started getting better concepts for my research agenda. Similarly, I read dissertations and books on qualitative research through internet sources and the KUSOED library to better understand my research area. Likewise, other professors were always there to help me with suggestions or needed study materials. I often consulted them. In addition to our regular classes, other guest professors also gave us some classes on Autoethnography as a research method. During my class in Autoethnography, I felt as if I was sucked deep into the memories

of my own life when the professor discussed how an autoethnographic researcher could delve deep into their painful and gainful lived experiences (Luitel & Dahal, 2021) to connect them to the broader social milieu. I believe my desire to explore my lived experiences germinated in this class.

However, with interest in making things easier, for the time being, I chose my research issue entitled ‘Task-Based Language Teaching.’ Still, as I kept studying others’ research works in the second semester, my professors advised me to modify it as ‘Teaching Writing Through Task-Based Language Teaching’, and many times I went on modifying the proposal. Although I was more interested in exploring my own lived experiences as a student, a teacher who always focused on giving lectures and compelled students to memorize the texts, and then as a facilitator creating a student-centered class, I chose phenomenology as my research method. I worked out a lot with the topic when my professor guided me to give a shape of the research proposal and helped me defend it. After I defended the proposal successfully, I again pondered my research proposal, the methodology I used, and the research participants. I decided that I could explore my own lived experiences more than that of other teachers. Eventually, after consulting with my supervisor about my desire to shift to autoethnography from phenomenology, I moved ahead, exploring my own lived experiences as an English language learner and teacher in the course of becoming a transformative English educator.

The Rationale of My Study

Learning the English language and becoming an English teacher is a widely discussed phenomenon. It was perhaps why I developed my intense interest in studying English and becoming a teacher. I tried to explore studies on this topic by Luitel (2009), Manandhar (2021), Shrestha (2018), Pandey (2021), Gautam (2018),

Yadav (2021), and others; however, I found very little literature on becoming a transforming English teacher similar to my contexts through the autoethnographic lens. Pandey (2021) asserts how combinations of his experience of social, educational, historical, and political influences illuminated his ways of seeing the life world of an English teacher. Similarly, Gautam (2018) excavated his teacher education journey through reflective experiences by unpacking the transformational stages of his professional journey as an English language teacher educator. Researching and reflecting upon various issues among ELT as I belong to an established English language environment, I question myself am I taking my experiences for granted?' Hence, I turn back and delve deep into my throbbing and rewarding experiences. I have carried out this research with three rationales: splitting self, demotivated versus motivated self, and transformative self.

Since I became aware of pedagogical advancements, I have read and heard student-centeredness discourses. In line with Povova et al. (2021), I experienced most teachers lacking effective skills to teach students, although SEC (2021) emphasize incorporating recent trends and contemporary issues in English language learning and teaching. Although education experts give stress developing students' meaningful communication skills, students are made to be silent listeners and memorizers of the texts for their examinations. Students expect the lesson content to be explained in Nepali because they lack their class level of proficiency in English (Gnawali, 2018). In most community schools like the one where I came from, translation of the texts by the teacher and memorization of those texts by the students was/is only the method of teaching English.

To become a qualified secondary-level English language teacher, one must have a master's degree in English language education (SSRP, 2009). However, in

practice, institutional schools prioritize candidates from an English institutional background. In this context, I was an exception as I belonged to a community school/college graduate and have taught in established institutional schools and colleges. This made me question my splitting self-based on my experiences and look for the possibilities for transformation. Hence, it enabled me to explore my experiences of becoming an English language teacher.

Despite my interest and my family's support, I was discouraged by my school teacher and senior college students from choosing English as my major subject college. However, I have been able to make a distinct way out with my English language through hard work by the time I arrived at this stage. Thus, my journey from a village boy with *Dwayam* quality results to a transforming English language teacher inspired me to explore how my socio-cultural forces helped me grow into a transforming English language teacher. Hence, I have tried to give meaning to the pains and gains I experienced during my academic and professional journey. I grew up academically in a rural, under-resourced environment (Gnawali, 2018).

I believe my experience would be a signifier (Chandler, 1994) to other teachers, especially to those who come from and wish to come from rural and under-resourced environments like mine. Hence, I believe my life stories give a new revelation that people can succeed through struggle.

Pursuing university degrees and continuing the teaching profession simultaneously with my involvement in teacher's professional development organizations, offered me opportunities to improve my English language and develop pedagogical skills. Rahman (2021) shares that professional development organizations help teachers build network initiatives for the best sharing practices they resort to. I attended training sessions, workshops, conferences, and webinars as a

listener, then a rapporteur, and then a presenter. Arriving at MPhil studies, being in the teaching profession and being a member of different English teachers' associations like NELTA and IATEFL, and knowing changing trends in ELT practices helped me change my perception towards being an English teacher and my pedagogical practices.

Although, at some point in my more than two decades of teaching journey, I was not an exception to thinking about shifting the profession, I believe strong willpower held me in it. Even though I belonged to a graduate community-based schooling, a strong zeal for struggle helped me reach this satisfying stage. Hence, I would like to define my present and future in becoming an English language teacher by relating to my past and giving this message to others who come to this profession.

Thus, the documentation of stories of learning and unlearning of my becoming an English language teacher will be a milestone for transforming the teaching-learning practices of teachers from a similar background to mine. This study helps to change the perception of society that not only high-achievers but also average or low achievers at school can become contributing English teachers if they get a congenial learning environment in their further studies and ultimately help to contribute to the ELT community. This study also leaves a path for further research on different issues of knowing, being, and becoming an English language teacher, as only research cannot cover the entire area of becoming an English language teacher.

Statement of the Problem

My choice to become an English language teacher brought a paradigmatic shift in my personal and professional life. Only the students obtaining a higher percentage in SLC were suggested to study English major at college. Still, despite my Dwayam results in English in the SLC examinations, I chose this subject and

succeeded in becoming an English teacher. Similarly, schools, specifically private and institutional schools, prioritize candidates educated through EMI while appointing English teachers. Further, from my own experience, I learned that becoming an English teacher requires academic excellence in education both at school and in higher studies.

However, reflecting on my experiences as a student and an English language teacher made me critical of our teaching-learning practices. There are discussions and discourses on teaching English to develop students' effective communicative and interpersonal skills (NESA, 2021) by incorporating recent trends and contemporary issues in the field of language teaching and learning, but the student learning outcomes are not satisfactory. The primary teaching method is still based on memorization, and rote learning just to pass the examinations administered at the end of the academic sessions. In this regard, Awasthi (2007) states most teachers are still using the traditional Grammar Translation (GT) method. NESP (2021) also emphasizes the involvement of government bodies in developing plans and policies, training curricula, developing teacher trainers, and executing training sessions to enhance quality education; however, public education has long suffered from a constant low level of student learning outcomes, which is partly because of poor quality teaching.

From my experience and theoretical footing, I have realized that my formal educational journey till graduation was possibly dominated by the conventional notion of education governed by overly emphasized teacher-centered pedagogy (Habermas, 1972). If I tell my narratives somewhere about outside my community, people might perceive that I should have been in some blue-collar job now. However, my initiation of studying English, hard work in my teaching career simultaneously with my studies

after school education, and participation in training sessions, workshops, and conferences on ELT set a milestone in my journey of English language teaching.

The government spends a considerable budget on training teachers to improve teaching-learning activities, but the overall impact was not addressed so far. I found only a little research on how students grown in under-resourced rural environments can grow into transformative professionals of the English language, but I couldn't find any research to address my context. Although I found studies on professional transformation through the autoethnographic lens (Gautam, 2018; Pandey, 2021; Yadav, 2021), I did not find any research to address the contexts and experiences that led me towards a professional English language teacher. This made me curious to explore my academic and professional journey towards becoming a transforming English teacher in Nepal.

Therefore, I endeavored to incorporate self-learning strategies of the English language in my wide cultural frame to make sense of how I am developing to be a fairly successful English language teacher now in my particular circumstances. Thus, all these contexts and my complicated educational journeying led to several questions in my mind. Despite the difficult socio-cultural situations, how do teachers strive to develop themselves into awarded professionals? I found how the transformation of an individual/teacher from an under-resourced background like mine can influence or contribute to the ELT community still under-researched. Although my community focused on going for jobs, I managed to go to college. I was told I couldn't learn English; somehow, I succeeded in becoming an English language teacher. Now I wonder how those socio-cultural forces tried to hold me back from developing myself into an English language teacher. Do all English teachers develop themselves in the same way I did? What forced me to move on? What did I do to myself and my

learners after I started to pave the transformative root? What did I achieve? How did I succeed in finding my way towards a transformative path to becoming a transforming English language teacher and educator?

Purpose of My Research

Through this study, I aimed to explore my painful and gainful lived experiences and practices concerning my personal and professional struggles as a learner and teacher of the English language, transforming myself through education. I also look into my journey from being a hilly boy learning English to becoming an English teacher with personal and professional transformation.

Research Questions

In this study, I attempted to explore the following questions:

1. How have my experiences of learning and teaching English shaped my personal and professional growth?
2. How have socio-cultural contexts influenced my growth as an English language learner and a teacher?
3. How have my professional struggles been transforming me, if they have, as a professional teacher?

Delimitations

Transformative learning involves many facets and processes (Hughes, 2021), but I delimited this research onto exploring my own painful and gainful experiences as a student and a teacher of the English language during the process of being transformed from a village boy learning English in an under-resourced environment to becoming a facilitator of English language education in an urban educational institution. Similarly, I demarcated this study to explore my epiphanies, which have influenced my transformation as a successful professional teacher.

My Theoretical Referents

Although I was exposed to learning theories in psychology and sociolinguistics in my master's degree, I could not get a clear meaning of them. I learnt them to pass the examinations. This led to many struggles in understanding the concepts of those learning theories in my higher studies.

When I joined MPhil at Kathmandu University School of Education, I spent much time reading literature in the library and attending professors' English language education and development studies sessions. Besides, during my MPhil studies, I got exposure to research training, workshops, and seminars organized by the university and some foreign organizations. This helped me to enhance my interest in looking at the world through my theoretical lens. However, I started getting a more profound knowledge of theories when I went through Advanced Qualitative Research in my MPhil degree and developed my research proposal in the second and third semesters.

Consequently, I studied some of the MPhil and Ph.D. dissertations written through the autoethnographic lens (e.g., Gautam, 2018; Pandey, 2011, Pandey, 2018, Yadav, 2021; Manandhar, 2021) and available published literature precisely to get a clear idea to start with my dissertation. This reading of those research works helped me understand, analyze and interpret my experiences of personal as well as professional life in so doing, relating it to the world around me. These theories have been most relevant to my autoethnographic journey as an English language learner, English language lecturer, and English language facilitator.

Transformative Learning Theory

In this section, I reflect on my experiences of success and difficulties in my class as a learner and an English teacher through theoretical lenses. Based on my teaching-learning practices, I will explore various questions like what hindered me in

speaking and writing English fluently during my educational journey until my master-level studies. Why couldn't I perform in the class as expected? What was wrong with my classroom procedures? Why couldn't some of my students learn as I expected to teach them? How can I be a reflective educator? Such inquiries make me mull over new techniques to change my teaching method and change myself into a more transformative teacher and educator.

When I got a chance to learn about transformative learning (TL) theory during my MPhil studies, I wanted to look at the narratives of my lifeworlds. As a process of adult learning, transformative learning helps learners transform their taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, and mindsets) to change beliefs and opinions to prove them more true and justified to guide their actions (Mezirow, 2012). These frames of reference refer to the structures of culture and language through which we interpret meaning by attributing rationality and significance to our experience (Mezirow, 2008).

Transformative research engages educational practitioners in transforming their professional practices and the lives of future generations (Luitel & Taylor, 2019). Transformative learning involves a significant change in the learner's perspective and ultimately shapes their thoughts and behaviours to help them accommodate the changing world. Cranton and King (2003) also affirmed that these frames of reference help us make meaning of the world through our experiences, and Mezirow (1997) delimit our expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings (as cited in Terras, 2017), so our habits of mind help us understand the world. These frames of reference are the structures of assumptions that help us understand our experiences. In the process of daily learning, we absorb those frames of reference for understanding the world and transforming our life. The TL theory focuses on the idea

that learners can adjust their thinking based on new information they receive during the learning process. TL attempts to describe and analyze how adult learners learn to make meaning to their experiences (Mezirow, 1991), and while doing so, they define their life through various frames of reference or habits of mind.

Habermas (1972) suggested instrumental learning that helps to manipulate or control the environment to achieve the desired goals, communicative learning that helps reach a consensus through interactions, and transformative learning that helps to change perspective and behaviour (as cited in Mezirow, 2000). Contrary to Habermas, Mezirow (2000) claimed only transformative learning helps us to interpret meaning through understanding the intentions or assumptions behind any communication (ibid). Thus, learning is not only reacting to the words, utterances, or discourses; it also requires critically examining the issue and making meaning of it.

Providing a variety of alternative conceptions of Mezirow's transformative learning, Taylor (2017) suggests a psychoanalytic view of learning. This view of journey refers to understanding one's lifelong journey by reflecting on the psychic structures that make up their identity, such as ego, persona, shadow, etc. During learning, adults face various incidents, which make them responsive in bringing a substantial change in how they perceive the world. Learning often occurs in self through critical dialogues with self and others or critical personal reflection. Luitel and Dahal (2020) also share that reflecting on past events, activities, and performativities helps one examine actions that have transpired from the vantage point of new possibilities. Hence, I used my reflective view as a significant perspective of transformative learning in this study, where I recapitulated my lived experiences that helped me move towards being transformed.

Hence, transformative learning contributes to understanding the scope and possibilities of human learning, leading to some change and action. Kitchenham (2008) suggests teachers welcome students' ideas and allow them to present critical ideas for discussion so that they can look at old things in new ways and move through a process of looking at new things in new ways, ensuring their transformative learning. Before the classroom can be democratic, the teacher has to welcome input from the students as well as present critical ideas for discussion so that they "affirm themselves without thereby disaffirming their students" (Freire & Faundez, 1989, p. 34).

Transformative learning enabled me to understand a revised interpretation of the meaning of my prior experience as a learner and teacher to guide my future action as becoming a transformed English language teacher (Mezirow, 1996). The experience of an adult is the essence of transformative learning, and even unarticulated cultural or social experience shapes the meaning of their perspectives. The principle of transformative learning is to bring inherent change in the learners' perspectives and worldviews that eventually shape their activities and behaviours (Wang et al., 2019). Hence, in line with Taylor and Cranton (2013), I believe that my socio-cultural, contextual, and discrepant experiences as an English language learner, English language teacher, and a transforming English language educator help me focus on my research and theory development.

A learner goes through three dimensions of transformative learning: psychological, convictional, and behavioural (Pappas, 2016). The psychological dimension of transformative learning, associated with the cognitive aspect of the individual, helps learners change their perspective or understand themselves through their independent thinking to create their meanings and interpretations rather than

allowing culture or society to dictate what they think or feel they are. Similarly, the convictional dimension links to a person's belief system, including their values and assumptions towards the world, helping learners transform their cognitions according to their personal experience. In the same way, the behavioural dimension of transformative learning helps the learners change their behaviour and influence their actions through their learning experience.

I have employed transformative learning theory to construct the foundation, research agendas, research problem, and research questions in chapters I and II. Using transformative learning theory, I analyzed and discussed my beliefs, practices, and personal experiences in the later chapter. In doing so, I tried to depict how socio-cultural factors, including upbringing and values, beliefs, and practices, influenced my becoming an English language teacher and teaching-learning practices.

The Socio-cultural Theory

Learning is an interaction that "unfolds during the dialogic activity collaboratively constructed by learner and tutor" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 367). This theory claims that the process of learning, i. e., thinking and problem-solving, is essentially social due to the linguistically mediated interaction between learners and other members of society.

Vygotsky (1978) categorizes thinking and problem-solving tasks into three categories: some can be performed independently by the child; some cannot be performed at all (yet), and between these two extremes are tasks that the child can perform with help from others. He has called the dynamic process in which the child and adult collaborate in constructing a mutual activity frame "the zone of proximal development (ZPD)" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84) for learning the third kind of task. Hence the individual develops their language and rational thought with assistance

from and in collaboration with more experienced members of society. While becoming an English language teacher, I became a member of teacher development organizations like NELTA or IATEFL to learn through collaboration.

According to Vygotsky (1962), the development of the mind proceeds from the social to the individual domain. Language is first used to guide the private speech of the child as well as for social interaction leading to its internalization and then becoming the structure of the child's thinking. Thus, thought patterns are the products of social activities (Vygotsky, 1978). He treats learning as an active cognitive process leading to increasing levels of capabilities.

Supporting Vygotsky's view, Rumelhart (1980) opines that modern cognitive psychologists have also described this process as constructing new concepts based on existing knowledge in schemata and frameworks. The learner's experiences influence the processing and transformation of further information through the selection, hypothesis-formation, analysis, decision-making, interpretation, and synthesis strategies. The learner can go beyond the information given (Bruner, 1973). Thus, the main implication of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory in instructional design is the call for an active learning situation and a learner-centered approach where learners can act upon their environment self-directed. He further asserts that learning must occur in a dialogic situation since knowledge is constructed when the novice and the experienced teachers interact in the ZPD. Therefore, I also employed Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to constructivism as a theoretical referent to my experiences.

Organization of My Research

This research consists of seven chapters. In the first chapter, I introduce my research issue, presenting the context of my research, including a brief synopsis of my childhood and how I chose English as my major subject and then opted for teaching

as a profession. It includes my exploration of the research agenda, the rationale of the study, the problem statement, the purpose, the research questions, and the delimitations of the research. I also present transformative learning theory and the socio-cultural theory as my theoretical intent of the study in this chapter. Finally, I conclude the chapter with my research organization and the chapter's essence.

Similarly, the second chapter includes the methodological aspects presenting a process of how I carried out this research. It mainly covers the philosophical, methodological, and theoretical considerations I have used in this research. This chapter also deals with Autoethnography as my research design, text generation process, meaning-making process, quality standards of the study, and ethical considerations. It winds up with the chapter's essence.

The following four chapters - Chapter III through Chapter VI - present discussion, analysis, and interpretation of my painful and gainful lived experiences connecting them with the broader social contexts. In the third chapter, I present my rural village's socio-cultural, linguistic, and political contexts to situate myself in the broader context of the research. I present how I began my academic journey and explored my lived experiences related to my struggles of learning the English language in an under-resourced rural area. In the same way, I present the narrative of my struggles and successes in learning the English language from my intermediate to master's level educational journey in chapter IV.

In chapter V, I present my struggles in carrying out both my studies and career simultaneously. There I discuss my motivation towards developing myself as an English language teacher and further initiations along with political influences. Therefore these four chapters were all about the socio-cultural activities that either supported or hindered or shaped my becoming an English language learner and an

English language teacher. In the same vein, in chapter VI, I present my journey of becoming a transforming English language teacher through my affiliation with different professional development organizations MPhil studies, motivation, and self-initiation. The final chapter concludes with the key insights I drew from my study and reflections on this research journey. This is followed by the list of references in the last section of this research.

Chapter Essence

In this introductory chapter, I set the context of my research. First, I created a background by constructing the foundation of my study connecting to my socio-cultural practices and their influence on my behaviour and performance. Then, I reflected on my journey of earlier school education, presenting how my school education became the foundation for further study due to my parents' inspiration, teachers' motivation towards hard work and self-realization of the importance of English language learning leading myself towards an active learning process. I stated my purpose as to explore my personal and professional journey from a hill boy to an English teacher with personal and professional transformation with my broader social, cultural, and economic contexts. Thus, the insights from this chapter helped me to explore my research agenda in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER II

JOURNEY OF MY INQUIRY

To my understanding, the methodology is the plan or roadmap for research work. It offers rationales behind using a particular research design, paradigm, and method in relation to philosophical considerations of the research work. In this chapter, I discuss the whole roadmap for this research journey, and for this, I have articulated my methodologies and methods with philosophical considerations. I have also discussed my multi-paradigmatic journey, philosophical worldview, and research design. I have discussed Autoethnography as a method for emergent research inquiry and writing narratives as a method of inquiry in this research. Then I deal with text generation and the meaning-making process. Finally, I have concluded the chapter with the strategies followed for the quality issues and ethical considerations I have maintained throughout my research.

Philosophical Considerations: Decoding the Worldviews

As our beliefs, reality, and understanding of a phenomenon differ, the degree of values given to a phenomenon can also vary from person to person. Our previous experiences and social contexts guide our understanding and beliefs, which help us develop our perspectives on that phenomenon. I believe that reality differs from context to context, and people construct knowledge from others differently in their own ways. Hence, I incorporated the nature of ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions to maintain a proper philosophical stance in my research. Each paradigm has certain philosophical viewpoints regarding ontology- the nature of being or reality, epistemology, and axiology. Hence, ontology and epistemology are the foundations that shape the approach to theory and methods in Research (Don-

Solomon & Eke, 2018). Now I discuss how I, as an autoethnographic inquirer, maintained my philosophical stance in this study.

My Ontological Position

I have my perception and understanding of any phenomenon that is unique. Don-Solomon and Eke (2018) state, “[o]ntology is a belief system that mirrors the way an individual interprets what represents a fact” (p. 2). Ontology, being concerned with the characteristics of existence, seeks to explore the individuality of things around us (Willis, 2007). As an individual, I have my own experiences with the pedagogical practices of being a learner and an educator, and knowledge is constructed through those experiences. I believe knowledge and reality are personal, subjective, and unique (Cohen et al., 2007), so these realities are contextual and subjective. My experiences and stories have helped me develop my own perception of the nature of reality (Jackson, 2013).

<p><i>Does the researcher believe in (a) one reality that is context-free and can be discovered? OR (b) multiple mental constructions or reality that is bound by context? [keep this in the box while discussing ontology’ (Killam, 2013; p. 7)</i></p>
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I attempted to interpret my own lived experiences as a learner and a teacher in connection with the broader social milieu as a learner and teacher. Hence my reality of the social world might be dissimilar to that of others because of my own distinctive individuality (Saldana, 2015). As there is nothing as a universal truth or central, the reality for this research is more of contextual meaning-making that turns out to be relativist as I have tried to weave whatever seemed relevant to me from my ontological standpoint (Pandey, 2011). Therefore, the epistemology of my research is located within interpretivism, where my experience is unique and personal and goes with a pluralism of methods. I believe my thinking and progress have taken shape

according to time and space by the society and culture I represent, along with the value and beliefs that I live within.

Hence, considering reality as social construction built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman, 2016), I have constructed the meaning of the world I have been exposed to and surrounded by. However, I believe that there are multiple realities for the existence of each social phenomenon. As a dialectical researcher, I unearth those realities in this research by adopting multiple pedagogical beliefs. Therefore, with the conceptualization of the nature of reality as subjective, I have attempted to transform myself according to time and context.

My Epistemological Position

Epistemology is the study of knowledge between the knower and the known (Richards, 2003), and it deals with inquiries about our own identity. It shows various explanations of social reality and will, in general, have multiple realities of an event depending on these interpretations. I consider knowledge to be constructed through the collaboration between the world and individual desire to expand on local understanding. The construction of meaning could be influenced by the participants' prior experiences and knowledge, political and social status, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or personal values (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Therefore, I believe that knowledge is constructed through my lived experiences of the phenomenon, which varies from person to person.

<p><i>Does the researcher believe the relationship with participants should be objective or subjective? (Killam, 2013; p. 8)</i></p>
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The epistemological worldview raises the question of what might be acceptable knowledge in a discipline (Pandey, 2011). Similarly, Crotty (1998) mentions three significant types of epistemology: objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism (as cited in Al-Ababneh, 2020). I have shared how I have learnt about

myself as an English language learner and a teacher and the ways that helped me develop my narratives, accounts, and lived experiences that pool resources to construct and shape perspective in my ELT practices.

Therefore, my epistemological viewpoint is based on how knowledge is constructed through my personal experiences of becoming a transformed English language teacher from a village boy. In this research, I have explored what knowledge is, how knowledge is acquired, and how we know what we know about the phenomenon of my study.

My Axiology

Axiology is an approach to problem-solving and inquiry strategy. The study of human nature concerns the relationship between human beings and the social milieu (Cohen et al., 2007). My concern has been to reflect on how I have employed various components of teacher development knowingly and unknowingly along the way and discuss elements transforming me daily. Axiological orientation gives rise to ontological and epistemological positions, from problematizing to writing up research (Luitel & Dahal, 2021), to guide the researcher's decision-making (Killam, 2013), I have tried to be value-laden, being neutral to all my past experiences as a researcher.

<p><i>How can the knower go about obtaining the knowledge and understanding he or she desires? (Killam, 2013; p. 9)</i></p>

As an autoethnographer, I focused on how my values, thoughts, and beliefs are associated with my present study. An autoethnographer's axiological inquiry orientation is value-laden (Luitel & Dahal, 2021), so I depicted my own stories and experiences, enunciating my beliefs and values in the form of data. Since I was not only the researcher but also the research participant, my experiences, thoughts, and views might have influenced the outcome of this research. My axiology is that my

belief is valuable and ethical (Killam, 2013), so I value motivation, self-determination and learner-centeredness, and transformative pedagogy. Therefore, my axiological assumption has been guided by relativist ontology that claims nothing exists outside experience.

I presented my assumptions, understanding, and practices of English education in common and English language pedagogy in particular by using monologues, dialogues, poems, narratives, etc. Moreover, I have overtly/covertly articulated my lived experiences netted from my childhood to date, situating myself in the context. While doing so, I have prioritized my academic, professional, and socio-cultural values. Thus, I believe that this value-laden axiology has helped me search for change, reflecting on my professional development practices as a researcher.

Multi-Paradigmatic Research Design

As I intended to explore my identity as a transforming English language teacher due to a deep understanding of my personal and professional practices, I chose a multi-paradigmatic research design for this study. This research approach inculcates methods from different research paradigms and helps researchers transform their professional practices (Taylor et al., 2012). I applied three research paradigms: interpretive, critical, and postmodernism, and reflected on my experiences, values, and beliefs to envision myself in different roles and to speak from my unexplored voices.

Interpretive Paradigm

As I believe in subjective reality and aim to interpret the in-depth understanding, practices, and social relationships that enabled me to be a transforming teacher, I adopted interpretivism as my research paradigm (Pulla & Carter, 2018). As an interpretivist, I believe that reality is subjective, multiple, and socially constructed

(Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I also believe knowledge is constructed through my interactions with broader social contexts (Creswell, 2014). I assumed that my ethos, perceptions, and experiences might have been formed due to my interactions with the broader society. I might have my perspectives to observe and acquire the happenings around me (Pulla & Carter, 2018). Therefore, I attempted to explore the meaning of my professional journey through an interpretive paradigm.

My individual experiences and stories are framed in the context of the story of a society in the process of knowledge construction (Chang, 2016). The interpretivist paradigm is based on shared assumptions, concepts, values, and practices (Willis, 2007). Hence, I attempted to explore my assumptions, values, concepts, and experiences that helped me transform from a traditionally grown and educated village boy to an English language teacher. Applying the interpretive research paradigm, I understood different interpretations and ways of understanding the reality of assumptions underpinning my professional identity as a teacher. While reflecting on my teacher identity, I tried to understand the influence of my culture. Understanding the culture helped me make varied interpretations giving detailed descriptions of my research context.

Subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are the two epistemological stances within the interpretivist paradigm (Weaver & Olson, 2006). I was concerned with understanding the world as it is from my own subjective experiences. Accordingly, I attempted to unfold and interpret my own experiences of the social world around me concerning my becoming an English language teacher.

During my academic and pedagogic practices as a student and teacher, I have developed a multitude of perceptions and beliefs towards learners, teachers, culture, context, etc., through my interactions with various people around me. I have dug

deeper to excavate the rich details of my experiences and brought them for sorting, labelling, interconnecting, and contextualizing them in the socio-cultural environment (Chang, 2016). This paradigm enabled me to dig deeper into the pedagogical practices of English language education through my lived experiences as a student and a teacher. Hence, my perceptions and opinions might not match those of others.

Critical Paradigm

Critical pedagogy has been used in education for the last few decades as researchers construct a moral vision of a better society (Taylor & Medina, 2013) through their critical consciousness. This paradigm helped me visualize conventional, irrelevant, and dualistic pedagogical practices in English language classrooms.

Critical theory arouses teachers' creative thinking about designing culturally sensitive, inquiry-oriented, student-centered and socially responsible curricula and assessment systems (Taylor & Medina, 2013). The study of criticalism motivated me to move toward reconceptualizing the old habits in education and to transform the conventional norms of pedagogy that have obstructed the student-centered approach in Nepalese classrooms. An autoethnography may help its readers embrace their marginalized voices and experiences (Ellis, 2004, as cited in Strong et al., 2008). Applying criticalism in teaching, my role would be a change agent continuously arguing for and leading a more sustainable society. I believe my critically informed, painful and gainful stories would help readers to give a picture of performatives to view the world from their viewpoints as change agents (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). My learning experiences have been shaped by influential socio-economic and political factors raising my critical thinking ability to envision a better educational system for the future. Hence, I realized that I would be forced to examine my own academic and

professional transformation critically. For me, this examination took the form of autoethnography (Ramsey, 2004).

I critically examined the distortion and false consciousness about ELT pedagogy from unexamined values and beliefs rooted in my academic and professional journey as a teacher (Luitel, 2012). Because of its ideological, emancipatory and transformative nature, a critical theorist views society as fundamentally conflicting and repressive because of historical problems of domination, division, and social struggle. Being a critical teacher-researcher, I aimed to help create an emancipatory learning environment in my classrooms so that my students would develop a critical conscience and civic-mindedness (Taylor et al., 2012). As a conscious member of a larger pedagogical community, I have tried to be aware of and empower marginalized groups to be involved in teaching by exploring my painful and gainful experiences as a learner and teacher of English.

Thus, criticalism helped me understand my teaching identity in this research by critically self-reflecting on myself and the world around me. It helped me not only to be critical of others' pedagogical practices but also to look back at myself and realize what I can do for society. Thus, understanding criticalism helped me empowerment for being a change agent in the context of English language teacher education in Nepal.

Postmodern Paradigm

I have always enjoyed learning through different forms of art. Since arts are inseparable forms of human evolution, people express, present and represent the ways of their lives according to their unique culture. The postmodern paradigm allows us to represent our thoughts and feelings through various means of communication, such as language, art, or gesture (Taylor & Medina, 2013). I chose the postmodern paradigm

to best present my lived experiences to help my readers understand what I mean in this research. Following the postmodern paradigm, Javanmardi et al. (2020) claimed that narratives, theories and scientific laws are changing to build an understanding of human experiences.

In this study, I employed multiple logic and impressionistic writing, like stories, monologues, dialogues, poems, etc., to express my emotionality engagingly. The Postmodern paradigm opens the door to other disciplines, such as the arts allowing the researcher to use new forms of representation like impressionist writing, autobiographical writing, story, poetry, visual painting, and photography (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Taylor & Medina, 2013).

The use of arts in research directs us to question our writing: Is the story dramatic, odd, or fun to engage the readers? Does the story elicit readers' emotional appreciation? Arts-based research helps researchers know emotionally, thoughtfully and spiritually (Taylor & Wallace, 2007). In this inquiry, drawing from the postmodern paradigm, I have moved beyond the conventional 'clear-cut' one-dimensional approach that considers knowledge as 'universal' and value-free. For me, knowledge resides in individuals and shared information space (Pandey, 2018). Thus, I have included different genres like poems, dialogues, monologues, and pictures/sketches to give authenticity to my study and offer diversity to the readers of my text. Similarly, I practised metaphorical language to capture multiple realities of my lived narratives.

Autoethnography as My Research Method

Before I started my postgraduate education, I sometimes wrote travelogues, monologues, or memorable experiences. My writings would be the narratives of those events and occasions. I wasn't aware of connecting those experiences with research.

However, my postgraduate education at KUSOED opened my eyes to be exposed to different research methods.

Through autoethnographic study, researchers tell a carefully written, lively story that unfolds in a rich description (Adams et al., 2022). Hence, I developed an intense curiosity in doing autoethnographic research to

explore my experiences concerning English language learning and becoming a teacher when I studied different qualitative research methods. I was inclined to

“You can’t learn how to tell someone else’s story until you first learn how to tell your own story.” (Saldana, 2018, p. 156)

autoethnography so that my past experiences and stories, connecting them to the social world, could be brought into the present and give meaning to social life.

However, I first decided to explore other teachers’ experiences and perceptions towards ELT and task-based language teaching and chose phenomenology as my research method while developing my research proposal and got it approved. I wanted to explore my participants' lived experiences of using task-based language teaching. Still, I couldn’t go for some reasons, such as the coronavirus pandemic and prospective participants’ fear of facing the interview. I approached more than thirty-five English teachers in Rupandehi district, and only four were ready to share their experiences.

Nevertheless, two of my prospective research participants denied being interviewed later because of the fear of the spread of Corona Virus. The other two attended the first interview and did not participate in the latter. It was disappointing initially, and I started pondering the suitability of my research methods. Manandhar (2021) states, “[c]hoosing a research method is a nerve-racking experience for every researcher out there” (p.45). On further thought, however, I realized that my experiences of being and becoming an English language teacher full of painful and

gainful experiences (Luitel & Dahal, 2021) would best help me explore my research interest. Eventually, I decided to bring my own experiences, stories, pains, and gains of being an English language learner and becoming an English language teacher through autoethnographic writing to frame my stories in the context of the story of society (Chang, 2016).

When my research supervisor approved my proposal, I started reading literature on Autoethnography as a method in more detail to begin with my autoethnography journey. I then realized that my assumptions, purposes, and interests helped me determine an appropriate way based on the requirement of my research. When I realized that autoethnography could open my eyes and mind to see and understand who I am, what I am doing and what I need to do (Belbase et al., 2008), I decided to unpack my own lived experiences relating to my pains, gains, and troubles while learning the English language since my childhood to postgraduate level as a student, and becoming an English language teacher.

Etymologically, autoethnography comprises the 'auto' meaning selfhood, subjectivity, and personal experiences, 'ethno' meaning beliefs, practices, and identities of a culture, and 'graphy' meaning description, interpretation, and representation (Adams & Herrmann, 2020). Autoethnography is a self-narration in which the self is placed in a social context (Spry, 2001, as cited in Denzin, 2016). In this research, I have reflected, analyzed and interpreted my lived experiences as an English language learner and a teacher connecting them to social contexts. My study was concentrated on my observations and experiences, taking up the tradition of further inquiry, identity, and change according to my time and space to transform myself from a lecturer to an educator. I opted for autoethnography as my research

method, which also worked as a heuristic, the process of discovering things for myself and learning from my own past experiences about my social life.

Although I studied different research methods like phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative inquiry, I took autoethnography to explore my lived experiences and understand how my personal and professional lifeworlds are connected. “All qualitative researchers should write at least one autoethnography in their professional lifetimes” (Saldana, 2018, p. 157). I chose autoethnography as the methodology and method of this research. According to Herrmann (2020), a person is often pervaded in unquestioned societal norms, identifications, and subjectivities in ethnographic inquiries. Hence, I employed reflexivity to identify the intersections between my ‘self’ and my ‘culture.’ I went back and forth, thereby observing and revealing my broader context of experiences to examine and interpret my vulnerable self (Ellis, 2007). I revisited my narratives repeatedly, which enabled me to regroup the various themes. In doing this, I identified the significant states of my educational and professional journey as a student and teacher as my narratives and chronologically organized them. Then applying the theories I had chosen, I dug deeper into my life experiences to understand how my personal and professional life was shaped and how I transformed from a traditional English teacher to a student-centered facilitator.

In this research, I attempted to describe my personal experiences to understand the cultural experience. Although autoethnographers start with their personal experiences, they are simultaneously political as they highlight the relationship of their experiences and stories to culture and cultural practices (Jones et al., 2013, as cited in Herrmann, 2020). As an autoethnographer, I interacted with the socio-cultural aspects by representing myself as an insider of the broader educational community by

representing my narratives. Autoethnographic research involves others' experiences as well (Edwards, 2021), but I believed that the telling of my experiences of being and becoming of transformative English teacher would be very meaningful to me both personally and professionally and have the potential, through my continual writing, to have an impact on the wider ELT community, I adopted autoethnographic journey (Dyson, 2007). Thus, I decided to give my personal experiences and stories to the broader cultural context through the autoethnographic lens.

Autoethnographic Representation of the Texts

Writing autoethnography was not easy for me in the initial phase. I felt quite disorganized in gathering my experiences to put them in black and white. Autoethnography is a blurred genre (Denzin, 2016). I sometimes wrote a few paragraphs but then stopped without completing them because I was still worried about whether my written texts would match the rhetoric of autoethnography or not. Hence I was baffled in creating texts for my research journey. However, I gradually got concentrated and motivated when I went on reading, discussing and reflecting on my own experiences of being and becoming an English language learner and teacher. However, I continued revisiting, remembering, and discussing the experiences of my academic and professional journey connecting those to the broader social contexts with my family members, relatives and teachers. Hence, gradual habituating myself in writing through textual playfulness and experimentation again motivated me to take alternative methods for generating information for this study (Stanley, 2014).

I attempted to evoke myself in remembering my scattered lived experiences and observations and note them down. In line with Hayler (2011), I used autoethnography as a lens to examine aspects of my memories, perspectives and experiences, such as how I came to choose English as the major subject in my higher

education; how I started teaching and sustained in the profession of an English teacher; what it is like to be an educator; how I see my role; why I believe what I believe about initial teacher education; and how I think this. Although I initially noted my past experiences and stories chaotically, I retroactively and selectively started writing about my past experiences as a student and teacher (Ellis et al., 2011). I slowly started ordering and systematizing them for my purpose of writing. My experiences and stories were written in poems, narratives, dialogues, pictures, and monologues.

Text Generation Process

A researcher can write through pains, confusion, anger and uncertainty, illuminating their cultural phenomena in complex ways to make autoethnographic research more assessable (Adams, 2012). I often reflected upon my experiences, thoughts and actions by making inquiries about my future career as an English teacher. The process helped me develop a deeper understanding of my lifeworlds.

To be reflexive, qualitative researchers expose their approach systematically and rigorously and present themselves as the instrument of data generation (Ruby, 1980). My educative experiences inside and outside classrooms engaged my reflective thought process in this research. Hughes and Pennington (2017) also state that autoethnography involves an in-depth view of the ethnographer's educative experiences and lifelong spectrum. Hence, I have used my experiences of the events, accounts, and incidents in different genres like poems, stories, dialogues, monologues, etc., constructed from various things to depict mental images. These expressions provided me space to express the multi-faceted nature of the inquiry.

I generated detailed and thick descriptions of my data from my envisioning, observations and reflecting on my own lived experiences. I applied multiple forms of

texts to represent the complexity of my lived experiences and social reality (Rahmawati, 2012). I presented the writing of those narratives, experiences and reflections through multiple genres within multi-paradigmatic research in the form of dialogues, poems, monologues, pictures, etc., within the narrative and some metaphorical expressions. These genres helped me bring contexts, events and people to the textual space, thereby offering a rich representation of the complexities of human experience (Taylor et al., 2012).

I maintained personal diary records to support my memories and bring the experiences live to me as if they were the visual players. In line with Ellis and Bochner (2000), who relates that the past, lived experiences of the researcher are privileged as sources of knowledge and as stories worth telling, the stories of my life that I reflected based on my memories and lived experience have added as a rich data text for this research. As Taylor (2013) views writing as an inquiry or the process of generating qualitative text data of the lived experiences of the research participant/s, I generated my text by writing my stories, my conversations with my parents, teachers, and other concerned people at different points of time, and personal diary records of the important memories from my childhood to present recorded in different genres.

The exploration of multifaceted genres of my painful and gainful lived experiences, events and happenings explored in this research have made my writing evocative to engage the readers in the thinking process, descriptive to inform the context and culture of those lived actions and undertakings, narrative to tell the stories in such a way the readers can follow those events, and impressionistic to give an overall experience of my personal and professional journey as a learner and teacher.

Meaning-Making Process

This section presents how I constructed meaning through my generated text data. Initially, because of my lack of creative writing habits, it was very difficult for me to start my autoethnographic writing. However, when I started reading literature on autoethnography (e.g., Adams et al., 2021; Reed-Danahy, 1997; Adams et al., 2022), I gradually learnt to write. I considered the ideas of Vries (2012) that, including ‘Dialogue between self now (Peter2010) and self-thinking about undertaking a PhD (Peter1996)’ and other the above autoethnographers to create and write the narratives of my experiences.

Reading the literature on autoethnography and discussing it with my supervisor and other professors helped me dig deep into the subject of my narratives and critically review the sense of my writing. Although I made various attempts and sittings to start, I recollected the lived experiences representing my soulful and interpretive events in my writing. Then keeping the purpose and questions of my research, I recollected my memories relating to my being and becoming an English language learner and teacher. It was one of my most significant tests to sort out the helpful autoethnographic narratives that would unpack cultural contexts.

Along with writing my narratives, I read some more books, dissertations, and articles, which guided me to recognize my narratives under various themes. A chapter, ‘*Writing Autoethnography*’ by Saldana (2018), drove me to identify and chronologically arrange the crucial stages of my academic and professional journey. When I continued writing my narratives regarding the theories that I have discussed in the previous sections helped me give meaning to my data texts. Therefore, applying the iterative process of autoethnographic writing, I systematically collected, verified, analyzed, reduced, expanded, interpreted, and further collected data in the research

process (Chang, 2022). Learmonth and Hymphreys (2012) described the iterative process of autoethnography as writing, reading, and rewriting time and again (as cited in Chang, 2022). While doing so, I looked into the trajectories of my lived experiences to make my writing meaningfully moving.

Quality Standards for My Research

This part of the research is concerned with maintaining quality, a key component of any research. After reading some books and research articles on autoethnography, I understood that there was no single appropriate criterion for maintaining the research rigour. Social, cultural, political, and historical contexts may influence the selection of criteria to judge a piece of research (Sparkes, 2002). However, I knew I needed to maintain certain quality standards to make my research significant. Realizing this, I opted to choose the following five criteria proposed by Le Roux (2016) to maintain quality in this autoethnographic research:

Subjectivity

From my research knowledge, subjectivity is the quality of being influenced by the researcher's opinions and feelings. Since the self is visible in most of the research (Le Roux, 2016), I recreated a remarkable or critical personal and professional experience to understand the self. I am self-consciously involved in constructing the narratives of my lived experiences that constitute this research.

Self-reflexivity

I have maintained quality in this research by digging into my life deep and reflecting on my lived experiences as honestly as possible. Reflexivity indicates self-awareness, self-exposure, and confident introspection (Le Roux, 2016). I was intensely aware of my role in and relationship to the research that is situated within my socio-cultural contexts.

Resonance

In general understanding, resonance refers to the quality of being enhanced or full or the state of echoing. The knowledge I have constructed in this research would resonate with my readers (Kara, 2015), especially those from similar socio-cultural contexts. In this research, I believe my readers would be able to enter, engage with, and experience my lived story and connect them with their own on an intellectual and emotional level. In a similar line with Le Roux (2016), I believe this research intertwines my and my readers' lives through a sense of commonality.

Credibility

Maintaining credibility means establishing the truthfulness of the findings. Hence, I undertook prolonged immersion within my lived experiences relating to learning and teaching English throughout my career as a learner and teacher. I gathered relevant information about my professional transformation, enquiring within and across myself to my study more explicitly. A researcher should present the overall research process and report the meaning-making process honestly (Le Roux, 2016). I have also honestly presented both experiences that brought happiness and sadness during my educational and professional journey.

Contribution

Autoethnography teaches, enlightens, and encourages (Le Roux, 2016). Hence, I believe this research extends knowledge, creates ongoing research, liberates, empowers, advances practice, or contributes to change in teaching-learning practices. Autoethnography teaches, informs, and inspires.

Ethical Considerations

The final component of autoethnographic writing concerns the writing task, along with its formal and ethical considerations. However, autoethnographers face

ethical issues and questions around truth/s, often more obvious and challenging than those using other methodologies like ethnography or narrative inquiry (Skies, 2015). Accordingly, I remained considerably sensitive towards ethical issues while conducting this research. As the instrument of my autoethnographic research, I knew that writing about others was also necessary (Legge, 2020). Thus, as the researcher and participant, I have been aware of protecting myself and staying away from any kind of intervention (Deinritz, 2006, as cited in Flick, 2017) and those involved in my research.

Being a teacher and a member of the teacher education community, I believe that my educational and professional stories are not only my property, but they also possess to the organization. I consciously followed the ethics of orientation (Luitel, 2012) since I was aware that people would read this document one day. Since I carried out this research to bring some changes against unjust practices to contribute to an inclusive and transformative world, I took this research journey as an endeavour of a responsible learner and teacher, research practitioner, teacher educator, and, more importantly, a responsible member of society. Hence, keeping sensible issues like who I was?; what I was doing?; and what impact would this study leave on me and my society? I remained conscious of the consequences of any possible misleading information throughout the research.

This research is all about my personal and professional life, so I was aware of the importance of ethics of self-care and protecting my privacy in both personal and professional development. I wholeheartedly agree with Rahmawati (2012) ... “[t]he stories relate to the reputation of my country, educational institutions, and some people included in the stories.” (p. 60). I needed to portray the weaknesses of the learning and teaching processes throughout my educational process and professional

journey. This was pertinent to my professional development as an English teacher, and if not handled correctly, I could cause discomfort to myself and those included in the stories.

I have been mindful of respecting and recognizing my and others whose stories have been shared in manifest and latent forms in this study. Therefore, considering the ethics of rights and responsibilities that upholds the unconditional value of human beings, I, as far as possible, used appropriate language to describe critical events in a non-problematic manner. For this, I, kept each participant's, including my family members, and the institution's identities as confidentially anonymous as possible.

Chapter Essence

Since this chapter covered the entire methodological journey, I began unpacking it with my philosophical understanding in order to explore my becoming an English language learner and teacher. Employing an autoethnographic research approach, I myself endeavoured to be both the participant and researcher throughout this research journey. I presented interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodern paradigm as my methodological research design under autoethnography as the roadmap of the journey. Moving on to text generation and interpretation as essential aspects of autoethnographic research, I discussed the processes I implemented in this study. Towards the end, I mentioned the quality standards and ethical considerations, which are essential and sensitive aspects of qualitative research.

CHAPTER III

MY LEARNING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: REFLECTING ON THE INITIAL JOURNEY

This chapter explores my lived experiences and practices on how I began learning English as a student at my primary level and continued to secondary and tertiary levels setting my foundation for a transformative English teacher. These stages of my academic life, which occurred in an under-resourced environment (Gnawali, 2018), were not well rewarding. Yet, I believe they all might have been the foundation of my professional life as I kept on successfully transforming the obstacles into opportunities. While exploring my academic growth, I present examples to prove how my simple rural life experiences shaped my interest in learning English. Such incidents have become meaningful milestones of my present career as a transformed educator of English language education. Throughout the chapter, I have weaved my English language learning trajectory through dialogues, monologues, pictures, and poems.

Preparing to Learn English

For me, it is hard to remember when I started to learn English. Still, my memories of following my mother to the cow shed, and reciting ABCD, the initial English alphabet, with her while she was milking the cows, are still vivid. Hence, my overall interest in education seems to have been shaped by my parents' encouragement. My mother shares she had learnt ABCD much later in her life while she lived in India during my father's job in the Nagaland Police. After living in India for some years, our family returned to my parental home in the hilly village of Gulmi, which lies in the Western region of Nepal, in 1982. Even before I started my formal

schooling, I was well aware of the English alphabet and could chant them all in a musical pattern.

My formal educational journey began in 1983 when I was five years old. My parents decided to send me to school on Thursday in the first week of July because Thursday is still believed to be the day of the goddess *Sarasawati*, a deity of knowledge and wisdom in my culture. So, my grandmother took me to school and admitted me to *Shishukakshya*. I do not have all the memories of the day, but I remember singing the English letters ABCD when the head teacher asked me to sing the letters of the Nepali alphabet *Ka Kha Ga Gha*. With a smile, he kept me on his lap and gave me a handful of chocolates. But, my exposure to English was limited to only those *ABCD* to me until I reached grade four when the school started teaching English formally.

However, one day at school when I was in grade three, when one of my school teachers, who had not taught me then, noticed me chanting the English alphabet A..B...C.,.D... during break time on a rainy day in August in 1986, came closer to me and asked, “*Baabu Raja, timro naam ke ho?*” (Little prince, what’s your name?). I was nervous. And before I uttered my name, he asked me to follow him to the office. It was my first entry to the teacher's office, where more than twelve teachers were sitting. I was afraid and nervous, but I somehow felt relief when I saw my class teacher in the group. My teacher said, “*Laxman, what’s the matter? Why are you here?*” Before I answered him, the teacher who had called me to the office replied, “*Is his name Laxman? A good boy! Do you (to other teachers) know he can recite all English letters by himself?*”

“*Babu, come here.*” The head teacher, who had recently got his promotion, said. He

offered me *Lacto chocolate* and asked me to recite the English letters as I approached him. Those chocolates were very popular among children then. By then, I was gaining more confidence, so I uttered *ABCD...* almost in a single breath. Offering me another chocolate, he again said, *“Good boy, you did well though you have missed a few letters”* I was wordless but happy.

The head teacher further asked, *“How did you learn them?”* As I was trying to say, *“M...my...my mother.....”* another teacher commented, *“Yes, his parents lived in India, so his mother might know a little English”*.

I realize now how my interaction with teachers enhanced my confidence to speak in a mass. My teacher’s smiling call and the head teacher’s motivation helped me stand and utter *ABCD* before them. Since that incident, I have experienced better treatment from my teachers. They often asked me about my studies and encouraged me to do better in my studies. Those teachers who know their students and their linguistic backgrounds can design and plan activities that suit the children’s needs, levels and interests (Corcoll, 2013). So, the English alphabet that I had learnt from my mother and the praise I received from the head teacher, class teacher and other teachers were causative in shaping my interest in learning. Now I wonder, would my interest in learning have been equally developed if my mother hadn’t taught me to chant English letters and my teachers hadn’t encouraged me to learn?

Parents have significant roles in developing a sense of learning in their children (Amin, 2018). Going back to my childhood experiences, the roles of family and school seemed significant to my English language learning in the initial phase of schooling. My mother’s knowledge of chanting English letters later became the foundation of my English language learning. According to Tamis-Le Monda and Rodriguez (2008), the learning environment is influenced by learning activities,

parenting quality and learning materials to foster children’s learning and language. I was inspired by the appreciation of the teachers when I recited the English alphabet. I don’t know whether I could produce the entire alphabet at that time. Still, now I feel that that short visit to the teachers’ office and interaction with many teachers in a formal setting must have helped me build my confidence in becoming a teacher, which I am enjoying now.

Learning English at School: Committing to Memory

In addition to my parents’ inspiration, my teachers’ compliments and recognition at the school in grade three made me eager to study seven subjects, including English, in grade four. The new academic sessions would begin in mid-April, and I remember it was the first period after my classes started in grade four in 1987; a new teacher entered our class with an English book in one hand and a bamboo cane in the other. Here, I would like to share how my first English class was:

We (students): Standing from our seats, “Good morning, sir”.

Teacher: “Good morning. Sit down. Sit down! You are now in class four. And you have to study English so hard because it is a complex subject. Do you know ABCD?”

Everyone was silent, but I stood with some fear and tried to recite the letters. Although I could recite them well, I felt nervous and missed some letters. After he asked me, the teacher himself wrote all the English letters on the blackboard and asked us to follow, repeating the chants after him. We followed him:

Teacher: A

We: A

Teacher: A for Apple

We: *A for Apple*

Teacher: *B...*

I repeated *A, B, C, D, A for apple, B for ball, C for cat, D for Dog...along with my classmates repeatedly*. I enjoyed chanting those letters in class because I had already memorized them at home. Although I was a little nervous at the beginning of the class, I did well. Sometimes, I felt disinterested when the teacher repeated the exact drilling of the ABCD every day. Given our professional history of teaching ‘language’, it is not surprising that most of the teachers focused on their pedagogical content knowledge of grammar (Johnson, 2009, p. 22). However, after a week, he said to the class, *“Children, now, Laxman reads the letters one by one from the blackboard, and you will all follow him.”* My happiness had no boundaries. My teacher trusted me and called me to his place (in front of the class) to conduct drills. At the beginning of every English class, the teacher wrote the alphabet, and I conducted drills for the whole class. However, (Koonthar et al., 2018) drilling and repetition, i. e. audio-lingual teaching method, put extra pressure on the learner.

My first experience of learning to write English began by copying the CAPITAL LETTERS first and then small letters of the English alphabet until I learnt them. Although Lightbown & Spada (2013) claim that learners spend hours participating in conversations, listening to others’ conversations, being read to, and watching television, mere writing and memorization were emphasized in our classes. After almost everyone had learnt to write these letters, the teacher gave us a list of questions and answers to learn by heart. Here, I would like to portray a list of questions and answers so far I remember after meeting my retired English teacher now, with their equivalent to Nepali translation provided by our teacher for us to remember:

Question: *What is your name?*[timronamkeho?]

Answer: *My name is ...* [meronam ...ho]

Question: *How old are you?*[timikatibarsakobhaeu?]

Answer: *I am... years old.*[ma....barsa ko bhaen.]

Question: *What is your father's name?*[timrobuwakonamkeho?]

Answer: *My father's name is....*[merobuwakonamho]

Question: *What is your mother's name?*[timroaamaakonamkeho?]

Answer: *My mother's name is....*[meroaamaakonamho]

Question: *What is your school's name?*[timroskulkonamkeho?]

Answer: *My school's name is....*[mero schul ko nam.....ho]

So far, I realize now that our teacher considerably emphasized the role of grammar explanation (Mitchell & Martin, 1997) and translation of the texts to the students. Like our English mantra, each of us had to memorize the pages of teacher-given questions and answers to pass the examination. The imitation, repetition and memorization of those sets of questions and answers enhanced my rehearsal of the English language in those initial days (Ding, 2006). However, Bista (2011) claims only committing to memory does not help students learn the English language as expected. The teacher tested us using the same questions even in the final examinations. I cannot claim that I understood the lessons taught; I remember I could memorize and recall the answers when my teacher asked in class.

Passionate English Speaking Teacher

My latent desire to learn English since childhood became manifest when I came to grade eight. This manifestation became more tangible with the first-day surprise with a new teacher. It was the third period after Nepali and Mathematics subjects, and a tall teacher with two dictionaries: one Ajanta's English-Nepali

Dictionary and another Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, in his hands, entered our class. After we exchanged a cordial greetings, he said his name was Mohan Sahani from India, and it was his first day in our school. With gestures and body movements, he started speaking in English. The way he was speaking English had made me spellbound. He was very expressive holding those books. I couldn't understand his accent, but I could easily guess from his gestures that he was talking about the advantages of using dictionaries to learn English. As he continuously went on speaking, I wondered about the following:

What a talented English teacher! Perhaps everyone speaks like Mohan sir in India. Perhaps my father wants me to be like him, so he inspires me to study English well. I wish I could be like him.

Suddenly he stopped speaking and wrote questions on the board like: *What is your name? How old are you? Where do you live?* Then he asked everyone to write the answers to these questions. Since I had memorized the answers to these questions before in the previous classes, I wrote them confidently. He asked us to introduce ourselves. First, the teacher modelled an introduction:

Hello, my name is Mohan Sahani. I am 34 years old. I am from India.

One by one, each student introduced themselves. Perhaps I was thinking somewhere else, so I could not concentrate on how my friends introduced themselves. However, I remembered what the teacher had said in his introduction, and then there was my turn.

"Namaste, My name is Laxman. I am 34 years old. I read in class eight."

Everyone laughed at me, but I wasn't aware of my own words until the teacher, with a smile, said, *"Laxman, are you 34 years old?"*

I blushed.

But the teacher said, *“Don’t worry. Can you write your introduction on the board?”*

I wrote- *My name is Laxman Prasad Bhandari. I am 13 years old. I am studying in grade eight.*

The teacher smiled and said, *“Very good! Now, introduce yourself again”*.

“Namaste, my name is Laxman Prasad Bhandari. I am from Johang. I study in grade eight. I love English.”

There was a huge applause from both the teacher and the students. I felt competent in learning the English language. I loved the way the teacher encouraged me. He was passionate. He used only English throughout the class. I understood less from his speaking, but I felt empowered. Although that passionate teacher taught me only in grade eight, he became my favourite teacher. The way I was learning to respond to simple conversations in his class encouraged me to stand in the class, and even today, I feel the same. Only meaningful learning can have a lasting effect on the life of the learners (Neupane, 2007).

Besides encouraging students at school, Mohan sir inspired us by visiting our homes during the holidays. Highlighting the importance of students’ home visits for more effective teaching, Ilhan et al. (2019) explored that home visits help teachers bridge specific cultural barriers, give an account of their students’ academic progress, and use parental help to build educational success. After a week of his appointment at the school, he came to my home with my uncle. My father also had come home from India then. I could read the feelings of familial attachment on my teacher’s face when my father told him that he worked in the Indian police and I was born in India. He said, *“Now I feel I am in my own home country.”* Since then, my father and Mohan sir have had a nice nexus regularly, and that helped me build closer rapport with the teacher in learning as well.

Now, I understand that Mohan sir was teaching us using the communicative approach to teaching English. Loumbourdi (2018) claims that communicative language teacher brings most of the inspiration and the material from the real world. The teacher then showed more interest in me. Perhaps the teacher used only English inside and outside our classes because he was not habituated to speaking Nepali. Whatever the reason was, he was a potential source of guidance and mentorship instead of being distant and judgmental in my school life (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2014). I started feeling more attached to him and with an increased interest in learning English. I attended all of his classes even when I was sick and completed most of the tasks without feeling any hesitation in asking for his help. This helped me build a reasonable nexus with English and positively impacted my learning.

Changing Wind: Shifting Sand

It was Thursday in the second week of April 1993 when I began grade nine. I was excited to be a secondary-level student. It was 10.15 am we had just entered our classroom after the assembly. Hari sir came to our class. After we greeted him, he greeted us back with a smile. He told us he would teach us English for two years because Mohan sir had left the school and returned to India. He said,

“Students, you will appear in the SLC examinations after two years. So, you have to prepare for both class nine and ten courses. SLC is an iron gate. If you cannot get good marks in English, you will not get admission to good programs. So, only the bright students will be successful in the future.”

As he was continuously speaking about what we had to do or how to study, I was missing Mohan sir, who often said English wasn't a complicated subject, and anyone could learn it. Of course, I was excited to continue my secondary-level

education. My secondary-level classes began with writing and memorizing the grammar rules.

“Mom, I have to buy a grammar book today. The teacher has asked us to buy one.”

“You should have told me before. I could have brought these when I went to the market yesterday. Now I don’t have money. So, wait until Saturday.”

Our classes consisted of listening to the teacher translate English texts into Nepali equivalent, copying answers from the teacher’s dictation, doing exercises from the textbooks and memorizing grammar rules and answers given by our teacher.

After I bought the book ‘Higher Level English Grammar, Composition and Punctuation’ written by Churamani Gautam, I turned almost all the pages in about a week. The grammar rules with examples were of genuine interest to me. Similarly, the paragraphs and compositions written in simple English attracted my attention. I was so interested in the book that I did not even go to attend *puja* at my maternal uncle’s to read the book.

I memorized the rules of active and passive voice, reported speech, articles, tag questions, synonyms, antonyms, etc., with curiosity when I was in grades nine and ten. Simultaneously, I read the Nepali equivalent of those rules and grammar to ensure that I could understand. My interest in that grammar book helped me complete the grammar exercises at school, and because of this, the English teacher often praised me in his class. Although I couldn’t understand most of the texts, I memorized the answers provided by my teacher and often proved to be a studies student in the class. This helped me win a “grammar rule race” organized by my school at the beginning of grade ten.

It was in the second week of August 1994; there was a notice from the school administration informing secondary-level students to participate in the ‘Grammar Rule Race’ on the following Friday. When our English teacher motivated the whole class, I decided to participate. Accordingly, I continued memorizing the reported speech rules, articles, voices, tenses, etc. It was an exciting moment when I stood second in the competition.

The above text indicates the context of using an additional grammar book along with the textbooks indicates that my teachers tried their best to enhance their students’ English learning in spite of limited resources and pedagogical skills they had then. Teaching grammar helps in second language learning by developing students’ linguistic competence as part of communicative competence (Zhongganggao, 2001). Since most classes constituted more writing than reading and speaking at my school level education, I felt speaking more challenging than other skills. Using the mother tongue in the target language class significantly interferes with speaking spontaneously (Denizer, 2017). Hence, it was because of the exposure to heavy use of my mother tongue, grammar rules, and memorization that made me less competent in speaking than in writing.

Reflecting on my father's innocent dialogue/interaction brings a gentle smile. On his every visit, he would say, *“Babu, where’s the book I brought to you? Did you read it all? My supervisor’s son read it all and has a good job in an office there.”* I replied, *“Yes, buwa, I am reading it.”*

In addition to memorizing grammar rules and exercises from the textbooks, I wrote and remembered some words and their meanings from Ajanta’s English-Nepali dictionary. On his every visit to the family, he would go to school and talk to my teachers about my studies. He would sit with me in the evening and ask me to read

some pages from the dictionary. Mudzielwana (2014) states parents should meet their child's teachers, talk to them, and improvise or create time to assist their children in improving their studies. Now I understand that my parents were conscious of my education even though they could not get any formal education, and I feel they might have realized the importance of education, especially learning English while staying in India.

It was the first day at school just after the vacation of our greatest festival, Dashain and Tihar, in Nepal in August 1994, I came to know that Hari sir had got his leg broken while playing on a swing. So, just after school resumed, the head teacher came to our class in the first period at 10.15 am.

“Dear students, you know that Hari sir is sick. He needs bed rest for some months. We don't have another English teacher. So, Suman sir will teach your English course. Although he teaches Agriculture, he has good English”.

My SLC examinations had been scheduled for February 1995. So, for the next six months, we were guided by Suman sir. I still remember his words in my first class, “Students, now I will teach you the English course. Don't worry; I have already brought all the notes from Hari, sir. I will give you all; you must learn them by heart. Those who memorize everything I provide in the class will get the first division in English. I also memorized everything when I took my SLC examinations. And, if you cannot, you will fail the examination.”

The above text indicates that teaching English at my school in the early 1990s was regarded as teaching a subject, not a language. According to Sahan and Sahan (2021), school administration focused their attention on the students' board examinations. My daily routine in the English class consists of copying sets of questions and answers, paragraphs, letters, and essays along with grammar rules from

the blackboard and memorizing them. However, Lightbown and Spada (2103) state, “[t]he imitation and rote memorization that characterizes audiolingual approaches to language teaching is not effective if learners do not also use the sentences and phrases they are practicing in meaningful interaction” (p.202).

Now I realize that my school teachers did their best to educate us from whatever the way they were taught and trained to handle the classes with limited resources- encouraging memorization, repetition, and punishment. “Proficiency (however it is defined) in the target language is part of the knowledge base of teaching a language” (Graves, 2009. P. 120). The inability to produce the teachers' answers would result in severe punishments. There were various occasions I was punished for failing to recite the rules and actual examples of grammar provided by my teacher. Teachers who lack confidence in pedagogy or their content knowledge tend to emphasize memorization rather than creativity or imagination, believing that rote learning provides a strong foundation for students learning (Beghetto, 2009).

Similarly, Sahan and Sahan (2021) explore school administrators do not understand the importance of EFL or approaches to language teaching, so they focus their teaching learning activities on standardized exam-focused activities. The nearer the SLC examinations, the more time I had to stay at school to memorize things for the examinations. My teachers and parents were glad I could recite most of the textbook study materials. Culture, policy, and implicit assumptions about pedagogical practices influence students' creativity (Kettler, 2018). Hence, again during my secondary level studies in grades nine and ten, I had to learn through memorization of textbook exercises to prepare for the examinations. Participation in language activities, like in grade eight, was again reduced to prepare for the SLC examinations.

Returning to my memory of the past in grade ten, I now understood that finding a good English teacher was a real challenge for schools in my rural area. Teachers' shortage is significant and growing (Gracia & Wiess, 2019). They further claim that the lack of qualified, trained and experienced teachers is even more serious in rural and poor schools. However, my teachers provided me with a ray of hope through their selfless responses to help me pass the examinations and set my foundation in English (Gnawali, 2018). This led to my success in the SLC examinations. When I dug deep into the learning memories of my English language learning pedagogical practices from school, I composed this poem:

*Compelled to fill my brain with memory
 With grammar rules, commas, and apostrophes
 Question tags, voices, and narrations
 Making them the source of my daily reflections.
 Parroting vocabulary, answer sets, and passages
 From Unsolved History, Tea & Coffee, and Aesop's Fable
 Were my everyday tensions and reflective messages
 To my preparations for the examination tables.
 Heaving all information filled in my memory
 With the opening of the question paper in the exam
 Most folders seemed unfamiliar, to my goodness!
 The contents got ruffled, causing me to forget most answers.
 And thus, I realize my parroting
 Missing one word led my whole answer to disappear
 I wanted to do better; I affirmed, but couldn't
 And thereby, I conclude learning through parroting wasn't expected!*

It was a Sunday afternoon in the second week of June 1995. It was the time for the millet plantation. Although it was drizzling, I was working with my mother and two other neighbouring aunts in our field. There were sometimes discussions about children and jokes and laughter in the field. Meanwhile, Netra Uncle, a teacher in my

school, came to us and said to my mother, “*Bhauju, badhai chha tapailai, Laxman SLC pass bhae!*” (Sister-in-law, congratulations! Laxman passed the SLC examinations). Aunt Sunita just left the saplings in the field and said, “*Lau babu badhai chha! Ani Pabitra didi (to my mother), "Aja ta khasi katnu parcha hai!"* (Congratulations babu. And sister, we will have mutton today!). I was thrilled but couldn't say anything. My mother left all the plants as they were and thanked Netra uncle for bringing that good news. She hugged me, “*Mero chhora, hamro naak rakhi dieu aja.*” (My dear son, you've saved our prestige). I could read the ocean of happiness on my mother's face.

My mother, “Kati khushilagyomerochhora le SLC pass garyo. Aba buwalaai phone garer timlai shaharma padna pathauchhu”. (How happy I'm now! My son passed SLC. Now, I will call your father and send you to a college in the city). I was excited!

Now I understand that teacher-focused methods that compelled me to memorize textbook exercises and a few structured activities helped me succeed in the examinations at school (SSDP, 2016). My exposure to English language learning was limited to copying, memorizing, reciting, and reproducing those limited study materials, such as the set of question-answers, words/phrases and their meanings, paragraphs, essays, etc., from the textbooks until I passed the School living Certificate (SLC) examinations in 1995. I now understand that translation, parroting, and memorization helped me develop my language competence and a base for my higher studies. However, as Robinson (2011) states, because of the implementation of translation methods and the rote learning culture of the school, students' creativity is suppressed.

Chapter Essence

This chapter unpacked the key events, lived experiences, and practices I had experienced regarding English language learning throughout my student life, from the beginning of my schooling to secondary-level education. I have presented my lived experiences through which my interest in learning English began. My parents' inspiration, teachers' motivation and compulsion, and my inner desire to become like my English teachers helped me understand the English language. Thus, this chapter concentrated on interpreting the generated texts in the form of the themes: preparing to learn English, learning English at school: committing to memory, English-speaking passionate teacher, and changing wind: shifting sand. The exploration of the initial journey of my academic experiences and practices set the foundation for my becoming an English teacher. Hence, in the next chapter, I discuss how my experiences of learning English at a higher level helped me set a path towards becoming a teacher.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLISH AS MY MAJOR SUBJECT: PREPARING FOR MY CAREER

In the previous chapter, I articulated my lived experiences through my narratives of English language learning by portraying the mixture of little interactive and more conventional models of education that laid the foundation. I articulated the need for holistic education that integrates the life worlds of learners for their meaningful learning. Holistic education includes intellectual and vocational aspects as well as the learners' physical, social, moral, and creative aspects (Mahmoudi et al., 2012). The exploration of my lived experiences as an English language learner at college prompted me to develop the second research question of this research: How have my socio-cultural contexts influenced my growth as an English language teacher? In this chapter, I explore my experiences of English language learning in college life, especially at college, from intermediate to master's levels, which shaped my identity as a learner and teacher.

Dwayam Results in SLC: English Major?

Passing the SLC examinations was taken as a matter of pride not only for the students but for the parents and the school in my village then. English was taken as the most difficult subject at school and SLC was regarded as the iron gate in any student's life. It was perhaps the reason why our English teachers in both grades nine and ten made us memorize and recite most of the study materials from the very beginning of academic session. Questions in SLC are designed to test students' memorization (Dawadi, 2018). I had no option except to follow the teacher's words, "*timiharule purai ghokenau bhane keta ho, jaaulaa India bhada majhna!*" (Boys, if you don't mug up everything, you will go to wash dishes in India). And to the girls,

“Ani, Ketiharu, timiharu jhanch pass garenau bhane, jaaula poika ghara!” (And girls, if you don't pass the examinations, you'll get to your groom's home).

The frequent repetition and memorization of the texts would compel us to prepare for the written examinations rather than learning language at school. “The curriculum meant textbooks, and pedagogy usually meant lecture” (Sharma, 2018, p. x). The teaching-learning solely concentrated on textbook exercises. I feel those utterances of my English teacher echoing in my ear when I visit the school even today. The pass rate in SLC for public schools was much lower (42%) in comparison to that of private schools (88%) (Mathema & Bista, 2016). I was one of the seven students who passed the examinations of the 1994 batch from my school, and I was satisfied with what I had achieved. Passing the examinations was my dream then, and I had achieved it.

It was Saturday morning in the third week of June 1995. Early morning, my mother said, *Babu, go to fetch some hay for the buffalos, and we will go to Dilli sir's home. He will give you some advice about your studies. Then I will send you to the city.*” Being able to go to college, I had no feet on the ground. So, as soon as I brought heavy hay from our field, my Mother and I went to Dilli sir's home at 8.00 am. On the way to his home, my mother went on saying to me:

Dilli sir will give you good ideas for your education. What to study? Where to stay? He has many people there, so he might also help you search for a room for you in the city. And don't play over-smart and ask too many questions to him. He is our relative as well as a well-wisher, you know.” However, my thoughts were elsewhere while my mother was talking to me. *Will I be able to study English as Mohan sir or my principal sir had suggested to me?*

Although I was very interested in taking English as my major subject at college, I could not express my desire before him because the teacher created a fear of English at the beginning of the conversation.

As we reached Dilli sir's home, we greeted one another. He was helping his children with their homework then, and he said to my mother:

"Bhauju, I hadn't expected he would pass the exam, but he did. You are lucky that your son passed the SLC examinations." Most boys go to India for work, but Laxman will attend college. He asked me, "Babu, which subject would you like to study at college?"

I: "Sir, I want to study English."

Dilli Sir: "Your interest is good, but English is a complex subject for you.

You're from a public school, you know. You haven't got first division in SLC.

Umm...the marks in English aren't very good either. Only Abbal students study English at college. And...you know, most students fail at college. My son also failed even the compulsory English twice and went to India. He's now working at a hotel. He didn't take my suggestion seriously. Therefore, if you join I. Ed. with the Nepali major, you can easily succeed. Then you can go to Kathmandu for a master's degree."

My mother (to me): Your teacher knows more than you do, so you should do whatever the teacher says, babu.

I just nodded, and we returned home. I was restless.

Going back to the text, I become very thoughtful regarding my context. First, I thought the school was irresponsible regarding the career counselling for the students for higher studies. However, later I felt enlightened by the thought that the changing trends in pedagogy have marked the difference. Course contents and teaching

materials are the most popular sources of demotivating students from taking English as their major subject in Pakistan (Ali & Pathan, 2017), but my experience appeared different.

Father's inspiration for duties

Mother's motivation for responsibilities

Granny's love for work wasn't faded.

The respect my English teachers received

In the village which I witnessed live

My desire to be like them was still alive

By studying English in college

To strive for a happy life through skills and knowledge

My parents, my pre-primary level head teacher, and my English teacher in eighth grade inspired me to learn English to uplift my family's social and financial status, social recognition, and self-dependence. I still remember my mother saying, "*Chhoro maanchhe bhayasi, dherai padher paisa pani kamaune, ijyati pani kamauna parchha.*" (Being a son, you should get higher education degrees for both money and social prestige). Malgwi et al. (2008) also claim men were considerably more influenced by job opportunities and the level of compensation in the field while choosing subjects for their higher studies. I wasn't worried about the marks and percentage in my SLC results, but I was determined to take English as my major subject at college. Student interest, attitude and impression, related exposure, and the nature of subject specialization influence their choice of subject at a higher level (Tsikati, 2019). Thus, despite my teacher's advice to opt for subjects other than English, I, as a rebel, decided to take that untrodden path without knowing its consequences.

My First Day Experience: Bhai, Did You Come to Fail?

New city, new aspiration

aiming to attain English education

*an unfamiliar village boy
 approaches the college gate
 bewildered to see
 the crowd of aspiring learners
 everywhere from corner to corner
 draw near two senior dajus
 and asked, "bhai, which subject-
 Nepali or health education?"*

It was a sunny Sunday morning after a week-long rain in the first week of July 1995. Beautiful blue mimosa flowers blooming on both sides of the road near the campus gate, a few mango trees with fruits in the field, birds chirping in the trees, and crowds of aspiring candidates for their future wandering here and there around the administration building. No sooner had I reached the college gate than two senior students approached me. One of them said, *"Are you here to join the campus, bhai?"* Before I said anything, taking my documents file in his hand, another said:

"Let me see your docs. Oh, you've got second division, bhai. You should take either Health and Physical Education or Nepali if you get admission to I. Ed., or you can take political science if you want to admit to Humanities. You can at least study them in Nepali medium."

"Brother, I want to study English in I. Ed. My parents want me to study English, and I want to be an English teacher." They laughed without letting my words fall to the ground, and one said, "Bichara Bhai (Poor brother), you don't know anything here now. Can you speak English? Can you write free essays? Did you come to fail? It's hard, bhai. Your parents' money will go in vain." And another added, "I haven't been able to pass the English subject for three years. Take easier subjects so that you can pass the examinations."

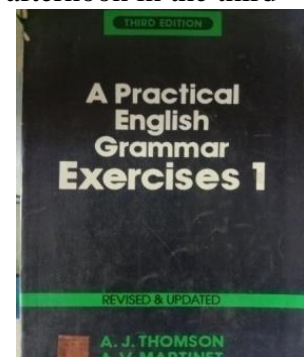
The elderly students' suggestions and seeing most candidates filling forms in subjects other than English, Dilli sir's words echoed in my ears, "...you haven't got first division... Only Abbal students study English at college." They filled in my admission form, and reluctantly, I got admission to Nepali and Health and Physical Education. Brown (2018) explores the knowledge of the English language as a key skill for students to develop to access further education. I was convinced that these subjects were not as easy as they had suggested to me, but I knew I could at least study those subjects in Nepali medium. However, I was convinced that I could uplift my social status through my education in English. Selecting a major subject at college that is supported by their social network (e.g., family, friends, or relatives) offers some social benefits (Beggs et al., 2008). But, I could not sleep till late at night. Exploring my memory from the past, I would like to share a monologue here:

I wish I had got first division in SLC! If only I had got better marks in English in the SLC examinations. If Mohan sir had taught me both in grades nine and ten, I think I could get better marks and studied English at college. My father always wanted me to study English. What would my father say? Surely, Dilli sir, will tell me, "Hum...You now realize my suggestion!" Perhaps this was my destiny... How can I forget my father's pains for not knowing English in the Police then? I don't want to repeat the same fate my father experienced. I want to be like Mohan sir, who earns better than other subject teachers and receives whom everyone respects. If I don't learn English, I won't be able to teach tuition and coaching classes and earn more. No, I will change my major subject and take English. But, if I cannot pass the examinations, as my school teacher said? The boys said to me at college?

Analyzing the text, there are internal and external factors for discouraging students from choosing English as their major subject at college. I was discouraged from choosing English as my major subject at college by some external factors. Cankaya (2018) also explores teachers as one of the demotivating factors influencing students' subject choice. Despite having lower grades in English in the SLC examinations, and my teacher's advice in the village, I decided to study English when I went to college. I wanted to get a more prestigious job with better pay by learning English in higher education. I was determined to make Students choose English at college for better earnings expectations and ability perceptions (Wiswall & Zafar, 2015). However, I was again compelled to select other subjects hoping to pass easily. Students' lack of will to study and lack of awareness of the influential worth of English were the most affecting factors of students' motivation (Jung, 2011). Still, I experienced external factors such as wide-of-the-mark counselling by the seniors as a discouraging factor in choosing English as my major subject at college.

My First Class: Raised Rays of Hope

With some excitement and confusion, I reached college, carrying a notebook in one hand and an umbrella in the other, on a rainy Thursday afternoon in the third week of July 1995. I felt comfortable seeing many other students outside, like me, searching for their classrooms. Meanwhile, someone, perhaps a college employee, patched a notice on the board stating our classrooms. No sooner had we (about eighty students) entered the class than a tall young bald-headed teacher with the book "Practical English Grammar Exercises 1" in his hand entered our class:



Good morning students! You look so good. My name is Ram Prasad Poudel, and I will teach you Major English. My class is in the third period, but the teacher who teaches you compulsory Nepali is on sick leave for two weeks. So, by the time he gets well, I will teach you Major English.

At first, I thought it wasn't my class, so I needed to go out. But again, I thought, "Let me take this class today! And I will go to my class tomorrow."

"Dear students, if you study this English book, you will pass the exam and prepare for other difficult texts in the second year. This grammar book is the base for your English and good jobs in the teaching field." Then he wrote five rules of the 'articles: a, an, the' with examples on the blackboard. "And, dear Students, now read them. Let me see who first recites all these rules with examples."

He looked, sounded and behaved like Mohan sir, my English teacher in grade eight. I liked how he spoke, wrote and moved back and forth in the classroom. As I had practised memorizing even longer texts in grade ten, I mugged up these rules and examples of articles.

Like the other two students who were asked to recite the rules before me, I recited all the rules and examples in my turn. The teacher seemed content: "Great! The three of you did very well. This year, I got really good students like you in my class. I'm sure you will get very good marks in Major English."

The first major English class ended with the teacher's compliments on the class.

As the teacher was going out of the classroom, I followed him, and with hesitation:

"Sir, I'm a major English student, but..."

He stopped and asked, "Why? Haven't you got admission here?"

I: "Yes, sir. But not in English.In Nepali and health and physical education."

Teacher: "You did well in the first class. Better than others. Why don't you study English?"

I: Can I shift to a major English group, sir?

Teacher: Why not? Sure. But don't forget to fill in the examination form.

I: OK, sir. Thank you.

Analyzing the text, the rays of my hope for learning English were still alive even after getting admission to other subjects. Perhaps this thread of hope led me to the encouraging major English class from the first day of my college life. The new learning environment, positive feelings towards the new teacher, and my desire to learn English intrinsically remotivated me (Jung, 2011) towards being a regular student in major English class since the first class of my college life. Therefore, I worked hard in reading, practising and memorizing the rules of other lessons like tenses, conditionals, infinitives, gerunds, active and passive voices and reported speech from the textbook. Although teachers made us memorize texts for examinations in all other subjects in but first and second years of my intermediate education, they encouraged us to better education in their respective subjects. Harmer (2007) also shares students feel more comfortable in teacher-student interactions if teachers establish a positive rapport with them.

Because the same motivating teacher taught me the course "*Teaching Approaches, Methods and Techniques*" in the second year, my passion for being an English teacher got more intense. I knew English's significant value for my career (Jung, 2011), so I worked hard to recite all the textbook materials. I continued the

almost same level of hard work till I passed my intermediate level in English education.

There were courses like English Structure, Speech and Oral, Reading and Writing, and Methods of Teaching English. I passed those courses by memorizing the lecture notes, class notes, guidebooks and guess papers; I now feel that memorization strongly impacted my English language competence rather than communication skills.

I cannot remember any classroom interaction except the teachers asking students to recite what they had been assigned during those two years.

However, Poudel sir was an exception. Although he did not conduct interactional activities in the class, he often asked me how my studies were and encouraged me to work hard.

Repetition and rote learning are the most engaging, proficient and helpful language learning activities that involve language learners in the authentic and communicative use of language (Cook, 1994). Coming to this stage, I realized that I was given the necessary study materials for memorization, which led me to succeed in the pen-and-paper-based examinations. Reflecting back on my school days, I came to understand that my teachers supported me to the best of their and knowledge and pedagogical skills even in the under-resourced environment (Gnawali, 2018).

Teachers use lectures and tutorials in conventional face-to-face undergraduate courses as dominant forms of instruction (Nyamapfene, 2010).

Even at my intermediate level, I was exposed to more lectures, dictations and memorizations of those dictated study notes than classroom discussions. This helped me pass the examinations so that I got opportunities to enhance further my academic as well as pedagogical skills in higher studies. Nasrollahi-Mouziraji and Nasrollahi-

Mouziraji (2015) share similar findings regarding memorization that it is a helpful approach in the early stage of language learning. Still, it is inadequate for learning a complex phenomenon like language. Perhaps it was why I felt incompetent in spoken English, which I realized during my visit to India after completing my intermediate education.

My Visit to India: Inspiration for Learning English

"Babu, when will you get your results?" My father asked me when I reached home after taking the second-year examinations of I. Ed. I was almost free from my regular memorization and recitations of the lecture notes at college. *"Yes, baba. It takes four to six months for my I. Ed. results, so I want to go to my birthplace."* I responded in a single breath.

It was a Monday in mid-August 1997 when my father and I reached Dimapur, Nagaland in India, where my father worked for the Indian Police. I had been to my birthplace for almost after sixteen years, so I could not understand their language. However, I felt somewhat comfortable when they used English while talking to me. Although I could understand, it was difficult for me to interact with them. Inefficiency in spoken language affects people's cognitive tasks, and they find it difficult to establish social roles and achieve social goals (Bruner, 1978; as cited in Gallagher, 1991). I often stayed inside the room to escape interactions with people there for a week until I met my father's officer at his office.

A tall, middle-aged man: Are you Mr. Bhandari's son? Come to my office. I am the SP here.

I: [with fear] Yes, sir.

SP: I came to know that your name is Laxman. Now tell me about your studies.

I: Sir, I...I have just given the final examinations of I. Ed. When I pass I. Ed., I will go for my B. Ed. My major subject is English at college.

SP: Not given, taken. You took the exam, and your teacher or the board gave that exam. Right? Yes, you should continue your studies to get better jobs and earn better salaries. You know, almost everyone speaks English here.

Wherever you go, you should prove that you are good at communication.

I: Nervously, yes, sir.

Analyzing this text, my incompetency in English language use made me realize that learning English is not only passing the examinations or getting a degree through rote learning and memorization but also communicating in it. The opportunity to interact with my father's officer again ignited a fire in my heart to learn English for my better social status. Gnawali (2018) shares similar findings that the English language adds value to people's social status and provides better student opportunities. Although I initially felt nervous before the SP, my intrinsic drive was getting more active to compel me to develop my English language skills further.

Before I said anything to my father that evening, he told me everything about my visit with his officer. *"The officer says you need to study more, and he wants you to be a successful person,"* said my father. No words came out of my mouth, but I was thinking if only I had good spoken English, I could have talked to him and asked him about his success stories. "Language skills are perceived as integral to participation in the social groups that use the target language" (Chen et al., 2005, p.612). After three months, with a better realization of the importance of learning the English language, I returned home for my bachelor's degree.

Bachelor Level: A Turning Point

The three-year duration of my bachelor's studies in English education from 1998 to 2001 was the time of my rapid movement for my degree and teaching career. Since my classes were on the morning shift, I simultaneously taught at a school for three years until I completed my bachelor's studies in Butwal. Like, intermediate-level studies, my bachelor-level studies were also more or less limited to my certification and degree affairs in most subjects. Though I had to study different subjects in English, I felt my classes in teaching methods in English and English for mass communication contributed more to strengthening my English world than other subjects because of the opportunities to engage in language use.

My zeal for learning English was activated when I worked hard to cover both my college studies and teach six to seven classes at school during my bachelor-level studies. I learnt about student-centeredness, motivation, reinforcement, student engagement, and other terms in my B. Ed. I started encouraging my students to ask questions in English classes and respond to their classmates in return. Student-centered teaching makes learners absorb and develop knowledge (Kassem, 2018). Although most of my classes consisted of writing from the lectures and guidebooks, self-studies and memorization, some activities left a great impression on my journey to English language learning. Here I portray a session conducted by my teacher in English for Mass Communication class during my B. Ed. second-year studies in the second week of January 2020.



The teacher entered the class with a bundle of newspapers. We greeted him, and so did he. He said, "Today, you will learn how we prepare a newspaper."

Then he displayed some English newspapers, namely 'The Himalayan Times' and 'The Kathmandu Post, and distributed these papers to us. When we looked at those newspapers' photographs, he had written the essential components of newspapers: the headline, lead, body, news section, advertisements, feature news, readers' letters to the editor, etc.

After the teacher introduced each term with its meaning from the blackboard, we located those components on the newspapers we had got from him. Finally, the teacher assigned us to prepare a handwritten four-page English newspaper within a week.

Delving deep into my memory, I remember it was the first project my teacher had assigned me as a part of my practical examination. On the same evening, I bought a large paper sheet and other necessary stationeries for my project in English. Although I felt difficult to start the project initially, I met my teacher every day to get help in every step of writing. Finally, within the deadline, I prepared a four-page coloured handwritten newspaper on Saturday, January 20, 2000. Although I had to spend many hours reading and writing and consulting my teacher and friends for improvement, I did not feel exhausted. Instead, I enjoyed doing all these. When I presented the newspaper and shared how I prepared it for my class on Sunday, my teacher praised me for my hard work. Patting my shoulder, he said, "Well done, Laxman, you've done the best task!"

The task of preparing a handwritten newspaper was a great achievement for me. Although I did not understand the exact meaning of the news items I had copied from other newspapers, I felt I learned much about grammar and sentence structure. After my teacher returned the newspaper, I showed it to

each of my friends or relatives who visited my room. Their compliments would be, "Wow! How did you make it?"

It was about 7.30 pm in the first week of February. I went home to see my parents and especially to show my tasks to them. They were keeping themselves warm near the fire in the oven. As soon as I showed my newspaper to them, my father took it in his hands and looked at it, although he wouldn't understand English. With happiness on his face, he said to my mother, "Dekheu ta, kati ramro English patrika tayar garechha chorale?" Dashile jastai English bolna sakyobhane ta hamro chhora le pani nikai ramro jaagir khanchha!" (Did you see what a beautiful newspaper our son has prepared? If he learns to speak English like Dashi, he will get a hi-paying job like him). My happiness had no boundaries when my father compared me to Dashi uncle, who had learnt English and worked for a Radio in India then. However, I knew I had to work harder to succeed.

At this stage, I realized that my exposure to learning English was improving at my bachelor's degree. Here, agreeing with Robinson et al. (2016), I am not claiming a complete move to student-centered, but some teachers involved us as co-creators of the classroom in order to promote our ownership of the learning process. Working in groups to prepare newspapers, brochures and leaflets as assignments and role plays and simulations in the classroom helped me develop confidence in using English. Authentic materials help bring the real world into the classroom and significantly enliven the ESL class (Kelly, 2002). Now I understand that my teachers brought those materials to expose us to our cultural features for our more profound understanding of and interest in the topic. Hence, my involvement in those activities helped me develop my linguistic and communicative competence to use the English language.

Language tasks and projects were the foundation of my English language learning at bachelor level. Students develop their communication skills in higher education through presentations of the products of the activities or tasks they accomplish (Chagas & Pedro, 2020). With my involvement in learning activities, I started feeling more competent in language use than in previous classes where the teachers would provide the students with answers. Student engagement in thinking and doing during language activities leads to better language learning than teacher-centered instruction (Kassem, 2018). In teacher-centered classes, students remain passive receivers of knowledge. Thus, I gradually started experiencing improvement in my communication skills in English.

Proudly Holding "The Kathmandu Post"

My engagement with the project of preparing a newspaper created my intense desire to read authentic newspapers. Before this, reading was limited to examination preparation, which never developed an intense interest in me. However, my teacher's compliments on my project at the bachelor's level ignited my desire to read newspapers; hence I became a regular customer of 'The Kathmandu Post' on January 22, 2000. Then I started making lists of unfamiliar vocabulary with their meanings and synonyms for teaching, learning, and society. Reading newspapers expands students' social, linguistic and cultural horizons (Lisitsina et al., 2020).

It was a cold afternoon in February. During my free time, I sat in the staff room. I had no assignments to check, so I took the newspaper from my bag. No sooner had I started to read an advertisement for a teacher in The Kathmandu Post than the vice-principal commented, "Laxman sir, are you still seeking another job?" I was a bit nervous and afraid, too.

"No sir, I am just reading a newspaper to improve my English."

Vice-principal: "If so, that's a good idea. Why don't you make your students too read the newspapers? Can we subscribe to English newspapers for school?"

From next week, there were two English newspapers, namely 'The Kathmandu Post' and 'The Himalayan Times', at school. I believe the vice-principal must have talked to the principal about this. I felt reading recognized me at school. I got more materials to improve my English, and I could also borrow them for a week. Eventually, I stopped subscribing to the newspaper and continued reading and learning from them. I started learning unfamiliar vocabulary and sentence structures with the help of the Oxford Advanced Learners' dictionary and Ajanta's English-Nepali dictionary, which my father had brought to me. Reading helped me get closer to both the school administration and my students. Reading newspapers and teaching subjects ranging from English to Social Studies at a private school's lower secondary level helped me understand my study materials and get better grades in college examinations. This helped me develop close relationships with my teachers and pass the tests with better grades and

During my free time and holidays, I continued reading feature articles, advertisements, news items, and editorials expecting to improve my English proficiency. When I held a newspaper, I often imagined, *"If only I were able to develop my English like my English teacher, the school principal, or my father's officer, the SP!"* They inspired me. Teachers and parents should enhance second language acquisition in their learners by raising their awareness of the importance of learning English using different techniques (Al-Zoubi, 2018). I started seeing things from other points of view and asking questions in class, and of course, reading further

shaped my relationship with the English language, improving my linguistic ability. Reading newspapers enhances students' critical thinking and cognitive skills, helping them prepare for English lessons (Lisitsina et al., 2020). I gradually started experiencing my acquisition of English, being empowered by reading both newspapers and books at school. Although I was not encouraged to interact in English, my reading offered a meaningful interaction with the text, making me more mature to receive newer input.

Master's in English Education

I improved my English when I went to Kathmandu for my master's degree and started teaching at a private English school. And if you want to improve your English, you need to leave your place for more struggles," one of my English teachers suggested to me in my bachelor's third-year class. I envision his statement would be companionable with what I usually expect. Although my parents would afford my higher education if I asked for it, I had been on my feet for my education (for college fees and stationeries) since I started my bachelor's level. My only concern was whether I could get a job in Kathmandu because of my poor English background. When I was in my final years of B. Ed., I was struck by Meningitis, compelling me to stay at the hospital for about three months. However, I completed my bachelor's degree after partially recovering from the illness. However, as my teacher suggested above, I went to Kathmandu for my master's degree after taking my B. Ed. final year examinations in May 2001.

As a member from a rural village where most parents would send their children to the Indian army or some other manual work in different cities of India then, going to Kathmandu for a master's degree was taken as a matter of

social prestige. I was the first student from my village to go to Kathmandu for M. Ed. in English education. And just two days after I went to Kathmandu, I applied for a teacher at a private boarding school in Lalitpur, and started teaching there on May 18, 2001. My desire to complete my master's degree was affected for two years because of the side effects of Meningitis, which I had suffered from for about three months while I was studying for my bachelor's third year.

I joined M. Ed. in English at Mahendra Ratna Campus, Kathmandu, in 2001, but I could not concentrate on my studies. This continued for almost two years.

Therefore, I do not have any noteworthy lived experiences to portray related to English language learning during my master's level education except collecting lecture notes, textbooks, guidebooks, and previous years' questions and learning them by heart to pass the examinations. I could not take classes regularly because of my health issues and long-hours teaching duties at school. Despite these difficulties, I attended some classes and maintained good relationships with my teachers and friends, who helped me with study materials. However, I would like to recall an event of micro-teaching when my teacher praised me and offered to arrange his class for my micro-teaching purpose in I. Ed at his campus.

It was the second week of April 2005; I was going to start my micro-teaching classes as a part of the evaluation in M. Ed. By the time I reached the micro-teaching hall, everyone had already arrived. I carried the textbooks "Meanings into Words and 'Magic of Words'. I had prepared a lesson plan for

teaching one of the supernatural stories, "The Recurring Dream". Teacher:

Dear students, let's start. As per the list, Laxman comes first. Please....

I: Yes sir [I moved to the front of the class with all the materials and started teaching].

I still remember the class where I first wrote the date, time, period and topic 'The Recurring Dream' on the board. Then I started translating, reading a few lines in English and then translating it into Nepali.

Kimberly Clark, who lives and works in London, England, seems like a normal twenty-five-year-old woman. She's pretty, loves dancing, and has many friends. Also, she has a good position in the office of a large company.

(Kimberly Clark England ko London shaharma basne ra kam garne garthin. Uni 25 barsa ki samaanyayuwati jasti dekhinchhin. Uni raamree chin. Uni naachna man paraauchhin, ra unaka dherai saathee chhan. Ra, uni euta thulo company maa raamro padama kaam garchhin).

Kim Clark does have a problem; however, the problem is that she has a mysterious dream. It's mysterious because it is a dream about a person and place which are completely strange to her. (Kim Clark ko euta samasyaa chha, tara tyo euta rahasyamaya sapana ho. Yo samasya unako laagi rahasyamaya chha kina bhane yo sapana euta maanis ra sthan ko baaremaa chha jun Kim ko laagi anautho chhan).

When I completed the third paragraph, the teacher interrupted me, "Now you've only five minutes. It was a fifteen-minute class; I could not complete the chapter. I still visualize his happy face after my presentation in the micro-teaching class. Immediately after the sessions ended, he said, "Laxman, will you teach English to I. Ed. students at this campus for your teaching practice?"

If you're ready, I'll manage it for you." And so, I experienced a warm environment during my practice teaching for forty-five days on the same campus.

Reflecting upon my experiences during my master's degree first made me realize that health is the utmost priority for the betterment of any journey. My illness from Meningitis affected not only my health but also my educational journey. Although I got admitted to a master's degree in English education at a TU constituent campus in Kathmandu, my health did not support me in attending my classes regularly. Poor health substantially affects achieving desired goals in students (Eisenberg et al., 2009), so I could not concentrate on achieving my desired goals of master's studies for next about two years that caused a delay of my degree.

Similarly, at this stage, I experienced that studying at university by attending regular classes is far more refreshing than making self-preparation at home. I missed most of the classroom interactions during my master's studies and depended on my self-preparation. Student attendance in class primarily determined their academic performance in courses (Nyamapfene, 2010). At this point, I realize the learning experiences at master's level were less influencing that those I achieved in my bachelor's studies.

Despite my sickness, I managed to continue my teaching career during my master's level studies. I taught English, social studies and health, population and environment education at Rising Readers' Academy to manage my living and study expenses in the capital city and to develop myself as a more influencing teacher through teaching. Although most university students work for financial reasons, they also engage in some job for gaining work experience (Hall, (2010). Since I had an intense desire to improve my pedagogical skills along with my higher studies, I

continued teaching despite my health issues. Students' attendance in class is essential for both theoretical and practical understanding of the subject matter (Johns, 2009). Now, I came to understand the motivation for learning English to become an English language teacher encouraged me to continue crafting my career as an English language teacher despite my poor health during my master's studies.

Hence, among difficulties and confusion in the learning process, I involved my students in using their and my experiences in constructing knowledge across meaningful content areas (Lodge et al., 2018). Hence, I realized that I could have developed myself into a more transformative English teacher if I had been able to attend university classes regularly during my master's level studies and teach English at school.

Chapter Essence

In this chapter, I attempted to deal with my lived experiences of English language learning, uncovering the critical events of my academic journey from intermediate to master's level studies. Here, I have portrayed my lived experiences through which I started loving English after facing many demotivating hardships and challenges. My teachers' usual counselling before going to college and senior students' pessimistic suggestions for opting for another subject than English major, and then an unplanned major English class with Poudel sir helped me become accustomed to learning English at college. Besides, my visit to India and meeting with the SP remotivated me to move through the untrodden path that most of my schoolmates had not taken.

Similarly, I have depicted my experiences of being motivated in English language learning after my involvement in Teaching English and other subjects in the English medium at a private school. My lived experience of preparing an English

newspaper at college and my motivation in reading 'The Kathmandu Post' emerged to have been a milestone in my educational journey of English language learning. In addition, I have portrayed my lived experiences of the educational journey I experienced during my micro-teaching (fifteen days) and practice teaching (forty-five days) at my campus. Although I was a remote student, I gradually adjusted to the English classes with my conscious efforts at the higher levels.

As an English language learner from a remote village where educating children was supposed to have been a waste of time, I experienced many painful and gainful experiences during my student life until I completed my master's in English education in 2005. The remoteness of my village with conservative beliefs regarding English language learning was my barrier on the way to quality education in general and English language education in particular. On the other hand, my parents' inspiration, teachers' motivation, self-awareness, and optimism motivated me to learn English.

CHAPTER V

MY JOURNEY AS AN ENGLISH TEACHER

This chapter covers many “gainful” yet painful moments of my professional journey as an English teacher for the past two decades. Here, I recollect the lived experiences and practices of my struggles and achievements during my professional development. Here, I begin presenting those experiences starting from an all-round pre-primary level teacher in the initial years to an English language teacher at a university now.

The Teaching Practice and the Farewell Colours

The fifteen-day micro-teaching, a part of the evaluation of my intermediate-level studies, became the foundation of my career as an English teacher. My involvement in teaching seventh-grade students during that forty-five-day practice is vividly present in my memory. It was Sunday, the last week of August 1997. I went to a teaching practice session at *Ujjyaalo* Secondary School, Butwal, with my classmates. Here, I present a snapshot of how I faced my first visit to the school as a teacher:

Some students were running here and there on the playground, and some in the classrooms, arranging their seats. Teachers were busy putting their signatures on the attendance register and preparing for the classes in the office. After we greeted the head teacher and other teachers, I handed the letter from our campus to the head teacher.

“Namaskar, I’m sorry, I’m busy for a little while. I’ll talk to you in detail after the classes start. (Pointing to the staff room) Please sit there for some minutes,” said the head teacher.

“Welcome to our school,” said the head teacher. After a short meeting, everyone chose the classes they wanted to teach, and I decided to teach English in grade seven. In vein with Cheng et al. (2010), I learnt many student-centered teaching approaches, methods and classroom strategies from my I. Ed. and B. Ed. studies; however, the schools where I conducted my teaching practice did not accept these strategies. In their case study, Kazaz and Alagozlu (2020) found that Turkish schools prioritized pre-service teacher training, preparation and development.

Similarly, my university education helped me prepare myself to become an English teacher through my intermediate, bachelor and master’s degrees in English language education. Although I experienced and practised almost the same methods and classroom pedagogies at all levels, teaching at different schools at different intervals of time gradually helped me grow to become an English teacher. Similarly, I realize how my teachers contributed to support my higher studies by enhancing practice through a deeper understanding of the prior experiences of my situation (Money et al., 2019). At this stage, I came to realize that my school education helped me develop my linguistic confidence and foundation of my higher education that helped me grow a contributing teacher now. Hence, it might be why I read the texts, provided the students with answers to textbook exercises, encouraged repetition and rote learning, and evaluated students through written texts. However, because of my students’ request, I engaged students on Fridays in some activities like:

“Good morning, sir.” (Students looked happier than on other days.). “Sir, aja Good-Friday ho hai. Tyasaile hami lai aaja game khelaununa.” (Sir, it’s Friday today. Will you rather design some game to play than teach lessons from the textbook?)

(After exchanging customary greetings, and as my pre-plan to teach a story from the textbook, it became difficult for me to manage games and other extra-curricular activities in that Friday class. However, I realized the context and prepared myself to change the plans.)

“OK, if you wish to play, you need to keep your books and notebooks in your bags,” I said. On the blackboard, I wrote the words ‘Girls’ and ‘Boys’.” Then I told them that they needed to find positive words to describe the terms ‘Girls’ and ‘Boys’.

Remember, girls will describe the boys and vice-versa.” (Then I wrote the words ‘Girls’ on the left and ‘Boys’ on the right top of the blackboard.

“Students, let me give an example, ‘boys are handsome, and ‘girls are (blank...)?’ Everyone was excited to respond... “beautiful’.

Then turn by turn, students from both groups presented different words (adjectives) to describe their counterparts. The bell rang. The students looked happy.

As a young mind, I would have composed the following poem:

*Awesome, beautiful and creative
 Studious, selfish and simple
 Dashing, dangerous and demanding
 And other words, to describe boys and girls
 Wow! How happy my students seemed to play
 The games that describe their names
 With adjectives of quality
 Increasing my learners’ creativity.*

Initially, I was worried about whether I could adapt to the classroom environment. The initial days of pedagogical practicum begin with a high level of anxiety, causing blind minds and fears of failure in their classes for most English

language pre-service teachers (Edgar & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019). However, I enjoyed making lesson plans, teaching and conducting Friday programs during my teaching practice within a few days of teaching at school. Gradually, I gained more profound knowledge about my learners. Podolsky et al. (2019) also share that teachers gain better experiences in their effectiveness when they have a supportive and collegial environment. One of the moments captures my feelings below:

It was Sunday. As I reached school, the school peon said, “Sir, huzurlai head sir le officema bolaunu bhaeko chha”. Urgent chha re. (Sir, the head teacher has called you to his office. He said it’s urgent). I was nervous, but I went to see him.

(With a smile) “Laxman sir, please come in. “My daughter also studies in grade seven. Children are happy with your teaching. But there are quite slow learners too in the class. My daughter is not good either. Please manage some time to take a coaching class after 4.0 p. m. The school provides you one hundred per student.”

There were twelve students for a one-month coaching class, and I started the classes the next day. The class wasn’t different from my practice teaching except for the number of students. Lee (2009) also finds that the proximity between the



teacher and students makes it easier for the teacher to create a friendlier and more positive classroom environment. And by the time I completed my teaching practice, I had completed the coaching class with Rs. 1200 income. It was my first earning with a lot of learning, and, more importantly, this little incentive motivated me that becoming a teacher not only empowers us academically, socially, and emotionally but

benefits us financially. Among a blend of fear and enthusiasm (Edgar & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019), I developed some optimism about becoming an English language teacher from my first practice teaching.

Be a Teacher Anyway

After I completed my I. Ed. studies in August 1997, I went to Dimapur with my father. There I was fascinated by how the students and police officers spoke English. *“I wish I were able to speak like them!”* I often talked to myself. My short visit to the SP, who selflessly suggested that I should work hard for my better education, made me realize the importance of education, especially English education, in my life. In his essay, Nissani (2008) emphasizes the importance of education, which opens doors to job and promotion opportunities. There, I understood why my father had encouraged me to study English since childhood. Duwadi (2018) also emphasizes the importance of learning English, making students capable of local, national, and international communication. Hence, after returning to Butwal after three months, I decided to simultaneously teach at a school and pursue my bachelor’s degree in English education.

*May 19, 1998- Jan. 20, 2000:
Pre-Primary to Lower-
Secondary Level English
teacher at Manakamana
English Boarding School,
Butwal*

I visited different schools enquiring if there were any vacant posts for a teacher. I visited almost seven schools and met the principals or vice-principals. The common question I faced was, “Have you had any teaching experience?” However, their only answer would be, “Sorry bhai, we don’t have any vacancy if you aren’t experienced.” This made me think, “How can one have an experience without getting a chance to teach? Will I not get a job at school? But I was still optimistic about having a job, earning experience

and living costs for my studies. It was Sunday, May 17, 1998, when I went to a lower secondary school, “Manakamana English Boarding School’ in the town. As I reached, I knocked on the main gate and entered the school. There was a middle-aged, formally dressed gentleman:

I: “Excuse me, sir, namaskar.

The gentleman: “Good morning.” Any help, please?

I: Sir, I want to teach. I want to know if there’s any vacant post of a teacher?

The gentleman: It’s scorching here. Please come into my office.” [Looking at his nameplate on his table, I knew he was Mr. Lucky Lama, the vice-principal of the school].

[Wiping the sweat with my hands, I followed him into his office.]

Mr. Lama: Please take your seat. And... could you tell me about yourself, your family, your education, and your interest?

I: Sir, my name is Laxman Prasad Bhandari. I... umm... I am from Gulmi. I am waiting for my B. Ed. results. My father is in the Indian police in Nagaland. And my family is in Gulmi.

[I answered him, taking long breaths with much difficulty in English.]

Mr. Lama: Why do you want to be a teacher?

I: Sir, I want to do my bachelor's degree in English. So I am willing to continue my studies with a teaching job. I want to be an English teacher.

Mr. Lama: Do you have any teaching experience?

I: No, Sir. But, I completed one and a half months of teaching practice as a part of my practical examination in I. Ed.

Mr. Lama: How long will you serve this school if selected?

I: Sir, I am just going to join B. Ed., so at least for three years, I'll be learning with you and serving the school.

Mr. Lama: [with a brightened face and smile] Okay, meet me on Tuesday with an application and your bio-data. But you must teach Geography in grade seven and English at the primary level. Can you?

I: Sir.... that's fine but, I need to prepare first.

Mr. Lama: Okay, I'll give you a book now. (Taking a textbook from his shelf and opening it), prepare the lesson 'The Topography of Nepal' and come for an observation class on Tuesday. Don't forget to bring an application and copies of your documents

I: OK sir. Thank you very much.

(Then I went to my room with the book. I was both happy and afraid!)

I had an intense desire for the teaching job to improve my English, so I spent the whole of Monday memorizing the unfamiliar words, phrases and meanings of the lesson 'The Topography of Nepal' for grade seven students. Believing that 'practice makes a man perfect, I must have written the whole text five or six times and read it a dozen times in front of a mirror to prepare for the teaching. I also memorized the spelling of unfamiliar words and phrases that I did not want to be confused with while writing them on the blackboard in my observation class the next day. And it was Tuesday. I went to school. I greeted the vice-principal and the principal Nabin Lama. Both the principal and the vice-principal took me to grade seven:

About forty students are sitting inside the classroom. As we enter the room, the students stand up and greet us all together: "Good morning, sir."

“Good morning, students.” Please sit down. [They take their seats. However, the room is not spacious enough for everyone to sit comfortably. It is rather scorching hot outside, and there is only one fan swinging on the ceiling!]

“Have all of you brought the Geography book to read?” (Some say ‘yes’, but many keep quiet.)

“Okay, open the book and start writing the meaning of the unfamiliar words from the lesson ‘The Topography of Nepal’. You will learn the word meaning by heart first to understand the lesson.” (I directed the students to the specific page number to copy the unfamiliar words from the lesson. Then I wrote the words with their meanings on the blackboard while the students copied them on their notebooks.)

The students read the word meanings aloud. Then I read the text in English at normal speed while the students followed me. After this, I wrote some questions and their answers on the board and asked the students to copy them on their notebooks. The class ended when the students read the set of questions and answers three or four times. Finally, I assigned them to rewrite and memorize those sets of question-answers at the end of the class. When the bell rang, I went to the office.

Before I entered the office, the principal and the vice-principal were already sitting at the tables. They seemed they were waiting for me. As I entered the office, the principal said, “Sir, we’ve selected you. Congratulations! But you cannot leave the school in the mi-session.” So if you guarantee now, you’ll start your job right from today.”

“Thank you, sir. I won’t leave the school in the mid-session.”

I started my career as an English, Geography and Social Studies teacher from grades three to seven on May 19, 1998. Preparing long hours to teach different subjects was tiresome, but at the same time, I was improving my linguistic competence. Guzalkhon (2022) defines linguistic competence as the knowledge of language acquired by a learner and the ability to use it in practice to create speech. I gained knowledge about the language through regular reading and writing the texts I had to teach and prepare for my examinations. This helped me comprehend my college courses somehow more easily. I continued reading and writing unfamiliar words/phrases and their meanings and lessons and exercises from my students' textbooks. Although Boyle (2006) claimed memorization and understating are opposites and comprehension is not automatically linked to prior memorization, most teachers used translation, rote learning and memorization in their classes in my context. At this point, I realized translation and memorization helped me improve my studies and teaching.

As a teacher, my profession helped me to explore my genuine interest. My engagement in conducting morning assemblies, taking students on educational visits to different places, interacting with their parents/guardians, and reporting students' progress to the school administration enhanced my confidence. Initially, I found teaching young children challenging, but I gradually learnt to deal with them. In a way, teaching helped me excel in my studies at college.

Wearing Two Hats Simultaneously

Teaching at a private English school was a pleasure for me until I managed sufficient time to prepare lesson plans. However, when I had to balance my studies at college and duties at school, I started experiencing a shortage of time when I joined B. Ed. I had to attend my university classes in the morning from 6.00 am to 10.00 a. m.

and reach my school before 10.00 am. This means that I started feeling to have been wearing two hats simultaneously (Canh, 2018): as a full-time student at my college and a full-time teacher at school. It was my pleasure to get a job at an institutional school which helped me earn money for my daily expenses and improve my English. However, it was a kind of hassle for me during the examinations. I had to prepare for my own tests at college and to prepare question papers and examine more than three hundred answer sheets of my students created pressure on my schedule. Here, I share my lived experiences of those challenging but fruitful days:

Alarm alarms early in the morning
Classes to attend and
Attendance to maintain
Awakening myself for life's turning
Preparing bulky books to learn
By heart until the last page turn!
Dreams of mine and parents
Lessons to prepare as long as Parents
When the school bell warns me at nine
Despite sickness, I'd learnt by heart
To say, 'How're you, sir? I'm fine.'
But, seeing the innocent faces in the class
Pondering upon to give a lift to my class
Organized my hard times to easy
The rural life to ease
I learnt to get up early
I earned to feed myself early
And comprehended life early
Wearing two hats simultaneously

The above poem represents a “capsule of time” (Pandey, 2018) or “memory book” (Thomson & Holland, 2012) in the way I used reflection for the time when I learnt to accomplish two equally essential full-time duties: studies and career for my

personal growth. In comparing these two different roles, my studies were more like a river, while my job at school was a stream. I was in a rush for school duties and delaying submitting my assignments at college was common. Khanal (2019b) explored nearly half of the students at Tribhuvan University remain irregular for one reason affecting the university's total results. Despite my inability to attend the classes regularly in the first year, I developed a better understanding of the pedagogical approaches, methods and techniques, the learners, and the situated challenges in teaching and learning English in a diverse context like Nepal. Saturdays were the days for me to complete the whole week's lessons. From time to time, when I had leisure time, I learnt from friends and teachers at college about complex topics. Learning occurs when learners engage in more accessible subjects and complex ones in collaboration with their more capable peers or under adult guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, my honest relationships with my teachers, colleagues and peers and their support in my studies helped me succeed handle both hats throughout my bachelor's studies.

I realize that I encountered a range of approaches, methods and techniques for language teaching and learning during my bachelor's studies. Sometimes, I tried to implement those techniques in my class at school, making students read the texts, question each other, write things on the board, and so on. However, most of the time, I had to maintain complete silence in my classes. For my school, students' being present, attentive and obedient in class was regarded as active student participation (Duong & Dejaeghere, 2022). I still remember how my school vice-principal instructed me in his office one day in October 1997, "*Sir, now we need to prepare our students for the final examinations, so you should be strict with the students.*" Now I realize that the school adopted teacher-centered approaches where the students were

expected to attend classes regularly, pay attention to the lesson, carefully take notes, and obediently follow teachers' directions.

However, on Fridays, my school organized extra-curricular and co-curricular activities like quizzes, games, oratory speeches, debates, etc. I could notice more enthusiasm and happiness on my students' faces than while being in other classes on other days. I wanted to engage my students in various language activities, which would produce a helpful noise in the class. Duong and Dejaeghere (2022) further share that teachers' expectations of their students' engagement in classroom activities are consistent with teachers' perceptions of their classroom roles and practices. I wasn't satisfied with my readings on student-centered teaching approaches in my bachelor's studies because the methods I had to apply were focused on getting my students higher grades than knowledge. Farooqui (2021) also shares that Bangladeshi students' promotion to higher classes is based solely on their annual examinations performance. Now I understand why my school principal often warned us to focus on the result-based preparation of our students. He often said to us almost one month before the final examinations:

“Sirs and madams, if you cannot give good results this year, some students might leave our school. And, you know, ... you might lose your job. So, please provide them with all important questions and answers indirectly. I might enter any of your classes and ask your students questions about your lessons. So, please concentrate on your job!”

July 17, 2000 (for two months): English teacher: Lower-Secondary Level at Ideal English Boarding School, Butwal

In vein with Farooqui (2021), our students'

assessment system was solely based on the examinations conducted at the end of each year. Despite the school rules of focusing on students only on examination results, I

often asked them to write in English whatever they understood about a program they watched on television or listened to on the radio and read it at the beginning of the class the next day. This helped my students and me to use the English language in authentic contexts. Thus, my experience as a lower-secondary teacher of the English language and a student of English Education in my bachelor's studies offered me to understand why modern learning approaches and methods like communicative methods were not in use in real classrooms.

The foundation of my teaching career began at Manakamana School, where I taught English and other subjects for about one and a half years. My desire to upgrade myself in teaching only English motivated me to apply for a lower secondary level teacher position at Idea English Boarding School after taking my B. Ed. first-year examinations in the second week of July 2000. Although I got an appointment on July 17 and started teaching, I could not even complete an academic session there. I suffered from Meningitis, and it took me more than six months to completely recover from it. Therefore, I could not have any remarkable experience while teaching at Idea School, which affected my studies and health for some time.

Teaching in Kathmandu

Upon completing my B. Ed. studies in Butwal, I moved to Kathmandu, the capital city, with excitement to pursue my master's degree in English education. Expensive room rents, travel costs, education costs, etc., were whirling in my head while travelling to Kathmandu from Butwal on May 15, 2001 (Jestha 2, 2058). *"I don't have anyone in Kathmandu to support me? Does my teaching experience in Butwal help me get a job in the capital? It should help, of course!"* Here, I share a dialogue between 'Self' now (Laxman2022) and 'Self' thinking about finding a job

and pursuing a master's degree in Kathmandu (Laxman2001) that took place while I was travelling by a night bus to Kathmandu:

Laxman2022: So you're going to Kathmandu to do M. Ed. in English, are you?

Laxman2001: Me? Yes, Laxman, I'm.

Laxman2022: Are you going to take some job to support your expenses?

Laxman2001: Yes, I should. But I'm wondering how to find a teaching job.

Laxman2022: Why don't you try some other jobs then?

Laxman2001: Oooh, no. I learnt a lot from teaching in Butwal. It helps me in my university studies as well, I think. But if I can't get a job at school, I think I need to search for another job.

Laxman2022: It sounds like you want to become an English teacher in the future.

Laxman2001: Yes, I love teaching! Well, it's been my dream since I was at school. But I'm wondering about finding a job in Kathmandu.

Laxman2022: Why's that? There're schools everywhere there.

Laxman2001: I heard teaching in Kathmandu is like chewing an iron rod for those who come from rural schools with Nepali as a medium of instruction (NMI).

Laxman2022: Don't worry! Umm... yes... you've got teaching experience, don't you?

Laxman2001: Yes, I do. I've more than two years of experience teaching at private schools in Butwal.

Laxman2022: Wasn't that English medium school there?

Laxman2001: Yes, it was.

Laxman2022: Why do you worry much? There's almost no difference in teaching in Butwal and Kathmandu. Be optimistic!

(Thanks Peter de Vries, 2012 for the inspiration to write this conversation)

As a teacher, I reflect on my earlier experiences with my students. Each student I have taught in my life has been significant to me. However, of all my years of teaching, I remember one of the classes I taught when I had just come to Kathmandu for my master's degree in May 2001.

It was Friday, May 18, 2001. It had been only three days since I was in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. I lived in a small rented room on the third floor of a five-story building at Bagbazar. Early in the morning, I remembered my teacher in English for Mass Communication in my bachelor studies class saying to us, "Do you know? Advertisements are the sources of your jobs when you go to Kathmandu. Hence, I went to Ratna Park, where I could read and/or buy newspapers. As I reached the shop, more than a dozen people were buying and reading newspapers, and the number of visitors soon increased. I could easily notice that most readers' concerns were in the 'job advertisement' section. As I picked up a newspaper, 'The Kathmandu Post', my eyes fell on an advertisement with the heading 'Lower Secondary English Teacher Wanted' for Rising Readers' Academy.

<p><i>May 18, 2001- April 28, 2005: English teacher: First at lower secondary and then secondary level at Rising Readers' School, Kathmandu</i></p>

After I read the vacancy announcement fully, I decided to visit the school to give it a try on the same day. So, following the direction shown in the advertisement, I reached the school at about 10.30 and met the principal.

"Could you tell me about yourselves?" he asked in a native-like accent. I was

fascinated by his English, but with some nervousness, I answered his questions to my best. I did not try to hide any information about my family and social background, academic journey, and teaching experience with him.

Interrupting me, he asked, "Would you like to take an observation class today? I believe you can take a class today after preparing a lesson for an hour. Then he handed me a book, 'Gul Mohar Graded English Course for Nepal' and an Oxford Advanced Dictionary. This year, you'll teach at a lower-secondary level, and if you do better, we'll upgrade you to a secondary level." Pointing to a table, he asked, "Please sit at the table and prepare the lesson 'The Clever Shepherd', and he went out. I took the book and the dictionary. I prepared the lesson to my best. After an hour of preparation, the principal asked Aaya sister to show me grade seven.

I was about 12.30 pm. I entered the class and exchanged cordial greetings with the students. There were around thirty students. Interestingly, I noticed that each student had an English dictionary on their table. I was somehow nervous about facing the children of Kathmandu. They looked gentle. After I introduced myself, I said to them, "Dear
If I ask everyone's name now, I will remember none's name at the end of the class, so I will ask your names as we start the class, OK?" The students nodded with smiles.

I had underlined the unfamiliar words and phrases and written their meaning in pencil in the book while preparing the lesson at the principal's office. So gaining self-confidence, I began the lesson by writing the name of the lesson, "The Clever Shepherd", on the board. "Students, "What do you call a person who grazes sheep?" "Shepherd," Students uttered together in a rhyming tone.

Then as I was writing the underlined vocabulary from my book on the board, a student said, "Excuse me, sir! Should we find the meaning to these words?" I planned to write those words' meanings and ask the students to copy them on their notebooks. But immediately, I replied to her, "Yes, you will write the meaning and make a sentence of your own using these words."

After completing the task, I explained the lesson: "Students, 'The Clever Shepherd' is a short play about an unpopular king John. He did not want his people to be richer and more successful than himself in England (and continue)...." I explained the dialogue between King, Abbot and Shepherd in English using the Nepali language when complicated terms had to be explained. The students were silent until I completed the explanation and asked them to speak. Finally, I dictated the questions and answers from the exercise given in their textbook, which they hurriedly copied into their notebooks. I told them to read the same at home. The bell rang! As I went to the principal's office, I saw a student following me. She called, "Sir... sir", She ran close to me and said, "Sir, you're teaching so nicely!" And in the same evening, I got a call from the principal. "Laxman, sir, you're selected as our lower secondary level English teacher. Please come to school at 9.45 am from tomorrow." My happiness had no boundaries! I got a job in Kathmandu on the first attempt!

My students' enthusiastic participation in class in all schools I taught in Butwal and Kathmandu and my colleagues' cooperation encouraged me to develop my pedagogical skills there. The fear of facing/teaching students in the capital was gone; I gained both linguistic and pedagogical competence. Drawing on an extensive range of sources, Lejonberg and Tiplic (2016) drew my attention to clear

communication of feedback and advice in developing my self-efficacy in teaching. I experienced higher self-belief than before when I faced the interview and observation class at Rising Readers' Academy in Kathmandu. The novices articulate a less-confident position regarding their teaching experiences (Onafowora, 2004). Analyzing the above text, my involvement in different levels of studies, engagement in teaching English, interactions with teachers, colleagues and students, and my self-initiation ve helped me develop into a confident teacher to undertake responsibilities.

The first decade of my teaching was something I would like to term 'The underpinning period of my career as an English teacher from 1998 to 2005. I collected various gainful lived experiences through different satisfying as well as painful moments in those years. Hence, in developing myself as an English language teacher, I went to Syangjya to teach English at a secondary level community school.

Does Politics Matter in Teacher Appointments?

After I completed my Master of Education (M. Ed.) in English, I was attracted to teaching in a community school when I got a call from one of my relatives from Syangjya, a hilly district in Western Nepal, on May 5, 2007. It was like flowing with the tide when I was offered an English teacher's job at a higher secondary

<p><i>May 7 to October 17, 2007: Secondary Level English Teacher at Aaradhana Higher Secondary School, Syangjya</i></p>

level in a community school. The peaceful environment of the green hills, helpful villagers, and cooperative colleagues and students positively affected my life in the village. In this line, Eze (2019) claims that teachers with master's degrees, to some extent, have a higher understanding of climate change than those with lower degrees. Thus, from the first day of my classes at school, I started expecting long-term service there. However, after three weeks, on a Saturday, I experienced something painful that I would like to share here:

It was very sunny and hot outside, so my house owner and I were sitting in the yard under the shadow of a big mango tree. He talked about various social issues like political, economic and academic issues. Meanwhile, Bijay sir, the head teacher of Aaradhana Higher Secondary School arrived to greet us, “Namaskar Chudamani daju, and Namaskar Laxman, sir”. After we exchanged our cordial greeting with him, Bijay sir asked me: “Laxman Sir, there was something important I’d like to ask you if you don’t mind.” I flushed! That afternoon, I called a student into the office for not bringing his textbook and homework to the class. “What’s the matter, sir? Is there anything wrong I caused? Is it about a complaint against my classes, sir? I asked him. Bijay Sir (with a smile) said:

“No sir, students are well-satisfied with your teaching. The School Management Committee (SMC) is pleased to have you at our school. And (with a smile on his face), I am happier and more hopeful than others that this year, we’ll have better results in SLC.”

Chudamani daju: Ho bhanya. Meri chhori ni paas hune bhai you paali Anjreji ma. (Yes, true. My daughter, too, will pass the English examinations this year).

I: I had some relief then. “So, what’s the matter, sir?”

Bijay Sir: Umm... yes... It’s about something secret about umm ... about your appointment letter.”

I: What’s it, sir? It has already been twenty-two days since I started teaching here. You know. When you invited me to this school, I left my job in Kathmandu.”

Bijay sir: "There's a meeting this evening for the same, sir. Don't worry. You'll get it tomorrow morning. But the committee members want to know something about you more..."

I: What's that, sir? What should I do more? You know I've tried to do best in my classes."

"Ke para ho, head sir. Ajhai sirlai niyukti patra dinu bhachhaina?"

Chudamani daju showed his concern. [Meaning: What's the matter, sir? Haven't you given him his letter of appointment yet?]

Bijay sir (to me): No, it's ready. But the committee just wants to know your faith in.....umm...

Chudamanidaju: ee...mailebujhe... uhaan (pointing towards me) ta hamrai Hariyali party ko ta ho ni. Ajhai thaha chhain ki kya ho tapaiharu lai. (Yes, I understood. He's a member of our Hariyali party. Don't you even know about him?)

I was shocked. I flushed! I did not know what to say. And before I uttered anything, Bijay sir rose to leave and said, "That's all Chudamani daju." As he went, he further said to me, "Laxman sir, I'll provide you the appointment letter tomorrow morning."

After Bijay sir left, Chudamanidaju said, "Sir, dekhnu bho ni, yiniharu le (indicating the CMC) kasari rajaniti garchhan schoolma?Tyai bhaera maile ta head sir sanga, sir hamrai party ko bhandiyen. Party ko malai ke matlab! (Sir, did you see how they do politics in school? So, I told the head teacher that you were in our party. I don't care about any political party!) I did not say anything.

Analyzing the text above, I now understand how politics affects education. Despite my qualifications, experiences, and pedagogical skill, the school management committee was reluctant to provide me with my appointment letter. Similar to my situation, Khadka and Bhattarai (2021) explored that political interest affects more than qualifications, training, work experience, etc., in school affairs in Nepal, while Amshah and Al-Qudah (2020) identify nepotism as a significant challenge in teachers' appointment in Jordanian universities. Although I did not or could not rebel against the SMC's influence during my appointment at that time, I now realize that I should have made the head teacher and the SMC members aware of their immoral/unethical political practices in school, no matter whether I would be selected or not. Similarly, Bhattarai (2015) claims that political misuse in the Nepali context, especially in community schools during teacher selection, has spoiled the quality of education in Nepal. Eventually, after twenty-three days, I received an appointment letter. I continued teaching for six months until I was selected as a teacher at a college in Kathmandu on November 19, 2007.

As said, 'once bitten, twice shy, I was doubtful of my continuity of teaching at Aaradhana School. Although I felt that students were enjoying my classes and colleagues were satisfied with my appointment there, I sometimes mulled over, *"If they start treating me just because I don't support their political party?"* The school heads' lack of accountability, whether to satisfy their political leaders or create a synergy for quality education (Khanal, 2019a), made me suspicious, and I sought another job at another institution. As informed by a friend, I applied for the post of lecturer in the English language at Ujyaalo Multiple Campus, Kathmandu, in the second week of October 2007. And eventually, after an observation class, I started

<p><i>Nov 19, 2007- July 10, 2008: English Teacher: 10+2 and bachelor's level at Ujyaalo Multiple College, Kathmandu</i></p>
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teaching there. I enjoyed reading beautiful stories, poems, essays, etc., from the book *Adventures of English* and sharing my knowledge with students. When I read Moti Nissani's essay "Why Go to University?" I understood more advantages of taking a university education especially English education. Education makes people capable of getting a job or promotion and empowers them socially, culturally, and emotionally (Nissani, 2008). While preparing four levels (literal comprehension, interpretation, critical thinking, and assimilation) to those interesting literary texts to teach the Bachelor in Business Studies (BBS) students at college, I also developed my critical thinking skills. In addition to teaching, I took a seven-week International English Language Teaching System (IELTS) course at an educational consultancy to improve my English language skills. The classes were also facilitated by an Australian instructor, where I learnt how important for a teacher is to continue learning. Sullivan et al. (2020) also share quality teachers show an ongoing desire to keep improving. Now I have become more conscious of those days as a time of struggle to uplift my academic and professional journey.

Analyzing my career path discussed above, I have been an English teacher from pre-primary to university level since 1998. Students perform in a better way on measures of success beyond their test scores as their teachers gain experience (Podolsky et al., 2019). Accordingly, I experienced visible changes in my students' performance aligning with my academic and professional development. At the same time, my teaching career flourished in a visible hierarchy from lower to upper levels as an English language teacher.

Chapter Essence

Coming to this stage, I felt different as a teacher from where I was at the beginning of my career as a teacher of English. Although it was easy to have been an

established teacher in private schools for me, who had come from an NMI, the only English environment of the schools, my theoretical knowledge from my university studies and my intense interest in teaching brought me to this stage. While preparing English texts to teach my students at school, I learnt different genres of English. I could not sometimes believe in my own potential during those days when I delved back into my past experiences as a learner of English. In his major study, Onafowora (2004) found novice teachers articulate a less than confident position as regards their teaching experiences. I developed my skills in writing paragraphs and essays and gained knowledge of grammar rules.

In the same way, I got sufficient exposure to English-speaking opportunities since speaking Nepali wasn't allowed at the schools I taught. More importantly, I acquired the skills of explaining English texts in English to some extent, which was my dream while I was a school student. Thus, the skills that I gained while teaching at different schools and the knowledge I learnt from different levels of my school and university studies contributed to the continuity of my academic journey as well as the development of my professional career, starting from an all-round pre-primary level teacher in the initial years to an English language educator of a university at this stage.

CHAPTER VI

CRAFTING MY TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVES

In the previous chapter, I presented “the painful and gainful lived experiences” that I gained at different intervals of my professional journey as an English language teacher. There I experienced a series of incidents that appeared to be the milestone for changing the beliefs taken for granted in my life. I vividly recollected those experiences of my involvement in training sessions, seminars, webinars, and especially my engagement in MPhil studies as a milestone of my transformative professional journey as an English educator. In this chapter, I explore my experiences of how my first teacher training session encouraged me to attend more seminars, training sessions, and workshops as a listener and presenter through different organizations that would work for teacher education.

I Can Teach the Same Way!

I was curious to attend teacher training, my first consciously known training, when the school assistant brought notice to the teachers' office during my lunch break at Rising Readers' Academy on Thursday, March 2005. "*Teachers, there's a notice for mandatory presence,*" he drew our attention. To that day, I was satisfied when I found my students being able to recall the assigned texts or question-answers in the following class and write in their examinations as they copied from my the dictation in my classes. However, participating in the whole-day training changed my perceptions of teaching English. It helped me change my ways of presenting before the students. Although I had to concentrate on completing the courses on time and making students learn the texts by heart like before, I started surfing the internet,

collecting something different from that in my teaching diary, and engaging my students. Here, I present a snapshot:

At ten a. m., with twenty other teachers, I eagerly waited for the trainer in the training hall. Then a middle-aged man in his entire professional attire entered with our principal. After a cordial exchange of greetings, the session began: "Please write an adjective in your notebook that best describes you. It should begin with the same English letter as your name begins: For example, My name is Laxman Gnawali, so I write Lively Laxman". The facilitator said to us. Most of us, the participants, wrote matching adjectives to their names, and it was wonderful to listen to them." Beautiful Bishnu", "perfect Pradip", "dangerous Dhan", "laborious Laxman"...There was a huge round of applaud. Some participants were still discussing the most suitable adjective for this name.

Facilitator: (Providing a piece of paper to each of us) "Now, please write the names of any three books you have recently read or have been reading. Remember, the books should not be of your school or college textbooks." This question made most of us look at each other. Only a few of the participants submitted their pieces of paper with answers. I was one of those who did not have anything to submit because I hadn't read any books other than the course books for the last six months. Our facilitator added, "Sirs, Madams, now must be thinking to start reading some books? How can we expect our students to read if we teachers don't read? I was ashamed! Meanwhile, I was wondering about "I must read. I will get some books from the library and start today..." The facilitator might have noticed me mulling over something, so he called, "Excuse me, sir, what's your name?"

I: (Gaining concentration towards him) "Yes, sir. I'm... I'm laborious Laxman."

Facilitator: "Laxman jee, could you please help me distribute these reading sheets to each participant?" He then divided the class into five groups with four participants in each said to all, "Please read the text and report the summary to the class after twenty minutes. "After preparing the summaries, we presented them to the class.

After a tea break, moving further to another issue, the facilitator asked, "You'll write an introduction to one of your colleagues and read it to the class." He distributed a piece of paper to

each of us. "Please write a short introduction to your colleague sitting next to you now and read it to the class." He added,

*2008- 2011: English Teacher at Dynamic College, Seto Himil College
April 15, 2010: Lecturer of English at Butwal Commerce Campus, Butwal*

"Dear all, don't forget to write the adjective your colleague added to their names at the beginning of this session." After most of the participants had completed writing their next-sit colleague's introduction, everyone read them. The facilitator asked us again, "How often do you engage your students in creative writing?" Almost all, including me, remained silent, just looking at a few participants who said, "sometimes!". I realized that I would only make my students write the answers to the exercise from the textbooks in the name of language activities in my class.

Going back to my experiences of participation in my first training session as an English language teacher, I now realize that Rising Readers' Academy put its efforts into enhancing its teachers' classroom practices through training. Gibbs and Coffey (2004) state, "[t]raining can change teachers such that their students improve

their learning (p. 98). The training made me revisit my teaching practices when I used to dictate a list of words from the textbook lessons and made my students memorize them to prepare for their examinations. Teachers use the same teaching strategies they were taught for their first seven years as professional educators (Saldana, 2018). However, I engaged my students with the textbook activities in language use. I gradually started realizing the need for designing and implementing pair/group works to engage students in effective learning (Wilson et al., 2018). During the training, I felt more empowered to learn classroom strategies by discussing the raised issues with my colleagues than with the trainer. In this line, Kagan (2014) claimed that pair/group work promotes learning by providing opportunities for learners to explain the reasoning to themselves and one another. Then, I started getting my students involved more in classroom activities, encouraging them to read, speak, write, and ask questions rather than just listen to my lectures in the classes.

I started engaging students in discussions and listening to their voices as I continued engaging in my teaching career while gradually upgrading myself from school to college classes. Then I taught at Dynamic College, Seto Himal College, New Bihani Int'l College and Butwal Commerce Campus. My experience as an English language teacher in these institutions helped me develop my English Language and pedagogical skills to come to his stage. As in the phase of the transformative journey, I would have composed the following poem:

*On the same route, I walk today
As I walked following you yesterday
Others came, and decades past, to walk
For uncertain times, still, my successors will come
Who is the pathfinder, and who is the disciple?
That set me on that trodden path and lifeworlds
Which they and I unfold*

*In the class
 If I can't risk an untrodden path
 Until I realize that every teacher
 As the ghost of their former teacher,
 (I am indebted to Thich Nhat Hanh for the inspiration to write this poem.)*

My participation in teacher professional development training sessions and application of those skills in classrooms made me aware that there were better approaches and methods of teaching. Adding to the importance of teacher training, Moeini (2008) shares that teacher training prepares teachers to work to meet students' learning needs. Although I had theoretically learnt to integrate language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in teaching at college, the training session opened my eyes to using those skills practically. Whatever the progress I had made in teaching English was because of my theoretical knowledge gained from all levels of studies and my self-directed strategies that included my own teaching experience, self-monitoring and support from my peers at my workplace (Joshi et al., 2018). In the thanksgiving speech, I articulated to him, “...so, thank you, sir, for opening my eyes to wider and brighter prospects of teaching English.” With the skills gained from the training, I gradually improved my classroom strategies by engaging my students in classroom activities. I started feeling my classes were somehow different from those one-way flow lectures I used to make.

Becoming Conscious of the Significance of Transformative Education

Arriving at this stage, I realized that only the transmission of textbook knowledge to learners to provide them with degrees is insufficient for their overall language development. The only memorization and rote learning did not perhaps help me and my learners to be critical and independent in learning. These decontextualized

pedagogical methods, like the translation, drilling, and repetition methods, might have shaped us into passive listeners or receivers of the information.

While practising such teacher-centered classroom practices, I did not consider exploring how my students could better develop their language skills through critical reflection. Teaching involves not only a systematic transformation of the information (Gracia, 2017), but also implies promoting conceptual thought through communicative activities.

Delving deep into my learning experiences again, I came to understand that learners need to be exposed to all four basic language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing to develop their language competence and performance. I started gaining ideas about how learning brings a change in learners' overall development. I have conceptualized my practices as mechanistic, systematic and objective nature of pedagogical practices (Shrestha, 2020) in the initial phases of my teaching career could not promote critical reflection. On the contrary, my practices of engaging students in information sharing helped them to be critical and transformative. We learn to make meaning, interpret experiences, question, reflect on, and converse about these lived experiences for overall development and growth (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020). I have realized that learning is not just a narrative character where the teacher transfers information to their learners or simply a process of students participating in the communicative activity for meaning sharing. Interactive methods, collaborative learning, dialogue, and group activities help students work through an understanding of themselves, others, and the social world they live in (Cranton, 2016).

Learning is a meaning-making process of interpreting experiences. The interpretation of experience guides our actions or decision-making, resulting in

learning (Mezirow, 1990). I have realized that learning involves making new interpretations of our prior assumptions through critical reflection. Hence, transformative learning becomes both a possibility and a necessity (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020) for me to become a more resourceful and influencing English language teacher. Hence, now I have realized that there is an urgent need to break the grip of hegemonic disempowering forces such as reductionist, transmissionist, and teacher-centric pedagogical practices.

The NELTA Membership and Thereafter

Becoming a life member of the Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) was one of the vital mileposts in my professional development as an English language teacher. Around the first week of April 2014, I chanced to attend a mini-conference of NELTA in Butwal while I was a teacher at Sagarmatha Multiple College, Kathmandu. The English Language Teaching (ELT) experts from home and abroad presented their classroom research findings and emphasized the importance of joining organizations for their professional development. Gnawali (2016) states that NELTA creates opportunities for professional exchange and updates ELT teachers' professional development. From this participation, I was impressed by one of the foreign delegate's words, "*I have been able to meet you all English teachers only because of NELTA.*" While she was sharing her ideas, I wondered I could write a paper! If only I'd been able to share my ideas on a similar topic. No... no, I must be a NELTA member now.

Similarly, an expert from Nepal shared his experience, "*I was able to improve my English to this stage only when I started presenting in conferences and seminars. You know, I have been able to improve my teaching strategies as well.*" I was jealous of his English accent. I was almost spellbound as he went on saying:

“My friends, only teaching in class is insufficient for us now. We need to read, write and share among ourselves and with others. We can share our ELT knowledge and classroom practices on such platforms. We can write articles, research papers and get them published, and...”

I realized that being an English teacher is also developing self through sharing ideas, knowledge, skills, and classroom practices with the ELT community. As a teacher, I understood that I should not only focus on imparting textbook knowledge to my students but I should also learn to foster emancipatory learning by challenging, stimulating, and provoking critical thinking (Cranton, 2016). My participation in this conference opened my eyes to my own development as a teacher and I realized that NELTA could be a suitable platform for my professional development as an English language teacher. NELTA has been organizing conferences, training sessions and workshops for ELT practitioners, researchers, and materials developers in Nepal since its establishment in 1992 (Bista, 2011). Hence, realizing my necessity for pedagogical skills, English language and social horizon through an organization, I became a life member of NELTA on the same day.

After becoming a NELTA member, I was excited to participate in national and international seminars for my professional and English language development. However, I could not continue my participation in other occasions for more few years when I shifted to Butwal for my job in the same year. Gnawali (2016) shares similar findings that teachers in Nepal can remain isolated from each other due to the barriers caused by geography and working conditions. Although I spent five years during my intermediate and bachelor studies there, I again had to struggle for my career, working hard in both morning and day shifts in different colleges.

The NELTA Conference 2019

Working as a rapporteur for TESOL-NELTA Regional Conference and Symposium 2019, organized by NELTA on November 20-23, 2019, set another milestone in my conference presentations. I got an opportunity to meet hundreds of presenters from home and abroad and participate in workshops to enhance my teaching skills. More importantly, as a rapporteur, I closely observed twenty presenters' sessions on different issues of ELT and research to submit a report to the organizer. In my previous participation in the NELTA conference in 2017, I was just a listener, and I used to wonder:

“If I could give such a talk or presentation...It's been many years since I became a life member of NELTA, but why couldn't I do anything? Hasn't it been too late for me to start writing articles? If others can do it, why can't I make it out? I can and I should.” Then many times, I tried to write a paper and attend the conference as a presenter, but I did not dare. I was afraid of the mass of foreign as well as national experts. I would think, “What might happen if I wouldn't be able to convince the audience?”

Delving deep into my above thoughts of almost five years before, I now found myself in a better position. The TESOL-NELTA Conference allowed me to observe how other presenters prepare and closely present their concepts and research papers. I learnt the contents they shared and the presentation skills during the conference when I worked as a rapporteur for those four days. I got acquainted with ELT practitioners from different other countries like India, Thailand, Philippines, Pakistan etc., through similar other ELT platforms.

Participating as a rapporteur at the TESOL-NELTA conference opened the door to opportunities to improve my English language skills and enhance my research

skills through participation, presentation, discussion and reflection on different ELT issues. Accordingly, I presented a research paper at a conference organized by the Department of English Language and Linguistics, Tribhuvan University (TU).

It was February 20-21, 2020; there were many people from different countries when I reached the conference hall at Tribhuvan University at 10.00 am. My session was on the same day in the late afternoon. To gain better confidence, I wanted to see how others presented themselves. After attending the inauguration program and keynote and plenary sessions delivered by ELT experts, I went to Room E. Although my presentation had been scheduled for 3.30 pm., I went to the hall at 1.00 so that I could watch how others present. I prepared my PowerPoint slides on 'Technology in teaching English: In-service teachers' perceptions and practices. There were around forty participants in the hall. After I got my presentation slides ready and introduced myself to the participants, and made sure that the participants were either secondary or tertiary-level English teachers, I asked them a few questions:

"Do you use a cell phone in teaching English in your class? Do you allow your students to use cell phones? Do you use a laptop/computer for teaching? If yes, why do you use them in class?" After a five-minute discussion on the questions, I presented my research findings. The presence of my professor of my master's level made me a little nervous initially, but I ended the session with happiness. Finally, my professor said, "Well done, Laxman! You've improved since I taught you in your master's degree. I'm so glad to see you here!"

The above narratives related to my early days of being passionate about standing in the conference sessions as a speaker had already transpired in me before I started teaching as a full-time faculty member at Butwal Commerce Campus in Butwal, Nepal. Agreeing with Pandey (2021), these experiences helped me understand and frame my socio-cultural engagement and its importance in becoming a transformative English language teacher. In the vein of Vygotsky (1978), along with my improvement in the English language, I learned different pedagogical strategies with other English teachers from home and abroad. Similarly, Mezirow (1997) states critically reviewing my own interpretations, beliefs, and points of view helped me transform my worldview towards being and becoming an English language teacher. Hence, I realized my identity was enriched through my transformative learning journey (Illeris, 2004). After sharing my classroom practices and research findings at conferences, I started critically viewing and reviewing my practices when I found myself among the wider ELT community.

American Certificate at Home

Joining NELTA and MPhil in KUSOED not only offered me opportunities to participate in training and facilitate teacher training sessions but also assisted me in taking an eight-week teacher development online course from an American university. On Wednesday, April 8, 2019, I received an email from American English (AE) E-



Teacher Program, USA, forwarded by the NELTA office, offering different professional development courses. Since the candidates were allowed to choose only

one course of study, I chose Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and applied for it. Eventually, I was delighted to be selected for the course on April 25.

My online course on CBI commenced on January 7 and ended on March 3, 2020. Throughout the course, I had a different experience while learning and sharing ideas on issues like cascading new knowledge, second language acquisition, Bloom's taxonomy, scaffolding, CBI lesson plans, etc. This course gave me a lived experience of how the American education system makes learners more engaged and active in their learning than how I was taught at my school and university. This course helped me improve my classroom practices as well.

Similarly, Mukan et al. (2019) emphasized that deepening knowledge, improving pedagogical skills and competencies, and shaping values and attitudes enhance teachers'

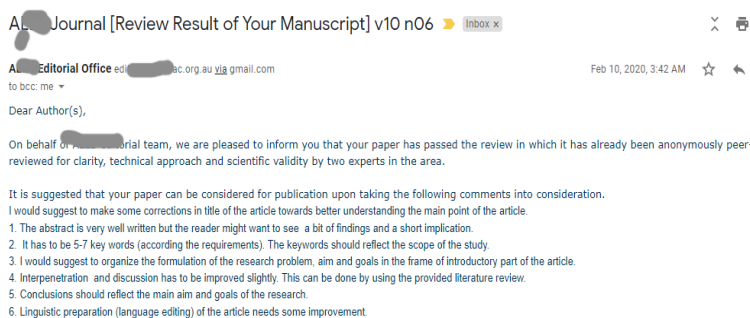
professional development. I

learnt much about how

English is taught through

content, which has helped me

improve my classroom practices. I have started making my students more responsible for their learning. Using CBI in my virtual classrooms during the lockdown period gave me additional satisfaction as an English language teacher. Thus, NELTA, as a professional teachers' organization, helped me develop my professionalism.



Then I Joined MPhil Studies

It was the last Friday evening in December 2018. Getting tired after a hectic afternoon at college, I was returning home when one of my college teachers, Binod sir, called me. *"Laxman, we are planning to get admission in MPhil studies at*

Kathmandu University. Do you want to join us? His question reminded me of an often-uttered statement my campus chief made in college meetings:

“We’re moving towards upgrading our campus to a deemed university. So, please plan to go for your MPhil or PhD studies. These degrees offer you both confidence in your profession and social prestige. And if you don’t update yourself, it’ll be quite difficult for you to teach the students very soon.”

So, without further thought, I agreed to go with his idea. What should I do now?”

Accordingly, I filled in the online form for my MPhil. I hadn’t been involved in any research work, so I was worried until I started classes at the university. Lack of knowledge and experience in research methods can undermine teachers’ career prospects (Han et al., 2019), so I wanted to grow with the demands of time as my campus expected each faculty member to do.

It was at 2.00 pm on February 6, 2019; along with twelve other students,

young and middle-aged, I entered the classroom. After exchanging cordial greetings

introduction ..., he welcomed us to KUSOED.

Then he said, “This is your first day. We aren’t doing anything bombastic. So, please choose a

topic of interest and write a five-hundred-word essay. Please don’t use any internet source!”

Although some of the students abruptly started

writing, I was confused for some time until the professor approached me and

said, “You don’t need to think of a difficult topic; you can simply write about a

topic you teach now or learnt at college.” Remembering a topic from my

<input type="checkbox"/>	Task-based language teaching: A Current EFL approach LP Bhandari Advances in Language and Literary Studies 11 (1), 1-5, 2020	13
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching writing through task-based instruction: Exploring English teachers' experiences LP Bhandari International Journal of Language and Literary Studies 2 (4), 177-186, 2020	4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching English during COVID-19: Nepalese Teachers' Voices H Kapar, LP Bhandari Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics 2 (5), 76-81, 2020	2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intercultural communicative competence in English language classrooms LP Bhandari, DR Bhusal Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching, 2020	1
<input type="checkbox"/>	Language task design: Teachers' understanding and practices in teaching writing LP Bhandari	

master's course, I chose 'task-based language teaching' and produced an essay about it. Writing five-hundred words on the self-chosen topic was not difficult for me, but developing the same writing into a publishable stage was almost a chewing iron rod for me for the whole semester.

Through rigorous writing, reading and rewriting, I was able to get that simple essay on task-based language teaching published in as a research article entitled "Task-based language teaching: A current EFL approach" in an international journal by the end of the MPhil second semester. Agreeing with Borg (2015), I engaged in research driven more by both professional and practical concerns to build up my profession as an English language teacher while uplifting my socioeconomic status. In doing so, I remember reading, writing and rewriting the same manuscript five times before it was accepted to be published was a challenging job for me. Zafar et al. (2021) sound similar experience to novice researchers because they lack expertise and confidence in conducting research. But remembering the words of my professors, "*Either publish or perish*", I would again get motivated to work and rework it before the dream came true.

Thus, before my engagement in post-graduate studies in ELE, writing for publications and sharing classroom practices on different platforms was a task beyond my imagination. Students respected me, attended my classes regularly, and even passed the examinations. So, I believed I was a good teacher, but I was not aware of something more than that. However, I gradually started realizing there was a dire need to improve my teaching. Stremmel (2007) states a conventional and restricted vision of a teacher as a technician-consumer and dispenser of a teacher's knowledge needs to be changed. Mehrani (2015) also explored instrumental incentives and organizational expectations as motivating forces for teachers to involve in research. When I joined

MPhil studies at KUSOED, I realized that teaching English is not only limited to imparting textbook knowledge to students but also researching, publishing, sharing, and getting students engaged in such tasks transforms a teacher. Now I know that only research keeps a teacher updated by continuously reading research publications, publishing research works, and sharing them at different academic platforms like conferences, webinars, or training sessions, along with developing their pedagogical skills.

Going Online

Through a few publications, I gained confidence in standing before an academic/research community to share my findings. After I started writing and publishing my research works in journals, I got opportunities to share my knowledge and ideas on different platforms.

My participation in NELTA activities and my MPhil in ELE at KUSOED in February 2019, helped me enhance my academic, research and professional career as a teacher of English. Reading, writing, and reviewing articles, research papers, and books on ELT became a part of my routine activities for my professional development.

Since the government of Nepal declared the first Coronavirus in Nepal on January 13, 2020, the students' number in my college started to drop daily. It was the first Sunday in March first week when I went to class; there were fewer students than usual. The students sat apart from one another with masks on their faces. As usual, we shared our cordial greetings. The student on the first bench said, "Sir, people are talking about closing all institutions for uncertain periods if the cases of coronavirus increase in Nepal. What is our college planning?"

Meanwhile, another student added, “In India, many people have been affected, so I’m terrified.” As I was trying to say something, Suman dai [Translation: Suman brother] appeared at the doorstep and said, “Sir, there’s an emergency meeting at 8.15 am.” Replying to him, “OK, brother,” I said to my students, “Yes, it seems it might affect our country as well. So, we should all be very much careful. You have just heard that there’s an emergency meeting to discuss it. Let’s hope things won’t get worse.”

And after the discussion with my class, I attended the 8.15 meeting. There were different opinions regarding the agenda. “We don’t know if anything might happen, so we need to be in touch with all students,” the campus chief warned us. So, we agreed to create messenger groups for each class within two days so that we could start teaching virtually and then give a month of summer vacation. In the meantime, we agreed to run training sessions to prepare the teachers to teach virtual classes.

There was still confusion among us on the effectiveness of online classes for our students, who were from rural socio-cultural and poor economic settings. So, in the next day's class, when I shared my views on online classes in a class, one student said, “Sir, there’s no internet in my village, and buying data is expensive for me...” Before she had completed her concern, another student, showing an old mobile set that would not support zoom or other virtual platforms, said, “Sir, I have this set, and my parents cannot buy an android phone for me. How is it possible for me to take online classes?” And there was a lot of discussion regarding the possible online classes. I was unknown of the online classes except for my knowledge of using Moodle for

my post-graduate studies. Most of the students showed serious concerns about their studies in that class.

Most students perceive online learning as highly flexible and offers self-control (Escobar Fancino et al. 2019). I faced challenges in bringing my students into virtual classes. From the text above, I found my students' socioeconomic and geographical difficulties led them to remain absent from classes. Rana et al. (2021) explored limited internet access in rural Nepal because the internet providers 'business is concentrated only in cities and towns. Unstable internet services and frequent power cuts caused my inability to bring the students from rural areas to the class. Besides technological issues, I faced socio-cultural challenges in getting my students into online classes.

In my inquiry, one of my students' parents said, "Sir, my daughter sometimes attends some classes when there's electricity and internet. But, she should also help her mother in the field." Another guardian sobbed while talking to me on the telephone and said, "Sir, gharama euta matra mobile phone chha. Chhora le pani tyahibelama class linaparne, tyasailenaani class linapaaekichhaina. Naani le gharakokam pani ta garnuparyo. Uskolagichhutai mobile kindinemerohaisiyat pani merochhaina." (Sir, we've only one mobile set at home. My son takes his classes simultaneously, so the daughter hasn't been able to take her classes. Moreover, she has to do household chores. I haven't been able to buy a separate mobile set for her).

I learnt to do the online classes through some training sessions and self-initiation, however, I found it a real challenge to bring my students into my virtual classes. Pennels (1998) revealed a maze of socio-cultural and economic barriers that vary by community and family to women participating in education. I realized only

teacher training, skills, and knowledge do not suffice for quality teaching; students' socio-cultural and economic factors and learning attitudes affect the quality of education.

So, trying to develop a sense of community with our students in the virtual environment (Sun & Chen, 2016), we connected them to the messenger groups of their respective classes. The students helped one another link to their virtual groups within a week. I created separate Google classrooms for each class to help my students access the learning materials I would upload. Google Classroom allows teachers to create classes, administer assignments, give quizzes, provide feedback, and add study materials in one online space (Martin, 2021). After students joined the Google classroom and experienced access to the study materials, one student telephoned me:

“Sir, I don't have internet access here in my village. Yesterday, I went to my aunt's house, around two kilometres from here, and downloaded all the materials you uploaded. Please leave a message on our messenger group when you upload our study materials.”

A two-day special training on using Teams, Zoom, and Google meet prepared me to teach my students and conduct meetings at college. Besides, this knowledge helped me take my classes almost as effectively as in face-to-face mode in my second and third-semester MPhil studies. So, along with teaching my students and doing my post-graduate studies, I enjoyed learning and sharing in different virtual sessions at home and abroad.

The above text gave me insights for developing myself to become a technology-friendly English language teacher to survive in post-pandemic classrooms. So, learning to teach online helped me build my knowledge and skills and expand my

social horizon. Online learning began in 1975 when the University of Illinois and Control Data Corporation began promoting features such as web forums, online chat, emails, instant messaging services, etc. (TrueConf., 2020). However, webinars have become popular to reach anyone, anywhere, at any time since the pandemic of 2019 (Mabuan, 2022).

To be up to date with the shifts in paradigm in pedagogy, I participated in online training sessions and webinars. There I learnt strategies to address the pandemic and post-pandemic classes to make myself able to adapt to the changing pedagogical trends. Transformation occurs when the former self-world perceptions turn into new ones, and an individual makes a further step towards professional maturity (Neubauer & Lehmann, 2017). Accordingly, I started attending webinars as a participant in conferences, training sessions and/or webinars and as an active presenter of my knowledge and classroom practices with the ELT community. Gradually, those painful challenges have been changing into gainful experiences, helping me bring positive changes in my perceptions of English language teaching and classroom practices.

Webbing the Wonder of Webinars

My participation in different ELT-related webinars after the nationwide lockdown in Nepal due to COVID-19 Pandemic from Tuesday, March 24, 2020, and helped me expand my academic and social horizons. Like most other educational institutions, my college trained us to run the classes virtually. Although I experienced many hardships in using virtual platforms and getting my students connected to my class in the initial classes, I enjoyed learning different classroom strategies during those pandemic days. Despite



my inability to interact face-to-face with my students, I connected myself to groups of ELT practitioners and researchers virtually at home and abroad. Conferences enhance ELT practitioners' community building by establishing rapport for collaboration on tasks (Rimmer & Floyd, 2020). Participating in a series of webinars as a listener and facilitator helped me improve my communication skills in English.

I was moderating the sessions in one of the virtual teacher training programs organized by our MPhil group from KUSOED in April 2020. More than one hundred and fifty participants were from Nepal and other countries. "Laxman sir, could you text me your email address?" An English language teacher from Thailand sent it. I responded to him with a positive note, and then we became friends on Facebook. This virtual introduction began my international connection for developing myself through participation and sharing my classroom practices, research findings, and pedagogical practices. Here I present a part of a messenger chat with my Thai friend that took place on a Saturday evening after a week of our virtual training:

He: "...sir, I enjoyed the online teacher training today. Our institution has planned to organize an ELT webinar in March. And I want you to be a speaker if you don't mind.'

His offer to get a platform in the international webinar thrilled me. So without thinking further, I said, "Thank you, sir. I am glad to accept it."

He: "Thank you, sir. There'll be twelve speakers and around two hundred participants. Most participants will be from Thailand, the Philippines, and others from other places. I will disseminate our webinar banner within two weeks."

After the conversation with the Thai organizer, I felt nervous; many things started whirling in my head. "How should I make the presentation? What topic should I

choose? I must prepare things very well! There'll be only foreigners, uff!"

However, I again patted my shoulder, thanking myself for getting such an opportunity to expose myself in an international webinar. Finally, I chose "Task-based language teaching", one of the ELT methods for the webinar and I did my first international conference presentation on Monday, May 11, 2020.

Analyzing the above text, I came to understand that my sharing on the first international webinar helped me enhance my confidence in participating, moderating and sharing my ideas on both virtual and in-person platforms more effectively at home and abroad. My professional journey with different national and international organizations since the beginning of 2020 positively impacted my life as an English language teacher. Mabuan (2022) shares similar advantages of seminars/webinars that re(shape) teachers' teaching trajectories, open up opportunities, and present prospective and paradigms. Acting as a reflective ELT practitioner, I presented more than twenty webinar sessions in Nepal, India, Thailand, Philippines, and Pakistan from January 2020 to July 2022, and it continues. In addition, I also got an opportunity to present a paper about my transformation from an under-resourced rural context English language learner to an influencing English language teacher at a conference organized by ISTAR at Rajamangala University, Tak, Thailand, from July 29 to 30, 2022. The exposure to ELT conferences, workshops, training sessions, and seminars helped me bring my intense desire to become a transforming English language teacher into reality. In addition to enhancing my pedagogical and research skills, my participation in those webinars helped me broaden my social horizon with the ELT community of other cultures and societies.

Thus, my engagement in learning and sharing through conferences and webinars shows how I became an agent for my professional development as a teacher of

English (Mabuan, 2022). Looking back on my teaching and learning practices, I found my perceived truths regarding my imperceptible socio-cultural practices of enculturating my students uncritically into my lifeworlds (Taylor et al., 2012) challenging at this stage. My engagement in virtual sessions enhanced my rapport with ELT experts from different countries, enhancing my learning and research. While doing so, I collaboratively wrote an article with a Pilipino teacher and presented it at the second international webinar organized by Butwal Commerce Campus in 2020.

Professional Growth Still Continues

Both virtual and in-person exposure reinforced my status and sense of self-worth in society and enhanced my professionalism as an English language teacher. A rich source of continuing professional development, a strong sense of academic community and enhanced professional identity help teachers grow (Rimmer & Floyd, 2020). As the educational front liners, teachers need support for continuing professional development that will enable them to make informed decisions in their pedagogy and to deliver effective and quality education to their students.



Beginning to being and becoming

A teacher inspiring his students to search for wisdom

A facilitator building groups to solve the riddles

A motivator encouraging learners to accept challenges

To solve the mysteries of their lives

A supporter helping novices to write their stories

To transform themselves from unknown to well-known

As a learner, I'm struggling and striving to be one

In the lines above, I inscribed

However, that untrodden path

*Is still on my horizon to see
 The next end to measure the distance
 So, I'm still a learner on the ride
 That untrodden expedition
 With more skills and assurance in
 Acquiring knowledge from my life
 Unlike in the past, when I claimed I knew all
 A different learner I am now,
 Striving self, facilitating, coordinating others
 Encouraging and inspiring my learners
 Still being inquisitive
 Seeking life skills from all!*

Becoming an English language teacher from an under-resourced rural context is challenging (Gnawali, 2018). Analyzing the above text, I realized that professional development is a continuous process. I started my education at a village school and gradually advanced my educational journey to a sophisticated university in the nation. Although my English language learning was limited to memorization and rote learning in the initial phases, I got more opportunities as I advanced my educational journey towards higher degrees.

Now I realize I was fortunate to get those learning opportunities to prepare myself to become a transforming English language teacher. In a similar vein with Robert (2009), this reflection allowed me to bridge what I experienced at the site with my academic studies and gain greater self-awareness, clarify my values, and become more open to experiential differences rather than reflexively imposing my beliefs on teaching the English language. “Teachers take actions to change or improve their practice informed by their reflections” (Liu, 2015, p. 147). My journey as a learner and English language teacher helped me reach inward through an extensive reflection process about my teaching and learning experiences.

Similarly, I began my professional journey as a pre-primary level teacher to become what I am today, i.e. a college-level English language teacher. I have learned that an essential aspect of teaching and learning encompasses the practice of extenuating or authenticating previously learned knowledge or thoughts to shape our current and future actions. Educational institutions create such teaching and learning settings in which future professionals can cope with issues of their professional development and deal with wicked problems in their future fields of work, thus contributing to a transformative future (Rieckmann, 2012). The formal and experiential experiences of my learning and teaching English helped shape the meanings I ascribe to our realities. Reflection, a crucial element of transformative learning, occurs when we become critically conscious of how and why our assumptions have come to limit the way we observe, recognize and sense the world (Balthazar, 2019). Those experiences helped me develop myself as a reflective English language teacher.

Now I feel I have become more competent and confident with the new knowledge in order to try for more transformative roles in English language teaching (Mazirow, 2000). The learning experience that I gained from ELT training sessions, webinars, and seminars as a listener and presenter helped me develop my professionalism in teaching English. And more noticeably, my MPhil study in KUSOED and presentations and publications of research articles in national and international conferences/webinars and journals helped me revise my old belief system and plan a course of action (Mazirow, 2000) for becoming a more transformative and influencing English language teacher.

Chapter Essence

In this chapter, I presented the flashback of my transformative journey through lived teaching experiences. I unpacked how I got opportunities to get exposure to facilitate ELT training sessions and publications nationally and internationally when I set my MPhil journey in ELE at KUSOED. Similarly, I explored how my participation in teacher training sessions, conferences and webinars through my employing schools and colleges, teachers' professional organizations like NELTA, ISTAR, etc., enhanced my pedagogical skills to transform myself from a traditional transmissionist teacher towards a student-centered English language facilitator.

CHAPTER VII
REFLECTIONS, INSIGHTS, AND CONCLUSION

*Looking back to my long, painstaking events
journey of untold painful stories
I remember the dark channels
I consider the untrodden paths
Delving deep into my myriad gainful experiences
in the line of self-reliance, I am standing
I remember the rays of hope
I remember the days of aspiration
Standing in the middle of an untrodden path
I see a beam of light at the end of dark channels
Among the vista of struggles
I feel my Gurus pulling my hand
Standing in front of the big mirror
I think the journey of struggles
To and fro, up and down, pains and gains
Continuing a journey of more gains than pains
A journey of achievement and satisfaction*

The above poem depicts my painful and gainful lived experiences in writing my MPhil dissertation. This journey involves improving my knowledge and the enrichment of my emotions, helping me empower myself for my ongoing lifelong journey (Rahmawati, 2012).

With this chapter, I am winding up this research journey about becoming an English language learner and teacher. I started with an ambition to contribute something to the knowledge domain. Coming to this stage, I consider research and learning to go simultaneously, so I do not take this research as a conclusion. Hence, in

this chapter, I present my reflections and insights along with the conclusion as much as possible.

Revisiting My Research Journey

When I had free time, I loved to ponder upon the reminiscences of my early education. I often thought there must have been a reason when it came to the issue of the English language, which was considered a language of a better lifestyle in our family. When he had time for casual conversation in the family, my father would emphasize the benefit of the English language, which he could not enjoy. He had encouraged my mother to put some habits in me about learning English from an early age. My first reminiscence of the English language went with the memory of my mother, who, in the form of lyrics, used to chant A, B, C, D... the alphabet to me during my early childhood years. Hence, learning English, although a foreign language, did not appear alien to me as it came to my ears from my mother tongue.

The beginning of my learning of the English alphabet from my mother was developed through my formal education in a community school in my rural village in Gulmi district in Nepal and was further developed during my higher studies. Since then, I have experienced various turns and twists in life while learning the English language. I was continuously teaching at institutional, community, and public schools and colleges for over two decades. Along with my exposure to the English language at my bachelor's, master's, and MPhil levels, I got many opportunities to attend different training sessions, seminars, and webinars which supported me in transforming myself from a traditionally educated village boy to a transforming English language teacher when I come to this stage.

My consciousness regarding the exploration of my lived experiences that helped me being and becoming an English language learner and teacher flamed out in

my MPhil studies. However, I was in a perplexing situation when my professor asked me to choose an issue for my research. I knew I had been able to satisfy my students academically in my classes; I could explain the English texts to them, and I could make my students get good grades in their examinations. However, when I experienced difficulty choosing and deciding a topic in my MPhil class, I asked myself, “Is it because I came from a rural community-based education system, as my school teacher had suggested? *Is it because I was educated through rote learning and memorization? Is teaching just explaining texts in class? Does becoming a teacher mean making the students pass their pen-and-paper-based examinations?* Taking these issues under consideration, I worked hard during my MPhil journey and learned ideas about philosophical and pragmatic considerations that helped me reflect critically on my own and others’ taken-for-granted teaching-learning practices. This helped me develop knowledge of constructivist and transformative educational thoughts and practices that could help people bring change in their pedagogical practices.

In the initial phase of writing this research, it appeared too blurred for me to explore my own experiences. I had difficulties selecting narratives from my lived experiences, finding appropriate scholarly reading resources, and reading and bringing their contributing ideas to make my discussion more manifest. Similarly, I struggled to cultivate new yet creative ideas to give justice to this inquiry. During this research journey, I often experienced frustration because of various blurring ideas that came into my mind. However, following my supervisor's suggestions, I started revising, creating and finalizing my thoughts chronologically. Eventually, the painful experiences gradually turned into gainful experiences when I came to this stage of the research journey.

Reflecting on the Research Purpose

Adopting autoethnography as the methodology, I aimed to explore my painful and gainful lived experiences concerning my personal and professional struggles in transforming myself through education. Through this research, I sought to bridge my personal and professional lifeworlds to envision transformative English language teaching in Nepal. In addition, I aspired to improve my personal and professional practices as an English language educator by critically examining my ELT practices.

Reconceiving the Research Questions

Although it was challenging to develop the research purpose and questions to capture this inquiry, I finalized them by reading, creating, revising and again creating many times, and with the help of my research supervisor. Drawing upon the research, I developed one overarching question: How has the motivation for the upliftment of life and struggle resulted in becoming a transforming professional English language teacher? Based on this, I developed three research questions finalized after multiple discussions with my supervisor. Here, I believe my attempts to research the answers to my research questions have enriched my values, beliefs, and practices as an English language teacher. I have developed this chapter based on my three research questions:

Q. 1. How have my experiences learning and teaching English been in terms of my personal and professional growth?

The main aim of developing the first research question was to present my lived experiences through my personal and professional journey that shaped my 'self' as possibly a conventional/traditional learner and teacher. This question guided me to select some significant issues related to my inquiry from the ocean of existing lived experiences.

Although I began my educational journey from a rural and under-resourced context, I feel proud to have been able to come to this stage, i. e. becoming an English language teacher. Moreover, I have been able to experience teaching in community schools in a rural setting and well-equipped English medium schools and colleges in the capital city. If I share my journey with someone outside my community, they might think that I should be in some blue-collar job now.

Since I was educated in a rural under-resourced community school, the teaching-learning activities would concentrate mainly on copying, rote learning and memorization. At this stage, I realize that perhaps my teachers employed those conventional approaches, methods and techniques to teach English because of the lack of exposure to training, seminar, or workshops related to student-centered teaching strategies. Similarly, my teachers might have used those teaching techniques because the curriculum demanded their students memorize texts to pass the examinations, which I did during my school and undergraduate education.

The better exposure to the English language in my higher-level studies, academically and pedagogically, helped me grow better. My involvement as an English teacher at private schools helped me improve my English skills and gain more confidence in pedagogical skills. Although wearing two hats simultaneously was not easy for me in the initial days, I continued teaching and learning until I completed my master's level and then MPhil studies. Learning and teaching the English language opened doors to connecting to different professional development organizations, such as NELTA and IATEFL. I believe I have been able to make myself a better teacher by participating in training sessions, seminars, and workshops both at home and abroad. My studies at the university level have helped me in my career as an English teacher

and vice versa. Therefore, I enjoy wearing both hats, which have helped me establish myself as an English teacher.

Q.2. How have socio-cultural contexts influenced my growth as an English language learner and a teacher?

Although teachers received high social prestige in society, education was not on priority. Most youths would either be sent to the army (British, Indian, or Nepal) or some other low-paid jobs as soon as they completed grade nine or ten in my village. However, I feel lucky to have received a conducive family environment to achieve education. My parents must have realized the importance of education while living in India for my father's job. Accordingly, I received a very accommodating familial environment to begin my educational journey.

Similarly, my father's bitter experience of not knowing English to support his promotion to the police inspired him to opt for an English major at college. Since my early education, I have been impressed by my English teachers' performance in classes, either being their strict behaviour or encouraging facilitator. Accordingly, I chose English language education for my university studies expecting improved living standards and higher social status. I believe I have been able to change my *Dwayam* status as I was supposed to be at school. Thus, when I reflected on my curriculum as a school student, I remembered that most of my English teachers taught me under curriculum representations as objectives and subject matter. The teacher would start writing down the materials on the blackboard, translate and explain the materials during the remaining time, and then finish the class with an overload of writing homework.

I experienced stumbling blocks during my initial days of teaching. My exposure to English-Nepali translation during my studies was often reflected in my

English medium classes. I learnt to face the English medium classes by consulting my teachers and colleagues and reading books, newspapers, etc. In the beginning days, I read the texts several times with their translated versions before entering the classes and then slowly moved towards explaining the lessons in English. Gradually, I learnt to assimilate into the EMI culture of private school. This progressively enhanced my English language and my studies at the university as well. Now, I feel recognized as an educated citizen in my society. Looking into my past again, I now realize that I was exposed to the best of my time's education. However, compared to the present education system that focuses on student engagement, study-centeredness rather than teacher-centeredness, and development of language performance rather than only competence (SEC, 2021), I could not enjoy developing myself as an English language learner rather than passing the examinations and upgrading the classes.

I faced various incidents, and these incidents helped me substantially change my perceptions of the world (Taylor, 2017) through my critical dialogues with the self and others. Agreeing with Luitel and Dahal (2020), I have been able to examine my actions as an English language learner and teacher that emerged from my lived experiences. Hence, I found transformative learning as a powerful vantage point for creating my role as a teacher to facilitate students to enhance their creativity and criticality. Thus, my MPhil journey at KUSOED has embedded transformative learning in my identity as a transforming teacher.

Q. 3. How have my professional struggles been transforming me as a professional teacher?

My transformative journey towards becoming an English language facilitator commenced when I started participating in training sessions, seminars, workshops, etc., by NELTA and other organizations and started my MPhil studies. Some of my

past teaching experiences were shaped by emancipatory interest and some by practical interest (Rahmawati, 2012). Now, I realize that combining both interests in my teaching would prepare me to be a more student-centered teacher. I realized that teaching should engage and empower my students instead of simply transferring knowledge.

While teaching in a community school, I learnt how politics influences education regarding teacher selection and their stability for enhancing quality education. However, I learnt to work with differences and develop considerate relationships and create negotiability for mutual understanding. Thus, I experienced teaching in institutional and community schools and community colleges as an empowering journey that helped me reveal significant aspects of my teaching identity as a transforming teacher.

By the time I had completed my master's degree and attended a few teacher professional development training sessions, seminars, and workshops, I began to envisage myself as a teacher striving towards transformation, and I attempted to apply my learning in classes. Transformative learning helps to define our problematic worldviews to make them more comprehensive, discriminating, insightful, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). However, my exposure to ELT discussions, both in my MPhil classes and national and international ELT pedagogical discussions, seminars, webinars, workshops, etc., helped me reflect on my past teaching experiences and strive for more engaging, inclusive and student-centered classroom practices. Individual experiences, dialogues, and critical reflections are the core elements that lead to a transformative approach to teaching (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). I learnt how my interactions with the ELT community changed my perception of teaching and learning English.

In relation to the nature of English language teaching, I came to recognize the narrow sphere of my understanding. I realized that I didn't have a deeper understanding of fundamental ideas in teaching English. My understanding of the English language teaching pedagogy resulted in the objective reality influencing how I educated my students. As a teacher, I worked hard to transfer knowledge, thinking, and actions to my students, which I now realize was wrong. I made my students unquestionably admit my thoughts and knowledge and recognize and establish them. After going through various training sessions, workshops, and studies, I now realize that teacher-centered approach severely confines students' thought processes and restricts their creativity. As a result, these learning experiences will likely influence students' overall educational development. Reflecting critically on past pedagogical experiences helped me expose and reconceive the significant facets of my teaching practices during the prolonged journey of writing this dissertation.

I have now realized how transformative learning, motivation, and culture are shaping my becoming a teacher. This critical awareness helped me build up my confidence in thinking further about my role as a teacher and educator. Although there is still the hegemonic power of the technical interest in education, I will adapt my transformative beliefs, values and practices to lead my way as a professional English language teacher. One of my inspirations for becoming an English language teacher was that English teachers exercised more power in controlling students and received higher social prestige; however, I now realize that the hegemony of the English language made English teachers more powerful. Now I wonder why students fear English teachers, so my transformative learning will guide me to educate my students as holistic individuals who can learn more through engagement and interactions.

Thus, the exploration of my lived experiences of being and becoming an English language learner and teacher through writing has enabled me to imagine deeply, reflect critically and envision creatively. I have realized that writing as an inquiry process is challenging and empowering. I believe my research will be able to engage my readers in revealing and reconceptualizing their personal teaching experiences and bring some change to their teaching-learning practices.

Conclusion

This research covered the painful and gainful lived experiences of my personal and professional journey. Now, I attempt to incorporate the circumstances that both discouraged and inspired me to become an English language learner and teacher. Despite various demotivating conditions, a few motivating factors, such as my parents' and teachers' motivation, my intense desire to uplift my social status through English language learning, and my cultural perceptions towards English language teachers, encouraged me to learn English and become a teacher.

Most English language classes during my school and college levels consisted of copying, rote learning and recitation; however, I have been able to establish myself as an English teacher now. Looking back to those days, I realize that perhaps my teachers were trained only to take the curriculum as subject matter, course objectives, and planned teaching-learning activities to develop students' English language competence. I experienced conventional cultural beliefs and values of jobs and money that education is a grave factor in discouraging children from going to higher education. In the bright rays, I experienced that the parents who got the opportunity to exposure to outer societies, like mine in this research, were aware of the importance of education. This gives me insight that becoming a professional English language teacher is determined not only by the quality of education we receive at school and

college but also by a supportive family environment that instils a positive attitude towards education in children; motivation and exposure are equally essential.

In addition to family support, my teachers' motivation, my desire to learn English, and my exposure to English language teaching experience for more than two decades helped me become an English teacher. While doing so, I learned to read textbooks and English newspapers while teaching at private schools. Now, I feel that I have been able to improve my English while abiding by the private schools' strict rules to maintain the English environment within the school premises. And by the time I completed my master's degree, I realized that my English teaching practices were improving in comparison to my beginning days of teaching.

As an English language teacher, I gained many hurting and joyful experiences in community and private schools and colleges. In general, I experienced that students were curious and hardworking in learning despite their poor English language background and exposure to the English language learning environment. The shortage of resources, effective teacher training sessions, and teachers' inability and/or disinterest in applying student-centered pedagogical practices interrupted the professional development of English language teachers. Now, looking at my students' performance in the English language, I remember my days and feel optimistic that they can learn if given sufficient learning exposure. I have realized that despite the scarcity of resources- both teachers and study materials- learners need to develop a strong sense of achievement to become an English teacher. At this stage, I have come to realize that I have been able to become a contributing English language teacher because of my supporting family, challenging as well as inspiring teachers, supporting organizations like NELTA and IATEFL, and my self-dedication.

As a community-based school student, I struggled to learn English and became an English language teacher. Despite my insufficient exposure to the English language at school, I concentrated on my classes, especially in higher-level studies, to attain academic degrees in English. Similarly, I joined NELTA, ISTAR and IATEFL, where I enjoyed learning English and pedagogical skills as a participant and presenter. My involvement in those teacher's professional development organizations has helped me read journals and newsletters from those organizations and newspapers to enhance my English teacher ability. Besides, as a participant and presenter, I have interacted with ELT practitioners from home and abroad in ELT training sessions, webinars, seminars, and workshops. All these activities have helped me move forward towards my transformative journey as an English teacher. Similarly, my familiarity with those ELT practitioners and experts from different parts of the world has facilitated me to perceive the varied scaffoldings and lived experiences to learn the language and research skills and strive towards a transforming English language teacher. Hence, these organizations have helped me to be internally and externally motivated for my development as a more transforming English language teacher.

This research journey is an exploration and interpretation of my lived experiences with regard to my English language learning and teaching in my broader social contexts. This exploration is expected to guide other members coming from similar to my contexts in the teaching profession. Over the past two and a half decades, my way of life has got interconnected with learning and teaching the English language to become a transforming teacher. Hopefully, my professional journey as an English language teacher will shape me in a more transformative way to prepare myself for more contributing teacher. Similarly, the journey will be helpful to inspire other teachers, especially those who aspire to lead their professional journey towards

a transformative one. Furthermore, whatever I do in the field of ELT, my future works will look one step further, thinking about what the world would like to read from me beyond my narratives. My insights that would be universalized as something anybody from any place would think is identifiable as narrated and felt by an English language teacher, basically in the third world.

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