

TEACHERS' STRATEGIES ON TEACHING ESSAY WRITING IN SECONDARY  
LEVEL IN NEPAL

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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

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This research paper entitled, 'Teachers' Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing in the Secondary Level' attempts to reveal some teachers' strategies for teaching essay writing expressed by current secondary level school teachers. It endeavors to uncover significant teaching essay writing principles by exploring the teachers' reflections from their experiences of classroom practices. Hence, its main objective is to find out principal and practical strategies from the teachers' experiences for teaching essay writing. It will be helpful to teachers like me who are interested in updating skills of teaching essay writing as per the need and interest of learners. The paper especially focuses on different teachers' teaching strategies for essay writing to the secondary school age learners to enable them to write a short essay that they need to face in the SLC examination. The paper has basically looked for how a teacher can scaffold learners to provide the basic concept of paragraph development in essay writing through teaching process. Since I have adapted interpretive paradigm under qualitative research design, my findings are product of qualitative data that I have collected through observation and interview. The study found that different teachers

use different techniques or strategies for the purpose of achieving the goal of essay writing. But a majority of the teachers use series of pictures in association with the topic in order to motivate students and provide basic information for learners as well. Interestingly, all respondents experienced group work as essential part of practice in teaching essay writing. As the paper has dug out some practical strategies for teaching essay writing process, it is not only significant for English language teachers but may be equally important for teacher-researchers, trainers, and policy makers including other concerning ELT bodies and authorities as well.

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March31,2013

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DELARATION

I, hereby, declare that this research paper has not been submitted for any other degree.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	vi
Table of Contents .....	ix
INTRODUCTION .....	1
General Background .....	1
Problem Statement .....	3
Objective of the Study.....	5
Research Question .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	5
DISCUSSION ON LITERATURE .....	7
What is Essay Writing? .....	7
Meaning and significance of Strategy.....	8
What is Strategy?.....	8
Why do we need teaching essay strategically? .....	8
What are the Basic Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing? .....	8
Strategies for Categorizing Essay .....	9
Strategies for Stimulating Ideas .....	9
Strategies for Brainstorming .....	10
Strategies of Applying Principles for Supporting Writing .....	12
Research Gap .....	12

METHODOLOGY .....	14
Research Paradigm: Interpretive .....	14
Research Method: Qualitative .....	15
Data Collection Procedure.....	15
Population Sampling Procedure .....	16
DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION.....	17
Thematic Analysis and Interpretation .....	18
Theme: 1 Teachers' Concept on Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing .....	18
Theme -2 Procedural Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing.....	21
Theme-3: Motivational Strategy for Teaching Essay writing.....	25
Theme-4: Preparatory Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing .....	27
Discussion on Interpretation of the Study .....	29
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION.....	33
Findings .....	33
Pedagogical Implication.....	34
Conclusion.....	34
REFERENCES.....	35
Appendix A.....	39

## INTRODUCTION

This section introduces fundamental issues on the research paper in relation to teaching essay writing. It basically encompasses five fundamental points in relation to my research issues: Background, Problem Statement Objective of the Study, Research Question and Significance of the Study.

### **General Background**

Teaching experience in the same level for many years need not necessarily guarantee to be perfect teacher in teaching essay writing. Despite my more than twenty years experience in teaching English in the secondary level, I even now feel that I have not been established as good English teacher especially for teaching essay writing in the secondary level. What is teaching writing? How can I support my students in essay composition? What is composition? I asked myself. As a blur response of my chain of queries Andrew (2001) differentiates between composition and transcription in the field of teaching and learning that composition encompasses getting ideas, selecting words, shaping and rearranging them in correct form skillfully. But transcription is the physical effort of writing or typing that doesn't demand skill of composition. He further explains that writing is a complex activity that includes: imagination, expression of feeling, cognitive state skills of medium and so on.

Skills of essay writing in the secondary level schools are crucial for students for their academic progress as well as career development. In this regard it would be worth effective to mention Hawthorne (2011) as he maintains that writing is a crucial skill in our society. He further expresses that writing skills of many secondary school students is poor. Moreover, stating a research report he claims that the writing skills

of many secondary school students are no better than that of many primary school students.

Essay writing is regarded as a painful job for both teachers and learners. In my experience, it demands not only hard work but also skills of better organization, presentation of ideas and persuasive language to convince the reader with the view point of the writer. Moreover, it demands integrated skills of the target language. Acknowledging writing skill as high difficulty level of language, Lucantoni (2002) points out that writing as a skill is more difficult rather than speaking. In addition, he claims that good writing cannot be achieved without using effective procedure in teaching and good practice of writing.

In the process of getting students to practice of writing Lucantoni (2002) emphasizes on need of interaction both with teacher and classmates as group work, pair work, and individual work subsequently. For the learners' active participation in writing activities, consequently, group work and pair work play vital role in learning.

In the context of teacher' role in teaching essay writing, Lucantoni (2002) opines that language teacher has to help students to develop their language skills. Likewise, learners are to be helped in selecting sub- skills which is appropriate for the writing task in hand. In this respect, contextual language using play significant role in developing learning strategies.

In relation to the meaning of learning strategies Cohen (as cited in Dahal, 2003) envisions that language learning strategies as conscious process of selection of technique or method to enhance the language skills through the storage, retention, application of information. For instance, Red (as cited in Dahal, 2003) advocates that the strategies used by Nepalese university students for learning English were: making notes and summaries, recopying notes, and memorizing texts.

Teaching strategies have to go with learning strategies. If a teacher is acquainted with the learners' learning strategies and teaches as per learners' interest, it creates learner friendly environment. In relation to pedagogical practices, Belbase, Luitel and Taylor (2008) advocate that student centered teaching with new approach of group work and pair work in practice were found initiative in classroom.

No matter whatever strategy we apply in English language teaching (ELT), no single strategy, method or technique may appropriate in each and every context. In this regard Prabhu(1990) maintains that there is no best method in teaching. He further opines that the best method varies from one teacher to another in the particular teaching context.

Regardless of teaching methods or strategies, a normal academic essay is structured into major three sections. According to Mounsey (2011) the major three parts of an essay are: introduction, body, and conclusion. The framework of these parts of essay has been described in the 'Discussion on Literature' section briefly.

Here my burning issue is 'how can I address my students' need in relation to teaching essay writing properly? In other words, my quest is 'How can I support my students for developing their essay writing skills. . A crucial question aroused: what strategies do other teachers use in teaching essay writing? This striking question initiated me to carry out research under this issue to tackle possible problems practically in my English language teaching (ELT) classrooms.

### **Problem Statement**

Recently one of my students who have been studying in grade ten asked me, if I could tell them a simple way to learn essay writing. This crucial question made me to rethink and redefine in my current teaching essay writing strategies. Considering the issue on teaching essay writing, I went through my students 'answer sheet of English

of the first terminal examination 2069 in order to analyze them in terms of strong points and find out the area in which I needed to support them. After examining their exam papers I found that out of 56 examinees of ten graders only 21 had attempted the essay question .In my school the number of girls are almost as many as boys: Out of 56 students in grade-X,27 are girls and out of 27 only 9 had attempted the essay question .And so had the boys. The figure showed that only 37.5% of students attempted the essay question. Out of them only 33.33% girls attempted the essay question while around 41.37% boys had attempted. This scenario of result challenged my professionalism as an English teacher. It emerged a serious question on my job: Whether I'm teaching or teasing my students.

The above dada indicate serious problem with my traditional strategies for teaching essay writing. If it is not solved in time, the result of my students will be poorer and poorer. It will drive me into critical situation. It will challenge not only my job, but my present status, dignity and prestige of my professional life as well. So, the only way out to solve such problem is to reform my old strategies or replace them with effective ones in my writing classes.

Interpreting my students' essay writing I came to know that first of all those who had not attempted essay question I found that there is special need of motivation in essay writing, Secondly, who had attempted essay question needed teaching process and techniques for what I prefer to use term 'strategies' in paragraph development and organize the text in coherence. Since my traditional strategy is not working well with my students, I would like to collect various strategies from experienced teachers who have been currently teaching English in the secondary schools so that I can test and apply those strategies in my future class room context and see the consequences in coming days.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of my research is to find out teachers' strategies for teaching essay writing in the secondary level in order to serve my primary purpose and interest of my own professional development and sharing with other ELT authorities and concerning personalities as well.

### **Research Question**

My overarching research question is: 'What are the Teachers' Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing in the Secondary Level?'

This main research question encompasses following subsidiary research questions:

- a) What strategies do teachers apply to motivate learners for essay writing?
- b) What procedures do teachers follow in teaching essay writing?
- c) What are teachers' concepts on strategies of teaching essay writing?

### **Significance of the Study**

First of all, it is expected that the outcome of my study will significantly be helpful for my professional development by quenching my quest for knowledge and skills in teaching essay writing. Secondly, the findings of the study are expected to address main specific objective of teaching writing in the secondary level curriculum, that is: "Students will be able to plan, organize and develop paragraphs and essays;" which will be beneficial for ELT practitioners and learners as well. Thirdly, essay writing deserves great value with the exam point of view as well. Single essay writing carries 50% marks of pass marks in paper pencil test in the SLC examination. Hence teaching essay writing is essential not only to meet the specific objectives of teaching writing but also supports students' academic success in the SLC examination. In respect, Cohen and Miller (2006) assert that writing product not only reflects an individual's personality but establishes them in prestigious society.



I hope the findings of strategies will be helpful for entire classroom procedure: planning, preparation, presentation, practice and production phases of teaching essay writing. I expect that the findings of the study will be important for not only English language learners (ELL) and teachers, but equally significant for all individuals and organizations who are working in the field of ELT. I anticipate the findings will also provide guidelines for ELT policy makers, language planners, curriculum developers, text- book writers, and researchers and all ELT personalities.

## DISCUSSION ON LITERATURE

In this unit I have tried to discuss on concerning literature basically on major three issues in relation to my study on 'Strategies in teaching essay writing'. The issues are: What is essay writing? 'Why do we need teach essay writing strategically? What are the basic strategies for teaching essay writing? And 'How can a teacher support learners in essay writing? Regarding these major issues, my discussion is fundamentally based on a series of three books by Savage and Shafie(2007) 'Effective academic writing 1: The paragraph, by Savage and Mayer(2005), ' Effective academic writing 2: ' The short essay' and Davis and Liss (2006), 'Effective essay writing 3: The essay. It has also taken consideration by Edwards (2004), Supporting writing and other relevant books and articles as well.

### **What is Essay Writing?**

Essay writing is a skill of expression of ideas on a particular topic in a systematic manner. In this regard Turley (2003) has maintained that essay writing is simply a skill to be learned like any other skills. He further claims that for many students 'essay' and 'nightmare' very similar. As a matter of fact, he views that writing essay reveals the tricks of the trade. Bearing these three statements of Turley (2003) in mind, we can conclude that essay writing is an individual's attempt or ability to compose his /her vision on the specific subject matter strategically.

As mentioned above, Turley (2003) has remarked three significant aspects on essay writing as: a skill, frightening dream and tricks of trade.

## **Meaning and significance of Strategy**

### **What is Strategy?**

In this research paper the term 'strategy' has been used for tactics or careful planning to resolve particular problem in a particular situation .So, the term strategy is used to represent approach, method, technique or any systematic plan or process to overcome situational obstruction along the route of ELT. In this regard, Shrestha (2012) has defined the term strategies as the techniques which are used in teaching/learning process. He further clarifies that they are plan of action designed to achieve the goal. In this sense for me the term 'strategy' can be used to refer a careful action plan for teaching essay writing skillfully so that learners can attempt essay question in their need for academic progress or professional development.

### **Why do we need teaching essay strategically?**

Strategies are basically needed for achieving targeted goal of teaching learning objectives. In this respect Wright (as cited in Shrestha, 2012) claims, "Teaching strategy is a complex amalgam of belief, attitude, technique, motivation, personality and control over the text or subject matter (p.1). Considering these points of view we can calculate that it is essential technique for motivating learners to teaching learning process and controlling over the text or particular subject matter.

### **What are the Basic Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing?**

Teaching essay writing is one of the essential components of teaching English in the secondary schools in the context of Nepal. But it is neither easy job for teachers nor convenient for learners. However, we can adapt or adjust various strategies as per level of students in the particular context. Basically teaching essay writing demands major three strategies: introducing the topic, developing body paragraphs, and concluding the subject matter as an organizational strategy. Similarly we can adapt

particular process of teaching essay writing. We can apply several motivational strategies to motivate students in writing.

Meanwhile we need preparatory strategies for well preparation of lesson. In this regard to tackle with the burning issue “How can we teach students effectively to write an essay?” we can manipulate various strategies of teaching essay writing. In the context of basic Strategies for teaching essay writing, I have presented Savage and Mayer (2005)’s strategies in relation to the short essay. They have stated basic four strategies: Stimulating Ideas, Brainstorming and Outlining, Developing ideas, and editing strategies for teaching essay writing respectively. Their main strategies are taken as guidelines in teaching essay writing:

### **Strategies for Categorizing Essay**

Savage and Mayer (2005) have categorized short essays into major five categories: Descriptive essays that use words to build images for the readers which have come from sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or even of feelings. Narrative essays that tell stories from experiences which shape how we see the world and what type of person we become later in life. Opinion essays that present writer’s opinion in relation to particular issue and discuss on it. Comparison and contrast essays illustrate the similarities and differences between one idea or image and another. In the cause and effect essays the writer analyzes causes and explains the results of outcome of an event. Regardless the sorts of essay, in teaching all these types of essays, getting students to describe relevant pictures with a partner has taken place as the key strategy for stimulating ideas.

### **Strategies for Stimulating Ideas**

Stimulating ideas initiates learners on thinking and linking ideas about the topic of an essay. In this context Jha (2012) views, “Students have to know at least something

about the topic before reading. Pictures and drawing can help students in getting relevant background information (p.5). Technically, it is called scene setting. The succeeding second strategy for stimulating ideas is getting learners to read about the topic. Similarly, the third strategy is checking understanding the text with suitable comprehensive questions like yes/no questions or true/false questions. The fourth strategy is getting learners to respond to the text with WH-questions starting with how, what, where etc. The fifth strategy is making learners write freely for ten to fifteen minutes on the concerning topic. These strategies play vital role in stimulating learners' ideas.

### **Strategies for Brainstorming**

In my experience of teaching, brainstorming refers to making learners aware think quickly to contextualize the theme and generate ideas in order to solve the particular issue. Savage and Mayer (2005) have maintained two types of brainstorming strategies: They are brainstorming ideas, and brainstorming vocabulary.

**Strategies for brainstorming ideas:** There are various strategies for brainstorming depending on nature of essay. The popular strategies for brainstorming ideas mentioned by Savage and Mayer (2005) are: a word web, questioning, chart filling, diagrammatic elicitation etc (p.32-134).

**Strategies for brainstorming vocabulary:** Nature of vocabulary varies from one type of essay to another. For instance in descriptive essays key vocabulary are based on sensory organs like taste, touch, smell, sight etc. In the cases of brainstorming vocabulary, Savage and Mayer (2005) have recommended to get learners to contribute with few words in gap filling relation to the topic as following:

**Taste:** salty, sour, bitter, sweet, juicy, -----, -----

**Touch:** soft, hard, chewy, tough, crunchy, -----, -----

**Smell:** comforting, sharp, strong, faint, -----, -----

**Sight:** small, big, tempting, smooth, -----, ----- (p.32).

### Strategies for outlining essay

Basic elements of essay organization are introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion; however, sub-elements vary from essay to essay depending on the nature of essay. Common elements for outlining all types of short essay under the main three elements are as stated by Savage and Mayer (2005) are following outlines:

**Introduction:** This is an initial paragraph containing three sub elements:

**Hook**-that attracts the reader's attention as opening sentence.

**Background information**-that is necessary to understand the topic.

**Thesis statement**-is the key sentence that introduces the topic and controlling idea of the entire essay.

**Body paragraphs:** Each body paragraph contains three further sub-elements.

They are:

**Topic sentence**-that states the topic and controlling idea.

**Supporting sentences** - support the idea in the topic sentence.

**Concluding sentence**- summarizes the idea in the topic sentence.

**Conclusion:** An essay ends with a conclusion that summaries or restates the main idea in the thesis statement. According to Davis and Liss (2006), concluding paragraph commonly carries three sub- points:

**Restatement of the thesis statement:** It remains similar meaning in different way.

**Evaluation, reflection, or advice:** It is writer's point of view.

**Final remark:** It is the ending mark to stop the discussion.

In this way, according to Davis and Liss (2006) and Savage and Mayer (2005)'s strategies, points of view can be summarized. So, basic outlining format of an essay contains introduction, body paragraphs and concluding paragraph. Under each paragraph heading there are three elements. These three elements of a paragraph are to be filled as per sorts of an essay which follow different points. These points may differ from one sort of essay to another.

### **Strategies of Applying Principles for Supporting Writing**

Principles for supporting writing include various principles to support learners in writing.

Edwards (2004) advocates that application of those guiding principles in classroom will enhance the writing skills of the learners effectively. The top ten guiding principles are: managing inclusive strategy in the diverse classroom composition, developing students' confidence to write, motivating learners with setting activities as per their need and interest, setting goal of writing, teaching process of writing before product, sequencing teaching /learning activities in order, encouraging learners write through their real experience, providing learning materials to enhance writing independently, balancing part and whole, and developing healthy approaches to the perception of writing.

Application of given strategies which are applicable in classroom setting may support learners to advance their writing essay.

### **Research Gap**

In the course of reading literature relating to my research questions, I went through many books, journal articles and Dissertation dealing with teaching essay writing. It was my part of library research for finding relevant support to my research inquiries. A lot of bulky books were found written in teaching writing. For instance: Effective

academic writing series, Supporting writing, Techniques in teaching writing and so on. All the books so far I have read have discussed about teaching writing in general, and have great value in the theoretical aspects.

Similarly, I selected matching research Dissertations in order to quench my research queries. First of all I found Mr. Neupane (2008)'s Master Dissertation entitled 'A Study on Teachers' Strategies on the short stories at Secondary Level. It gave me some guide lines on teachers' strategies. Though, it was from different field and context, it has revealed some findings in relation to ELT. He had found that relevant and comprehensive teaching materials make learners more communicative in ELT classes. The next Master Dissertation I consulted was on: 'Strategies for Teaching Writing' by Neupane (2008). I found that his research was oriented on teaching general writing rather than focusing on particular genre like essay writing.

Whatever books, dissertations, journal articles I found so far, none of them corresponded to my study. So, the findings of my research are intended to fill up this gap.



## METHODOLOGY

According to Crotty (as cited in Scotland, 2012), “Methodology is the strategy or plan of action which lies behind the choice and use of particular method” (p. 9). He further explains that methodology is concerned with why, what, from where, when and how data is collected and analyzed. ). So the term ‘Methodology’ is the set of methods for particular research under particular research paradigm. It includes research philosophy, data collecting procedure and techniques for analysis.

### **Research Paradigm: Interpretive**

In this research I have adopted interpretive paradigm. A research paradigm is a pattern of study under which a whole research process is determined with particular philosophical stand. In other words a paradigm is a model of study that guides the research process with philosophical principles. According to Scotland (2012) a paradigm consist four components: Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology and Methods of research (p. 9). According to Somekh and Lewin (2005), ontology concerns with the philosophy in relation to the nature of being and purpose of existence or the meaning of life. It depends on the researcher’s perception of how things really are and how they really work.

Similarly the term ‘Epistemology’ refers to a philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge and truth.

Since my research design is based on interpretive paradigm, it views reality as subjective and it differs from person to person. It is individually constructed. It believes that there are as many realities as individuals.

### **Research Method: Qualitative**

Research methods are established ways or process of data collection and analysis. Methods are the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data. The qualitative method gives value to data come from the personal experience. In respect to qualitative research Anderson and Arsenault (1998) point out that it is multi-method in focus that involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. They further clarify that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting for making sense and interpret phenomena from the participants' points of view.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Since my study is in qualitative in nature, I collected data from face to face interview between me as interviewer and respondents as interviewees. The aim of my study was to explore teachers' strategies for teaching essay writing in the secondary level students. I developed form (see Appendix A) to be filled up by interested teachers from focused group and distributed those forms to the selected teachers who are interested ones. Then, I visited concerning schools to collect the forms and confirm the dates and set the venue and time for the interview. After that I developed seven semi- structured (open ended) basic questions (see appendix- B) because Drever (as cited in Pathak & Intratat, P.4) opines semi-structured interviews provide a very flexible technique for small scale research. Next I administered interviews dully as per schedule and recorded them. Then the tape recorded interview texts were transcribed into orthographic forms. Finally, the transcribed data were interpreted in terms of teachers 'strategies for teaching essay writing.

### **Population Sampling Procedure**

In this research population refers to English teachers who have been teaching English in the secondary level schools more than five years and possessing master degree preferably in English. I selected six qualified and experienced non-native English teachers from secondary and higher secondary schools located in Bhaktapur district. I selected one teacher from one school from different schools. Out of six teachers four were male and two were female teachers. All selected teachers possessed master degree and had experience of teaching English more than five years in the secondary level schools.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

This section concerned with data presentation, and interpretation in relation to my research activities. I have collected data from the respondents who have been currently involving in teaching English in the community schools, in order to conclude their view points in relation to my research issues. Through this interpretation of the gathered data from the selected six respondents, I have presented my finding for my research queries in terms of thematic information, and interpretation in the respondents' point of views. Then I have established my meaning in relation to research question(s) from respondents' expression of practical classroom practice and my interpretation.

I have collected respondents' background information from the respondents' written documents, informal talks with them in process of visiting them for my research work as well as through interview. The thematic information was collected from the face to face interviews. Themes were generated from respondents' responses in relation to my main research question. In response to my inquiries what the respondents responded during the interview sessions from their experience of applying various strategies for teaching essay writing in the secondary level.

I selected one respondent from one school and asked them to fill up the form in relation to their ELT background: academic qualification, achieved training programs, teaching experience and readiness to participate in the interview program. Each respondent was elicited from face to face interview in friendly environment as a talk program on the issues. The finding from their documentation and expression from their reflection of practical implementation of their strategies during interview are presented herewith in the following manner:

### **Thematic Analysis and Interpretation**

This section introduces the basic thematic analysis and interpretation in relation to my main research question and its aspects of proposed study. Since my leading research question is: “What are the effective Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing in the secondary level?” I have collected data from the respondents mainly by means of face to face interview; however, I have included some significant data found from informal talk with the respondents and his/her colleagues reports on them in the process of visiting the respondents to set time, venue and other administrative management for the main interview program. Following four themes were generated from the respondents’ expressions in relation to my research questions

#### **Theme: 1 Teachers’ Concept on Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing**

The first theme: ‘ Teachers’ General concept on Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing’ aims at finding respondents’ conceptual meaning of the term ‘strategy’ and their reflection on their experience of practicing plan of action in relation to teaching essay writing in the secondary level. The main purpose of this theme was to diagnose diverse perception of the respondents in terms of meaning and experience of applicable strategic teaching essay writing practice in their classroom contexts. This is the core part of the study.

In order to be expressed their points of view regarding this theme, the respondents were elicited with the query, “What are the effective strategies for teaching essay writing? Their responses represent that what they mean the ‘strategy’ and how they are applying in their class room situation. Regarding this issue Respondent-1 viewed: “Students-teacher interaction and group discussion are the best ones.” Similarly, Respondent-2 said, “Group discussion on the topic and collecting ideas from the students, and secondly, acquaint the

students with devices that can be used in the essay writing”. She clarified the meaning of devices in my query that they were outlines or elements of essay.

But Respondent-3 Shared:

*I don't have any particular strategies to follow for teaching essay writing .Generally, what I do in teaching essay writing is I throw the topic among the students and ask them what they know about the topic. Usually, I ask basic questions on the topic and write students' responses on the board so that everyone can read and write them if necessary. If key points have been missed I help to add them. I usually draw a spider- diagram for collecting major points and arrange them in proper order for interaction among students as group discussion in those issues.*

Similarly, Respondent-4 Presented his concept on teaching strategies in the following manner:

*First of all I do not apply the strategies what I have read in books and other reading materials. Generally I use normal type of strategies which are applicable in my class room situation. After going into the class I see the situation no matter what lesson plan I have prepared in my lesson plan, and think how to start the class, and how to involve my students in the writing process. I decide the techniques which one is applicable in that situation.*

In the contrary to other respondents, Respondent-5 shared:

*I used three types of strategies in teaching essay writing. First of all I introduce the topic, and then I tell them to point out different kinds of point in relation to that topic. I let them think and list down through points and contribute to add the list of points on the board. As I collect about 20-25 points, I asked them to divide into 3 groups: introduction, body part and*

*conclusion. Then I ask them making sentences from the points and arrange them in paragraph.*

Giving similar meaning to Respondent1 and Respondent-2, Respondent-6 stated:

*“I think in the secondary level describing pictures and asking questions are effective in the secondary level”.*

Above data show that each Respondent has his/her own meaning of the term ‘strategy’ and each of them differs from one another’s concept in application of their class room practice. However, Respondent-1, Respondent-2, and Respondent-6 mean the ‘strategy’ as a technical term to mean technique or tactic to be applied in class room situation in order to achieve goal of teaching learning process. In contrast to Respondent-1, Respondent-2 and Respondent-6; Respondent-3, Respondent-4, and Respondent-5 view the term ‘strategy’ as approach, theory, or set of teaching principles. Though each respondent’s meaning differs from one to another, they can be categorized into two main streams: one tactic or technique to achieve particular goal and another specific approach for teaching in the particular context. Generally the plan term ‘strategy’ is understood as an action plan intending to achieve particular objective. With these viewpoints, it can be interpreted that both tactic or technique and approach are two sides of a coin which can be viewed from different stand points, but cannot be separated from each other. Both of them are essential components of teaching learning field.

According to the collected data it is found that the meaning of the term ‘strategy’ has been viewed with different perspectives as per their understanding in relation to teaching /learning process. However, they are all around the central tendency of the meaning, as the ‘on line Thesaurus in English (UK) has given several synonyms for the term ‘strategy’ as: plan, scheme, policy, approach, tactic and line of

attract. All of them are adoptable in the context of teaching essay writing in the sense that they all collocate in the field of teaching as teaching plan, teaching scheme, teaching policy teaching approach ,teaching tactic and teaching line of attract, perfectly.

Along with the above concept of strategy, the data have revealed basic conceptual meaning which is worthwhile for teaching essay writing. These strategies which have been pointed by the respondents' teaching experience are applied strategies rather than theoretical phenomena. From the above data, it can be interpreted that the respondents use various strategies to teach essay writing. To include maximum involvement of learners they expressed that they would develop Learner- centered activities like intra-group interaction, inter group discussion, writing competition, using pictures or natural scene, sometimes they use teacher made model essay for teaching elements of essay so that learners get concept of organization. Moreover they were found to follow process of writing like: planning, drafting, revising, editing by inter group sharing, commenting, and finalizing their writing within class room situation. They viewed that sharing and caring is a must. Balancing between sense of fair competition and friendly collaboration were applied in essay writing classes. From the above interpretation from respondents' points of view, it is found that greater the degree of application of given strategies faster the learning skills of essay writing.

### **Theme -2 Procedural Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing**

The second significant theme is the effective procedure for teaching essay writing. The main purpose of this theme is to find out what procedures the respondents have experienced as effective method(s) to meet the goal of essay writing. To serve this



purpose the respondents were elicited through the inquiry: What procedure they followed while teaching essay writing.

As the theme dealt with the procedures of essay writing from the Respondents' viewpoints, the six respondents shared more or less similar procedure in the major issues like collecting ideas from learners, group activities and using effective pictures in relation to the topic, however their steps were different from one another and notion of procedures were not found alike. Their steps are briefly presented in the following senses:

The Respondent-1, said, he first provides the topic, then give them key points, after that asking question on the topic, writing their responses on board and finally let them organize their sentences which were written on the board in group activities.

His focusing point lied on teachers – students, interaction and group discussion by means of picture description .He shared:

*“First I give them topic of essay, then some important information sometimes showing them pictures. Pictures which are related to the topic are helpful for them. Then I ask some relevant questions. And they try to give answers. I help them to develop the essay”*

The Respondent-2's procedure of teaching essay was found different from Respondent-1 because her first step was introducing organizational chart and discuss on introduction, body and conclusion. Then she dealt with key points followed by group discussion and conclusion. Furthermore she introduces devices or various elements of paragraphs and techniques for composition, then practice of writing activities. She emphasized on students involvement in learning process. She shared:

*First I write organizational chart on the board. Then I usually follow the steps on: introduction, body and conclusion. And give them some key points what are to be included in the essay. I apply discussion method under each point and get them to write in group discussion. I sometimes use lecture method. I give them steps to write from generating ideas to developing paragraphs and writing conclusion. When I write the chart on the board, I teach students about using them.*

In contrast to Respondent-1 and Respondent-2; Respondent-3 and Respondent-4 shared that planning to use particular strategy seems to be not very much practical. They shared that classroom strategy is determined by the particular classroom situation. In this regard Respondent-4 shared his experience of classroom scenario in the following ways:

*Once again I don't want to focus on this procedure and that procedure. Normally I warm up the class to keep silent condition first. Then I ask learners simple questions what they know about the topic of the essay. ? So they start saying whatever they know. In case they cannot tell in English, I allow them to tell in Nepali whatever they know on the topic. Then I try to motivate them with many examples about the topic by showing relevant pictures, drawing, cutout papers etc. When they start to show their interest I show word chart or word cards to deal with key vocabulary. Sometimes I take them out of class if the topic demands. For example if the topic is 'Agriculture in Nepal', I would like to take them open space or ground from where they can see the field of cultivation and talk about it. Such real and practical observation helps them to understand the subject matter easily and can make meaning of their own.*

From the above data it is found that respondent-3 and Respondent-4 prefer to be more flexible to address the students' psychological status and need and interest of learners. But respondent-5 follows formal steps of teaching. He presented his experience of his classroom in response to my query in the following ways:

*First of all I introduce the topic, and then I tell them to point out different kinds of point in relation to that topic. I let them think and list down through points and contribute to add the list of points on the board. As I collect about 20-25 points, I asked them to divide into 3 groups: introduction, body part and conclusion. Then I ask them making sentences from the points and arrange them in paragraph. After making sentences from the points on the topic, first of all I ask students to order the selected sentences which they have described the points they have chosen: the points dealt with introduction part, body part and conclusion respectively. I mean first they list the points then they divide the points into sections: introduction, body and conclusion. Then they describe the points under each section.*

Respondent-6's experience was found more or less similar to Respondent -5. She shared on her practice of teaching essay writing as:

*First, I select the topic and divide the class into small groups of 4/5. Then, I write the key vocabulary on the board and ask some questions on them to be answered by group discussion. After that they are asked to write sentences from their answers and arrange into several paragraphs from the sentences they made to develop as an essay format in group work.*

From the expressed data of the respondents' experience of teaching essay writing it can be interpreted that in total they follow at least 11 steps in sequence for teaching essay writing as classroom procedure: They are warm up and contextualize the theme mainly by using relevant pictures. Somebody gets learners to experience by making

them observe the phenomena in real context. While other teachers use pictures for scene setting to practice phase. Most of them brainstorm ideas and words to stimulate and provide guidelines for writing. Group work activities were realized as essential techniques for motivation, interaction and sharing each other. Sentence making and paragraph developing skills were felt as important skills to be taught for enhancing essay writing.

### **Theme-3: Motivational Strategy for Teaching Essay writing**

The section on ‘The motivational strategy’ focuses on the Respondents’ motivational techniques in teaching essay writing. The purpose of this theme is to uncover the respondents’ strategies to motivate learners for essay writing. The Respondents were elicited with enquiry: “What strategy do you follow to motivate the learners for essay writing?” In response to this query Respondent-1 said,

*“ I give some pre-questions on topic and they try to give answers from the group discussion. Then showing pictures I ask students what they know about the pictures.*

The data reveals that Respondent-1 has practice of using pre-questions, group activities and relevant pictures as motivational tools. Similarly, Respondent-2 and Respondent-6 shared that they usually apply three strategies for motivation: Using pictures, creating sense of fair competition, and announcing small prizes for participants. Correspondingly, Respondent-3 has practice of using pictures contextually followed by relevant topical questions to make interactive situation for communication as tool of motivation. He shared:

*I often collect pictures which are relevant to the topic. Using pictures contextually have been found effective rather than oral presentation. Besides it, question answer method which is accompanied with pictures has been*

*found more effective in compare to bare guided questions. Such pictures not only attract learners' attention but help to make meaning with their pace of learning. It creates interactive situation to communicate each other and share ideas. I found students enjoy at exploring their ideas with the help of relevant pictures. It also promotes their creativities because it activates learners' thought process.*

Respondent-4 creates motivational environment by asking learners to collect some reading materials and relevant pictures from the News papers/magazines or collect ideas from concerning persons on the particular topic and bring collected information to the class for sharing. He said,

*Besides getting students to observe relevant site practically, what I am doing normally is that I inform students the topic previously. Then I ask them to bring any cutout pictures, written documents, or observe the related things, listen to news or read the Newspapers so that they can talk something about that topic and take part in discussion. This makes them to be aware of learning things.*

But Respondent-5 attempts to motivate learners by drawing their attention towards exams point of views. In respect to this he shared:

*First of all I explain them the importance of essay writing: "It helps us to develop vocabulary power with imagination. I tell them' essay wring has great value in exam point of view for SLC level students'. It carries 12 marks in the final examination."*

The above data expressed by six respondents from their experience of regular classroom practices on motivational strategies, it can be interpreted that all of them have sense of motivational strategy, however, one's strategy differs from another

.Analyzing these data it can be interpreted that they are practicing basically following five strategies to motivate learners in essay writing: Using relevant cutout pictures in the context of topical view points, maximizing intra - group/intergroup interaction rather than students teacher communication, explaining to learners about significance of skills of essay writing for their academic progress or greater value in exams viewpoints, getting students to observe practical field to experience to contextualize the subject matter clearly if possible, and create sense of fair competition by announcing small prizes for the participants.

#### **Theme-4: Preparatory Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing**

This section looks for how the respondents effectively get preparation for teaching essay writing in the secondary level schools. The main aim of this theme is to dig out effective preparatory strategies from the respondents considering them as experienced practitioners. As there is saying “Morning shows the day”, the preparatory strategies reflect the effectiveness of teaching activities.

As teaching essay writing is regarded complicated task, I found all of respondents have practice of preparation. Their preparation strategies differ from one another. According to Respondent-1’s response in the process of preparation he collects pictures that go with the essay topic and word cards or chart for teaching. In the contrary to him respondent-2, a female respondent, gets preparation with deep study as she claims, *“I read reference books: other’s essay on the topic. I usually search the internet and collect more information in the process of getting preparation for teaching essay writing.”* It seems that she prepares advanced reading materials and collects ideas for content as well as process of teaching. But Respondent-3’s strategies differ from her. He has reflected his ways of preparation in the following manner:

*In my experience teaching essay writing is one of the difficult aspects of teaching skills. So I usually collect suitable teaching materials that match to the topic. Then I develop guided questions or prompt cards and skeleton of the particular essay. Sometimes I prepare model essay and provide them for analysis of structure and organization.*

In response to my query respondent-4 feels proud of the training program that enabled him to prepare and use the teaching materials. He says:

*Few years ago I joined to a teacher training program at Dhulikhel .During that training period I learned how to develop teaching materials like word-cards, charts, tables, cutout pictures and idea of no-cost materials. I am proud to say that I learned how to involve learners in learning process with group work and pair work. I think such educational materials plus practical observation help learners to grasp the meaning. I usually prepare mental lesson plan before going to class but develop essential teaching materials.*

In relation to preparation Respondent -5 stated that he just consults reference books and make essential note for teaching on what to teach and how to teach.

But Respondent-6 prepares in detail and manages very well as she claims:

*Before going to class, I develop simple questions on the topic like yes/no questions and WH-questions. Anyhow sometimes we can use question-answer method. We can use making sentences from key words. We can let them join the sentences they made and put them in sequence to make paragraphs. Keeping these ideas in mind I develop activities to use in classroom. I also collect teaching materials like pictures from the Newspapers.*

Under this theme from the above data I found that teachers prepare lessons not as theory of lesson plan with detail description of activities and

procedure in paper rather than collecting/developing effective materials and short note on particular content and mental preparation of teaching process. From the Respondents' point of views it can be interpreted that the experienced practitioners prepare lesson for teaching essay writing by: collecting teaching materials like cut out pictures in relation to the topic, developing word-cards for key words and appropriate chart/table to present/support for key concept, reading reference books for content and teaching methods, searching Internet to gather information in detail and studying post modern theory of teaching essay writing, developing guided questions/outlines/organizational chart for classroom purpose, developing activities sets for group work/pair work, interpreting possible issues that learners may raise or feel difficulty and strategies to face them.

### **Discussion on Interpretation of the Study**

During the thematic interpretation of my research from the collected data, I found that different teachers perceive the meaning of the term 'strategy' differently. Some teachers view it as pre-plan activities set by the teachers to apply into the classroom situation, whereas other perceive it as immediate action to face the challenge emerged unexpectedly in the classroom. There are another type of teachers too, who regard strategy as a set of established principles or theory of language teaching. No matter whatever the meaning they understand by the term strategy, all respondents of my research participants' common standpoint is that they take strategies as series of teaching activities followed or developed by teachers to apply in the teaching learning process.

In this regard as I studied research conducted by Neupane (2008) on 'the teachers' strategies on short stories' from Kathmandu University, he found that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers might have different perceptions in term



of practice and choice of particular strategies. However, they were found interested to adapt multiple strategies to transfer textual information in the class. Similarly, when I read another dissertation by another Neupane(2008) on: 'Strategies on teaching writing' his finding was that group activities and pair activities motivate learners to be more communicative and learning by experiences. He has used the term 'Strategies' for sequential list of activities or procedures of teaching from pre-teaching to post-teaching.

Likewise, Shrestha (2012) also reported his research finding that teachers were found familiar with their respective strategies in teaching respective language skills. He further claimed that teachers' strategies in particular language skills were found as effective tools for motivating learners in teaching/learning process. Another researcher Jha (2012), who carried out research on : 'Strategies of scene setting in teaching short stories' reported her research finding that teachers were found using different strategies for scene setting which can be taken as essence of teaching item to contextualize the thematic concept of particular teaching field.

From the given research reports, it can be interpreted that each and every teacher has his/ her choice of strategies. In this respect Gnawali(2008) asserts that every teacher has her personal theory of teaching and learning. He further points out that the teachers make their own sense of understandings to make decisions and act on the basis of their understandings.

Similarly, Prabhu (1990) claims "No single method is the best method for everyone (p. 162)". He opines that the main reason behind it is the variation in teaching context.

Regarding the issue of my main research question, “What are the teachers’ strategies for teaching essay writing?” it basically focuses on: Strategies of planning, motivating, presenting and practicing like: drafting, revising, editing of learners’ essay compositions through the process of group/pair activities/ in the class room .In the words of Graham and Perin (2007) such process is called teaching writing strategies.

Writing strategies are often considered as planning for successful achievement in teaching essay writing. It can be viewed as techniques, methods or approaches of teaching essay writing. In layperson words the three terms can be treated interchangeably to mean Strategies.

According to Yan (2005) basically there are three approaches in teaching essay writing: the product approach, the process approach and the genre approach. Brown (as cited in Yan, 2005) points out, “With the product approach teachers focus on what a final piece of writing look like and measure it against criteria of vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical consideration such as spelling and punctuation, as well as content and organization”(p.1).

The second strategy, the process approach is just contrast to the product approach. It is often considered as stage-wise teaching. According to Tribble (as cited in Yan, 2005) there are four stages in writing: prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, and editing.

Similarly, the third strategy is the genre approach. According to Nunan (as cited in Yan) in genre approach different types of written texts are typified by a particular structure and grammatical forms that reflect the communicative purpose of the genre.

Regardless the types of strategies we use, the main purpose of applying them is to achieve the specific objectives of teaching learning effectively.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The finding of the study has been concluded from the summary of above data analysis and interpretation section. From the interpreted data it was found that different English teachers apply different strategies in teaching essay in the secondary schools, however, respondents were found greatly impressed with student centered activities in ELT classes. The found data can be interpreted to establish the principle that 'higher the learners' involvement in the teaching learning process greater the degree of achievement. Out of six respondents two of them were found hesitated to use the term strategy. They preferred to say techniques or procedure instead of strategies. Though the respondents perceived the term 'Strategy' from different angle, each respondent expressed his/her view that teaching strategies are crucial in order to achieve the specific goal of teaching essay writing in the secondary level students.

From the data analysis and interpretation the finding of the research are given below.

### **Findings**

- a) Teachers use different strategies successfully in teaching essay writing in their context. It establishes that 'No single strategy works each and every context of classroom composition'.
- b) Teaching essay writing demands series of individual strategies: Preparatory, Motivational, Presentational, Practice, and Feedback sharing strategies.
- c) Using relevant set of cutout pictures, teacher made model essay, and classroom interactions were expressed by respondents as effective means for scene setting to practice activities.

- d) Teachers should be equipped with variety of teaching writing strategies to address learners' need, interest, and level of understanding to meet the goal of essay writing for learners' academic development.
- e) Relevant set of pictures using in the particular context is used to learn with fun.
- f) Group/pair activities motivate learners for planning, preparing, drafting, revising, and editing and sharing each other smoothly.

### **Pedagogical Implication**

From the above findings I would like to recommend following pedagogical implications:

- a) EFL teachers are to be equipped with various strategies for motivating to testing.
- b) Different strategies are to be applied as per students' need and interest.
- c) Strategies should match local context and level of students.
- d) No single strategy is helpful in each and every context.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion findings of my study, we can conclude that EFL teachers perceive the meaning of the term 'strategy' differently; however, all of them are related to various teaching/learning activities in the class room. Different teachers apply different strategies for different purpose of teaching. Pictures using in writing play vital role in making conceptual framework of essay writing. Student teacher, and students- students interaction is essential part of teaching/learning process.

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## APPENDIX A

### **Investigating Teachers' Strategies for Teaching Essay Writing in the Secondary**

#### **Level Schools**

#### **Interview Guidelines**

1. What strategies do you think are effective in teaching essay writing in the secondary schools?
2. Why do you think they are effective ones?
3. Which strategies do you often use in teaching essay- writing classroom?
4. Which strategy is the best one in your experience? Why?
5. What procedure do you follow for applying that strategy?
6. How do you usually get prepared for teaching essay writing?
7. How do you motivate learners in writing essays?