

PROBLEMS IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH PLURAL MARKER -S FOR LIMBU-
SPEAKING BASIC ENGLISH LEARNERS

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of Mr. Hari Chandra Lawati for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education*, presented on 31 January 2025, entitled *Problems in Pronouncing English Plural Marker-S for Limbu Speaking Basic English Learners*.

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In recent times, pronunciation issues among second and foreign language learners have become a significant global concern. There are two differing perspectives on this issue. One school of thought argues that pronunciation is a critical aspect of language learning and should be given serious attention, while the other maintains that it is not a major concern. This dissertation explores the pronunciation challenges faced by basic-level Yakthung/Limbu-speaking students when learning English. Every language has its own pronunciation system, with some similarities and differences compared to others. Similarities facilitate learning, whereas differences create difficulties. Limbu-speaking English learners experience these challenges, particularly when encountering phonetic contrasts between their native language and English.

In the Limbu language, -haʔ is the plural marker suffix, but the pronunciation of -haʔ remains the same. Here are two examples:

(1) nakca-haʔ

pen-pl.

nakcahaʔ

'pens'

(2) loŋ-haʔ

computer-pl.

lɒŋhaʔ

'computers'

In the first example, haʔ is after the voiceless sound /c/, whereas in the second example, the same plural marker -haʔ is used after the voiced sound, but the pronunciation remains the same.

To the contrary in the English language, the same plural marker -s is pronounced in three different ways. Here are three examples:

(3) hat-s

an object that is worn on the head as a part of a uniform-pl.

'hats /hæts/

'more than one hat'

(4) king-s

the male ruler of a country, one who inherits the position by birth-pl.

kings /kɪŋz/

'more than one king'

(5) face-s

the front part of the head (from forehead to chin)-pl.

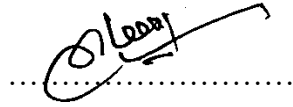
faces /feɪsɪz/

'more than one face'

In the third example, the plural marker is after the voiceless, and as a result, -s is pronounced /s/. In the fourth example, the plural marker is after the voiced sound. As a result, -s is pronounced /z/. In the fifth example, the plural marker is after the sibilant. As a result, -s is pronounced /ɪz/.

After the theoretical discussion, the research suggests that the teacher should understand the problem of L2 learners and treat them accordingly. This thesis projects Optimality Theory (e.g. OT) and methodology to solve the problem. The result brought a hopeful impact. The students were able to pronounce the plural marker -s properly after adopting the action research method. The teacher's main job is to find out the problem and give a solution. Such and such research investigates students' specific difficulties and provides techniques, methods, etc. Since

Nepali is a contact language, it has also been used as a medium, and an example is here. Because contact languages have an impact and importance in learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hari Chandra Lawati', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

Hari Chandra Lawati

Degree Candidate

31 January 2025

शोध सार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा दर्शनाचार्य (M.Phil.) उपाधिको लागि हरि चन्द्र लावतीको लिम्बू बोल्ने आधारभूत अंग्रेजी सिक्नेहरूका लागि अंग्रेजी बहुवचन मार्कर-S उच्चारणमा समस्याहरू (*Problems in Pronouncing English Plural Marker-S for Limbu Speaking Basic English Learners*) भन्ने शिर्षकको शोधपत्र शिक्षा संकाय, काठमाण्डौ विश्वविद्यालयमा माघ १८, २०८१ गते मा प्रस्तुत गरियो

.....

सह प्रा. टीकाराम पौडेल, पीएचडी
शोध निर्देशक

.....

हिरालाल कापर
शोध निर्देशक

वर्तमान समयमा, दोस्रो र विदेशी भाषा सिक्नेहरूमाभक्त उच्चारण समस्या एक महत्वपूर्ण विश्वव्यापी चिन्ताको विषय बनेको छ। यस विषयमा दुई फरक दृष्टिकोणहरू छन्। एउटा विचारधाराले उच्चारण भाषा सिकाइको एक महत्वपूर्ण पक्ष हो र यसलाई गम्भीर ध्यान दिनुपर्छ भन्ने तर्क गर्छ, जबकि अर्कोले यो प्रमुख चिन्ताको विषय नभएको बताउँछ। यस शोधपत्रले आधारभूत-स्तरका याक्थुङ/लिम्बु-भाषी विद्यार्थीहरूले अंग्रेजी सिक्दा सामना गर्ने उच्चारण चुनौतीहरूको अन्वेषण गर्दछ। प्रत्येक भाषाको आफ्नै उच्चारण प्रणाली हुन्छ, जसमा अरूको तुलनामा केही समानता र भिन्नताहरू हुन्छन्। समानताहरूले सिक्न सजिलो बनाउँछ, जबकि भिन्नताहरूले कठिनाइहरू सिर्जना गर्दछ। लिम्बु-भाषी अंग्रेजी सिक्नेहरूले यी चुनौतीहरू अनुभव गर्छन्, विशेष गरी जब तिनीहरूको मातृभाषा र अंग्रेजी बीच ध्वन्यात्मक विरोधाभासहरू सामना गर्छन्।

लिम्बू भाषामा बहुवचनको सङ्केतक -हा? प्रत्यय हो, तर -हा? को उच्चारण सबै अवस्थामा उस्तै रहन्छ।

यहाँ दुई उदाहरणहरू छन् :

(१) नाक्चा-हा?

कलम-बव (बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क)

कलमहरू

(२) लङ्-हा? .

कम्प्युटर-बव.

कम्प्युटरहरू

पहिलो उदाहरणमा बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क - हा? अल्पप्राण ध्वनि /च्/ को पछि छ, जबकि दोस्रो उदाहरणमा सोही बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क - हा? महाप्राणपछि प्रयोग गरिएको छ, तर उच्चारणमा फरक आएको छैन ।

अंग्रेजी भाषामा यसको विपरीत, एउटै बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क -s लाई तीन फरक तरिकाले उच्चारण गरिन्छ । यहाँ तीन उदाहरणहरू छन् :

(३) ह्याट-एस्

टाउकोमा लगाइने पोसाक/टोपी-बव (बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क)

hats/ह्याटस्/

'एक भन्दा बढी टोपी'

(४) किङ्-एस्

देशको पुरुष शासक, जन्मद्वारा पद प्राप्त गर्ने व्यक्ति-बव..

kings/किङ्ज्/

राजाहरू

(५) फेइस्-बव.

टाउकोको अगाडिको भाग (निधारदेखि चिउँडोसम्म)-बव.

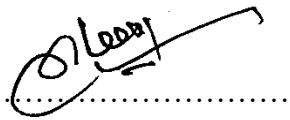
faces/फेइसिज्/

अनुहारहरू (एक भन्दा बढी अनुहार)

तेस्रो उदाहरणमा, बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क अल्पप्राण ध्वनिपछि छ, र फलस्वरूप, -एस (s) लाई /स्/ उच्चारण गरिन्छ । चौथो उदाहरणमा, बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क महाप्राण ध्वनिपछि छ । फलस्वरूप, -एस (s) लाई /ज्/ उच्चारण गरिन्छ । पाँचौं उदाहरणमा, बहुवचन सङ्केतक सीत्कार (sibilant) पछि छ । फलस्वरूप, -एस (s) लाई /इज्/ उच्चारण गरिन्छ ।

सैद्धान्तिक छलफल पछि, अनुसन्धानले के सुझाव दिन्छ भने शिक्षकले दोस्रोभाषी सिकारुहरूको समस्या बुझ्नुपर्छ र तदनुसार व्यवहार गर्नुपर्छ । यो शोधले अनुकूलता सिद्धान्त (जस्तै OT) र समस्या समाधान गर्ने पद्धतिलाई प्रोजेक्ट गर्दछ । यसमा परिणामले आशाजनक प्रभाव ल्यायो । कार्यमुलक अनुसन्धानको प्रयोगले विद्यार्थीहरू बहुवचन सङ्केताङ्क -एस (s) लाई सही रूपमा उच्चारण गर्न सक्षम भए । शिक्षकको मुख्य काम समस्या पत्ता लगाउनु र समाधान दिनु हो । यस्ता अनुसन्धानले विद्यार्थीहरूको विशिष्ट कठिनाइहरूको अनुसन्धान गर्छ र प्रविधि, विधिहरू,

आदि प्रदान गर्दछ । नेपाली भाषा सम्पर्क भाषा भएको हुनाले यहाँ यसलाई पनि माध्यम र उदाहरण बनाइएको छ ।
किनभने सिकाइमा सम्पर्क भाषाको प्रभाव र महत्व रहन्छ ।



हरि चन्द्र लावती

उपाधी उम्मेदवार

माघ १८, २०८१

This dissertation, entitled Problems in Pronouncing English Plural Marker -S for Limbu Speaking Basic English Learners, was presented by Hari Chandra Lawati on 31 January, 2025.


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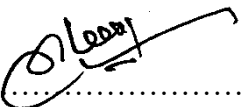
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31 January 2025

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I understand that my dissertation will be part of the permanent collection of Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes me to reveal my dissertation to any release upon request.

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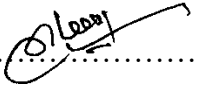
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

.....

Hari Chandra Lawati

Degree Candidate

31 January 2025

DEDICATION

I dedicated this dissertation to Ran Maya Ningleku/Lawati (my mother), Prithi Prasad Lawati (my father), Radhika Sambahamphe (my wife), Bhawana Lawati and Shila Lawati (my daughters), Uttam Lawati (my son), my respected school and University teachers, well-wishers and supporters who supported and paved my way to continue my education/learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the collective effort of several individuals. Without their support and inspiration, I could not have accomplished this challenging task. Professors, senior students at this university, peers, and my family members have all contributed to this research. I am deeply grateful to those who have assisted me on my academic journey, and I sincerely thank them in advance.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to both of my supervisors, Associate Prof. Tikaram Paudel (PhD), Head of Language Education Department, Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED), and Mr. Hiralal Kapar, Research Associate, for their continuous support throughout my research journey. Their guidance, inspiration, and unwavering support have been invaluable in every aspect of my study. Their willingness to oversee this dissertation has opened new doors in my educational journey. I will always cherish the way they have mentored me in my academic pursuits. They also encouraged me to complete the dissertation on time.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to my respected gurus: Prof. Laxman Gnawali (PhD), Prof. Lava Deo Awasthi (PhD), Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi (PhD), and Prof. Hem Raj Kafle (PhD) for their dedication and mentorship. Their classes and guidance have been profoundly practical, motivational, creative, and transformative, qualities that every student needs. I am also sincerely grateful to Prof. Dr. Bal Chandra Luitel, Dean of Kathmandu University, for his kind support and his valuable contributions to both administrative and academic matters.

I have found Kathmandu University, the second-largest university in Nepal, to be an academic hub where new ideas flourish and innovative educational trends emerge. Despite the challenges, including the pandemic, our academic sessions were well-organized, classes were conducted effectively, and courses were completed on time. Finally, I extend my love and gratitude to my dear children, Bhawana Lawati and Shila Lawati (daughters) and Uttam Lawati (son), for their unwavering support and encouragement. They continue to inspire me to explore new possibilities and strive for excellence.

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ABBREVIATION

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
A	Agent
E	Exclusive
GT	Grammar translation
I	Inclusive
NPT	Non preterit
N	Noun
P	Patient
PF	Perfective
Pl	Plural
PP	Passive participle
PRES	Present tense
PST	Past tense
PTT	Pupils' talking time
S	Subject/student
Ss	Students
Sg	Singular
T	Teacher
TTT	Teacher's talking time

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication. Human beings exchange their ideas, feelings, and emotions using language. According to Chomsky (1965), language is a system of rules that enables individuals to generate and understand an infinite number of sentences. Through language, we know threats, promises, welcomes, well-wishes, commands, orders, expressions of gratitude, and beliefs, which influence our behaviour. As Halliday (1975) states, language serves multiple functions, including expressing emotions, facilitating interaction, and conveying information. In this regard, Pinker (2019) highlights that language is not just a tool for communication but also a key element in shaping human cognition and thought processes. As a result, we smile to express happiness and shout to express anger or frustration. That is to say, we use language to express physical, mental, or psychological responses. However, defining language is not an easy task, as different linguists interpret it in various ways. Saussure (1916) emphasized that language is a structured system of signs that derive meaning through differences in relation to one another. Given that languages consist of thousands of signs and systems that represent their forms and meanings, they must be understood within a broader linguistic framework. Evans (2020) further expands on this by arguing that language is deeply embedded in human culture and evolves continuously, reflecting social and technological changes.

Language is closely associated with syntax, morphology, pragmatics, and semantics. The speaker should produce meaningful, contextual, and grammatically correct sentences. On the other hand, the listener must also comprehend the message that the speaker conveys; otherwise, communication fails. As Hymes (1972) argues, effective communication requires not only grammatical competence but also sociolinguistic competence, meaning that speakers must understand the appropriate use of language in different contexts. VanPatten and Williams (2020) emphasize that modern linguistic research focuses not only on structure but also on cognitive processes, interaction, and the role of language in learning. Thus, language is not just about structure but also about meaning, context, and evolving communicative functions.

There are varieties of languages and language families. The largest language families in the world are Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan Languages, Niger-Congo Languages, and

Austronesian Languages. English, an Indo-European language, is taken as a lingua franca at the international level since it is globally used. It is used in different sectors: education, administration, medicine, health, business, agriculture, technology and so on. In Nepal, the English language is made a compulsory subject from the very beginning up to the bachelor's level. English is spoken as an administrative or official and cultural language in eighty-eight countries by and between one and two billion people (CDC Secondary Curriculum/TU syllabus BTM).

I try to exemplify one of the morphological parts between English, Nepali and Limbu languages here. Limbu language is a pronominalized language (Grierson, GA. 1909: 283-304). That is, the subject and predicate can be found in a single word in Limbu language, for example, $k\epsilon-nis-a-\eta-bi$ (you-see-PST-me-Q) $\Rightarrow k\epsilon nis a \eta bi$? 'Did you notice me ?' The number of such features is quite different in English. For example, eat-s (eat-3P/Sing/PRES) 'He/She eats.' In the case of pronouncing the plural marker -s in English and -ha? in Limbu, there is a big and fundamental difference between these two languages. If the same plural marker is pronounced differently in different situations in English, it may create problems for those whose language doesn't have such a phonological system. For example, the same -s is pronounced in different ways to produce plural words: /s, z, ɪz/, but we can't find such a case in Limbu. Those things make learning difficult and even vague.

Linguistic Situation in Nepal

Nepal is a linguistically diverse country with a variety of languages spoken across its regions. The linguistic situation in Nepal is characterized by the coexistence of multiple indigenous languages along with Nepali, the national language. Among the many indigenous languages, Limbu is one of the prominent languages spoken in the eastern region of Nepal. According to Poudel (2013), the linguistic landscape of Nepal is shaped by a complex interaction of languages, with each language having its own phonetic and grammatical structures, which can influence the learning of other languages, such as English, among native speakers. This diversity plays a crucial role in the challenges faced by learners, especially in the pronunciation of English sounds.

The Nepali language belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family. It is the official language of Nepal. It is spoken by 2,91,64,578 speakers (National Census 2078). The Nepali language is taken as a link language.

Table 1

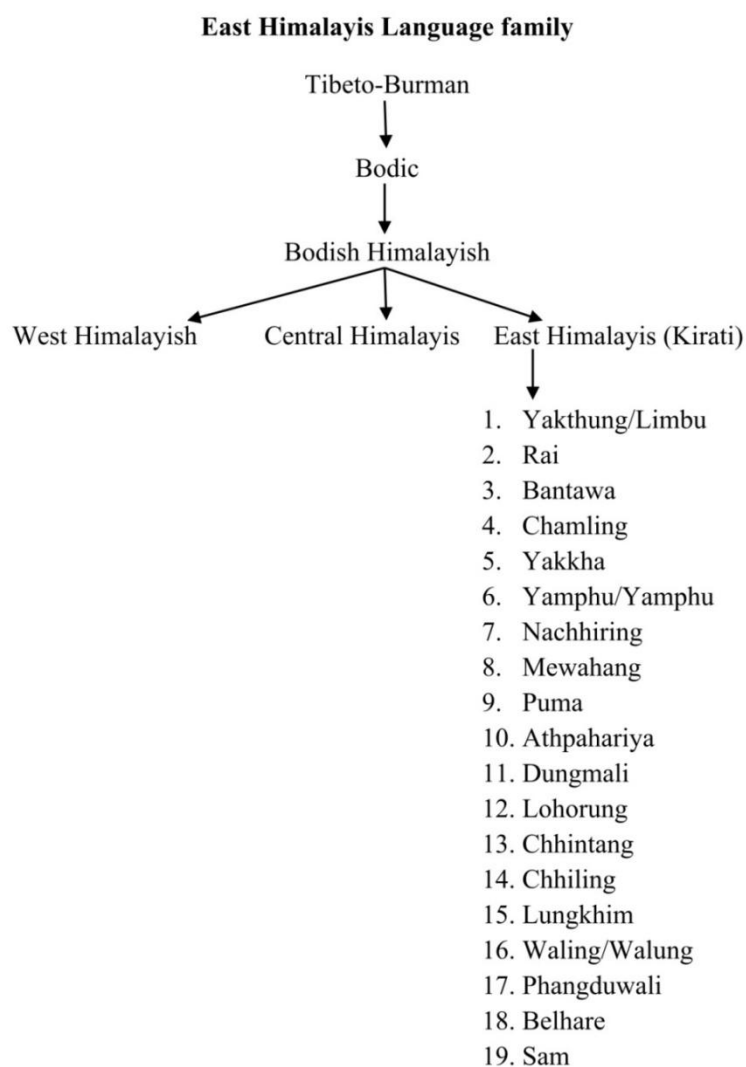
The Nepali Language: Province-wise (National Census 2078)

Province	Speakers
Koshi	22,46,027
Madhesh	3,52,109
Bagmati	34,27,981
Gandaki	18,10,003
Lumbini	26,04,614
Karnali	15,00,161
Sudurpaschim	11,43,562

Sources: (Bradley 1997/2002)

Yakthung/Limbu language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family. In Nepal, 3,50,436 speakers speak the Yakthung/Limbu language (National census 2078). It is one of the major languages spoken and written in Nepal, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Sikkim and Bhutan. Yakthung/Limbu language has four main dialects: Panthare, Phedape (Kainla, 2059), Tamorkhole and Chhatore. Sirijunga script (also 'Kirat Sirijunga script or Kirat script') is used to write the Yakthung/Limbu language.

Figure 1
East Himalayas Language Family



(Bradley 1997/2002)

Table 2
The Yakthung/Limbu Language: Province-wise (National Census 2078)

Province	Speakers
Koshi	3,32,512
Madhesh	22
Bagmati	16,674
Gandaki	612
Lumbini	212

Karnali	61
Sudurpaschim	128

Taking references from some grammar books, I can say language is also associated with script and pronunciation. In Nepal, there are some scripts for writing. According to the National Census 2024, there are 124 languages. However, only 15 scripts are used in Nepal.

Table 3

Scripts that are used in Nepal

SN	Script	Languages
1	Devnagari	Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Newar, Rajbamshi, Magar, Tamang, Kirati languages
2	Mathilichyar/Tirhuta	Maithili
3	Kaithi	Maithili
4	Sambota	Tibbati, Sherpa, Tamang, Lhwoka, Seke
5	Tamhig	Tamang
6	RanJanuarya	Newar
7	Sirijunga (SiriJanuarya)	Limbu
8	Rong	Lepcha
9	Akkha	Magar
10	Gurumukhi	Panjabi
11	Arabiyan	Urdu
12	Latin/Roman	Santhali/Gurung
13	Olchhemel/Ol Chhiki/Ol	Santhali
14	Khema	Gurung
15	Bangala	Bengali (Bangali)

(Gautam, 2021)

Nature of the Study

Pronunciation is the foundational aspect of language learning. Teaching pronunciation is a challenging and time-consuming task, as noted by Aliaga García (2007), Martínez-Flor et al. (2006), and Pourhosein Gilak January (2016). Mispronunciations can significantly impact meaning at the semantic level, sometimes entirely altering comprehension. This issue is not

limited to non-native speakers; even native English speakers may encounter difficulties due to pronunciation errors. Based on students' responses, Limbu speakers, who speak the Limbu language and are learning English as a foreign language, face significant challenges in pronunciation, which hinders their language acquisition.

It is amazing for the Limbu students to pronounce the same plural marker (suffix) -s in three different ways, e.g., the /s/ sound or the fricative, alveolar and voiceless sound is produced for the plural marker -s, but the /z/ or the fricative, alveolar and voiced is most difficult (or the pronunciation 0% ?) for the plural marker -s. And the sibilant /ɪz/ sound is rarely/hardly produced for the plural marker -s(<https://www.grammar.cl/english/pronunciation-final-s.htm>). The preceding sound of the plural marker -s is deciding in English, e.g., in the word 'goats', /t/ (or the plosive, alveolar and voiceless) is the preceding sound of the -s. As a result, the -s is pronounced [s]. On the other hand, in Limbu, the plural marker -ha? remains the same in terms of pronunciation and use, e.g., noun +ha?

Pronunciation difficulties are a common challenge for second-language learners, especially when phonetic structures differ between their native and target languages. One such issue is the mispronunciation of the English plural marker -s among Limbu-speaking basic-level students. I have frequently observed that these learners struggle to pronounce this grammatical feature correctly. Initially, they lacked awareness of when and how to change singular nouns into their respective plural forms, leading to consistent errors in pronunciation.

Such difficulties align with findings by GilakJanuaryi (2016), who emphasizes that phonological differences between a learner's first and second language significantly impact pronunciation accuracy. Without proper instruction and intervention, these errors can persist, hindering overall language proficiency. However, after targeted intervention, the students in my class gradually improved, and by the end of the session, they successfully pronounced the plural markers correctly. This issue highlights the need for focused phonetic training to bridge the gap between Limbu and English pronunciation patterns.

Rationale of My Study

Awareness and familiarity with linguistic structures play a crucial role in facilitating language learning. When learners understand phonological rules, they can navigate pronunciation more effectively. This study aims to investigate the pronunciation challenges faced by Limbu-speaking EFL students, particularly in articulating the English plural marker -s. In English, pluralization is often achieved by adding -s to common nouns, whereas in the Limbu language, a similar function is performed by adding -ha (Gurung, 2019).

However, due to phonological differences between Limbu and English, students often struggle to correctly pronounce the -s sound in English plural forms. This difficulty can hinder their overall language proficiency and communication skills. Therefore, it is essential to examine these pronunciation challenges and implement appropriate interventions to support Limbu-speaking learners in their English language acquisition.

The morpheme -s is added to the base-form noun to make it plural (Adejare, 2019). As a result, the unmarked singular (e.g. girl) can be converted into the marked plural (e.g. girls). From a phonological point of view, the plural marker phoneme -s is realized as /s/, /z/ and /ɪz/ based on whether the noun ends with a voiceless noun-sibilant, voiced noun-sibilant or vowel or sibilant (Adams, 1973; Christopherson & Sandved; Strang, 1969; Quirk et al., 1985).

In Seri, various types of suffixes are used to form plural (Chen, 2020). Supporting the discourse, M Seri et al. (1981) provided some typical examples of this claim. Here is an example,

a) aristo:n-ox
 ribbon-pl.
 'ribbons'

Unlike in English, the morphemes do not realize the different sounds in Seri. In this support, Surmic et al. (1999) stated that in Tirmaga, the (dialect of Suri) -*giis* is the common suffix, but when they (demonstratives) are used adnominally, there's a difference. For example,

Amani- nα
 hunter-pl.
 "hunters"

The above examples also highlight that teachers who are teaching in the field are facing problems regarding the plural markers- especially in the Limbu community. So, this study

expects to give general information about Limbu phonology, which will help them deal with limbu speaking students. Similarly, teachers teaching in a multicultural background will facilitate classroom pedagogy as they will be familiar with the plural marker system of Limbu phonology.

In addition, policymakers are expected to benefit from this study as this study explores the challenges faced by the Limbu students. The policy has not been explicitly mentioned in the curriculum (i.e. whether the English that is being implemented in schools is British English or American English, etc.). It creates problems in the practical field. So, this study will provide practical insight into how to make proper revisions to the curriculum.

In addition, Limbu-speaking students will also benefit from this study during their English classes. When the students learn about the variation on plural markers -s in both languages, Limbu and English, they will have fewer chances of mother tongue interference in second language learning, i.e. English. Further, students will also preserve the Limbu language's sound system and plural-making system.

The main rationale of the study is to bring new knowledge to the field of education through comparison. In English, -s is added to the noun. As a result, the singular noun is made plural, and in Limbu, the suffix -haʔ is added to the noun, and as a result, the singular noun is made plural. But the idea is that the plural marker -s is pronounced in different ways in English, but in Limbu, the plural marker -haʔ is pronounced in the same way. This comparison will facilitate the teaching-learning process, e.g. the teacher's job is to investigate the obstacles (linguistic differences).

Statement of My Research Problem

Pronunciation is a fundamental aspect of language learning, yet it remains a significant challenge for non-native speakers, particularly when phonological structures differ between the first and target languages (GilakJanuaryi, 2016). Limbu-speaking learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) often struggle with the correct pronunciation of the plural marker -s, as their native language follows a different morphological system for pluralization (Gurung, 2019). These phonological differences lead to systematic errors, affecting learners' intelligibility and overall communication skills. Understanding these difficulties is crucial to developing effective pedagogical strategies that enhance pronunciation accuracy and language proficiency among Limbu-speaking EFL learners.

Almost all the time, I found my students (basic level students whose mother tongue is Limbu) frequently mispronouncing the plural marker -s: all students pronounced /s/, some /es/, but no one pronounced /z/ initially. After a long run, they managed to pronounce. After the intervention, all of them succeeded in explaining plural nouns. Will they continue this? Is there any teaching method for these kinds of students?

Being an English teacher, I realized whether we English teachers pay specific attention to fundamental pronunciation. Structure, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling are the basic parts to be taught. Shaleh & Muhaji (2015) have developed some strategies. According to their strategies, the students who are learning English as a second language should be helped immediately whenever they face pronunciation problems; the teacher should use the drill method so that the content they teach is practised or it helps to automatize the learning; the teacher should make sure that the students hear him/her clearly and properly; the teacher should pay their particular attention to particular words which have a big difference between sound (e.g. pronunciation) and spelling (e.g. writing); the teacher should pay their attention to sounds and their influence on the learners' understanding; the teacher should make the students alert about the pronunciation because the habit of repeating correct pronunciation helps to develop the real learning automatic or natural (Enerio, 2021, p. 27). But have we (English teachers) thought seriously and tried to bring it into practice? Will a comparative study bring new thinking to pedagogical therapy?

Pronunciation is a basic part of a language. The students who are learning English as a second language are deeply affected by their mother tongue. In this regard, GilakJanuaryi (2011) says that eight factors affect the learning of pronunciation: accent, stress, intonation and rhythm, motivation, attitude, instruction, age, personality and mother tongue interference. The way they produce sounds depends on the presence and absence of sounds.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to explore the basic obstacles that create problems in pronouncing the plural marker <-s> for Limbu learners while learning English.

Research Questions

My research questions are:

1. What kind of problems do Nepali and Limbu-speaking learners face while learning to pronounce English nominal plural marker -s?

2. How do English language teachers cope with the challenges of pronouncing the English plural marker -s?

Delimitation

This study focuses on the pronunciation of the plural marker -s if the last consonant sound of the word is sibilant (a hissing or buzzing sound), if the last consonant of the word is voiceless, and if the last letter of the word ends in a voiced consonant (or sound). This study only covers the common noun in which the suffix -s is stuck and makes the Limbu-speaking English learners of grade eight. The study is the subject of eight students in grade eight, only concerned with the English words that end with -s and Limbu words that end with -haʔ. So, my study is concerned with pronunciation due to the plural marker -s, when it is added to a noun. Moreover, I will try to examine the experience and real practice of eight students from one secondary school.

Structure of the Study

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic. The second chapter reviews the related literature. The third chapter deals with research methodology. The fourth chapter talks about the teachers' perception of pronunciation related to the plural marker -s (PRPM-s). The fifth chapter deals with the strategies for teaching English plural marker -s pronunciation. The sixth chapter talks about the summary, findings and conclusion.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the study, beginning with the context, which outlined the linguistic challenges faced by Limbu-speaking learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in pronouncing the plural marker -s. The discussion highlighted the differences between Limbu and English phonological structures and how these differences contribute to pronunciation difficulties.

Following this, I included a reflection on my observations as a teacher, emphasizing how students often mispronounce the English plural marker and the need for targeted intervention. This personal insight strengthened the foundation for the study by demonstrating its practical relevance. The rationale of the study was then discussed, explaining why this research is necessary. Given that pronunciation plays a crucial role in language comprehension and communication, understanding the difficulties Limbu-speaking students face can help develop

more effective teaching strategies. This section also incorporated relevant literature to establish the significance of pronunciation research in second-language acquisition.

Next, I articulated the problem statement, identifying the specific pronunciation challenges experienced by Limbu-speaking EFL learners. The discussion underscored how phonological interference from the Limbu language affects the pronunciation of the English plural marker -s, leading to systematic errors. The purpose of the study and research questions were then presented to provide clarity on the study's objectives. These elements guided the research focus and methodology, ensuring that the study effectively addressed the identified linguistic challenges.

Finally, the chapter concluded with a discussion of the delimitations, outlining the scope and limitations of the study. This section specified the targeted population, research setting, and linguistic features under investigation. The chapter ended with this summary, offering a structured overview of the key discussions and setting the stage for the subsequent chapters of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of Nepal, the English language has taken a wider space in education in recent years. It (English) was brought into education in 1951 (Bista, 2011). Though there's great controversy or debate, the English language is a foreign language (Shrestha, 1983; Shrestha, 2008). It has been a compulsory subject from the very beginning up to the bachelor's level. National Educational Policy 2019 has given schools options to run classes using either their mother tongue or, Nepali or English as a medium of instruction (Shrestha & Gautam . 2022:12).

<-hal?> is the plural suffix in Limbu, but in certain situations, it is not necessary when the plurality of the noun is shown by the verb (Driem. 1987,p.29), e.g.

1. sɔwa pɛr-a => sɔwa pɛra

bee-fly/PST

'A bee flew.'

2. sɔkwa mɛ-pɛr-a

bee they-fly-PST

'The bees flew.'

January aideh and Mahadin (2015) analyze the results of female Arabic-speaking learners (grades 8 and 11). Comparatively, grade 11 students could comprehend and do better than grade 8 students (Al-January aideh and Mahadin. 2015). Wilson (2002:159) researched the plural marker in Kuche. In Kuche, singular noun can be made plural by adding *bān* (*bānā*) before the noun, for example: *īyɛ* 'mother' *bānīyɛ* 'mothers' (2002:159).

In some educational institutions, English pronunciation is simply ignored since exact pronunciation is to some extent, impossible (Wei & Zhou, 2002; see also Syananondh, 1983). In the context of Nepal, the concerned institutions should also pay attention to it (the detailed projection associated with pronunciation). But we have to follow the minimum requirements so that people understand the speaker better, and they sound more natural.

Dewi (2009) studied pronunciation related to -ed and -s/es endings. The same suffix <-ed> is pronounced in three ways viz. /t/, /d/ and /ɪd/. This study shows one of the irregular forms of pronunciation for the same suffix which supports my research work. Almost all the languages of Nepal have a regular way of changing singular into plural, and the sound remains the same.

In the English language, the plural marker -s is pronounced differently according to the preceding sound. The pronunciation of words ending -s depends on the final consonant. English morphological rules indicate plural in English by adopting the formula (+pl) → {-s}, where /-ɪz/ is produced if the final is [+sibilant], e.g. house + s => houses; /-s/ is produced if the final is [-voice], e.g. cup + s => cups and /+z/ is produced if the final is [+voice], e.g. bag + s => bags (Köpcke, 1997).

Children should know phonology because of the relationship between reading (sound) and spelling (orthography) (Yeong and Liow, 2012) in the process of learning the -s morpheme by the children. Another researcher named Selby (1972) tested two types of persons: the first type were English native speaker adults, and the others were pre-school children. It showed that particular morphological rules can't be learnt or achieved below the age of 14 (Selby 1972: 298).

Theoretical Stance

Understanding human behaviour is crucial, as learning often involves habit formation. Similarly, the methods through which knowledge and skills are transmitted to learners require careful study. In this context, I applied the Optimality Theory (OT) as a theoretical framework for my research because the purpose of my research is to understand how human behaviour and habits influence learning.

The Optimality Theory was first introduced by Prince and Smolensky (1991) and later expanded upon by McCarthy and Prince (1993). This theory is widely recognized in phonology, syntax, and semantics, which are core components of linguistics. However, for this study, the notion of Optimality Theory is primarily explored in relation to phonology. The fundamental principles of OT—violability, ranking, inclusiveness, and parallelism—were extensively defined and elaborated by McCarthy and Prince (1993). As a natural and practical linguistic model, OT has been widely applied in language studies, particularly in phonological analysis. Its

adaptability and explanatory power make it a relevant framework for examining linguistic structures and constraints in pronunciation.

The Formation of Rule 'A->B/C - D' talks about the affected segment (or A /input), the change (or B/output), and the context (or C and D/environment/) (McCarthy, 1993).

As mentioned above, this theory will be applicable to my study because it generates a practical idea. As a result, my teaching will be facilitated to achieve the learning outcome, for instance, A - B/ - C where /A/ becomes [B] before /C/ in a particular linguistic environment. On the other hand, the learners will be equally benefitted.

Policy Review

Educational policies formulated by the government are implemented in institutions such as schools, ensuring structured learning at various levels. At the school level, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) is responsible for designing and overseeing the curriculum. In the Basic Level (Grades 1–3) Curriculum (CDC, 2076), the importance of understanding plural forms with the -s marker is mentioned under reading skills for Grade 2 (p. 18). However, the CDC does not explicitly outline instructional strategies for teaching the plural marker -s in higher grades. This omission persists across multiple curricula, including the Basic Level (Grades 4–5) Curriculum (CDC, 2078, p. 44), Basic Level (Grades 6–8) Curriculum (CDC, 2077, pp. 65–66), Secondary Level (Grades 9–10) Curriculum (CDC, 2078, p. 40), and Secondary Level (Grades 11–12) Curriculum (CDC, 2077, p. 40).

This gap in policy raises concerns about whether students receive adequate instruction in English pronunciation, particularly in mastering the plural marker -s. Addressing this issue at various educational levels could enhance students' phonological competence and overall language proficiency.

Teachers' Understanding: Curriculum-based Practice

As an English teacher, I have experienced that English has become a crucial component of education, particularly as the language of instruction in many schools in Nepal. However, due to diverse linguistic backgrounds, students often face challenges when learning English, especially in terms of pronunciation. Teachers play a pivotal role in guiding students through these challenges, with the curriculum serving as a primary framework for teaching and learning. Despite its significance, the curriculum's approach to pronunciation, especially in the case of

basic-level learners, has often been inconsistent, posing difficulties for both teachers and students.

In the context of Nepal, the curriculum plays a crucial role in shaping the teaching-learning process (TLP). It provides educators with a structured framework, including objectives, prescribed content, recommended methodologies, and guidelines for evaluation (Sarkar, 2022). In the Nepalese educational system, the curriculum acts as a primary guide for teachers, helping them navigate their instructional responsibilities. The curriculum's alignment with language development goals, especially for English language learners, significantly impacts the quality of pronunciation instruction provided by teachers.

For instance, the Basic Level (Grades 1-3) Curriculum (2076) in Nepal encourages students to imitate sounds and blend initial sounds with other sounds as part of developing their pronunciation skills (Curriculum Development Centre, 2076, p. 18). This foundational focus on phonetic practice is essential in helping young learners master the phonological aspects of English. However, as students progress to higher levels, the curriculum's focus on pronunciation becomes less explicit. In the Basic Level (Grades 4-5) Curriculum (2078), there is no mention of specific pronunciation features or sounds under speaking skills (Curriculum Development Centre, 2078, p. 44). This gap may make it difficult for teachers to continue addressing pronunciation in a structured manner, potentially leading to the neglect of important elements such as stress patterns or the plural marker -s.

In contrast, the Basic Level (Grades 6-8) Curriculum (2077) introduces stress and intonation as key components of speaking skills (Curriculum Development Centre, 2077, p. 66). Although this represents a step forward in emphasizing aspects of intonation and rhythm, the curriculum still lacks a detailed focus on individual sounds or comprehensive strategies for intonation patterns, elements that are crucial for clear communication in English.

This progression of attention to pronunciation across the different stages of Nepal's educational curriculum reveals a need for a more consistent and structured approach to pronunciation instruction. Teachers in Nepal often face the challenge of supplementing the curriculum's limitations with their own strategies, resources, and knowledge (Foote et al., 2016). Without clear guidance in the curriculum, teachers may overlook or inadequately address key pronunciation features, which could hinder students' fluency and intelligibility in spoken English. In this context, it becomes essential for teachers to understand and effectively implement

curriculum-based practices to ensure comprehensive pronunciation development across all grade levels.

Teachers' Role in Developing Pronunciation

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' pronunciation skills, particularly in the early stages of learning a foreign language. They are not only responsible for delivering subject matter but also for guiding and correcting students in their language development. Even when faced with limitations in curriculum and textbooks, skilled teachers can effectively address pronunciation challenges through purposeful instruction and targeted interventions. As the English proverb states, an imperfect instrument in the hands of a good artist can tune well.

One of the primary responsibilities of teachers is to identify and correct pronunciation errors before they become fossilized in learners' speech patterns. Hikmawati and Handayani (2018) emphasize that teachers must be attentive to students' pronunciation mistakes to prevent recurring errors and promote accurate articulation. This is particularly important in the case of the plural marker -s, where improper pronunciation can lead to intelligibility issues.

Similarly, pronunciation instruction remains a subject of debate in language teaching. Foote et al. (2016) highlight that while some educators prioritize pronunciation training, others downplay its significance in favour of communicative competence. However, an integrated approach, where pronunciation is systematically incorporated into language instruction, can enhance students' fluency, intelligibility, and confidence in spoken English. Therefore, despite curriculum limitations, teachers' strategies, corrective feedback, and explicit pronunciation training play a key role in improving students' phonological accuracy.

School Administration and Its Roles in the Development of Students' Pronunciation

In our context, English is widely used as a second language, and effective pronunciation instruction is crucial for ensuring that students can communicate confidently and clearly. School administrators play a vital role in the development of students' pronunciation skills. While teachers are responsible for implementing pronunciation practices in the classroom, administrators have the power to create an environment that supports and prioritizes pronunciation development across all levels of education. Sarkar (2022) highlights that effective school administration can help ensure that pronunciation receives the attention it deserves, contributing to better overall language proficiency.

School administrators in Nepal must have a clear understanding of the importance of the English language, especially its pronunciation, which directly impacts students' ability to communicate effectively in English. As the core part of language, pronunciation is crucial for clarity, comprehension, and social interaction in an increasingly globalized world (Koirala, 2019). Good pronunciation not only aids in academic performance but also enhances students' confidence in using English in real-world situations. Given this, administrators should support the integration of pronunciation instruction within the school's curriculum and encourage teachers to prioritize it in their daily lessons.

Effective school administration involves managing school resources and human capital, ensuring that there is adequate support for both teachers and students in the pursuit of language learning goals (Adhikari, 2021). Administrators should possess competencies in areas such as strategic thinking, managerial leadership, and stakeholder engagement (Nomnian, 2018). For instance, they can organize professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their pronunciation teaching methods or allocate resources for pronunciation-based learning tools. Administrators can also support collaborative efforts between teachers, students, and parents to ensure that pronunciation is consistently practised and reinforced both inside and outside the classroom.

In Nepal, where the education system often faces challenges like limited resources and varying teacher expertise, administrators can play a key role in facilitating instructional leadership (Adhikari, 2021). By fostering an environment of continuous improvement, they can ensure that pronunciation, as a critical aspect of language learning, receives the attention it deserves across various grade levels. Moreover, administrators can bridge the gap between curriculum limitations and classroom practice, ensuring that the focus on pronunciation is not overlooked or sidelined in favour of other language skills.

Gap Analysis

January aideh and Mahadin (2015) analyze the results of female Arabic-speaking learners (grades 8 and 11). Comparatively, grade 11 students could comprehend and do better than grade 8 students. Wilson (2002:159) researched plural markers in Kuche. In Kuche, a singular noun can be made plural by adding *bān* (*bāna*) before the noun, for example: *īyε* 'mother' *bānīyε* 'mothers'.

In some educational institutions, English pronunciation is simply ignored since exact pronunciation is to some extent, impossible (Wei and Zhou, 2002; see also Syananondh, 1983). In the context of Nepal also the concerned institutions should also pay attention to it (the detailed projection of the program that is associated with pronunciation). But we have to follow the minimum requirements so that people understand the speaker better and they sound more natural.

Dewi (2009) studied the issues on pronouncing -ed ending. The same suffix <-ed> is pronounced in three ways viz. /t/, /d/ and /ɪd/. This study shows one of the irregular forms of pronunciation for the same suffix which supports my research work. Following the theory of morphology nouns are formed plural in English by adopting the formula (+pl) → {-s}, where /-ɪz/ is produced if the final is [+sibilant], e.g. house + s => houses; /-s/ is produced if the final is [-voice], e.g. cup + s => cups and /+z/ is produced if the final is [+voice], e.g. bag + s => bags (Köpöke, 1997).

In this study, I want to discover specific solutions related to the pronunciation problem of plural-marker '-s', faced by Limbu-speaking basic-level English learners. Thus, there are research gaps between the previous research and mine on "Pronunciation Problem of Plural-marker '-s': Faced by the Limbu Speaking Basic level English learners.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the literature related to the pluralization process in English, Nepali, and Limbu, with a particular focus on the plural marker in the Limbu language. The review began by exploring the concept of pluralization in these three languages, analyzing how the plural marker is formed and used in each linguistic context. In English, pluralization is typically marked by the addition of '-s' or '-es', while Nepali and Limbu have their own distinct methods of pluralizing nouns. The chapter explored how these different pluralization systems impact the learning process of Limbu-speaking English learners, particularly in relation to pronunciation issues.

The section on the plural marker in the Limbu language examined the form and function of the plural marker '-ha?' in Limbu. This marker serves a similar purpose to the plural '-s' in English, but the phonological structures and rules differ, making it challenging for Limbu-speaking learners to master English pluralization. This section also highlighted how these

differences contribute to specific pronunciation difficulties in English, especially with the plural marker '-s'.

The chapter then discussed the pronunciation system in English, noting the complexities of English sounds, stress patterns, and intonation, which can be particularly challenging for second language learners, especially for those coming from languages like Limbu with different phonological systems. The section included a review of relevant theoretical frameworks, including Optimality Theory (OT), which was proposed as a potential lens for understanding the pronunciation difficulties faced by Limbu-speaking learners.

A key part of this chapter was the policy review, where the role of government policies in shaping the teaching of pronunciation was examined. Specifically, the review focused on how the national curriculum and educational policies in Nepal address pronunciation instruction, particularly the teaching of plural markers. The policy review showed that although certain aspects of pronunciation are mentioned in the curriculum, there is a lack of explicit focus on teaching the plural marker '-s' across various educational levels.

The review of previous studies offered insights into existing research on language learners' pronunciation challenges. These studies highlighted similar challenges faced by speakers of other languages when learning English pronunciation, particularly in relation to specific grammatical markers like plurals. The gap analysis further identified a lack of focused research on the specific challenges that Limbu-speaking learners face in mastering English pluralization, particularly in pronunciation.

The chapter also explored various approaches to teaching pronunciation, including the communicative method and the audio-lingual method. The communicative method emphasizes the importance of real-life interaction in language learning, while the audio-lingual method focuses on repetitive drills and mimicking native speakers. Both approaches were considered for their potential to help students overcome pronunciation difficulties, particularly with complex aspects like plural markers.

Finally, the chapter reviewed the status of English pronunciation in Nepal, examining how English is taught and perceived in the country. The review revealed that while English is widely taught across Nepal, pronunciation instruction often takes a backseat, with limited emphasis on developing clear and accurate pronunciation skills. This is especially problematic for Limbu-speaking students, who struggle with English pluralization due to differences in

phonological structures between their native language and English. It also provided a thorough review of existing literature, identifying key areas where further research is needed, particularly with respect to Limbu-speaking learners' difficulties in pronouncing English plural markers. It emphasized the importance of addressing these pronunciation issues within the broader context of language teaching and policy in Nepal.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section of this research offers a detailed explanation of the philosophical foundations that guide the study, including ontology, epistemology, and axiology. It establishes the ontological perspective, addressing how reality is understood in the context of pronunciation challenges faced by Limbu-speaking English learners. The epistemological framework elaborates on the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired, while the axiological considerations examine the values and ethics involved in the research process. The study utilizes an action research approach, allowing for a practical investigation of the issue through cycles of reflection and intervention. Data collection methods, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, are outlined, with a focus on interviews, observations, and recordings to capture accurate insights from the participants. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights, are emphasized throughout the research process. In this chapter, I have also tried my best to present the quality standards to ensure the credibility, reliability, and validity of the study, ensuring that the findings are robust and trustworthy. This comprehensive approach ensures that the research is methodologically sound and ethically responsible.

Philosophical Consideration

In social science research, it is crucial to examine the underlying philosophical perspectives that guide the study's approach and methodology. Philosophical considerations help shape the research framework, ensuring that the study aligns with appropriate epistemological and ontological perspectives. For this study on the pronunciation difficulties faced by Limbu-speaking learners of English, an exploration of relevant philosophical paradigms provides a deeper understanding of how language learning, particularly pronunciation, is conceptualized. Constructivism, as an epistemological viewpoint, emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their knowledge, which is crucial when addressing pronunciation issues in a second language (Piaget, 1952).

This study also followed Vygotsky's social constructivism for exploring the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in language learning, which is integral to understanding how

pronunciation can be effectively taught (Vygotsky, 1978). These perspectives will serve as the guiding principles for examining the challenges in English pronunciation within this context.

My Ontological Stance

Ontology refers to the theory of reality, providing researchers with a framework to define and establish their understanding of the chosen issue (Piaget, 1952). In research, ontology helps researchers articulate their perspective on what constitutes reality in relation to the topic under study. By clearly stating ontological assumptions, researchers communicate the lens through which the research is conducted. In my study, multiple, subjectively derived realities coexist. Specifically, the challenge of pronouncing the plural marker '-s' differently to form plural nouns is a surprising reality for Limbu-speaking English learners. This is because the Limbu language does not have a similar tradition of pluralization. Therefore, exploring this issue requires an ontological perspective to capture the authentic nature of the phenomenon being studied.

My Epistemic Stance

In epistemology, knowledge is often viewed as the result of interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied. According to Crotty (1998), epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired, as well as the methods through which we come to understand reality. I am convinced that learning is more effective when rules or procedures are relatively consistent, as irregularities in processes often create discomfort and confusion for learners. For example, regular processes tend to be more easily taught and learned compared to irregular ones. In the context of pluralization and pronunciation in Limbu, the knowledge system is relatively regular and straightforward, making it easier for learners to grasp compared to more complex or irregular systems.

My Axiological Stance

In axiological terms, I believe that research should not only reflect the value-laden nature of human existence but also acknowledge the biases that inevitably shape our understanding of phenomena. Axiology, as a branch of philosophy, concerns itself with the study of values, particularly in relation to ethics and aesthetics (Crotty, 1998). Language is deeply intertwined with a value system, as every language is inherently shaped by the values of the culture that speaks it. These values influence the structure and usage of language, as well as the behaviors and perceptions of its speakers. Therefore, in my research, I recognize the importance of values in shaping both language and the broader human experience.

Research Design

Qualitative research design focuses on understanding phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing them, emphasizing in-depth exploration of experiences, behaviours, and social processes (Creswell, 2014). It is particularly useful in areas where context and meaning are crucial and where researchers aim to capture rich, detailed data about a specific issue. In my study, I have applied the principles of qualitative research to explore the challenges faced by Limbu-speaking learners of English pronunciation in Nepal. To investigate these challenges, I employed action research, which allows for the identification of issues, followed by planning and implementing interventions to address the difficulties encountered by learners (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). This cyclical process helped refine teaching practices and improve pronunciation skills over time.

Qualitative Inquiry as a Research Method

The qualitative research is to explore human experiences, behavior, and social practices. This approach is cyclical and iterative, with the researcher identifying issues, implementing interventions, observing the outcomes, and reflecting on the process to make informed decisions about subsequent actions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The primary steps in the action research process include planning, intervention, observation, and reflection. These steps allow researchers to engage in continuous improvement by applying theoretical knowledge to practical situations and adjusting strategies based on the observed results (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

In the context of my study, this study a practical framework for exploring the challenges faced by Limbu-speaking learners of English when pronouncing the plural marker –s. By applying AR, I could systematically investigate the issues and improve students' pronunciation skills through targeted interventions. The initial planning phase involved identifying the specific difficulties learners faced with the plural marker –s and designing a set of activities aimed at improving their pronunciation. During the intervention phase, I employed instructional methods tailored to address these difficulties, using techniques such as focused drills and phonetic awareness exercises. The observation stage allowed me to assess how the students responded to the interventions, and the reflection phase enabled me to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken and make adjustments where necessary.

The cyclical nature of action research allowed me to refine my teaching strategies continuously based on the learners' progress and feedback. By repeatedly engaging in this process, I was able to help Limbu learners develop a better understanding of how to pronounce plural nouns correctly in English, which would have been difficult to achieve using a more static research method. From this, I understood that action research not only contributed to improving the learners' pronunciation but also facilitated the generation of practical knowledge about the specific challenges faced by this group of learners in Nepal.

Site and Participants Selection

To select participants for a qualitative study, I (the researcher) use proper or purposeful sampling, choose suitable people (informants) and appropriate areas to fulfil my purpose, make a list, identify and sample every person, identify a location, ask participants, contact people and refine my sample.

Data Collection Procedures

Data is the source of information. Source, therefore, must be natural and reliable. Here, I follow the data collection methods. I interviewed my informants. I was ready by preparing questionnaires and survey plans. Then, I distributed the questionnaires and collected them. I did a survey. Observations were done on particular parts. Documentation was essential, so they were done. Records were maintained. And focus groups were handled specifically.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

I analyzed the data by inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling. In doing so, I was able to discover helpful information or/and to inform conclusions and to support decision-making. After finding out the problems, I properly organized them. First of all, I categorized their problems: common problems and specific problems.

I made a thematic Analysis Process in the following ways in six steps:

Step 1: First, I transcribed the data and selected them

Step 2: Selected keywords

Step 3: Coded them

Step 4: I developed the themes.

Step 5: Conceptualized through Interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes.

Step 6: I developed a conceptual model.

Step 7: Finally, I connected the themes by applying them to OT.

Quality Standards

Quality research most commonly refers to the scientific process encompassing all aspects of study design; in particular, it pertains to the judgment regarding the match between the methods and questions, selection of subjects, measurement of outcomes, and protection against systematic bias, nonsystematic bias, and inferential error (Boaz & Ashby, 2003; Lohr, 2004; Shavelson & Towne, 2002). Students are offered four alternate tests of quality that reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm:

Credibility

Credibility ensures that the research findings are trustworthy and accurately represent the participants' experiences. In my research, I established credibility by engaging in prolonged interaction with participants, using multiple data sources, and triangulating findings to verify accuracy. Member checking, where participants reviewed and validated my interpretations, further strengthened my credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These strategies helped ensure that my findings genuinely reflected the pronunciation challenges faced by Limbu-speaking learners of English.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of research findings over time. To maintain dependability, I systematically documented my research procedures, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Keeping an audit trail, where all decisions and changes were recorded, allowed for transparency and reproducibility of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This approach ensured that my study remained methodologically sound and that future researchers could follow the research process.

Transferability

Transferability assesses whether the research findings can be applied to other contexts. In my study, I provided detailed, thick descriptions of the research setting, participants, and methods, allowing others to determine the applicability of my findings to similar linguistic and educational contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By detailing the specific challenges faced by Limbu-speaking learners in pronouncing the plural marker -s, I aimed to make my findings relevant to other non-native English learners with similar phonological backgrounds..

Confirmability

Confirmability ensures that research findings are based on data rather than researcher bias. To enhance confirmability, I used reflexivity by keeping a research journal to document my thoughts, biases, and decision-making processes. Additionally, triangulating data sources and having external peer reviews helped maintain objectivity and reliability in my interpretations (Patton, 2015). These measures ensured that my conclusions were grounded in the data rather than personal assumptions.

Ethical Considerations

I assured my research participants that there would be no harm to them. I made sure that I would not force them in any way. I ensured my research participants that they were safe from harm and protected from unnecessary stress (Cacciattolo, 2021) when they were with me during my data collection process. The importance of ethical consideration in research is growing. It is, therefore, critical that I abide by the ethical research norms of my university, and I obeyed my professor's guidelines whenever I was in confusion. This is especially important if my research involves interaction with members of the general community who serve as participants (i.e., respondents) in my research. My research consists of a range of interactions. In research, Ethical considerations refer to a set of principles that guide the researcher's research designs and practices.

I was aware of the fact that I would not cause any kind of psychological, financial or social harm to my research participants. By psychological harm, I mean I treated them with respect for their gender, racial status and individual differences. I never asked them for any kind of financial opportunity. We human beings are social creatures, so what we do in our society should be constructive. The connection between the informant and the social activities must be seriously considered.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I described my methodological procedures, with special reference to philosophical considerations, research design, the action research process, data collection, procedures, data analysis and interpretation, quality standards, and ethical principles. I also elaborated on the rationale for choosing a qualitative research approach to explore the challenges faced by Limbu-speaking learners in pronouncing the English plural marker -s. The action research method was selected as it allows for practical intervention and reflection, thus providing

an opportunity for continuous improvement. The data collection included observation, interviews, and interaction with the learners, and was followed by an analysis to identify recurring patterns and issues. Furthermore, I outlined how I maintained the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of my research through appropriate strategies, ensuring that the findings could be trusted and applied in similar contexts. Ethical considerations were also strictly adhered to, maintaining confidentiality and ensuring participants' informed consent.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEMS IN PRONOUNCING ENGLISH PLURAL MARKER - S

Pronunciation refers to the act of producing the sound of a letter word, phrase, clause, or sentence, e.g. the word 'nice' is made up of [n], [a], [ɪ] and [s]. Graphemes and sounds (phones) are associated with syllables. There is no one-to-one relationship between the spelling and the sound it represents, and it becomes a problem for EFL students. I understand there is no reliable relation between the English letters and the sounds that they (the letters) make.

The way the sounds of English are produced may not be the same as those articulated in Nepali or Limbu sounds, and they are different in many ways. Syafei (1988:4) observes that English speech sounds are all produced by air, which comes from the lungs into the throat and then passes through the mouth and/or the nose. Phonology is determined based on the sound system of a particular language. Phonology studies the sound system of a particular language, and it also analyzes and classifies its phonemes. University of Pennsylvania). The phonemes of English, Nepali and Limbu are different. The learners articulate sounds in different ways as a result of it.

Students' Understanding of the Pronunciation of the English Plural Marker-s

Students' understanding of the pronunciation of the English plural marker –s is influenced by their linguistic background, exposure to spoken English, and formal instruction. The plural marker –s in English has three distinct pronunciations—/s/, /z/, and /ɪz/—which often pose challenges for non-native speakers, particularly those whose first language follows a different pluralization pattern (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Limbu-speaking learners of English in Nepal may struggle with these variations since the Limbu language employs a more consistent and predictable system for forming plurals. As a result, these students may either overgeneralize one pronunciation or face difficulty distinguishing between the different phonetic realizations of –s. This section explores how Limbu-speaking students perceive and produce the plural marker –s, highlighting the factors that affect their pronunciation and the challenges they encounter.

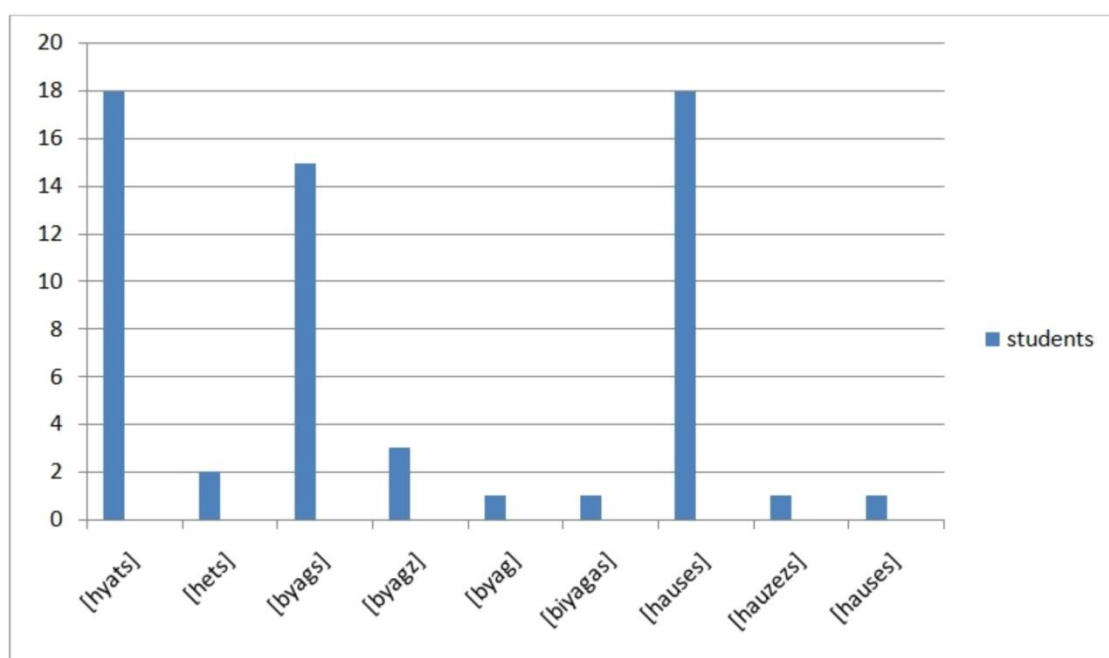
It is said that learning is habit formation. When students speak, they are used to speaking based on the sounds of their mother tongue. Because of the differences between English and the

students' mother tongue, students may find it difficult to learn English as a foreign language in a classroom situation, especially when pronouncing English words.

While collecting data, I chose basic-level (G-8) English medium students as my informants. I selected twenty students: ten Nepali-speaking students and ten Limbu-speaking students. I asked them to pronounce the words with the plural marker '-s' - 'hats', 'bags' and 'houses'. Words that have final /p/ or /t/ or /k/ or /θ/ or /f/ voiceless sound, words that have final /b/ or /d/ or /g/ or /ð/ or /v/ or /n/ or /m/ or /l/ or /r/ voiced sounds and words that have /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and their voiced counterparts /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/. The following graph presents the students' understanding of pronouncing English plural marker-s.

Figure 2

Based on students' Pronunciation (Initial phase)



Almost all the students of class 8 section 'C' could pronounce the words that have final /p/ or /t/ or /k/ or /θ/ or /f/ rather than words that have final /b/ or /d/ or /g/ or /ð/ or /v/ or /n/ or /m/ or /l/ or /r/ and words that have /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and their voiced counterparts /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/.

The finding of my research is as follows: Eighteen out of twenty students pronounced hats as [hyats]. Two out of twenty students pronounced hats as [hets]. Fifteen out of twenty students pronounced bags as [byags]. Three out of twenty students pronounced bags as [byagz]. One out of twenty students pronounced bags as [byag]. One out of twenty students pronounced bags as [biyags]. Eighteen out of twenty students pronounced houses as [hauses]. One out of twenty

students pronounced houses as [hauzezs]. One out of twenty students pronounced houses as [haus].

Teachers' Understanding of the Pronunciation of the English Plural Marker-s

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' pronunciation skills, particularly when it comes to complex phonetic structures such as the English plural marker –s. Understanding the pronunciation variations of –s, which can be voiced /z/, voiceless /s/, or /ɪz/ depending on the preceding sound, is essential for effective instruction (Roach, 2009). Many non-native English teachers, however, may lack adequate training in phonetics and phonology, which can impact their ability to guide students correctly (Derwing & Munro, 2015). In the context of Limbu-speaking learners in Nepal, teachers' awareness of these pronunciation patterns is critical, as the Limbu language follows a more regular system for pluralization. This section explores teachers' understanding of the pronunciation of the plural marker –s and its implications for English language teaching.

In my experience, teachers are the central elements in teaching. They play key roles. Whether the results of teaching go up or down is in their hands. The teacher is also known as the source of knowledge for students in the class (Larasati, Quma Irah, 2019).

Table 4

Pronunciation made by the English teachers

SN	Name of the teachers	Words/Pronunciation		
		hats	bags	houses
1	T ₁	[hæts]	[bægz]	[həʊdʒɪz]
2	T ₂	[hɑts(s)]	[bags(z)]	[houses(iz)]
3	T ₃	[Hɑts(s)]	[Bɑgs(z)]	[Houses(iz)]

The teachers who teach English as a compulsory subject think pronunciation is an essential part of the language. The teachers should apply the things (contents) they have first in the classroom. They also should have quality content. The flow of quality content fulfils the purpose of the existing curriculum.

Pronunciation System

Pronunciation consists of many small components that both the teachers and the learners should understand, and science creates misunderstanding and difficulty as well. Poudel (2021,

pp, 42) highlights in Nepal that the English voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ is used, but the voiced counterpart /z/ is not brought into practice distinctly.

English Phonemes

Table 5

Consonants (Gimson, 2008)

Sounds	Common spelling	Spelling alternatives
/p/	p: as in 'pot'	Pp
/b/	b: as in 'book'	bb 'ribbon'
/t/	t: as in 'tank'	tt 'better' ed 'washed' th 'Thomas'
/d/	d: as in 'day'	dd 'add' ed 'killed'
/k/	k: as in 'kite'	c 'cat' cc 'accident' ch 'chemical' q 'quite' gh 'lough'
/g/	g: as in 'gun'	gg 'egg' gh 'laugh' gu 'guest' gue 'dialogue'
/ŋ/	ng: as in 'ring'	n 'pink' ngue 'tongue' (no initials)
/n/	n: as in 'nose'	nn 'sunny' kn 'knee' gn 'gnat' pn 'pneumonia'
/m/	m: as in 'mat'	mm 'summer' mb 'thumb' mn 'Autumn' lm 'calm'
/tʃ/	ch: as in 'chain'	tch 'match' tu 'culture' ti 'question' te 'righteous'
/z/	z: as in 'zebra'	zz 'buzz' s 'has' se 'cheese' ss 'scissors' x 'xylophone' ze 'maze'
/dʒ/	j: as in 'jellyfish'	di 'soldier' dge 'bridge' gg 'exaggerate' g 'giraffe' ge 'cage'
/ʒ/	s: as in 'treasure'	si 'division' z 'azure' (no initials)
/θ/	th(unvoiced): as in 'think'	-
/ð/	th(voiced): as in 'then'	-
/f/	f: as in 'fox'	ff 'coffee' ft 'often' gh 'tough' lf 'half' ph 'phone'

/v/	v: as in 'vat'	f 'of' ph 'Stephen' ve 'five'
/j/	y: as in 'you'	i 'opinion' j 'hallelujah' (no final)
/r/	r: as in 'rat'	rh 'rhyme' rr 'carrot' wr 'wrong' (not pronounced before consonant and at final)
/l/	l: as in 'leg'	ll 'till'
/w/	w: as in 'wet'	o 'choir' u 'quick' wh 'when' (no final)
/ʃ/	sh: as in 'shake'	ce 'ocean' ch 'machine' ci 'special' s 'sure' sci 'conscience' si 'tension' ti 'station'
/s/	s: as in 'stamp'	c 'circus' ce 'rice' ps 'psychology' sc 'science' se 'horse' ss 'mess' st 'listen'
/h/	h: as in 'hat'	wh 'who' (no final)

Table 6
Vowel Sounds

Sounds	Common spelling	Examples
/ə/	a, or, er	ago, doctor, farmer
/ʌ/	u, o	hut, son
/ɜː/	ir, ear, ur	bird, earth, fur
/æ/	A	Mat
/e/	e, ea	hen, head
/ɪ/	i, y, e	sit, city, economics
/iː/	ea, ee, ei, ie, ey	leaf, seek, thief, key
/ʊ/	u, o	put, book
/uː/	oo, ui, oe	school, juice, shoe
/ɒ/	O	Cot

/ɔ:/	all, aw, on	all, saw, brought
/ɑ:/	A	Arm
/eə/	ere, air, are	there, chair, dare
/ɪə/	ere, ear	here, mere
/ʊə/	oor, ure	poor, pure
/eɪ/	ay, ey, ei, ai	say, they, eighth, pain
/aɪ/	I, y	high, sky
/ɔɪ/	oy, oi	boy, noise
/aʊ/	ow, ou	how, found
/əʊ/	o, oa	go, boat

English Consonant Clusters (CCs)

English words start with three consonants, and English words end with four consonants at the maximum. If there are three consonants in sequence, the first phoneme is always s-, and the second member is bilabial voiceless stop. Examples: CCs at initial level/position: spring [sprɪŋ] (It consists of three CCs). CCs at final level/position: texts [tɛksts] (It consists of four CCs)

Nepali Phonemes

Nepali language is a common language. It is therefore connected with other languages since it is used as a medium of instruction in the classroom situation.

The Nepali language has a rich phonemic inventory that consists of vowels, consonants, and distinctive phonological features. As an Indo-Aryan language, Nepali has a relatively simple vowel system with short and long vowels and a consonantal system that includes aspirated and unaspirated stops, retroflex sounds, and nasalized phonemes (Yadav, 2014). Unlike English, Nepali does not have voiced and voiceless fricative contrasts such as /v/ and /w/, which often leads to pronunciation difficulties for Nepali learners of English. Additionally, Nepali follows a syllable-timed rhythm, whereas English is stress-timed, creating further challenges in acquiring

native-like pronunciation patterns (Acharya, 2019). Understanding these phonemic differences is essential in exploring how Nepali speakers, including Limbu learners, struggle with specific English sounds, such as the plural marker –s.

Table 5 shows the Nepali consonant phonemes showing place, manner of articulation and voicing plus aspiration.

Table 7

Place and Manner of Articulation and Voicing

	Bilabial	Dental	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p p ^h b b ^{fi}	t t ^h d d ^{fi}		t̪ t̪ ^h d̪ d̪ ^{fi}		k k ^h g g ^{fi}	
Affricate			ts ts ^h dz dz ^{fi}				
Nasals	m	n				ŋ	
Tap or flap			r				
Fricative			s				ʃ
Lateral			l				
Approximant	(w)				(j)		

Table 6: Minimal Pairs: Nepali Consonants

Table 8

Minimal Pairs: Nepali Consonants

Sounds	Explanation	Examples
/k/	plosive, velar, voiceless, unaspirated	kaki : 'aunty'
/k ^h /	plosive, velar, voiceless, aspirated	k ^h aki : 'brown cloth'
/g/	plosive, velar, voiced, unaspirated	garə 'Do (imperative).'
/g ^{fi} /	plosive, velar, voiced, aspirated	g ^h har 'house'
/ŋ/	nasal, velar, voiced	narə 'human'
/ts/	affricate, alveolar, voiceless, unaspirated	tsirnu "
/ts ^h /	affricate, alveolar, voiceless, aspirated	ts ^h irnu
/dz/	affricate, alveolar, voiced, unaspirated	dzod, 'addition'

/dz ^h /	affricate, alveolar, voiced, aspirated	dz ^h adi : 'dense forest'
/t̪/	plosive, retroflex, voiceless, unaspirated	t̪akkʌr 'rivalry'
/t̪ ^h /	plosive, retroflex, voiceless, aspirated	t̪ ^h akkʌr 'collision'
/d̪/	plosive, retroflex, voiced, unaspirated	d̪aknu 'to call'
/d̪ ^h /	plosive, retroflex, voiced, aspirated	d̪ ^h aknu 'to cover'
/t/	plosive, dental, voiceless, unaspirated	taknu 'to aim at'
/t ^h /	plosive, dental, voiceless, aspirated	t ^h aknu 'to become tired'
/d/	plosive, dental, voiced, unaspirated	dan 'generosity'
/d ^h /	plosive, dental, voiced, aspirated	d ^h an 'paddy'
/n/	nasal, dental, voiced	nur 'glow'
/p/	plosive, bilabial, voiceless, unaspirated	pur 'town'
/p ^h /	plosive, bilabial, voiceless, aspirated	p ^h ur[<p ^h urnu] 'the act of occurring new idea in the mind'
/b/	plosive, bilabial, voiced, unaspirated	bʌnnu 'to be made'
/b ^h /	plosive, bilabial, voiced, aspirated	b ^h ʌnnu 'to say'
/m/	nasal, bilabial, voiced	manis 'human being'
/j/	Approximant, palatal, voiced.	ja tra 'fair'
/r/	Flap, alveolar, voiced	ramo (also 'rābo') 'chisel'
/l/	lateral, alveolar, voiced	lamo 'long'
/w/	Approximant, bilabial, voiced	wan 'having something (e.g. dhanʌwan = a person having wealth'
/s/	fricative, alveolar, voiceless	san 'dignity'

/h/	fricative, glottal, voiced	han[<hannu] 'the act of giving blow'
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Source :Khatiwada, 2009

Table 9

Minimal Pairs: Nepali Vowels

Sounds	Description	Examples
/i/	close, front, oral	kɪra 'insect'
/ĩ/	close, front, nasal	ĩṭ 'brick'
/u/	close, back, oral	gu [<guhu] 'stool'
/ũ/	close, back, nasal	gũ 'a kind of sound.'
/e/	close-mid, front, oral	gɐre '(they) did'
/ẽ/	close-mid, front, nasal	gɐrẽ '(I) did'
/o/	close-mid, back, oral	oṭ ^h [õṭ ^h] 'lip'
/ʌ/	open-mid, back, oral	ʌ 'a word denoting neglect.'
/ã/	open-mid, back, nasal	ã 'yes'
/a/	open, central, oral	bas 'resting place'
/ã/	open, central, nasal	bās 'bamboo'

Source :(Khatiwada, 2009)

Nepali Syllable Structure

Nepali syllable structure follows a relatively simple pattern, typically consisting of consonant-vowel (CV) sequences, though more complex structures such as CVC, CCV, and CCVC also exist (Yadav, 2014). Unlike English, which allows complex consonant clusters at the beginning and end of syllables, Nepali has more restrictive syllable patterns, making it challenging for Nepali speakers to pronounce certain English words, especially those with final consonant clusters (Acharya, 2019). The phonotactic constraints of Nepali often lead to the insertion of vowels to break clusters, a phenomenon known as epenthesis, which impacts the pronunciation of English words, including the plural marker –s. Understanding these structural

differences is crucial in identifying pronunciation challenges faced by Nepali learners of English. The following list gives a comprehensive insight into the Nepali syllable structure in a nutshell.

Nepali has the following syllable structure:

- 1) V = /u:/ 'he/she (e.g. 3sg.)'
- 2) VC= /am/ 'common'
- 3) CV= /j a/ 'Go'
- 4) CVC= /lʌd/ 'Fight'
- 5) CCV =/kya/ [k^hoi] 'what'
- 6) CCVC= /kwaɾ/ 'bachelor (unmarried man)'
- 7) CCCV = possible but the example not found
- 8) CCCVC = /plyaŋ/ 'way of beating'

(Source: Pokharel, 2057: p.160)

- 9) CCCVCC = /phlutt/ 'phulutt'

The NUCLEUS consists of one vowel, and that is obligatory. And finally, the CODA optionally consists of one consonant.

Limbu Phonemes

There are 32 primary/basic phonemes in the Limbu language. Among them, 25 are consonant sounds, and 7 are vowel sounds (Kaila, 2070: pp. 20-41).

ʔ /ʔ/: plosive, voiceless, non-released glottal stop (syllable-finally)

plosive, voiceless, released glottal stop (syllable-initially)

ɰ- /k/: plosive, , voiceless, unaspirated, velar

ɰ^h- /k^h/: plosive, voiceless, aspirated, velar

ɣ- [g]: plosive, voiced, unaspirated, velar (after nasal, glottal stop or intervocally s/k/
becomes u- [g])

ɣ^h [g^h]: plosive, aspirated, voiced, velar (after nasal, glottal stop or intervocalic v- /k^h/

becomes P- [g^h])

ᄃ /ŋ/: nasal, voiced, velar

ᄂ /c/: affricate, voiceless, unaspirated, alveolar

ᄆ [c^h]: affricate, voiceless, aspirated, alveolar (after /t/ or /n/, /s/ becomes p- /c^h/)

ᄇ [j]: affricate, voiced, unaspirated, alveolar (after nasal, glottal stop or intervocalic r- /c/ becomes h- [j])

ᄀ /t/: plosive, voiceless, unaspirated, apico-dental

ᄁ /t^h/: plosive, voiceless, dental, aspirated, apico-dental

ᄄ [d]: fricative, voiced, apico-dental (after nasal, glottal stop or intervocalic t- /t/ becomes b- [d])

ᄅ /d^h/: plosive, voiced, aspirated, apico-dental (after nasal, glottal stop or intervocalic y- /t^h/ becomes w- /d^h/)

ᄇ /n/: nasal, voiced, apico-dental

ᄀ /p/: plosive, voiceless, unaspirated, bilabial

ᄁ /p^h/: plosive, voiceless, aspirated, bilabial

ᄄ [b]: stop, voiced, unaspirated, bilabial (after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocalic k- /p/

becomes a- [b])

ᄅ /b^h/: plosive, voiced, aspirated, bilabial (after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocalic m- /p^h/ becomes e- /b^h/)

ᄇ /m/: nasal, voiced, bilabial

ᄇ /y/: approximant, voiced, palatal

ᄀ [r]: trill, voiceless, aspirated, dental (F- [r] is the allophone of n- /l/)

ᄁ /l/: approximant, voiced, aspirated, dental

𑄢- /w/: approximant, voiced, aspirated, bilabial

𑄣 /s/: fricative, voiceless, alveolar ([z-] is the allophone of 𑄣- /s/)

𑄤- /h/: fricative, voiced, glottal

Phonemes and allophones (in brief)

𑄥 [ɣ], 𑄦 [ɕ], 𑄧 [ɕ], 𑄨 [ɕ], 𑄩 [ɕ], 𑄪 [ɕ], 𑄫 [ɕ], 𑄬 [ɕ], 𑄭 [ɕ]

Note: The allophones are in the square brackets. In Limbu, only the phonemes are words initially, and allophones are always word-medially and finally.

Consonant Codas

𑄮[k], 𑄯[ŋ], 𑄰[t], 𑄱[n], 𑄲[p], 𑄳[m], 𑄴[l]

Examples (phoneme)

𑄥𑄮𑄴 [kɔkma] 'to stiff with cold'

𑄦𑄮𑄴 [k^hɔkma] 'to cut'

𑄧𑄴 [ŋa] 'fish'

𑄨𑄴 [ca] 'food'

𑄩𑄴 [tu:ŋma] 'to bow down'

𑄪𑄴 [thu:ŋma] 'to bend'

𑄫𑄴 [naŋma] 'to be mad'

𑄬𑄴 [paŋma] 'to send (sb./sth.)'

𑄭𑄴 [phumma] 'to open'

𑄮𑄴 [mumma] 'to move'

𑄯𑄴 [yɔmma] 'to be/become large or big'

𑄰𑄴 [lɔmma] 'to be out'

𑄱𑄴 [wa] 'liquid'

𑄲𑄴 [sa] 'meat'

Diacritics

Diacritic is, which is used above or below, or on the right side of a letter (in Limbu) indicates a difference in pronunciation from the same letter when unmarked or differently marked.

Example

˘ [r] as in ɔ˘ɕʰɕɪ [ɕʌkkɪɾʌkma] 'Adam's apple'

˘ [r] as in ɕʰɕɪɕ [khʌɾdik] 'in a slippery way'

˘ [y] as in ɕʰɕɪ [khyalli] 'poetical dialogue in Limbu'

ɕ [w] as in ɕʰɕ [kwaʔ] 'maternal uncle'

Vowels

Basic vowels

ɕ /ɔ/: ɕʰɕɪ [ɕse:k] 'snake'

ɕ /a/: ɕʰɕɪ [ambe] 'mango'

ɕ /i/: ɕʰɕɪ [iksa] 'earth'

ɕ /u/: ɕʰɕɪ [ume] 'camel'

ɕ /e/: ɕʰɕɪ [eknambʰe] 'chair'

ɕ /o/: ɕʰɕɪ [omma] 'to be clear (weather)'

ɕ /ɛ/: ɕʰɕɪ [ɛkma] 'break'

1. Long vowels

ɕ /ɔ:/: ɕʰɕɪ [ɔ:kma] 'to cry aloud'

ɕ /a:/: ɕʰɕɪ [a:ɳma] 'to root out'

ɕ /i:/: ɕʰɕɪ [i:pma] 'to imitate'

ɕ /u:/: ɕʰɕɪ [u:ɳma] 'to pull'

ɕ /e:/: ɕʰɕɪ [e:k] 'back of the body'

ཡེ་ཤེ་ /o:/ཡེ་ཤེ་ [o:k] 'yhea'

ཡེ་ཤེ་ /ɛ:kma:/ ཡེ་ཤེ་ཡེ་ [ɛ:kma] 'to cheat'

Limbu syllable structure

(C₁ (G)) V (C_f)

Where C₁ refers to 'ONESET' or initial consonant, the NUCLEUS consists of one vowel, and that is obligatory. And finally, the CODA optionally consists of one consonant. G for glide.

Aspirated vs. Unaspirated

English: aspirated vs. Unaspirated

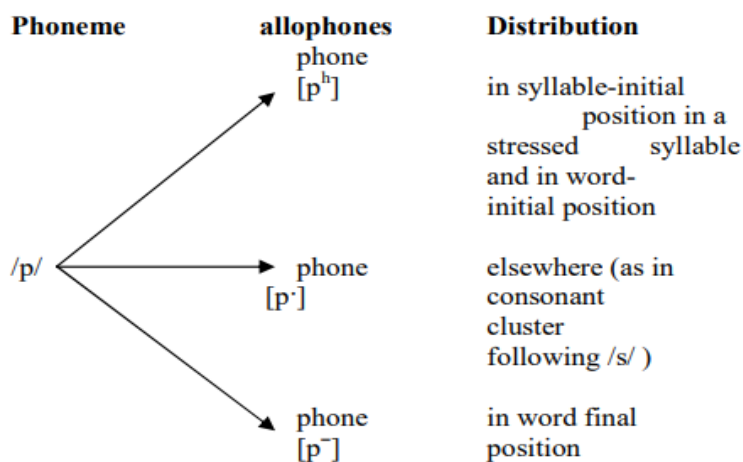
Case - 1 : phoneme vs. allophone as a free variation

/p/ → [p^h] as in pen /pen/ 'writing instrument' vs. pen [p^hen] 'writing instrument'

Case - 2 : Phonological unit (the allophones of a phonemes)

Figure 3

Phonological Units



(Source: *English Phonology - The Sound Systems of Language.pdf*)

Nepali: Aspirated vs. Unaspirated

Nepali distinguishes between aspirated and unaspirated consonants, a feature that significantly influences pronunciation patterns among its speakers (Yadav, 2014). Aspirated sounds, produced with a strong burst of breath (e.g., /ph/, /th/, /kh/), contrast with their unaspirated counterparts (/p/, /t/, /k/), which are pronounced without much airflow. This phonemic distinction is crucial in Nepali but does not hold the same significance in English,

leading to pronunciation difficulties when Nepali speakers learn English (Acharya, 2019). For instance, Nepali learners may unintentionally aspirate unaspirated English sounds or fail to differentiate between aspirated and unaspirated stops, affecting intelligibility. Understanding this contrast is essential for improving pronunciation instruction for Nepali-speaking learners of English. Some of such examples are noted below for a better understanding of the concept.

In Nepali, unaspirated /p/ and aspirated /p^h/ are phonemic.

/p/ → [purnu] 'to burry'

/p^h/ → [p^hurnu] 'to occur (e.g. a new idea) to the mind'

Limbu: Aspirated vs. Unaspirated

In Limbu, unaspirated /p/ and aspirated /p^h/ are phonemic.

/p/ → [pimma] 'to jump'

/p^h/ → [p^himma] 'to offer food to deities or evil spirits (before eating)'

To support the disguise, Sari (1988), uses the term 'vocal tract' to represent speech organs. Here, Sari (1988) states that the vocal tract is important for two reasons: it is impossible for a human being to deliver a speech without a vocal tract, and the physical properties of the vocal tract are used to describe the physiological units of phonology."

Plural Marker and Plural Marking System in English

The plural marking system in English primarily involves adding the suffix -s or -es to nouns, with variations based on phonological and morphological rules (Quirk et al., 1985). While regular nouns follow predictable patterns (e.g., cat → cats, box → boxes), irregular nouns undergo changes such as vowel shifts (man → men) or remain unchanged (sheep → sheep). These complexities pose challenges for learners whose native languages, like Limbu, follow different pluralization rules.

Plural Marker (-s) Rule

There are three ways of pronouncing the plural marker (plural suffix) '-s' (Nagendra, 1998) as shown below :

Rule:1

If the final sound of a word is /p/ or /t/ or /k/ or /θ/ or /f/ (voiceless sound), then the plural marker 's' attached to the noun is pronounced /s/.

Rule:2

If the sound of a word is /b/ or /d/ or /g/ or /ð/ or /v/ or /n/ or /m/ or /l/ or /r/ or any vowel sounds (voiced), then the plural marker 's' attached to the noun is pronounced /z/.

Rule:3

If the sound of a word is /s/, /f/, /tʃ/ and their voiced counterparts /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, then the plural marker 's' is attached to the noun, pronounced /Iz/.

In the Nepali language, we can make the plural simply by adding the plural marker -*hΛru* to the noun. However, the plural marker/suffix is used according to the linguistic environment. The examples are given below :

- Noun + -*hΛru* => plural noun, e.g. *ket a'boy' + hΛru 'pl. marker' => ket a hΛru 'boys'*
- Because of the plural marker -*hΛru* the singular demonstrative noun changes into a plural demonstrative noun, e.g. *j/yi 'these' + goru 'ox' + hΛru 'pl. marker' => j/yigoruhΛru 'these oxen' [y/jo → j/yi]*
- A singular noun can function as a plural noun when it is preceded by a numeral, e.g. *aṭ^h 'eight' + din 'day' => aṭ^h din 'eight days'*. Here, in Nepali, the plural marker is optional, whereas in English, the plural marker is compulsory.
- The plural marker -*hΛru* is compulsory in Nepali when the noun is qualified by *d^herai*, e.g. *d^herai 'many' + pustak 'book' + hΛru 'plural marker' => d^herai pustak hΛru 'many books'*
- The genitive case <-ko> (of the first noun) becomes <-ka> then the plural marker -*hΛru* is added to the second noun, e.g.
 -keṭiko ama 'girl's mother'
 - keṭika amahΛru 'girl's mothers'

Plural Marker and Plural Marking System in Limbu

The way we say a word by producing the distinctive sound of a language is commonly termed pronunciation. Yates (2002) says that pronunciation refers to uttering sounds for

communication. If the meaning is not understood, we won't know that the pronunciation is correct.

In Limbu, the pronouns show the plural form. If the suffix *-si* is added to the adjective, and a plural is formed. If we apply this normal format in verb *<mε+stem+Λ/e etc.>*, then plural form can be formed, for, examples:

a) Pronoun: *aniʔ*

b) Adjective: *nu:ma-si*

beautiful-pl.

beautiful (ladies)

c) Verb: *mε-pe [mεbe]*

they-go/PST

They went.

When *-haʔ* is added to the noun, then the singular noun becomes plural. Unlike English, the pronunciation of the plural marker *-haʔ* remains the same. Here are some examples.

a) *lotchanakca* 'one pen'

b) *nεtchinakcahaʔ* 'two pens'

c) *sumsinakcahaʔ* 'three pens'

d) *yɔ:knaakcahaʔ* 'many pens'

<-halʔ> is the plural suffix in Limbu. In certain situations, it is not necessarily used when the plurality of the noun is shown by the verb (Driem. 1987,p.29) as a result, it is not heard, e.g.

1. *nichamsa-haʔ mε-pe: =>nichamsa-haʔ mεbe:*

student-pl. nsAS-go/PT

'Students went.'

The suffix *<-m>* also indicates the plurality except for the third person (Driem, 1987,p.101), e.g.

a-lεr-ø-u-m-si-m-ø-ø

1-give^{up}-NPT-3p-pA-nsP-pA-i-PF

'We^{pi} shall give up them.'

The morpheme of agent non-singularity takes place in 1→2 forms, e.g.

cum-nε-ø-tchi-ge-Ø

meet-1→2-NPT-nsA-e-PP

'We'll meet you.'

The preterit first person plural exclusive agent/subject morpheme, e.g.

ha:-mʔna-ø-ø

divide-1 peAS/PT-P-PF

'We^{pe} divided [something].'

Language is tradition-based. These common components are phonemes, morphemes, lexemes, syntax, context, grammar, semantics, and pragmatics. Here, morpho-phonology will be dealt with in general. The knowledge system of the existing human resources more or less lacks these things. On the other hand, the existing curriculum doesn't specifically address these genuine problems.

Pronunciation can be broken down into two constituent parts (Kelly, 2006): phonemes and suprasegmental features. The phonemes can be further broken down into two groups: vowels and consonants. Consonants can be grouped into voiced, voiceless or unvoiced. Vowels are divided into single vowels and diphthongs. In the same way, suprasegmental features are further divided into intonation and stress. Stress is grouped into word stress and sentence stress. Without the knowledge, it is not possible to generate the correct sounds.

Summary of the Chapter

Chapter Four provides an in-depth exploration of various aspects related to the pronunciation of the English plural marker -s among Limbu-speaking learners. This chapter systematically examines the students' understanding of the pronunciation of -s, along with teachers' perceptions and pedagogical approaches to addressing pronunciation challenges. It also delves into the broader pronunciation system, discussing phonemes, aspirated vs. unaspirated sounds, and the intricacies of pluralization in both English and Nepali.

A key section of the chapter focuses on the theoretical stance that frames the study, particularly Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky, 1993), which helps explain how learners

navigate phonological constraints. Additionally, the chapter reviews relevant educational policies, assessing how pronunciation is addressed within Nepal's curriculum. Special attention is given to teachers' curriculum-based practices, their role in fostering correct pronunciation, and the impact of school administration in shaping students' phonological competence. I also integrated theoretical perspectives with practical insights, and this chapter highlights the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in teaching and learning the pronunciation of the English plural marker -s in Nepal.

CHAPTER V

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH PLURAL MARKER – S PRONUNCIATION

There must be purposeful plans and actions to fulfil the objectives or to solve the problems. This chapter discusses the ways to address the problems that ESL learners or students face. Long-term solutions should be planned rather than short-term solutions. The CDC designs a curriculum that can address language skills in proper ways, e.g., using the vertical and horizontal approach, the ratio and amount of content, and so on. The other important component involved in this issue is the subject teacher who implements the curriculum. The approach, method, technique and teaching materials they use are appropriate.

Strategies for Implementing Pronunciation Practice in the Classroom

Effective pronunciation instruction requires structured strategies that align with learners' linguistic backgrounds and learning needs. In the context of teaching the English plural marker -s to Limbu-speaking students, pronunciation practice should involve explicit instruction, auditory discrimination exercises, and communicative activities. Research suggests that incorporating phonetic training, minimal pair drills, and multisensory techniques can significantly enhance learners' pronunciation accuracy (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Moreover, using interactive methods such as peer practice, teacher modelling, and corrective feedback fosters an engaging learning environment. By implementing these evidence-based strategies, teachers can help students overcome pronunciation challenges and improve their spoken English proficiency. This research follows Action research as a research method.

Action Research Cycle

- ***Problem Identification***

To diagnose students' actual pronunciation, I entered the class. I cracked a common tongue twister just to refresh their tired mood. Then I started my job. I asked them to read out some words that end in /p, t, k, f, θ/, /b/, /d/, /g/, /ð/, /v/, /n/, /m/, /l/, /r/ and /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ + s to check their pronunciation output. All the students pronounced /s/, but no one pronounced either /z/ or /ɪz/. This made it clear that they (students) lack regular practice. And their problem was diagnosed.

- ***Intervention***

I decided to apply the following activities for at least one week. If no change is found, then I would replan and redo the action research cycle. To do so, I would do these activities:

Demonstration-1

By displaying flashcards, I read out (pronounced) the words that end in /p,t,k,f,θ/ voiceless sounds. There would be a comparison between Nepali and Limbu languages, too.

The previous day's practices were repeated the next day as an evaluation. That day would decide whether the objective was achieved or not.

Demonstration-2

By displaying flashcards, I read out (pronounced) the words that end in /b/, /d/, /g/, /ð/, /v/, /n/, /m/, /l/, /r/ voiced sounds. There would be a comparison between Nepali and Limbu languages, too. The previous day's practice would be repeated the next day as an evaluation. That day would decide whether the objective was achieved or not.

Demonstration-3

By displaying flashcards, I read out (pronounced) the words that end with a sibilant (voiceless /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and their voiced counterparts /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/). There will also be a comparison between the Nepali and Limbu languages. In the third demonstration, I also taught my students to use technology. I conducted a discussion on 'Problems in Pronouncing English Plural Markers for Limbu-Speaking Basic English Learners' using a laptop and projector through PowerPoint. I showed a YouTube video covering the topic. I made the students practice searching for YouTube videos.

The previous day's practice would be repeated the next day as an evaluation. This day, we will decide whether the objective has been achieved or not. Listening to the students: The teacher shouldn't discourage the students, but they should motivate them. I listened to their discussion and showed a smiling face as if I were positive with them.

Respecting the students: Teachers should treat the students with a friendly attitude as if they are our friends on one hand. On the other hand, there must be a positive correction. Negative correction demotivates the students. Vero (2017) says the teacher should encourage their students intrinsically rather than externally.

Being even-handed: The teacher's main job is not only to pay attention to the responsive and introverted students, but to encourage the less responsive and introverted students. The teacher should study the home environment and socio-linguistic situation of the learners.

- POST-TEST

According to the plan above, the students are shown flash cards containing words that end in various sounds. First, the teacher displays and pronounces the words, and then they are asked to pronounce them as they did.

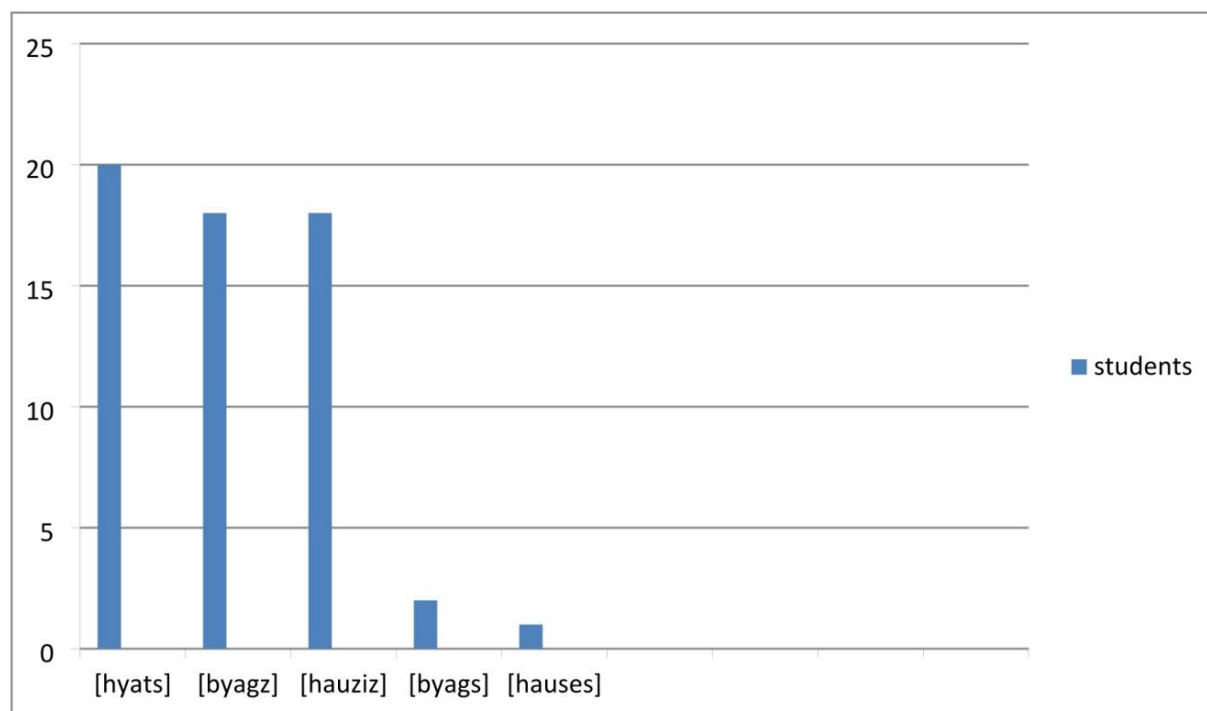
- ENGLISH

After several classes, the students were given the same task, which was implemented in the class, in order to check students' basic/initial understanding of the pronunciation related to the plural marker -s.

Demonstration-1

Figure 4

Based on students' pronunciation (Final phase)



The findings of my research are as follows:

Twenty out of twenty students pronounced hats as [hyats]. Eighteen out of twenty students pronounced bags as [byagz]. Two out of twenty students pronounced bags as [byags]. Nineteen out of twenty students pronounced houses as [houziz]. One out of twenty students pronounced houses as [hauses].

Demonstration-2 (words that end in /p,t,k,f,θ/ voiceless sounds)

mat /mæt/ + s => mats [mæts]

book /bʊk/ + s => books [bʊks]

map /mæp/ + s => maps [mæps]

laugh /lɑ:f/ + s => laughs [lɑ:fs]

math /mæθ/ + s => maths [mæθs]

tip /tɪp/ + s => tips [tɪps]

Demonstration- 3 (word that end in /b/, /d/, /g/, /ð/, /v/, /n/, /m/, /l/, /r/ voiced sounds)

flag /flæg/ + s => flags [flægz]

dog /dɒg/ + s => dogs [dɒgz]

room /ru:m/ + s => rooms [ru:mz]

sword /sɔ:d/ + s => swords [sɔ:dz]

tub /tʌb/ + s => tubs [tʌbz]

well /wel/ + s => wells [welz]

Demonstration-4 (words that end with a sibilant, (voiceless /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and their voiced counterparts /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/)

bridge /brɪdʒ/ + s => bridges [brɪdʒɪz]

face /feɪs/ + s => faces [feɪsɪz]

fox /fɒks/ + es => foxes [fɒksɪz]

bus /bʌs/ + es => buses [bʌsɪz]

patch /pætʃ/ + es => patches [pætʃɪz]

wish /wɪʃ/ + es => wishes [wɪʃɪz]

Comparison between Nepali and Limbu :

- NEPALI

Words that end in /p,t,k,p^h,t^h/ have nothing to do with making plural in Nepali language.

In Nepali, the plural-maker - हारु is added to the noun to make a singular noun into a plural noun, but the plural marker - हारु doesn't have a different pronunciation. Here are some examples,

sap + हारु 'pl.' = sapहारु 'snakes'

ghat + हारु 'pl.' = ghatहारु 'port'

qhak + हारु 'pl.' = qhakhारु 'measuring object'

gaf + हारु 'pl.' = gaf हारु 'gossip'

saθ + हारु 'pl.' = saθहारु 'supports'

- LIMBU

Words that end in /p,t,k,/ have nothing to do with making plural in the Limbu language.

In Limbu, the plural-maker - हा? is added to the noun to make a singular noun into a plural noun, but the plural marker - हा? doesn't have a different pronunciation. Here are some examples,

hap 'nest' + हा? 'pl' = hapha? 'nests'

kok 'load' + हा? 'pl' = kokha? 'loads'

pɔ:t 'mushroom' + हा? 'pl' = pɔ:tha? 'mushrooms'

Observation and Reflection

It was found that nearly all the students pronounced the words properly. Expected purposes were achieved. In the brief span between observations, some remarkable improvements were seen. The students pronounced the words that ended in voiceless, voiced and sibilants (/p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /b/, /d/, /g/, /ð/, /v/, /n/, /m/, /l/, /r/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/). Though some of them confusingly pronounced them in a confusing way, my satisfaction was satisfactory on average. On the whole, the student's response was desirable.

Classroom Setting

A classroom is a place where teaching-learning activities take place. The place must be somewhat suitable for different types of students and teachers. That means the class must be inclusive and learner-friendly. A well-equipped class is desirable. There must be electronic devices that can record and display audio, visual, audio-visual and online materials as well.

Akomolafe (2015) points out that physical layout is a basic thing for a well-run classroom where the workplace must be attractive and well-equipped.

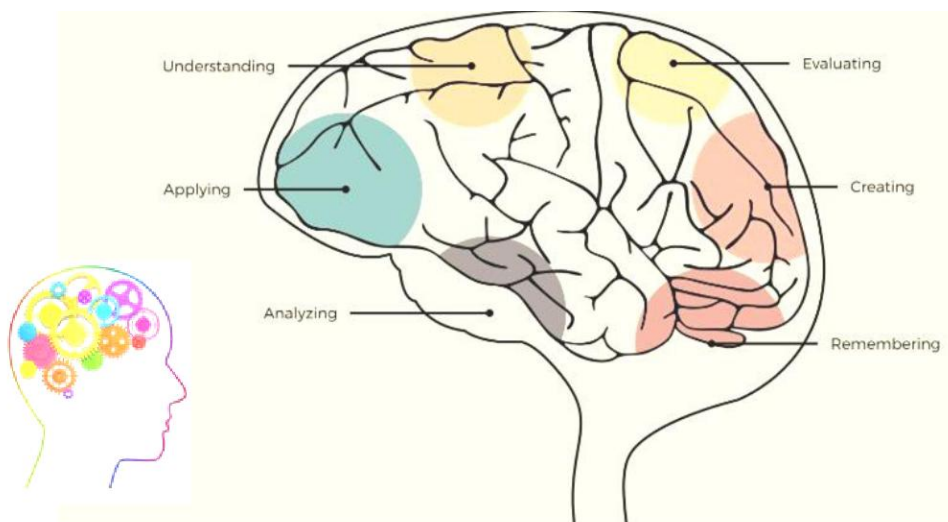
Use of Language in the Classroom

Language is the key part of knowledge, knowledge transformation and knowledge conservation. Sardeshpande (2020) mentions that language is the light of mind. Language teachers shouldn't forget that he/she should maximize PTT and minimize TTT. The more the learners speak, the more they develop their language. To speak means to do pronunciation practice. An experienced teacher, therefore, provides his/her students with enough tasks to be performed.

Figure 1: (Cognitive Domain Brain Analysis/

Figure 5

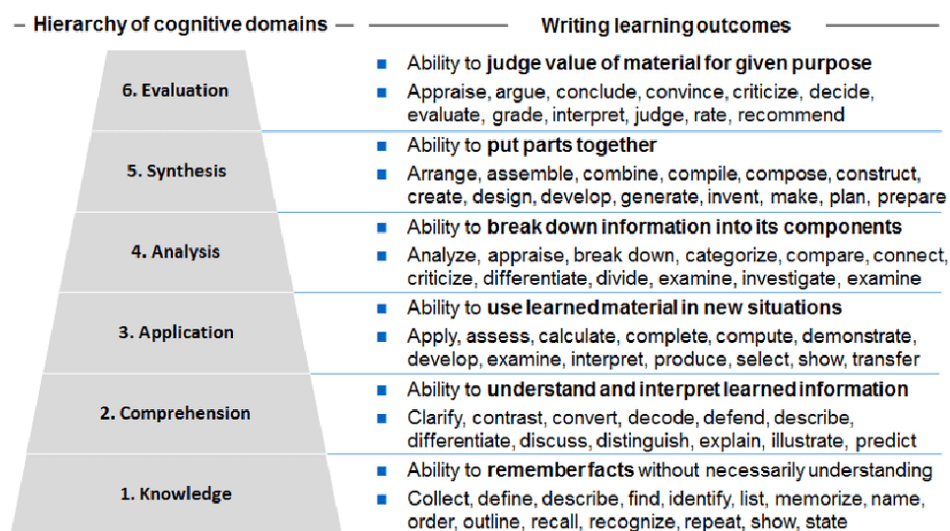
Cognitive Domain Brain Analysis



(Source : Hoque, 2016)

Hoque (2016) says the cognitive domain is directly associated with mental skills and knowledge acquisition, which can be divided into six categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, Synthesis and evaluation.

Figure 6
Cognitive Domain Chart



(Source: Hoque, 2016)

The things that we hear, see, feel, taste and smell are recorded in our mind or brain. Our sense organs make the input process possible, and language helps them work together in an organized way. Pronunciation is one of the basic parts of phonology. Pronunciation refers to the act of producing sounds of speech, together with articulation, stress and intonation.

Plural marker (suffix) -s/es and past tense and past perfect marker suffix -ed are frequently used, but the user mustn't pay less attention to them since they show or maintain the language's uniqueness or/and standard. Pronunciation is the instrument of judgment because we evaluate the speakers, whether they are competent or incompetent, educated or uneducated, and knowledgeable, based on their spoken form (GilakJanuaryi, 2016). The more the learners speak (use language verbally), the more they automate the language. To automate means to make it habitual. Many English learners feel that English pronunciation is very difficult, and the teacher should solve it. It is, therefore, a very important thing for the teacher to consider.

Use of Teaching and Learning Materials

Teachers use materials to make their teaching objective-oriented. These types of materials or aids are called teaching-learning materials (TLM). The TMLs may be either audio or visual or audio-visual or online modes. TLMs may work as motivation. Contents can be delivered to the minds of the students easily if the teacher uses TLMs. Teaching and learning

materials make the teaching and learning process easy to learn, purposeful, interactive and interesting (Bušljeta, 2013).

Video clips of native or professional speakers will be very useful. In recent times, we have mostly used advanced technology, which makes our pronunciation classes very interactive. If possible, smart boards or interactive boards will help facilitate the main objective. Dewey says sincere knowledge and productive understanding are achieved by manipulating suitable TLMs (Dewey, 1966).

Use of Technology

This is the era of advanced technology. Learners/Students can make effective searches. Time can be managed well by means of transportation and communication. Typing and editing methods have made learning simple and easy. Simply put, learners now don't have to worry about checking spelling. Meaning, pronunciation and translation are available.

Electronic materials replaced printed materials. Varieties of online materials are available. Native speakers or professional artists' voices are easily available. They can be recorded, copied, deleted, displayed or transferred. Electrical materials are portable, sent or downloaded.

Our major attention is concentrated on spelling and pronunciation. In English, the interrelation between writing and speech is very weak, that is, there is no one-to-one relation between spelling and sound. The teachers of the 21st. Century doesn't only use printed materials, but it also guides its students by providing search links. Standard pronunciation both in audio and phonetic symbols, can be found if students use the following link :

Link: <https://youglish.com/pronounce/production/english/uk?>

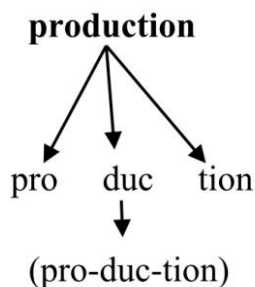
Example,

Figure 3: Pronunciation of 'production'

/prə'dʌk.ʃən/

(Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pronunciation/english/production>)

Figure 7
Production



(Source: <https://www.howmanysyllables.com/syllables/production>)

(Instruction: Type the word you want to pronounce in the search field. By doing this, go to Audio-Visual to hear the sound and go to Phonetic if you want phonetic symbols.)

Connection Between Orthography, Speech Waveform and Spectrogram

Phonemes should be linked with Orthography and Speech. The teacher's basic job is to break and again join (B&J) the letters and sounds. Students look and listen to their teacher on how he/she writes and articulates.

Orthography

↓

Speech Waveform

↓

Spectrogram

The orthography makes a sequence of sounds. The proper chain or relation of letters prepares a background to generate a specific sound, for example:

production

↓

pro-duc-tion

↓

[pruh] + [DUK] + [shuhn]

↓

prə'dʌkʃən/prədʌkʃən

(prə-dək-fən)

It will be quite easy for Nepali and Limbu-speaking students if the teacher uses B&J theory as shown here since both Nepali and Limbu languages are syllabic languages.

Demonstration-1 : Example (Pedagogical)

T : p-r-ə-d-ə-k-ʃ-ə-n (B/breaking)

Ss : p-r-ə-d-ə-k-ʃ-ə-n (B/breaking)

T : prə-dək-ʃən (J/joining)

(pro-duc-tion)

production

Ss : prə-dək-ʃən (J/joining)

(pro-duc-tion)

production

Demonstration - 2 : Contextual

mat : m-a-t

[m-æ-t] => [mæ-t] => [mæt]

mats : m-a-t-s

[m-æ-t-s] => [mæ-t-s] => [mæt-s] => [mæts]

ring : r-i-ng => ri-ng => ring

[rín] => [r-í-ŋ] => [rí-ŋ] => [rín]

rings : r-i-ng-s => ri-ng-s => ring-s => rings

[rínz] => [r-í-ŋ-z] => [rí-ŋ-z] => [rín-z] => [rínz]

mouse : m-o-u-se => mo-u-se => mou-se => mouse

[maʊs] => [m-a-ʊ-s] => [ma-ʊ-s] => [maʊ-s] => [maʊs]

mouses : m-o-se-s

[m-a-ʊ-s-ɪz] => [ma-ʊ-s-ɪz] => [ma-ʊ-s-ɪz] => [maʊ-s-ɪz] => [maʊs-ɪz] =>

[maʊsɪz]

Similar Consonant Clusters (CC): Presence and Absence

Similarities and the existence or presence of the sounds make learning easy. On the contrary, the absence of the sounds makes learning difficult.

NEPALI : p, t, k, f, th + s => /s/

lapsi [lʌpsi:] 'Spondias acuminata (a tree with sour fleshy fruit)'

raksi : [rʌksi:] 'alcohol'

boksi: [boksi:] 'witch'

f/ph+ s => [fs] (rare/not possible)

th+ s => [θs] (rare/not possible)

LIMBU: p,t,k, f,th+ s => /s/

khepse [khɛpsɛʔ] 'listen'

hatse [hatsɛʔ] 'Distribute them'

paksang [pɔksaŋ] 'he/she lifted me'

ph+ s => [fs] (rare/not possible)

th+ s => [θs] (rare/not possible)

NEPALI :b,d,g,ð,v,n,m,l,r + s => /z/

b + s => [bz] (rare/not possible)

d + s => [dz] (rare/not possible)

g + s => [gz] (rare/not possible)

ð + s => [ðz] (rare/not possible)

v + s => [vz] (rare/not possible)

n + s => [nz] (rare/not possible)

m + s => [mz] (rare/not possible)

l + s => [lz] (rare/not possible)

r + s => [rz] (rare/not possible)

NEPALI : s,ʃ, tʃ + s => /Iz/

s + s => [Iz] (rare/not possible)

ʃ + s => [Iz] (rare/not possible)

tʃ + s => [Iz] (rare/not possible)

LIMBU : s,ʃ, tʃ + s => /Iz/

s + s => [Iz] (rare/not possible)

ʃ + s => [Iz] (rare/not possible)

tʃ + s => [Iz] (rare/not possible)

- ESL song sing-along

ESL songs and total physical response (TPR) are interrelated. When a song is sung, then we (e.g. learners, etc.) start dancing. When we dance, then physical exercise begins. The physical movement is expected according to the phonics song where we find TPR. At the same time, the mind is working (e.g. recording, repetition, etc.).

A sing-along is a simple activity for the learners. Repetition makes learning (pronunciation practice) easy and possible. Widodo (2005) mentions that TPR works with mixed-ability classes where there are strong and weak learners. The physical actions make the intended meaning purposeful so that the learners can understand and apply the target language.

Pronunciation Bingo

Pronunciation Bingo is an engaging and interactive classroom activity that helps students improve their pronunciation skills, particularly in distinguishing and articulating challenging sounds like the English plural marker -s. This game encourages active listening, phoneme recognition, and repeated oral practice, which is essential for pronunciation development (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). By incorporating words with different plural endings (e.g., /s/, /z/, and /ɪz/ sounds), students can identify pronunciation patterns and reinforce their learning through play. The repetitive nature of the game enhances retention, while the competitive yet enjoyable format keeps learners motivated and engaged.

As I discussed above, language games (LG) are very effective in delivering content to the students' minds. LGs make the learners very excited and creative because one LG helps them to create another similar LG. One of the LGs is the 'Pronunciation Bingo.' Students are provided with a set of words, e.g. desk, beak, etc. The words are written on the Bingo Sheets. The teacher takes a sound flashcard and says the sound, such as /e/. The players (students) will have to display the Bingo Sheet containing 'desk.' Such games can be played individually or in pairs or in groups. Wright (2006) states that the learners work in groups/pairs while playing language games and get enough chances for oral practice. The teacher shouldn't forget that he/she should teach their students about the correlation between grapheme, phone, and phoneme very consciously.

Rhyming activities

Rhyming activities are a powerful tool in developing pronunciation skills as they engage learners in repeating sounds and patterns, which helps reinforce correct pronunciation. These activities promote familiarity with phonetic sounds, stress patterns, and intonation, thereby enhancing speech clarity (Saito, 2019). In my classroom, I used rhyming activities to address the

mispronunciation of the plural marker -s among Limbu learners of English. By incorporating rhymes that emphasized plural forms, students were able to practice the pronunciation of -s in a fun and engaging way, which facilitated better retention and accuracy in their speech.

The teacher can use connected rhyming pairs to teach pronunciation and differentiate the sounds, such as say and day, cow and how, etc. Students will have to pronounce the pairs. That is, the students will have to follow them.

T: say [seɪ]

Ss: say [seɪ]

T: day [deɪ]

Ss: day [deɪ]

After using the first cycle of the pronunciation bingo techniques, the teacher then switches to a very new rhyming pattern.

Tongue Twisters for Better Pronunciation

Tongue twisters are an effective method for improving pronunciation skills as they challenge learners to articulate complex sound combinations quickly and accurately. They are instrumental in enhancing fluency, articulation, and the mastery of complex sounds in a language (Hegde & Gaitonde, 2016). In my classroom, I used tongue twisters to help Limbu learners of English improve their pronunciation of the plural marker -s. These exercises provided students with the opportunity to practice the target sound repetitively and engagingly, thus improving their ability to pronounce plural forms correctly and enhancing their overall speech clarity.

A good or experienced teacher makes their students repeat one sound again and again so that the students will be familiar with alliteration and/or assonance; that is what we call a 'tongue twister'.

Demonstration-1

T: I saw two mats, three bombs and four houses.

Ss: I saw two mats, three bombs and four houses.

Note:- The teacher should be aware of how the underlined suffix -s is pronounced in different linguistic environments.

Demonstration-2

T: Five fat friends found fifteen fat foxes in the field.

Ss: Five fat friends found fifteen fat foxes in the field.

Note:- The teacher should be aware of how the labio-dental sound is pronounced. The position of the lip-teeth teeth should be taken very carefully because, in Nepali and Limbu, the /f/ sound is bilabial.

Minimal Pair

Minimal pairs are pairs of words that differ by only one sound, which makes them particularly useful in teaching pronunciation. By contrasting similar-sounding words, learners can focus on the specific phoneme that creates the difference, helping them fine-tune their articulation and improve their speech clarity (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). In my classroom, I used minimal pairs to help Limbu learners of English improve their pronunciation of the plural marker -s. This technique allowed students to hear and produce the subtle differences in sounds, facilitating their understanding of how the plural marker is pronounced in different contexts and enhancing their overall pronunciation skills.

Example,

Projection: day /deɪ/ and say /seɪ/

Result: /d/ and /s/ are different sounds.

Demonstration-1

T: see [si:] and she [ʃi:]

Ss: see [si:] and she [ʃi:]

Projection: see [si:] and she [ʃi:]

Result: /s/ and /ʃ/ are different sounds.

Teaching pronunciation using minimal pairs makes the learners very enthusiastic. Without motivation, learning won't be real, practical, or purposeful.

Imitation

The teacher says something. Students listen to the teacher very carefully so that they can repeat the sound exactly. This is, therefore, 'Listen and Repeat (L&R).' More precisely, this type of activity is comparatively more useful for learners in smaller grades. Meltzoff and Williamson(2017) mention that animals aren't able to imitate a wide range of imitations, whereas human beings are more capable.

Students are given some tips, and they choose suitable speech models to practice themselves. Imitation and repetition are the basic parts of learning that suit them. They (students) must be encouraged to participate in such activities.

Round-1: Simple Imitation

T: Peter is

Ss: Peter is

Round-2: Complex Imitation

T: Peter's

Ss: Peter's

Note:- The teacher should be aware of pronouncing short forms of is, am, are, has, have, had,

will, would and not.

he is [hi: ɪz]

he'ss [hi:z]

Practice with a Mirror: To Learn English Pronunciation

The mirror is a useful object for learning pronunciation because it (mirror) shows the image of our speech organs, facial expression and posture, The learner stands in front of the mirror and pays his/her attention to his or her mouth, lip, teeth, vocal cord, etc. This visual feedback can help the learner to check and correct any pronunciation issues and improve his/her overall delivery.

Figure 8

Practice with a Mirror



(Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image-film?phrase=checking+teeth+in+mirror>)

Pronunciation Games

Pronunciation games are interactive activities designed to engage students in improving their pronunciation skills in a fun and motivating way. These games encourage students to practice sounds, intonation, stress patterns, and rhythm in a non-threatening environment, which can help reduce anxiety and build confidence (Derwing & Munro, 2005). In my classroom, I used pronunciation games to address specific pronunciation challenges faced by Limbu learners of English, particularly with the plural marker -s. Through engaging and interactive activities, students were able to practice and internalize correct pronunciation patterns while enjoying the learning process.

Grid completion

The teacher displays visual material. He/She asks their students to complete the grids.

bone	pigs	cups	cane	cat	cup
rats	pen	cats	bats	pig	dog
dogs	bat	canes	bones	rat	pins
pan	pens	pans	pin		

singular (1)

plural (2+)

Source: <https://wordwall.net/en-us/community/pronunciation-plural-nouns>

Reading & writing

The teacher displays visual material. He/She asks his/her students to read and write.



Source: <https://wordwall.net/en-us/community/pronunciation-plural-nouns>

- **Word Stress Pellmanism**

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, Pellmanism (= pairs/ memory game) can be played with the same cards as Snap but is a slower game. All the cards are spread face down on the table and students take turns trying to find matching pairs of cards by which syllable is stressed. This is easier if all of the words have the same number of syllables. This game can also be played with students matching vowel sounds or the number of syllables.

- **SoundsBrainstorming Task**

The teacher displays a sound on the board. He/She asks his/her students to say or write as many words as possible with the sound they have been given on the board. as quickly as possible.

Round-1

Example,

T : noun + s => [-z]

S1 : taps (×)

S2: rings (✓)

Round-2

Example,

T : noun + s => [-Iz]

S1: houses (✓)

S2 : bags (×)

Round-3

Example,

T : noun + es => [-Iz]

S1: benches (√)

S2 : machines (×)

Round-4

Example,

T : noun + s => [-s]

S1 : kings (×)

S2: taps (√)

Sounds the same or different

The teacher displays two identical pairs of words and says, "Same or Different ?" The students will have to say either "Yes" or "No" in their turn.

Demonstration

T: Listen to the sound /æ/

tap/map (same)

rat/rain (different)

Note:- The teacher should give the students a lot of practice in this matter.

- Tell me when I'm odd

In this variation of Sounds Same or Different, students listen to a whole string of words with the same sound (e.g. the same vowel sound) and race to indicate the first word they hear that is different.

- Silently mouthing

Students try to identify the word or sentence that the teacher or a student is mouthing silently. This is good for awareness of mouth position for English sounds.

- Sounds puzzle

You can get the logical parts of their brain working during pronunciation practice by hiding the sounds that make up a word that is the answer to the puzzle. Students find the sounds in common in each pair of words, put all the sounds together (mixed up or in order) and write the word they make.

Summary of the Chapter

I looked into the problems raised in this dissertation from different angles. Strategies for implementing pronunciation practice in the classroom were discussed. Qualitative Inquiry was carried out in order to find a solution to the problems faced by the students. Three demos were demonstrated: demo 1 on /s/, demo 2 on /z/ and demo 3 on /Iz/. Each demo is compared with Nepali and Limbu languages.

The teacher not only speaks and speaks himself but also listens to her/his students. Any sort of things done by the learners are respected. The classroom is very important in teaching and learning because the students and teachers spend most of their time there performing different activities. Pronunciation can be developed through. The more the students speak (use of language), the more they develop their pronunciation and accuracy. Teaching and Learning materials help the learners in many ways. The TMLs make the subject matter easy to understand. ESL pronunciation activities. Learners are interested in learning something interesting. When something is interesting, it is easy, too. Very often, language games, songs, etc., can be stimuli in such circumstances.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The problem of pronunciation related to the plural marker -s is introduced, and the previous literature is researched, analyzed and discussed in this research. Different languages have different grammar systems. In the Nepali language, the plural marker -haru suffix is added to the noun to make it plural, and the plural marker -haru is pronounced in the same. In the Limbu language, the plural marker -haʔ suffix is added to the noun to make it plural, and the plural marker -haru is pronounced in the same. But in the English language, the plural marker -s is pronounced in different ways: the same plural marker -s is pronounced sometimes as [-s], sometimes as [-z] and sometimes as [Iz]. Not only the students but also the ESL teachers suffered.

Special strategies should be implemented in real classrooms. The curriculum development centre, the educators and the teachers should be aware of these facts. Every language has particular standards or linguistic norms, and the first and basic component of language is its unique sound, which makes it different from other languages.

Findings

I found that the students can pronounce the plural marker -s if the final sound of a word is /p/ or /t/ or /k/ or /θ/ or /f/ (a voiceless sound). Almost all the students who took part in the test could pronounce the suffix -s. So far as the plural marker -s [z] and the plural marker -s [Iz] are concerned, none of the participating students could recognize the correct pronunciation.

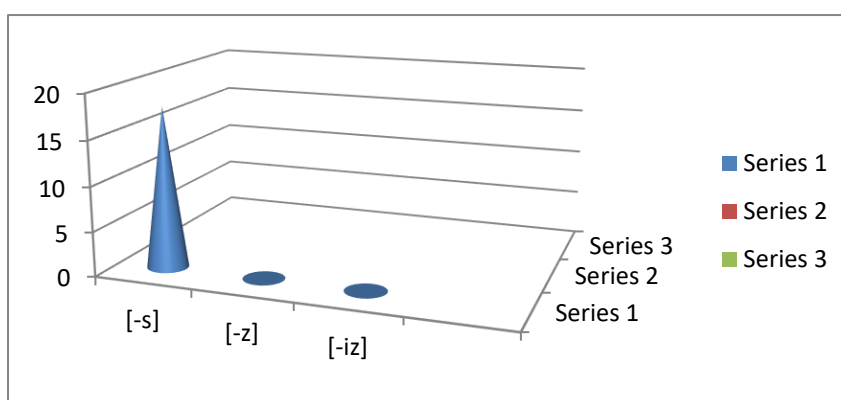
Conclusion

When the action research on the topic of 'Problems in Pronouncing English Plural Marker-s for Limbu-Speaking Basic English Learners' is carried out, the students' activity and curiosity have improved significantly when it comes to the second stage. In this way, if we identify the pin of other problems and move forward by doing action research on learning issues, learning achievement will gradually increase.

Twenty students, 10 Nepali-speaking and 10 Limbu-speaking students, of grade eight took part in my research work. All twenty students, both Nepali and Limbu-speaking students, found it easy to pronounce the voiceless sounds that end in /p/ or /t/ or /k/ or /θ/ or /f/ because eighteen students pronounced the word 'hats' as [hæts]. Another two students pronounced the word 'hats' as [hets].

Figure 9

Responses made by the Students



All of the students mispronounced the word 'bags': Three out of twenty students pronounced bags as [byagz]. One out of twenty students pronounced bags as [byag]. One out of twenty students pronounced bags as [biyags]. The same thing happened to the word 'houses'. All the participants couldn't pronounce: eighteen out of twenty students pronounced houses as [hauzes]. One out of twenty students pronounced houses as [hauzezs]. One out of twenty students pronounced houses as [haus].

Language learning is disturbed in many ways: mother tongue interference, the absence of sound or the absence of system or grammar rules. On the other hand, students come from different linguistic backgrounds. They are in school in a particular linguistic condition, so they feel quite uneasy about mastering the other strange grammatical rules.

In the context of Nepal, there are no plural forms in the pronunciation of the plural marker suffix -hɹu. Similarly, in the Limbu language too, the plural marker suffix -haʔ doesn't have plural forms in pronunciation. It is the teacher who is fundamentally responsible for understanding students and behaving accordingly.

This research makes the stakeholders, including curriculum designers, teachers, and learners, aware. The first component is the Curriculum Development Center (CDC). The basic curriculum doesn't say anything about which English the learners are going to learn, e.g., British English, American English or Australian English.

Implication

It is not the fault of the students alone for not doing homework and project work. Not searching for and using the latest methods of learning. The main reasons are that the teacher is unable to motivate the students, only encourages teacher-centered, lecture-based and traditional learning, does not do creative activities, does not use modern technology in the classroom, and does not doing experimental and practical teaching and learning.

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APPENDIX A

FIELD MILIEU

Phidim Municipality

Phidim Secondary School (PSS)

Gadhi Secondary School (GSS)

Sukhabodh Secondary School (SSS)

APPENDIX B
YAKTHUNG/LIMBU VOWELS

ᄁ /ɔ/ as in *ɔkma* 'to shout'

ᄂ /a/ as in *amba* 'my father'

ᄃ /i/ as in *iksa* 'earth'

ᄄ /u/ as in *upma* 'to call'

ᄅ /e/ as in *pe:kma* 'to go'

ᄆ /o/ as in *so:kma* 'to point out'

ᄇ /ɛ/ as in *tɔɛʔ* '(you) insult (him/her)'

APPENDIX C
YAKTHUNG/LIMBU CONSONANTS

ᳵ/k/ as in *kɛra* '(He/She) came'

ᳶ/kh/ as in *khɔmma* 'to stir'

᳷/g/ as in *aŋga* 'I'

᳸/gh/ as in *khɛmnɛ* '(I) hear (you)'

᳹/ŋ/ as in *haŋ* 'king'

ᳺ/c/ as in *ca* 'food stuff'

᳻/ch/ as in *anchuma* 'my auntie'

᳼/j/ as in *hinja* 'child'

᳾/t/ as in *tumma* 'to meet'

᳿/th/ as in *thikma* 'to blame'

᳠/d/ as in *lɛndik* 'day (time)'

᳡/dh/ as in *mɛdho:ktu* '(They) cooked (something)'

᳢/n/ as in *ni:pma* 'to read'

᳣/p/ as in *pa:pma* 'to speak'

᳤/ph/ as in *phɔŋma* 'to break'

᳥/b/ as in *aba:ttum* '(We) spoke (on something)'

᳦/bh/ as in *kɛbhɛttu* '(You) brought (something)'

᳧/m/ as in *nam* 'sun'

᳨/y/ as in *yɛm* 'time'

ᳩ/r/ as in *kɔrɔ* 'but'

ᳪ/l/ as in *allɔ* 'now'

ᳫ/w/ as in *wamma* 'to shake'

ᳬ/s/ as in *sɛmma* 'to separate'

ç /h/ as in *homma* 'to open'

APPENDIX D
STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Pronounce the following words as shown in the example.

Example,

- a) puts [पुट्स] hats [.....]
- b) bags [.....]
- c) houses [.....]
- d) pots [.....]
- e) legs [.....]
- f) horses [.....]

APPENDIX E
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Q.1 How do you teach plural words (nouns) that end with -s?

Q.2 What is the importance of teaching pronunciation in the English language?