EMPOWERING NARRATIVES OF MAITHIL WOMEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHERS

Bibha Jha

A Dissertation

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation/thesis of *Bibha Jha* for the degree *of Master of Philosophy English Language Education* presented on *4 February, 2025* entitled *Empowering Narratives of Maithil Women English language Teachers.*

APPROVED BY

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Assoc. Prof. Tikaram Poudel, PhD

Dissertation Supervisor

This research entitled *Empowering Narratives of Maithil Women English language Teachers* explores the stories of Maithil women English teachers who teach English at the secondary level in Nepal by using technology. It critically analyzed the social, cultural, and instructional narratives based on personal and professional experiences. In addition, it also sees how the knowledge and skills of English and using ICTs in teaching helped the Maithil women teachers get economically, socially, and psychologically empowered to maintain their status under the patriarchal society where men and women are treated differently and liable for different roles.

I selected a narrative inquiry as a research method and used the narratives of the research participants as my research data. I selected four Maithil women teachers who teach compulsory English in grades 11 and 12 at private institutions in Nepal. My inquiry on the struggles of Maithil women teachers has explored my participants' living stories in detail, which enforce their bitter and better experiences of English language teaching in Nepal. Their stories reflect their struggles in their families, society, schools, and workplaces. Such stories also inform us how they faced challenges and raised their voices against the biases and differences applied to them at their homes and workplaces. I used empowerment theory and Sen's capability theory, providing a theoretical foundation for this research.

Based on the participants' stories, I learned that English language proficiency helped them to empower themselves in the Nepalese sociocultural context, while the knowledge and skills of ICTS in teaching empowered them in their professional

arena. These skills and knowledge helped them to be established in their profession, economically uplifted, and able to handle odd situations, if any, in their life. I also learned that strong willpower and regular income motivated them throughout their academic journey.

From the study, I conclude that the knowledge of English and ICT, regular income, higher education, and family support for the teaching profession are key factors in creating a democratic environment at home and in the workplace. Maithil women teachers have become powerful under society's strict social and cultural patterns. They are empowered to make their decision for their life. Furthermore, using technology in teaching has empowered them and developed their capacity to resist contradictions, make decisions, use money for them, feel powerful, and have no feeling of loss of jobs. Due to empowerment, they have earned a strong psychology to handle negative responses from family members, colleagues, or internal or external factors.

In this respect, there are ample chances that they can explore the academic and professional space and height if they are motivated, encouraged, trained, and invested by a family from their childhood, as their male siblings have. In sum, family and institutional attitudes and behaviors towards Maithil women English teachers greatly impact their capability enhancement and professional achievements.

……………………..   4 February 2025
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शोध सार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि बिभा झा को शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक "मैथिल महिला अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षिकाका सशक्तिकरण कथाहरु" २२ माघ २०८१ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

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सह. प्रा. टिकाराम पौडेल पीएचडी

शोध निर्देशक

यस अनुसन्धानले नेपालका माध्यमिक तहका विद्यालयमा प्रविधिको प्रयोग गरी अंग्रेजी पढाउने मैथिल महिला शिक्षिकाहरूको जीवन कथाहरूको अध्ययन गर्दछ। यसले सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक र शैक्षिक सन्दर्भहरूमा आधारित व्यक्तिगत तथा व्यावसायिक अनुभवहरूलाई समालोचनात्मक ढङ्गले विश्लेषण गर्दछ। साथै, यसले अंग्रेजी भाषाको ज्ञान तथा सूचना तथा सञ्चार प्रविधि को प्रयोगले कसरी तिनै महिलाहरूलाई आर्थिक, सामाजिक र मनोवैज्ञानिक रूपमा सशक्त बनाएको छ भन्ने विषय पनि अध्ययन गर्दछ, विशेषगरी यस्तो पितृसत्तात्मक समाजमा जहाँ महिला र पुरुषलाई फरक भूमिकाको लागि जिम्मेवार ठानिन्छ।

मैले अनुसन्धान विधिका रूपमा कथानक अनुसन्धान अपनाएँ र सहभागी शिक्षिकाहरूका कथाहरूलाई अनुसन्धानको तथ्याङ्क को रूपमा प्रयोग गरेँ। यसका लागि मैले निजी विद्यालयहरूमा कक्षा ११ र १२ मा अनिवार्य अंग्रेजी पढाउने चार जना मैथिल महिला शिक्षिकाहरू चयन गरेँ। ती शिक्षिकाहरूको संघर्षको अध्ययन मार्फत मैले उनीहरूको जीवनका पीडादायक तथा प्रेरणादायी अनुभवहरू विस्तृत रूपमा पत्ता लगाएँ। ती कथाहरूले उनीहरूले घर, समाज, विद्यालय, र कार्यस्थलमा भोगेका संघर्षहरूलाई उजागर गर्छन्। साथै, ती कथाहरूले उनीहरूले कसरी चुनौतीको सामना गरे र घर तथा कार्यस्थलमा भेदभाव विरुद्ध आवाज उठाए भन्ने पनि देखाउँछन्।

मैले सशक्तिकरण सिद्धान्त र अमर्त्य सेनको क्षमतावाद सिद्धान्तलाई अनुसन्धानको सैद्धान्तिक आधारको रूपमा प्रयोग गरेकी छु। सहभागीहरूको कथाका आधारमा मैले बुझेँ कि

अंग्रेजी भाषाको दक्षताले उनीहरूलाई नेपाली सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक सन्दर्भमा सशक्त बनायो भने प्रविधिको प्रयोगले उनीहरूलाई व्यावसायिक क्षेत्रमै बलियो बनायो। यस प्रकारका सीप र ज्ञानले उनीहरूलाई पेशामा स्थापित, आर्थिक रूपमा सुदृढ, र जीवनका कठिन परिस्थितिहरू सामना गर्न सक्ने बनायो। साथै, दृढ इच्छाशक्ति र नियमित आयले उनीहरूको शैक्षिक यात्रा जारी राख्न उत्प्रेरणा प्रदान गऱ्यो।

यस अध्ययनबाट मैले निष्कर्ष निकालेकी छु कि अंग्रेजी र प्रविधिको ज्ञान, नियमित आय, उच्च शिक्षा, र शिक्षण पेशामा पारिवारिक समर्थन जस्ता कुराहरूले घर र कार्यस्थलमा लोकतान्त्रिक वातावरण सृजना गर्न महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्दछन्। मैथिल महिला शिक्षिकाहरूले समाजका कडा सामाजिक(सांस्कृतिक ढाँचाभित्र आफूलाई शक्तिशाली बनाएका छन् र आफ्ना निर्णय आफैं गर्न सक्षम भएका छन्। शिक्षणमा प्रविधिको प्रयोगले उनीहरूलाई सशक्त बनाउनुका साथै विरोध गर्ने, निर्णय गर्ने, आफ्नै लागि पैसा खर्च गर्ने, आत्मबल महसुस गर्ने, र जागिर गुमाउने डर नभएको मानसिक अवस्था निर्माण गरेको छ।

यस सन्दर्भमा, यदि परिवारले बाल्यकालदेखि नै उनीहरूलाई प्रोत्साहन, प्रशिक्षण, र लगानी गरेमा उनीहरूका दाजुभाइ सरह शैक्षिक र व्यावसायिक क्षेत्रमा उत्कृष्ट उपलब्धि हासिल गर्न सक्छन्। संक्षेपमा, मैथिल महिला अंग्रेजी शिक्षिकाहरूप्रति पारिवारिक तथा संस्थागत दृष्टिकोण र व्यवहारले उनीहरूको क्षमता वृद्धिमा तथा व्यावसायिक सफलतामा ठूलो प्रभाव पार्दछ।

....   २२ माघ २०८१

बिभा झा

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation entitled *Empowering Narratives of Maithil Women English Language Teachers* was presented by *Bibha Jha* on *4 February 2025*.

APPROVED BY

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I understand that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

………………………….   4 February 2025

Bibha Jha

Degree Candidate

DECLARATION

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

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Bibha Jha

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my parents, teachers, siblings and the friends who supported me.

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I express my deepest gratitude to my Assoc. Prof. Tikaram Poudel, PhD, Head of the Department of Language Education, Kathmandu University, for his invaluable guidance and support throughout my research journey. His experience, review, continuous constructive feedback, and personal motivation are the outcomes of this research.

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I want to thank all my research participants who willingly contributed to this study and shared their stories to accomplish my study. Similarly, I am grateful to all my M. Phil's colleagues have always been helpful throughout my M.Phil journey. My special thanks go to my family members, who constantly supported and encouraged me to enhance my education. Finally, my sincere thanks go to the people who directly and indirectly inspired me to stay on track and overcome any challenges I faced on personal and professional levels during my MPhil.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
EFA	Education for All
ELE	English Language Education
ELT	English Language Teaching
Gen Z	Generation Z
IA	Intermediate of Arts
IEd	Intermediate Education
ICT	Information Communication Technology
MA	Master of Arts
MEd	Master of Education
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
SLC.	School Leaving Certificate
WiFi	Wireless Fidelity

LIST OF FIGURE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter opens with some basic accounts of the section and a detailed explanation that rationalizes the call for my research. It starts with the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the rationale of the study, the research questions, and the delimitation of the research. The chapter subsequently describes the aims of the present study and provides a chapter-by-chapter overview of the thesis. The chapter concludes with the organization of the thesis. This research explored the understanding and experiences of Maithil women English Language teachers on using ICTs in teaching English in the classroom and the challenges they face during and after or before teaching.

Background of the Study

The English language and technology have emerged as indispensable parts of our life. People cannot imagine and run their lives without both or either one to achieve success in education and career. That is why English language teaching (ELT) should be adequate for a goal-oriented, informative, exciting, and fruitful future to improve the level of four skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English language learners (ELLs).

In Nepal, many changes have been observed in educational institutions in town areas. However, the traditional methods (Lecture method) and Grammar Translation Method (GTM) can be observed in practice, especially in remote and village areas (Rahman, 2019). The same practices are alive in Birtamod, Jhapa. ELLs are forced to rote memorization and copy the answers. The student-centered approach is far less practiced, as Sharma (2023) opined that most learners used copying, recitation, and imitation as their main learning strategies.

Using technology in ELT is apt for accessing better teaching approaches by which learning grows. In this regard, Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) have stated that sharing knowledge seems easy and convenient, as it makes learning and teaching effective. It means using audio, video, online or offline materials, and ICT tools to boost learners' academic achievements. Using such tools and materials to teach based on students' needs may enhance their understanding of the subject matter. As Haleem et al. (2022) have mentioned, digital technologies help increase learners' knowledge

and skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, and comprehension. ELLs grasp the subject matter well if their presentation is full of insight. For example, if one has to explain different types of 'jump' through words, it is an uphill task for teachers to make students understand by explaining the word. Instead, a short video of 'jump' is effective here. Indeed, ELT with ICTs is very effective for learners in showing the elements of language like emotion, action, and dialogue, as well as helping students understand the concept of the topic in different ways. In addition, Cox and Marshall (2007) observed that the benefaction of ICT to students' learning was reliant on the type of ICT resources used based on the nature of the particular subject. Thus, using ICTs in education or any ELT program with a purpose can encourage students to be more creative and motivate them to study the subject matter deeply.

The ease with which information and communication technologies can transmit and disseminate information for development is well recognized. However, women's access to ICTs cannot be assumed to occur 'naturally' when gender-blind approaches and technologies are implemented. As a result, the impact of ICTs on employment, education, training, and various aspects of life highlights women's need to receive motivation and assistance to claim their rightful position in the information revolution (Gurumurthy, 2004). In this sense, women are generally limited in access to and getting benefits from ICTs. Gender barriers and a lack of ICT resources and infrastructure hinder women from being digitally friendly. They need an environment where they can access ICTs and skills to use in education for teaching and learning purposes. We use technology inside or outside the class for teaching and learning, but our students are born with computers, play with ICT tools, and, interestingly, know a lot about computers and ICTs. As Galaczi (2018) mentioned, it is often the case that technology is amicable to students but not to teachers as they lack the skills to use it properly, doubt its real value, or see it as a threat to their professional status. Here, he has said more precisely about the value of digital friendliness for the teachers.

Many years ago, I participated in a NELTA program in Birgunj, Parsa. I was not aware of the use of ICTs in the classroom or beyond the classroom for teaching and learning purposes. Mostly, teachers followed lecture methods to teach. They believed that a teacher-centered approach is more effective in the concept of learning, where the teacher is the primary controller in the classroom, and students are just merely the listener and remain passive for the whole duration of the discussion (Karki,

2021). I liked to follow teacher-dominated interactions (Broughton et al., 2022) in my class. I had no idea about other types of approaches to teaching.

If the students did not pay attention or became restless, my colleagues tried to control them forcefully by using either negative or derogatory words or giving punishments. I liked both neither. Yet I shouted at the naughty students to make a peaceful environment in the class. I rolled my eyes, changed facial expressions, or stared at the noisy students to manage the noisy class. Pin-drop silence was best for any class to run smoothly. I could not realize if my teaching was boring. Instead, I considered why students were not prioritized in their studies. From the Transmission Perspective, effective teaching starts with a substantial commitment to the content or subject matter. It is essential, therefore, for Transmission-oriented teachers to have mastery over their content (Pratt, 2020). Similarly, I focused on memorizing the content to teach in the class rather than focusing on learners' needs and interests.

Time passed, and I moved to Kathmandu. Luckily, I got an opportunity to work in an international school. Almost all teachers were very trained and digital-friendly. In my new workplace, I observed that modern methodology is also more effective in encouraging children to communicate and creating a positive attitude toward the subject (Boumová, 2008). I did not want to miss any opportunity to learn from my colleagues. With time, I realized the impact and value of ICTs in ELT because technology helps students become independent, proficient members and researchers (Mayer, 2005). The value of applying ICTs in ELT has been growing daily in Nepal, as teaching with the help of technology is more relevant and result-oriented in the case of English language teaching.

Gradually, I began to include offline or online materials in the class, such as video, audio, PowerPoint slides, and other required materials, which boosted my learners' learning. My class turned into a learner-centered class. My students were motivated to learn more than in the past. I often asked myself questions. Why didn't I use ICTs in ELT from the beginning of my career? Why is parrot learning imposed while so many facilities are available in Nepal? How could I ignore the technology for my teaching and learning purposes? I realize the importance of using technology in my teaching and learning.

The role of ICTs in teaching and learning is so large that blending teaching and technology with a purpose in education will lead to great teaching and learning success. Similarly, teachers can integrate technology to enhance teaching performance

so that students can be enlightened. The Nepal government has been promoting the use of technology in education, including ELT. The recent School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) aims to use ICT as a significant tool to improve classroom delivery and engage the effectiveness and efficiency of education to meet the SSDP target (SSDP Midterm Review, 2021). Using technology purposefully in teaching creates miracles in the delivery of information. ICT tools, approaches, facilities, and computers are appropriate. Such facilities provide freedom of learning anytime and anywhere in a self-paced environment. Therefore, ELT, without using technology, is an incomplete journey of teaching and learning English. Modern technology and its access have overloaded people with information and have piles of information on multiple subjects. People can easily navigate information, use and throw it.

Similarly, teachers can use ICT in language teaching to make teaching more straightforward than in the past. Indeed, technology has revolutionized language teaching and technology-friendly methods to help achieve one's objectives faster. ICT is changeable, fast, and conveniently fulfilling different aspects and teaching needs. ELT with technology integration is a dire need for developing students' language proficiency, according to Singh (2019). It solves many barriers to teaching because it provides quality teaching material, and teachers can use the same material multiple times based on their needs.

Ultimately, the power of ICTs is determined by the ability of teachers to use the new tools for learning to create rich, new, and engaging learning environments for their students. UNESCO World Education Report (1998) has noted that there are indications that the new technologies could have radical implications for conventional teaching and learning processes. Indeed, teachers must have enough knowledge of Ed-tech, the content of the subject matter, and presentation skills to fulfill the goal of teaching.

Modern approaches to teaching language have frequently been applied to ICTs to meet the goal of language teaching. A teacher can use single or multiple approaches to teach the learners properly based on their context, interest, intelligence, and even facilities. Numerous techniques can be used in a classroom for teaching and learning purposes. For instance, the same task can be categorized under reading, listening, or watching. Similarly, functions with different content can be given to distinct learners to get similar outcomes and motivate them for further learning.

Similarly, the students with continuous exposure to ICT technology through education demonstrated better knowledge, presentation skills, and innovative capabilities. They were ready to put more effort into learning than their friends (Carstens et al., 2021). Thus, ICTs significantly impact ELT from the past to the future as they are beneficial for teaching and learning in depth. However, poor infrastructure and internet service may cause hindrances for teaching and learning purposes.

The Interim Constitution (2007) guarantees social justice and affirmative action for women, Dalits, Adivasi Janajatis, Muslims, Madhesis, and other excluded or disadvantaged groups. However, in reality, multiple forms of difference and discrimination create barriers to achieving their goals and accessing their rights in life. In the case of Maithil women, most of them, except privileged ones, do not have easy access to ICTs. Privileged women get access to fulfill their desires due to their independence and education that influence their financial and non-financial decisions.

In Nepal, technology integration in teaching is popular as it enriches tutors' and learners' teaching strategies and learning opportunities and supports them to be productive in language teaching (Adhikari, 2021). Even most teachers are remote from using technology and modern approaches during the teaching and learning program. However, teachers face many new challenges and are required to settle. New methods of teaching and learning are essential to gain an understanding of the subject matter. UNESCO opines that women face serious challenges that are not only economic but social as well as cultural –obstacles that limit or prevent their access to, use of, and benefits from ICTs worldwide (Primo, 2020).

Similarly, Maithil women teachers cannot be excluded from this reality. The use of ICT in education has brought new perspectives and practices to ELT. Like teachers, students also benefit from exploring their knowledge and learning ability. They can lead themselves towards independent learning and deep learning as ICTs assist them in getting any information within a second. So, they can easily specify their learning needs in the English language by using and applying ICTs, whether online or offline. Thus, this research is worth producing as it connects with educators, learners, researchers, and people who are concerned. They got benefitted by reading and collecting information as per their desire.

Rationale of the Study

I have genuine faith in the worthiness of my research paper from different perspectives of knowledge contribution in teaching and learning English. Firstly, Maithil women teachers would be empowered by the insights of my results about professional enhancement and how they have struggled and eased their challenges while teaching and learning English. As a non-native English teacher, I have also experienced vivid stories of struggles and ignorance of applying ICTs in ELT. I tried to update my skills and knowledge of using technology in teaching and learning English.

Secondly, I rationalized that my research contributions would have important roles in redefining the policies by introducing the value of ICTs in language teaching in the context of Nepal. It is crucial to speak about Maithil women's experience of using ICTs in ELT in the context of Nepal.

Thirdly, the derived stories provide important insights for all the English language teachers of Nepal, directly or indirectly. I realized there is an urgent need for time to contribute to the educational arena by informing the Maithil women teachers' struggles and achievements of those beyond the Maithili community. It may broaden the scope and distinct perceptions, beliefs, and knowledge by informing about a real English teaching situation by Maithil women in the Nepali community.

Therefore, my present research is likely to make an original contribution to English language teaching in Nepal. It brings up issues related to Maithil women teachers teaching in Nepal. In addition, it is equally beneficial for the ELT practitioners of Nepal and worldwide. It is underexplored till today. Furthermore, it is worth producing as it connects with educators, learners, researchers, and people concerned about getting essential data from reading and collecting information according to their needs.

Statement of the Problem

Using technology in ELT is apt for accessing better teaching approaches by which learning grows. In this regard, Raja and Nagasubramani (2018) have stated that sharing knowledge seems easy and convenient, as it makes learning and teaching effective. It means using audio, video, online or offline materials, and ICT tools to boost learners' academic achievements. Using such tools and materials to teach based on students' needs may enhance their understanding of the subject matter. As Haleem et al. (2022) have mentioned, digital technologies help increase learners' knowledge

and skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, and comprehension. ELLs grasp the subject matter well if their presentation is full of insight. For example, if one must explain different types of 'jumps' through words, it is an uphill task for teachers to make students understand by defining the word. Instead, a short video of 'jump' is effective here. According to Hamza (2019), using visual aids in the classroom has many advantages, from captivating and retaining students' attention to encouraging them to get the subject matter and aiding in their memory of the material.

Modern approaches to teaching language have frequently been applied to ICTs to meet the goal of language teaching. A teacher can use single or multiple approaches to handle the learners based on their context, interest, intelligence, and even facilities. Numerous techniques can be used in a classroom for teaching and learning purposes. For instance, the same task can be categorized under reading, listening, or watching. Similarly, functions with different content can be given to distinct learners to get similar outcomes and motivate them for further learning. Acharya (2015) discussed in his article that using ICT/Web tools in ELT in Nepal has become an integral part of English language teaching to meet education needs. However, the underrepresentation of women in the ICT sector decision-making institutions makes it difficult to negotiate gender-sensitive investment decisions and implement novel patterns, regulations, and standards (Primo and Khan, 2003). In this sense, women are generally limited in access to and getting benefits from ICTs.

Gender barriers and lack of ICT resources hinder women from being digitally friendly. They need an environment where they can access ICTs and skills to use in education for teaching and learning purposes. We use technology inside or outside the class for teaching and learning, but our students are born with computers, play with ICT tools, and, interestingly, know a lot about computers and ICTs. As Galaczi (2018) mentioned, it is often the case that technology is amicable to students but not to teachers as they lack the skills to use it properly, doubt its real value, or see it as a threat to their professional status. However, teachers face many new challenges and are required to settle. New methods of teaching and learning are essential to gain an understanding of the subject matter. Women teachers face serious challenges that are not only economic but social as well as cultural –obstacles that limit or prevent their access to, use of, and benefits from ICTs worldwide (Primo, 2020). Similarly, Maithil women teachers cannot be excluded from this reality. The use of ICT in education has brought new perspectives and practices to ELT. Like teachers, students also benefit

from exploring their knowledge and learning ability. They can lead themselves towards independent learning and deep learning as ICTs assist them in getting message information within a second. So, they can easily specify their learning needs in the English language by using and applying ICTs, whether online or offline. Thus, this research is justifiable to fill the gaps and build close connections with educators, learners, researchers, and people concerned with the language teaching and learning field.

Purpose of the Research

The primary purpose of the research was to explore the experience of Maithil women teachers teaching English with the help of ICTs in Nepal.

Research Questions

Out of different problematic issues with the broader areas of learning English, in this study, I posed the following questions:

1. How do Maithil women teachers narrate their experiences using ICT in teaching-learning activities in ELT classrooms?

2. How does the use of ICT empower Maithil women teachers in ELT?

Delimitations of the Research

There are many issues in the field of ELT in Nepal. The prime concern of my research was exploring the issues of Maithil women teachers' applying ICTs in their teaching of English. I delimited my research to study and explore the life experiences of Maithil women teachers using ICTs in ELT, their challenges and hardships, and how they overcame their difficulties to achieve empowerment. There are diverse reasons behind their success as well. However, I searched for the experiences, perspectives, and stories of struggles of English language women teachers from the Maithili community. The delimitations of a study limit or define the scope of the study and the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions made while developing the particular study plan (Miles, 2019). Indeed, researchers make their choices regarding the study's participants, area, and methodology. I selected Nepali Maithil women teachers as research participants in my study. This study followed a qualitative approach with an interpretive research paradigm. It is delimited to the fact that the study might not be generalizable to other people except for teachers and teacher-researchers.

Organization of the Dissertation

The body of this dissertation is structured and organized into seven different chapters. The first chapter introduces motivational context for my results in the form of background of the study, the rationale of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of research, research questions, and delimitations of the study. The second chapter is all about a relevant literature review on the research issue, including conceptual, theoretical, and empirical attributes, followed by a research gap. The third chapter presents all the required components of my results methodology, which includes the philosophical considerations, paradigms, design and information-generating tools, quality standards, and ethical issues.

Likewise, the fourth portrays the participants' narratives, including their personal stories, educational backgrounds, acquaintance with technology, and their experiences of teaching English with technology. Chapter 5 highlights the narrative of Maithil women's endeavors. I have presented my participants' familiarity with teaching before and after COVID, their status under the patriarchal system, and how they have dealt with the challenges of using ICT tools to maintain and grow their profession.

In the same manner, chapter 6 contains the theme on the of Maithil women teachers, which includes descriptions of the empowerment of Maithil women teachers into their involvement in decision-making, resisting contradictions, and financial strength as a way of autonomy. I analyzed their experiences based on their narratives. Then, chapter 7 presents a brief discussion on key insights I got from the study. Similarly, I drew the conclusions based on my personal interpretation and understanding of the study. Finally, I closed the chapter by presenting the possible implications that I envisioned from this study.

Chapter Summary

Chapter one begins with a brief conceptualization of the research topic by integrating the interwoven stories of my experience as a student and a teacher. In addition to that, the chapter presents the rationale of the study followed by the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the delimitation of the study. This chapter concludes with the organization of this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of the relevant previous research, which evaluates critically and clarifies the spectrum of the research concerning the current research study, comes under the literature review as Nunan (1991) states that a literature review refers to the background information on the research issues. It spots what others have said or discovered about the problems. It is authentic information that has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers (Taylor, 2020).

I studied the different papers on using technology or ICT in ELT in the literature review process. This helped me identify new knowledge and how to find knowledge and remaining things to study. It supported my research by providing relevant information.

Thematic Review

This section discussed my research's key concepts and theories before the empirical review and research gap.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to transmit, process, store, create, share, or exchange information (UNESCO, 2006). Similarly, it functions in education by sharing information. It enables educators to get curricular goals from the target learners. It also provides ample space and choices for the learner to grow with knowledge and skills based on individual interests and pace. However, ICT includes communication devices that are useful for sharing and delivering information related to education. According to Khan et al. (2020), 'ICT' includes any communication device such as computers, mobile phones, radio, television, and satellite systems. It has to do with the Internet facilities. Likewise, English Language teachers can use ICT to create dynamic, engaging, and effective learning environments in ELT (Saud & Laudari, 2023). Hence, information communication technology has multifaceted benefits if used purposefully to teach English.

Using ICT in English Language Teaching

Modern technology and its access have overloaded people with information. People can easily navigate information, use and throw it away due to ICTs. Likewise, teachers can use ICT in language teaching to make teaching easier than in the past.

Indeed, 'technology revolutionized language teaching' as Lopez (2010) claimed that technology encourages learning and teaching effectiveness by enhancing classroom interaction. So, it can fulfill different aspects and teaching needs conveniently to achieve the educational goals of tutors and learners simultaneously. It reduces many teaching hindrances and helps provide quality teaching (Karki, 2019). ICTs support teachers and students in English language skills, accessing resources, and carrying out collaborative activities in teaching and learning English (Poudel, 2020). Due to purposeful technology integration in teaching, students become more engaged, and the classroom becomes more student-centered.

Using ICT in language teaching is positive and stimulating for tutors and learners (Mullamaa, 2010). In this sense, using technology in teaching language has wider effects on teaching and learning activities. The use of technology as a tool for teaching the English language is increasing as it can create both independent and collaborative learning environments in which learners can learn English with ease and self-pace (Jayanthi & Kumar, 2023). So, integrating ICTs in ELT simultaneously fulfills many expectations of teachers and learners.

Valuable Approaches for Teaching and Learning Language with ICTs

Teachers can use single or multiple approaches based on educational needs and learners' levels. Integration of ICTs in ELT can benefit learners if it happens appropriately because it increases dynamic and interactive learning, students' engagement, and access to educational resources (Bhandari & Bhandari, 2024). For instance, the same task can be categorized under reading, listening, writing, or watching. Similarly, content can be recreated or reused per individual learners' needs to get a similar outcome and motivate them for further learning.

Various approaches can be used to teach better, and applying ICTs in ELT can increase students' motivation, broaden their perspectives, and equip them to handle issues in the world (Rofi'i et al., 2024). ICT makes learning easier for learners by providing worldwide access to information, collaboration, and communication with the availability of multiple educational apps. Similarly, tutors can use such access to teach in the classroom. The ICT-based approaches applied in teaching showed more potent effects on students' academic enthusiasm than the conventional ones (Fannakhosrow et al., 2022). So, using technology in teaching is more convincing in Nepal. Isisag (2012) opined that appropriate technology integration in teaching is simply a reward in the teaching and learning process. However, technology cannot

resolve all educational challenges in the developing world. However, the progress in teaching English in Nepal has been increasing due to embracing digital teaching techniques.

Maithil Women and Their Status

Maithil women have their own culture, language, dress, and rituals, and they are different from the women of Hills. They have different life patterns, though they live in a society where women from other groups, like hilly women, spend their livelihoods. Madheshi people are the people who speak plains languages like Maithil, Awadhi, Tharu, Magahi, Hindi, Bengali, Bhojpuri, and Urdu as their mother tongue or first language, whether they were born or live in the plains or hills of Nepal (Gaige, 1975). They have different experiences, knowledge, and needs due to their distinct cultural, social, and economic realities. Education attainment (learning) and delivery of education (teaching) in the modern era are difficult for Maithil women. Though the Constitution Assembly Secretariat (2015) has embedded gender equality as a guiding principle of society, differences can be seen between women and men due to inequalities and vulnerabilities. In this sense, Maithil women are double marginalized from their patriarchal community. They are treated differently and unfairly in the same situations due to gender inequality, which is deeply rooted in society (Kent, 2020). However, privileged Maithil women may have different experiences than less privileged ones.

Mithila is a geographical region located in the Indian subcontinent. It comprises a specific part of Bihar of India and an adjoining district of the eastern Terai of Nepal (Jha, 2022). Specific cultural or symbolic markers differentiate Madhesis from the 'other,' the Pahadis (Pandey, 2021). Since Maithil women are considered Madheshi in Nepal due to socio-political movements over the past decades, they are not pahadi. Pahadi dress, culture, social norms, and living styles are pretty different from those of the Maithil women, though they may share the exact geographical location of Nepal. Mostly, they speak Maithili as their mother tongue, while the Pahadi's first language is Nepali. Maithil women can be settled around and beyond the nation. I mean to say that Maithil people can be found worldwide, though they are initially from the Mithila region and belong to Nepal or India (Thakur, 2022). However, my study concentrates on the narratives of Nepali Maithil women.

The Nepal government has been promoting the use of technology in education, including ELT. The recent School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) aims

to use ICT as a significant tool to improve classroom delivery and engage the effectiveness and efficiency of education. Using technology purposefully in teaching creates a miracle in delivering the information. Therefore, ELT, without using technology, is an incomplete journey of teaching and learning English. Although my inquiry has transpired through personal stories of Maithil women teachers, my study will reach out to social, historical, and physical contexts to gain a broader significance, academically and personally.

The status of Maithil women teachers in Nepal has been improving over the past several years. However, it is not satisfactory. They still are not allowed to enjoy the rights and freedom of Maithil male teachers. Maithil society or community has prioritized Maithil men over Maithil women. However, the Nepali constitution has provided equal rights and no discrimination for any citizen of Nepal based on sex, gender, color, religion, caste, or economic status on any other grounds.

Maithil women teachers are aware of their rights, but they remain voiceless and silent victims due to various sociocultural and traditional dogmas and do not seek legal remedies (Ketrapal, 2015). Seeking legal remedy is not considered a prestigious matter for the women in the Maithil community. In addition, superstitions and patriarchal social and cultural norms limit Maithil women's freedom of movement, marital choices, and employment opportunities. Maharjan and Sah (2012) claimed that women are considered secondary to men in Madhesi society. In addition to being marginalized from political and social life, they faced discrimination based on their cultural dialect and religion. It suggests that Madhesi or Maithil women never experienced full integration into the Nepali community.

Power relations in Nepali families are the prime factor in running the family system. Maithil girls or women have to maintain a patriarchal family and system. When the power gap in a family is large, women and children are taught to orbit, and they are not encouraged to be independent. Women in these societies learn to accept the unequal division of power (Hofstede, 2011, Ch. 2). Maithil women are conditioned to obey their family and patriarchal rules. However, educated and independent women are their chorus for a positive sense in their family. They try to deal with gender issues, inadequate cultural barriers, and the dual burden of work and home life to some extent so that they can manage their family and work life.

Maithil women often have minimal influence in household decisions concerning both domestic and organizational matters (Tiwari, 2013), while Yadav

(2024) states Madhesi women are backward to Pahari women. The nationality of Madheshi is always questioned because of its proximity to and close relationship with the Indians.

The previous literature that I reviewed related to my study has focused on the experiences of English language teachers teaching English with and without teaching. However, none of the earlier studies mention how Maithil women teachers use technology in ELT or whether they follow only traditional teaching. I found no research paper about Maithil women teachers' experience using ICTs in ELT.

Theoretical Review

In this section, I have reviewed theories related to my study that explored the experience of Maithil women teachers using ICT in ELT. I selected the following theories to support my research study. Since my research study focuses on narrating the Maithil women teachers' struggles and achievements, I reviewed, selected, and presented the following theories to support my study.

Capability Approach

I have selected Amartya Sen's Capability Approach as a theoretical insight to build meaning from the collected data in the form of narratives. It is a popular literature in development economics, which links development, quality of life, and freedom (Walker, 2005). It has contributed to development discourse by strengthening the multidimensional approach to poverty analysis and stressing the importance of focusing on agency and empowerment (Garnham, 1997). I have explored via my research study how capability contributes to Maithil women teachers' personal and professional lives. Nussbaum (2000) concluded that women suffering in developing countries is often due to a lack of developing capabilities. The capability approach aims to empower women to enhance their abilities and improve their well-being.

The capability approach helps people achieve their goals by making them aware of their capabilities. Capability refers to an individual's ability to perform valuable actions or attain valuable states of being. According to Sen (1993), capabilities are opportunities or freedoms that enable individuals to possess what they consider valuable (p. 30). Further, expanding human capability involves increasing individual freedoms to lead fulfilling lives and make choices that are important to them.

Under technology-based teaching and learning, the fundamental underlying idea is that a teacher must be capable of meaningfully engaging in teaching activities

through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks. Technology can facilitate engagement in ways that are difficult to achieve otherwise. Utilizing ICTs in ELT is equally beneficial for students. Teachers should be well prepared and informed about the uses and consequences. Though the main areas of the capability approach are capability, functioning, agency, human diversity, and public participation to enhance capability (Kibona, 2023), I have found out why education, capability, earning, freedom, and authority are essential for empowerment and how these factors help Maithil women teachers to get empowered. In conclusion, the capability approach is an available tool for promoting equality and freedom while addressing social justice issues for Maithil women teachers in various contexts. I have found out how education and regular income are urgent needs for the empowerment of Maithil women teachers in Nepal to exercise their decision-making authority within the household regarding financial and non-financial aspects (Le & Nguyen, 2021).

Empowerment as Theory

In my study, I argued that education and occupation empower women, restore them as women teachers, and give meaning to their struggles in their personal and professional lives. Empowerment theory talks about how empowerment helps them to get empowered, as empowerment is a way to access and foster power in people (Page & Cuzeba, 1999).

To feel empowered, people have the excess of essential resources, training skills, and motivation to pursue their careers successfully and take ownership of their responsibilities. Education significantly impacts the empowerment of individuals by enabling them to secure employment and generate income (Guinée, 2014). Similarly, education, occupation, and work experience contribute to the empowerment of female teachers (Thapa & Gurung, 2010). Thus, a rise in a woman's income or improved access to education are the key factors of empowerment. Likewise, one significant result of empowerment initiatives is that they positively alter societal standards or perspectives toward women. The empowerment from financial independence and higher education in women instructs and shapes the future, which is the outcome of their present challenges. Likewise, empowered women teachers can invest in themselves and make better decisions for their personal and professional lives. In addition, empowered people feel more likely to contribute to society by solving the problems of organizations where they work. According to Thapa and Chaudhary

(2022), the primary criterion for women's empowerment is the mobility of women, decision-making power, and security.

Empowerment theory talks about how women got empowered. I have voiced unheard stories of my research participants' struggle to be empowered teachers in my study. The knowledge of the English language, ICT, and teaching have provided women with access to power and freedom in teaching English in the classroom.

Women empowerment refers to awareness of one's situation backed up with the knowledge, skills, and information that could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision-makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men (Afsana, 2017).

Empowerment in women's development involves overcoming challenges, updating skills, access to resources, and upgrading quality, dignity, and work status in society (Dandona, 2015). Similarly, women's empowerment indicates an array of choices and raising of voices through transforming power relations (Van Eerdewijk et al., 2017). Consequently, it indicates women's empowerment when they move from a weaker to a stronger position to exercise a particular amount of power (Takai, 2024). My research participants have exhibited such qualities during the process of their empowerment. They can participate in their decisions and control their present and future. They can influence society through their service and presence. Due to education, they have earned their voice and prestige with richness.

Empowerment includes factors like education, financial, cultural, and political empowerment, and many more (Balabantaray, 2022). Educational, economic, cultural, and political empowerment are the keys to women's success. Women's empowerment is required for positive change and transformation of an unequal society. So, empowerment enables women to exercise power, resist abuse, exploitation, and social isolation, and handle issues according to their interests and needs (Dandona, 2015). Consequently, empowered women can manage their situation based on their decisions because they face challenges and consequences. All my participants are empowered as they are educated, economically independent, physically and mentally well, and decision-makers. They can neglect social or cultural isolation and stand for their peaceful and progressive lives. They can choose to be involved or not in any social network or function. Also, laws and policies should be strengthened to protect them from violence and discrimination on the real ground. They can address, avoid, or remove cultural and societal norms perpetuating gender inequality.

In our context, almost all women are conditioned to stay under male supremacy due to the patriarchal structure of society, as women have a secondary status in the human world. Neupane (2024) said that the subjugating condition of Mithila women remains silent under the patriarchal society and has constrained traditional responsibilities from the past. Women's experiences or insights, including their lives, are considered secondary, though Nepal's law prohibits discrimination. Article 18: "All citizens are equal before the law, and no person shall be denied the equal protection of the law." and Article 14 (1) - (5) presents that "no person shall, on the ground of caste, descent, community or occupation" be a matter to racial prejudice (Jyakhwo, 2019)).

Empirical Review

An empirical review is an essential factor in finding the gap. I have reviewed some research related to ICT use in ELT. I have gone through some previous work, and going through these works has strengthened my research further. In this section, I have reviewed previous studies in different areas. My purpose is to draw a gap in my research.

Integration of ICTs into English language teaching (ELT) has emerged as a crucial component of improving instruction and learning outcomes. Dudeney and Hockly (2012) discussed how ICT has impacted ELT over the past three decades. The shift caused by the rise of Web 2.0 offers teachers and learners a wider range of tools and development opportunities. Likewise, Saud (2024) claimed that digital tools improve teaching and learning experiences, boost student engagement, enhance access to educational materials, and create dynamic and interactive learning environments.

Acharya (2015) discussed in his article Use of ICT/Web tools in ELT in Nepal that ICT has been a vital part of English language teaching (ELT) to meet the requirements of the present-day world. He has presented the positive impact of ICT in teaching English in Nepal by using judgmental non-random sampling from Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur districts proportionately. He used close-ended and open-ended questionnaires to collect the data. The data he obtained revealed that the ICT tools are used in ELT and positively impact ELT. Further, I studied the research by Hada (2022) that focused on how teaching is enhanced if technology is integrated with English language teaching. Techno-friendly teachers can motivate

learners quickly in the class. I found the gap here in that she did not mention women teachers' perception of applying ICT in ELT.

Likewise, according to Niroula (2023), I found his dissertation was conducted through a qualitative method following a phenomenological approach. This research studies the value of ICT in the present-day education system and English teachers. It did not cover the challenges or struggles faced by tutors to be competent enough to use ICT in ELT. This research focuses on inquiring about teachers' experiences of using ICT tools in teaching school mathematics. It did not cover the experience of English teachers in their learning and teaching activities.

The phenomenological study under the qualitative method explores how English language teachers become ICT literate, why they use ICT in English language classes, and find the challenges while integrating ICT in ELT (Bhattarai, 2021). His study has not pointed out any issue related to women teachers' perceptions and experiences using ICT in ELT. Similarly, Thapaliya (2014) investigated teachers' perceptions and practices of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching English in public schools in Nepal. It examined teachers' perceptions of their challenges in using ICTs to teach the English language. His study is based on descriptive qualitative design.

The English teachers found ICT very helpful. However, the limited time and tools, a poor Internet connection, and a lack of ICT training knowledge and experience were obstacles for the teachers using ICT. The results of this study give meaningful insights for policymakers concerning the implementation of ICT for teaching and learning in the classroom. As Bhandari (2020) highlighted, integrating ICT in ELT enhances students' creativity and language proficiency in English. However, the challenges to effective English teaching are the lack of teachers with enough ICT skills, limited resources, and a lack of ICT training.

After going through many works related to ICT in ELT, all of them just focused on the integration of ICT in ELT and how ICT is important to enhance English language teaching but not focused on the women teachers' struggle, particularly Maithil women teachers while using ICT for teaching purposes and how it empowers them. Many earlier studies have shed light on the importance of ICT, teachers' perceptions of it, and its usefulness to students. However, they have not mentioned the experience Maithil teachers gained while teaching in the classroom with the application of ICT. After going through the literature review, I learned that a

more profound and broader study is required on the study of Maithil women teachers' experience regarding using ICT in ELT.

Research Gap

I have gone through many studies on English language teaching with or without the help of technology. Teachers use many online or offline teaching materials with the help of technology to make clear students' concepts about the subject matter, which motivates the learners to learn. However, I have not been aware of any research about the experience of Maithil women teachers using ICTs in ELT conducted in Nepal. Even though their struggles and achievements have not been documented, I realized I should explore unheard stories of Maithil women teachers' struggles, barriers, and positive progress in their personal and professional lives.

Though much research on using ICTs in ELT under various topics has been found, the literature review has reflected that there is still a gap in exploring the missing knowledge about the narratives of Maithil women teachers' professional journey.

This research differs from the substantial body of research mentioned above about using ICTs in ELT or technology in teaching. The Maithil women teachers' lived experiences and narratives are not explored in the context of Nepal. Likewise, I noticed the gaps in their cultural way, academic journey, economic aspects, how they learned and managed to take the ELT class, and their experience and perspectives of using ICT in ELT. So, my research stands as a bridge to fill up those gaps.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

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              ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
              │   EXPERIENCES OF MAITHIL         │
              │  WOMEN TEACHERS' USING ICTs in ELT│
              └─────────────────────────────────┘
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| Theories |

| Methods |

| Interpretivis |

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Stories consists Maithil
Women teachers'
struggles, barriers,
achievements,
independence, freedom,
updating skills,
development and
empowerment
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| Capability Approach & Empowerment theory |

| Narrative Inquiry |

| Interview/ Information generation |

(Research Outcome)
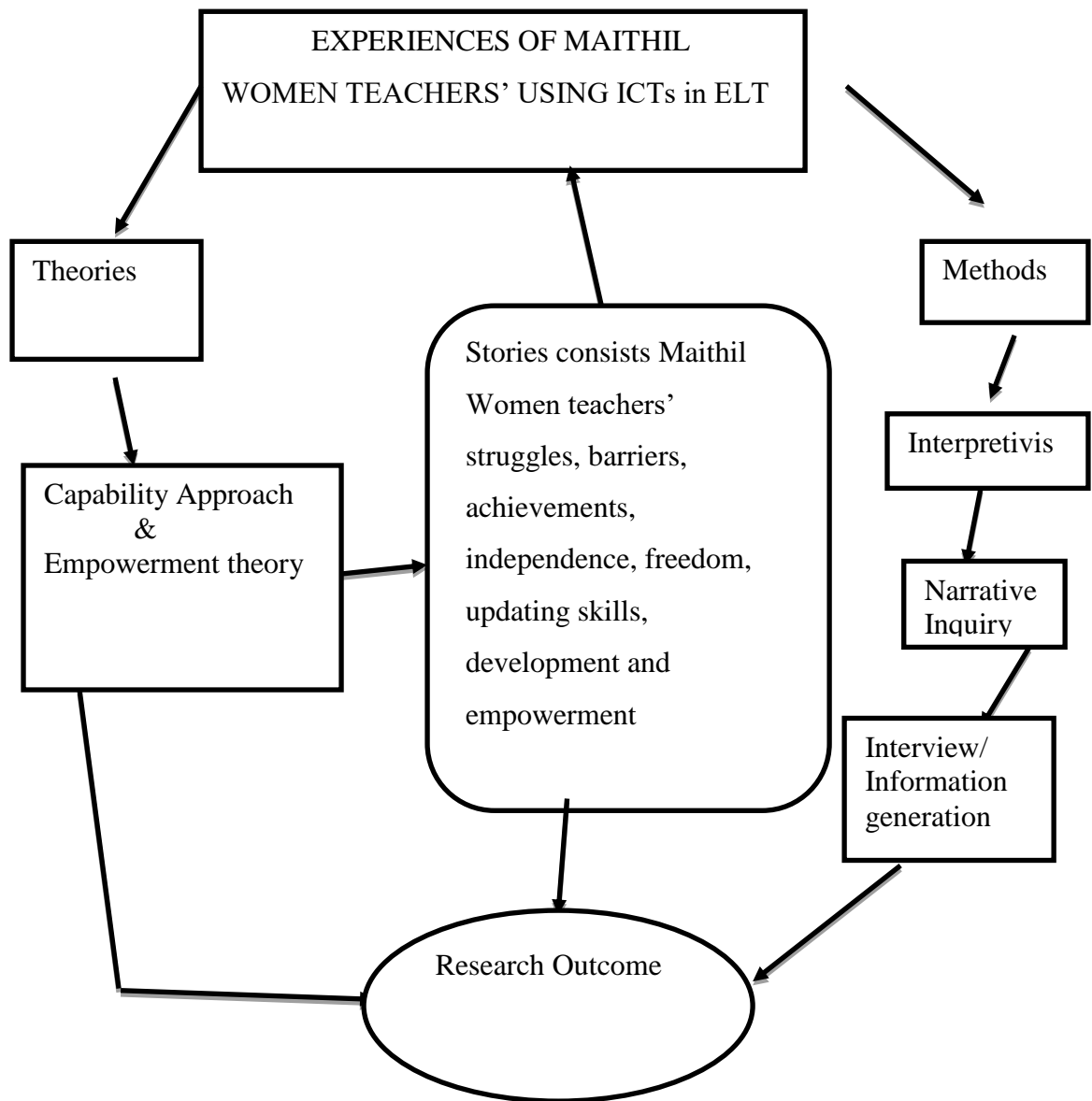
Through this conceptual frame, I planned to see major issues of Maithil women teachers related to their teaching in applying ICTs in the classroom and their experiences. They are drawn from the words they express about their struggles, challenges, and opportunities during their academic life while they are students and teachers. Narrative inquiries are applied under qualitative business. Empowerment and capability theories are applied to study my research.

Chapter Summary

In the second chapter, I described the capability approach and empowerment theory, the theoretical review, while I have thematized it as information communication technology. Using ICT in English language teaching provides valuable approaches for teaching and learning language with ICTs and mentally women and their status. Under the empirical review, I have gone through many literatures to present a review application based on my research questions. Then I discussed the results gap before presenting the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER-III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I used specific procedures or techniques to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic. In my research, the methodology section allows the reader to evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability critically. This means that it is the path that shows the right direction to do research. It assists the researcher in dealing with collected data, applied methods and materials in research, and the rationale for selecting methods, tools, and materials.

As a researcher, I applied 'Interpretivism' as a research paradigm under qualitative research. The interpretive paradigm derives knowledge from people's subjective experiences with their present world.

Philosophical Consideration

People see and interpret things differently, even though they simultaneously live and work in the same place. Their description and interpretation are similar but never the same. I set my view on using ICT in ELT by Maithil women teachers.

My Ontological Stance

My ontological stance was to explore the stories of Maithil women teachers regarding using ICTs in ELT. I tried to understand the realities from human experience, knowledge, views, and interpretations under the natural setting, as we can never know reality in its purest form; we can only interpret it (Smith, 2001).

Qualitative research promotes a deep understanding of social settings or activities from the researcher's perspective (Otoo, 2020). I deeply concentrated on understanding and constructing the reality of my research participants through their dialogues, experiences, and social phenomena (Trede & Higgs, 2010).

Though ontology suggests multiple realities, my main focus is to search for the subjective and contextual reality based on my research participants' experiences. Their subjective experiences with using ICTs in ELT were my prime concern and I studied their challenges and consequences for emerging empowered.

My Epistemological Stance

My epistemological position is to study the base or nature of knowledge and its acquisition processes. I concentrated on the nature, extent, and methods of acquiring knowledge under an epistemological stance. I investigated issues such as

how knowledge is obtained, what constitutes evidence, and which approaches or methods are reliable for learning. Sol & Heng (2022) argue that 'Epistemology,' the science or study of knowledge, refers to a view about the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the known.

We might validate our beliefs or research to support our viewpoints in light of reality under the epistemological position that guides the methods (Carter & Little, 2007). It is the study of how we can validate our thoughts or conduct research to support our beliefs based on reality. I used tools and techniques such as interviews and interpretivism to gather information from the narratives of my participants and build my knowledge. I created the data and conducted a meaning-making process based on my participants' stories.

Axiology

For me, axiology refers to the science of values (Bahm, 1993). My axiological stance is to the value of people and the value of knowing. During the research, I valued all my research participants equally. I listened to their interpretations, ideas, experiences, arguments, barriers, achievements, struggles, and stories related to my study. I paid attention to each bite of information and inferred the data and knowledge based on their shared narratives. I valued their stories without any prior biases and ethical obligations.

The axiology of my research is the stories of my participants using ICT in ELT in Nepal. According to Cohen et al. (2002), the values established by the respondents also vary because of their individual, cultural, ethnic, and professional distinctions. A person forms, changes, and interprets their surroundings. Therefore, I valued the various realities of my participants. Also, I prioritized my participants' rights and privacy.

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Paradigmatic Stand: Interpretivism

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For me, an interpretive paradigm is a philosophical research framework to guide my research systematically. I used this paradigm as an assumption about how things work and sometimes illustrated as a 'worldview' involving 'shared understandings of reality' (Szyjka, 2012). It helped me to know how problems should be understood and addressed (Kunh, 1907, as cited in Perera, 2020). As my research issue was to find out the unheard stories of Maithil women teachers using ICTs in ELT, I believed this paradigm would be justifiable to explore the real stories of my participants.

I used an interpretive paradigm as a philosophical research framework to get guidance during my research journey. I used this approach as a base to reach and meet the purpose of my research since this paradigm is humanistic, and it helped me to understand social reality from many perspectives (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2023). Furthermore, I could understand my culturally different participants/others by learning to stand in their 'shoes,' 'look through their eyes, and feel their pleasure or pain' (Taylor & Medina, 2011, p.4). I believed this paradigm would be justifiable to explore the deeper reality of the teaching and learning world of my participants

According to Cohen et al. (2011), understanding the subjective world of human experience is the key point in the context of the interpretive paradigm. I used an interpretive research paradigm to collect data from the stories of my research participants based on their subjective reality and level of understanding. It reflects the subjective knowledge of the real world and subjective reasons of the participants about using ICT tools in ELT.

Since the interpretive paradigm constitutes a people's subjective experience of the external world, I tried to understand the place where my participants lived and worked. The interpretive tradition has no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories (Walsham, 1993; Ernest et al., 2023). It suggests that meaning is constructed differently by the individual as their culture and context influence them. It argues that the premise of interpretive resources is that access to reality (whether a given or socially constructed) is only through social construction, such as language, consciousness, and shared meaning (Myer, 2009; Antwi & Hamza, 2015). So, each individual has multiple realities, meanings, or interpretations of the world.

I attempted to understand the struggles of empowering the self of my participants, as well as their courage and motivational factors. I subsided the rigidity and strict structure to make it easy and transparent to respond to my research queries. I explored insights from their data interpretively, as interpretivism offers an in-depth interpretation, detailed investigation, and participatory accountability (Shah, 2017).

I used this paradigm for interviews and the subjective relationship between the researcher and participants to gather information, meaning, and interpretation for the research. In addition, I used narrative inquiry, the study of experience as a story (Clandinin & Caine, 2013), to explore the perspective or viewpoint of my research participants in their natural settings. It helped me to interpret the journey of my research.

As a researcher, I applied 'Interpretivism' as a research paradigm under the qualitative research approach. The interpretive paradigm derives knowledge from people's subjective experiences with their present world. It constitutes a subjective experience of my participants in the natural context of teaching English. In this sense, it tries to understand where they live and work. So, each individual has his/her meaning or interpretation of the world. Also, the interpretive paradigm helped me to lead my research. Their perception and interpretation may be similar but never the same, even in the same workplace or place. I set my view on using ICT in ELT in the context of Nepal.

Narrative Inquiry as a Research Strategy/Design

I used narrative inquiry as a 'method of inquiry,' as a 'story,' as a 'mode of knowing,' and as a way to create meaning (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009) as a research design for my research. I tackled the research issues logically and scientifically under the particular research design, which helped to derive a conclusion based on the collected data from my research participants via interview. Similarly, I used unstructured interviews in a flexible environment within a reliable context to gather the information from the narratives of my participants. The narrative combines life events with understanding and knowledge for meaning-making (Martin, 2018). I made and organized meanings by inferring the information provided by my participants. Patton (2005) states that qualitative research analyzes data from direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents. I used open-ended interviews to gain the data and recordings and notes to store the information for analyzing the data. Also, I listened to my research participants' notions, viewpoints, and experiences to understand their perceptions, feelings, and reactions. My participants also got the opportunity to voice their experiences, views, and feelings by sharing their stories with me. At this point, the story makes the implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear (Ford, 2012). Therefore, I attended to the individual experiences of my research participants to learn about their failures and successes, barriers and achievements, weaknesses and strengths, cultures and backgrounds, and ignorance and developments during their personal and professional journeys. I dig out how they handled their struggles and maintained their teaching English in class by integrating ICTs. Indeed, their stories resembled my story of the bitter and sweet experience of carrying my profession of

teaching English. Naturally, I became more curious to know about my participants' stories.

Another equally important concern of my research is to study and shed light on the reality of Maithil women teacher participants' teaching experiences and struggles to use appropriate ICTs for teaching purposes. I also explored how using ICTs in ELT empowered them personally and professionally. I tried to find out their realities from their told stories as narrative inquiry is a set of human stories that supports finding a reality with the help of life events (Webster & Mortova, 2007). It is, first and foremost, a way of understanding experience within context. It brings out the matter related to human beings, drawing together human actions and events that affect them. It is the process of gathering information for research through storytelling. The researcher then writes a narrative of the experience. Connelly and Cladinin (1990) noted that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Understanding experience as lived and told stories-- also known as narrative inquiry--has gained popularity and credence in qualitative research. Unlike traditional methods, narrative inquiry successfully captures personal and human dimensions that cannot be quantified into dry facts and numerical data (Cladinin & Connely, 2020).

I have selected narrative inquiry as my best-suited research method to reflect the stories of my research participants. I used my participants' stories of their lives, conversations, interviews, family stories, and various references and notes as the units of analysis to research how people create meaning in their lives as narratives. I gathered and shuffled the essential information from the narrative accounts of my participants. I maintained a good rapport with them in a natural setting. My research focused on an in-depth understanding of phenomena, research participants, perspectives, and challenges towards using ICTs in ELT among Maithil women in Nepal. I conversed with and interviewed them to fulfill my purpose without hampering anybody.

Research Site and Participants

Selection of the participants is essential in qualitative research because qualitative research relies on purposeful sampling strategies (Patton, 1990; Pitney & Parker, 2009) or the selection of participants who can provide data related to the purpose of the study and research questions. So, I purposefully selected my research participants from Maithil women teachers as proper sampling is one of the important

issues for the success of any research. (Mandal, 2018). I used my research participants as real agents to accomplish my research.

I approached at least ten Maithil teachers, but I got to interview four and collect all the required information for my research. Before taking the interview, I built a good rapport with them. I chose four English Language Teachers teaching English as a compulsory subject. I observed the classroom and facilities of ICTs provided by the school, used by teachers in the classroom, and the effect of ICT in ELT wherever possible. Also, I interviewed teachers either by visiting them or through a virtual meeting. Being familiar with research norms and ethics, I never forced, manipulated, or controlled them. I used convenient and purposeful sampling as per the needs of my research.

Data Collection Technique

Several methods and techniques can be applied to collect the data. I used interviews and narrative inquiry as part of my data collection procedure. Technology makes work easier; I recorded, took notes, and phoned to collect their stories whenever needed for my research. While doing any activities with my participants, I always provided prior information regarding my purpose and research in a trustworthy environment. With my research participants' consent, I collected all the data.

Interview

For the data collection, I conducted unstructured interviews to gather detailed information about their life events. An interview involves two or more individuals exchanging ideas, opinions, or impressions via questions and responses (Hasim et al., 2023). It establishes the foundation for interaction with others, the openings of dialogue, ways to elicit opinions, critical approaches to analysis, and a way to write opinions (Schostak, 2005). I decided to conduct unstructured, in-depth interviews to get the narratives of my participants' experiences related to their profession and their empowerment, as it is the process of gathering details of experience, reflecting, organizing, and interpreting their narratives (Seidman, 2006). Since I wanted to get detailed stories of my participants' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and outcomes in their lives, I continued the interview with questions and follow-up questions based on their descriptions and the research questions to construct the sensible meaning of my study. I made my interviewees feel at ease and responded to them very well to get rich information that reflected their views, experiences, and

feelings (Hancock et al., 2001). I did manage the schedule or time for interview as per their ask after giving them prior information about the research topic and my intentions behind the research. In this way, I understand the participants better to make meaning from the data for my research.

I believe unstructured interviews enable me to understand, interpret, describe, and explain social phenomena for deeper and richer understanding. It is the most suitable for collecting information for research. It discloses the data with human feelings, experiences, and understanding in their contexts. Sometimes, the researcher may hear the participants' mute or untold words. In a structured interview, all questions are predetermined. Unlike an unstructured interview, questions are not prepared in advance, and the interviewer can alter the queries at any time and ask follow-up questions to the interviewee's responses.

So, it was easy for me, as a researcher, to interview the participants per my study's needs. I got precise answers to my questions. However, I used open-ended questions if necessary for my research. Sometimes, I noted down the key points of their stories. Their voice was recorded during interviews whenever possible with the consent of my research participants.

Data Analysis and Interpretation/ Meaning-Making Process

First, I systematically collected and organized all the information obtained from participants' interviews, discussions, and observations. Data analysis in qualitative research systematically searches and arranges the interview transcripts, notes, or other non-textual materials that the researcher accumulates to increase the understanding of the phenomenon (Wong, 2008). The main objective of narrative inquiry is to develop meanings from individuals' experiences (Clandinin, 2022). In my research, I used Maithil women teachers' stories of their lived experiences to derive meaning, which is key in making my research meaningful, relevant, and essential.

Then, I reviewed all the data collected from the stories of my research participants. Then, I separated the data and selected only relevant data for my study. I processed the raw and random data using the four steps (gathering the raw data, editing it, coding it, and analyzing it) as suggested by Kumar (2014). I studied and inferred the coded data systematically based on the collected evidence from the participants.

Quality Standard in My Research

There are many criteria for evaluating qualitative research. Morrow (2005) states that qualitative research from various disciplines, paradigms, and epistemologies embraces multiple standards of quality known as validity, credibility, rigor, or trustworthiness (P.250). Similarly, 'trustworthiness' refers to maintaining the quality standard of qualitative content and analysis (Guba, 1994). Maintaining credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity establish trustworthiness. However, I used credibility, transferability, and conformability to maintain the trustworthiness of my study.

Credibility

I brought reliable details and data for my study based on participants' experience and knowledge. I used trustworthy materials, methods, and knowledge during my research to maintain credibility as the 'truth' of the findings (Muftahu, 2020). I interviewed my participants to get real and rich information and quoted their verbal responses directly to ensure the required credibility in my study. To strengthen credibility, I reviewed the data and regularly followed up with my participants for the required information for the research.

Transferability

Transferability occurs when the researcher presents an extensive description of their study and the participants were chosen with a purpose. Transferability in qualitative research is the degree to which the findings of a study can be applied to other contexts, settings, or respondents (Rodon 2008). It creates trustworthiness in qualitative research. To maintain transferability, I made sure the interpretation and the stories of participants took up a large chunk of my writing (Bastola, 2018). I generalized my findings based on the research participants' evidence and observations. I also described and made assumptions in our context based on research findings.

Conformability

I verified my data, analysis, research report, and findings based on the information I obtained and my observations. Confirmability describes the degree of impartiality (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Furthermore, the impartiality and objectivity of the results ensure that they are not influenced by the researchers' prejudices or preferences, known as confirmability (Anney, 2014). Thus, it suggests that confirmability represents the researcher's neutrality. I avoided biases in documenting

it for any step of my research. Apart from these, I built a good rapport. I created meaning from the stories shared by my research participants. I never harmed anybody during or after my research. And I did not manipulate or influence them in their responses.

Ethical Issues in My Research

I complied with the codes of ethical consideration of my university, i.e., I filled out the ethical form and followed the guidelines. I applied all the ethical issues as guided by my university professor. While doing my research, I maintained honesty in reporting, collecting the data, and using research methods. I did not influence or reduce the data and my findings. According to Capron (1974), respect for people entails acknowledging the rights of study participants, such as the freedom to choose whether or not to engage in the study, the right to be informed about it, and the right to withdraw from it at any moment without incurring any fees.

I avoided my personal biases in any aspect and step of my research. I was also very conscious regarding the collection of information and my behavior. I focused on credibility. Being friendly, I was open to new criticism and new ideas from any concerned people about my research. I avoided plagiarism. I maintained confidentiality if necessary. I was fully responsible for my work. And I never harmed or manipulated anybody during or after my research. As a researcher, I consulted my teachers and colleagues, who felt happy to help me further improve my research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarizes the detailed descriptions of the methodological procedure I went through for the quest for knowledge to advance my understanding of the research issue I am to inform. I shed light with the philosophical considerations well in anthology epistemology and axiology were discussed. I presented the concepts, relations and justification for choosing.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE PORTRAYAL OF THE MAITHIL WOMEN TEACHERS

In this chapter, I presented the narrations of the four Maithil women teachers' experiences using ICTs in English Language teaching. I collected their experiences one after another and what they shared during the interview. I categorized their experiences into different sub-titles. I also included their voices wherever they were contextual.

I presented the stories of our research participants with their pseudo-names separately to make a detailed presentation of their narratives. The participants' stories begin with their schooling, higher studies, and challenges to joining and continuing their teaching profession, along with their initial teaching days.

At first, I took support from my friends and colleagues to approach my participants via Messenger and WhatsApp. I selected only the Maithil women teachers teaching English in Nepali schools. Before listening to their stories, I informed them about my research and got their consent by following the research ethics.

The participants' stories began with their birthplace, schooling, higher studies, and experience teaching and using ICTs in ELT. The participants were asked to focus on the uses and the challenges of using ICTs for their English teaching purposes in the classroom. Further, they were asked to elaborate on what kind of environment they got an education in and learn about using ICTs for their teaching and learning purposes

Participants' Portrayal

Before presenting the findings, I mentioned the pseudonyms of the participants, such as Nita, Sita, Reetu, and Gita, to ensure confidentiality in this study. All of them are Maithil women teachers who teach English at grade 11 in different parts of Nepal. By virtual means, I managed to interview them about their experience regarding their academic and teaching backgrounds and how they face technological challenges for their teaching purposes.

Nita's Story

The research participant, Miss Nita's experience in teaching English, has many stories of success and failure. However, her professional continuity resembles

her dedication, and keeping herself updated shows her devotion to her career. She said, 'I keep updated on my teaching, which makes me feel I am responsible.' Her background is rooted in Maithil culture. She is a Maithil woman teacher, and she is 46 years old. She has taught at Budhanilkantha School in Kathmandu for over seven years. She is the mother of three children.

Though she has already earned a teaching license, she did not get any charms toward government school. She has worked in private schools from the beginning of her teaching career. She belongs to a well-to-do middle-class family, and her husband is also a teacher. Her husband is very supportive. She is the mother of three grown-up children. Nowadays, her responsibilities have increased as her mother-in-law lives with her.

Her Educational Background

Her schooling up to SLC (School Leaving Certificate) was from Juddha Secondary School, Gaur. She completed her B.A. with a major in English from Rajarshi Janak Campus, Janakpur, while her M.A. (English) was accomplished at Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur. In response to teaching style and technology integration during her schooling, she informed;

> *English was taught using the translation method, and most of the time, the Nepali language was used to teach English, but sometimes the Maithil language was also used for some specific context. Teachers used the Maithil Language to make us understand English words or phrases in teaching clearly to say about a particular word or phrase. Teachers used a cassette player to take a listening class in her grade ten. However, it rarely happened because the concept of listening and speaking classes was not in practice. It was considered a waste of time waste.'(Nita)*

Her words suggest that she has gone through traditional teaching and learning approaches during her student life. She learned English by translation method. Memorization, writing, and copying the information from texts are the skills she was focused on. Demanding a new way of learning was not a priority.

Nita's Acquaintance with Technology: Digital Divide

She never got a chance to use a mobile phone, even during her schooling. Her father has only a mobile. She first saw a computer desktop in the computer center in grade 8. There was no computer in her school. She came across a mobile phone after

her SLC (Grade 10). Further, she said, 'I learned typing and took a basic computer course before joining the intermediate (I.A.) to use my free time.' Again, she added,

> *Being digitally friendly was possible due to Kathmandu University, where I was an MPhil student. I had many exposures where I had to use ICTs to express my ideas, learn, and network during my studentship. I had the opportunity to learn the use of ICTs during my studies there. I used ICTs like YouTube, Word, PowerPoint, Canvas, and Email, searching authentic resources via the internet, citing the authentic resources during my studies.' (Nita)*

This means that Nita developed confidence about using ICTs in her learning. The limitations of her knowledge were broadened. She was familiar with social media and YouTube, which she used to chat with friends and for entertainment purposes, as she claimed.

Nita's Experiences of Teaching English with Technology

She got exposure to using ICTs in her learning while she was a student at Kathmandu University, but unfortunately, she left the program for personal reasons. Now, she is pretty familiar with how to use them for her learning and teaching purposes, as she claimed,

> *I use technology in my teaching. It is convenient for my students and me, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also the demand of the time that global education is being reshaped with the application of ICTs in teaching and learning programs. In our context, it is a newly born concept. Indeed, it makes teaching effective. For example, showing any color with the help of technology is far better than defining it with the help of words. (Nita)*

She is well aware of the different teaching strategies as she uses technology for her teaching assistance and students' needs. Excluding ICT from teaching is not a wise decision for a teacher who wants to prepare her students to be global citizens. She further stated that ICT is one of the strongest tools for teaching English excitingly and effectively. According to Chouthaiwale and Alkamel (2018), the creative use of ICTs in teaching enables learners to achieve their educational goals. The teaching materials, such as images, animation, audio, and video clips, are very stimulating for learners to enhance their communication skills and other sub-skills. She further added,

It makes teaching better, though preparing for the first time is difficult. Preparing teaching materials for teaching English based on ICTs is much more time-consuming and tough at first than applying a lecture method in a face-to-face class.' (Nita).

Participant Nita shared her experience about using ICTs in ELT. For her, using ICTs in or outside the classroom for teaching or learning purposes is not easy as it takes time and effort to prepare for the teaching. However, she accepts that using technology for teaching and learning purposes is fruitful and can be used many times, as Costley (2014) claims that technology is an effective tool for learners. Learners must use technology as a significant part of their learning process. Teachers should model the use of technology to support the curriculum so that learners can increase the true use of technology in learning their language skills. Nita explained how she and other teachers in her school manage the class by using ICTs for ELT with limited resources. Using ICTs effectively teaches in her context of large classes where 30 to 40 students' study in a single class.

However, she realized that knowledge transfer has become easy, convenient, and effective. Integrating technology into education for teaching and learning has transformed the education system, making it easier for teachers to impart knowledge and for students to grasp the content (Ghory & Ghafory 2021). Indeed, teaching with visual aids is more effective than teaching with conventional methods. Indeed, showing any color is far better than defining it with the help of technology. Also, she uses 'downloaded or softcopy' materials to present in her class for her teaching purposes. For her, access and facilities of modern tools and techniques are easily available. She knows how to use them for her learning and teaching purposes, as she claimed,

I am teaching with the help of technology. This trend is growing and is the demand of the time in Nepal. It makes teaching better, though preparing to teach for the first time is difficult. Preparing teaching materials for teaching English based on ICTs is much more time-consuming and tough at first than applying a lecture method in face-to-face class' (Nita).

Participant Nita shared her experience about using ICTs in ELT. For her, using ICT in or outside the classroom for teaching or learning purposes is not an issue, though it takes time and effort to prepare for the teaching. Thus, access and facilities of modern tools and techniques are easily available for her throughout her

professional journey. However, she does not have enough access to ICTs during her learning of the English language and literature.

Sita's Story

The participant, Sita (name changed), has been a teacher for over a decade. She is a 35-year-old unmarried lady from the Maithil community. She lives with her mother and her brother. She is the breadwinner of her family. However, she gets economic support from her brother whenever he is earning.

She has been working in a school from grade 7 to 12, teaching English Language and Literature. She has taught at different private schools in the eastern part of Nepal. She has attended government school until her SLC and private and government academic institutions for further studies.

We worked together in a school. She was my younger colleague. We both had a good understanding at personal and professional levels. Still, we help each other in need. Her experience compared to Miss Nita is entirely different, as she bears different personal and professional backgrounds. Her family condition was deplorable and unbalanced due to her father. She has struggled a lot to pursue her education. She has completed her M. A. at her own expense. She even has to contribute money for her mother and younger brother's survival. However, she is happy with her life nowadays, as she said,

> I have earned enough to live a standard life in my society only because of my
> education, and I have gone through multiple struggles inside and outside my
> home. I still remember how my father ignored me and did not talk with me for
> many months because I got admitted to M.A. My father's relatives, except my
> mother and brother, criticized me for not obeying my father.' (Sita)

Now, she is happy with her life. She has overcome many told and untold problems due to her education and earnings. She cooperated with me whenever I needed her help regarding information for my write-up.

Sita's Educational Background

Her schooling up to grade SLC was at the government school in Nepal. She was an average student. Though she was discouraged by her relatives, she continued her studies. She said,

> I used to wear dirty clothes and slippers. Most of the time, I get two meals a
> day. There was no tiffin or breakfast system in my home. I remember
> sometimes eating rice with a pinch of salt, green chili, and oil whenever my

mother could not afford to buy vegetables from the market. Children and elders generally did not like me. I had very few friends in school.' (Sita)

It suggests that she has faced many challenges to continue her studies from the beginning of her student life. Knowing and unknowingly, she realized the value of education in her life from an early age. Like her mother, she did not like to bear so many discomforts and abuses in her life. She added, 'Along with my studies, I did household chores and even worked in the field during the paddy season. I love to do work in my field.' Her enthusiastic words show how laborious and realistic she is. Without adding much, she responded very clearly and concisely. As she informed me, her I. A. and B. A. with a major in English were accomplished in community college. She has completed her Master's (M.A.) from Mechi Multiple Campus, Bhadrapur, Mechi as well. She started teaching as a profession immediately after her S.L.C. to maintain her expenditure on her studies.

Sita's Acquaintance with Technology: Digital Divide

At her home, there was no modern facility. For phone and TV, she used to go to neighbors. Her mother was given an old radio from her close relative. However, she managed to buy a mobile phone after getting a salary. 'I bought a smartphone after saving money for three years,' she said. When she was in post-graduation, she bought a second-hand laptop. She used those gadgets to chat, watch videos, and listen to music. Even before COVID-19, she was unaware of the importance of using ICTs in her teaching and learning purpose. She watched movies, documentaries, local songs, and viral news on YouTube occasionally, and she ran social media to see and post pictures or videos. She liked TikTok just for fun. 'I use my phone to click photos, record voices, watch videos, listen to music, and converse with my friends, relatives, or my colleagues,' she added. Her words confirm that she has used ICTs via her smartphone or laptop to take entertainment, not more than that. After COVID-19, I have to learn visual materials for an online class. She said I learned about PowerPoint slides, word typing, and searching for relevant and authentic materials from Google or YouTube. Indeed, she updated herself by learning, unlearning, and relearning to teach her students via online classes.

Sita's Experiences of Teaching English with Technology

Her experience using ICTs in ELT is entirely different as she has different personal and professional backgrounds. She said,

I was not allowed to use ICTs frequently in my school before the COVID-19 pandemic as it was considered misusing time and escaping from educating the students. Use of the internet in school was prohibited. Teachers had no access to the internet in school. I use data secretly if anything is urgent for me.' (Sita)

She disclosed her reality and the facilities provided by her institution. She rarely got ICT facilities from the school and was strictly forbidden from using the internet during school hours. She opined that the lecture method was supposed to be the only medium to teach students properly and that tutors could use paper-based materials for effective teaching. Her institution strictly prohibited using electronic gadgets for teaching purposes before the pandemic. However, paper-based materials are allowed in the classroom. In developing countries, limited facilities are the major constraint in integrating ICT into learning activities (Mahdum et al., 2019). Now, she claims that the scenario has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She said,

I learned how to create PPT slides from my senior colleague and how to add authentic materials to teach my students. I was familiar with English typing in Words and the simple format of question patterns for English subjects. Generally, I add distinct and interesting information from different websites to motivate my students to learn.' (Sita)

Along with this, she also realized the importance of using ICTs in teaching and learning programs, and her institution became flexible towards using ICTs in teaching English, especially after COVID-19, she said,

These days, I use documentaries or films or any softcopy of teaching material to teach my students as per the need of the prescribed syllabus. I use related videos from YouTube in the classroom. It is easy and effective for me and my students. My students grasp the content easily while using different approaches.' (Sita)

Madzima et al. (2013) said that ICT remains a tool that enhances teaching and learning in the 21st century despite various challenges. In response to her learning phase as a student, she said that all the teachings were based on the lecture method. Then, her teachers used chalk and duster in the classroom, and most of the time teaching was teacher-centered. She disclosed her reality and the facilities provided by her institution.

Reetu's Story

The participant, Reetu (pseudonym) from Dhanusha district, is a secondary-level English language teacher at Janakpur. She has started her career as an English Language teacher at a private institution at the primary level. She is married and the mother of two children. Her husband is a private worker. Except for her husband, all family members are just literate. In Janakpur, she lives in a rented house with her own family, though her family is joint in the village. She got inspiration to be an English teacher from her teacher in school. Then, she thought being an English teacher in Nepal was prestigious. She opined, 'I love English literature as it is rich in expressions. And I chose English because my family and my friends admired me for it.' So, she studied English Literature to position herself as a smarter student among her friends.

Her Educational Background

She has completed S.L.C. (School Leaving Certificate) from a government school at Sothain, Siraha and has accomplished intermediate (+2 level) and B.Ed. from private institutions at Lahan after S.L.C. She has taken a short-term computer course. She utilized the days in teaching immediately after her plus two levels, she said,

> *After I. Ed., I joined a private school to teach the students. It will support my career in the future as my studies are in the Education stream. Also, I do not like to ask for money every time. Being economically independent gives a sense of empowerment. I covered all my academic costs during my B.Ed. and M.Ed. studies. (Reetu)*

Here, her studies and her earnings brought positive change to her. It can be observed that she has decided on an academic place to study further. Now, she works at a government school as an English Language teacher. Fortunately, her parents are very supportive of her studies. However, her mother strongly believes that there is no need to educate her daughter after Plus Two, though she never disturbed her regarding her studies or any academic training or teaching and learning program.

Reetu's Acquaintance with Technology: Digital Divide

For the first time, she learned about computers and their parts, like monitors, mice, keypads, etc., via pictures in her English textbook in grade 10. She said, *'I joined the Computer Basic Course for three months after S.L.C. to utilize my free time before the result.'* Her brother gave her a small mobile phone when she was at

graduation. She used it just to talk with her relatives and her close friends after her B.Ed. She bought a laptop as she realized its importance during her Montessori Training. She became familiar with terms like ICT, pen drive, and offline, and online utilization of ICTs for educational purposes. She said,

> *My father asked me to buy gold or a laptop. I preferred the Laptop, then. I invested for the first time in buying a gadget. I bought a pen drive as well. It was very useful for my teaching and learning purposes. Now I use my mobile phone for the same.'(Reetu)*

 She has been using a laptop or mobile phone for teaching and learning. She googled the information. She watched tutorials or entertained her via YouTube these days. She is familiar with social media, online portals, and online or offline dictionaries. She uses her mobile device or pen drive to download documents for her students most of the time. There are projectors, laptops, and internet facilities in her school. She uses them from time to time.

Reetu's Experience of Teaching English with Technology

The third research participant, Miss Reetu, said, *'Having a laptop or mobile is possible for me just because I can afford it.'* She has been teaching school for more than a decade. However, she initially did not use ICTs for teaching purposes rather than entertainment. Her use of ICTs was limited to social media and self-entertainment. She said,

> *Before COVID-19, I used my mobile phone to go through social media like Facebook and TikTok most of the time. I did not know what digital skills are needed by teachers. The school trained me to run an online class during the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, it was challenging for me to run the Zoom class, but now I am familiar with it.' (Reetu)*

It suggests that she was unaware of the utility and importance of using ICTs for teaching and learning programs. Now, she can utilize her digital skills in teaching, feel better, and obtain better student results. In addition, she is happy that she can use her digital materials multiple times for teaching and learning activities.

Her opinion and struggle point out that using ICTs in ELT is relevant, important, and necessary at the time. Pupils clearly understand the subject matter if suitable techs are used purposefully in teaching. Using digital materials relieves her as she can use them multiple times and modify them whenever and wherever is essential.

Her learning attitude shows her dedication to her teaching. She understands that teaching and learning go side by side as teaching and learning are a part of the same process of knowing (Holst, 2019). This means that teaching is impossible without learning, and incompetent teachers cannot prepare today's students for the future. She said,

> *My school's perception changed after COVID-19. Now, they easily allow the internet or any online or offline ICT materials for teaching. Even computer teachers or technical staff support teachers. In addition, I get support in technical issues related to ICT in the class from my students as they are very smart to use mobile or laptop. (Reetu)*

After COVID-19, the scenario of teaching in the classroom is modified. Perception of school administration has been revived. Teachers, including me, can easily access ICTs in class. She admired younger learners who knew more than her about ICTs. She further added,

> *I am privileged as I already have access to a smartphone, laptop, and internet Wi-Fi at home after my B.Ed. I could afford my few expenses and invested my money in these things. However, I was not very aware of and trained in applying ICTs in the classroom for teaching purposes as there was a fixed mindset that teaching means lecturing in the silent class. (Reetu)*

She has facilities for digital gadgets and the internet at her home, but her focus is limited. She spent her free time watching, reading, or chatting with her friends or relatives on social media. Also, she was upset with her school's strategies for not using technology in the classroom. Even teachers cannot keep their mobile phones open. They can use it for urgent calls only.

Gita's Story

Gita (pseudonym) is the fourth research participant. She is working in Birgunj now. She is from Saptari and belongs to the Maithil community. She has been a secondary-level English Language teacher for more than seven years in the private academic institution in Birgunj, Parsa. She is thirty-two years old. She has one girl child. Her husband is very supportive, but other family members have pretended to cooperate with her, as she has informed. She lives in a joint family where she struggles with many challenges to continue her teaching career.

I learned about her through a local person who is my Facebook friend. I contacted her via WhatsApp, and her response was very good. I informed her about

who suggested that I approach her and my purpose to connect with her. She was happy to share her professional experiences and challenges with me. She agreed to tell me about her academic and family background as well.

Gita's Educational Background

Her schooling was at Sharda English Secondary School, Kathauna, Saptari, where she completed her I.Ed. She was a good student. She completed her B.Ed. from Budhilal Bidya Munar Campus, Bhagwatpur, Saptari, whereas she earned a certificate of M.Ed. from Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tahachal, Kathmandu. In Kathmandu, She said,

> *My aim from the early stage of my life is to be a teacher. I was inspired by my father, who was popular in society. Everyone respected him. I studied in a private school to fulfill my parent's dream to be good in English. I was a very good student in English language and grammar. Later, I realized that being an English teacher in Nepal is prestigious work in our society. (Gita)*

It seems she was very clear and determined to be a teacher. She loved to read English language and literature. English is an international language, and it is always in demand. As Bhusal (2020) described that, English language teachers use traditional teaching modes in the classroom and are hesitant to use modern methods and techniques in Nepali classrooms. She also faced similar issues during her studies up to M.ED. She said, *'We are supposed to be very silent in front of teachers in our classroom. The class was based on a lecture method, and we are said to copy the class notes from the blackboard.'*

Like other informants, her educational background appears similar in learning the English language and literature during her school and college.

Gita's Acquaintance with Technology: Digital Divide

She got a mobile when she was at plus two. There was no function other than receiving and dialing calls from her mobile phone. She used to listen to songs and news from the family radio. She watched TV for entertainment. She got a smartphone in her last year of B.Ed. Her father bought a laptop for her when she was a student in her M.Ed. program, but she was unfamiliar with its many functions. She said,

> *I used my laptop to watch movies online. Sometimes, I use it to send emails or any document or to save my documents and photos. I was so happy that I was the first in our family to get a laptop. I learned much more about its functions*

with the help of my friends, who are my classmates in M.Ed. However, I joined

a basic computer course for three months. (Gita)

Thus, she said that she was digital-friendly. She learned PPT Slides, Excel, Photoshop, Typing, Responding to emails, and searching for information online. Since she did not have good access to the internet while she was a student, she used the Internet for her education very cautiously. Now, she can easily use social media and online platforms for teaching and learning purposes. However, she expressed a similar opinion to that of other participants regarding the use of digital skills in the classroom before COVID-19.

Gita's Experiences of Teaching English with Technology

Initially, she believed in a teacher-centered approach in the classroom. For many years, she followed it. However, with time, she learned to use many paper-based materials in the classroom to teach the English language. She said,

I began my career as a teacher at a private school. I did not like noisy classes.

So, I used to be rude and scold the students who disturbed the class.

Generally. I used paper-made teaching materials like flashcards, pamphlets,

postcards, and so on rather than digital access. (Gita)

She took basic computer courses during her college years. Due to this, she easily prepares the required materials for teaching. Using ICTs to provide or acquire education is interesting for her. First, preparing educational materials may be hectic or time-consuming. However, one thing she likes the most about the technology is that one material can be used many times for multiple purposes, either for one objective or another. She said, *'ICT makes teaching easier.'* Indeed, ICT in Teaching English saves time and effort, though content-wise, she needs to be prepared before handling any class for teaching purposes. It is enough for her context whatever she knows about technology and teaching English. She said,

Using ICTs in the classroom to teach English is a boon for me. It is interesting

to present difficult ideas or examples through technology. My students feel

amused while watching or listening in the classroom. Searching for the

meaning and pronunciation of any word is helpful for me. (Gita)

ICT plays a vital role in making information and knowledge more relevant to the students now and then. They can use the ICT application to improve their learning (Dhital, 2018). She views how using ICT in ELT creates win-win situations for

students and teachers. Information technology has broadly enhanced administration, and teaching and learning efficiency.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the stories of Maithil women teachers' struggles during their academic journey. They struggled a lot to be there where they are now. Handling household chores, family responsibilities, their studies, and their profession made them more aware of and mature in their profession. They get more energy to motivate them to advance in life as they can manage multiple tasks simultaneously. The themes were discussed properly and accordingly regarding the experience of Maithil women teachers using ICTs in ELT while they were students, teachers, or both. I discussed each theme.

Maithil women teachers have different barriers to pave the education path dealing with family, money, digital gadgets, and society. They have faced struggles from childhood to learn the English Language and established themselves as knowledgeable and skilled teachers, which I learned from my participants who shared their stories with me.

CHAPTER V

NARRATIVES OF MAITHIL WOMEN'S ENDEAVOUR

This chapter deals with the first research question of this study, i.e., how do Maithil women teachers use ICTs in ELT? Every participant in this study recounted their professional journey of teaching. They shared their journey that prepared them for teaching as a profession. This chapter is the recollection of the stories expressed by the research participants, the theoretical stances, and the analysis of what the participants provided information to address the research needs. Here, I have presented the participants' stories with sub-themes such as technology anxiety, ICT adoption during and after COVID-19, and empowerment.

Technology Adoption: Before and During COVID-19

My participants narrated their stories regarding their experience of using ICTs in ELT. To some extent, all the participants were limited to their familiarity with handling social media and reading or watching videos online or offline. The research participant, Sita, said, *'I do not have the habit of using ICT for academic purposes though sometimes I show the photos or certain information on mobile to my students inside the classroom.'* Here, she expressed her limitations of knowledge and skills in using technology in teaching, which suggests her unawareness of the value and utilization of ICT in ELT. It emerged as her anxiety when she had to attend online classes during COVID-19 as she claimed, *It was quite hectic to run Zoom class during the COVID-19 pandemic. I downloaded videos and other documents related to the chapter in the text from the internet and showed them in the classroom.'* In this context, her words speak about her easy way to handle and use technology with a purpose. She tried to adopt technology in her teaching to save her profession. Similarly, another participant, Reetu, said, *'I was pretty familiar with social media. Occasionally, I used to show videos, pictures, or text through my mobile to deliver special information aligned with their subject in their classroom'.*

She further accepted that she had no idea how to include technology in her teaching to take the class. However, she adopted technology to maintain her profession for a long time. She realized the importance of ICT, especially during COVID -19. The ICT facilitation program organized by her school helped her stay motivated regarding using ICTs in ELT.

The research participant, Gita, has different experiences. She expressed, *'I feel active while using technology in my teaching.'* But she also claimed, *'Before COVID-19 in Nepal, it was hard to use ICTs in ELT frequently due to lack of support from school admins though I used messenger to send group messages to the students.'* Furthermore, she added, *'Any digital gadgets were not allowed in the classroom before the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal. Sometimes, teachers took students to the hall to show them educational documentaries. I often used a cassette player for my students' listening tests.'*

My research participant, Nita, narrated a similar story, *'I am fond of using ICTs in ELT for teaching and learning purposes in the classroom. My students enjoy it as they easily grasp the content with interest.'* Her institution had digital-equipped infrastructure and access, so she continuously used ICTs in ELT.

All my research participants adopted ICTs in ELT to continue and maintain their teaching profession as needed. Most universities and colleges face challenges regarding teachers' knowledge and its implementation through technology, students' understanding and proficiency, and a lack of transferring classroom teaching into virtual classes (Chen & Li, 2011; Li et al., 2018; Al-Mroof et al., 2023). The effectiveness of technology or virtual classes is in adopting technology as a tool for distance teaching. Most technology adoption is not easy for teachers as it may influence many aspects, such as learning technology, context, and strategy.

The role of ICTs in teaching emerged as a new possibility and hope for the dimension of education. My research participants embraced technology after struggling frequently to make their class students friendly. However, they took using ICTs in ELT, which meant applying PowerPoint slides in teaching. Such ideas gradually improved after getting broad information and an in-depth understanding of ICT use in ELT.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal, all the research participants have the same voice, as Sita said,

> There was no restriction to use the internet or any online or offline educational materials for teaching purposes after COVID-19. During COVID-19, schools provided online access and training to prepare PowerPoint slides, share teaching materials via Zoom or Google Meet, and manage power supply with a backup system. COVID-19 has broadened the perception of school

owners regarding using ICTs in ELT. It matters a lot to teachers like me who feel afraid of responding to even a text message during school hours.' (Sita)

Furthermore, the consequences of the pandemic have created mandatory online education; using technology in education is no longer an option, which has led to significant shifts in the intention to use information technologies (Sahin & Sahin., 2022).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers did not need online education in Nepali schools. The school curriculum was unprepared, and teachers were not trained in online teaching and learning programs. Most of the teachers were not prepared and could not adopt technology in teaching. For the first time, physical class was replaced by online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. They could not run computers and the internet as per the educational needs of their learners. They did not prepare or share the educational materials on-screen during online meetings or classes. All the participants shared their anxiety regarding running an online class during COVID-19, as they had never practiced teaching the English language before. They had undergone quite different experiences as they had no prior knowledge of Zoom or Google Meet. All four participants shared similar views: *'It was tough to give feedback to all students individually, which created hindrances to achieving the result-oriented outcome for learners during online class.'* Thus, teachers and learners must be self-motivated, organized, focused, and digitally friendly to deliver the information properly and acquire target-driven results from students.

Patriarchy and Maithil Women

Nepal has made significant progress in achieving gender parity, especially in access to education and female literacy rates. However, despite significant advances made towards equal access to education, Nepali society, to a large extent, still privileges a patriarchal mindset that favors a son over a daughter in access to resources (Basnet, 2022). Contrarily, a girl child is unknowingly viewed as inferior in the Madheshi community of Nepal. The disparity in patterns associated with gender and conventional socio-cultural practices creates negative impacts on a girl child's personal development and educational achievements (Gupta, 2019). After doing some analysis, I discovered that daughters are suppressed in our society for various reasons. In contemporary society, they are not free to wander about, and no environment is conducive to daughters.

Gender discrimination has become a reality in Nepalese culture due to patriarchal societal standards. A definite hierarchy has been established by the social norm that a man should be the head of the household, with men being the superior group and women being the inferior or subordinate group. Stereotypes with deep roots in culture and male dominance have prevented women from participating in many social activities, and discriminatory gender roles have prevented them from performing household tasks.

There are many derogatory statements and behaviors in the Maithil society for women. The research participant, Sita, disclosed her struggles with her studies. She said,

> *My father and his relatives insisted that my mother should withhold me from my school. But she never listened to them. Then, I decided that I must do better in my education. I felt a burning fire inside me to prove my excellence. Also, I felt rebellious towards my father as he never supported us. Anyhow, my mother managed to provide me with books and other stationery to attend the school. (Sita)*

She never got a valuable treat from her father and his relatives, who had created a burden in her life from childhood to adulthood. She followed her instinct and continued her studies. She managed household work even from an early age. She assisted her mother in the kitchen and the field. Generally, she felt *'excluded'* or *'other'* in her community and school due to her poverty and restrained relationship with her father. She pointed out that the patriarchal mindset troubled her in many ways, as Wolpe (2013) said,

> *When women work, they are usually convinced by their jobs because they do not have high aspirations. In addition, they do not hold themselves to a high standard in their careers and do not sense any discrimination. Therefore, the perspective of working women is shaped by socialization processes that maintain a rigid binary between a man's and a woman's functions and roles.*

Another research participant, Reetu, claimed,

> *Being a nice woman in my society means serving the family members without any question or demand. Being obedient to my parents and husband allowed me to pursue my education and profession together. Still, being a woman means taking full responsibility for her husband, children, relatives, and*

career or studies. Sometimes, I feel hectic managing all the roles and duties.'(Reetu)

Her words convey that her male relatives did not support her with her workload. She is supposed to be perfect inside and outside her home. She is considered responsible for household chores and her career as well. She faced gender-based discrimination from an early age, as it is commonly practiced in the Maithil community. Furthermore, she said about her husband, *'Helping me is his choice, not duty. He helps our children with their studies rather than cooking, washing, cleaning, grocery shopping, and other household chores.'* She has to bear the differences created by patriarchal culture and behavior. She has been suffering the consequences of a patriarchal mindset that undervalues them and restricts them from sharing their household responsibilities like cooking, washing, cleaning, child-rearing, and many other duties. They are often limiting their roles to the socially defined responsibilities within the household. As (Dhakal, 2022) mentioned in his paper, the social concept of women's sole responsibility for household work and family care has added a burden to their professional career and development.

Reetu admitted that she was affected by gender disparities more than her husband in many ways. She has gone through multifaceted differences. In the context of Nepal, patriarchy is systemic across political, economic, social, and cultural systems, and it encompasses multiple intersecting ages of discrimination in addition to gender (Uprety, 2018). However, she agreed that such scenarios have greatly changed the Maithil society. She cannot be tired, unhappy, and free from her tireless job and responsibilities within the household.

Her culture and upbringing do not allow her to raise her voice against it, as Nita claims, *'Most Maithil women are supposed to be always nice. Being nice means that, here, they are viewed as silent creatures who should not defend themselves from any absurdities or abuse, or inhuman differences done by family members, especially in her domestic affairs.'* She is more fortunate than others, and as she said, *'I have to focus on my studies rather than household work. My parents are always very supportive and serious about my studies.'* Even after marriage, she was not restricted to traditional tasks of women as the Maithil community perceives. That's why she has been a competent teacher because she can update her skills and give her quality time to her profession to enhance her quality and keep herself empowered.

Further, another research participant, Gita, added, *'Discrimination is rooted in society'* though she did not realize discrimination before marriage. Deep-rooted discrimination is perceived as normal as women's tasks, and men's tasks are predetermined in the family. *'I failed to identify the discrimination against me for a long time as I have seen and experienced women's roles and duties as per the definition of Maithil family,'* as Gita said. *'I have to prefer household chores to my career'*, she said. The social concept of women as solely responsible for household work and family care has burdened their professional development and career goals. Working women spend maximum time on household chores and child care, while male partners spend their time with children rather than taking responsibility for family work. Due to social and cultural norms, women have been fulfilling the responsibilities of housework, childcare, and other family responsibilities (Mussida and Patimo, 2021). In such a scenario, Maithil women are also supposed to be very dutiful and calm, as Gita expressed her views. They are supposed to be always obedient to their family members. They cannot choose their working sectors, occupations, and life partners. Reetu said, *'As she aims to be a teacher in her life, she easily gets permission from her parents to study further. Otherwise, she may not get a chance to study further.'* Indeed, families do not like investing much money and maximum time in girls' education. For them, daughters' achievements belong to other families. Similarly, pursuing education and a career after marriage is very tough in the context of a patriarchal society. Maithil research participants agreed that it was a burden to manage work life and family life together because women have to take on all the responsibilities of household chores and elders and younger family members.

Before marriage, the daughters get some advantages in the family. But after marriage, she has to obey the family and social boundaries and work as per the decision of the family to fit in that family. Daughters-in-law get less freedom but have to bear more family responsibilities. So, daughters are taught in such a way that they can fit themselves into the new family after their marriage as women perform their roles associated with a particular relation to each individual throughout their lives. Women perform various roles according to their relationship with the particular individuals they interact with (Luitel, 2001; Bhandari, 2019).

Most of the time, she did not get support from family members in her home. However, the presence of her husband brought changes to the environment of her family as her family members began to help her with good behavior. Otherwise, they

just isolated themselves to make her do all the work like cooking, cleaning, dusting, washing, and making tea multiple times. She confessed the reality of her life. Ahmad said,

> *The women in their immediate environment- their mothers, mothers-in-law, neighbors, acquaintances, and coworkers—have a negative impact on them even if they are receptive to change because they constantly remind them of the significance of their traditional responsibilities and the fact that they should never be disregarded (Ahmad, 1984).*

This suggests a rigid dichotomy between a masculine and feminine role; social hierarchical roles and expectations are always reminded by women's family members strictly in the home. Women's main work is staying at home, rearing and bearing children, and caring for family members. Pursuing a career is her choice, not the compulsion.

Gita also experienced unfriendliness and no cooperation from her husband's relatives. She experienced more workload when guests visited her. She was supposed to welcome them and prepare food for them. Her husband could not support her at that time as she said, *'In Maithil culture, the male figure is supposed not to handle household chores. If they do it in front of relatives, they will be criticized in society.'* So, she was overloaded with work during festivals as well. Parida and Nayak (2009) said that women's share of household resources was never equal to the effort they spent in augmenting it. Their subordinate status meant developmental benefit- be it education, health, income, employment- did not reach them in the same measurement.' Here, the author is concerned about the situation and status of Indian women, which can be related to Maithil women teachers. These women's social and cultural contexts relate to the family's structure of roles and responsibilities. Indeed, such Maithil women are less valued and unheard, though they earn by teaching. They do not participate in decision-making, especially regarding financial issues and assets.

Being professionally engaged, the women teachers are supposed to work professionally together with all the responsibilities at home. Livingstone and Pollock (2004) suggest that women spend significant time on family-related duties such as child care, cooking, cleaning, and shopping. In her dissertation, Bhatta (2023) claims that women teachers face cultural discrimination in Nepal. Women's family life is given more priority than their professional life, though they contribute to their family by money and taking full responsibility for household chores. Though women started

doing jobs in different sectors, it is considered their duty to do all the household chores and take responsibility and management. In such a scenario, women have dual roles and the burden of house and office, as the research participants have expressed their views on the cultural supremacy existing in the Maithil community. This means that there is still male superiority in the family and society despite some substantial changes in the condition of women in Nepal.

Challenges of Using ICT Tools

The global spread of COVID-19 led the World Health Organization to declare a pandemic on 12 March 2020. As of the second week of May 2020, UNESCO estimated that nearly nine million (8,796,624) students in Nepal were affected by school/university closures in response to the pandemic (Dawadi et al., 2020). As a result, the government of Nepal also declared a lockdown in the country, so schools were temporarily closed. Over time, the education delivery system has changed dramatically with the rise of online education, with teaching and learning taking place remotely and on digital platforms. In the context of Nepal, the COVID-19 pandemic caused issues for educators and students in classrooms because there was insufficient infrastructure to support online learning in the early stages of the pandemic.

Furthermore, Nepalese school teachers lack the necessary skills and knowledge to engage children in virtual education. The research participant, Sita, narrated her situation,

> *We teachers have no idea how to handle the situation. Due to corona, we feel*
> *helpless in teaching and our expenditure. We do not have enough ICT skills to*
> *run an online class. Most of us are familiar with social media. We have no*
> *knowledge and techniques for the students' engagement during online classes.*
> *We even lack the skill to share and show related educational material to our*
> *students during online teaching and learning. (Sita)*

Likewise, other research participants claimed the same scenario during a pandemic. They agreed that teaching stress is also included with many personal stresses. Gita said,

> *We are working in a private institution. We have no extra income except*
> *salary, which was also not provided or was partially provided during corona.*
> *The economic condition is deteriorating day by day. For schools, it is very*
> *tough to continue teaching with less digital infrastructure in school. Most of*
> *us have mobile phones and laptops without Wi-Fi at home. (Gita)*

In this line, Nita said,

> *I was lucky in the sense of salary. I got a full salary during Corona as well. In my school, teachers were digitally friendly, and almost all children had access to the internet and gadgets. So, there was not much of an issue with conducting the virtual class. However, making educational materials for the online class was very time-consuming, and motivating students to be patient during the virtual class was difficult. Also, it was very difficult to check their learning level. (Nita)*

So, teachers faced many challenges in surviving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle during the coronavirus pandemic. They had to accept the new challenges of ICTs for teaching learning programs. Gita had no skill in using ICT in ELT, while Nita was familiar with using ICTs in education. However, they start to learn from their colleagues and the training organized by the school. They both need to learn about online teaching and learning and their student's engagement. There might be problems like a power cut, no laptop, and no internet at teachers' homes. As Reetu said, *'I had just a mobile but no backup for power cut.'* Acharya and Acharya (2021) said:

> *Most teachers lack adequate ICT skills despite having better education, according to the study population's ICT knowledge and teacher competencies. The findings indicate that even though teachers possess advanced degrees to instruct and hire in secondary schools, they are not sufficiently skilled in ICT pedagogy. Even so, they possess the fundamental ICT abilities needed for online high school instruction. (Acharya & Acharya, 2021)*

It shows the reality of the teachers that they are a little friendly with the use of ICTs in education, but virtual classes for teaching purposes were completely new for them. They learned, unlearned, and relearned many skills and knowledge related to ICT and the mode of education they used to cope with the educational situation. My participant teachers described the classroom climate as follows:

> *Learners had limited time to cover the curriculum since the lockdown had reduced the number of instructive hours. Rapid education was a solution. However, the teachers were not given enough training by the responsible authorities. There was also an issue with how the kids were evaluated. During the lockdown, there were no clear-cut guidelines or student standards assessments.*

According to the teachers, completion of the teaching course as per the syllabus was not possible at that time, and they experienced physical class was more convenient as well as result-oriented. They could personally follow up with the students. Likewise, Sita said, *'I faced difficulty in making students active in teaching-learning activities.'* Maintaining physical distance from the students who come to school to learn during COVID-19 was challenging. Lack of budget and ICT materials is a critical problem in schools. Maintaining physical and social distance has created challenges for school resources and learning. The big problem was the budget. However, teachers tried their best to teach in online classrooms.

Teaching without using a book may not be effective in our region. Although online classes were possible, many parents had mobile phones but lacked access to Wi-Fi. Implementing online classes presented challenges due to varying levels of interest and willingness by teachers to embrace technological innovations such as ICT. Some teachers lack technological proficiency, others face financial constraints in acquiring necessary equipment, and some are reluctant to put extra effort into the online classroom environment. (Mina, 2020).

Concerning the application of ICT, the participant teachers added:

> *Digital learning was the best alternative method during the lockdown and prohibitory orders. Still, digital platforms such as laptops, tablets, mobiles, the internet, and television were inaccessible to all the students. Also, those who were accessible were not skilled enough, and the teachers were not good at using such platforms.*

Administrative enforcement and motivation are the common obstacles in every institution to use innovation in the classrooms (Joshi, 2022). The successful integration of ICT in the classroom largely depends on instructors. Using modern pedagogy effectively depends on their level of acceptance of technology. One of the most significant barriers to ICT adoption at the grassroots level is teachers' reluctance to use it in the classroom.

This participant, Gita, expressed the challenges of using ICT in the classroom in this way, *'I feel a conducive setting for using ICT in the classroom rather than virtual class. In physical class, using ICTs in ELT is more effective as I can interact with students individually.'* It suggests she does not need any other motivation to make students learn. However, many teachers find it difficult to implement ICT tools effectively in their teaching strategies, according to Ekberg and Gao (2018).

Challenges shorten the hindrances in teaching by learning skills and use of ICTs in ELT. Skills of using ICTs in ELT make women teachers more fruitful and interactive than in the past. Teachers cannot prove themselves without paving the path of teaching as per the demands of the modern time. Maithil women teachers struggled to keep themselves motivated and updated on their professional journey.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the storage of methylene women teachers during their professional development. They struggled from the beginning of the academic journey, from their learning to teaching in the schools. They struggled in family society and the workplace to maintain their profession as teachers. They adopted proper technologies in their teaching by acquiring ICT skills. They struggled to break the patriarchal chain and mentality to release themselves to get an education, which empowered them. Their struggles made them strong enough to be the early responsibilities of their family and profession. I discussed the theme to bring out the narratives of their struggles to wake up in their profession and live a good life.

CHAPTER VI

VOICES OF MAITHIL WOMEN TEACHERS

This chapter presents the voice of the Maithil women teachers for integrating ICTs in ELT. They have faced multiple challenges and opportunities for professional stability and demand. In this chapter, I have analyzed another question: How does integrating technology in teaching the English language empower them? In this response, I noted the struggles of Maithil women teachers and made themes representing different aspects, such as empowerment by integrating ICTs in ELT, women's involvement in decision-making, resisting contradictions, and financial strength as a way of autonomy. The difficulties Maithil women teachers face and their financial earnings to their empowered journey of life are presented in this chapter.

Empowerment of Maithil Women Teachers through ICT Integration in Classrooms

Maithil women teacher participants shared their stories about how they achieved empowerment. They shared their success stories of their empowerment and maintaining their teaching English as their profession. They explored long stories of their academic journey- how they overcame their challenges and pursued their teaching profession. The English Language knowledge helped them get empowered in the Nepali sociocultural context. In addition, English language proficiency and the use of ICTs in teaching allowed them to get job opportunities and pursue their professional careers. Their updated ICT skills in teaching and learning English helped them be qualified teachers in Nepali academia.

Women empowerment is a multidimensional process. I understand women's empowerment in an indifferent context by different people due to geographical, cultural, economic, social, political, environmental, and technological backgrounds. It is the phenomenon that causes an overall change in the position of women. They feel powerful in freedom of choice and action in all economic, political, social, cultural, personal, and familial spheres to shape one's life. My research participants are from the Maithil community living in various parts of Nepal due to their engagement in teaching.

Empowerment is defined as the redistribution of power (Moser, 1993) and gaining control of participation in decision-making (Karl, 1995). In this sense, I define it as enhancing self-capacity, which causes professional and economic growth.

'After ICT training provided by the school, I downloaded all the useful materials from the CDC library on my laptop for teaching purposes, and I used them whenever required.' Reetu said. She said, *'I have collected many educational apps related to teaching and learning the English language from my colleagues via chat in Messenger or WhatsApp.'* Such changes have empowered me to be a professionally competent teacher who can use ICTs for effective teaching and learning (Government of Nepal of Ministry of Education, 2015). Technology adoption cannot be avoided as today's classroom has been more dynamic and technocratic (Acharya & Dhungana, 2024). Likewise, Facebook (social tool), Google Docs (collaboration tool), and Moodle technologies (learning management system) were used the most in previous studies to facilitate language and 21st-century skills (Shadiev & Wang, 2022). In the twenty-first century, teaching is not an easy profession. Gen-Z education puts teachers' abilities to the test every single day. The process of teaching and learning used to be very repetitive. However, due to the ongoing influence of technology's rapid advancement, many students worldwide are exposed to a wide range of educational opportunities and job paths. As a result, in the twenty-first century, educators must possess the information and abilities necessary to help and support their pupils. My participants collectively indicated that teaching without technology is impossible and ineffective for ELT. Also, technology empowers teachers on their personal and professional levels.

Nitu said, *'My school is very friendly to using digital gadgets and tools for teaching and learning purposes even before the Corona pandemic. So, during the pandemic, we teachers use ICTs in ELT easily.'* She utilizes ICTs in her classroom for purposeful engagement (Bidari, 2021). She also informed me that her colleagues were very cooperative, and she always kept herself updated to enhance her teaching skills and knowledge. She further connected with her ideas, *'I realized the value of digitally equipped school and techno-friendly environment, especially during the pandemic which constructively changed the delivery of education if the teachers and students use purposefully.'* Her opinion on using ICTs in ELT with a purpose brings better understanding of the content among the students. Technology can contribute in-depth

to getting four language skills and building a strong foundation of language. It can empower users today and tomorrow.

ICT creates a joyful environment (Jeet & Pant, 2023) and a more powerful tool for education and empowerment. It makes students think more creatively and makes them more interactive. Adding to this, it can effectively stimulate children's skills in both spoken and written language (Dryden, 2014). The research participant Sita said, 'My students enjoy a lot when I show them drama in the classroom. They easily understand the plot, setting, scene, character, and story. She took help from technology in her teaching, which was fruitful for her learners. Through ICT, she added her knowledge and skill to her teaching from time to time. Likely, another research participant, Reetu, said, 'I search teaching materials from Google and use them in my classroom. Technology is very useful when preparing PowerPoint slides, including audio or video links. It helps to create effective teaching.' Self-empowerment results in effective teacher professional development. Through empowerment, teachers can add new knowledge and master new skills so that they will be able to overcome teaching and learning process problems faced in schools (Yunus et al., 2021). Thus, empowerment helps teachers' professional development. The knowledge and skills to use ICTs in ELT broaden teachers' professional skills.

Furthermore, research participant Reetu said, 'The availability of internet, laptops, and smartphones gives me access to online resources for my teaching. I use online resources like dictionaries, thesaurus, audio or video, authentic notes, and the materials on the CDC website.' As all the research participants agreed, such resources empowered teachers to perform their academic pursuits and teaching delivery in the classroom. Additionally, Gita added, 'Online translation and YouTube are equally important.' Indeed, as cited by Saud & Laudari (2023),

> There are multiple benefits of integrating ICT in ELT. Teachers reported enhanced student engagement, motivation, and learning experiences, ICT facilities, interactive and dynamic lesson delivery, accommodating diverse learning styles, and providing access to vast resources and authentic materials (Gnawali, 2020).

Integrating ICTs in ELT enhances teacher professional development as the ICT skills help teachers progress in their careers and aid in student motivation (Gnawali, 2020). Similarly, ICT provides self-learning and distance learning opportunities without binding us to a certain time or place. There are some online

course materials that can be accessed 24/7. Moreover, ICT-based education delivery, for example, educational programming broadcast over radio or television, does not need the learner and the instructor to be in one physical location (Jha, 2020). Thus, ICT provides an incredible opportunity for teachers' empowerment if it is used rationally. When teachers employ technology in the classroom, students are inherently inspired and motivated to study and advance their information technology skills. In this sense, teachers are role models who influence or lead their learners. From Jha and Gnawali's views on applying ICTs in ELT, I conclude that an educational program must be implemented together with improvements to get the experience of empowerment. Traditional classroom lectures cannot be effective in teaching and empowering the students as per the demands of the time. Students must be prepared for a rapidly changing world by developing skills like digital literacy, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation (Kennedy & Sundberg, 2020).

The status of Maithil women teachers has been growing due to their economic and professional achievements. Their ICT skills have played a key role in their empowerment as they can build their network and access many other professional networks for their betterment. Along with that, they have access to information. Also, they can raise their voice via their mobile phone.

The Maithil women teachers struggled to improve their personal and professional lives by learning and teaching English language and literature. Their continuous earning and updated knowledge helped to empower themselves. Frequent use of ICT will provide high confidence in teachers to implement various other innovations in their teaching (Ismail et al., 2021). Using ICTs in ELT improves self-efficacy, as claimed by Nita. She further said teachers must process ICT at the students' level. In addition, *'We should not forget the educational goal'*, said Gita. This means that teachers need high self-efficacy in their classroom teaching. Teachers' professional seriousness in imparting knowledge is vital to producing excellent students either in the academic or co-curricular sector. Besides, teachers' seriousness and job satisfaction in imparting knowledge is one reason for producing excellent students in various academic or co-curricular fields. For Maithil women teacher participants, professional development is available to meet their needs because they can invest their earnings and time in training themselves.

Involvement in Decision Making

Women are underrepresented in my community, despite their qualifications and experiences, based on the participant narratives as well. Participation in decision-making can support educators in their teaching-learning program. However, research by Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2013) and Brinia (2012) indicated that women typically participate at lower levels than men in school decision-making. Choge (2015) pointed out that managerial decisions are one area where this gender gap is most noticeable. Compared to male teachers, women teachers are underrepresented and participate in activities at a lower rate. To participate, women require a supportive environment. Women can participate equally when there is behavioral equality, which is applied from an early age. It is important to introduce the idea of equality to the kids and to motivate them to take part.

It is a fact that women contribute more than men to the advancement of the family. Women's participation is indispensable for the social and economic development of the country.

The research participant Nita said,

> *At my mother's time, women were treated as objects and servants of the family. She was very concerned with the traditional rules and regulations of my family. But my generation was lucky. We were free to choose our clothes, food, and many more things. Unfortunately, I could not choose my desired subject as it was costly.(Nita)*

It suggests that her mother was confined to the house and that her duty was to do all the household chores for her family members. However, she (the narrator) appreciates the ability to select their desired things and food but is restricted in choosing their education or career. Reetu said,

> *'I was allowed to study further as I had chosen English language and literature as my major subject, and my goal was to be a teacher. If I had chosen any technical field or studied in Kathmandu or India, I would not have been permitted. But, the same case with my brothers was treated differently in the same case. They had the freedom to select their desired courses. For this, my parents would sell the property happily if needed for son.'* (Reetu)

Reetu knew the open secret reality, overcame the situation, and pursued her studies at the Graduate level as she was earning. She continued her career after 10th grade. Her earnings empowered her to be heard and positioned among her family and relatives. Due to her income, she could continue her education. Sita said,

> *I was supposed to do domestic tasks and take care of my family as my priority rather than my studies. I was considered stubborn and mannerless during my childhood. However, due to my education, job, and attitude, I was gradually taken as a good adviser. My mother and brother began to respect my decision. My father, whom I always hated, began to ask and inform me of the issues related to the family. My words were considered valuable even by my father's relatives. However, my economic contribution to the family has not been recognized. (Sita)*

The participant teacher, Reetu, said,

> *Both of us (my husband and I) are job holders, but I only have to look after my two growing sons, my family, and all the household chores. Nowadays, sometimes my husband helps me in the kitchen and washing clothes in the absence of other people and relatives. Though it was a slight change, I am happy about it. I suppose it is the fruit of patriarchal thought.(Reetu)*

Such practices or perceptions have become normal or taken for granted in many parts of the world and become an integral part of Maithil culture for the ages.

According to Claridge (2004), participation is the process by which a particular group of people with common needs actively seeks to identify those needs, makes decisions, and sets up a system to pursue those goals. It only means cooperating to accomplish the shared objectives. Similarly, Kabir (2013) said that participation is defined as actively participating in decision-making processes recognizing difficulties, carrying out and managing tasks, equally utilizing advantages, and evaluating tasks. It suggests that participation is the key activity in human life that affects the people's social, economic, cultural, and political sphere.

The minimal participation of female teachers at the senior administrative level causes them to participate in organizations only to a limited extent. Although many women are working as teachers, the proportion of women in upper positions is small in school. Colleagues who are men do not give women much encouragement to hold higher positions. Because they are indoctrinated from an early age to believe that men

belong in higher positions and women belong at home, men feel dominated by women when they hold higher positions.

      'Due to my education and earnings, I am a good companion to my husband in any decision-making, ' said Gita. It suggests that being educated plays a role in women's participation in decision-making in the Maithil community. Women with education maintain balance in society. They have better access to resources and job opportunities and can make decisions regarding their personal and professional matters. She disclosed that her independence plays a vital role in raising her voice against many types of differences towards her, though she has not been as privileged as the male members of her family. Paudel et al. (2016) has described the condition of Madheshi women as backwards because women's rights are overshadowed by traditional harmful practices, stigma, and discrimination, and they lack the authority to make decisions. Abusive language, inferior behavior, work pressure, and limitations in education and freedom are accepted in the Maithil community. Still, their involvement in decision-making is not given much importance. Maithil women have been dominated by traditional cultural practices and the mindset of Maithil people, where they are rarely given priority to make decisions, utilize the economy for themselves, and invest time in their professional growth.

Resisting Contradictions

Maithil women teachers have gone through multifaceted businesses, prejudices, and intentionally imposed differences. Families comparatively provide less priority to female education and their professions. Women who are silent, shy, timid, and always ready to serve are supposed to be 'nice' and so-called 'cultured.' Women are directly or indirectly forced to be perfect servants in their homes and offices. All the participants, Maithil women teachers, expressed their common views on the partialities in their education, economic investment for their career, support, and familial behaviors towards them. *'Women's needs are second priority'* as Sita experienced. She said with teary eyes, *'I have never given any priority in my family because I am a girl. Even my mother kept mum on the fault of my father, who never treated me well.'* In the workplace, they struggle a lot compared to male colleagues. As Gita said,

> *Men have enough time to invest in their careers in our culture because they only focus on their education, career, and earning, as I have observed from a young age in my home and society. My brother and husband are not bound to*

divert their career for the family's sake, while I have to function as per the family's needs. I have to take care of my two sons, my husband and his relatives and all my home responsibilities. (Gita)

Mentality is the product of society and culture. It strengthens the thought, which turns into belief. Belief makes people follow social and cultural patterns in behaving, talking, and thinking. For many years in Nepal, Maithil women have been considered assistants of their families. According to Alam (2020), male chauvinistic attitude has limited women's mobility and provided them a few opportunities to grow as individuals. They have more restricted access to economic and educational resources, liberty, and pursuing their dreams.

In my family, I never got more freedom and choice than my brother did. Since I was young, I have faced many differences and biases from my relatives. My mother has persuaded me to take on all kitchen responsibilities at a young age. She desired to see all the qualities set by society 'to be a nice girl' in me. (Sita)

Gender-based discrimination remains one of the most intractable constraints to realizing the right to education,' according to the 2000 Education for All (EFA) Framework for Action. Education for All will not be possible unless such barriers are overcome. Although the context has been changing, gender issues are normal in the Maithil community.

Women are undervalued from birth to death in Maithil society. They are supposed to be nice if they never question or cross the family's decisions for them. Many rituals center on increasing male glorification, success, and age. For example, Rakhi, Mundan, Janai, Barshait, Madhushrawani, and many other festivals are celebrated by female relatives for male relatives.

Nita said,

I did not follow the rule that forced me to eat after my husband and his relatives. I took food whenever I was hungry. It seemed easier, but actually not. I was criticized for not obeying in-laws' so-called orders. However, I focused on my career much as my husband was always supportive. He supported me at home in the kitchen and while preparing teaching materials. (Nita)

Nita said that her husband was comparatively more liberal than she had seen in her society. She always thanked her fortune because her husband always provided

her with a positive response for her betterment. He never interfered without reason.The findings of Sultanpur (2021) in the context of India, *irrespective of their class, caste, and educational status,women are not safe. They have been the victims of exploitation and abuse for a long time in different fields in their life both physically, socially, culturally, mentally, and economically.*

In the Maithil community, such issues are relevant based on my research participants' voices. They faced many verbal and non-verbal differences and exploitations compared to man in their family. They had observed the value and place of their mothers and sisters in their family. Very few women are blessed to get freedom without any torture. The research participant Sita's opinion,

> *Physical and mental torture walked simultaneously on my life during my schooling. I got badly beaten by my father if I could not obey my father, who always harassed me. Unfortunately, family members, including my mother, never supported me or heard my pain. Instead, they convinced me to tolerate it. Maybe my mother was afraid of my father's economic support to the family.(Sita)*

Her suffering suggests that she has gone through domestic violence and economic violence, as she had no option of spending money.

Gita said,

> *I used to feel irritated when my mother ordered me to bear all the household chores in her absence. But I never heard the same for my younger brother. However, I asked my brother to help me. His help depends on his choice, not compulsion like mine. The same scenario came in front of me after my marriage. But I asked my husband to coordinate me in every sector of my life, even in the kitchen. Though I could not ask him in front of my relatives as it is still considered that kitchen responsibility belongs only to women in my Maithil culture. (Gita)*

Here, Gita realized that work has no gender, and her voice was heard only because of her education and earnings. Maybe she was not praised in the Maithil society, but she was happy with her supportive husband. She could distinguish and decide what was right and wrong. For that, she resisted or put effort into positive change in her life.

Reetu said,

My father was happy with my education. Now I realize the reason. I had chosen education as a subject for further study, which was considered a noble but not costly subject for a lady in the Maithil community. However, I continued my academic journey to empower myself. (Reetu).

All the research participants expressed exploitation in different forms like restrictions, artificial scarcity, mental and physical harassment, social misuse, manipulation, and character assassination they faced during their lives. They pursued their career by defending or resisting such issues to position their academic journey as best as possible. In their words, they have realized that breaking cultural mindsets regarding gender is not an overnight game. It takes ages and ages to change. Empowered women's voices played a vital role in lessening the differences and painful situations for the Maithil women in the Maithil society.

Financial Strength: A Way of Autonomy

All the research participants are working women as teachers. They earn money, and they feel powerful for them, and they can affect their personal and professional life. Women's earnings enable them to tear down barriers and unlock opportunities. They can raise their voices and cause positive change in society. They have experienced the positive perceptions received from society. Meanwhile, the research participant Nita said,

I began to invest in myself and make myself more skilled and knowledgeable than in the past. Though my husband supported me, my earnings gave me the confidence to spend on myself. Plus, I spend money on my children as per my desire. This type of freedom gives me immense pleasure. (Nita)

Her words confirmed that earning is the source of autonomy. Regular income is crucial for the person to fulfill fundamental cravings. Indeed, financially strong, Nita is an independent woman with a strong voice. Her economic independence has empowered her. According to (Srivastava, 2020), women cannot be independent and uplifted if they are denied financial and economic rights. So, financial risk and economic rights are the key factors in living life independently. Independence creates confidence in women. Likewise, another research participant, Sita said,

For me, money is everything. Before earning money, I had never had a chance to eat tasty food and wear new clothes. I could not buy anything. I had no stylish slippers (chappal), so forget about shoes. Since I did not fulfill the ill desire of my father, he always created trouble for me. I was overloaded with

household chores when I was in grade six. I was living in extreme poverty under the guidance of my rich father. However, my meager salary was a boon for me, which gave me the freedom to spend on myself. The first time, I realized the power of money (and she laughed with teary eyes in the video call). Being a teacher gave me a feeling of self-importance and autonomy. I began to buy new things based on my needs and desires. I struggled a lot to be here in this position as a secondary-level teacher.(Sita)

Sita sensed the value of autonomy after getting a salary. She made less money through her salary, but that money was precious to her as she could utilize it to be happy. Her happiness earned by her money and independence gave her value in her surroundings. At her home, her words were heard. Her relatives were envious of her success because they could not suppress or exploit her emotionally or physically. Reetu said,

My financial strength enabled me to invest my money and time for my professional growth. Nowadays, I do not take permission; rather, I give information about my outings or involvement in academic or financial activities. Continuous earning gives me pleasure and power. (Reetu)

Investing ideas can take shape if an individual has access to use of the economy. Reetu suggested that her monthly income enabled her to update her skills for teaching the English language. She can afford the costs required for her further education and training. The secretary of the United States, Clinton, said,' When women participate in the economy, everyone benefits' in remarks at the Clinton Global Initiative America event in Chicago in 2013 (ABC News, 2013). Indeed, women take care of their families, and the benefits are used for the family members as per their needs. The income of women provides security and lessens ongoing financial anxiety and dread. It can also bring about a sense of fulfillment and materialistic happiness. Without question, '*having regular income has a significant impact on the well-being, security, access to resources, and growth chances*' as claimed by Sita.

Women can spend money for their growth and happiness to feel empowered. Financial empowerment is key to surviving a better quality of life. Being financially stable can help one to be less anxious as unforeseen circumstances or any burden can be resolved with the help of money. All my research participants agreed on the importance of money and their income in their lives and for their families.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how Maithil women English teachers achieved empowerment teaching through integrating technology in the classrooms, which helped them to acquire the objectives of teaching and learning programs. The knowledge of English and ICT applications in ELT helped Maithil women teachers to establish themselves in the professions. It got empowered, which boosted their confidence to get many opportunities and be able to make decisions in their personal and professional life. They have enabled themselves to listen or remove contradictions from their life. Their financial strength kept them strong enough to be heard and positioned in their life as a valuable person.

CHAPTER VII

KEY INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION, REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I drew insights from the participants' perspectives. Conclusions are based on the participants' narratives, including their stories of the struggles, challenges, education, delivery of teaching, using suitable technology in teaching purposes, the challenges they overcame in their personal and professional life, and how they have gained empowerment. My quest portrays ideas, stories, ways, feelings, opinions, realities, and experiences explored based on visits, observation, communication/talk, and interviews. I brought all those things within the frame of research questions and objectives. My thematic analysis was based on the collected contents. Whatever contents were collected, I analyzed them thematically.

Key Insights

In my study, I addressed two research questions: how do Maithil women English teachers narrate their experiences applying ICTs in classrooms? How does the use of ICT empower Maithil women teachers in ELT in a Nepali sociocultural context? The main objectives of my study were to understand the struggles of Maithil women teachers in teaching English, their integration of ICTs in the classroom during and after COVID-19, and how they feel empowered. I analyzed my research participants' stories to document and understand their struggles in teaching the English language and their empowerment with the proficiency of English and the application of ICTs in teaching purposes within the theoretical framework of Sen's capability approach. Empowerment and knowledge of ICT and English are separate domains; however, integrating ICTs into English language teaching has been a motivating factor for empowering Maithil women English teachers.

My study found that Maithil women teachers have struggled much from the beginning of their studenthood to teacherhood. They have paved their academic path by handling their household duties at home and trying their best during their student and teacher hoods. Through their stories, they have proved that they have a strong willpower and energy to modify their content and skills for teaching. In addition to being multitaskers and responsible human beings, they have struggled from childhood for higher education and have resisted general inequality, gender inequality, and the

artificial economic crisis. They worked tirelessly for the day for their professional stability.

Due to patriarchal sociocultural tradition and strong gender inequality, Maithil women do not get proper help at home and in the workplace. Dual responsibilities are typical for these women. In the Maithil community, the orthodox people criticize a male family member if he helps his woman in the kitchen and laundry, cleaning the house, and looking after their children. Despite multiple roles and responsibilities, my research participants worked efficiently at a school. The stories they presented showed that they had struggled much in their professional career. Their stories revealed they are hardworking, caring, sensitive, punctual, energetic, and independent women.

I explored Maithil women English language teachers' struggles in teaching English. Maithil society prioritizes men, not women. Despite these stereotypes, my research participants share their stories of struggles for their education. They shared that they resisted the restrictions of their family, society, school, and workplace. They struggled to learn about and update their digital skills to ease their teaching so that they could engage their students effectively in English language learning. They seem to struggle with their knowledge and skills regarding applying educational technology and using ICTs in ELT. They have difficulty in adjusting to a big family, focusing more on household chores and compromising to live in other's houses for education. Socially, they have pest issues like relatives' interference and a struggle between household responsibilities and teaching duties.

In the academic institution, Maithil women teachers did not find any motivation for their profession. They found more exploitation compared to male teachers. In the workplace, they face gender discrimination, inequality, no democratic environment, and less participation in decision-making in private institutions. The Maithil woman teachers were able to empower them as empowerment theory is an interactive process that helps to experience social and personal change. It helps to transform social, economic, and psychological status.

I found that proficiency in English has empowered them in the Nepali socio-cultural context. The skills and knowledge of integrating ICTs into ELT empowered them in their profession. Maithil women teachers struggled to get higher education. They faced cultural dominance. They were not asked their opinion, even on important issues, but rather decisions made by parents or in-laws imposed on them. Financial

stability has been a way to empower women teachers. Unwillingly, Maithil women are disturbed by cultural dominance and absurd ideas regarding dual burdens, inferior positions at home and a school workplace, and preferences of boys for higher education than girls. They could not participate in the decision-making issues at home. The women teachers' financial stability allowed them to spend money of their own will. The capability approach has helped them get higher education, creating better opportunities and securing their financial future. Despite many challenges, my participants break the boundaries of limitations towards the development of academic knowledge and skills in teaching English. Also, the skills of integrating ICTs in ELT have become a tool for fully effective teaching in the classroom. This integration has made them more capable of knowing that potential.

The narratives of my research participants reveal that empowerment comes from power. Power comes from education and income. They realize that their English knowledge and ability to integrate ICTs into teaching help them acquire independence.

Female educators demonstrated a strong dedication to their studies and domestic duties from an early age. From all these women's narratives, I found that educated people can fight in any situation. They know and understand their strength and feel empowered to manage difficult situations and multitask. They attend independence and can raise their voice against any biases and discrimination against them. The upgraded status substantially contributed significantly to their empowerment, encouraging their self-confidence and communication skills to succeed personally and professionally. A strong grasp of the English language and applying ICTs in ELT help women teachers move toward their objectives and acquire stable positions.

Conclusion

The narratives of the research participants portray that they were empowered in the long run. Their hard work, strong willpower, and continuous income contributed to keeping them updated as professionals. The dual burden of responsibilities between school and home does not stop them from pursuing their dream life. Continuous education has broadened their vision of life. Later, their earnings encourage them to invest in them and fulfill their desire. They realized the power of education and money from their earning when they suffered from the artificial crisis caused by their parents or in-laws. The constitution of Nepal has a law

that all Nepali citizens are equal and no discrimination against any Nepali based on region, caste, religion, sex, color, language or any other ground. Many biases and differences with patriarchal bargains create hurdles and set boundaries for women.

The Maithil women teachers' knowledge and skills of English with the technology helps them to continue their profession. Their profession appears to be the source of their economic stability and heightens their status, enhancing their value in their society.

My research participants are aware of women's rights and the exploitation due to social, cultural, and traditional dogmas. They can take a stand for themselves but follow many social and cultural norms unwillingly to maintain family peace. They faced more challenges at home than in the office. They do not knock the court as they grow up in a family where women are cultured to be tolerant and vulnerable from a very early age. Going to court or to the police degrades the family's prestige.

The knowledge of ICTs and their application in teaching has made my research participants powerful women from powerless women. They empowered themselves from the struggles they faced in their lives. They overcame difficult situations created at their home and institution. Their profession helps them to gain economic stability and freedom. Being independent and educated, Maithil women teachers can use their power to lessen differences, misconceptions, and traditions targeted at them. However, they can be partially free from such issues, which may hamper their personal and professional good. Their male partners strongly believed that all the power household responsibilities come under the women's responsibilities. Helping them is just a choice for their husband, not an obligation.

Educated and financially established women can bring positive changes in their lives. They have earned a strong voice that affects their home and school. Their education and income make them more powerful than uneducated and dependent women and lessen the gender gap between men and women in the family.

Finally, after analyzing all the stories of my research participants, I concluded that the empowerment of Maithil women teachers does not come easily. These women have crossed a long journey full of struggle, challenges, and scarcity. A patriarchal mindset and double responsibilities create the main hurdles to their professional growth. However, Maithil women teachers' knowledge, skills, determination, and salary income enhance their capacity to be empowered and give them the power to achieve their desired goals in life.

Reflection

My dream was full of insights, knowledge, skills, comprehension, and contemplation. The journey headed from home to the School of Education, Kathmandu University. I rowed three boats at a time as my obligations and responsibilities bound me tightly. I was managing my home, my profession, and my studies. As a Maithil woman, managing a family, job, and study was tough. Despite my difficulties, I chose this path, leading to wonderful educational destinations. Since learning for a teacher never stops, I pursued my academics ahead by joining MPhil (ELE) degree at the School of Education, Kathmandu University.

After filling out the online form of admission call, I attended the entrance exam within a given time frame. I was very nervous about the questions and the time allocated. The entrance exam had subjective questions based on broader concepts related to education. I attended the exam at the University. After the written exam, two professors interviewed me. I was very nervous then. Anyhow, I answered all the questions based on my knowledge and experiences. The result was published within a week. My name was on the merit list. After the admission, I came to Kathmandu to attend the class for two weeks. I was very happy in the new environment. After a long time, I spent quality time on myself. The class hour was long but very skill- and content-oriented. I simultaneously came across many ideas of learning and teaching - how to search, apply, and prepare resources for teaching and learning purposes.

Previously, I had no idea how to search and cite. Gradually, I learned to search many resources on online platforms and began to cite to give credit to the owner. I came to know the consequences of plagiarism in research. For this, professors taught me how to avoid plagiarism in writing and focus on developing natural writing. They taught me to select research topics, read an abstract, and find the main ideas from the papers.

In the first semester, I selected my research topic and read many papers, but I found research methodology very tough in my second semester. When I shared my confusion with my professor, he provided many books and materials to read and review. My professor helped me write the proposal by reading it line by line. Without his constant help and support, I would not have been able to make a draft of my proposal. I learned new ideas on post-colonialism and decolonization. My professors' knowledge, hard work, and academic contributions have always inspired me. In the third semester, I learned about writing reflections and my academic writing. My

writing was very poor. Professors showed concern about my writing and provided full guidance for transforming my writing. They provided me with enough materials and guidance for my writing enhancement.

I needed help with the data collection procedure for my thesis. I approached about fifteen candidates for choosing my research participants, but I found it very difficult to convince Maithil women teachers to share their experiences. They showed less interest in disclosing the obstacles of their life journey. However, some women teachers agreed to share their stories. I am interested in their cooperation. I learned that they had a very tough life. They suffered a lot for their higher education and pursuing their career while maintaining their married life. They have been managing their triple responsibilities, i.e., family, personal, and professional. They got empowered by addressing various issues, breaking stereotypes, and gradually making place and earning status for them. These women's stories have transformed my perspectives on life and struggles.

To improve my writing, my thesis supervisor helped me a lot. He was always a source of inspiration for me. He instructed me at each step of my writing. He asked me to write chapter-wise and read between the lines. He always reminded me about completing my thesis on time. During my thesis work, I found positive changes in my perceptions and a massive improvement in my write-up. It upgraded my skills and broadened my horizon of knowledge.

The entire process of my journey of research writing developed my insights, working disciplines, writing level, academic information and the value of completing the work in time. Unfortunately, I could not manage punctuality in my work due to my personal stuff. This journey helped me boost my confidence level in my writing and its delivery via presentation. It is a worthy experience with experts for learning and sharing knowledge.

Finally, I remember all the people who directly and indirectly contributed to this thesis work and changed my perception of struggle.

Implications of the Study

This study is based on Maithil women teachers' narratives of struggles, failures, achievements, capability enhancement and empowerment. It highlights the deep concern about their professional journey as updated teachers. The derived stories may be practical insights for all the professional scholars who belong to ELT in Nepal. For the researchers who want to study further about Maithil women teachers or

the diverse community of Nepal, the information of this study will contribute to them. The issues that have been explored in the course of research are important for ELT teachers and policymakers in order to broaden their knowledge. Furthermore, the narratives of Maithil women teachers clearly provide the real challenges they face on their personal and professional grounds, which can be resolved by understanding equity perspective, positive discrimination and affirmative action toward them. In addition, it is equally crucial, useful, and worthwhile for all the ELT practitioners in Nepal. The implications of the present study are that it confirms that the concerned authority needs to pay proper attention and formulate a policy regarding ICT tools and applications and teaching English.

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