

EXPLORING ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES ON
THE CURRENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN NEPAL

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A Dissertation

Submitted to
School of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Education in English Language Teaching

Kathmandu University
Dhulikhel, Nepal

October 2025

AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Sabina Tamang* for the degree of *Master in English Language Teaching*, presented on *14 October, 2025* entitled *Exploring English Teachers' Perceptions and Practices on the Current Assessment System in Nepal*.

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An assessment is an inevitable component of teaching learning process. It should not be considered only as a tool to measure the achievement of the students' learning outcomes. Instead of taking it as a separate entity, it should be aligned with teaching learning activities to achieve the intended learning objectives. However, in the context of Nepal, the examination system guides the teaching learning process. Instead of incorporating both formative and summative assessments, summative assessment works dominantly in the process of assessing students' knowledge, language competence, and skills.

This study explored the Nepali English language teachers' perceptions and experiences in assessment practices. This study followed interpretive research paradigm and adopted narrative inquiry as a research method. I purposively selected four secondary-level English language teachers teaching in private and public schools of Taplejung district as participants in which one was female and others were males. The participants had more than 10 years of teaching experiences. I took several rounds of in-depth interviews to understand their assessment practices. After that, I transcribed and translated the collected information and formed the codes out of that information. I generated the themes by categorizing the codes. Moreover, Gardner's multiple intelligence theory guides this study.

The findings revealed that English language teachers take assessment as both a ritual and a burden. They carried out the assessment in a traditional way (i.e. assessment of learning). They used tests, terminal, and final examinations as the main tool of assessing students' knowledge and skills. Furthermore, English language

teachers do not give equal emphasis to all language skills during teaching and assessment. They prioritize reading and writing skills which is from examination perspective. It shows that assessment of learning still dominates over assessment for learning and assessment as learning.

This study implies that there is the essence of trainings for teachers to carry out the assessment effectively in their classroom. The curriculum designers and policymakers have to take this issue seriously and work on the school-level assessment system. The strict supervision should be done in every school regarding the effective implementation of both formative and summative assessment. The teachers have to be taught the ways of integrating assessment in teaching learning process to enhance the students' learning.

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14 October 2025

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शोध सार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि सबिना तामाङको शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक " नेपालमा वर्तमान मूल्याङ्कन प्रणालीमा अंग्रेजी शिक्षकहरूको धारणा र अभ्यासहरूको अन्वेषण " २८ असोज २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

.....

सुरेन्द्र प्रसाद भट्ट

शोध निर्देशक

मूल्याङ्कन शिक्षण सिकाइ प्रक्रियाको एक अपरिहार्य घटक हो। यसलाई विद्यार्थीहरूको सिकाइ परिणामहरूको उपलब्धि मापन गर्ने उपकरणको रूपमा मात्र लिनु हुँदैन। यसलाई छुट्टै संस्थाको रूपमा लिनुको सट्टा, यसलाई अभिप्रेत सिकाइ उद्देश्यहरू प्राप्त गर्न शिक्षण सिकाइ गतिविधिहरूसँग मिलाउनु पर्छ। यद्यपि, नेपालको सन्दर्भमा, परीक्षा प्रणालीले शिक्षण सिकाइ प्रक्रियालाई मार्गदर्शन गर्दछ। रचनात्मक र सारांशात्मक दुवै मूल्याङ्कनहरू समावेश गर्नुको सट्टा, सारांशात्मक मूल्याङ्कनले विद्यार्थीहरूको ज्ञान, भाषा क्षमता र सीपहरूको मूल्याङ्कन गर्ने प्रक्रियामा प्रमुख रूपमा काम गर्दछ।

यस अध्ययनले मूल्याङ्कन अभ्यासहरूमा अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षकहरूको धारणा र अनुभवहरूको अन्वेषण गर्‍यो। यो अध्ययनले व्याख्यात्मक अनुसन्धान प्रतिमानलाई पछ्यायो र कथा सोधपुछलाई अनुसन्धान विधिको रूपमा अपनायो। मैले ताप्लेजुङ जिल्लाका निजी र सार्वजनिक विद्यालयहरूमा पढाउने चार माध्यमिक-स्तरीय अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षकहरूलाई सहभागीको रूपमा उद्देश्यपूर्वक चयन गरेँ जसमा एक महिला र अन्य पुरुष थिए। सहभागीहरूको १० वर्षभन्दा बढी शिक्षण अनुभव थियो। मैले तिनीहरूको मूल्याङ्कन अभ्यासहरू बुझ्न धेरै चरणहरूको गहन अन्तर्वार्ता लिएँ। त्यसपछि, मैले सङ्कलन गरिएको जानकारीलाई ट्रान्सक्राइब र अनुवाद गरेँ र त्यो जानकारीबाट कोडहरू बनाएँ। मैले कोडहरू वर्गीकरण गरेर विषयवस्तुहरू उत्पन्न गरेँ। यसबाहेक, गार्डनरको बहु-बुद्धिमत्ता सिद्धान्तले यस अध्ययनलाई मार्गदर्शन गर्दछ।

निष्कर्षहरूले पत्ता लगाए कि अंग्रेजी भाषाका शिक्षकहरूले मूल्याङ्कनलाई अनुष्ठान र बोझ दुवैको रूपमा लिन्छन्। तिनीहरूले मूल्याङ्कनलाई परम्परागत तरिकाले (अर्थात् सिकाइको मूल्याङ्कन) गरे। तिनीहरूले विद्यार्थीहरूको ज्ञान र सीपहरूको मूल्याङ्कन गर्ने मुख्य उपकरणको रूपमा परीक्षण, टर्मिनल र अन्तिम परीक्षाहरू प्रयोग गरे। यसबाहेक, अंग्रेजी भाषाका शिक्षकहरूले शिक्षण र मूल्याङ्कनको क्रममा सबै भाषा सीपहरूलाई समान जोड दिँदैनन्। तिनीहरूले पठन र लेखन सीपहरूलाई प्राथमिकता दिन्छन् जुन परीक्षाको दृष्टिकोणबाट हो। यसले देखाउँछ कि सिकाइको मूल्याङ्कन अझै पनि सिकाइको लागि मूल्याङ्कन र सिकाइको रूपमा मूल्याङ्कनमाथि हावी छ।

यस अध्ययनले शिक्षकहरूलाई उनीहरूको कक्षाकोठामा प्रभावकारी रूपमा मूल्याङ्कन गर्न तालिमको सार रहेको संकेत गर्दछ। पाठ्यक्रम डिजाइनरहरू र नीति निर्माताहरूले यो मुद्दालाई गम्भीरतापूर्वक लिनुपर्छ र स्कूल-स्तरको मूल्याङ्कन प्रणालीमा काम गर्नुपर्छ। निर्माणात्मक र सारांशात्मक मूल्याङ्कन दुवैको प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनको सम्बन्धमा प्रत्येक विद्यालयमा कडा निगरानी गरिनुपर्छ। विद्यार्थीहरूको सिकाइ बढाउन शिक्षकहरूलाई शिक्षण सिकाइ प्रक्रियामा मूल्याङ्कनलाई एकीकृत गर्ने तरिकाहरू सिकाउनुपर्छ।

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२८ असोज २०८२

सबिना तामाङ

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation entitled *Exploring English Teachers' Perceptions and Practices on the Current Assessment System in Nepal* presented by Sabina Tamang on 14 October 2025.

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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 scholar upon request for academic purposes.

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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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DEDICATION

This dissertation is passionately devoted to my Living God, Mr. Om Prakash Rai.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere and highest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Surendra Prasad Bhatt, for his regular feedback, support, and motivation. His guidance and unwavering support made me to bring the dissertation to this shape.

I cannot forget Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi, PhD, my well-wisher, who made me a part of KUSOED and his evergreen support and guidance made me over here. Similarly, I also extend my wholehearted thanks to the head of the department, Assoc. Prof. Tikaram Paudel, PhD for his encouragement and guidance throughout the entire masters' program. Likewise, I am thankful to the external examiner, Dinesh Sanjel for providing in-depth and suggestive feedback. Moreover, I would like to thank Manda Pokhrel, who always kept on pushing me to complete the dissertation on time. In addition, I am equally grateful to Hiralal Kapar for his untiring support in broadening my horizons of knowledge on research.

Similarly, I am incredibly grateful to Prof. Hem Raj Kafle, PhD, whose suggestions and in-depth feedback on my proposal helped me to shape my dissertation. How can I forget the gem of our University, Assoc. Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD, Dean of School of Education, whose innovative ideas and far-sighted vision made KUSOED a point of attraction. I am the one who always sees for the opportunities to attend his breathtaking sessions and talks.

This dissertation cannot be considered as a complete work without thanking UGC for providing me full scholarship to complete my master's program. Furthermore, I would like to offer my warmest gratitude to all my facilitators who always inspired me to do more and sees the possibilities of doing more on me.

Finally, I want to express my hearty thanks to my second parents Mr. Om Prakash Rai and Mrs. Soni Sherpa Rai, my sisters Sushmita Tamang and Suzana Tamang, and my brother, Osho Rai who were always there by my side in all situations.

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14 October, 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
ABBREVIATIONS	v
CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
An Encounter with Foreigners	1
Is Exam Greater than Life?	2
Problem Statement	3
Rationale of the Study.....	5
Research Purpose	6
Research Question	6
Delimitations of the Study	6
Chapter Summary	6
CHAPTER II.....	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	7
Understanding Assessment in Language Learning.....	7
Approaches to Assessment	8
Assessment for Learning.....	8
Assessment as Learning.....	9
Assessment of Learning.....	10
Assessment in Nepal	11
Multiple Intelligence Theory	12
Review of the Previous Studies	14
Gap Analysis	16
Chapter Summary	17

CHAPTER III	18
METHODOLOGY	18
Philosophical Considerations.....	18
Ontology	18
Epistemology	18
Axiology	19
Research Paradigm.....	19
Narrative Inquiry.....	20
Participants Selection Process and Profiles.....	21
Kishor.....	21
Ashok	22
Man Kumar	22
Bhima Devi	23
Data Collection Techniques and Process	23
Data Analysis	24
Quality Standards.....	24
Truthfulness	24
Reflexivity.....	24
Authenticity.....	25
Credibility	25
Conformability	25
Ethical Standards	25
Informed Consent.....	25
No Harm and Risk	25
Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity	26
Chapter Summary	26
CHAPTER IV	27

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON CURRENT ASSESSMENT	27
Assessment as a Learning Barrier.....	27
Formative Assessment: A Daunting Task.....	30
Assessment for Students' All-Round Development	33
Chapter Summary	35
CHAPTER V	37
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF CURRENT ASSESSMENT	37
Unequal Practices in Teaching Language Skills.....	37
Superficial Internal Assessment.....	40
Chapter Summary	43
CHAPTER VI	44
KEY INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION, AND REFLECTION	44
Key Insights	44
Conclusion	45
Navigating My Interest in Research	46
REFERENCES	48

ABBREVIATIONS

CDC	Curriculum Development Center
ELT	English Language Teaching
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
DLE	District Level Examination
SEE	Secondary Education Examination
MI	Multiple Intelligence
GT	Grammar Translation
MoE	Ministry of Education
GPA	Grade Point Average
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
EL	English Language
LAK	Language Assessment Knowledge
AfL	Assessment for Learning
AaL	Assessment as Learning
UGC	University Grants Commission
VVI	Very Very Important

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Assessment plays a significant role in the teaching learning process and assists learners achieve the specified objectives. I began this chapter unfolding my personal experiences and the contexts that triggered me to carry out the study. Furthermore, I showed the gaps that exist between assessment and real-world context, reflecting on my experiences along with problem statement. Moreover, the rationale of the study, research purpose and questions are mentioned in this chapter.

An Encounter with Foreigners

It was in the month of October 2019 AD, when three foreigners from Europe came to visit Taplejung (one of the districts of Nepal); a place where the world's third-highest mountain, Mt. Kanchengjuna and one of the famous pilgrimage sites, Pathibhara temple are located. They decided to stay at our home for a night. I was the only one in my entire family as the medium of communication between them and us, as my parents did not know English. However, I failed to communicate with them well. I felt pathetic for not answering their several questions regarding the resorts and parks of the locality. As I reflected this incident, it took me back to my school days.

I grew up in a school environment which prioritized rote learning and memorization rather than creativity and comprehension. There was not even a single day on which my English teacher conducted listening and speaking activities in the classroom. I still remember those sleepless nights memorizing essays on several topics and grammar rules provided by teachers. It was fortunate that there was an essay in the final District Level Examination (DLE) from the same memorized topics. I just vomited memorized words and sentences on the exam paper without missing even any punctuation marks in the fastest speed as I had the fear of forgetting specific words and sentences. At that time, the teachers taught English to us using Grammar-Translation (GT) method and they considered those students as brilliant who can memorize multiple pages.

The teachers evaluated the students based on certain skills like memorization and writing. In this line, Gyawali (2021) mentioned that the examination system of Nepal promotes the culture of remembering, restoring, and recalling instead of developing comprehension and practical knowledge. Due to the culture of assessing

the students based on specific hours of written exams, they lag in many practical aspects of their lives like life skills, everyday communication, and leadership. We can take example of our SEE graduates completing 13 years English course, hesitate to communicate in English. But a person studying 3-6 months can communicate properly in Japanese or Korean language.

My parents admitted me in one of the best private schools of Birtamode, Jhapa (one of the districts of Nepal) for my grade 9 and 10 even it was out of their hands so that I can learn English. I learnt English but that was limited only on the examination paper. This means that I always scored more than 80 in English and even scored 91 in SLC. My parents were so proud of me as I was a distinction holder. But, when it came to real-life context, having conversations with foreigners felt like climbing high mountains without oxygen cylinders. My parents' pride fell into sadness when I stuttered frequently during conversation. These events reflected that teaching learning processes were isolated from real-world communication. The main emphasis was only on passing the examinations with good marks and percentage. The examination worked only as a tool to measure the students' knowledge and skills mainly based on the cognitive skills of the students, detaching from the real-world scenarios. I came to realize that all these happened due to our assessment system that allocates unequal distribution of marks for language skills.

Even though changes evolve in the assessment system of education in Nepal, the teachers rely only on summative examinations such as final term examinations and high-stakes standardization tests to measure students' achievement, which focus only on a few language skills (mainly reading and writing) with grammar. This results in the promotion of fear and detestation on students (Sigdel & Sherpa, 2024). It means that instead of fostering and supporting the students' learning, they have been threatening by standardized tests. All these situations intrigued me to conduct this study on teachers' perceptions and assessment practices.

Is Exam Greater than Life?

The word 'assessment' was taken from the Latin word "assidere" meaning "to sit beside or with" (Wiggins, 1993). This means that assessment should be carried out during teaching learning activities supporting it. However, in the month of July 2024, when I was scrolling Facebook, I saw a post entitled, "*Is exam greater than life?*". I went through it and it was all about the suicide attempts did by students after their Secondary Education Examination (SEE) results.

The SEE results of 2080 gave heartbreaking news to everyone. More than 50% (i.e. 52.13%) students scored non-graded (NG) in the results (Dhakal, 2024). On top of that, many students committed suicide due to the unexpected results. All these bad incidents have been happening for a long time. For instance, Oli (2019) reported that a student named Aron Sharma (name changed) from Bajura (one of the districts of Nepal) committed suicide due to poor results in SEE despite his good attempt. Similarly, 87 cases were found to be suspected to have committed suicide due to poor academic performance, among which 46.6% cases were from Grade-10 students (Mishra et al., 2013). Furthermore, I heard through my relatives and friends frequently that twenty-three government schools of different rural municipalities of Taplejung had null result in 2080's SEE. Moreover, Ghimire (2025) shared that even though there had a remarkable improvement in the SEE results of 2081 (i.e. 61.81%) as compared to 2080, students did not do well in English in comparison to other subjects. This shows that there is lack of experienced and trained English teachers. Furthermore, this questions the teachers and their pedagogical strategies. Not only that, it also puts questions on the current assessment system. In spite of the inclusion of both formative and summative assessments to evaluate the students' achievement, schools rely mainly on summative assessment due to several problems including inadequate resource materials and teachers limit, imbalance proportion of students' numbers, no monitoring from authorities and ignorance of guardians (Nepali, 2012). As a result, the assessment system threatens the students rather than fostering their learning.

All the aforementioned incidents show that the assessment system mainly the standardized tests put pressure on the students, compelling them to memorize the abstract concepts which are of no use even leading to the destroyal of their lives instead of developing physically, morally and emotionally. So, it is the serious time to rethink about the recent assessment system of Nepal.

Problem Statement

Assessment; an essential component of pedagogy, should be aligned with the daily classroom activities to achieve the intended objectives. It emphasizes not only on the nature of the learner, but also on what is to be learned and how (Payne, 2003). Therefore, it cannot be detached from teaching learning activities. According to National Curriculum Framework (2021), both formative and summative assessment tools should be incorporated to evaluate students' knowledge and skills and to

evaluate the students' holistic learning. To be specific, 25% weightage is allotted for formative assessment whereas summative assessment carries 75% weightage (Secondary Education English Curriculum, 2021). The teachers were positive regarding the implementation of formative assessment in their classrooms (Kafle & Neupane, 2025; Rai, 2019); however, in the process of implementation, they encountered several challenges including large classroom size, insufficient resources, inadequate teachers' trainings, limited time, unsupportive school environment (Ghimire, 2023; Kafle & Neupane, 2025; Khadka, 2017). Due to all these challenges, the teachers have to rely mainly on summative assessment. In the way, Ur (2013) also defined summative assessment as the process of assessing students' performances based on their achieved grades mainly in percentage without any feedback indicating the completion of the specific academic year. At the same time, low performance students get demotivated and show less interest towards their learning. In result, students do not participate actively and interactively in the classroom activities.

In contrast, formative assessment stresses on students' improvement by providing regular feedback. In this regard, Cowie and Bell (1999) defined formative assessment as a process conducted during the ongoing teaching learning activities providing feedback to teachers and learners to enhance the students' learning outcomes. It assists the students' learning by pointing out their strengths and weaknesses and even provides them opportunities to bring positives changes in their studies. Despite its effectiveness, there occurs several problems in the practice of formative assessment in public schools such as unsupportive school environment, unbearable workload, limited time, lack of training on formative assessment (Khadka, 2017). All these challenges hinder teachers to practice formative assessment effectively in their classrooms.

The English curriculum of Nepal aims to develop learners' communicative competence. However, it does not give equal emphasis to all language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSWR). According to Secondary Education English Curriculum (2021), 8 marks each is allotted for listening and speaking skills whereas 40 marks for reading and 24 marks for writing. This shows that there is unequal distribution of marks among all language skills in the process of assessing students' knowledge. Furthermore, in the real scenario of the English language classroom and assessment also, teachers emphasize more on reading and writing skills (Acharya, 2025). Moreover, the teachers make students focus more on rote learning

rather than promoting creativity and comprehension (Gautam, 2014). At the end of every academic year, their achievement is evaluated by 2 or 3 hours of paper-pencil tests focusing on cognitive skill only, but have we ever asked ourselves questions like: Do the limited hours paper-pencil tests address the needs and potentialities of each student?, Is certain hours exam fair for them? What is the outcome of the annual exam? Does the annual exam bring changes in the students' behaviours? It is the time for the concerned authorities to give vigilant eyes to the culture of evaluating the students based on certain hours of written exams focusing only on certain skills. In the same vein, Gyawali (2021) also asserted that our evaluation system focuses more on abstract knowledge, featuring those students as intelligent who can reproduce what is taught in class. So, the traditional assessment that promotes only memorization and rote learning should be reviewed.

All these aforementioned information indicate that despite the fact that formative assessment being introduced in the curriculum, it still remains in shadow in the real classroom practice. In this regard, Saud et al. (2024) also highlighted that formative assessment being carried out in traditional ways. Similarly, the study by Sapkota (2022) found that written examination as a dominant assessment tool for evaluating students' achievement. Furthermore, Sigdel and Sherpa (2024) put their arguments against the existing assessment practices of Nepal and advocated for valid, reliable, learners-engaged, and goal-oriented assessment. Therefore, to explore how the English language teachers' perceive and practice the current assessment system, I carried out this research study.

Rationale of the Study

Assessment and teaching learning activities should run in a parallel manner for effective learning. The assessment stresses more on enhancing students' learning instead of marking certain grades for the completion of the course (Rogler, 2014). However, in the context of Nepal, summative assessment: written examinations guide the teaching learning activities. The educational assessment system of Nepal promotes fear of failure, self-doubt, cheating, and feelings of anxiety among the students, as opposed to the definitions of assessment. Moreover, students are taught from the exam point of view, focusing on board exams. Therefore, this study explored the EL teachers' perceptions and practices related to the current assessment system.

This study updates teachers with the current assessment system and their effectiveness. It makes them aware of the implementation process of it for the

student's overall development. Not only that, but this study also works as a basis for future researchers to carry out research in assessment. They can cover the areas of assessment that are not covered in this research and further explore the innovative assessment strategies that favour our context.

Moreover, the findings of this research add a brick towards rethinking assessment system. The policymakers and curriculum designers can further work on the assessment system and bring some positive changes.

Research Purpose

This study explored the Nepali English Language Teachers' perceptions and practices of the current assessment system of Nepal.

Research Question

This research study answered the given question:

- How do Nepali ELT teachers narrate their perceptions and practices about the current assessment system?

Delimitations of the Study

This study emphasized mainly on the secondary level English language teachers' perceptions and experiences of carrying out assessments in their classrooms. More specifically, it covered four ELT teachers working in different public and private schools of Taplejung district. This study mainly focused on the relevancy of assessment system based on our context. I restricted this study within the multiple intelligence theory.

Chapter Summary

I gave a brief personal anecdote on the assessment system that was carried out by my teachers during my school days. Moreover, I showed the problems that I encountered in real world context in communication even after scoring good marks in the examination. In addition, I showed the gap that exists between policy and classroom practices in the problem statement. Based on the problem statement, I developed the research purpose of exploring the Nepali ELT teachers' perceptions and practices of carrying out assessment in their classrooms. This chapter ends with the inclusion of delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter mainly focused on the discussion of the relevant ideas including assessment in language learning, approaches to assessment, and assessment in Nepal. It also includes the summary of previous researches on assessment followed by policy review. Moreover, it discusses about Multiple Intelligence theory, which I correlated with my research. The discussion on research gap indicates the end of this chapter.

Understanding Assessment in Language Learning

Assessment is the continuous long-term process that goes in parallel with teaching-learning activities. In this regard, Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) asserts that assessment is an everlasting process that includes a broad area of methodological strategies. Different tasks and procedures are used to assess the students' learning outcomes. Similarly, Khaniya (2005) also defined it as the process of analyzing the learning process of learners about the subject matters that the teachers intend them to learn, and argued that assessment is an inseparable part of instruction. It is not only a tool to measure the students' knowledge and skills by conducting tests but a process to improve the students' learning behaviours and attitudes. In the same vein, Almeida et al. (2010) also stated that the information collected through the assessment inform the teachers about the learners' difficulty areas and hence encourage them to work collaboratively towards overcoming those difficulties. Moreover, Bakerson et al. (2015) opined that assessment is the systematic process of collection and documentation of students' learning to evaluate their knowledge, beliefs, or behaviours aiming to enhance all aspects of their learning. Therefore, assessment is considered an inseparable segment of educational instruction to promote quality education.

During 1940s and 1950s, language was tested, focusing on language skills and units of language in an isolated manner with less relevant to real-world authentic communication emphasizing mainly on grammar, vocabulary items, and translation. After that, it was shifted to integrative language testing that stresses on assessing language elements in a unified form rather than in isolation (Oller, 1979). The languages were tested based on cloze tests and dictation. Cloze test emphasizes on supplying the blanks with suitable words or phrases that require language

competence, whereas dictation is a test that requires test-takers to write based on their listening. Communicative language testing has become a prominent way of assessing the ability of language use in real-world contexts and attempts to evaluate what the test-takers can do with language rather than assessing their language knowledge (lexical, grammatical or phonological knowledge). Furthermore, it focuses on fulfilling communicative purposes within real-world contexts (Morrow, 2018). Therefore, communicative language testing is the use of authentic texts to measure the students' communicative skills, focusing on real-world applications.

Approaches to Assessment

Assessment, an inevitable part of educational instruction, has an important role to promote students' learning. Broadly, there are three approaches to assessment: Assessment for, as, and of learning.

Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning indicates the transformative shift from traditional summative assessment to modern formative assessment. It is defined as the process of collecting and evaluating the data that students and their teachers use to find out where a student is, where they should go, and the most effective way to reach there (Budiyono & Mardiyana, 2019). Similarly, William (2006) also stated that the major purpose of AfL is to promote the students' learning. Such assessment practice provides privilege to the teachers to collect more information about the students so that they understand each students' strengths and weaknesses. Knowing each student assists the teachers to adopt appropriate teaching strategies which in result intensifies their learning. It takes place during teaching learning process rather than at the end. This assessment places a strong emphasis on supporting students' learning and progress.

Adopting assessment for learning to evaluate the students' learning progress provides sufficient feedback to both teachers and students to bring improvements in their language teaching and learning process. It motivates the teachers to apply appropriate teaching strategies and encourages the students towards learning. Through consistent feedback and support from teachers, students bring improvements in overall learning including their language skills. The students' knowledge and skills can be enhanced if this assessment is integrated in their classroom practices. Marking is provided to the students not for the purpose of comparative judgements but to understand individual students' strengths and weaknesses. As Tjendani et al. (2019)

argued that AfL teachers view assessment as an investigative tool to learn more about students, their learning, potential biases, and understand their own teaching practices.

This new concept of assessment focuses more on students' learning rather than their achievement. Through this assessment, the teachers get to know to what extent the students become able to grab the shared knowledge. It always encourages the teachers to provide detailed feedback, that comprises not only the grades or scores, but also continuous guidance to achieve specific learning goals (Hwang et al., 2022). Assessment for Learning (AfL) lets the teachers provide detailed feedback to intensify their students' learning enhancing the quality of assessment. Furthermore, it encourages them for active participation in the assessment process to promote active learning in the classroom.

AfL encourages the students active interaction in the process of language learning. Through the study conducted by Lee and Coniam (2013), it was found that AfL brings improvement in the students' writing skills, recommending that AfL facilitates the language learning. Moreover, students involved actively in decision-making process regarding learning objectives, offering constructive feedback, and align assessment with the language instruction. With the adoption of AfL in language instruction, students get the opportunities to enhance their language skills.

Assessment as Learning

Assessment as Learning, a very new concept of assessment that stresses on the active participation of students in the assessment process. Following this assessment, students have to engage actively in the assessment of their own learning. They are their own assessors. Regarding this, Han and Ellis (2018) stated that assessment as learning considers students as subject to assessment promoting self-evaluation. It empowers the students to monitor their own learning and capable them to make decisions regarding next step. It instils the skills of self-monitoring on the students to direct their learning.

Assessment as learning makes students capable to assess their own learning. It encourages the students to involve in the self-correction process and promotes the culture of autonomous learning. Here, the students analyse their works by comparing it to their prior ones and make targets for continuous learning. This considers students at the center of learning and views students as active assessors to foster the development of metacognitive and self-regulated learning skills (Kim et al., 2021).

The students have prime roles in teaching learning instruction and evaluating their works.

The students get the opportunities to learn evaluating skills and mark their learning by themselves. It does not limit the students within knowledge receivers, but makes them critical evaluators by intensifying their knowledge of self-monitoring. It fosters the development of critical analysis and self-analysis on the students and makes them critique. In the same vein, Lam (2015) found that AaL supports students' learning and writing instruction. Moreover, he argued that AaL supports the development of students' language awareness, self-assessment skills, and self-reflection, promotes teacher competence in teaching writing, students' encouragement for learning, and improves text. The students' language skills can be enhanced through self evaluation and peer feedback.

Assessment of Learning

Assessment of learning is the most dominant assessment practices carried out in our classrooms. Adopting this assessment, both teachers and students do not get appropriate feedback. As a result, both of them gets less opportunity to bring improvement in their pedagogical strategies and their learning. This assessment is to certify the students' learning giving them certain grades and promoted them to higher levels. In the same vein, Schellekens et al. (2021) stated that this assessment mainly stresses on measuring learning after the delivery of all materials and used to categorize students and assessment reporter. This assessment system evaluates mainly the memorizing capacity of the students and it promotes the culture of rote learning and cheating. It makes the real learning that is learning for life in shadow. The students learn only for passing exams memorizing all the abstract ideas which is of no meaning in their lives.

Assessment of Learning is the traditional and narrower concept of assessment that mainly focuses on providing grades to the students conducting some tests. It is not fair to evaluate different animals such as fish, monkey, bird, and elephant, which are born with different potentialities based on a specific ability like swimming. This assessment system also emphasizes on evaluating students having diverse potentialities and talents by the same tests which looks unfair to them. Every students' knowledge and skills are measured by the specific test that does not address their diverse potentialities and talents. The students do not get the platform to show their excellency. Such system mainly focuses on certifying the students based on teacher-

made tests that measures only the cognitive skills of the students. It does not cater the psychomotor and affective domains.

This assessment system is taken at the end of the specific course which is also called summative assessment. It does not meet required needs and skills of today's students such as collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, cooperation, and problem-solving skills. Instead of promoting the culture of collaboration and cooperation on students, it instils the competitive habits on them as this assessment mainly emphasizes on comparing the students with each other based on their scored grades. Rather than focusing on students' learning, it mainly prioritizes their achievement. It does not focuses on the enhancement of the language skills.

Assessment in Nepal

The evaluation system emerged along with the beginning of education in Nepal. During Gurukul system, disciples or students were evaluated based on formal and summative examinations. The rote learning and memorization were prioritised rather than comprehension of the text. Nepali Education System Plan introduced the internal evaluation system for the first time to relate the teaching learning process with the evaluation system (Ministry of Education, 1970). In this regard, Shah (2021) also mentioned that NESP has placed a strong emphasis to maintain the students' progress reports, improve measurement systems and make texts authentic and valid.

With the invention and advancement in technologies and changes in teaching pedagogies, evaluation system has undergone several changes. The National Curriculum Framework (2020) emphasized on the inclusion of both formative and summative assessments in equal manner considering both formal and informal assessment strategies. It indicates that there is a policy of 50% formative and 50% summative assessments at the basic level whereas it is 25% formative and 75% summative assessments at the secondary level (Curriculum Development Centre, 2020). Formative assessment as an internal assessment covers different tasks such as students' participation, project work, unit test, terminal exams, etc giving equal priority to all language skills whereas summative assessment as external assessment that includes final examination which covers only reading and writing skills including grammar. It means that students should be evaluated not only on the basis of different formative tools but also considers final examination as an important assessment tool to evaluate the students' learning outcomes.

Instead of finding out the effectiveness of specific type of assessment, it is the time to apply different tools of both types of assessments to encourage students' active participation in the learning process and ingrained learning for life on them. As Sapkota (2022) claimed that both formative and summative assessments are equally important for the enhancement of the pupils' learning. Despite the fact that both are important, most of the public schools of Nepal rely only on summative assessment. This clearly shows that there exists gap between assessment policy and practices. So, this research is carried out to explore how the teachers practice the current assessment system in their classroom contexts.

According to Secondary Education English Curriculum (2021), both formative and summative assessments should be used to assess the students' knowledge and language skills. There is the provision of 25% formative assessment that includes classroom participation, class/unit tests, homework, classwork, project work, listening, speaking, and terminal exams whereas summative assessment comprises written examinations that covers remaining 75% which includes reading, writing, and grammar (Curriculum Development Centre, 2021). Moreover, there is also the provision of alternative assessments for differently-abled students. All these provisions of formative, summative, and alternative assessments are considered for the holistic development of the students.

The curriculum intends students to be competent listeners, speakers, readers, and writers in English. However, there is unequal distribution of marks in the process of assessing students' language skills: 8 marks each for listening and speaking skills, 40 marks for reading, 24 marks for writing, and 11 marks for grammar. Even though the listening and speaking skills are equally important to develop students' communicative competence, due to allocation of 8 marks for each, it discourages the teachers to practice these skills in the classrooms. Moreover, the more emphasis on reading (40 marks) promotes the teachers towards exam-oriented practice. So, this unequal distribution of marks for language skills do not let the students meet the expected learning competencies and objectives. Therefore, the concerned authorities have to take this issue seriously to create balance among learning competencies, objectives, and language assessment.

Multiple Intelligence Theory

Multiple intelligence theory is based on the principle that human intelligence is pluralistic (Gardner, 1983). It focuses on individual students' diverse intellectual

abilities. Every individual is born with some intelligences and the teachers have crucial role to identify their intelligences and foster it. According to Gardner (1983), humans possess eight distinct intelligences that includes logical-mathematical, linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and naturalistic. This theory believes that each individual possesses different cognitive abilities, strengths, and intelligences. Therefore, the different teaching strategies should be adopted by teachers to address diverse intellectual abilities of the learners.

The MI theory creates spaces to conduct interactive and engaging classrooms addressing each learners' needs, interests, and desires. The use of MI theory encourages the teachers to adopt various student-centered teaching learning strategies and promotes lifelong learning on students. It challenges the written examination assessment system traditional and advocates for intelligence-fair tools that recognize and evaluate the diverse strengths of each learner. Viewing assessment as an ongoing and dynamic process, MI theory emphasizes the importance of conducting evaluations in natural, real-life settings where students can demonstrate their abilities authentically.

This theory considers that assessment should be taken during the time of teaching learning. It has argued for paper-pencil tests that are taken to make decisions regarding students' promotion and show the schools' effectiveness. It advocates for the application of differentiated assessment that addresses students' diverse intelligences. In this regard, Grabin (2007) argued that a child should be assessed based on their possessed intelligence providing him opportunities where he can show his excellency rather than questioning his intelligence testing. It means that students' learning should be evaluated by the use of effective assessment strategies that meet every students' interests and potentialities. Focusing on these ideas, this study explored to what extent the teachers have implemented differentiated assessment to address students' multiple intelligences.

According to MI theory, there should be the provision of alternative assessment practices which are very relevant to make the assessment representative, inclusive and more engaging addressing the diverse needs of learners. The Secondary Education English Curriculum (2021) made the provision of alternative assessments to meet the needs of differently-abled students. Even though a great initiative was made by the curriculum, the written examinations are still dominant tool to evaluate the students' abilities and potentialities. In this line, Taufiqi and Purwanto (2024)

explained that traditional assessments emphasizing only on written tests and exams measure only verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, ignoring other intelligences. So, this theory is adopted to advocate for differentiated assessment that addresses students' diverse intelligences. It supports the ongoing formative assessment that focuses on improving students' learning and also promotes holistic learning.

Review of the Previous Studies

Assessment is not a new topic for anyone. Due to its unavoidable significance in teaching learning process, various research have been carried out in this field covering different aspects of the assessment. I studied several research papers in assessment and some of them are given below.

Farhady and Tavassoli (2021) carried out research on EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of their language assessment knowledge (LAK) in order to find out how EFL teachers perceive the significance of LAK and utilize it in their teaching to improve their students' achievement. The participants of the study were twenty one in which eleven had high level of LAK and ten teachers had low level of LAK. The study revealed that high LAK teachers prepared lengthy tests including variety of tasks. However, there was not found any meaningful and direct relationship between teachers' LAK and the students' learning achievement.

Isik (2021) researched how ELT teachers perceive and practice English language assessment in Turkey among 198 ELT teachers from 24 K-12 level schools and eight universities. The study explored how ELT teachers perceive training in English Language Assessment and practice in their classrooms in Turkey. This study revealed that teachers still totally depend on traditional exam-oriented assessments to assess the performance of their students. The ELT teachers perceived assessment just as an official procedure to upgrade their students. It was found to be a kind of forced duty and burden for them as teachers had not attended any formal and informal trainings on assessment.

Sapkota (2022) explored the assessment tools adopted by teachers in their classrooms. The study revealed that the teachers mostly rely on written examinations to indicate the completion of the specific academic year. Furthermore, students were found to be felt bored to write long papers; due to which they expressed their desires to involve in different interactive and participatory activities. Instead of conducting

different collaborative and interactive activities, teachers were found to teach from the examination's perspective rather than focusing on the students' learning.

Similarly, Gyawali (2021) researched on school level evaluation system to find out the main drawbacks of the evaluation system that hinder mental, social and moral growth of the students through content analysis. Different pitfalls were found such as written evaluation system emphasizes only on the memorization and recall of information stored in their mind rather than to use it in real world context. Furthermore, the inequitable relationship was found between Continuous Assessment System and learning facilitation which creates disturbance in the learning outcomes of the students.

Moreover, Sigdel and Sherpa (2024) conducted a study titled Assessment Practices in Community Schools in Nepal. This study explored the learner-centred assessment system that makes students achieve their designed goals exploring the existing assessment practices. It was found that students have some kind of fear regarding high-stakes exam and they seek for the classroom activities that evoke their creativity and motivate them for their participation. Even the practical examinations were found to lack validity, reliability, and trustworthiness.

Furthermore, research entitled Formative Assessment in English Language Classroom: A Narrative Inquiry was carried out by Ghimire (2023) to find out the teacher's understanding and formative assessment practices. This study used narrative inquiry to collect the information. The teachers have clear ideas on formative assessment and formative activities such as presentation, interaction and question answers were used but found to be challenging also due to several reasons such as limited time and resources, resistance to change, and the need for ongoing professional development.

I got several ideas including thematic and methodological concepts after going through different research papers. All these studies were carried out using various research methods covering different aspects of assessment. Most of the studies focused on the importance of formative assessment and its integration in classroom teaching to enhance the students' learning. These papers argued against the summative assessment that do not provide feedback and support to improve students' learning. I realized that students' learning outcomes can be enhanced if assessment is taken as a part of teaching learning process. Different assessment tools have to be

used to engage the students and promote their learning. All these studies emphasized that assessment should be taken as a process rather than as a product.

Gap Analysis

In the journey of writing dissertation, I spent my priceless time going through several dissertations, scholarly papers, and books to get in-depth knowledge related to assessment and explore the practices of assessment worldwide. I came to a conclusion that the research was not carried out narrating the Nepali ELT teachers stories and experiences related to assessment in the most eastern part of Nepal.

Isik (2021) highlighted the ELT teachers' perceptions and practices in assessment focusing on the trainings provided on English language assessment. It was carried out to explore ELT teachers' perceptions and practices related to assessment in Turkey. However, the findings of the study of Isik would not be applicable in the context of Nepal as assessment is affected by various aspects including curriculum, teaching pedagogy, and assessment policy. Similarly, Saud, et al. (2024) explored the internal assessment practices adopted by Secondary level English language teachers but limited the research only on formative assessment. Furthermore, Gyawali (2021) focused his research mainly on the pitfalls of the current evaluation system. However, this study did not bring the lived experiences of the ELT teachers related to assessment practices. Moreover, Dhungel (2024) conducted research on continuous assessment practices in private schools of Kathmandu. It was an in-depth study but, it did not cover summative assessment. I found that Sapkota (2022) has highlighted the assessment tools used in different public schools of Nepal. Similarly, Sigdel and Sherpa (2024) advocated for learners-friendly, valid, reliable and authentic assessment exploring the existing assessment practices of community schools of Kathmandu valley.

The previous studies did not cover the lived experiences and practices of ELT teachers in assessment. Furthermore, the previous studies have suggested that researchers can carry out further studies covering different aspects of assessment in the future. This research fills the gap by narrating Nepali ELT teachers' experiences and practices on assessment. To my understandings, it was found that researches covering assessment area has been carried out in a limited access despite it's high prospect for enhancing and promoting students' learning. Hence this study shows the existing gaps between policy and practices and works as an initiative towards rethinking assessment.

Chapter Summary

I studied various research articles, non-research papers, and books to broaden my knowledge regarding assessment. At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed several themes such as assessment in language learning, approaches to assessment, and assessment in Nepal. After that, I explored multiple intelligence theory which I found relevant to my study. Then, I presented any six research papers related to assessment focusing mainly on purpose, methodology, findings, and future directions. I reviewed the policy document related to assessment of Nepal that I included within the theme Assessment in Nepal. All these studies helped me to find out the gap for my research study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This third chapter discusses the methodology of my study. It begins with the philosophical considerations: ontology, epistemology, and axiology followed by an interpretive research paradigm that guides my whole research. It incorporates narrative inquiry, research sites and participants, data collection process and analysis. The inclusion of quality standards and ethical considerations that were considered while carrying out this research indicates the closing of this chapter.

Philosophical Considerations

Philosophical considerations refer to the assumptions and beliefs that guide the entire research. It works as a foundation to select research design and method to conduct research. As a researcher, s/he has to understand the philosophical considerations to provide shape to the research study. It includes ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions.

Ontology

The ontology of research design mainly deals with the nature of reality. Scotland (2012) states that ontology deals with the beliefs we establish so that we can believe that something is true. The ontology of my research tells me that there exists multiple realities and it is influenced by the participants' experiences, social environment and their perceptions. I believe that truth is relative. It means that it differs from individual to individual and is created based on their perceptions and experiences. So, my ontological stance asserts that there does not exist fixed and absolute truth rather than there exists subjective realities regarding the concept, perception, and practices of assessment in school level.

Epistemology

Epistemology focuses on the construction of knowledge. Saldana (2015) believes epistemology is a different form of knowledge and nature that explains how knowledge is generated and communicated. It helps to understand how do I know what I know. As a narrative researcher, I believe that knowledge is constructed through the shared narratives of the participants. Furthermore, it is based on the shared information and interactions with the participants regarding the existing

assessment system. Their individual experiences, notions, beliefs and stories help to construct the knowledge for my research.

Axiology

Every research is guided by certain beliefs, ideas and ethics. Creswell (2009) believed that axiology means integrating the researchers' values and beliefs into the research work to generate new information. It is also called theory of value. Heron (1996) argues that the beliefs and values have prominent roles in guiding all the actions of human beings. Following interpretive paradigm, I value all the participants' narratives as each individual is guided by his/her own values and beliefs. The experiences and shared knowledge of every research participant are value-laden not value-free.

Research Paradigm

The entire research is guided by a research paradigm. The researcher should select the paradigm on the basis of the research purpose and nature. I employed interpretive research paradigm to explore the EL teachers' understandings and assessment practices. The main notion of this paradigm is to understand the subjective human experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This paradigm emphasizes on understanding the individuals and their interpretations of the world around them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Furthermore, the researcher constructs the meanings from the shared experiences of the participants.

Following the interpretive paradigm, the researchers endeavour to understand the ground realities of the social context reflecting on their experiences and practices. In this regard, Taylor and Medina (2011) opines that interpretive research paradigm gives access to the researchers to enrich the detailed understanding of the real-world experiences of teachers, students, school environment and the community they serve. Here, the researcher attempts to stand on the participants' shoes and tries to understand them from the closest distance. It believes that the researcher and participants involve in interactive processes through conversations, asking questions, and listening.

Adopting the interpretive research paradigm, the researcher focuses more on the subjective perspectives and numerous realities of the individuals rather than single and absolute truth as every individual is shaped by socio-cultural environment and his/her beliefs. Guba (1990) asserted that in interpretive paradigm, the researcher and subjects are compiled into an entity and results are the creation of the process of

interaction between the two. This is the only one paradigm that gives voices to the voiceless participants and the knowledge is constructed based on the interpretations shared between the researcher and the participants.

Narrative Inquiry

There are various research methods in the qualitative approach. Among them, I selected narrative inquiry as a research method that gives privilege to explore the participants' lived experiences. Stories play a significant role in humans' lives. In this line, Kramp (2004) asserted that stories provide meaning to the experiences of our lives. So, to bring out the unrevealed stories of my participants, I adopted narrative inquiry as a research method. Johnson and Golombek (2002) defined narrative inquiry as a "systematic process of exploration which is conducted by teachers and for teachers through their own stories and language (p. 309)." It is a research method by which the researcher understands their participants' pain and pleasure.

Narrative inquiry, which is a collection of human tales, assists the researcher to understand the real experiences of the involved participants. It is a means of considering and understanding participants' ideas, thoughts and concepts. This investigation involves the researcher working with the participants in a social setting while telling stories that introduce characters, settings, and events. I accept a specific perspective of experience telling on the topic being studied while employing narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Moreover, they considered narrative inquiry as a research method in understanding human experiences where narrative is not only a method but also an object of inquiry.

The three dimensions of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and spatiality are interrelated to each other which differentiates narrative inquiry from other methodologies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I maintained these dimensions throughout the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. They helped me to understand the participants' experiences that unfold over time, shaped by personal and cultural factors in a specific context. Thus, the research process is to develop a flow of stories with their values and writing their experiences along with my reflection. Similarly, telling the stories about experiences is also regarded as a tonic and helps to recognize them. So, I listened to teachers' stories about their practices related to assessment. When I conducted my research, I followed certain steps to maintain the spirit of narrative research for better insights.

Participants Selection Process and Profiles

My research agenda was to explore teachers' perceptions and practices of the existing assessment system in reference to English. To meet the research purpose, firstly I used purposive sampling to select participants for my study. I used purposive sampling, aligning with Gentles et al. (2015), who consider purposive sampling as a suitable strategy to conduct qualitative study. Moreover, this sampling strategy gives me privilege to select teachers who have knowledge about their involvement in their socio-cultural context (Creswell & Clark, 2011). I found the sampling technique to be of greater relevance.

I decided to carry out my research in Taplejung, the most eastern part of Nepal that lies on the lap of Pathibhara Mata and Mt. Kanchanjunga as I grew up with the socio-cultural context of this place. At the beginning, I selected six teachers as the participants of my study, however two of my participants were unable to provide me the detailed information. As a result, I took in-depth interview with other four participants who were engaged in various private and public schools while interviewing. In this research, I included the voices of teachers of not only the municipality area of Taplejung but also the different schools of rural municipalities. It was my fortune that all of them were Master's Degree holder and had more than 10 years teaching experience. Among four participants, one of them was female and remaining three were males.

Kishor

Kishor (name changed) was my first participant. He had 24 years teaching experience in various private and public schools of different parts of Taplejung. Related to this education, he shared:

My elder brother was the one who always encouraged and financially supported me for study. I completed my Bachelor's from Dharan campus in 2054 BS. After that I got married and even after marriage, I decided to continue my study due to continuous support from my life partner and family members. Finally, I earned Master's Degree in 2057 BS. It was the time when there were limited number of people completing their Master's degree from Taplejung.

His narratives reflect that his continuous efforts towards his study opened many opportunities to teach the students. His multiple years teaching experiences and his dedication in facilitating the students keep on engaging him in the teaching sector.

His both sons are in UK working as British armies, however, he still works as a teacher in one of the government schools of Taplejung. I got fascinated by his humbleness, kindness and politeness in speech.

Ashok

The second participant of my study was Ashok (name changed). He got inspired from family members and relatives and decided not to be like them spending the days worthlessly taking Jaand (a kind of drink). He did not limit his study within Bachelor's level, he also earned Master's Degree from Tribhuvan University residing in Kirtipur in 2066 BS. Regarding his teaching career, he says:

I came to Taplejung due to some projects in 2069 BS but remains over here till today. I started facilitating the students as an English teacher from 2070 BS. Currently, I am working as an English teacher in two private schools of Taplejung district. I am also a lecturer and Head of English Department at Pathibhara Multiple Campus. I just feel it was just few days ago I came to Taplejung but I did not realize how fast time flew.

He also shared that he has interest in crafting poems and stories. He was selected as a judge in various literary programs. His zeal in teaching and helping passionate learners made him a great teacher.

Man Kumar

A passionate and humble Secondary level English teacher, Man Kumar (name changed) was the third participant in my research. He narrates his educational background in the following lines:

I was a student who showed little bit more interest in study. During that time, people mainly had the dream of becoming lahure (British army) or teacher. I never had the dream of becoming Lahure. So, I gave first priority to my study. I got the opportunity to complete Bachelor's level from Mahendra Ratna Multiple Campus, Ilam as there was no any campus in Taplejung district at that time. After that, I joined Master's Degree in Central Campus, Kirtipur in 2066 BS and successfully completed in 2069 BS.

Furthermore, he shared that he started working at a government school as a secondary-level English teacher in 2070 BS. He is now a permanent teacher. In addition to this, he also worked as a lecturer at a campus. He enjoys sharing knowledge with learners and continues to update himself professionally.

Bhima Devi

The fourth participant of my study was Bhima Devi (name changed), an experienced secondary-level English teacher from Srijunga Rural Municipality-8, Yamphudin - a nature-blessed place but underdeveloped in terms of facilities. She is 44 years old and completed her Master's in English from Tribhuvan University in 2063 BS. Talking about teaching experience, she said:

I have involved in teaching sector since 2059 BS. During the beginning phases of my teaching, I worked in different private schools for several years. After that, I started teaching at a public school located in Yamphudin from the year 2066 BS. It becomes more than a decade working as an English teacher in this school.

With her long engagement in the teaching field, she had gained vivid teaching experiences. Her dedication and passion towards teaching inspired me a lot.

Data Collection Techniques and Process

Adopting narrative inquiry as a research method, I found interview as the best tool to collect data for my research. In this regard, Taherdoost (2021) opined that interview is one of the best way to carry out qualitative research as it provides natural and comfortable atmosphere for participants. Interview allows me to know about my participants' experiences in detail. Through interview, I was able to know about my participants and feel their pain and pleasures.

Taking semi-structured interview allows me to understand their perceptions and practices. I took several face-to-face and online interviews to get in-depth information. Time also favoured me as I could be able to meet them during my winter vacation and end of the academic session 2081. I met all the participants physically and had an intellectual conversation with them. The consent was taken from the participants before taking the interview recordings. At the first meeting, I had a casual talk with them sharing personal and professional backgrounds.

I used several social media platforms including Messenger, Whatsapp, and GoogleMeet to conduct the follow-up interviews. I asked them the questions sharing my classroom experiences so that they feel comfortable in sharing their stories. In some situations, I started by sharing my own anecdotes so that they feel intrigued to share their classroom anecdotes. I recorded all these information through mobile device and laptop.

Data Analysis

In the process of data analysis, I followed Saldana's model. Saldana (2015) stated data analysis in narrative inquiry is about coding stories, identifying themes and patterns, restorying experiences, and interpreting meaning. At first, I sat for transcription and translation of the recorded data on the same day of interview to capture their every moment. I provided them the transcribed information to ensure that their shared experiences and stories were not misinterpreted. After transcription and translation, I coded the information line by line highlighting by different colours. I used the same colour for the similar ideas.

I wrote the shared stories and experiences of the participants in the coding sheet and generated the codes. After that, I categorized the codes keeping the similar codes under specific theme. I generated two broad themes that include perceptions and practices under which five sub-themes were generated. In the process of interpreting data, I also included my personal experiences relating with the themes. Furthermore, their narratives were linked with various literatures and theory of the research study.

Quality Standards

I believe that maintaining the relevant quality standard is indeed a challenging task. As a qualitative researcher, adhering to the interpretive paradigm, I maintained the quality standards of trustworthiness, authenticity, reflexivity, credibility, and conformability as far as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Truthfulness

It is not difficult to persuade researchers themselves and the readers that the research findings are important by being honest (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). I was well aware that any misrepresentation and non-representation would lead to lack of trustworthiness. So, I did not keep any fake reality of my participants and kept only those things that happened in the real-life situation of my participants.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a process in which researchers consciously evaluate how their own context and subjectivity influence the research process. The researchers should critically reflect on their preferences, preconceptions, and their relationships with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I ensured that my participants did not feel pressured to share their personal details or express anything which they did not feel comfortable to maintain reflexivity.

Authenticity

The quality of making the research authentic is crucial. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), authenticity is the impact that the researcher would likely have on members of the culture or community being researched. To maintain authenticity in my study, I was respectful towards my participants, my original identity, and towards myself. Moreover, I quoted some of their original voices and maintained the value of pluralism in my research.

Credibility

The research findings should accurately reflect the participants' experiences, ensuring that they are the correct interpretations of the participants' original ideas (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It should be maintained to make the research trustworthy and valid. I spent several hours to maintain rapport and understand the participants' social and cultural contexts to achieve credibility.

Conformability

The research should be free from the researchers' personal biases. The act of interpreting the data based on the participants' responses, rather than the researchers' imaginations is considered as conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To maintain conformability in my study, I provided the interview transcripts to my participants to ensure that their shared experiences and narratives were not misinterpreted.

Ethical Standards

Ethics is an essential element in any kind of research. In my research, I kept the following issues in my mind while conducting interviews.

Informed Consent

It is often argued that the researcher must ask for consent from the participants before conducting research work (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). I made my participants feel easier by explaining to them that the information they shared would be used only for my research. I even explained them about my research purpose so that they trusted on me. Additionally, I asked for their permissions before recording the interviews so that they felt comfortable in sharing their stories without any hesitation.

No Harm and Risk

During the process of conducting research, I was very conscious due to which they did not have to bear any harm and risk. Before I asked questions, I observed the background of the participants, not to make them hurt which made me aware of their

cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds. During my research time, I ensured that there would not be any harm or risk to my research participants. During interview, instead of compelling my participants to answer my questions, I created a friendly and comfortable environment that assisted them to share their stories, ideas and experiences.

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Anonymity

As a narrative researcher, I respected the opinions and thoughts shared by my research participants. I kept the participants' private experiences confidential and did not break the confidentiality that was maintained between me and my research participants while interpreting, describing and analyzing the data. I ensure that their shared ideas and experiences would not be made public on any occasion other than the research. Following the suggestions of Guba and Lincoln (1989), I also tried not to enter into their private lives beyond the scope of the study. I kept pseudo names of all my participants to maintain their privacy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the research methodology that I adopted to carry out this study. I followed interpretive research paradigm to meet the purpose of my study. Then, I selected narrative inquiry as a research method to understand the lived experiences of my participants. Among various research tools of narrative inquiry, I adopted interview as a data collection tool. After this, I discussed about the participants selection process and their profiles. Moreover, I also maintained quality standards and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON CURRENT ASSESSMENT

This chapter incorporates varied perceptions of the Nepali EL teachers related to the existing assessment system. I included every participants' voices to reflect the real scenario of schools in the Taplejung district. Their shared stories and experiences provide valuable insights into my research question: How do Nepali EL teachers perceive the current assessment system in ELT? I retold the participants' narratives relating with my own personal experiences and the researchers' and experts' ideas. I generated three different sub-themes based on their shared experiences.

Assessment as a Learning Barrier

Assessment and teaching learning process are two sides of the same coin. It is an integral element of formal education. The revolutionized form of assessment (i.e. assessment for learning) emphasizes on fostering students' learning by making them aware about their strengths and weaknesses and even provides the opportunity to teachers to reflect their teaching practices. Furthermore, it supports teaching and learning by informing teachers and learners of "what the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there" (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Alexander (2000) emphasized that it plays a significant role to reflect its status and bring positive changes in education as a whole. However, the educational system has limited the assessment within the standardized tests. Still the teachers rely on the tests and standardized exams to examine the students' learning achievement which reflect traditional assessment (Isik, 2021). The reliance on written examinations and tests do not let the teachers to adopt modern ways of assessment (i.e. assessment for learning and assessment as learning).

Similarly, to enhance the students' learning, the school curriculum of Nepal integrates both formative and summative assessments based on a policy made by National Curriculum Framework, 2021 (Sapkota, 2022). Different tools for formative assessment include homework, classwork, project work, tests, classroom participation, and attendance. However, in the real classroom scenario, terminal and final examinations were found to be the dominant assessment tools to evaluate the students' learning achievement (Sapkota, 2022). It clarifies that the students'

learnings are still constricted and evaluated by certain hours of written exams with limited numbers of questions. In this context, Ashok, one of my participants (a private school teacher) states,

We focus more on results than what the students actually learn. The school's main concern is on how to make students score good GPA. Even we have to make students pass by giving some clues otherwise our jobs are in risks due to which real learning is over shadow. Although scoring good GPA in SEE exam, most of the students continue their intermediate levels in the schools of district where they do not have to appear entrance examination as they do have fear of failing the entrance examination in other schools that lie out of district.

Ashok's narrative shows that the exam-oriented assessment system limits the students' learning horizon. This practice of emphasizing more on scores narrows down the contents and encourages the teachers to teach only from the examination perspectives. Moreover, the teachers felt high anxiety, fear, and pressure to complete the course as they felt that their job is evaluated by students' exam scores (Shohamy et al., 1996). This represents that the examination system has negative washback on teaching-learning process. Furthermore, he also stressed that the students read for the sake of passing exams only; as a result, it does not build confidence on them. The greater emphasis on scores pulls the legs of students' enthusiasm towards real learning and exploring new ideas. Moreover, the students' actual learning remains in the silent and dark corner where no one can see by his/her naked eyes. On top of that, the students' creativity and criticality are being killed by including only those questions that check their memorization power and rote learning capacity. Regarding rote learning, Thankachan (2024) argued that rote learning suppresses students' creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and it even discourages them to question, critically analyze or interpret information. The students stress only on memorizing and recalling facts that does not foster deeper understanding on them. The written examinations that include only verbal-linguistic and logical mathematical intelligence are the main tools of evaluating the students' learning achievement. However, MI theory advocates for differentiated assessment that address students' diverse intelligences.

Moreover, rote learning makes students easier to face board exam tests by providing them questions bank including question sets of last 10 years. In this regard, Sigdel and Sherpa (2024) mentioned that the tests include long/short answer

questions, objective questions such as filling items, matching items, multiple-choice questions, etc. that motivate students to memorize through rote learning and recall it during examination. When we see our assessment system based on Bloom's taxonomy, we are just at the basic levels of thinking i.e. remembering and understanding. So, this assessment system does not let the students come beyond these thinking levels. In the same vein, Ashok continued as:

We mainly focus on the course completion. If we do not complete the course on time, the principal and administrations put the question marks on us. I make the students involve in the group activities and do the works rarely. I still remember my earlier days of my teaching at this school when I was called to the Principal's office for not being able to cover all the first term syllabus. I tried to convince him telling that whatever I taught to the students, I tried my best to make everything clear. He did not show interest in my clarification and I got back to staffroom making a vow to complete the course on time.

His reflection indicates that the pressures put by administrators to complete the course on time do not give them the space to inculcate various interaction activities that promote students' communicative and comprehension skills. The assessment being limited to exams shrinks its scopes to a limited area. Instead of broadening students' mind, it encourages them to use unauthorized teaching materials and promotes cheating habit. In the same vein, Gyawali (2021) asserted that standardized tests motivated learners to memorize and recall the information rather than promoting comprehension skills and practical knowledge based on real-world context. It shapes the students' minds by compelling them to score good GPA. In addition, this certain hours examination system does not address students' diverse intelligences. Individuals possessing various intelligences such as bodily kinesthetic, musical, and visual-spatial are also evaluated by the same written test that examines only linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences which is like evaluating various animals such as fish, elephant, monkey, and leopard having different abilities by seeing their climbing capacity. Reflecting myself back to my school days experiences,

I was the one who memorized not only the questions answers but also the essays and stories. The teacher used to provide us essays on some important and probable topics that can be asked in exam and made us to memorize. Even there was the culture of giving VVI (Very Very Important) for exam. So, we did not have to put pressures on our brains to think critically and analytically as

they used to ask questions from the same VVI notes. The main fear was the fear of encountering unmemorized essay topics on exams.

So, this traditional summative assessment system that focuses more on promoting good grades fails to foster the students' creativity, and critical thinking skills. Moreover, it makes the students feel that they are machines that perform the tasks based on others' instructions; the students almost forget that they are the rational human beings who have the ability to change the world. Similarly, my another participant Bhima Devi (a permanent government school teacher) narrates:

We do not have English learning environment. The students have problems even in creating single sentence. Before few weeks, when I checked Grade-9 students' essay writing on the topic 'Students' life', their writings were full of mistakes. Even one of the students wrote only one paragraph. I found some students' using small essay books memorizing it. There are no other options for them. It is not possible to make them memorize essays on every topic, that's why I provide them essays on some possible topics that can be asked in exams.

She believes that English learning environment is a must to evaluate the students' language skills. Her narrative reflects that the students are compelled to memorize the ready-made answers due to lack of English proficiency for the sake of passing exams. I believe that language learning is not an overnight work. So, it becomes a culture for the students of remote parts of Nepal who do not have access to English learning environment to do *ratta-maar* (parrot-reading) to pass exams due to which real learning always remains neglected.

Formative Assessment: A Daunting Task

The inclusion of formative assessment in school's curriculum gives privilege to the teachers to incorporate various interaction and innovative activities in the classroom that promotes learners' collaboration and communication skills. Different researchers who carried out the research on formative assessment found it effective to apply in the classroom. They have found that the formative assessment enhances the students' comprehension skills and assists them to score higher grades (Black & William, 1998). It emphasizes on uplifting students' learning outcomes by providing regular feedback and making them able to be responsible for their learning. A study conducted by Sonmez and Cetinkaya (2022) also showed that incorporating formative assessment improves English language learners' reading comprehension skills.

Despite the commendable aspects of formative assessment, it becomes challenging to apply effectively in the real classroom. In this line, Sapkota (2022) said that the teachers rely only on paper-pencil tests to assess the students as they found formative assessment difficult to carry out and even the teachers prefer to be in the comfort zone. Similarly, Sigdel and Sherpa (2024) also mentioned that the use of different formative assessment tools takes more time, efforts, and money. In this context, Bhima Devi shared her experiences in the following lines:

We maintain the portfolios of every student where we included their project works, test exams (Menjo garumna vanne ho: It means just for the sake of doing). However, at the end if they scored NG in their written exams, they are considered fail. It is just like our tradition of conducting different sorts of rituals in various social functions. I feel this like Bijuwa (priest) reciting mantras after people's death saying that reciting mantras by Bijuwa can help his/her soul to rest in heaven. So, conducting different activities are just like our rituals as we are compelled to do that's why we are doing but I do not see the actual progress in our students. When we were students, we also scored pass marks even though there were not all these stuffs. Even I became able to complete my Master's level, so what is the use of all these mainly in the schools of remote areas where English is spoken only for maximum 45 minutes a day mixing Nepali in between.

She takes assessment just as a ritual and passive task rather than an active process. There is a culture of keeping portfolios but actually, they are unaware about the significance of it. Maintaining portfolios become a mandatory task only while the teachers are unable to use it in the maximum extent. In this regard, Saud et al. (2024) pointed out that the valuable records kept in the portfolios never find the way to go back into the classroom to bring desired changes to enhance students' learning achievement. Various reasons including the newly-made practice of maintaining portfolios, lack of knowledge regarding its proper use, etc. can be the hindering aspects behind it. Therefore, the concerned authorities have to empower and motivate teachers to make use of the students' valuable records to bring transformative changes in teaching-learning process. If formative assessment can be used constructively, it has the potential to bring desired learning outcomes on students. As Ashok reflected, *"It is very good from students' perspectives but teachers have to work hard and here teachers become happy if they have to perform less tasks. they think it has given more*

workloads to them.” It shows that the teachers prefer to be in their comfort zones rather than adopting innovative strategies. They considered carrying out formative assessment as a burden for them which align with the findings of Isik (2021) who stated that the teachers considered carrying out such assessment as a forced duty and they were not happy in conducting that. However, MI theory believes assessment as a part of teaching learning process (Gardner, 1983). I also felt the same when I joined one of the schools of Lalitpur district. My experience was,

Even though I had five years of teaching experience in the rural parts of eastern Nepal, I felt myself lost in schools’ hectic works preparing daily planners to portfolio maintenance. Every Friday, we had to send the weekly planner through email before 5pm. From the early morning to the late evening, I had to engage in the school’s works. Even I used to get back to home carrying students’ copies on my bag. Rather than these, I had the experiences of spending Saturday on making chart paper works and checking students’ assignments. On top of that, the administrations’ pressure and parents’ frustrations made me more like a pressure cooker which was being ready to blast.

I realized that due to lack of proper training on integrating formative assessment in the classroom, I had to face these troubles. I did not enjoy the schools, rather than I had the fear while stepping my feet on the gate of school every morning. As a result, I could not survive at that school more than five months. Similarly, one of my participants, Man Kumar (a permanent government school teacher) says,

We see the assessment system of Nepal focuses more on reading and writing skills rather than listening and speaking. So, the assessment system itself is not fair. They have not assigned equal marks to all language skills. So, we also do the same in our school. Beyond this, we also perform listening and speaking sometimes.

His sharings show that he updates himself with the curriculum and the assessment system. He is well aware about the unequal distribution of marks for all language skills. So, he advocated for fair assessment system. However, they do not prefer to carry out various interaction activities in a regular manner to enhance the students’ learning.

The integration of formative assessment in the teaching-learning process promotes students’ learning by getting regular feedback and even the teachers can reflect on their teaching strategies. However, the formative assessment is considered

as a ritual and passive task. Moreover, teachers think that it gives more workloads on them. They prefer to be in their comfort zones.

Assessment for Students' All-Round Development

With the introduction and implementation of innovative pedagogical strategies in the classrooms, the concept of assessment has changed considering it an essential part instruction. It should not be taken only as a tool to measure students' final achievement (i.e. assessment of learning), but also considered as a process that emphasizes on bringing improvement in students' learning by providing them regular feedback (i.e. assessment for learning; Black& William, 2009; Davison & Leung, 2009; Jones & Saville, 2016 as cited in Sigdel & Sherpa, 2024). This concept of assessment for learning encourages students' active participation in learning and furthermore, makes them responsible for their own learning. However, the assessment for learning is overlapped by assessment of learning in Nepal.

The National Curriculum Framework (2020) has allocated 25% marks for internal assessment in SEE providing space to the teachers to conduct interaction and collaborative activities to foster the students' innate potentialities and the enhancement of their language skills. According to MI theory, it is the teachers' responsibility to nurture students' innate talents and assess them based on it. The appropriate use of internal assessment makes the students active and passionate learners rather than passive recipients. Regarding this, my another participant, Kishor (a permanent government school teacher) shared his experiences as:

We allotted the marks for attendance, classroom participation and their project works. I am not being able to give time to check everyone's homework everyday but I follow one technique to check the homework like telling them to do homework and the next day, I told the random roll number like Roll:no-20 and told him/her to read out the homework. In this way, I make them do the homework. At least, the students become quite alert. All these activities make students active, regular, close relationship between teachers and students are maintained as well. When students become absent regularly, we consult the parents and find out the reasons behind it. We are doing all these due to this assessment system. Last time, I gave a project work: Prepare a report on the sharing that they have done with their friends whom they meet after a long time (details such as where did you stay, with whom did you stay, how did you spend all these days). They made the reports and shared in the classrooms due

to which they did not feel hesitate and fear as well. It brings overall positive changes in the students.

His experiences show that the students are actively engaged in the learning process and become regular. It has brought the parents and school together; as a result, becomes easy to handle the students and brings improvement on them. They assigned specific marks for classroom participation, and project works that hone their creativity, language skills and makes them actively engaged in the learning process. In this regard, Li and Wu (2018) asserted that the emphasis on behavioural criteria, including classroom behaviour, interaction, participation, and extra-curricular activities in their grading enhances their learning process. It not only improves students' learning but also shapes their behaviour and attitudes.

Despite the large classroom sizes, he adopted a technique to ensure that everyone is doing their homework. His attempts of integrating assessment in teaching motivates students to contribute by participating actively in the learning process. This alignment of assessment with the classroom activities fosters lifelong learning on students encouraging their active participation, which supports assessment for learning and further provides continuous support for specific learning goals (Hwang et al., 2022). On the superficial level, it seems like attendance does not have direct relation with students' learning enhancement. Indeed, students' regularity in the class encourages them for active participation in every activity. In this context, Man Kumar says:

The students' regularity in the class makes them catch up the knowledge being taught. At least, they learnt a new word each day. Letting them share the things makes them feel confident. This year, there was a boy named Landuk Sherpa (name changed) in grade-nine who always feels hesitate to talk in my class but he was regular. Due to his regularity, he was able to score good marks in the exam and upgraded to grade-ten.

He emphasizes on the students' regularity and participation in the classroom activities. Although it does not bring drastic changes on them, it fosters intrinsic motivation on them for further learning. In the same vein, Bourguet (2024) asserted that the regularity promotes the students' learning and takes them towards the academic success. The teachers' eyes automatically seek those students who are regular as well. Even though there is large number of students, they feel his/her

absence. It means that those who are regular in the class are being noticed. Man Kumar continued as:

We do not focus on the completion of the course contents rather than develop the language skills by bringing the scripts that suit their level using various AI tools including ChatGPT. Here, we even started the culture of calling the students during the break time if they did not understand the things that were taught as we have a smaller number of students.

His experiences reflect that they prioritize the students' learning process rather than their outcomes. They do not rely only on the coursebook being provided to them. From his sharing, it is clear that they use different AI tools to improve students' language skills. His narratives are similar to Rogier (2014) who opines that the assessment is to enhance students' learning rather than providing certain grades only. Therefore, the assessment should be taken as a process rather than a product which is also stated by MI theory.

The reliable, valid and authentic assessment does not limit the students within the small areas of rote learning and memorization. As Haghi (2015) states, "Assessment, in today's educational milieu, is no longer solely teacher-centered assessment of learning, but a means of enhancing learning through greater learner involvement and effective feedback using assessment for learning" (p.10). This broader concept of assessment provides the space for the learners to address the given feedback and makes improvements in their learning. The marks assigned for formative assessment are not solely based on terminal exams; rather, it encompasses a comprehensive evaluation of students' overall behaviour, participation and continuous engagement in the learning process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter consists of three different sub-themes that I generated based on the participants' narratives. Every individual has their own beliefs, values, and ideas. The study found mixed perceptions regarding assessment. Assessment as a learning barrier, formative assessment as a daunting task and assessment for students' all round-developmet are the generated sub-themes to answer the first research question. Along with the participants' narratives, I included my own experiences and insights. I incorporated some relevant literatures to support my participants' narratives.

Some of the participants shared that they take assessment as a burden and a ritual. However, some of them shared that the current assessment system fosters

students' all-round development. The students' regularity has promoted and become active participants rather than passive knowledge receivers only. However, the traditional written examination is still found prominent among all the teachers. The completion of course is given more priority than what the students actually learn. Along with the course completion, their main priority was to make the students score good GPA. The students' learning is constricted by limited number of course contents and the written exams that check only their memorization and rote learning skills. The prominence of written examinations and more focus on course completion indicate that assessment of learning remains the dominant practice. Although some initiatives have been taken by teachers to inculcate assessment in the teaching learning process to promote assessment for learning, assessment of learning is still found to be dominant.

CHAPTER V

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PRACTICES OF CURRENT ASSESSMENT

This chapter discusses the Nepali EL teachers' experiences of assessment practices in their classroom. Every participant shared their vivid experiences of assessing students' language proficiency. Their shared experiences act as valuable insights to come up with the following sub-themes. I also correlated their shared practices with the relevant literature. Moreover, this chapter answers the question: How do Nepali EL teachers practice the current assessment in their classrooms.

Unequal Practices in Teaching Language Skills

Language is the doorway of communication. Basically, a language learner has to master all four language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSWR) to be proficient in the target language. Every language skill should be given equal emphasis during language learning process to be proficient in a target language. However, in the real scenario of the school contexts of Nepal, all language skills are not given equal priority.

The main aim of National Curriculum is to foster learners' communicative competence. It mainly focuses on enhancing students' language skills. However, all language skills i.e. LSWR are not given equal emphasis at the time of assessing the students' language proficiency. In this line, Acharya (2025) also claimed that the learners are incompetent in English language due to the unequal distribution of marks for language skills. Although listening is a foundational language skill, it is found being skipped in the language classrooms. Through the research, Isik (2021) also found that the listening and speaking skills were not evaluated, whereas writing was only evaluated in all schools. In this context, Kishor shared his experiences in the following lines:

I do not conduct these listening and speaking skills as I have not seen teachers conducting these in other public schools as well. But I provide the meanings of the difficult words to the students consulting dictionary and teach the pronunciation by drilling method. Furthermore, I made the students of Grade-9 to do film review. All these skills are mentioned in the coursebook but it is being skipped 100% in our context. But when I was an English teacher in Aadarsha Boarding School (name changed), I conducted listening test after

their SLC exam playing cassette player but I have not seen conducting listening during the class hours. Yeah, teachers make the children do rhyming songs in the primary classes but there are no any sorts of listening related to text-based. It was during 2066-2067, schools were provided some audio cassette for Grade-7 and 9, but we did not use it.

His narratives reflect that they do not conduct listening and speaking skills in their classrooms. In the same vein, Ulum (2015) through his study also found that listening skill is being ignored in EFL context due to which students had listening comprehension problems. So, this is one of the reasons that students do not have English language proficiency. He even shared that even though the listening materials were provided, they did not use it due to the environmental influence as he had not seen anyone conducting the listening during the class hours. His experiences of conducting listening tests during SLC examination shows that he did only for the sake of providing grades. This shows that they still rely totally on summative assessment that incorporates only reading and writing skills with grammar. I also went through the same situations during my school days:

I do not remember a day my English teacher conducting listening and speaking activities during the classroom hours before the SEE exam. When I was in Grade-10, he conducted listening test taking us to the separate room, played audio, and provided short questions. Overall, we spent almost 15 minutes in that room. There was not even a day he conducted role-plays, dialogues, and conversations to improve our speaking skill. The teachers used to focus more on reading, writing, and grammar in isolation.

This culture of giving unequal emphasis to all language skills can be due to several reasons including the concept of taking listening as a passive skill, and unequal distribution of weightage in examination. Similarly, Ashok reflects, “*I had never done listening using audio materials rather than I made them listen when I read out the text.*” His response shows that instead of using authentic materials, he used his own voice for listening. However, the listening should be conducted following certain steps so that the students enhance their listening skills. According to DeVito (2000), there are five stages of listening: listening, understanding, remembering, evaluating and feedback. But in the classroom, the teachers conduct listening without following proper steps. In the conversation with Man Kumar, he said:

There are listening tasks after each lesson. So, I make them listen the English speech delivered by students in essay competition which they can comprehend rather than native speakers which they feel difficult to understand. Even sometimes, we enjoy listening the English songs inside the classrooms by which they enhance their listening skills.

Man Kumar is aware of the listening items provided in every unit of the book. He made several attempts to conduct listening in the classrooms bringing various scripts that the students can comprehend. However, he does not provide activities to the students to check their comprehension skills. His attempts to conduct listening items in the classroom is a great initiative to develop students' language proficiency. Similarly, another participant, Bhima Devi says,

In class nine, I made the rules to deliver a short speech of 4-5 sentences everyday but the students become absent in their turns. So, if we conduct all these, there is high probability of students leaving the schools. It's really challenging to evaluate all these skills even though internal assessment is really good.

Her above expressions reflect that they have the fear of students leaving the school due to the incorporation of various engaging and interactive activities in the classroom. The students do not involve in speaking tasks due to fear, lack of confidence, and hesitation. On top of that, they do not get exposure to the English language except 45 minutes per day. Regarding this, Sumbul et al. (2024) asserted that the English language learners' speaking skill is affected by various factors including educational and institutional factors, personal motivation and practice, language environment and exposure, and technological exposure. There is not only specific factor that hinder students' language learning process. Therefore, the school administrations and teachers should work effectively to enhance students' language proficiency.

All four language skills (LSWR) are not integrated into the Nepalese English classrooms and assessment has been one time activity instead of being the integrated action during the LSRW tasks. The main reasons behind it is due to the unequal distribution of marks assigned to the language skills. However, MI theory believes on the integration of all language skills to foster students' diverse intelligences. It also emphasizes on the holistic development of the students by giving equal priority to all language skills. The teachers' more emphasis on certain skills are pulling legs of

passionate learners to be proficient in English. As a result, they will be discouraged to express themselves and feel lack of confidence to share their opinions and ideas in real-world context.

Superficial Internal Assessment

Assessment, an inseparable component of the teaching learning process, has a remarkable impact on students' learning achievement. Both assessments are equally important to enhance the students' learning. However, the several problems that occur in the practice of formative assessment in public schools such as unsupportive school environment, unbearable workload, limited time, lack of training on formative assessment (Khadka, 2017) make it challenging for the teachers to implement effectively in their classrooms.

The assessment system undergoes several changes along with the change in pedagogical practices. Both assessments were introduced to meet the learning outcomes of National curriculum. The internal assessment also called formative assessment fosters students' learning providing them immediate and frequent feedback resulting in the enhancement of language proficiency. However, the grading in formative assessment has affected by halo effect (Sigdel & Sherpa, 2024). The teachers provide the marks without evaluating the students' actual knowledge and skills. Instead of using it to develop the students' language skills, it is used only for the promotion of students' grades. In the conversation with Kishor, he says,

I assign Phurba (name changed) the internal marks by myself. As I know his English is good and his father is also an English teacher. We have 60-70 students in a single class and sometimes I even do not know who is absent. We take monthly tests and sometimes weekly tests to evaluate our students' learning.

His narratives indicate that due to the large number of students in a single class, they have to assign the internal marks based on their assumptions rather than assessing their actual language skills. The similar finding was found by Saud et al. (2024) who highlights that large classroom and unprofessional activities hinder the teachers to conduct internal assessment effectively. Due to all these challenges, the summative assessment (high-stakes testing) is given more priority and considered as a major tool for evaluating students' overall achievement which is not supported by MI theory. Similarly, one of my participants, Ashok shares:

The school gives the full authority to provide the internal marks to the students up to Grade-9 based on their overall performance but regarding Grade-10, the principal collaborates with parents and provides the marks to the students. The school tries to provide full marks even the students are not being capable to score.

His reflections show that they do not have privilege to provide internal marks to their students. Instead of that, the school provides marks to the students without evaluating their actual performance which results to students' low language proficiency. The school does so to advertise their results to the public and compel others to give them the tag "The School with Highest GPA Scorer". Ashok continued as:

We provide them the project work only twice in a year during Dashain and winter vacation which is really unsatisfactory. I found many students doing project works copying from their friends and from Google which do not match their levels. Actually, all these activities do not foster their learning. Last year, I told the students to prepare a report about your educational trip to Pathibhara temple (a religious place). When I brought all those project works at home for correction, it did not take me more than an hour as most of their writings were similar to each other.

The story of Ashok indicates that the students are doing project works for the sake of scoring marks rather than enhancing their language skills. Project works are assigned to students to foster their creativity and critical thinking skills. However, their reliance on Google and friends declines their creativity making them parasitic. As a result, they have to bear several language problems in real-world context. Even the most pitiful thing is teachers are strictly prohibited to provide NG to students in the internal evaluation. In this context, the next participant provides the evidence of context of student regularity which is a part of internal assessment, Bhima Devi expressed:

In our school, last year, we had only 7 students in grade-10 at the beginning of the session. After few months, there remained only 5 students and by the end of the session, we had only 1 student to attend the class regularly. Anyway, all those 5 students appeared in the exam. Even the parents think that their duty is over just by sending their children to school and it's all due to students' carelessness.

The story of Bhima Devi reflects that students' irregularity becomes hindrance to carry out internal assessment effectively. In this regard, Singh (2022) opined that students' regularity brings improvement in overall academic activities. Moreover, the teachers are compelled to provide pass marks to their students in the internal assessment even in their absence. According to the assessment system, in SEE, three marks are allocated for participation that includes students' attendance, classroom interaction, homework, classwork, and project work. Allocating certain marks to classroom participation promotes students' active participation in the classroom activity. In the conversation with Kishor, he shared:

We have 48-80 students in each class. In most of the classes, we have 60 students. We do not keep the records of every student. We provide the summary to the students of the lessons being taught and students also feel comfortable with this. Here, we even have those students in Grade-9 who cannot read the text properly. In 2081, there was a student named Phaben Limbu (name changed) in Grade-9 who had problem in recognizing the English alphabets also and he even used to do frequent mistakes while copying from the whiteboard. Involving the students in speaking activities is far more difficult for me.

His narratives clearly show that large number of students becomes a problem to carry out continuous assessment. His ways of delivering the methods still reflect the traditional methods. Due to the students' low language proficiency, teachers faced the problems to carry out the internal assessment effectively. Similarly, Ashok said, *"We have classes in all seven periods so we do not have time to check their assignments in detail as well. Mostly, I check the homework orally."* Due to more workloads provided to the teachers, teachers are unable to carry out the internal assessment effectively.

The internal assessment can contribute in promoting students' learning achievement if carried out effectively. It improves students' language proficiency by getting regular feedback from the teachers. However, internal assessment is carried out in a traditional way (Saud et al., 2024). This traditional way of carrying out internal assessment (i.e. assessment of learning) makes students' real learning in shadow. So, it should be carried out effectively (i.e. assessment for learning) to enhance the students' language skills.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the classroom assessment practices carried out by Nepali EL teachers. I generated two major sub-themes: unequal language skills integration and superficial internal assessment. These sub-themes were generated based on their shared stories and experiences. I also reflected my school experiences of how the teachers assessed our language skills. Moreover, I supported my participants' narratives with researchers' and experts' ideas. They shared that they do not conduct and assess all language skills in their classrooms. They give top priority to reading and writing skills which is from examination point of view. Furthermore, they do not have authority to provide internal marks to SEE students. The school principal negotiates with the parents and provide the internal marks without evaluating the students' actual performance.

CHAPTER VI

KEY INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION, AND REFLECTION

This chapter begins with the key insights. After that, I reflected on my interest of carrying out the research and the learning that occurred on me during the journey of writing dissertation.

Key Insights

I carried out this study to explore Nepali EL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding the current assessment system. After several virtual and in-person meetings with my research participants and data analysis processes, I came up with some key insights regarding the perceptions and practices of the current assessment system. The research revealed that assessment has an important role in maintaining quality education. The students' learning achievement can be enhanced if assessment is carried out effectively in the classrooms.

The study uncovered mixed findings. Some teachers perceived assessment as a burden rather than a tool to support students' learning. They considered it as a boring and time-consuming task. They also felt that the inclusion of internal assessment adds more workloads. So, they conducted only class-tests and terminal tests to evaluate their students' knowledge and language skills. In this way, they limited the assessment within the written examination which is the narrower definition of assessment i.e. assessment of learning. This study revealed that assessment is considered only as a tool to upgrade the students and show the schools' effectiveness. Moreover, their teaching learning process is guided by the examination. This exam-oriented assessment system pressured the teachers to complete the course and even narrows down the curriculum. Furthermore, it encourages the teachers to focus only on those language skills that are relevant to the examinations. As a result, it discourages the students' creativity and critical thinking skills.

On the other hand, some teachers perceived assessment as a tool for the students' all-round development. The students' classroom participation, behaviours, and all four basic language skills have been assessed providing them suggestive feedbacks for further improvement. The integration of internal assessment gives more privilege to the teachers to perform various interactive and engaging activities that encourages the students' active participation in the classrooms. This current

assessment system further benefits the teachers by maintaining good rapport among teachers, students, and parents. Moreover, the students' regularity has maintained which supports the students' learning. This formative assessment practices motivates the teachers to adopt innovative and new teaching strategies addressing the students' diverse needs. So, for the effective implementation of formative assessment in the classroom, the concerned authorities have to provide regular trainings on assessment. Furthermore, there is the need of strong monitoring and evaluation mechanism to evaluate the teachers' practices. The schools have to consider several issues including student-teacher ratio, classroom size, infrastructures, and teaching learning materials for the inculcation of assessment in the teaching learning process.

Regarding the assessment of language skills, the teachers give first priority to reading and writing skills skipping both listening and speaking skills. It was found that the listening skills are only assessed during SEE examinations for the sake of providing marks. Furthermore, lack of English learning environment is found to be the main barrier of conducting speaking in their classrooms. In result, students felt fear, distress, and low-confidence to speak in front of the classrooms. In addition, large number of students is another hindrance to effective implementation of current assessment system. I have realized the essence of trainings and workshops for the teachers to update them with the assessment and the ways of carrying out it effectively.

Conclusion

This research explored how English language teachers understand and practice the current assessment system. For this study, I purposively selected four secondary-level English language teachers as participants who have more than 10 years of teaching experiences in the schools of Taplejung district. Adopting narrative inquiry, I narrated down their stories and experiences of practicing the current assessment system.

This study revealed that assessment of learning has been prioritized than assessment for learning and assessment as learning. The teachers depend mostly on class-tests, terminal, and final exams to evaluate the students' learning achievement. Various formative assessment tools such as assignments, project work, presentation, classroom participation, listening, and speaking are given less priority and carried out in a traditional way. Moreover, teaching learning process is guided by exams. The course completion is given more priority than the students' learning process.

This study emphasizes that assessment is not only a tool to evaluate the learners' final achievement rather than, fosters the students' learning. So, it is duty of teachers to integrate the assessment in their classrooms to promote students' learning and upgrade their achievement. The findings also revealed that while some teachers attempted to apply various formative assessment tools to enhance students' language skills, they still had confusion regarding proper implementation. So, the schools must provide regular training and workshops on assessment. At the beginning of each academic session, there should be orientations on curriculum and assessment. The teachers should also be encouraged to adopt innovative pedagogical strategies and assessment practices so that their perceptions and traditional practices can be changed.

Navigating My Interest in Research

The assessment has rooted on me some sorts of fear and anxiety till I joined Kathmandu University as a Master's level student. I still remember a day during my intermediate level when I was preparing for Physics exam. This was the subject in which I had zero interest. I was in the washroom crying a lot due to lots of stress as I had the fear of failing the exam. There was no one to listen my pain except all four walls of the room. That moment was really unforgettable and remained in my heart. The result got published after few months and got passed with first division. However, I did not make any use of the various principles that I memorized doing parrot learning. All the information that I memorized for the sake of scoring good marks limited only within the examination paper.

During my school days, I was given the tag "Good student" and listed among top three students out of 60. To maintain the level, I worked days and nights forgetting my health always running towards scoring good marks whether by understanding the subject matter or by memorizing without understanding. Even I was diagnosed anxiety by the doctor when I was in Grade-10. Somewhere in the inner side of me, I had the fear of exam that always kept on pushing me.

This master's degree program provides me a platform to express my unrevealed stories that were on me since school days through this dissertation. This dissertation not only assists me in expressing my stories but also helps me to delve deeper into my interests for research. It has broadened my knowledge regarding research methodology, improved my writing skills, and the essence of editing and reviewing in writing.

In this dissertation, I included the situations that intrigued me to carry out the research focusing on the ELT teachers' perceptions and practices related to assessment. After that, I went through several books, research articles, papers, non-research papers to broaden my knowledge regarding assessment. The research purpose and questions helped me to be with my topic. I used Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory to support my ideas.

I followed interpretive paradigm which supports the idea that there exists multiple truths rather than a single and universal truth. Following interpretive paradigm, I adopted narrative inquiry as a research method which provides me privilege to listen to my participants' stories and experiences. I took in-depth interviews that included open-ended questions which helped me to better understand their perceptions and practices. I transcribed and translated their shared stories and provided them the transcriptions to ensure that their shared stories were not misinterpreted. After that, I analysed their shared stories reflecting on my own experiences correlating with experts and researchers' ideas.

With the belief of "A thousand miles journey begins from yourself", I have begun my long and untiring research journey from this dissertation. In it, I just took the ELT teachers' perceptions and practices guided by MI theory following interpretive paradigm. Along with this, I also wish to raise my voice against the most dominant assessment practice i.e. three-hours written examination system which does not address students' diverse intelligences in the following research papers. All the enthusiasm and motivation towards learning have been awakened by the Gurus of Kathmandu University, to whom I remain deeply grateful.

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