Enhancement Approach: Success Stories of EFL Teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal

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Enhancement Approach: Success Stories of EFL Teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal

Ram Ashish Giri
Saraswati Dawadi
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Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA)
Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

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Foreword from Amol Padwad, a Hornby Trustee

In one of the periodic meetings of an English Teachers’ Club (an informal professional development self-help group) in a central Indian town, the participants were discussing what they might pick out as one defining characteristic of their education system. While different members proposed different features, one teacher said she would choose ‘error-picking’ as the term describing the most central and defining feature of the system. When asked to elaborate, she pointed out how everyone from teachers to headteachers, inspectors and education officials (and even parents, she later added) were bent on only finding faults and errors. She narrated her own experience of how a frustrated student once came to her – with his notebook filled with red error-pointers and corrections by the teacher – to ask why she could not also point out something he had done correctly. And she in turn had similar experiences with the school supervisors who would only point out what went wrong in her class and never bothered to discuss any successes.

This would probably answer one question that may cross a reader’s mind as they pick up this book – ‘Why success stories?’. ELT in particular and educational domain in general is characterised in many contexts by a deficit view of teachers and teaching. Failures and lacks are more prominently noticed and highlighted than achievements in such contexts. Teacher education or development activities and approaches seem to be aimed at remedying some lack or covering some deficit. In such a deficit-view dominated scenario it is no wonder that teachers’ confidence, sense of agency and belief in self-efficacy all take a big hit. This not only leads to a loss of self-esteem, but also gradually deskills teachers by eroding their faith in their capabilities and potential. Against this backdrop, which largely holds true for the countries represented therein, the present collection of teachers’ success stories from Nepal and Bangladesh makes a strong and firm point on why talking about successes matters.

What makes this book remarkable? There are several lessons and learnings this collection of success stories offers. The stories tell about the attempts of teachers at addressing in innovative ways the challenges posed sometimes by the system and sometimes by circumstances, but in many cases by both. Importantly, these attempts to tackle challenges typically work with locally available resources and build on local customs, traditions and practices, which is one key reason why they have been successful and relevant. The range of issues and concerns one sees reflected in the stories is quite wide and diverse. Many of these issues may not find a place, or would be considered very peripheral, in ‘standard’ research literature and academic publications. However, for a practicing teacher they are important, priority concerns, directly affecting their work and well-being. The stories, thus, also indicate how the teacher-authors took the initiative to address those concerns/ issues which mattered to them a lot.

As one takes an overview of the entire collection, one would find that inspirations and motivations of individuals spurring them into initiative and action run across the stories as a common thread,
and so does a deep concern for students’ well-being and growth as an overarching motive force. The commitment and perseverance of the teachers while imagining and implementing ideas in spite of contextual difficulties and occasional apathy of others are quite clearly visible across the stories. Interestingly, while the authors have themselves tried to be reflective and analytical on their own experiences, readers too are encouraged to reflect on and process the stories through a set of ‘guiding’ questions accompanying each story.

As the title of the collection indicates, the stories are presumably underlined by an ‘enhancement approach’, though the contours and features of this approach are yet to be clearly established, both as a notion and as a practice. It is an interesting idea, with an obvious aim to counter the prevalent deficit views and approaches, which needs to be developed more fully. The stories in the volume would contribute further to the emerging discussions around the idea and practice of the enhancement approach, which has the potential and promise to offer an alternative to the ‘expert culture’ and deficit-view dominated activities in teacher education and professional development in many parts of the world.

Amol Padwad
Remarks from BELTA President

It gives me immense pleasure to write a few words about this wonderful journey which Hornby Scholars have undertaken to document the success stories of Bangladeshi and Nepalese teachers in their struggle to keep learning afloat during the pandemic. It is indeed a praiseworthy initiative as it projects the strategies local teachers used in their individual classes to combat the effect of the disruption on their students and make classes motivating and interesting.

It is a unique project as the e-book is based on the ‘Enhancement Approach to Teacher Development’, which follows a bottom-up approach and is advocated by Smith (2018) as a constructive enhancement approach. The stories revolve around 5 seminal themes and weave a tapestry of novel ideas and user-friendly strategies essential for the 21st century teacher. It presents 18 success stories from local practitioners where they focus on communication and writing skills, technology in teaching & learning and classroom activities and drive for success. The contributors aimed to share their experiences with other teachers in order to encourage them gain confidence in building their emergency remote teaching skills.

I strongly believe that this e-book will be a valuable resource for teacher educators, researchers and novice teachers as it shares a wealth of new and interesting techniques for taking teaching and learning forward and promotes the spirit of the community of practice of sharing and caring. The E-book is indeed a new way of encouraging ELT practitioners to highlight their successes rather than dwell on their failures. The stories of struggle, fortitude and resilience in this collection are indeed commendable and exemplify teachers’ agency in their efforts of coping with challenges.

I congratulate the editors and the writers for this timely and unique collection. Thanks are also due to the Hornby Educational Trust for providing a platform for the development of this inspiring experience. I am delighted and deem it a great honour that BELTA is a co-publisher of this e-book.

Dr. Rubina Khan
President
Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA)
Remarks from NELTA President

It is my immense pleasure to write the foreword for the book ‘Enhancement Approach: Success Stories of EFL Teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal’. NELTA feels privileged to co-publish it with Bangladesh English Language Teachers’ Association (BELTA).

COVID-19 is arguably one of the biggest pandemics we have experienced during our lifetime. And no one was prepared for it. It has hit every aspect of human life, and the education sector is one of the hardest hits. With schools having to shut down, teachers, especially from developing countries such as Nepal and Bangladesh, were completely clueless regarding how teaching, particularly foreign language teaching would move forward. In such a time of uncertainty, and despite having little or no prior experience in online teaching, many teachers adapted, even innovatively, to this new situation. This volume is one of the compiled resources which has documented how teachers successfully continued their teaching, learning activities in this time of the global epidemic.

This book comprises 18 success stories from Nepal and Bangladesh. Each story is unique and motivating in nature, which inspires teachers to continue their journey of imparting knowledge even during such times of trial and trepidation. Furthermore, the stories are presented in five different themes, namely Communication skills, Technology in teaching and learning, Writing skills, Technology and/or classroom activities, and Drive for success.

Overall, I found this book to be very helpful, especially for novice teachers, teacher educators and researchers. It has enabled us to understand and learn cross-border similarities and differences as well as challenges and opportunities in post-Covid situations.

I commend Dr. Ram Ashish Giri, Dr. Saraswati Dawadi, Mr. Sagun Shrestha, Ms. Saifa Haque, and the entire SSF team, including contributors for bringing out this book in this wonderful shape. NELTA is delighted to be a part of this creation.

Last but by no means least; NELTA would like to extend much gratitude to the Hornby Educational Trust for supporting this initiative.

I wish you all the best and I would like to see its best flourish in the coming days and hear more success stories.

Motikala Subba Dewan
President
Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA)
The Covid-19 pandemic has historically become one of the greatest challenges we have ever faced. It has significantly disrupted the education systems in most countries. The sudden closure of educational institutions has significantly impacted the lives of all stakeholders, including teachers, students and parents. The pandemic, for example, affected more than two-thirds of the world’s student population i.e., 72.4% of total enrolled learners across the globe (UNESCO, 2020). Teachers felt helpless and worried for not being able to connect with their students during the testing times (Shrestha, et al., 2021). Similarly, parents of the affected children are worried about their academic future. Many studies carried out on the impacts of the pandemic affirmed that students and their parents not only suffered educationally but also psychologically and physiologically (Dawadi et al., 2020; Rehman, 2020; Terada, 2020; Shrestha et al., 2021). The need to provide some form of educational continuity forced educational systems to offer new modalities of learning and mobilisation of all available means. These included e-learning whereby teaching and learning are undertaken remotely using digital platforms. Nevertheless, most teachers (and students) in developing countries, including Bangladesh and Nepal, had little or no prior experience of teaching and learning online. The teachers of English were no exception to this. Furthermore, there were several challenges around their access to technology, training opportunities and educational resources.

Having considered the challenges faced by English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in continuing teaching and learning during the pandemic and/or in the pre-pandemic situation, we, Saraswati Dawadi, Sagun Shrestha, Saifa Haque (Hornby scholars) and Ram Ashish Giri (British Council fellow, 1996), developed a project proposal with an aim to support EFL teachers through online events and networking opportunities and submitted it to A. S. Hornby Trust for support. Fortunately, the A.S. Hornby Trust accepted our proposal in December 2020 and we started the project in January 2021. By the time we began our journey, we were working in four different countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Ireland, and the UK. We enjoyed our work though none of us could meet in person. Indeed, working in distributed locations made our journey more adventurous.

The project aimed at developing a unique platform where EFL teachers would share their success stories on the identified themes and subthemes, learn from each other and promote emergency remote teaching (ERT) as a separate skill set. Therefore, the project adopted a bottom-up approach to ‘teacher education’ which Smith (2018) calls a constructive enhancement approach. The adopted approach had a goal of helping EFL teachers build their Community of Practice (COP) through which they may get an opportunity to enhance their teaching by valuing their own expertise and by supporting each other. This project is the extension of some sharing success story events organized in Nepal, and the root of this project is in the Hornby Regional workshop organized in Kathmandu, moderated by Richard Smith and Amol Padwad which introduced sharing success story model (See Shrestha, 2019). EFL
teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal were the major focus of this project. Since the two countries shared similar contexts (difficult circumstances), it was hoped that teachers from both countries would be able to learn the best practices they have had in their contexts and build a rapport amongst each other. The online sessions would allow EFL teachers working in a variety of challenging contexts to share their reflections on the challenges and opportunities of supporting teacher professional development in crisis contexts. Through the session discussion, EFL teachers would come together to share their best practices, learn from each other’s stories, and avail opportunities to support their professional development amidst extraordinarily challenging settings.

In order to organise the webinars, we needed both the presenters and participants (i.e., EFL teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal). To reach out to our prospective presenters (and participants), we designed a website for the project (https://successstoryforum.wordpress.com/) and made a call for presentations. The website provided detailed information about the events and offered guidelines to develop a proposal for a 20-minute session. To be specific, interested teachers were invited to submit their proposal for sharing their success stories based on the following four questions.

1. What went well related to your teaching and learning?
2. What did you do categorically to achieve your success?
3. What were the signs of success?
4. Do you have any plan to build on or extend this success?

Additionally, we developed a flyer (see Figure 1) and shared it through our social media (Facebook and Twitter). We also requested the British Council (Nepal and Bangladesh), Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA) and Bangladeshi English Language Teachers’ Association (BELTA) to spread the information among EFL teachers in their network. This means the call for presentation along with the online sessions were disseminated through NELTA, BELTA and Local British Councils.
We received 21 proposals (13 from Nepal and 8 from Bangladesh) from 24 EFL teachers. All proposals were reviewed, and many teachers were asked to revise their proposal based on the comments they had received. Then, the proposals were finalised by the project team in March. In order to systematically organise the proposals and our virtual sessions, we developed five different themes, namely Communication Skills, Technology in Teaching and Learning, Writing Skills, Technology and/or Classroom Activities, and Drive for Success.

We organised an orientation programme on the 3rd of April which was attended by almost all the teachers who were going to share their success stories. The program lasted for one and half hours and it provided us an opportunity to bring all the presenters together for the first time in our journey, make them familiar with the format of the webinars and the focus of the events, and discuss the issues raised by the teachers. The teachers were reminded that they would be focusing on the four key questions (mentioned above) while sharing their success stories. We could easily sense a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement among the teachers about their presentations.
Following the orientation session, we organised five two-hour virtual sessions in which the 24 teacher participants (excluding one) individually presented their success stories. To run the online sessions, Zoom, a video conferencing platform, was used to facilitate communication with the presenters and participants. Around 45 to 65 EFL teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal attended each of the webinar sessions, organised fortnightly from 10th of April to 5th of June, 2021. We also introduced Edmodo (an asynchronous platform) to connect teachers outside the sessions. Through the platform, the teachers could discuss their issues and share their learning/work. Additionally, we used email for asynchronous communication during the program. We primarily used the Gmail that we created for the SSF program to communicate with our presenters. The project organisers moderated the sessions and took part in the discourses in Edmodo and encouraged teachers to share their learnings with each other.

The first sharing session was organised on the 10th of April. The event was filled with a lot of enthusiasm in meeting EFL teachers from Bangladesh and Nepal and to learn from each other. Before starting the session, we organised an opening ceremony. Representatives from the British Council (Nepal and Bangladesh), NELTA and BELTA were invited. Their gracious presence at the opening ceremony provided additional encouragement and boosted the morale of the organisers as well as the participating teachers. The ceremony highlighted the aims of the program and its format. During the event, we received inspiring remarks from our distinguished guests about our effort inorganising the program. This was especially significant to us because we were filled the added zeal in taking this event to success.

In the first sharing session immediately after the opening ceremony, four success stories were presented by seven EFL teachers on two main themes: ‘Communication Skills’ and ‘Technology in Teaching and Learning’. The first story was about Amin, Fatema and A K M Sharif’s success in using Addabaz to help EFL students in enhancing their English language proficiency whereas the second story reflected on how Pushpa successfully used several strategies to develop mass-facing skills in her students. The third success story presented by Rezwana offered new insights on how technological knowledge can be integrated into English language education in low-resource contexts. The session wrapped up with Bishnu’s success story which highlighted some key initiatives introduced by Mid-West University, Nepal to support students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main theme for the second sharing session, organised on the 24th of April, was the ‘Writing Skill’. During the session, five EFL teachers presented their success stories. It began with Gopal’s fascinating story around his efforts to improve his students’ writing skills which was followed by Bhiva’s wonderful reflections on how English Language Fairs can be organised to enhance the English language proficiency of EFL students. Indeed, Bhiva’s critical observation on the usefulness of Language Fairs was based on her own experience of organising such fairs. The third and fourth success stories shared by Dipak and Surendra respectively presented some useful techniques that we can use ICT in promoting creative writing practices among EFL learners. Both the teachers shared their personal experiences of using ICT to develop writing skills in their students. Finally, Sabreena presented her success story on Fostering XIV
Critical Thinking in Prewriting through Focused Freewriting’. Her presentation clearly indicated how effectively she used the Focused Free Writing technique to promote critical thinking in her students.

The third sharing session was organised on the 8th of May. The session had a major focus on Communication Skills and Technology in Teaching and Learning. In the session, five EFL teachers presented their success stories. The session began with Muhammed Shahriar’s presentation on the use of the Tissue Technique to improve EFL learners’ pronunciation skills. The technique was well received. Similarly, Nusrat shared her experience of teaching communication by using the Learning by Doing technique. She mainly reflected on how she incorporated the 4Cs (Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Critical Thinking) and the 21st-century Skills in her Tertiary Level Writing Course. Furthermore, Mehnaz and Maruf shared their success story that highlighted the need to integrate technology in education and develop 21st-century skills in students. The term “21st-century skills”, according to them, refers to specific core competencies such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity. The session ended with Puskar’s amazing story about what he did to enhance Digital Literacies in EFL learners and teachers from his school in Kathmandu.

The fourth sharing session, organised on the 27th of May, comprised four success stories. All four presentations focused on the use of technology and/or classroom activities. At first, Anju shared her extensive experience of organising several national and international programmes or project works that immensely supported her professional growth and her students’ skills development. Anju’s presentation was followed by Nawsheen’s success story entitled ‘Human Being’s Drive for Academic Success’. In her presentation, Nawsheen highlighted how she made writing fun for EFL students by introducing drawing activities in her classroom. Then, Prateet presented his own success story that captured all the struggles or hard times that he had in the past and how his motivation and determination to be a successful person enabled him to overcome all the barriers and challenges that affected his life when he was quite young. The session wrapped up with Kalpana’s success story that reflected her efforts in helping her underprivileged students during the COVID-19 pandemic. We truly appreciate her dedication in supporting the students from rural Nepal who were deprived of learning opportunities during the pandemic.

The final sharing session was organised on the 5th of May which consisted of three success stories. The session began with Geeta’s wonderful story on ‘Promoting Gen Z Wellbeing in English Language Classroom’. She claimed that her students belong to Generation Z as they were tech-savvy and/or digital natives. Her story was followed by Santona’s wonderful story about how she helped her students in developing their writing skills. The final story was presented by Zohur. His presentation mainly focused on successful techniques that he used to help students tackle speaking anxieties during the Academic Oral Presentations. At the end of the final sharing session, we organised a closing ceremony. Representatives from the Hornby Trust UK, British Councils (Bangladesh and Nepal), NELTA and BELTA were invited to the event. We were overwhelmed by the good remarks made by our guests and participants.
In each session, participants were requested to give us feedback on the events. We had designed a survey with a couple of questions around participants’ learning from the program. All the participants were requested to take part in the survey. The survey link was shared with the participants in each session. Based on the responses to the survey, it could be concluded that each session was received very well.

These are some of the quotes from the surveys:

I would like to say that I had so many takeaways from the session held today. The ideas shared by the distinguished presenter were very unique and interesting.

In the future, I would be honored to work with the organisers if possible. The organisers are so down-to-earth and friendly. It affected the entire atmosphere where participants remained engaged till the end.

It is an effective one, so it should be organised again.

I am sure this platform and the ideas that came out from this sharing have added more confidence in every teacher's day-to-day innovative/contingency practices.

I have found sharing the success stories is helpful as this will help me incorporate some of the ideas shared.

The forum was a wonderful event where teachers could share their success as well as their worries and future plans. That is why the participating and sharing were very interesting and worth listening to.

During the sessions, we informed the presenters about the possibility of publishing their stories. After the program, a good number of the presenters showed their interest in the initiative. We received 18 success stories in total.

All things considered, we are very happy to bring this book to you which is indeed a collection of success stories presented in our online events. In particular, we are confident that this book will be useful to EFL teachers who are teaching in a low-resource context.

Finally, we would like to thank Richard Smith and Amol Padwad for sharing a success story model to teacher development in Nepal in 2013. We would also like to thank the Hornby Trust UK for trusting upon us and providing us with their financial support to run the Success Story Forum. We are equally grateful to the British Council (Bangladesh and Nepal), NELTA and BELTA for their generous support. Much gratitude goes to the participating EFL teachers for their hard work in putting their stories together in a written form.

We would love to receive readers’ feedback on the SSF online events and this book. If you have any comments or queries, please email us at successstoryforum@gmail.com.
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https://www.edutopia.org/article/covid-19s-impact-students-academic-and-mental-well-being

https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse
How to Use this Book

This book is a compilation of amazing success stories presented at the Binational Success Story Forum in 2021. The Forum brought teachers and teacher-educators from Bangladesh and Nepal together to share their success stories on classroom teaching and learning. Based on the enhancement approach, the Forum was designed to inspire other teachers to learn from the effective teaching strategies and innovative classroom techniques that were explored in this program. This book is a testament to the efforts these teachers made in order to bring their lived experiences to the Forum.

The stories presented in this volume exhibit common problems that teachers face in their classroom, the steps and strategies they undertake to address them, the ways they implement those strategies and the consequent outcomes they find. These stories are the brilliant display of how teachers can address their classroom problems with their initiation despite their limitations.

The stories in this book are organised in five different themes,

   a) Communication Skills,
   b) Technology in Teaching and Learning,
   c) Writing Skills,
   d) Technology and/or Classroom Activities, and
   a) Drive for Success.

In order to stimulate your reading experience, most sections of a story have focus questions. The purpose behind the inclusion of such questions is to guide readers to the pertinent issues the story addresses.

Given the limited time in which the teachers presented their success stories and the constraints imposed by the mediating technologies, the participants might not have benefitted fully from their lived experiences.

We feel that the success stories have the potential for inspiring many others who work in similar situations and make laudable successes. As such, this book presents new opportunities for EFL teachers and teacher educators as well as the wider readership to learn from the successes of their fellow ELT practitioners. Finally, it is our hope that this book is useful for teachers, teacher trainers, teacher educators and researchers aiming to explore workable answers in the field of ELT in under-resourced contexts.
For teachers

The primary target of this book is the practicing English language teachers. Such teachers will benefit from this book in a number of ways. Firstly, ELT teachers can relate to the common classroom problems and adapt the strategies used in this book in their teaching practice. Secondly, the stories illustrate how they can develop classroom materials and activities in actively engaging their students and produce the desired outcomes despite various restrictions and limited resources. In addition, these stories will help teachers realise how to reach out to fellow teachers within and across institutions to seek collaboration and assistance.

More broadly, the volume is particularly useful to teachers working in challenging conditions in Bangladesh and Nepal who are interested in learning from similar practices or in trying out something different to bring an innovative solution to their classroom issues. Thus, this book is useful for anyone interested in finding out ways and means in improving their practices and for solving their EFL classroom problems.

For trainers and teacher educators

The stories in this book have important implications for teacher training and teacher education. The first and foremost implication for teacher educators or teacher trainers is that the stories inform them how to train teachers to become innovative problem solvers and change agents even in under-resourced contexts. The compiled stories in this book will help teacher educators understand how teachers develop and use new practices, what strategies they employ to deal with their classroom problems, and how they build rapport and collaboration with their colleagues and students. The book will help them train teachers to develop ELT projects together with students, and implement them to bring about positive changes in their classroom. Moreover, the teacher educators will be able to share these stories as cases to make trainee teachers understand how teachers can help themselves to deal with their teaching issues.

The teacher educators or teacher trainers of Bangladesh and Nepal may use this book to:

- familiarise themselves with the common classroom issues teachers face;
- ask teachers to find possible solutions or strategies used in the book to address the classroom issues they have identified;
- showcase some of the stories as sample stories during their teacher training programs; and
- use questions given in the book to generate activities or interactions during their teacher training sessions
For ELT researchers

The stories in this book are a proof of the hard work that the participating teachers have put into in bringing the innovative changes to their classroom practices. As such, researchers can potentially use the book to explore what issues teachers in under-resourced EFL classrooms experience, what innovative practices they develop or adapt, and how they deal with their classroom challenges to bring out the desired result. Therefore, we hope that this book is a useful resource for the researchers of ELT practices.
Section 1

Enhancement Approach to Teacher Development and Teachers’ Success Stories
Teacher development programs are essential to help teachers excel their pedagogical skills to effectively engage in their teaching-learning activities. If they are designed by taking account of teachers’ local context and their skillset, there is a high chance that such programs can benefit teachers significantly to build their pedagogical knowledge and expertise in their professional development. This volume is an attempt to illustrate the teacher development programs which accentuate the strengths of the teachers to help develop their teaching practice.

Teacher development models practiced in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs) are mostly expert-driven, and teachers tend to look for prescriptive ideas to be adopted in bringing some newness in their classrooms. However, success is not guaranteed. In particular, Popova et al. (2019) view that teachers in LMIC regions do not have the proper skills to effectively teach their learners. They argue,

> teachers and coaches in low- and middle-income countries may benefit from more prescriptive instructions on implementation and, while they too require ongoing follow-up as part of PD, this may need to be provided in lower-cost forms, whether in group sessions, using technology for remote coaching, or training school principals and experienced peer teachers as coaches. (Popova et al., 2019, p. 4)

Therefore, in LMICs a proper and context-sensitive teacher development program is necessary to enable teachers to gain appropriate pedagogical skills. Benegas et al. (2021) in their paper related to decentring English language teaching (ELT) argue that "Work needs to be put into empowering teachers to develop contextually appropriate thinking and action (on methodology, materials design, curriculum development, teacher education, etc.), in relation to the needs of their local contexts" (p. 2). One of the teacher development models in this volume is based on a strength-based approach that inculcates teachers’ expertise in valuing their successful work.
Strengths-based approach

The strengths-based approach emphasises strengths to empower people, thus it is a concept based on the assumption that people have capabilities and resources for their self-development (Center for Child Well-being, 2011). This approach “looks for opportunities to complement and support existing strengths and capacities as opposed to focusing on, and staying with, the problem or concern.” (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012, p. 6). Thus, the strengths-based approach attempts to build on the strengths or successes of communities or individuals rather than problems to uplift the existing situations.

Rapp et al. (2005) assert that the practice of this approach dates back to the early 1980s in mental health case management. Clarifying the aim of the strengths-based approach, Thurber (2021) argues that it is not to assume that problems do not exist; rather, it is to emphasise the strengths of individuals and communities and also to build on the successes for positive outcomes. In that case, this approach differs from the deficit approach which emphasises problems in people and attempts to help people avoid risks. As the focus on deficit issues can reinforce the negative stereotypes, “those in the group of interest who constantly hear these negative stories may internalise negative beliefs about their identity, which can contribute to low self-esteem and psychological distress” (Thurber, 2021). Overall, linking it to teacher development, which we are discussing in the upcoming section, is a distinct approach that accentuates teachers' successes shared by the teachers in what classroom approaches work in their communities for their professional development (Shrestha, 2019).

Enhancement approach in teacher development

Many teacher development programs are observed to be expert-driven. In other words, experts come with their knowledge and disseminate their knowledge to teachers who seek some insights on professional development. The shared knowledge might not always align with local contexts and realities. Consequently, there is a high chance that the experts’ or teacher educators’ proposed ideas can remain unused as the teachers who attend these programs may not use them at their workplace. As the local context is very important, it may be a good idea to value their successes or strengths by making them share their stories and learn from each other. In other words, their context sensitive sharing can be termed as an enhancement approach that focuses on building on teachers’ own strengths to enhance their professional engagement. We claim that the enhancement approach to teacher development is more effective than an expert-driven approach because this approach emphasises teachers’ strengths more than their problems to uplift their teaching-learning activities.

When it comes to the studies on strengths-based or enhancement approaches in teacher development, Zwart et al. (2015) in their study focused on making “teachers aware of their core qualities and inspiration, and to support them in enacting these in practice and dealing with the obstacles hindering them from doing so” (p. 3). Their study demonstrates that teachers emphasise positive experiences as being the important aspects in their learning. Shrestha (2019), based on an enhancement approach,
evaluated how sharing success stories helped teachers of Nepal for their professional development, and found that teachers could learn from each other, establish a network with their colleagues and gain context-sensitive classroom tips and strategies. The enhancement approach in teacher education is very new; therefore, it needs further exploration to unfold the potential of this approach in teacher development programs.

Enhancement approach as an intervention in teacher development programs

The enhancement approach as a teacher development model was introduced in Nepal by Amol Padwad and Richard Smith in November, 2013 at a British Council Hornby Regional School (Shrestha, 2019). Other scholars might have tried such a model in their own respective contexts; however, the authors have not found the resources on such a practice till the time of writing. Notwithstanding, this approach has been expanded further by different teacher educators around the globe in the form of various teacher development models, such as in training events, conferences, mentoring, etc. In its original form, in this approach, teacher participants are asked to talk and write about successes that they have achieved in their classroom teaching and learning. This can involve strategies related to teaching particular content, managing their classrooms and the like. Firstly, the participants are invited to recall a story related to their success in their classroom practice and share it informally in a small group. Later, they are asked to share the story in a different group (can be in a group of three). While sharing this time, they add more descriptions. They reflect on their good moments in a form of a presentation. Finally, they are asked to share their story with a different partner (see Smith et al., 2017). This final sharing is an extended form of the success story they identified earlier which is more specific and comprehensive. Depending on the context where teacher educators work and the nature of the program which they design, the steps of this approach can be modified.

The authors (project team members) employed the enhancement approach to teacher development in their project because of the following reasons:

1. This approach creates a learning platform by building on teachers’ successful experiences and their perspectives on their successes, and encourages other colleagues to try out the strategies that are applicable to their local context and are more likely to be successful.
2. It places teachers as opposed to trainers or mentors at the center of the teacher development programs.
3. It involves teachers guiding other teachers.
4. This approach has been proved to create a highly productive platform for teachers where TEACHERS can CELEBRATE and EXCHANGE their SUCCESSES.
5. This approach assists the participants in establishing and expanding a wider community to support their professional development.
6. It is a bottom-up approach and directly addresses their contextual issues and concerns.
7. Teachers are encouraged to apply teaching strategies that their colleagues share with them in their immediate classroom.

(Adapted from Smith & Shrestha, 2019)

How the project implemented enhancement approach in Success Story Forum

The project began with an open call for the willing participants for the Success Story Forum. Interested EFL teachers or teacher educators made a 20-minute presentation detailing their success on their teaching and learning. They were asked to share what went well, what were the signs of success, and what they did categorically to achieve that success. Furthermore, the authors categorised their success stories under different themes such as communication skills, technology in teaching and learning and so on (for more details, see the 'Teachers' success stories' section below), created a fortnightly schedule, and made the participants present their success stories virtually via the Zoom platform. There was a Question and Answer session at the end of each presentation so that other teacher participants could raise some questions to gain better understanding on the success stories that their friends have shared or they could simply comment on those presenters’ success stories either by associating to their own stories and contexts or by simply making note of a few striking things that the presenters have shared. (See About the Project section in this volume for more details).

Future implications

The authors (i.e., the project team), with a view to encourage more ELT practitioners to focus on their successes rather than failures, disseminated the outcomes of the Success Story and the enhancement approach through a number of conferences and forums. The feedback from the participants shows a great deal of enthusiasm for this model, which values teachers' strengths, generates context-sensitive strategies in teaching and learning, and enhances teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and skills through sharing (see Shrestha, 2019). Since this approach focuses on building on the teachers’ skills by sharing their successes in their local context, it may equally be effective in all kinds of settings that include richly resourced classrooms. While adopting this approach in teacher education, teacher educators or trainers might worry about their reduced roles; nonetheless, they need to be mindful of their important role as a facilitator. Under the Enhancement approach, teacher educators play an active role in helping teachers share their successes and learn from each other’s strengths.

Teachers’ success stories

This volume consists of eighteen success stories of the teachers and teacher educators who have successfully shared their unique experience related to their training, teaching and learning. The participants came together in the Success Story Forum organised by the authors during the pandemic of 2021. The stories are grouped under five themes viz., communication skills, technology in teaching and learning, technology and/or classroom activities, writing skills and drive for successes, and the stories in this volume appear as per the themes. Following are the synopsis of the success stories.
Theme: Communication skills

The theme 'communication skills' has four stories, and in the first story ‘Adda in English (AIE) – Group Adda and One-on-one Adda,’ **Amin, Fatema and Sharif** talk about a new ELT approach or technique, which they call Adda, a century-old tradition of Bengali people. They use the technique to improve Bangladeshi EFL teachers’ listening and speaking skills. The authors define Adda as “express oneself”, and by Addabaaz they mean all those persons who take part in an Adda. They reflect on how they brought addbaaz together and organised Adda in English with an enormous support from 21 mentors from different countries including Australia, Canada, England and the USA. They have successfully organised six group Addas and several other one-to-one Addas (between two people). The authors claim that “this [Adda] is a very simple but effective approach which can help people improve their fluency in English speaking.” Having received good feedback from the Adda mentees, they are going to extend their program in the future. Furthermore, the authors mention that their “mentees have started similar programs in the form of organising Speaking and Debating clubs with their students, colleagues and community members.”

**Another story by Pushpa Priya** reflects on the techniques that she adopted to train her undergraduate students in building their mass-facing confidence and improving English communication skills. During the Covid-19 pandemic, she introduces some forms of intervention through action research in online classes. She claims that her students have developed interpersonal skills and they are more positive and friendly after practising their speech in front of their teacher and classmates. She indicates that her students’ success has inspired her to help more students boost their mass-facing skills. She is interested in organising speaking clubs where her students can practise their public speaking skills. She is also planning to organise one social event where students can exhibit their skills. Furthermore, she mentions that she is planning to organise psychological training to boost students’ confidence. She has a high hope that more and more students will develop their mass-facing skills.

**Bibha Jha**’s story is based on her experience at a language fair in her school. The event is conceptualised, created and conducted by her students through her guidance. In 2020, Bibha shared the concept of a Language Fair with her students for the first time. Her students are very excited and begin to prepare for the fair. They share their ideas in her classroom. Furthermore, they begin to work on producing posters, charts, videos, handmade books, etc. for the fair. Additionally, some of them write poems while others come up with stories, and still others collect famous quotes.

When the preparation is complete, the school organises an English Language Fair with a goal of making the students achieve four language skills, namely writing, reading, speaking and listening. The students are busy with the preparation while Ms Jha facilitates the activities and provided them with the necessary materials. Beyond the four English language skills, her students gain useful life skills. Most importantly, they gain an experience in ‘Learning by Doing’. The Fair provides them with student engagement which is a powerful tool for student motivation to learning in any classroom size and within the available resources. During the Fair, they share their struggles and achievements with the visitors. They answer the questions and engage with other students and teachers from the same school.
Muhammed Shahriar Haque’s story shares how Tissue Technique can be applied to teach correct pronunciation to the EFL learners in Bangladesh. Following 'Engage' (E), 'Study' (S) and 'Activate' (A) strategy, he shows how this technique can be easily applied to learners. The story mentions how applying the technique can make the class entertaining and help the students learn through edutainment.

Mentioning his observation of linguistic discrimination experienced by his colleagues and students, he emphasises the importance of learning pronunciation. In a country like Bangladesh, learning English language pronunciation is more important because of interlanguage differences. Because of the dissimilarity among different plosive sounds between Bangla and English, he particularly highlights the effectiveness of the Tissue Technique to teach pronunciation to Bangladeshi learners. In the last 15 years, he has used the technique and observed how students enjoyed using the technique to improve their pronunciation. He intends to make video tutorials on the Tissue Technique and apply for a patent on the method.

Theme: Technology in teaching and learning

There are four stories under this theme and in the first story, Rezwana Islam talks about her journey towards becoming an online language teacher. She mentions how she learns to use Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK) (Herring et al., 2016) by joining different online webinars, groups and forums. From these webinars and forums, she gets ideas on online teaching and applies them in real life. She mentions how she developed professionally as a result of following the simple strategy of connecting and learning, and how she improves her skills as a teacher along the way.

For applying the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK), she does a needs analysis assessment first by identifying learners’ access to digital devices. Her personal development as an online teacher runs parallel with her success in teaching online. As she participates in different webinars, groups and forums, she develops her knowledge in effective online teaching. She applies the knowledge to plan lessons, manage interaction, design group and pair works and give feedback. As a learner-friendly environment gradually develops, she realises how her personal development contributes to creating the right conditions for effectively running online classes.

Bishnu Kumar Khadka’s story is based on reflecting or experiencing his own teaching and learning practices using online and alternative pedagogy that help him develop activities and empowering other faculty members for their professional development through online and alternative pedagogy during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown, it gets impossible for teachers and students to physically convene in a classroom. Besides, the physical meetings of university authorities are also completely postponed. However, it becomes unfeasible to remain disconnected from colleagues and students for a long period. After the pandemic lockdown, the university authorities meet on Facebook Messenger group and later on Google Meet. Finally, Zoom classes are set up with formal rules and regulations. Facebook Messenger is initially relegated to a
communication tool between the university authorities, teachers and students. On the other hand, with more training and practice on online pedagogy, the teachers are capable of conducting formal classes on Google Classroom and students become familiar with the Google learning platform. Furthermore, the teachers are able to conduct mid-term as well as semester-end examinations through online and alternative modes. The university formally declares it as a hybrid model (physical as well as online and alternative mode of pedagogy) system practices and transformed it into an e-university with the concept of e-admission, e-class, e-assessment and e-certification.

Mehnaz Monir Meem and Maruf Mozammel as teaching fellows for Teach for Bangladesh, share how they implemented mobile-assisted language learning in their classrooms in Bangladesh during the pandemic in their story titled ‘Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: Where Teaching and Learning are Merged with the 21st-Century Skills’. Working in the limited yet difficult circumstances, such as conducting online classrooms using only smartphones, they start with making the students interested in the online education. As a result, they begin taking their classes on Imo, WhatsApp and Messenger. They create a five-step lesson plan that aligned with the 21st-century skills. Their five-steps lesson plan included opening, introduction to new materials, guided practice, independent practice and closing which helped learners move from guided practice to autonomous learning. They have several activities in each step such as a Stand-up and Sit-down game in the first step, demonstration of what they would be doing in the second step and so on. These activities accentuate communication, creativity, collaboration and independent practice. They have also explained how they have implemented a concrete, pictorial/visuals, abstract (CPA) method for teaching vocabulary and sentence making by conducting a writing workshop for their classes. Moreover, they explain how their activities in Mobile-Assisted Language Teaching help develop the 21st-century skills in the learners.

Puskar Chaudhary’s success story delineates that he empowers teachers and helps them to develop digital literacies at Triyog school, Kathmandu, by supporting them to use technology in their classrooms. He helps them to prepare and share digital content for lesson delivery and build professional networking among teachers through trainings and workshops. He also facilitates and organises in-house weekly training sessions at his school to discuss classroom teaching practices, opportunities and challenges. Moreover, he supports the school by keeping digital portfolios of each student. Puskar claims that his students and colleagues have improved their digital literacy as a result of his programs. He further claims that his students have enhanced their creative and critical thinking skills by doing activities such as creating PowerPoint presentations, making digital posters, using digital storytelling methods, making memes and using digital learning materials. Besides, they can manage their online identity, communicate on digital platforms, and access authentic learning materials on the internet. Now, Puskar wants to design an online course for his teaching. He is also interested in carrying out classroom research, collaborating with stakeholders such as teachers, parents and learners, as well as integrating technology into education.
Theme: Technology and/or classroom activities

Under the theme, 'technology and/or classroom activities', the first story by Anju Lama reveals that she previously used to teach by solely relying on the traditional methods i.e. chalk and talk method. This means that she did not care about her students' feelings and desires and only about the goal of finishing the course objectives. Her aim used to be completing the course on time and focusing on the reading text. Consequently, students used to feel that English was a difficult subject.

When she changes her teaching strategies, she includes technology in her teaching process and provides lots of project works (group activities) apart from giving them reading tasks. She rewards the students who get better grades and motivates those students who really want to change for good. She introduces learning materials using ICT and helps them use ICT in her classroom. She involves them in project works for better learning. Using ICT in the classroom and involving them in project works provide the students with practical knowledge. Under the ISA (International School Award) program, she prepares around 11 projects related to curriculum and textbooks. Then she categorises all the projects in different criteria such as some projects to be done as a school program, some projects to be done collaborating with other schools in Nepal and some projects to be done collaborating with international schools. They share lots of ideas, cultures, language, etc. with other schools. Some of the activities are conducted in the school while other activities are exchanged with partner school’s students either virtually or physically. Virtual collaborations are conducted with international students through Skype conversation, email, WhatsApp, etc. She collaborates with BloomField Hall, Pakistan in the project, Coat of Arms. Pakistani students learn about Nepali folk dance and Nepali students learn about Pakistani folk dance and Sindhi dance along with stage shows in their schools. Later on, they continue their collaborative projects with India’s Maruti Mangolia school on ‘Animals around us’. The students share lots of information on the animals, their sounds, their homes, etc.

Now she teaches her students using presentations by including related pictures as well as videos, and different project works. Students are also able to present their ideas using ICT. Students’ active participation in any kind of activities and projects is higher which she considers as her success in relation to the teaching and learning. Being awarded ‘Best Teacher of the Year’ in 2019 speaks loudly of her success.

The story of Kalpana Paudel displays how she became successful even working in the remotest region of Nepal as a teacher of higher education. It is the first-ever online teaching experience for her during the pandemic period, yet she successfully handles those challenges. No doubt, there are loads of issues, such as limited access to the Internet, frequent power cuts, lack of infrastructure, etc, yet she engages her learners in online learning using online tools such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom and Messenger Group. In her story, she delineates her success and the steps that she followed to achieve her success well. Her story shows that introducing new techniques in a classroom is possible and requires hard work from a teacher.
Nawsheen Ahsan’s story describes how applying different activities in the class helps her underprivileged students to be motivated. As the students are shy in speaking English, she has added a fun factor in her English classroom activities to lower their affective filter. In her story, Nawsheen tells us about two such classroom activities. In the first activity, she asks one of her students to leave the class for a minute. The rest of the students in the class are given pictures. After a minute the student enters the room and the other students sitting in the class describe the picture to the student. In this way, they try to draw pictures and write in the class. In another activity, all her students tell stories in the class. One student starts telling a story and gradually the other students add details to that story. When everyone in the class has spoken, they have an oftentimes loosely juxtaposed story that is weird, funny or even interesting.

Nawsheen describes that these activities are helpful for motivating the students to overcome their inhibition of speaking in English. She also emphasises on the importance of choosing appropriate topics for presentation. She has seen the signs of success as her students now enjoy her class and speak more in English. In the future, she wants to apply similar activities to motivate her students.

Theme: Writing skills

In the first story under the theme 'writing skills', Gopal Prasad Bashyal explains how he motivates teachers in teaching writing in his training session. In the teachers’ community, first of all, he makes them realise the value of writing. Later, he engages teachers in pre-writing, while writing and post-writing stages through different activities, such as the use of the Ishikawa diagram in pre-writing, identifying thesis statements and topic sentences during while-writing and providing some questions to examine the text in post-writing stages. He explains that teachers could produce one long paragraph while creating the first draft and had three to four paragraphs in the subsequent revisions. In Bashyal’s story, any reader can find that by guiding the learners in writing during all three stages, learners will be able to produce better and meaningful text that can encourage them to continue writing.

Dipak Mishra shares a success story of a creative writing workshop he conducts for his secondary level class with ten students. The workshop motivates them to write their stories. Most importantly, the workshop brings newness in the teaching and learning process. He focuses on student presentations, group discussions, reflective writing and collaborative activities. The main objective of this creative writing project is to motivate students to develop stories on their own. The author conducts a three-day creative writing workshop collaborating with the British Council. Top ten stories as well as the best in the college are awarded certificates and prizes. Similarly, the top three students get scholarships for ‘A’ level education and higher study. At the time of their presentation, they are in the process of publishing the top ten stories as a storybook.

In the creative writing workshop, his students write reflective writing which they share in the classroom every day. Their writings get published in local newspapers. His job is mainly to motivate their students to write on any subject matter. The students comment critically on other student writings which
inspire them to write better. He encourages them to present their writing samples in the classroom and during the school assembly. They get rewarded by the school principal every Sunday. During the Covid-19 pandemic, he encourages his class to use technology in order to make his teaching-learning activities more meaningful. Dipak and his students engage in collaborative work via Microsoft Teams. Furthermore, he conducts a writing evaluation and organises a forum for presentations. Because of the regular classroom practice, the students improve their writing skills. Moreover, they are able to confidently present in any seminar or conference due to the increased interaction and exposure in the workshops and forums.

**Sabreena Ahmed’s** story focused on using a focused freewriting strategy. She shows how by using images and short films, it is possible to generate ideas and develop the critical thinking skills in her students as part of developing their writing. She follows Core Critical Thinking Skills Framework (Facione, 2015) and Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric (HCTSR) (Facione & Facione, 2014) to generate ideas and give feedback. By following these steps, the students show progress in their critical writing ability.

Her story illustrates her finding that focusing ten minutes on brainstorming and generating ideas can be very effective for developing the critical writing skills of the learners. Within a short span of three weeks, she finds her students becoming more responsive with visual stimuli and focusing on ideas. The success of this activity can be ascertained by the increased duration in focused freewriting in her students.

The story of **Nusrat Gulzar** presents how writing classes can be made interactive using a handful of simple digital tools. She uses Padlet, Jamboard, Vocaroo and Zoom breakout rooms to promote critical thinking, communication and collaboration in her classes. These tools help to give individual, peer and oral feedback. Some tools also help in brainstorming and discussing ideas. As a result, she finds that students become more motivated and responsive in her classes.

Even though she uses several tools for promoting the 4 C’s in her classroom, she introduces just one tool at a time. Padlet is used for collaboration and for brainstorming before the writing session. Next, she uses Jamboards for the drafting stage. Feedback on the drafts is given using Vocaroo. To make the writing process interactive, she also uses Zoom breakout rooms so that students can discuss among themselves. Collecting information using questionnaires helps her evaluate the success in each student.

**Theme: Drive for success**

The 'Drive for success' is the final and interesting theme, and this theme comprises only two stories. As the first story in this theme, **Geeta Bhattari** talks about promoting the physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing of her students who she believes are tech-savvy; therefore, she names them Gen Z (for Generation Z). During pandemic, she allows her students to take a 20 minutes break between synchronous online sessions. She gives activities on nature because she believes that spending time
with nature promotes physical wellbeing in her students. She asks them to share their problems and difficulties in writing and talking to her. Furthermore, she implements the netiquette rules that help her learners properly behave during the online class sessions. In particular, she focuses on promoting positive self-esteem and self-respect in her students by encouraging the class to value other’s perspectives. On the same note, she includes projects and classroom activities that inculcate their practice on the theme ‘recycle, reuse, reduce and plantation’, as well as produce a dream book, develop a short story or create a poem, and play Pictionary.

In the next story, Zohur Ahmed shows how the oral communication skills of the 1st-semester students at his university can be improved by following a simple strategy of creating Online Group Discussions (OLGD). He allows students of his class to discuss in English for 30 minutes each week. This time, however, is outside the class schedule and each group has a moderator. Students report that OLGD gives them a non-threatening and supportive platform that reduces anxiety.

In the five online discussion groups, each comprising 5/6 students, students discuss different topics. Their discussion is regularly monitored by the moderator of each group. As students overcome their nervousness and their progress gets regularly reported, they start performing better. Data collected using qualitative and quantitative methods shows that OLGD activity helps to reduce speaking or presentation anxiety among his students.

Last but not least, Prateet Baskota beautifully presents his success story on his professional growth. His story clearly indicates that he has to struggle a lot to be successful. He faces several challenges including health issues and financial crises in his life. However, due to his resilience and willpower to be a successful person, he never gives up and continues working hard to fulfill his dream. He also acknowledges that he received support from various people, from his family members, friends and fellow teachers. His hard work pays off. Now, he has established himself as a successful teacher. He aims to conduct more research and learning to establish himself in academia. The SSF team believes that his story will inspire other teachers to be resilient.

References


Section 2

Teachers’ Success Stories
Adda in English (AIE) – Group Adda and One-on-one Adda

- Amin Rahman
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Introduction

Amin Rahman: I am from Bangladesh residing in Melbourne (Australia) since 1980, with my professional background and education in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, Demography, HR, Technology Management, Applied Linguistics (TESOL), and Educational Research. I have lived and worked in Pakistan, Scotland, Bangladesh, Iraq, Venezuela, Australia, Zimbabwe, and Kuwait. I love travelling, sightseeing and meeting people. Since retiring in 2003, I have been teaching Spoken English and Intelligible English Pronunciation to teachers and students in Bangladesh. I developed three localised phonetic alphabets for English learners of Bangladesh (BPA) (Rahman, 2016), speakers of Bahasa Indonesia (BIPA) (2019), and Hindi Speakers (HPA) (Rahman, 2020). During the Pandemic, I started two online training programs (a) Spoken English for School teachers in Bangladesh, and (b) English Pronunciation Car Driving School (Rahman 2021). I developed the first Virtual Theatre Group for Bangladeshis and our first production will be The Merchant of Venice. I am the Chief Mentor to the AIE program.

Fatema Farid: I am from Sylhet, a district in the northeastern part of Bangladesh and my first language is Sylheti. In 2010, I completed my MS in Sociology from M.C. College, under the National University. I started my teaching career in 2013. Currently, I am working as a teacher at Muhibur Rahman Academy, Sylhet. I love reading, writing, teaching and travelling. I am one of the mentees of this program.

A.K.M. Sharif Ull Islam: I am from Lalmanirhat, a district in the northern part of Bangladesh. I graduated in English Literature from the University of Chittagong in 2011. In 2019, I completed my Master’s in Education degree (MEd) from Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology. I started my career first as an English Teacher at a primary school and then after gaining some experience, I started teaching at the secondary level. Currently, I am working as a Lecturer in English at Adamjee Cantonment College, Dhaka. I am a member of the English Teachers’ Association of Bangladesh (ETAB). I like teaching and learning new things. I am one of the members of this program.
Before reading the authors’ success story, let’s answer the following questions.

- How do you define the term ‘Adda’?
- How did you learn English?
- What language do you use in your classroom? Why do you use that language?
- Have you faced any difficulties in developing English language proficiency in your students?

Background and context

In Bangladesh, English is taught as a compulsory subject from primary to secondary levels (K-12). At the tertiary level, at least in private universities, lectures are supposed to be delivered in English. However, despite studying English for more than 12 years, most Bangladeshis do not speak English well. Even those who have completed their bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English from reputed universities and have gained experience as a school teacher, they teach their courses, including English, in Bangla. When asked about why they did not teach in the English language, most teachers mentioned about the lack of English language use in their professional life including the preference of their students to Bangla. My next question to them was whether learning to speak in English was necessary or beneficial to them and whether it would be good if their students also learned to speak in English. Their answers were a big YES to both my questions.

I decided to use a century-old tradition of the Bengalis, an activity called “Adda” (Trachtenberg, 2005) with which all Bengalis are very familiar. The word “Adda” means “to express oneself”. I modified this favourite pastime of the Bengalis and called it “Adda in English” (AIE), meaning “express yourself in English” and employed the AIE approach for improving the English speaking skills of English learners of Bangladesh.

Let’s read the following sections and answer these questions.

- What did the authors do to develop English speaking skills in English as second language (ESL) learners from Bangladesh?
- How did ESL learners join the Group Adda in English organised/run by the authors?
- How did the authors organise their Group Adda in English and how did it work?
- How did they manage one-to-one Adda and how did it work?
- What did the authors do to make their Addas successful?
Steps that we followed

We employed two types of Adda in English (AIE) as follows

(a) Group Adda, and  
(b) Adda between two persons

1. How did Group Adda in English (AIE) work

- All the members of this group were volunteers. They were selected on a first-come, first-served basis in response to our notice on Facebook about the formation of an Addagroup with the aim of helping improve the Speaking Skills of the AIE participants. They were to be known as Addabaaz or mentees.
- All Addabaaz, as well as, a few mentors who were free at the time met every Wednesdays from 5 pm to 7 pm in Bangladesh via Zoom.
- During each session, an Addabaaz talked about anything for 5 minutes in English Adda. They did not get any pre-set topic to prepare and talk about. One speaking round took about 30 minutes (accounting for six individuals) and each Addabaaz in total got three attempts in a two-hour Addasession.
- It was a controlled Addawhere each person got roughly equal time to speak.
- While an Addabaaz was talking, others were not allowed to disturb him/her Adda. If anyone had any question or comment, the person was allowed to speak during his/her session only.

Note: All Addabaaz, except one, were English teachers. The only exception was a civil engineer who left after a few sessions. Instead, his place was filled by another English teacher. Initially, Addabaaz wanted to talk about the given topics, and some hesitated as they had never talked in English for such a long time. I told them that if they were to prepare a talk on a given topic then that would not be an ‘Adda. It would be a ‘presentation’. After attending AIE for about seven months, all Addabaaz overcome, what they called, their English phobia. I noticed that they came out of their shells, and they could continuously talk for a great length of time (hours) in English. Figure 1 shows a group Adda in progress.
2. **One-to-one Adda between two people**

While group Adda improved the speaking fluency of the Addabaaz, I thought that if they were given an opportunity to speak to more experienced people, either Native English speakers or people of Bangladeshi origin who had settled in a Native English-Speaking country, the Addabaaz would improve further. They would also be exposed to different English accents from talking to people living in different countries. I contacted some of my former class fellows at schools, former colleagues, and relatives who fell into this category. 21 such people from England, the USA, Canada, and one retired Professor of English from Hyderabad in India, agreed to help by having a conversation with an Addabaaz once a week on an individual basis. The one-on-one Adda between a mentor and a mentee took place on the date and time that was suitable for both parties. Figure 2 shows a mentee in Sylhet talking to a mentor in Melbourne in Australia.

![Figure 1. Group Adda in English in progress](image1)

![Figure 2. A one-to-one Adda in progress between a mentee in Sylhet in Bangladesh and a mentor in Melbourne, Australia](image2)
The mentors came from different professional backgrounds and were from different age groups. The majority fell into my age group (75-79) (See Table 1). Mentors liked to know many things from mentees and talked about different subjects according to their personal interests, during the one-on-one Adda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor</th>
<th>NS/NNS*</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Professional Background</th>
<th>Current station</th>
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<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>75-79</td>
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<tr>
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<td>60-64</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Retired Physician</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NS = Native English Speaker/NNS = Non-native English Speaker

Table 1. Profiles of Mentors who take part in One2One Adda
What did I do to achieve success?

The following contributed to my achievement:

- I created a friendly environment by emulating a familiar zone which is full of fun.
- The mentors I selected were very friendly people who were keen to help the mentees as well as learn about different things from the mentees.
- The Addas did not have a teacher-student environment. Mentees did not address Mentors as Sir or Madam. Instead, according to the wish of the mentors, they were referred to as Bhai (elder brother) or Apa (elder sister).
- The mentees did not feel frightened or nervous. They felt like talking to a family member when they got an advice and learned about different things – both English and other things (music, travel, bringing up a child (Dr. Spock?) - from their mentors.
- All mentors were senior (mostly retired) having wide and varied experiences both in their fields of specialisation and other matters.
- The personal attention received by mentees from mentors was extremely high due to a relatively higher mentor/mentee ratio – 6 mentees to 21 mentors! (compared to 100+ students to 1 teacher in BD schools, or 1 teacher to 25 students in the west)
- There is high discussion/consultation time with mentors – 4 hours per week compared to 1/2 hours per month research students get with their supervisors! Or lecture time of 50 minutes in face-to-face classes.

Now, let’s consider these questions.

- What kind of challenges did mentees face?
- Did mentors see any changes in their mentees?
- How did mentor and mentee work together?
- Did mentees think that Addas have supported them in developing their English speaking skills?

What were the signs of success?

(a) According to the Chief Mentor

I saw improvements in the mentees despite many difficulties due to the time difference, network problems, foreign accents of mentors, heavy workload of mentees during the pandemic, etc. They became more fluent speakers of English by attending the weekly group Adda sessions and talking to mentors.
(b) According to other mentors

Although not mandatory, most mentors gave feedback after a mentor-mentee talk which was posted on Google Doc that was accessible to all mentees.

One mentor who was an IELTS examiner gave his assessment of a mentee’s possible IELTS score in Speaking and Listening.

An Australian mentor mentioned that the mentees initially understood him about 60%; however, after three months into the program, their listening comprehension went above 90%.

There was no fixed duration for a mentor-mentee talk. Most talks went on for about an hour. Talks with a mentor typically lasted for two hours. Yet, one session continued for four hours. Mentees did not mind long sessions as they felt their time was well utilised.

(c) What mentees said and did

After each mentor-mentee talk, a mentee was required to write their comments about their talk which was posted in google docs. The comments (See figure 3) clearly showed proactive attitudes of the mentees despite some shortcomings pointed out by the mentors. Furthermore, the comments reflected what the mentees learned, where they needed to improve, and what they needed to do to improve as suggested by the mentors.

All six mentees started similar programs in a form of organising Speaking and Debating clubs with their students, colleagues and community members.

Most notably, the mentees paid a small fee, BDT 100 per week, for each club session was used for some charitable work agreed by the mentees.

Comments by a mentee about talk with a mentor SMK

A few minutes back, a long discussion as a part of one-on-one scheduled talk took place between Mr. SMK and me. It was an informal but informative conversation. First of all, I suggested that we talk about the success and failure of Bangladesh as an independent nation. He consented to my proposal and continued the talk as well. So, he asked me to put the reasons for failures first. Hence, I presented some key reasons for the failures such as overpopulation, gender disparity, religious conflict, cultural assault, corruption, etc. He agreed to all these points and picked up the points one after another to analyse them in detail. He mentioned the population we had just after our independence and its current growth rate. Next, we discussed the worst position of Bangladesh in the list of most corrupt countries across the world. He talked about the basic reasons for corruption and also presented how the culture of corruption commenced here just after the first newly elected government had taken the oath. Now it has been a continuous problem. According to all the major ranking institutions, Bangladesh routinely
finds itself among the most corrupt countries in the world. Then, he added that government officials were involved in corruption for the first time when their salaries were fixed with an illogical amount in the early 80s. At this point, I picked up the recent parliamentary controversy over the Government's appointing secretaries for discharging duties as heads of the units tackling the Covid-19 pandemic in districts. I also added that the Prime Minister had the goodwill to do something for her country's people but couldn't go ahead because of the corrupt politicians. Next, both of us critically elucidated our education system and its standard in comparison with India and Pakistan. Even though our country's current literacy rate is about 75%, the standard of our education isn't beyond question. Similarly, we also talk about our students who go abroad for higher studies and join ordinary hotel/restaurant jobs without accomplishing their degrees.

Finally, I mentioned the name of the Nobel prize winner Dr. Muhammad Yunus as a successful personality of the country. At the same time, I wanted to know the reason for the government's rage against him. In reply, he referred to some logical and historical backgrounds and thus contextualised his great sister Jahanara Imam's friendship with the Prime Minister and movement against the War Criminals and so on. Last but not least, he wished me a safe journey and a happy Eid. In the context of my English, he admired the use of my vocabulary and grammatical sentences but criticised the flat uses of intonation and accent. Thank you so much, Mr. SMK.

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**Let’s answer this question:**

- What do the authors plan to do in the future?

**Further plans**

We have already promoted this program in the following ways:

- We have a Facebook page called ‘ZAMOSC Zoom Group’. All events, activities and achievements are posted there for all to see and discuss.
- We invite guests to our weekly AIE sessions. The guests may run similar programs in their educational institutes or community. Additionally we helped two guests to set up similar Adda groups.
- We made a presentation about this program at the first Binational Success Story Forum (Rahman et al., 2021).
- We have extended this program by starting a Virtual Theatre Group (VTG) and are now working on the first production – the trial scene (Act 4, scene 1) of Shakespeare’s play – The Merchant of Venice in which all Addabaaz are taking part and enjoying developing their acting skills.
- One of our Addabaaz has started a weekly Adda session on Saturday evenings.
- We have started an international Adda in English Program for school teachers via Zoom platform on the second and fourth Fridays of each month from 4 pm to 6 pm Bangladesh Standard Time.
Conclusion

Adda in English is a very simple but effective approach which can help people improve their fluency in English speaking. It is easy to implement as it follows an age-old Bengali tradition and a popular Bengali activity. Moreover, it costs very little to run, operates with minimal experience and requires a little effort to meet the program objective.

After reading the authors’ success story,

- What did you like most about the Addas that the authors organised?
- Do you think you will encourage your students to join Addas? Why or why not?

References

Rahman, A. (2016a). English pronunciation guidebook for native Bengali speakers. ZAMOSC.
Celebrating Students’ Success in Mass-Facing Skills

- Pushpa Priya

(pushpaapriya@gmail.com)

Before reading Pushpa’s success story,

- Do you think your students need to develop mass-facing skills?
- Do you think your students have mass-facing skills?
- Have you ever tried to develop the skills of your students?
- Do you think mass-facing skill is one of the most important skills to be demonstrated in the academic and professional ground?

Introduction

I am a lecturer of English and a Columnist of the English National Daily in Nepal. I regularly write for The Rising Nepal and The Himalayan Times newspapers. In addition, I am a capacity-building trainer for a social program entitled “Children for Children” organised by an NGO every year in the month of April at Rastriya Nacch Ghar (National Dance Theatre). Occasionally, I write for Journals. My interest area for writing includes women empowerment, issues in English classrooms, parenting skills, psychological well-being, transformative education system, and effective communication skills. I train undergraduate students to build their level of confidence in facing mass and improve communication skills. As a capacity-building trainer for the last nine years, I have been guiding students on how to present before thousands of audiences. I solve most of my classroom issues through experimental and exploratory action research.

Based on Pushpa’s introduction above, let’s find the answer to the following questions:

- What encouraged Pushpa to develop mass-facing skills in her students?
- What does she do to address the classroom issues?

Background and the Context

Since childhood, I have witnessed teacher-centered teaching techniques that not only kept the learners passive but also made them incompetent to face the competitive global marketplace. As I recall my school days and especially during the SLC, students generally got nervous while attending a practical speaking test. As a teacher now, I witness the same fear for mass-facing in my students. Despite having
The linguistic competence, many students struggled to speak confidently before mass. As I reflected on my teaching practice, I realized that perhaps I was not much different from my teachers in my pedagogy because I still relied on traditional methods. However, after adopting a student-centered teaching method, I found good confidence in my students. This really aroused interest in me to conduct an experimental action research. During the COVID 19 pandemic, I conducted action research in an online mode.

Public speaking skills enhance mass-facing skills as it makes the students feel comfortable to speak in the front of the class or on any stage among a large number of audiences. Different skills like communication skills, interpersonal skills and intrapersonal skills are developed through speaking in mass. It not only prepares students for academic achievement but also supports the global market. Students are often assigned to make a presentation by their teachers but they are not taught on the presentation skills. This results in anxiety and fear to face mass in the students. My expertise on teaching compulsory English to undergraduate students for 9 years, experience in capacity building trainer for social events for 9 years and skills in delivering welcome speech at Ratriya Naach Ghar for many years before thousands of audiences have inspired me to work in this area. I wanted to help my students realize their true potential in mass-facing skills. I believe the students’ nervousness in facing the mass is the result of psychological distress that can be seen in the form of anxiety, fear, nervousness, etc. In addition, the lack of preparedness in speaking in front of the mass is a contributing factor that makes students incompetent in making a mass presentation. Therefore, I aimed to work on alleviating my students’ mass-facing skills with an optimistic view.

Now let’s find an answer to these questions:

- What did Pushpa do to develop mass-facing skills in her students?
- Did she find her steps/techniques effective? Why or why not?

Steps that I followed

In order to imbibe confidence in my students, I adopted some strategies as interventions through experimental action research in online classes. Firstly, I worked on myself to remain confident while delivering presentations through confident body language as well as eye-contact. I also remained emotionally intelligent; for instance, if any students complained about presentations being difficult, I calmly counselled them on their importance while I remained patient. During the COVID 19 pandemic, my students showed their willingness to give their presentations in front of their friends virtually. (See figure 1).

Secondly, I believe practice makes a person perfect and consistent practice forms second nature. Internalizing these ideas, I engaged my undergraduate students in speaking tasks for every alternate
day as an intervention. The changes have been observed from the first week. Every day I asked them to read texts and underline difficult words. With the increased vocabulary, they developed their fluency and confidence to speak in mass. I engaged them in classroom activities and made them present their answers verbally. As a result, the oral expression of the learners was enhanced. This practice lasted for three months. Whereafter a drastic change has been observed among the students in terms of their self-confidence and facing mass skills.

Thirdly, I adopted positive counseling to my students as an intervention to make them feel good and important about themselves. Furthermore, I wanted them to be a role-model for their family, community, society and nation as a whole by improving themselves and doing good. Facing mass whether in a physical classroom or facing camera online and presenting before friends and teachers make them feel nervous. During COVID 19 pandemic in a virtual class, the stress level of students were compounded. Therefore, I consoled them with a motivation that comes under positive psychology. Everyday class started with positive words that filled students with hope and courage to do something better in the field of learning. This positivity boosted the level of confidence of my students and things became easy for them to learn especially about the presentation in mass, and during COVID 19 it helped them to make a presentation in front of their friends and teacher being camera friendly.

Facing mass while presenting is not a cup of tea; however, with consistent efforts, determination and patience, the students enhanced their level of confidence. Mainly, I made my students comfortable by frequently reminding them that they are not going to be judged. This relaxed them to make an effective presentation before others.

Now, let’s find answers to the following questions.

- How did Pushpa know her students were developing their mass-facing skills?
- What did her students do to develop their mass-facing skills?

Signs of success

The students who were shy before became confident to face mass. They engaged with the Task-based learning on speaking. Additionally, counseling seems to motivate their willingness to engage in the speaking sessions. Counseling had a great impact on them, even the students who did not speak a single sentence in mass because they felt nervous during their physical class sessions turned out to be confident after the online program.

During COVID 19 pandemic, I made them practice mass-facing skills online. There were some pictures acting as an evidence of how students enhanced their mass-facing skills through developing competence, confidence and speaking skills. I told students to take the photographs and with their consent shared them here. In the screenshot, signs of success like assertive body language, eye
contact, as well as calm and confident posture could be seen while making presentations in front of me (teacher) and friends. Pictures show their emotional make-up it could be surmised that the students were emotionally intelligent.

The students developed their interpersonal skills and they turned out to be positive and friendly after practicing speaking in front of their teacher and friends. The real success can be observed in their preparedness to give a presentation, either PowerPoint or verbal, in front of others. Evidence for PowerPoint presentation and facing mass in an online class is shown in Figure 2 and the evidence for verbal presentation facing mass in an online class is shown in Figure 3 and figure 4.

Figure 1. A student made a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating mass-facing skills
Enhancement approach and teachers’ success stories

Figure 2. A student made a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating mass-facing skills

Figure 3. A student made a verbal presentation facing mass in online class
Future plan

I am planning to adopt these strategies to prepare more students in facing mass; especially focusing on shy students who are reluctant to make a verbal presentation in front of mass. For this, first students are supposed to be furnished with speaking skills. I can engage my students in a speaking club where they may practise their public speaking skills. I aspire to organise a social event where the students can exhibit their skills and talent before mass. My aim is to see them confident in their presentations while facing mass. Integration of some psychological training to boost the level of confidence of the students is also under my plan. Similarly, I am interested in having my students explain their understanding of the program before others. Furthermore, I am looking forward to extending this mass-facing program across Nepal. I want to see students prosperous with mass-facing skills since furnishing these skills enhances many life-relevant skills that help them in all aspects of life.

Conclusion

Facing mass through presentation is always rewarding in many ways. First, it gives a chance to be an effective communicator. Second, it gives a great sense of accomplishment and gratification. Third, it develops confidence which is very important for any academics or professionals. The benefits of effective communication skills and especially speaking before a mass spread across all professional

Let’s answer this question.

● What is Pushpa doing in the future to enhance her students’ mass-facing skills?
spectra. In other words, this skill is a key to both the academic and professional development of students. Suffice to say, both teachers and students can benefit immensely from enhancing their mass-facing skills.

**After reading Pushpa’s story, consider the following questions.**

- Do you agree with Pushpa that students need to develop mass-facing skills?
- Has Pushpa’s story encouraged you to develop mass-facing skills in your students?
- Do you think you can employ Pushpa’s techniques to develop mass-facing skills in your students?
Teaching Communication by Learning by Doing

- Bibha Jha
(bibha.jha@gmail.com)

Introduction

Bibha Jha has spent more than a decade teaching English Language and Literature in Nepal. She is pursuing M. Phil (ELE) at Kathmandu University, Nepal. She is a life member of NELTA. Additionally, she has been an editorial member of NELTA ELT Forum for its E-zine (2020 June -2021 May). She has presented her papers at national and international conferences/webinars. She is an emerging trainer for teachers and researchers especially on the issues related to Teaching and Learning English. She completed AE-E Teacher Course i.e. Professional Development for Teacher Trainers offered by the U.S. Embassy. She participated in an online course Developing an Online Teaching Program offered by TESOL. She attended the virtual TESOL 2021 International Convention. She is also a member of the TESOL International Association.

Background and context

Being a teacher was not my passion or dream. It happened just by chance as I got a teaching job at the beginning of my career. Sometimes teachers seemed unmotivated due to heavy load of work with little salary. However, I did not go through them as I was focused on spending my time constructively. My economic expenses were borne by my parents as I was a student then. I never thought it would be my career but now it is my identity. That time soon passed and I began to enjoy my teaching journey. However, I loved my students then as I love them now. The respect and admiration they offer are always precious to me. I feel that students are the pillars of a nation.

When I was a student, the pin-drop silent class was considered the best class. Teachers were the boss of a class. We felt fear in front of them. The scene has changed. The relationship between teachers and students gradually became friendly despite teacher-centered classrooms being in practice in many academic institutions of Nepal. Still, school authorities demand quite classes. The principal moves with a stick and orders students not to speak except in English inside the school premise. I had a similar experience. However, I gradually realised that possessing the world of knowledge is one thing but teaching effectively is completely different. My perception changed when I began to love my job. I thought thoroughly about my teaching. I raised the questions in my mind-

- Whom am I teaching?
- For what am I teaching?
• Why do my students feel bored while teaching?
• How can the scene be changed?

Then I remembered a saying from my senior colleague, ‘If your students do not like you, they will never listen to you.’ I realised the in-depth meaning of the saying. I searched for a way to make my teachings more acceptable and likable by my students. Then, I accepted myself as a teacher and began to modify the way I used to teach. Gradually I found myself changing my personality and attitude. My perception of the profession was transformed for the betterment of my teaching and learning.

Can you find the answer to these questions from the section above?

- When did Bibha's perception of a teacher change?
- What did her colleague say that changed her perception as a teacher?

After knowing the needs and interests of my learners, I began to use technology in my teaching. And, it worked! It’s amazing about how technology can add life to teaching as teaching becomes interesting, informative and effective. Here, I selected technology purposefully to meet my student needs. They felt encouraged to study as they read and wrote better. No doubt, technology can make students passive if they just do copy and paste for the assignments. So, I thought about how to use technology purposefully in my teaching. I tried to change my teacher-centered classroom into a student-centered one. I did not like to do nonstop lectures _bla...bla...bla_ in a loud voice. It was really painful for me. I realised that translating English text into Nepali was never fruitful for my students.

Everyone is unique in their ways and so were my students. They just needed some persuasion to explore their talents and abilities. I came to know about a variety of knowledge and interest among my students with their diverse social and economical backgrounds. I found one size did not fit all. So, using technology in teaching itself was not enough.

One day I was sitting and talking to my friend, a fellow teacher. She told me that using technology was good for teaching but it might make learners lazy as they could get all the answers from the internet. Then, I decided to talk with my students and involve them in some activities in making them active learners. All students of class seven were curious and happy about a new project.

**Steps that I followed**

First of all, I talked to the principal about the new project i.e. the English Language Fair. He agreed with our project and was ready to provide us with paper, pen, and colour materials to the students. This concept was new to the school.

One thing was remarkable here. I told my students to prepare a list of tasks, divide the groups, and set the deadline to complete the tasks in time. They were expected to finalise the tasks under my
supervision. Students were free to do work in either a group or alone. They just needed to complete their tasks within the deadline. With much surprise, they completed their assigned tasks outside of their class time. During school, they were busy with their regular study.

*Figure 1. Visitor students are watching and asking the queries and the organiser students are responding to them*

*Figure 2. Handmade books of biographies and quotes*
I was just a facilitator there. Within a month, everything was prepared according to our project list. Two groups of the students even prepared small videos to show in the fair. All the posters, books, pamphlets, charts, biographies, storybooks, etc. were arranged and decorated by the students. It took about two hours to complete. They did the work in groups. After the arrangements were done, they stood closeby to explain about them to the visitors. Some of them welcomed the visitors while others provided instructions to younger students. They explained their work to the visitors in turn. There was no group leader except me. In other words, they were all individual leaders.

They were responsible for each and every activity related to the English Language Fair under my supervision. They prepared hand made dictionaries, fiction or nonfiction text, short anthology, biographies, posters, a collection of quizzes and quotes, charts of the structure of tense, and many more. They were free to write or prepare any materials from any subjects but they had to write in English and explain in English.

Let’s answer these questions.

- What was Bibha’s role in the project?
- Who were accountable for the activities of the project?

Signs of success

Mastery over communication cannot be achieved just overnight. It takes time, effort, and patience. But here effortless communication progress can be observed amongst the students after the Language Fair. Their confidence level rose. They felt much comfortable with their achievements and hardships with their English practice.
Did it happen? Yes, it happened. Students did multiple activities within a month; they discussed, suggested, helped and talked with their friends and me with a purpose. They prepared handmade books, charts, pictorial stories, quiz booklets, dictionaries, etc. They prepared more than 50 items for the fair. Indeed, the activities demanded many types of words to explain about them coherently. They used English to ask or talk about anything related to their project. Definitely, there was a good chance to enhance their English speaking and I noticed some improvements in them.

I want to mention an interesting event here. One time, my students laughed loudly at their friends and made funny comments on each other. Besides, many students came up with funny ideas. Academically, it might sound nonsense or trivial but for me, it was a genuine activity. How can a speaker always communicate in formal English? A speaker needs to speak impromptu. It seems formal speaking requires much care while informal speaking lessens or frees the student of any speaking related anxiety. What I observed there was that they were not stuck with grammar or words to pass the comments on to their friends.

The fair was appreciated by visitors. Visitors were students and the staff of our school. They were happy and curious. They posed many queries and got satisfied with replies. The students explained in detail and with care. They explained things and answered queries in turns to the visitors. So, all the presenters got the chance to speak. Needless to say, such activities were very fruitful to develop their English communication skills. Here, students were not forced to do anything; they were engaged, involved, and interested in the project.

Let’s answer these questions in the section above.

- What signs/evidence of success does Bibha mention above?
- How did the project help her students?

Conclusion

Teaching must not be funny but it should include fun. Fun creates happy environments to teach and learn. And learning without stress is much more effective. Students should know how to play with English words and the structure of sentences to put their ideas into words. Here, we need to know that a textbook is just a collection of information. It depends on us how to train our students. Similarly, English is not only useful for academic purposes but for other uses as well. Language Fair is a good solution to engage our students.

So, it happened to my students. They spoke better English than in the past. They were confident while speaking. Now, they realise that speaking English is not difficult but just that it needs more practice. Moreover, speaking English is not only useful in the English classroom but in any other courses and even outside their classroom.
The purpose of the Language fair is to achieve seven characteristics of good language learners - the ability to make good guesses, communicate in many ways, tolerate mistakes, pay attention to form and communication, practice the language regularly, monitor one’s language use, and understand and attend to meaning (Rubin, 1975). However, these traits need regularity in speaking practice and that can be achieved by conducting Language Fairs that give them an English speaking environment and encourage them to explore their interests using the English language.

Due to the Language Fair, self-confidence emerged in students. They got motivated to speak English and acknowledge the purpose of speaking English. They realised how easy speaking English is if they know the purpose of speaking it in a true sense. Just reading books and doing exercises may not be enough and interesting. Instead, activity-based learning can fill in the gap. Finally, I want to say that teaching and learning activities go hand in hand.
“Pronunciation problems?”-“Try the Tissue-Technique”

- Muhammed Shahriar Haque
  (shahriar@ewubd.edu)

Introduction: The accidental academic

Since the beginning of my career in 1997, I have been concerned with my job satisfaction. Would I be satisfied with whatever job that pays the rent and can be done by any Tom, Dick and Harry, a job what Graeber (2013, 2018) calls a ‘bullshit job’? Teaching or so-called ‘noble profession’ was what I presumed to be a ‘laboriously boring’ career choice that hopeless people who reluctantly enter after giving up on their dream job. Therefore, as a teenager, I was perplexed as to why my father, with a first-class distinction from the best engineering university in Bangladesh, did not pursue a lucrative engineering career and was immensely satisfied with teaching. Anyway, fast-forward 35 years, and I am a teacher, as ironic as it may seem. I am a professor of English at East West University, located at the heart of the megacity Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh, and I do not think I could have chosen a more fulfilling profession.

As a professor of the English department, I teach undergraduate and graduate courses, supervise and counsel students. Furthermore, as the Executive Director of East West University Centre for Research and Training (EWUCRT), I oversee its activities which involves four regular annual publications (Two journals, working paper, and book of abstracts of published papers) and occasional publications (conference brochures, EWUCRT handbook, etc.), as well as organize international and national conferences, symposiums, seminars, roundtables, training and workshops. I have published numerous journal articles and book chapters. I am also a co-editor of three books—Prostitution: Women, Society, State and Law (1997), Constructing Identities in the Malaysian Media (2008), and English Studies and the Marketplace (2018). Furthermore, I am a producer and an assistant director of the documentary film Life after Grey (2015) and Editor of a peer-reviewed journal: East West Journal of Humanities (EWJH). I am passionate about cinema, in particular, Hollywood, Bollywood, Dhallywood films; therefore, I am a cinephile. My research interests include film and media studies, critical discourse analysis, teacher education, educational technology, and photojournalism. When life becomes hectic, to unwind I take every opportunity to travel to the world’s longest natural beach and marine drive in Cox’s Bazar.

Before you read Shahriar’s success story, answer this question.

- How do you teach pronunciation to your students?
Background and context

My first university degree was from Chittagong University in Chittagong, Bangladesh. The people of this city communicate in a particular dialect called Chittagonian or, as the locals would call it, Catgàiia (চট্টগঞ্জিয়া). Some people of the Chittagong division region face challenges in speaking formal Bangla, Bangladesh's national and official language. They also face difficulties in pronouncing English words. As a student, I had seen my classmates ashamed of themselves and/or embarrassed in the class or when socializing among friends outside the class because they suffered emotionally due to becoming victims of linguistic discrimination, whether speaking in English or Bangla. Having taught at several English medium schools and private universities, I have seen my students becoming victims of linguistic discrimination. If this kind of discrimination is to be avoided, good pronunciation in English or Bangla is essential. When I say good pronunciation, I do not mean American or British, but rather a pronunciation that is mutually intelligible. Even though the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) may help at the basic level, for Bangladeshis, more assistance may be needed due to the interlanguage interference.

Bangla and English languages are dissimilar in numerous ways; for instance, there are some English sounds (e.g. /v/, /θ/, /s/, /z/) that do not exist in the Bangla language; consequently, similar sounds are used: ‘ভ’ for /v/, ‘থ’ for /θ/, ‘শ/ষ/স’ for /s/, ‘জ/য’ for /z/. Interlanguage interference, presumably subconsciously or unconsciously, may pose a challenge for those who want their English pronunciation to be mutually intelligible. My focus is to deal with the aspirated plosive sounds /p/, /t/, and /k/. To teach mutually intelligible pronunciation through the Tissue-Technique, it is necessary to identify aspirated plosive sounds in the English language like /p/ and /k/ that are similar in Bangla but are not so aspirated as, for instance, ‘প’ and ‘ক’. In the case of /t/, even though there is a Bangla sound ‘ঠ’ that is aspirated plosive with similar intensity, Bangladeshi people, in general, tend to use a much less aspirated sound ‘ট’. The Tissue-Technique, which I have been using since 2007, can practically demonstrate how the less aspirated ‘প’ and ‘ক’ can be pronounced with more intensity like the aspirated /p/ and /k/ sounds. Furthermore, it can also show the difference between a less aspirated ‘ট’ and a more aspirated ‘ঠ’ that sounds like the English /t/. Therefore, the Tissue-Technique can assist in overcoming some of the interlanguage interferences in terms of the aspirated plosive sounds /p/, /t/, /k/. Bangladeshis learners can be taught this technique and subsequently be made to practice it in their classroom with an English language instructor who can provide them with relevant feedback. Afterward, with the relevant feedback, students can practice pronouncing the appropriate English phonemes at home until the sounds become second nature.

Let’s answer these questions.
- What system did Shahriar follow to teach the Tissue-Technique?
- How did he apply the system?
Steps that I followed

Any lesson can be successfully taught when a particular system is followed. 'Engage' (E), 'study' (S) and 'activate' (A) are elements which can be combined to form various sequences like a straight-arrow (ESA), boomerang (EASA), patchwork (EAASASEA) (see Harmer, 2007). I generally tend to follow the straight-arrow sequence, that is, *engage-study-activate* (ESA) to teach the Tissue-Technique as it is the simplest one.

In the straight-arrow sequence (ESA), the first element is 'engage' (E). One of the essential fundamentals of teaching a lesson is an excellent short warm-up session to engage the learners with the lesson and also to develop rapport with them. The teacher should avoid diving straight into the deep end of the main lesson without a warm-up session as this would make any lesson very dry, strictly academic, and rather boring. Interacting with the learners at the beginning of any lesson is essential. The initial chitchat, also called the ‘ice-breaking’ session, helps ease into the lesson. Therefore, a warm-up session that draws the learners’ attention is necessary to make a lesson successful. A warm-up session would undoubtedly vary from one class to the next. In the case of the Tissue-Technique, the broader context is pronunciation, particularly the interlanguage interference due to the absence of certain phonemes between English and Bangla. English phonemes that do not have the equivalent sounds in Bangla pose a big problem for English speakers in Bangladesh. I generally provide several examples based on some commonly used lexical items and a couple of tongue twisters from Bangla and English to highlight the interlanguage problems between the two languages and then talk about the linguistic discrimination in Bangladesh. When providing the examples, due to the absence of the phonemes /s/ and /v/ in Bangla, mispronunciation is obvious, provoking laughter from the students. While uttering the Bangla tongue twisters using the Tissue-Technique, the tissue does not move; on the other hand, the tissue does move when demonstrating the English tongue twisters. I initially begin by mispronouncing ‘is’, ‘his’, ‘sit’, ‘sir’, ‘very’, ‘heavy’ and ‘love’ and say *ij, hij, chit, char, berry, heaby, and lobe*. Subsequently, I depict two scenarios with relevant contexts where the following sentences are uttered: ‘*May I sit down sir*’ and ‘*I love you*’; however, I intentionally mispronounce and say ‘*May I chit down char*’ and ‘*I lobe you*’. I then mention that the Tissue-Technique can assist in getting rid of a few of the interlanguage problems between English and Bangla that are very subtle and often are neglected, like the phonemes /p/, /v/, /k/. The examples do three things: engage the students in a light-hearted manner to the main lesson; make them realise that there are differences between some English and Bangla phonemes and emphasise the significance of linguistic discrimination.

The second element in the straight-arrow sequence (ESA) is ‘study’ (S). In this segment, I initially make the students familiar with the ‘organs of speech’ (see Appendix-1, Figure-1) followed by the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols (see Appendix-2). Subsequently, a detailed explanation of the Tissue-Technique is provided, and then a practical demonstration. During the demonstration, I emphasise that the tissue should be held from a corner with the tip of the fingers and dangled one inch away from the mouth. For successfully pronouncing /p/ and making the tissue move when the aspirated
plosive sound is made, the tip of the fingers holding the tissue should be parallel to the nose. For successfully pronouncing /k/, the tip of the fingers holding the tissue should be parallel to the mouth, and for /t/, the fingers should be parallel to the chin. Without strictly following these basic rules of the Tissue-Technique, success cannot be guaranteed.

The ESA sequence is completed by the ‘activate’ element, where the students practice the Tissue-Technique based on the rules they have been taught. Initially, I get the students to try out just the sounds /p/, /t/, and /k/. Once they have grasped this, they are told to practise pronouncing the vocabularies in Appendix-3. Once the students have practised the vocabularies, I let them try out various tongue twisters with the phonemes /p/, /t/, /k/. When this task is complete, I ask volunteers to demonstrate their skills in front of the entire class. The students seem very enthusiastic as this session is quite fun. When the student-volunteers are able to pronounce the tongue twisters correctly using the Tissue-Technique they feel quite proud. If some of them make mistakes, the whole class has a good laugh, and the volunteers usually do not feel embarrassed.

During the ‘activate’ segment of the ESA sequence, the teacher must be very active and take detailed notes as well as monitor the students’ successes, failures, and incorrect techniques. This is very important because the teacher must provide detailed feedback to the learners to correctly use the Tissue-Technique. If the teacher does not give the essential feedback, the students will not be able to practice at home; consequently, the interlanguage pronunciation challenges can pose a hurdle for them to accurately speak the English language confidently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Let’s answer these questions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● What is necessary to follow to be successful in the application of the Tissue Technique?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What signs of success did Shahriar notice?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signs of success**

To achieve success using the Tissue Technique, it is necessary to follow a four-step procedure categorically. The first step involves finding the right kind of tissue for the experiment: a single ply from two-ply facial tissue. The next step of the experiment is exploratory and requires finding the precise positions, distance and height the tissue has to be placed from the mouth to achieve the maximum effect for the Tissue-Technique to work. The third step is a laborious process of finding and making lists of the right vocabularies (Appendix-3 /p/, /t/, /k/) and tongue twisters (Appendix-4 /p/, /t/, /k/). The next stage (i.e. step-4) is equally time-consuming, as the teacher has to practice pronouncing all the vocabularies and the tongue twisters to ensure that the selections are appropriate for the Tissue-Technique.

The Tissue-Technique is generally a hit with the students and can become a success due to several
reasons. The demonstration of this technique is entertaining and the practice session is fun. Some of the students’ inability to pronounce properly produces smiles or outbursts of laughter from themselves and their classmates. That helps to lighten up the environment of the in-person or virtual classroom. The signs of success emerges through the practical sessions because the edutainment or the infotainment values are realised. Edutainment or infotainment, obviously not the Sesame Street kind, is also crucial for adults. When students became enthusiastic, learning became more encouraging. That is one of the main reasons for the success of this technique. Furthermore, the practical hands-on sessions enable the instructor to give instant feedback to the class.

Further plans

The Tissue-Technique is a unique teaching technique. However, if it is to be considered as an effective technique, teachers, trainers and students need to be made aware of it. Therefore, once the publication comes out, the Bangladeshi English language teaching (ELT) community, including academics, practitioners and learners will become familiar with the usefulness of the Tissue-Technique which may be used by them in teaching, training, and learning respectively. After the publication, however, some long-term initiatives are required to build on the success of this technique. I have already been using this technique to teach my students for almost 15 years but I have never made a tutorial video on it. I intend to make a series of short video clips on the Tissue-Technique to distinguish between the target pronunciation (English) and the native pronunciation (Bangla) in terms of the /p/, /t/ and /k/ phonemes and teaching the appropriate way of using these sounds to pronounce appropriately in English. The video clips will be uploaded on reliable virtual platforms so that the teaching-learning community and the general people can have an access to the video clips.

Further plans involve continuation of intensive research to explore to what extent the Tissue-Technique may assist to distinguish other English sounds (e.g. /v/, /θ/, /s/, /z/, etc.) that are not present in Bangla. In the long run, I contemplate applying for a patent on the Tissue-Technique to see whether it may be officially and legally recognised as an ELT technique to teach correct pronunciation to Bengali speakers of English. It may be worth mentioning that getting a patent for language teaching methodology is not unheard of. For instance, Ken K. Inouye, Sidney C.Sheres and Luna M. Inouye are the inventors of the ‘Method for teaching spoken English using mouth position characters’.

Let’s answer this question.

- How does Shahriar want to disseminate the technique?

Conclusion

Bangla is a full-fledged language that originated in the 10th century, and it was made an official language of Pakistan in 1956 (see Hanif, 2021). However, not enough empirical studies have been carried out
regarding the phonology of English and Bangla, particularly concerning individual phonemes or a group of phonemes. Among the numerous studies that have been conducted in Bangladesh on the appropriate use of English pronunciation in the recent years (Anis, 2021; Kesavan et al., 2021; Rahman & Chowdhury, 2019; Rani & Tina, 2020; Mahjabin, 2019; Wahiduzzaman, 2017; Begum & Hoque, 2016), the emphasis has been on the pedagogical aspects of the phonology of the two languages (English and Bangla), and therefore rather theoretical in nature. Amin Rahman has even gone so far as to bring out dictionary-like books that compare English sounds with Bangla sounds and pronounce the English words in Bangla (see Rahman, 2016; Podder, Bilkis, & Rahman, 2020). However, until now, I have not been able to find any practical training or pragmatic demonstration on how English words may be pronounced appropriately by Bangladeshi speakers/learners, particularly in terms of the problematic sounds. The Tissue-Technique is a pioneering ELT technique and is pragmatic enough to address the challenges of overcoming the inappropriate pronunciation caused by interlanguage interference in terms of the English phonemes /p/, /t/, /k/. It is hoped that this technique may pave the way for other pragmatic techniques to avoid linguistic discrimination by overcoming inappropriate pronunciation(s) and thereby enable Bangladeshi speakers to speak in mutually intelligible English.

References


Appendix-1

![Diagram of speech organs]

(Source: Sethi and Dhamija, 2005)

Appendix-2: IPA Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Vowels and diphthongs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p pen /pen/</td>
<td>ı see /si/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b bad /bæd/</td>
<td>å cup /kʌp/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t tea /te/</td>
<td>i happy /ˈheɪpi/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d did /did/</td>
<td>æ cat /kæt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k cat /ket/</td>
<td>a about /əˈbaʊt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g got /gɔt/</td>
<td>e ten /ˈti:n/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tʃ chain /tʃeɪn/</td>
<td>e ten /ˈti:n/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dʒ jam /dʒem/</td>
<td>æ cat /kæt/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f fall /fɔl/</td>
<td>ə go /əˈgoʊ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v van /væn/</td>
<td>ʊər near /nər(ə)/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>θ thin /θin/</td>
<td>u ər near /nər(ə)/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ð this /ðɪs/</td>
<td>w wet /wɛt/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| θ thin /θin/ | u ər near /nər(ə)/    |
| ð this /ðɪs/ | w wet /wɛt/           |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tongue twisters with</th>
<th>/p/</th>
<th>/t/</th>
<th>/k/</th>
<th>/p/ &amp; /k/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plain bun, plum bun, bun without plum.</td>
<td>Two tiny tigers take two taxis to town.</td>
<td>Clean clams crammed in clean cans.</td>
<td>Did Dick Pickens prick his pinkie pickling cheap cling peaches in an inch of Pinch or framing his famed French finch photos?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picky people pick Peter Pan Peanut-Butter, 'tis the peanut-butter picky people pick.</td>
<td>Tommy Tucker tried to tie Tammy’s Turtles tie.</td>
<td>How many cookies could a good cook cook if a good cook could cook cookies? A good cook could cook as much cookies as a good cook who could cook cookies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers? If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where’s the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?</td>
<td>The thirty-three thieves thought that they thrilled the throne throughout Thursday.</td>
<td>The cat crept into the crypt, crapped and crept out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain bun, plum bun, bun without plum.</td>
<td>Tommy Tucker tried to tie Tammy’s Turtles tie.</td>
<td>Clean clams crammed in clean cans.</td>
<td>Did Dick Pickens prick his pinkie pickling cheap cling peaches in an inch of Pinch or framing his famed French finch photos?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aiming for Technological Pedagogical Knowledge: Diving in and out

- Rezwana Islam
(rezwanaislammumun@gmail.com)

Introduction

My road to a successful career involves a parallel journey of learning, teaching, and researching language. After finishing my first Masters in English, and the second Masters in ELT, I completed CELTA in 2016. Currently, I am working as a lecturer in the Center for Language Studies at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh. I have also worked at the British Council as a teacher. My diverse professional background has allowed me to arrange materials, conduct lessons and interact with EFL, IELTS and EAP learners of different ages and backgrounds. Another aspect of my career includes constant interaction with the international community of researchers and teachers by presenting in different national and international conferences in the USA, Nepal, Japan, etc. I have published papers in reputed journals like IATEFL ESP SIG and JALT TD SIG. My passion lies in identifying contemporary issues in education and finding practical solutions through action research.

Before you read Rezwana’s success story, answer the following question.
• How did you prepare yourself before incorporating any technological tool in your class?

Background and context

For me, what started as a digitalised part of teaching through an asynchronous process of sharing materials for flipped learning and homework submission, transformed into a full-fledged online teaching experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. While the existing course contents were deemed worthy of application, the pedagogical skill was facing the challenge of a rather hasty collaboration with technology in order to enhance the learning experience. Otherwise, the learners might lose interest in the class and end up with fear or focus on tools rather than the topic. The biggest question that came to my mind was,

How do I incorporate technological tools in my teaching to enrich the learning experience of the undergraduate EAP learners in a private university in Bangladesh?

Extensive research into this issue redirected my attention towards a branch of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge Framework (TPACK) (Herring et al., 2016). While the entire framework reshaped my teaching experience at the very beginning of the pandemic, a more specific focus on pedagogical proficiency inspired me to work on TPK or Technological Pedagogical
Knowledge. In search of “technological solutions to pedagogical problems” (Ioannou & Angeli, 2014, p. 228), I worked on detecting learner access to tools and online facilities as well as maintaining a proper teacher-student interaction. Based on the type of online and device access, I chose apps and websites to create interactive exercises, give assignments and deliver the content in the classroom. Learners gave detailed feedback through one-on-one or group discussions where they mentioned both positive and negative sides of using these tools and their impact on their understanding. I was able to identify factors like accessibility issues due to the type of devices, their existing technological skill and the level of familiarity with educational technological tools.

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Let’s answer these questions.

- What steps did Rezwana follow to develop herself professionally?
- How did she apply her knowledge in her classes?

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Steps that I followed

In three corresponding steps, I started my pursuit of success inside and outside of the classroom. Those steps include:

1. Connect
2. Learn
3. Apply

The pursuit started with an attempt to engage with the peers and researchers of the national and international community. At the university, I started attending central training and workshops as well as conducting webinars for colleagues and peer tutors in the center. I joined Facebook groups and pages like Educational technology, Google classroom for teachers, Onthesamepage ELT to get ideas on apps like Quizizz, Slido or simple tips like taking a screenshot of a web page and adding in slides or word files. I also became a mentee in a mentorship program offered by The Career Path Development Professional Learning Network (PLN). Besides, different virtual conferences were frequently advertised on social media from the beginning of the pandemic which allowed me to share my ideas with other researchers and showcase my talent through presentations on the events’ YouTube channel.

With exposure to the new knowledge, my quest for suitable theories came naturally for both research and teaching purposes. From analysing the learner's level of interaction to evaluating the real-life linguistic and technological needs of students in the future job sector, I went through a considerable amount of research. Their mental well-being was also considered to avoid overburdening learners with tech-heavy content. For example, the analysis and continuous application of the TPACK structured my online teaching activities. For information processing in web conferencing tools, I started reading about the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). I also joined online courses on...
educational technology in Coursera and Futurelearn. These courses allowed me to go through frequent assessments which sharpened my skills.

The third step involved practical application of the tech tools and getting feedback from learners. Their online experience was intended for improvement and not merely participation. For this purpose, I have used a learner account first to experience the task and anticipated possible hurdles which may come along. For example: learning about the assignment submitting, editing, deleting, or resubmitting process in Google Classroom was crucial for my students. In the beginning of a new semester, I demonstrated the usage of Google Classroom. Before assigning any task, I provided a practical version of the task. In some cases, I provided video tutorials in Bangla through my YouTube channel.

Addressing the learners' needs was my main concern. I kept track of their reaction and responses. For the synchronous part, I was able to receive immediate feedback and a reaction to the task. For the asynchronous part, my main objective was to see the extent of their improvement through formative and summative assessment, level of learner absenteeism and their level of interaction with their teacher and peers.

Let’s answer this question.

- What signs or evidence of success did she notice?

Signs of success

Gradually, the steps towards success started showing the sign of development with better preparation skills, self-awareness and learner responses. Mostly, I emphasised on planning and preparing the lesson along with designing the interaction pattern while maintaining a positive technological intervention. For instance, I created most of my lessons on Quizizz which allowed me to incorporate quiz questions, receive an immediate response from the students and reuse thematerial. This habit saved the valuable time and provided cloud storage documentation.

The interactive nature of the lesson made students more responsive during classroom sessions. They even complained if they were not included or could not participate in a quiz. Since the practice sessions were common for them, their fear for the examinations reduced to a great extent. Whenever I gave a task, they immediately enquired about the technological aspect of it. Somehow, the tech-skilled learners were easy to identify at this point as they voluntarily helped their peers either verbally or by preparing video tutorials.

Peer collaboration also became significant when I used the “question section” of Google Classroom classwork. Here, students were asked to give answers to questions and challenge a classmate to reply with better options. They started communicating with each other and providing peer feedback. This is how the teacher-centred and tech-heavy environment gradually started to shift towards a learner-
friendly environment where they started connecting different aspects of lessons with real-life purposes through discussions. Nothing was off-topic anymore. Even the subject writing section of a formal email was discussed and scrutinised for better choice. This culture of enquiry created learner awareness and helped them to adjust to the alternative assessment system in online classes.

Let’s answer this question.
- What did she do to make her success sustainable?

Further plans

Online teaching competency comes with continuous learning and experimenting with continual effectiveness. To make my success sustainable, I designed a diagram (see figure 1) that allows me to plan flexibly but strategically and implement it by keeping self-development and learner differences in mind.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1. The cycle of tech-enhanced teaching

As I keep documenting my lessons, I identify my challenges in two ways. First of all, does the task improve learning or does it merely substitute a physical class? Secondly, can the learners work on it? If I find any problematic or useful tool or method, I immediately put it in a specific category and keep notes in my Google Keep file. Here, the class management category often contains similar issues like students being late in accessing a software, confusion about the grading rubric or missing an update notification. On the other hand, the material category has different issues, such as the compatibility of audio-visual content which can vary from learner to learner. At this point, I start working on making the digital content more learner-friendly. I work mostly on simplifying the task-related instruction by...
sharing it in my native language, writing it as a post and appointing better learners as mentors for the struggling ones. When I assign a specific task, I take notes of learner reaction and the suitability of the task. Finally, I do a thorough self-reflection which helps me with reviewing the lesson and also making it better for future classes.

I consider this cycle as a roadmap in achieving a bigger goal of expertise in online teaching and developing an everyday essential tool to ensure well-assembled lessons.

**Conclusion**

A common misconception among today’s learners and educators is that online teaching is a substitution of face-to-face teaching during an emergency remote learning process. Keeping the prolonged effect of the pandemic and the future job sector in mind, I intend to change this notion and customise the digitalised teaching for the betterment of learners and teachers.

We may have had basic training when we initially delved into this program, but we have come a long way now. The surge of professional support, passion for innovation and a tendency to lean towards possible reciprocal learning prove our strength as an educator.

**References**


Practices of Online and Alternative Pedagogy: A Case of Mid-West University

- Bishnu Kumar Khadka
(luckybishnu@gmail.com)

Introduction

I am Bishnu Kumar Khadka currently working as an Assistant Professor of English Education at Central Campus of Education, Mid-West University, Surkhet, Nepal. I recently completed a two-year tenure as an Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Education at Mid-West University and now I am pursuing a PhD in English Language Education from the Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University, Nepal. I have been teaching English as a foreign language for more than a decade. Besides teaching, I work as a Central Committee Member as well as the President of Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA) for Karnali Province. I am a general member of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), UK, and TESOL International Association, USA. I have worked as a researcher, trainer, speaker, writer, and freelancer facilitator and published books, research articles, and opinion-based papers in the field of education in general and ELT in particular. I have participated and presented papers in the national and international workshops, conferences and seminars home and abroad.

Background and context

Due to an abrupt outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide, all the academic institutions remained closed for an uncertain period. As a leader of the Faculty of Education, I was worried about the teaching-learning activities being postponed suddenly and searched for the best ways to be connected. The Vice-chancellor of Mid-West University called a virtual meeting for the first time in Facebook messenger group. This was followed by an online session in Google Meet and Zoom. All the university authorities were worried about how to regulate the teaching-learning process. The only way to conduct the teaching-learning process was via online and alternative mode of learning; however, there was no established policy on online and alternative pedagogical practices. Therefore, the university authority meeting decided to prepare a guideline to address various dimensions of online and alternative pedagogical perspectives in education. It was a very challenging job to convince both
the teachers and students that the teaching-learning process through online and alternative modes was possible since there was no record of the students having email or any sort of virtual mode of connecting them. Since the conventional pedagogical system was a physical face-to-face teaching-learning and evaluation system, there was no advanced preparation of it. However, some of the teachers were practising online and alternative approaches of teaching in their efforts and interests in collaboration with the administration and students. Likewise, there was no easy access to the internet for both students and teachers as the university was situated in the remote parts of Nepal. Besides, the frequent power cut problem was one of the most impacting obstacles to being connected. Most importantly, neither the teachers nor the students were familiar with the practices of using online and alternative pedagogical systems.

It was a kind of amazing experience of conducting virtual meetings and sharing among the other authorities. I remember the university authorities frequently requested to unmute and mute while speaking, used Raise Hand icon for waiting to speak and so on. Similarly, most of the university authorities were afraid of practising the teaching and learning process in action due to complications in using technology. During the meeting, I suggested that to overcome such a problem we need to conduct the training and workshop to train not only teachers but also to students to become ready for online and alternative teaching practices. However, it was a challenge to bring all the teachers and students to the training sessions because they were reluctant and afraid of using the technology online and alternative teaching-learning processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can you answer the following questions?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● How was the first virtual meeting at Bishnu’s university held? Does it surprise you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What were the challenges Bishnu faced to changing to online teaching?</td>
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Steps that I followed

**Step 1**

At first, I, as a leader of the Faculty of Education, coordinated all the campus chiefs of the university. I contacted them by phone at first, connected with them in a Facebook messenger group, and made a video call and shared the agenda of the meeting. The first and foremost step of initiating the online and alternative approach of teaching was tracking and tracing the students and connecting them in the virtual world. Additionally, we prepared the policy document to guide the online and alternative approaches of pedagogy. Furthermore, we requested the campus chiefs, faculty members and students to be in virtual connection so that we could proceed with the new journey of virtual world pedagogy. In this regard, Khadka, Rokaya, Roka and Bhatta (2020) mentioned that Mid-Western University formally prepared the guideline for regulating the online mode of teaching-learning and alternative mode of operating system and published it. The guideline visualised a complete cycle of the education from admission to result as e-Admission, e-Class, e-Assessment, e-Examination, and e-Certification.
While preparing the policy document, there was great confusion about how to pave the way to an online and alternative approach to teaching. The best practices of other universities and the future plan of the university were studied and shared among the university family members. They also contributed along with the university authorities to make the policy more comprehensive and practical. After finalizing the policy guideline, it was circulated among all stakeholders and asked them to act accordingly. The path from documentation to its implementation was difficult because the teachers and students were not well-trained and it was a new practice for them to implement the concept of the policy document. Therefore, the orientation program was organized by the university authorities and teachers for the successful implementation of it.

**Step 2**

Secondly, there was an urgent need for the teachers to train in the use of technology-based e-pedagogy. Fortunately, I coordinated the training programs for the teachers who were teaching at the central as well as constituting campuses. A three days training as per the demand of teachers was successfully conducted which paved the way for the mission of practising online and alternative approaches to education. After the training to faculties and students, the online class was conducted using a synchronous and asynchronous mode of teaching and learning using tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Moodle (Khadka, Rokaya, Roka & Bhatta, 2020). Initially, the mid-term examination of all the semesters was completed and the online examination form was announced in the first phase, and the final examination was successfully conducted.

The Faculty of Education, Mid-West University also organized a three-day online training for the teachers to enhance their capacity and make them ready for the online and alternative mode of teaching. The training was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor of Mid-West University via Online mode using the Zoom platform. It was the first online training for teachers in the history of the university. The experts from home and abroad contributed and facilitated the session and around 250 teaching staff including the professors from central and constituent campuses. They not only shared the theoretical aspects, needs and importance of online and alternative modes of teaching but also supported the technical knowledge and skills useful for teaching and learning. The final day of the training session was followed by the panel discussion and closing ceremony. It was a milestone for the effective implementation of online and alternative modes of teaching and learning as well as the testing process.

**Step 3**

Thirdly, I supervised the online classes of the teachers who were practising the new and innovative pedagogy in their virtual classes. It was easy to enter and observe the e-classes being conducted via online mode. I found both the teachers and students enjoying their technology-based innovative pedagogical practices, however, I found many students waiting for the internet services and electricity to be connected. Besides, frequent power outages, lack of technological knowledge and skills to make the virtual classes more interactive and effective and lack of smart digital devices with students
were major challenges that they were facing while practising the online and alternative pedagogical system. This was in line with Acharya et al. (2020) who claimed that three factors, institutional policy, internet access, and poverty, were found to be significant factors affecting the online higher education systems in Nepal. On the brighter side, the Covid-19 outbreak brought many opportunities to reform the conventional teaching-learning paradigm in Nepal. It was a bitter truth in the case of Mid-West University too that I have experienced.

When I observed the online classes of the teachers via a Zoom link, I found most of the students were not connected. It was easy for me to supervise many classes on different campuses from Rukum to Jajarkot and Bardiya to Mugu. The poor connectivity of internet services and frequent power cuts with a lack of skills to use technology were major problems that both the teachers and students were facing during their teaching-learning classes. The one-way delivery of the teachers without any sort of participation of the students made the classes a monotonous and passive process of learning.

**Things to note:**
- What did Bishnu do in each of the steps he followed to transition to online teaching?

**Signs of success**

**Let’s find the answer of these questions.**
- What signs of success does Bishnu mention in this section?
- Can you find any other evidence of success apart from the ones he explicitly points out?

The sudden, unprepared and unplanned journey towards technology-based online and alternative e-pedagogy was not easy for us. However, we tried to jump into it from the conventional pedagogical system. Despite the untrust to the mission with little hope from the stakeholder we could succeed not only to proceed with the online classes but also to conduct the alternative and virtual mode of examination and result publication. A complete cycle of teaching to testing was completed. As the evidence, I can mention some of them as follows:

- Mid-Western University Digital, Virtual and Alternative Teaching-Learning and Operating Systems Policy Guidelines 2020
- Mid-Western University Alternative Examination Management & Evaluation Directives 2020
Figure 1. Mid-West University online teaching learning guidelines
A Three Day Online Training on Developing Innovative & Technology based e-Pedagogy in Education by Faculty of Education, MU

https://youtu.be/aqeV9M3E-_Y
Figure 3. A snapshot of panel discussion on transforming epedagogy

Figure 4. Exposure: Opportunity to share to the online community
The major evidence of the success is the policy documents and the implementation of them in the classroom. Because of the initiative role for leading the university's teaching-learning activities from the physical presence and/or face-to-face mode which was not possible during the COVID-19 pandemic towards online and alternative modes of pedagogy, the academic calendar was fully executed. There was no academic loss due to timely teaching and testing despite the adverse effect of COVID-19 and the running semester-end examinations were conducted via alternative mode and promoted to the upcoming next semesters. Besides, the faculty members as well as the students carried out their researches on the various dimensions of online and alternative pedagogical practices and some of them are being published and some others are being presented in the seminars and conferences.

**Further plans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bishnu proposes a plan for future development…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Do you think Bishnu’s plan is realistic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● What else could you have done?</td>
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<tr>
<td>● What would you have done differently?</td>
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The practice of fully online and alternative modes of teaching-learning and evaluation is the new practice among students and teachers in the case of the remote and rural context where there is no
access of knowledge, skills and digital devices and infrastructures for online and virtual modes of pedagogy. In this regard, Gautam & Gautam (2020) rightly claimed that technological support, infrastructure availability, faculty, and students' perception have a significant relationship with the effectiveness of the online mode of the teaching-learning process. Likewise, Acharya, et al. (2020) also proclaimed that three factors, such as institutional policy, internet access, and poverty, are found to be significant factors affecting the online higher education systems in Nepal. Furthermore, there is a need and enthusiasm towards online and alternative systems of teaching, learning, and evaluation in education, it is necessary to have access to electricity facilities, internet, and strong connectivity along with providing skill-based training to both teachers and students (Khadka et al., 2020). So, I proposed the future plan as follows:

- Develop infrastructure and access to internet facility to all the faculty members and students
- Revise curricula as per the blended pedagogical system
- Empower Faculty members and offer training
- Use Online and Alternative Pedagogy system as a regular part of teaching and learning
- Update technological systems and facilitation
- Monitor and Supervise

The proposed plans are being implemented now. Each campus has its computer laboratory and there is a provision of an ICT focal person for coordinating the use of ICT in pedagogy. The second phase of the physical as well as the alternative examination system has been successfully conducted. The curriculum development process is in action and the framework has been developed which has given due emphasis on using online and alternative modes of pedagogy. The faculty development program is proposed in the budget which aims to develop the knowledge and skills of using ICT in pedagogy. The university has planned to update its manual system of record keeping into an online portal and develop its monitoring and supervision mechanism through the Directorate of Planning, Monitoring and Development Office at Mid-West University now.

Conclusion

It is a bitter fact that due to the worldwide impact of Covid-19, the conventional mode of teaching-learning and testing, i.e. face-to-face physical presence, has been completely postponed. As a result, educational institutions started to practise online and alternative teaching, learning, and evaluation systems. Mid-West University also practised it and this success story-based writing is also one of the reflective parts of it. However, both the teachers and students were enthusiastic enough to practise teaching-learning and testing purposes. Despite many challenges such as the lack of electricity, no access to the internet, and poor connectivity as well as the lack of training and skills to use the technology, we enjoyed success after overcoming the hurdles and challenges.
References


Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: Where Teaching and Learning are Merged with 21st-Century Skills

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- Maruf Mozammel
  (marufmozammel008@gmail.com)

Introduction

I am Mehnaz Monir Meem, and I live in Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am a graduate of the Department of English, East West University. I have served as a general secretary and advisor for East West University English Conversation Club. I am also doing my MA in ELT and Linguistics at Brac University. Currently, I am working as a teacher at Islami Bank International School and College and as a fellow for Teach for Bangladesh. In this program, I work with underprivileged children and their community. Besides, I like to read English novels and do photography in my free time.

I am Maruf Mozammel, and I live in Chattogram, Bangladesh. I am a graduate of the Department of Philosophy, Jahangirnagar University. Previously, I was a vice-president of Jahangirnagar University Debate Organisation. Now, I am doing my MA in Philosophy at Jahangirnagar University. I have worked as an instructor at Robi 10 Minute School, which is an online school. Currently, I am working as a fellow for Teach for Bangladesh. In this program, I work with under-resourced children and their community. I like to travel and recite poetry.

Before you read the story of Mehnaz and Maruf, answer the following questions.

- Do you have any experience of using technology to run classes virtually? If so, how successful were you? If not, how did you manage to handle classes during the pandemic?

As Teach for Bangladesh fellows, we envision a society where all children receive an excellent education that empowers them to realise their full potential and shape their future through talent and hard work. We believe that there is no age limit or boundary when it comes to education. Our education begins after birth. There is no shortage of efforts by teachers, students or their families to accelerate formal education. Even then, the easy path to education is often hampered by many obstacles. Such a thorny path has been created due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, we are all working together to accelerate education through distance learning or online learning because we are trying to overcome adversities and obstacles during this period. At the same time, we expect that the light of education will shine over all. With this hope, we envisioned a world with mobile-assisted language learning.
Mobile assisted language learning has helped students to achieve digital literacy as well as ensured the integration of 21st-century skills (Silva, 2009) through communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. The ways in which Mobile-assisted language learning is integrated in the primary level facilitated by the 4Cs are given below.

**Things that went well**

First, we want to start with the gems of our classroom. We teach primary-level students, and they have a very short attention span. So, we tried to make them curious about online education because curiosity is an aspect of intrinsic motivation that has an excellent potential to enhance student learning. Our main concern was to make the students comfortable with the online mode of learning as it was a new area for underprivileged primary-level students in the context of Bangladesh. Also, most of them did not have laptops or computers, so our hope was to run online classes using smartphones. So, we put all our hopes on apps like WhatsApp, IMO, and Messenger because Zoom and Google Meet were too difficult for them, and during the pandemic, teaching about these apps would take more time and add a layer of complexity. So, we started taking classes on IMO, WhatsApp and Messenger. At first, the attendance was too low, but we did not lose hope. We started incorporating fun activities, socio-emotional learning in the lessons so that we could make the students curious about the online classes. Moreover, we had grounding activities before starting the main lesson, such as storytelling in English, doing breathing exercises, playing word games or colour games and so on. It was a game-changer for us because the students started to feel more welcomed and relaxed when they came to the class. Also, a few of them who joined the classes informed their friends about our mobile-assisted class, and their parents asked us how their children could enroll in the classes. Subsequently, we added more students to our IMO and WhatsApp groups. All the techniques we applied in our classroom created a positive impact on our students.

In addition, the activity that worked like magic is the creation of a five-step lesson plan in alignment with 21st-century skills. The term “21st-century skills” is generally used to refer to specific core competencies such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity. We think that a prepared teacher can prepare their students for upcoming challenges, and these five-step lesson plans contain all the plans for facilitating a mobile-assisted language class. The five-step lesson plan includes - opening, introduction to new materials, guided practice, independent practice and closing.

To begin with, in the opening part, we incorporated communication and creativity. We spoke in English with the children to give them proper exposure, and we expected them to talk in English. If they faced any difficulty, they would seek our help, and it served the purpose of communication. Moreover, we played a stand-up and sit-down game (see figure 1) in the opening part with the students as we intended to teach commands and requests. We found out that this activity served the purpose to teach this lesson creatively. Also, in the opening part, we clearly stated the objective so the learners knew what they were learning.
Secondly, we introduced the new materials to them. We call this part the “I do” part because, in this step, only the teacher will be talking and modelling for the students. Here, if you look at figure 2 below, you can see that we started with the definition of request and command. Also, we demonstrated what we would be doing throughout the lesson through “How Key Points”, such as - I will read the sentence, I will recognise and decide if it is a command or a request, I will mark the command and the request words. At this point, all the steps were carried out by us as modelling so that the students could understand how the class was going to be conducted. In this part, we incorporated communication as we would be talking descriptively, then our demonstration would enable the students to think critically. Also, we had to be creative so that the students understand the definition and key points even with minimal supervision.
Thirdly, after the introduction to new materials comes the guided practice part or, as we call it, “we do” part where all the teachers and the students do the work together which serves the purpose of collaboration. Here, if you look at figure 3 below, we described the HOW key points but instead we used “we will”, such as we will read the sentences, and we would ask the students to repeat what we said this time. This time, we read the 1st sentence and the rest of the sentences were read by the students.
students. Then we gave them time to think as they were going to mark the command and request words which are to make them think critically. The students think, and after that they help one another to do the work which facilitates collaboration and communication among them.

Fourthly, after the guided practice part, students engage in independent practice. We call it “You do” part where students will be on their own to solve problem and neither the teacher nor any other student will help each other. During this stage, the teacher describes the HOW key points again, and instead of using we will, the teacher uses “You will”, such as- You will read the sentences and so on. Then the students complete the activities on their own which demonstrates critical thinking and creativity on the students’ part. When they are done, they send the pictures of their work through IMO and WhatsApp. Thus, we can see how gradual shift in the responsibility works in the class.

Figure 3. The guided practice part
### Independent Practice - (05 min.)

- **Teacher Actions:**
  - Now you are going to do an individual activity.
  - For that at first listen to the instruction very carefully.
  - I will show you 5 sentences and you will:
    1. Read the sentences.
    2. Recognize and decide if it is a commanding and requesting sentence.
    3. Mark the commanding words (Starting with verbs).
    4. Mark the requesting words (Could you, can you, would you, please).
  - You will read one by one after I call your name.
  - 5 sentences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Request</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS will listen carefully</td>
<td>SS will follow the teacher’s instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS will read the sentences one by one</td>
<td>SS will brainstorm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS will think</td>
<td>SS will answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS will listen</td>
<td>SS will identify the commanding sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS will identify the requesting sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Materials: |
| Internet, Mobile, Laptop, Google doc, Speech, Pen, Paper, |

### Figure 4. The independent practice part
Last but not least, in the closing part (Figure 5), some of the students share what they did and learned in the class which serves the purpose of communication and collaboration. Also, the teacher gives them homework and asks if they have any questions. A five-step lesson plan is long and full of activities. As a result, sometimes, we break the lesson plan into bite-sized lesson plans and finish one or two steps in one day which works just fine for a mobile-assisted language learning class.

![Figure 5. The closing part](image)

Thus, a five-step lesson plan helps not only teachers to prepare for the class but also the students so that they can understand and utilise what they are learning.

**Let’s answer these questions**

- How do you find a five-step lesson plan explained by Mehnaz and Maruf?
- Do you find this plan effective to be used in your classroom? Why or why not?
What we did categorically

Now the question is, what did we do categorically? To begin with, we tried to implement a concrete, pictorial/visuals, abstract (CPA) method, especially for teaching vocabulary and sentence making. Usually, CPA is a highly effective teaching approach that develops a deep and sustainable understanding of maths in students. Often referred to as the concrete, representational, abstract framework. CPA was developed by American psychologist Jerome Bruner (1966). We thought of using the CPA method to teach English vocabulary and sentence making. So we sat and thought for a long time about how we could do that. So for the concrete part, we tried to show and tell the students to bring an object that we could use to teach.

For example, in figure 6 below, we can see a ball at first. We tell the students to bring a ball, or they can make that out of paper. However, the problem was with some objects which they might not be able to bring. So, we thought we could tell them to draw that object which they could not bring such as maybe a tubewell. It helps learners understand the real-life implication of the things they are learning. That is how we covered the concrete part. After that, in the visual or pictorial part, we showed a picture or a video that contained the object. Such as: in the figure 6, you can see a picture where children are playing with a ball. Students see the picture and connect the object with a context familiar to them. It enables their background knowledge. In the end, from the picture, they write sentences related to themselves or general sentences such as *I like to play ball with my friends*.

This process enables students’ critical thinking ability and creativity. Also, when they share, it helps their communication and collaboration as well.

![Figure 6. The CPA method](image)

The next thing that we did was introduce a writing workshop among the students to teach writing. The writing workshop includes - Ideating, Drafting, Enhancing, Editing and Publishing. In the ideating part, students draw a picture on a given topic using their imagination and critical thinking ability. If you look at figure 7 below, you can see, one of my students drew a picture of his village house as he would be writing a short paragraph on My Village House. The positive aspect about drawing is that it cheers the students up, enables their background knowledge and visualises their thoughts.
Furthermore, the next step is the drafting part, where they will write what they see in their picture. For example, in figure 7, you can see a home, trees, a pond, a tubewell, a field and fish in the pond. So the picture captures his imagination and he can transcribe it in his words as in figure 8.

In addition, after drafting it is time to enhance the points a little more. As you can see in the picture below (Figure 9), he added some details to his drafting, such as he added the type of house which is tin shaded, what he can see in the river and the purpose of having a tubewell which is to drink water, a field to cultivate crops and trees which are to have vegetable, fruits. However, these points are in chunks of words and not at sentence level.
Now comes the editing part (Figure 10), where the students write the bullet points in the form of sentences within a paragraph. After finishing the writing, the students work in pairs. They exchange their copies, and in an online mobile-assisted language class, they take a picture and exchange that picture with their pair mate to check and give feedback through online communication. Now, a question might arise: to what extent will they be able to give feedback to one another, as they are primary level students? The answer will be given in a moment. The students exchange the copies through pictures and give feedback to one another and share the feedback in the class. The students will rectify and modify their writings after getting the feedback.

In the last step, after finishing editing, this is the time to publish the writings. In this case, publishing means sharing in front of the class and it can be read aloud or shared using picture with the whole group. However, we mostly prefer reading aloud and then sharing the picture in the group. Now, to answer the previous question: if you look at Figure 11 below, the marked ones are the feedback the student got from his pair mate.
So we would say that they can give feedback at the word level such as: adding “s” or “es” to the plural words or using verbs according to the subject which is yet challenging at this level. After the publishing part, we check every exercise book and give them final feedback. This is how we conduct the writing workshops.

These processes take time to integrate and execute but teachers have to be patient as they are dealing with the primary level students who belong to the underserved community.

**Figure 11. The publishing part**

Let's answer these questions.

- How satisfied are you with what Mehnaz and Maruf have done on implementing a CPA method for teaching vocabulary and sentence making?
- Can you think of any other ways that could improve their actions?

**Sign of success**

Here are the signs of success in mobile-assisted language learning in which teaching and learning are merged with 21st-century skills.

While we were working with the language competencies, we found that our approach of building competency developed the 21st-century skills like 'collaboration,' 'communication,' 'creativity,' and 'critical thinking.' Earlier, we discussed the writing workshop. And now here are our findings on how developing the language competencies in mobile-assisted language learning also developed the 21st-century skills.

**Listening:** While we were teaching the listening skill, we found that the students frequently responded and increased their effort to understand the meanings. That effort developed their communication and critical thinking skills as they had to identify the correct meaning of the commands.

**Speaking:** Classes on speaking competency developed their communication and collaboration skills. While we were practising speaking, all of the students were trying to represent themselves. As they were still new to the English language, they enjoyed basic tasks such as introducing themselves to others in a new language.
**Reading:** In our finding, 'creativity' and 'critical thinking skills were developed in reading competency classes. Our students were exploring new words and also trying to make new sentences and that practice leads them to 'creativity' and 'critical thinking.

**Writing:** We found that all the '4c' is developing in a notable ratio for this competency. They were trying to write their own stories and create new stories in English. Thus, their creativity and critical thinking were developing.

After completing their writings, they exchange their copies by sharing photos. Doing this activity, we found that our students' communication and collaboration skills developed very well.

**Our plan to build on or extend this success in the future**

We have four steps in our plan to continue this success in the future.

**Firstly,** we want to establish a 'Phone school.' In Bangladesh, parents tend to keep home tutors or send their children to coaching centres. We found that mobile assisted learning could be a better alternative for the current scenario.

**Secondly,** to establish a phone school, we must ensure the online classes. In countries like Bangladesh, a probable solution might be to get some help from the CSR programs of multinational companies to expand their budget on the education sector. Most significantly, telecom companies can contribute a lot here, for example: they can provide cost-effective internet packages especially for students who are not able to buy internet for online classes due to the high cost of the internet. Also, multinational companies can provide donations and scholarships to students for online learning. This will be very effective to promote mobile-assisted language learning.

**Thirdly,** we will create digital content. And that will be for both phone school and physical school. This content may be Youtube videos, audios of their texts, self-explanatory workbooks, and worksheets.

**Last but not the least,** we need to distribute the content through different channels. Those channels can use social media like Youtube, WhatsApp, Messenger, and a country's local social apps. These are all from us to build on or extend our success in the future.

To conclude, keeping the new normal situation after the pandemic in mind, it is time we moved forward and did something to facilitate the education sector not only in Bangladesh but also around the world. We have to understand the needs of the community and work accordingly so that together we can recover the damage that occurred in the last one and half years. We can do that through 21st-century communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. We can search for new ways to educate children, which work in a different area where people are facing similar situations, and by analysing the pros and cons, we can make it work.
Let’s answer these questions.

- Do you have any success stories like the ones shared by Mehnaz and Maruf?
- Can you think of your plans to extend your success further?
- Do you have any plans to modify your current teaching and learning strategies that can potentially lead you to your success in your teaching and learning?

References


Enhancing English Language Learners’ Digital Literacies in Remote Teaching

- Puskar Chaudhary
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Introduction

I am Puskar Chaudhary, who is pursuing MPhil in English Language Education at Kathmandu University. I also work as a full-time faculty member at Triyog High School, Kathmandu where I coordinate the Digital Literacies Programme. I empower teachers to develop digital literacies by supporting and preparing them to use technology in classrooms. I help to prepare and share digital content for lesson delivery, build professional networking among educators through training and workshops. Additionally, I facilitate and organise weekly in-house training at the school to discuss classroom teaching practices, opportunities and challenges. In addition, I am also supporting the school to keep digital portfolios of the students. I love to make my remote teaching more fun, engaging, and interactive by incorporating and introducing educational technologies. My professional memberships include the Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA), Toastmasters International, and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). My current interests include digital pedagogy, digital literacies programme, teachers’ networking, and professional development.

Based on Puskar’s background, do you know:
- What encouraged Puskar to help his colleagues develop their digital literacies?
- What challenges did he face when he started delivering lessons online?

Background and context

Technological advancement has transfigured the 21st-century education. There have been drastic changes in our lives and complete changes in the way we communicate, access information, teach, and learn in our day-to-day lives. Technologies have become a vital part of our lives for our personal and professional growth. Most of the teachers and students have embraced it to improve and facilitate their learning. Moreover, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, technologies have become a crucial part to be integrated into teaching-learning activities and the whole educational system despite its difficulties and challenges. Technologies have become a powerful education tool for teachers, parents, and students to manage the educational crisis during a difficult time.

The aforementioned reasons made me feel that my pupils and I need to acquire new skill sets to update
about educational technologies to address the need of the time and be digitally literate. Moreover, the shift of in-person teaching-learning into remote teaching-learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic demanded learners to use digital tools and technologies. The situation impelled me to use alternative ways of teaching and communicating with parents. My school had to facilitate remote teaching for the children and I had to become a part of it. I had to be ready to use the digital tools for video conferencing to teach my children. I was happy that the situation was allowing me to connect and collaborate by opening up opportunities, challenges and innovation which were unimaginable just a few years ago. At the same time, I was worried due to the lack of knowledge and experience in remote teaching.

As I began remote teaching, I experienced the difficulties students were experiencing with the connectivity issues, technical issues, access to digital devices, and digital content. I also noticed that the parents were becoming apart of their child’s success and for our remote teaching-learning because they were involved in supporting the children to make remote teaching-learning successful and communicating with teachers about general tasks and their children’s performance.

Notwithstanding the focus on the four core of language skills, I emphasised on enhancing the digital skills of the learners as they were increasingly communicating and accessing information through a variety of digital avenues. I figured out that there were mixed types of learners in my class in terms of the level of knowledge on digital tools. Some of my learners were just familiar with the general use of a laptop, computer, cellphones and MS-word whereas there were other groups who had expertise in MS-office, features of modern tools and digital content. They were already familiar with the use of digital tools. However, they need to be digitally responsible, creative and critical during the remote classes. Digital literacies became an important part for my learners and mine too. Only knowing about digital technologies was not enough for them but they required a high level of digital skills while learning remotely. They required the skills to communicate with the digital learning materials that were available on the internet, build digital networking and understand the digital platforms appropriately. It was important for the learners to be critical and creative to manage their online identity and be aware of online safety rather than just using synchronous and asynchronous tools to learn the content.

With these baby steps, I invested my time to sensitise my learners about the benefits and impacts of enhancing digital literacy skills while learning remotely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now let’s read the following sections and find out answers to these questions:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● What did Puskar do to enhance English language learners’ digital literacy?</td>
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<td>● What kind of skills did his learners possess?</td>
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<td>● What kind of activities did he carry out to support his learners?</td>
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<td>● What skillsets did he focus on and what steps did he follow?</td>
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**Steps that I followed**

To enhance English language learners’ digital literacy in remote education, the first thing I did was:
I educated and updated myself and my students on digital literacy skills. I participated in online conferences, seminars and online courses to learn about how to use online resources to facilitate English language learning and cultivate new skill sets to teach remotely. I explored books and research articles on digital literacies to make remote teaching worthwhile. I was highly inspired by the framework of digital literacies contributed by the Hockly, et al. (2014) on digital literacy model with eight elements, namely cognitive, constructive, communicative, civic, critical, creative, and confident and culture. Whereas Hockly (2013) suggests a set of four overlapping skill sets corresponding to four main areas i.e., focus on language, information, connections or collaboration and (re-)design. I applied the ideas and lessons I received from webinars, online courses books and articles, in my classes. I also encouraged my colleagues to participate in the online training, workshops and webinars which were provided by Massive Open online courses (MOOCs).

The second important thing I did was: I integrated the theories of Hockly and Belshaw into English language classrooms. To prepare my learners for remote classes, I started focusing on enhancing their technological skills although they were already familiar with social media tools. The children were going to use the synchronous tool like Zoom cloud meeting for the first time for their online classes. I sent them some instructions using social media tools on how to log in, set up a video conferencing tool. My learners were already familiar with video chatting on Facebook and Viber so it was not complicated to communicate with them. Before using these synchronous tools for online teaching, I dedicated my time to familiarise myself with the platform and the tools. Some of the children were facing problems with creating the Zoom login ID and setting up the camera and microphone. So, my focus was on how to use tech tools for learning remotely.

In the initial phase, the synchronous tools helped me to get connected virtually with my learners and parents and know more about them, how they were spending their time at home. Whereas the children were asked to use asynchronous tools like Gmail, Messengers, and Viber Group messages to share important messages for my learners and post assignments. The parents were also involved in their children’s teaching-learning process. They supported their children in case of connectivity problems and general technological problems.

After educating the children about the modes of synchronous and asynchronous tools that I was using to deliver lessons, the digital content became the most important part of teaching-learning activities. The children did not have physical textbooks because of the school closure. As a teacher, I used PowerPoint slides with interesting visuals rather than a lot of texts to keep my learners engaged and make the content delivery more effective and fun. So, my focus was on enhancing children’s skills for navigating digital content of the internet. I shared links and appropriate learning videos and content with children for their levels and classes. It was important for learners to understand images, digital text, hyperlinks, videos and know how to communicate with the multimodal tools of learning. So I emphasised more on communicating with the digital texts and evaluating the information using the internet than using only printed texts.
The other skill set that I was emphasizing was communication and collaboration skills. It was important for children to maintain their online identity and it was important for them to understand how to behave and interact on digital platforms. My concern was how learners could develop their personal, social, networking and participatory skills through digital tools to enhance their learning remotely. Therefore, I made the children aware of how to communicate on online platforms, chat forums and social media while taking online classes. To ensure children’s online safety, the children were communicated and explained about possible issues with online safety. They were also reminded about how they could report to the school’s safeguarding team. They were communicated about the netiquettes to be followed while taking online classes. They were added to the group Viber, shared documents and Learning Management System (LMS) to share their ideas and enhance their personal and academic skills. They were encouraged to participate in online speech, date, writing competitions and understand intercultural aspects through digital tools.

Finally, the most important focus was on enhancing the learners’ creative and critical thinking skills while learning remotely. I started motivating children to mashup videos, digital texts, pictures that were used for context delivery and make their own. The incorporation of interactive and tech tools offered them opportunities to share their collaborative and personal ideas. They were creating digital tools like slides, videos and audio materials. To sum up, I focused on the digital skills, communicative, creative and collaborative skills of the learners to enhance their digital literacies.

Now, let’s read the following sections and find answers to these questions about Puskar and his students.

- What kind of changes did Puskar see in his learners?
- Were they able to learn new things?

**Signs of success**

It was important to enhance digital literacy skills among my learners so that they would adjust and adapt the teaching-learning activities with the help of technologies. On the other hand, it was important to motivate the students and help them develop valuable life skills alongside language skills. The digital tools and platforms helped teachers and learners to explore authentic resources in the English language. While practicing reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, the videos, audios, pictures, digital texts and tools contributed a lot in enhancing their learning skills.

Being digitally literate is not limited to knowing how to operate digital tools and technologies for learning remotely but communicating and interacting with multimodal learning tools. It also means the learners need to be creative and critical about learning the content that are available on the internet. Talking about my students, they particularly mastered two types of skills: general technological skills and 21st-century digital skills. By general technological skills I mean that means my learners learned the basic functions and features of modern technologies: cell phones, laptops and computers, synchronous and asynchronous tools for remote learning. They also built the ability to use the internet and explore
virtual and augmented realities for language learning. It was also essential for them to integrate
technologies to learn good communicative language skills. On the other hand, they were able to enhance
21st-century digital skills, they learned how to communicate in formal and non-formal online settings.
They learned how to communicate on social media and particularly in the Zoom cloud meeting, sharing
the ideas in the chatbox or presenting their ideas virtually either through PowerPoint presentation or
through group or pair discussion. They learned the ideas of online exploration. They learned how to
navigate appropriate information on the internet, and use and share it for learning. They also enhanced
the skills in digital collaboration. They collaborated with their teachers and friends for groups and pair
works. They were found to be more critical and creative when they were producing digital content.
They were creating memes, animations, and videos. The digital tools and platforms helped them create
digital identities as they were contributing to the digital world by writing blogs and creating videos for
the blogs.

After a couple of months, the students showed shreds of evidence that they had enhanced their digital
literacies in the English language classrooms by understanding how to access reliable sources for
online language learning. They were using online dictation, listening materials, and online reading
comprehension. In addition to this, they were also able to utilise story telling media to allow students
to create and publish stories, present PowerPoint presentations. They learned the skills to search, filter
and collect digital content from the internet, web pages, and YouTube videos which were essential for
their academic learners. I also noticed that they were able to use the links or hypertext to explore the
information. Many of them did not have physical textbooks so they were asked to use information from
different educational websites. The children learned how to find and filter information on the internet.
They learned search literacy besides developing technology skills. While doing the online project
works or general assignments, they learned how and where to access information and make their own.
They learned remixing and reproducing literacies.

They had developed collaborative skills through a support system. The students who were academically
poor and technologically challenged were helped by others. They organised Zoom meetings to help
each others and discuss lessons. They were also connected in the Viber, Edmodo, Flipgrid, and other
social groups. Many of them also enhanced their social and interpersonal skills by participating in
educational webinars and inspirational talks. The students’ parents were updated through Gmail
messages and Viber messages about their academic performance. They learned how to contribute
while doing group or pair works when working on the shared files. Moreover, they learned personal
and group responsibility while interacting on social networks.

I also noticed that the children enhanced their creative and critical thinking skills by doing the
PowerPoint presentation, making a digital poster, digital storytelling, making memes, using the digital
learning materials either from the Internet or school learning management (LMS). They were about
to submit their assignments taking the pictures, typing the documents or creating the links, taking the
assessment remotely following the netiquettes.
Overall, the digital literacy skills of the learners helped them to explore not only the technology but be a part of the digital world by creating and contributing digital content. They learned how to manage their online identity and communicate on digital platforms. They accessed authentic learning materials on the internet. They were also able to develop language learning skills by using digital reading, writing, speaking and speaking materials.

Further plans

It is necessary to develop digital literacy skills in learners so that they can communicate and express their ideas effectively using digital media while teaching remotely. They are required to be equipped with digital skills and knowledge so that they can enable safely navigate and discern all forms of digital technology. It is essential for the learners to maintain online safety and be a part of the digital world. They required more digital skills as technologies and tools are advancing day by day. In the future, there would be more platforms where learners can learn remotely.

Therefore, I want to design an online course for my teaching. I want stakeholders, teachers, parents, and learners to know how technologies can be integrated into the teaching. I would like to carry out classroom research on promoting digital literacy skills among learners. I see the future of online and virtual learning and I aspire to know more about the challenges and how technologies actually work. Thus, I intend to collaborate with parents, teachers, and students and learn more about the technologies. As a teacher, it is very difficult to assess learning virtually and prepare portfolios. I expect to learn more about online assessment and prepare digital portfolios. Technologies are transforming the quality of education; therefore I intend to integrate digital literacies into my coursebook and prepare learners to be a part of the digital world globally.

Conclusion

To conclude, digital tools and being digitally literate affect students’ critical thinking, communication skills, creative works, community building, and different ideologies of English language learning. English language learners’ digital exploration skills, networking, and collaborative skills, creative and critical thinking skills English language teachers can enhance by incorporating the practical strategies in the teaching besides developing their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in the remote classes by focusing on their digital skills and knowledge. The learners not only require knowing on how to operate digital tools but how to interact and communicate with the digital texts while learning remotely. They also required collaborative and critical thinking skills to adjust and adapt to the digital platforms and networks; therefore, teachers should help learners acquire digital skills for full participation in the digital platforms beyond classrooms and can enrich students’ learning.
while teaching remotely.

By being digitally literate, learners can take ample advantage. These skills are more beneficial for their remote learning as the learning incorporates the delivery and access of information through the medium of digital tools. It can help themselves adjust to digital education system and develop effective and engaging online learning experiences.

Moreover, being digitally literate is a creative and innovative way to respond to the challenges of the pandemic.

Taking all of the above into consideration, it is important that English language learners understand the concept, implication and importance of digital literacies. These skills are more essential for remote learning as the learning is related with technologies and in new normal ways. It has facilitated English language learners, educational and professional, by providing the opportunities to develop their proficiency and fluency of language with the help of tools and technologies. These skills are also important in facing and adjusting the unprecedented challenges of a pandemic and learning remotely.

After reading Puskar’s success story:

- Do you think teachers need to support learners to develop their digital literacy? Why or why not?

References


“Project Work” is the Best Pedagogical Practice for Teaching and Learning

- Anju Lama
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Introduction

I am a secondary-level teacher and researcher. I have been working as an English teacher and ISA coordinator at a public school in Kalanki (a suburb in the Kathmandu Valley), Nepal. Besides teaching, I conduct varieties of extra and co-curricular activities in the school and share collaborative projects among national and international schools and make students actively participate in the learning strategies through project works on the theme of sustainable development goals. I am a life member of the Nepal English Language Teachers Association (NELTA) and a member of the mother language subject committee in the curriculum development center. I am an ICT teacher-trainer for interactive teaching-learning. I conduct ICT training for teachers on their demands. As a hobby, I love reading books, and researching issues of multilingualism.

Background and context

Before you read Anju’s success story, answer the following questions.

- What prompted her to join the ISA program?
- What challenges did she face to introduce a change?

In 2015 (2072 BS) I was appointed as a secondary level English teacher where I taught my students using the traditional teacher-centered method. I was an active speaker and my students were passive listeners. Consequently, I had to do a lot of work including give lecture presentations in front of the class. Then I would think, “I did a very good job.”

Previously, there was no project work in our school. The school’s extra co-curricular activities used to happen according to the school calendar once a month. The school administration used to focus on an exam-oriented study to obtain higher marks in final exams. As a result, other changes would be in shadow. The school was 10 to 5 pm limited mainly to indoor activities where students were passive learners. They were bored and wanted a change in their learning mode. However, it was difficult to modify the entrenched rules and regulations of the school and all the stakeholders needed to be onboard with any change in the schedule.

When I joined the International School Award Program conducted by British Council Nepal, I learned the value of teaching project work as curricular activities. Students, as well as teachers from my school, actively participated in a variety of national as well as international project works. Students got the
platform to show their ability, communicative skill, leadership skill, etc. These project works brought enthusiasm to the students, teachers and parents. The school committee members and members of the parent-teacher association encouraged the students to participate in the project works. They agreed that holistic development was not possible through textbook learning alone. In every project, students brought their ideas, creativity, and thoughts to express their learning skills. The project works became one of the parts of the internal evaluation system. Now, all the subjects give priority to project works and student involvement.

**Let’s answer this question.**

- What change did Anju introduce to her teaching?

**Steps that I followed**

At first, I registered my school in the ISA program and submitted eight action plans for the projects. They were approved. All the action plans were related to different subjects. Then I called some teachers to make the ISA team conduct the projects in school. All the teachers were positive about the projects. They helped me a lot and the projects ran smoothly. We prepared subject-wise action plans. They targeted nursery to secondary level students. We did lots of activities and competition programs in our school. Most of the students actively participated and learned a lot of things. The students collaborated with international schools for some of the projects. Our students shared information and built up communication skills and social well-being. All the projects were completed successfully.

They were:

1. FOLK DANCE OF NEPAL (Tamang Sello) Collaborative project with Ghulam Husain Khalidina Girls School, Pakistan (International collaboration)
2. National emblem (coat of arms) collaboration with BloomField Hall school in Pakistan (International collaboration)
3. Personal Hygiene (in school project, supplementary)
4. Speaking English in the classroom (In school project)
5. Use of ICT in education (in school project)
6. Waste is the best (local curriculum)
7. Wake the Hero of your own (Public-private partnership)
8. Healthy food for a healthy life (School online project)
9. Kumari the living goddess of Nepal, supplementary
10. Animal kingdom and plant kingdom (supplementary)
Enhancement approach and teachers' success stories

Can you answer these questions?

- What were Anju’s steps in the ISA Project?
- How many of the activities listed above are related to the environment?

Signs of success

Let’s answer these questions.

- What signs or evidence of success did Anju notice?
- What changes were made in Anju’s school curricula?

The students actively participate in the project works which helped them in their studies because they were student-centered and related to their curricula and textbooks. Students' creativity and imaginations were outstanding. They developed their communication and leadership skills. Those students, who were known to be very weak in reading and writing skills, improved on those skills through the project works. Moreover, the projects gave the students a platform to showcase their talent in other skills.

Project works are allocated 25 marks towards their practical test. Each project work is based on students' life skills which are used in their daily life. Doing these activities in school enhances the celebration of every national and international Day in the school. The students have been actively participating in their project works in collaboration with national and international schools. Meanwhile, active students have established the ISA club in our school. I am coordinating and supporting them to do different varieties of project works in the school and to enhance students' life skills.

This practice of project work in each subject in every class proved that teaching means not only using chalk, talking and keeping the classroom silent but also making students value their performance and building their confidence level in every step.

The students had no experience with project-based learning. They simply followed the normal school hours without many stimulating extra-curricular activities. But after the ISA project, there were so many activities that took place in the school. Our school and teachers didn't know about this ISA program before. But later, I as an ISA coordinator started to conduct varieties of activities in the school. Because of this ISA program, drastic changes took place in my school as well as in my students. To point out the success I have chosen some case stories hereunder.

After reading the case studies, can you answer these questions?

- What is the slogan of the first case study?
- What is the focus of the second case study?

Case Study 1: From Darkness to Bright Future

The first international project work program was held in our school which was organised by British
Council Nepal. In that program, more than 100 schools participated. The main objectives of that program were to make students creative and enhance collaborative learning and broadening soft skills. I was the coordinator of the program. I had the ISA team participating in the program. I would like to remember and thank the ISA team members who helped me successfully accomplish the program. In particular, I would like to thank Sapana Srivastav, Shushmita Sharma Panta, Tirtha Chhantyal, Sarala Shahi, Laxman Adhikari, Prakash Kafle as well as entire teachers. We conducted altogether 11 national and international collaborative project works. Among them, the 20% local curriculum "Waste Is the Best" project brought a drastic change in our school curriculum as well as in the students’ attitude. This is further explained in the next section.

**Waste Is the Best- 20% Local Curriculum**

This project was based on the local curriculum which is designed by Curriculum Development Center. For this project, we selected the main problem of our school i.e. Waste. We planned how we can manage the waste and reuse them. So, we did lots of activities related to waste management. We did orientation classes, poster presentations, a rally on world environment day, exhibitions, etc. From these activities, we distributed medals, certificates for the best performer.

![Figure 1. Students taking part in activities](image)

One of the parents from the PTA group stated, "This kind of activity should be done once a year in our school from which the students can improve their creativity and collaboration".

In the previous years in our school, there used to be four big dustbins filled with waste. Most of the classrooms were littered with papers and plastics of noodles and biscuits. Our school's janitor would clean all the classrooms. By the time she finished cleaning the entire school, it was already 6 in the
evening before she got back to her home. However, after the project, she finishes her cleaning job early and is not late to leave the school.

Now, we have consulted the DOKO Recyclers organisation and SAMDAN organisation to support our theme Zero Waste. SAMDAN organisation provided our students' training to recycle waste. All these activities are being conducted in our school. Because of this project, our school's scenario has totally changed. This is one of the achievements and area of progress in our school.

![Figure 2. Students display their creations](image)

And still, we are on the track of reducing waste and doing different activities to control waste in our school. Now we have a theme of 'Zero Waste'. We have selected some school leaders and created a child club. All the school leaders are asked to go and observe the whole class whether those classes are tidy or untidy and all classroom students are informed that there will be an award for maintaining a neat-and-clean classroom of a month. Students collect the papers and old books and by selling they are collecting some funds. Students have a meeting to utilise the fund in reducing the waste.

This year we collaborated with “White Hall Primary School, UK” on the theme of “Zero Waste” and shared lots of information. We exchanged ideas and materials made from waste materials such as postcards made from recycled paper, flowers from recycled bottles and letters with lots of information about our country.
Enhancement approach and teachers’ success stories

Figure 3. Posters made from recycled materials

Figure 4. Students taking part in awareness programmes
Let's talk about Sudipa Chaulagain from class ten. She studies in section "A" in the engineering group. Before the ISA program, she was in class six. According to her, she was an inactive and shy girl in the classroom. She did not have quality interaction with others in the school. She was good at studying but didn't have any curiosity about extracurricular activities. Later, when the ISA program was introduced in the school, she was selected in the international collaborative project work "Coat of Arm" with Bloom Field Hall School, Pakistan. In that project work, she interacted with international school students as well as participated in the drawing competition of national emblems. After that, she started to take part in the different activities conducted in the school. She also took part in the waste exhibition program and got a medal and certificate for activity. Slowly, her interest in participating in activities increased. Now, she often asks when the next ISA program will be held in the school. She says, "We learned different skills from the reference of this program. All the students as well as me participated in the different activities to develop our interaction skills and drawing skills. We got the opportunity to know about the culture and national emblem of other countries. Our school also became popular not only in our country but also among the people of other countries. This ISA project helped us to increase our confidence level, creativity. It helped to make the students active from the primary level. Due to this program, the system of distributing medals, conducting various programs came in our School".
The most important thing is that my parents are also very curious about my participation in the project work. They most often time ask me, "What's going on with your project work? Did your school select in the competition?"

Now, she has become active in a number of programs. She is a member of the child club as well as a member of "The Way to The Happiness". Through these programs, she is showing her activeness and creativity in every step of the project. Now she feels that she has totally changed. Like her, so many other students feel that this type of project should be held every year in their school as well as in other schools across the country.

![Figure 6. Students rewarded for their hard work](image)

**Further plans**

Now, we, the teachers in the school, agree that we should conduct a variety of projects and activities for teaching life skills to the students. Only rote-learning education is not enough in this modern era. If students are given opportunities to perform, they can do/learn more than memorizing from the books. It has been proven that only book-centred teaching and lecture-centered instruction are not ideal for students. Students do not want to be passive. We are making them passive by using the traditional teacher-centered pedagogy. So, learning strategies using varieties of activities, i.e. project, work for enhancing the teaching-learning process.

For that, I have planned to broaden the activities from intra-school to inter-school and then national to international level schools. I am thinking of searching different countries to collaborate in different activities through the ISA platform, I am planning to provide collaboration training to my school's teachers so that each and everyone can conduct their projects and activities in the best performance level with different schools.
Conclusion

As a teacher, we should not merely evaluate students from one aspect and complain that they cannot do better in their life. Each and every student is precious, valuable and perfect in one aspect. The only thing we have to do is provide them with the platform and opportunity to show their talent. In other words, all people are not perfect in every aspect so we have to respect their learning ability for this. It is our responsibility that we should provide them a platform according to their abilities and use their abilities in their daily life. We should make the students believe on their own and realise that they are also somebody and can do better. Only obtaining high marks in reading and writing is not an important thing but building social well-being is also important.
A Story from Karnali: A Way to Survive Academically in Covid-19 Pandemic

- Kalpana Poudel
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Introduction

I am a teacher, teacher educator and researcher. I work in what is considered as the remotest region of Nepal (Karnali Province). I teach English in different colleges and universities. I work as a visiting faculty member at the English language teaching department in the Education faculty of Mid-West University Nepal. I teach at different levels in the university as per the need of the university. With the knowledge and skills I have gained in my life, I try to support my students to be qualified teachers, researchers and trainers. I plan lessons, deliver them in the class, evaluate students' learning and provide feedback to them. Besides teaching, I am an on-call trainer of the British Council and NELTA. I provide my service to these organisations according to their demand and need.

My area of interest is research. I have tried to conduct mini-research from an individual level and I will be very happy to collaboratively work with organisations or people to explore issues, challenges and opportunities of the Karnali province in diverse areas.

Background and context

"Where there is a will, there is a way"

On the 6th of Chaitra 2077 (March 19, 2020), the government of Nepal decided to close all the academic institutions due to Covid-19 pandemic. I had just entered Mid-Western University as a faculty member (had not even completed one month of my service there) then. I felt as if I lost my way as a crow in the fog. Slowly the condition became tougher. The government of Nepal decided to impose a lockdown. After lockdown, all the schools, colleges, and universities were closed and there was no option besides sitting quietly inside the house. After one month of lockdown, the university requested teachers informally to contact students and take online classes if possible.

It was impossible to conduct a virtual class because we did not have trained human resources, there was a frequent power cut, teachers’ and students’ very limited access to the internet, lack of infrastructure
and limited guiding policies. Students had already left for their hometown.

It was very difficult to contact them because many of them lived in a place where the mobile network did not work. Mid-West University lies in Karnali province of Nepal. The province, land of north and mid-hills of Nepal, has occupied high mountains. Karnali is one of the poorest provinces from the economic point of view but the richest province in its natural beauty, biodiversity, culture and linguistic diversity and herbal medicine. This region has tough topography. Hills and mountains stand as an impediment to initiating development works there.

Despite all the challenges I was facing in this region, I wanted to do something about the bleak prospect of education there. I was so confused and scared to start a class. But I dared to take risks to empower myself and start classes. I can proudly say that I did not only start teaching but also completed the entire course through a virtual platform, and students completed the semester with good knowledge, skill, attitude and grades. I feel proud to say that I was the first teacher who started an online class in my department for the Bachelor level. Slowly I started to support other teachers who were not confident in using those platforms.

### Steps that I followed

It was like a dream to use a virtual platform in teaching and learning at the Mid-West University and I followed these steps to achieve my goals.

1. **Empowering self**

   The first step I followed was empowering myself. I critically reflected on my ability. Though I had done several online courses as a student, I did not have any experience teaching online. But I dared to try it. I searched for an online teaching-learning platform that a teacher can use for classroom teaching purposes. I found MS Team, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom and Messenger group as tools for the online class. I spent a few weeks using those platforms as a teacher. I joined different informal training programs from an individual level to empower myself.

2. **Empowering students**

   The second step that I followed was empowering my students in using online learning platforms. First of all, I contacted them individually and developed a good rapport with them. I created a Facebook group of students. I slowly informed them that I was going to start an online class. When they heard about online classes for the first time, they were quite scared, but I counseled them to their great relief. I spent some days teaching on different online learning platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom and Google Meet. After training students, with the permission of the officials, I started taking online classes.
classes 15 days before the university organised a formal training session on how to conduct an online class. I started teaching online and those who could join the classes took it positively but many were not able to join. I shared all the slides and notes in the Google classroom and Messenger group. After completing classes, I provided them with enough time for review and practice. Additionally, I posted some questions every week. Students wrote answers or solved the questions and posted them in the Google Classroom and Messenger group. In this way, students were engaged in online classes where they could learn new things being far from their university and teacher.

**Let's answer this question.**

- What did Kalpana do to achieve her goal?

**Signs of success**

In my view, students’ desire to learn and a teacher's hard work played a vital role in success in this case. If students had not shown their keen interest in learning, my hard work would have gone to waste.

The smooth running of classes and empowering students with 21st-century skills such as communication and creativity were the signs of success. After the online learning, they did not only complete their course but they also used this knowledge in their working area.

*Figure 1. Engaging students through presentation*
Figure 2. Different classes in a Google classroom

Figure 3. Evaluation of students (Mid-term)
Let’s answer this question.

- What tells you that Kalpana was successful to achieve her goal?

Further plans

My further plan is to devote myself to the improvement of quality education in remote areas. I would be happy to use my knowledge, skills and attitude to uplift the academic quality of those students and of teachers who are struggling to use technology in classrooms. Also, I desperately want to conduct a speaker's club inside my university which can support students to develop public speaking skills and the English language simultaneously.

Conclusion

If you wish for a change, you should start it. Bringing change and/or introducing new techniques and skills in the classroom is not easy. They demand more effort and dedication. If we put our full effort into our duty and love our work, there is no chance to be unhappy and sad.
Human Beings’s Drive for Academic Success

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Introduction

I am Nawsheen Ahsan. I work at Language Proficiency Centre, Dhaka, and I am involved in the English Microscholarship ACCESS Program. It is sponsored by the State Department, the U.S.A, and supervised by the American Centre Dhaka. My students call me an ACCESS Teacher. I am very interested in improving myself as a teacher and engaging in professional developmental activities. I love to read books, especially fiction and short stories. I also enjoy browsing the internet, listening to music and watching television.

Before you read Nawsheen’s Story, let’s answer the following questions.

● Have you ever taught underprivileged students?
● How do you motivate your students to speak in English?

Background and the context

Students who enroll in the English Microscholarship ACCESS program come from underprivileged backgrounds. It is a two-year program and I have been involved in the program since 2016. I have seen improvements in the English language proficiency in my students through the program. Over the time, they are able to gradually work on their English language levels. In the beginning of the program, the students are usually very scared, naïve, shy, and the majority of the students do not utter a single English word.

Over the course of the program, the students have overcome their inhibitions and shyness in speaking in English due to the guidance, constant motivation and encouragement from us (ACCESS Teachers). They feel relaxed and motivated to communicate in English as their fear of English has reduced. Consequently, their interest in learning English and attending the ACCESS classes also increased. Now they are not scared of English anymore. They gladly attend and enjoy the classes and participate in classroom activities.

Reasons/signs of success

As an ACCESS teacher, I am responsible to motivate, encourage and make the students feel comfortable and confident in learning English. I can say that I am able to do that because I have witnessed a gradual
development in their English skills. I am able to change how they feel about the English language. Previously, they believed that English was a scary and difficult language and it was very difficult to learn it. Now they are confident, motivated and can communicate more easily and freely with others in English.

**Steps that I followed**

**Activity 1**

I always start my classroom sessions with warm up activities and give the students interesting tasks because they help motivate my students. As a result, they are attentive in the classroom and engage in other learning activities.

In the descriptive writing class, I asked one of the students to go out of the classroom for a minute and then I distributed sheets of paper with pictures on them to the rest of the students.

After a minute, I called the student back into the classroom and asked the rest of the class to describe the picture without showing the entering student the picture. The students described the picture to her in English and she drew the picture according to the description.

After the drawing was over, she was shown the picture which was described to her, and the two pictures were compared. It was found that the pictures were very similar.

I noticed that the students had fun going through the activity. Previously, they were scared and did not think that English could be taught in a different and enjoyable way, but after that particular class their notion of English changed completely, which was very important.

![Figure 1. Students are doing activities in the class](image)
Activity 2

The second activity involves creating a story in English. I told the class that one of them is going to start telling a story with what comes into their mind and the rest of the class will take turn to add to the story. The students were motivated to do this activity and they were very happy and enthusiastic in doing this activity. So, one student started telling a story and one by one all the students continued telling the story by adding various incidents in the story to make the story more interesting.

I wanted to motivate the class in speaking English because I noticed that they were not confident to speak in English due to the grammatical errors and mistakes. So, I thought the best way to make them speak was to ask them to randomly tell a story and have fun in the process. This tactic really worked well because the students were happy in participating in creating a story that was sometimes composed of odd or contrasting events. It was seen that students changed the nature of the stories themselves. For example, what started as a simple story suddenly took turn into a horror story and ended with a ghost story!! After that class, they were more interested in speaking regardless of the grammatical mistakes.

During the classroom activities, I tried to give them interesting topics for speaking because I noticed that the nature of topics made a difference in their speaking. I made sure to give them interesting topics to help them become comfortable and speak more fluently. Furthermore, I gave the students some scientific topics which helped them to think critically about the subject and to give presentations on the given topics. Critical thinking activities were greatly emphasised in the ACCESS classes and students were strongly motivated and encouraged to think critically about the topics given. As a result, the students could present on any topic, and they became more confident in the English language.

I have always wanted to make my students feel safe and confident in using and learning English in my ACCESS classroom. I empathize in their struggle with the English language because it is a foreign language and especially due to their socio-economic background.

The way the English language was taught in their schools was very different and traditional. So, I had to first boost up their confidence and interest in learning English. In order to facilitate learning, I gave them interesting classroom activities to do. Examples of such activities were solving crosswords puzzles, role playing, showing them videos about specific themes, etc. As a result of these activities, their perspectives towards learning English changed dramatically. From the first day of activity 1, they became more interested in learning English. I had a great feeling of satisfaction that I could change their attitude towards learning English and reduce their fear with the English language.

Let’s answer these questions.

- What did Nawsheen do in the class to make the class enjoyable for the students?
- What signs of evidence did she notice?
My future plans

From the ACCESS classes, I have seen that students can perform very well if they are motivated by their teachers and their surroundings. Theoretically, it is also seen that motivation plays a huge positive impact on the performances of students academically.

Considering the positive outcome, I will continue to motivate my students so that they improve their English language even more and excel in their academic life. I will continue to motivate my students to become better regardless of their English language level.

I understand their struggles and their challenges because of their underprivileged background. I am even more encouraged to help other students through the ACCESS program in making them confident in the English language and develop a positive outlook about themselves.

Conclusion

In conclusion, motivation plays a major role in learning a language. If students are self-motivated to learn English, then they can learn English easily. Various communicative activities can be used in classes to make learning interesting. As a result of making English classrooms fun, students will be more interested to engage in the classes and their attitude towards learning English will change. I would also like to say that teaching can be fun and interesting if different fun-filled activities are included as part of the English language teaching and learning.
Improving Writing

- Gopal Prasad Bashyal
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Introduction

I am an author, educator and researcher. I have been working as a trainer at the Education Training Centre, Palpa, Nepal. I design materials, deliver sessions, and evaluate trainee teachers’ performance as per the guidelines of the Government of Nepal. I lead training on English language teaching, leadership and management, generic and multidisciplinary issues, and parenting. I also work as an on-call trainer for the British Council, Nepal and support as British Council School Ambassador and Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning trainer. I am also voluntarily engaged as Senior Vice-President of NELTA Lumbini and an editor for NELTA ELT Forum (2020-2021). I'm a Teaching Excellence and Achievement alumni. Furthremore, I have authored English textbooks (Grade 1-5), reference books like *Teaching English to Beginners*, *ELT Handbook*, and contributed to the different national and international publications including three research-based articles in the British Council publications. *The Recollections* and *Gharadekhi Parasamma*, the travelogues, are published. As a hobby, I write poems, stories, travelogues, and newspaper articles. I have presented papers at different conferences.

Before you read the success story, let’s ponder...

- What teaching techniques do you adopt when you teach your students how to write paragraphs on certain topics?
- Are you satisfied with the techniques that you have used to teach writing? Why or why not?

Background and context

As a teacher and teacher educator, I noticed that there were issues with how writing was taught in Nepali schools. I realised that teachers often showed writing samples to their students and expected them to output similar level of writing. However, many students resorted to memorisation or copying. This ruined their creativity and writing skills. I felt an urgent need to change the way how writing process is taught in schools.

Writing occupies a significant space in all curricula of school and university education. Talking about my students, evidences show that the students score high on predictable topics to write on but they cannot produce any sensible sentences on random topics. Unfortunately, the teachers also practice memorisation and regurgitate longer texts as they dictate the text to the students. Therefore, I decided to demonstrate some activities in the training sessions and motivate the teachers to engage their students...
in the processes. I practiced this intervention in two groups with 25 English language teachers each from Lumbini Province. I first prepared a note on becoming a writer, designed activities, delivered sessions, and got reflections from the teachers. Finally, it was reported that a good piece of writing entails language, content and organisation qualities, which are improved through a series of processes with careful progression. The teachers were engaged in the stages with a deliberation that they were developing fluent writing skills. Every expository writing needed to be well organised, full of ideas and thoughts, and expressed with required clarity and correctness, which were identified in the final drafts of the participants.

Let's answer this question.

- What was Gopal's intervention in a teacher training session?

Steps that I followed

At first, I presented a note on becoming a writer: read, learn everything, set a deadline, create a book out of a book, don’t look away, have passion and patience, find writer’s company, write regularly, and publish. I explained all these strategies with examples of writers who were busy with diverse responsibilities. This made the teachers realise the value of writing.

Writing is best taught by engaging students through interactive stages like pre, during and after writing. Let’s look at these stages in more detail. First, I assigned some of the pre-writing tasks on exploring data and ideas through brainstorming. The teachers wrote the title in the middle of a page and jotted down random information/ideas in bubbles or clouds. Then, the Ishikawa diagram, or fishbone diagram which shows the causes of the effects, was used for clustering or branching the ideas gathered during brainstorming. After that, the teachers were encouraged to ask questions on a short note or message. For example, a meal: Who made it? Who was it for? What were the food items? What were the ingredients? Why was it made this much? What is the taste? And, freewriting, where the writers write without stopping a pen for five minutes, was practiced. These exercises helped the teachers gather data, thoughts and ideas for making the text complete with necessary information. I also provided some thought-provoking phrases and asked the teachers to chat with their colleagues via online Messenger. The virtual group work helped trigger the ideas and break the mental deadlock.

Secondly, the outlining began. The teachers got ample opportunity to identify and formulate thesis statements and topic sentences. The general format of the thesis statement, topic sentence and supportive details and evidence was provided.

Thirdly, the selection of vocabulary cues related to the connectives, the sentence starters, or phrases to indicate the facts and opinions were supplied. Sample of vocabulary cues for generalisation was: in general, as a rule, generally, all, on the whole, always, usually, frequently, rarely, seldom, never,
in most cases; vocabulary cues for specific details were: *to illustrate*, *for instance*, *as an illustration*, *in other words*, *let me illustrate*, *as proof*; and connectives were *because*, *and*, *although*, *therefore*, *however*, *but*, *etc*. The teachers were encouraged to use these vocabulary cues in their text.

Writing cannot be developed at one attempt. It demands revision and editing. Finally, I suggested to the teachers that they should examine their text in detail and consider the language, content and organisation. They were also provided with several questions to examine the text. Some questions were: *Are the paragraphs in the logical order?* *Is there any unnecessary information?* *Is any necessary information missing?* *Are there any parts that you can’t understand?* *Are a lot of the same words repeated?* *Can more precise words be used?* *Do the verbs agree with their subjects?* *Are the articles used correctly?* *Is the punctuation correct?* *Have all the words been spelled correctly?* Peer checking and peer comments helped a lot to locate the errors and improve immediately. I also asked them to check plagiarism via www.duplichecker.com.

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**Let's answer these questions.**

- What steps did Gopal follow to make teachers write some paragraphs on some topics?
- Do you think you can also use similar writing techniques as explained by Gopal while teaching writing to your students? Why or why not?

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**Signs of success**

As the teachers were engaged in several activities in exploring information or data through brainstorming, clustering, questioning, freewriting, and chatting, they got ample data to write a few long paragraphs. These activities also gave the insight to format the essay into different sub-titles: introduction, evolution and advancement, benefits, challenges, further attempts, etc.

As evidence, there were one page long paragraphs in the first draft whereas the revised essays had three-four paragraphs in a page, and it was after the support on how to outline the format of a paragraph. I found that teacher support after testing learners’ prior knowledge was important. I did not provide information first and asked them to write. I provided them the format of expanding ideas in longer text: outlining an essay including a thesis statement, topic sentences, supportive details, vocabulary cues; and engaged the teachers in practice. As they produced the first draft, I presented an editing checklist that included questions such as ‘Is there any missing or redundant information?’, ‘Are the same words repeated?’, ‘Are the ideas orderly presented throughout the paragraphs?’, and ‘Are the articles/prepositions/verb aspects properly used?’ These questions helped to locate possible corrections during peer check and feedback (Figure 2), and the next draft became more informative and improved.

This practice proved that writing demands some sort of planned and structured processes, and the text should be enriched with ample information or data intertwined with feelings or emotional beauty. As the teachers were guided through exploring data and weaving them in a healthy string, finally they realised that they could communicate fluently in a beautiful text.
Figure 1. Teachers chatting on given statements

Figure 2. First draft of the essay
ICT in ELT

ICT in ELT has widely fostered online learning with different courses using technological tools for faster, deeper, easier, and innovative learning. Use of ICT in ELT is the call for the ELT community worldwide. It has become a milestone in the field of English language teaching.

ICT has a great importance in ELT. Use of ICT in teaching is a new trend which helps the learners learn anything faster, deeper. A learner can learn anything of the world by sitting at home even inside his/her home. This type of learning is flexible, interesting, authentic, and lively. This helps to expand the horizon of knowledge of any individual. There is no fear of doing mistakes because it is based on self-learning and self-correction. Use of ICT has also decreased the burden of a teacher.

There are different web tools of ICT used in ELT. Using different web tools in ELT fascinated learners toward learning. Different web tools like Facebook, zoom, team, video conferencing, office, etc., are used to make classroom authentic, interesting.

Online learning has played a vital role in the teaching-learning activities of the students. It has fulfilled the demand of the present time. It has broadened the minds of students. Students can solve the problems of any subject within few seconds using online.

Figure 3. Final draft and peer feedback
Further plans

The practice of several activities at pre-, during-, and post-writing stages ensures improvement of writing skills. If learners are engaged in several activities, such as collecting data, organizing them in suitable clusters, digging them in-depth or details, coming up with ideas at the prewriting stage, they help writers to make the text cohesive and coherent. Likewise, outlining the text and including appropriate vocabulary cues are big challenges for ESL learners, and prompt support, practices, and feedback are major interventions to avoid this problem. Similarly, revision and editing questions made peer check more effective. Therefore, I have decided to continue improving my writing skills in the future too.

I have planned to start a Writer’s Net. This is a network of both experienced and novice writers who regularly contribute writing. I am thinking of creating an online platform where writers of any discipline irrespective of geography can become a member. The members meet virtually on specific dates and times. They will share texts written in the meeting. The participant members can interact with each other or comment on the texts. This platform is also a forum for learning and improving writing. The members can decide to share novel ideas or their creative writings or book reviews etc. The members will decide whether to publish or not to publish. This will certainly encourage writing, extend readership, establish writers’ networks, and learn from each other.

Conclusion

For a passionate writer, writing is rewarding. Writing definitely requires careful efforts which can be painful for beginners, but regular practice ensures fluency and clarity in writing. When someone acquires knowledge on the components of writing, for example, language, content, format, they start writing longer expository texts or creative writing. Moreover, writing makes a writer an extensive reader who aspires to an unsatisfying appetite for knowledge, beauty and truth. Once the writing journey starts with spelling and grammar rules, it grows to aesthetic and spiritual values.
My Success Story of Creative Writing

- Dipak Prasad Mishra
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Before we read Dipak’s success story, answer the following questions.

- What is special about Dipak’s birthplace?
- How far was Dipak’s school?
- Apart from his studies, what other responsibilities did Dipak have?

I grew up in the far western part of Nepal its panoramic views of the Himalayas. early in the morning, beautiful sun rays wake me up and I can directly see the sparkling Api Himalaya from my window.

Figure 1. The place where I grew up

I learned how to read and write at home, my mother and father taught me basic skills as there were no schools in the vicinity. My school was seven kilometers away from my home; therefore, it was a really adventurous walk to reach school every day. I was enrolled in class two when I was five years old. I studied grade one at home where I learned whatever I was supposed to learn at school. After one year, I enrolled in grade two where I happened to see twenty-five students in one class. The teachers assisted me in writing words and sentences clearly. I have vivid experiences where I would read all the words loudly and other friends would repeat after me every time Urba sir used to pinpoint me to read in front of the class. Slowly and gradually, I became a confident reader but I was a little naughty and clever in each and every work. Every teacher encouraged me from the beginning to do rigorous study.
After grade five, my father enrolled me in another school where every parent had a dream to enroll their children. I was thrilled to see a new and exciting environment there. There were eighty students in one class. It was very difficult to get a seat in the front row of the class. I had to walk more than two hours in the morning to arrive at school. I used to sit in the last row. I strongly raised my voice if I did not get the lesson. So all the teachers used to focus on me. they frequently used to say, ‘Where is Mishra vai?’ Those incidents made me excel in academia. In this way, I got inspiration from every teacher, senior brother, sister, and parent. Eventually, I passed my school education from that reverent school.

Let’s answer the following questions about Dipak.

1. What was a hidden reality about Dipak?
2. What were Dipak’s first experiences?
3. What challenges did he face during his study in the city?
4. Why does Dipak think he was weak in English?

After SLC, my father decided to enroll me in one of the well-known schools in Kanchanpur, a city in the far-western region of Nepal. But it was quite an emotional moment for me to leave my sweet home for higher education because no one had gone to an urban area for higher education from my village. I was the first person who was leaving the village. I cannot describe in words how I felt when I left for Kanchanpur. All my kin and kiths emotionally bid me farewell and I was quite emotional. My father, uncle and I set out on a long journey after receiving ‘tika’ from my mother. We walked almost fifteen hours to reach the border of India. First time I stayed in a hotel and received a unique experience. Early in the morning, we bought tickets for ‘Banbasa’, another place in India. We got the first seat on the bus and that was the day when I first had travelled by bus. I remember my excitement and fear during the bus ride. We reached our destination after a long drive. When we crossed the border, it was already dark. After that, we headed to Mahendranagar and stayed at one of the relative’s houses.

The next day, I appeared for the entrance exam and then commenced to search for a room. I got the result of the entrance exam and got selected among the forty candidates. Then, I had to stay alone; it was quite difficult for me in the initial days. All of my friends had sound English because they were from institutional schools. But I was the only one who was weak in English because I did not get appropriate school exposure. I used to learn all summaries by heart without getting their meaning because I could not understand the contents taught in school. later I rigorously studied all subjects and my English teacher praised me and they searched for a job for me after the twelve examinations. I commenced my teaching career at the age of sixteen. There is one saying 'to teach is to learn twice'.I followed the same in order to convince my students. I used to narrate stories of ghosts and gods in the classroom which were told by my grandmother. Students used to be happy in my class though I was not familiar with teaching approaches and methods.
I attended morning classes at college and I used to teach in one of the renowned schools in the afternoon as a full-time teacher. I still remember it was quite difficult for me to manage all the schedules and in the evening I had to cook for myself. Similarly, I had to submit an assignment within the deadline and prepare for the next day class. Fortunately, I managed to pass my bachelor's degree. I aspired to earn a master's degree from the central campus of Tribhuwan University so I resigned from the job and went to Kathmandu for higher education. I lived in Kirtipur where I happened to see an academic environment even in a tea shop. Luckily I got a chance to study in the semester system. We were the first batch of the semester.

It was entirely new for me as I was not introduced earlier. I studied teaching methods, phonetics and phonology, second language acquisition and teacher professional development. These all subjects have expanded the horizon of knowledge and pursued it for two years.

Furthermore, I was in search of a job after the completion of the fourth semester. Fortunately, I got an opportunity to teach in one of the best schools where I implemented the knowledge I learned. I always preferred to practice learner-centered techniques like presentation, group work, peer work and focused group discussion and so on in class so every student was delighted with my facilitating styles. Later, I planned to pursue a Master's in Philosophy from Kathmandu University. I had a hectic schedule from morning to late afternoon. I used to attend classes in the late evening which gave me a great experience.

Let’s find an answer to these questions.
- Why did Dipak go to Kathmandu?
- How did he get a chance to teach at a college?
- What is Dipak’s passion?
- How does he plan to help his students?
Enhancement approach and teachers’ success stories

Figure 2. A student engaged in creative writing

Figure 3. Communicating the importance of e-learning to students
As a teacher, I always wanted to motivate my students to learn better and achieve higher. With a view to motivating students to write, I wanted to do something different that inspired students to write and have fun at the same time. I conducted a creative writing workshop for our secondary level (class ten) students. In the workshop, they were motivated to write their own stories. The main objective of this creative writing project was to motivate students to develop stories of their own world. I conducted a three-day creative writing workshop in collaboration with the British Council. I selected top ten stories and one of the best colleges was awarded with a certificate and prize. Similarly, the top three students got scholarships for ‘A’ level education and higher study. I am in the process of publishing the top ten stories in a story book.

My students write reflective journals and they share it in the classroom the next day. These are also published in local newspapers. I motivate my students to write on any topic. And they also get inspired to comment critically on their colleagues’ writing. I ask them to deliver speeches in the classroom and in the school assembly. They get rewarded from the principal every Sunday. Furthermore, the students use technology in my class in order to make the teaching learning process more meaningful. We use Microsoft Teams for our classes and the students learned to collaborate their work virtually. I organised some forums for presentations in order to evaluate students performance. The Students presented on it and I provided feedback and suggestions. Moreover, the Students gained confidence presenting their topics in any seminars or conferences, and they are able to write short stories on any topic. I plan to make my students independent in the days to come. I will also make our students attend national and international seminars and conferences.

**Conclusion**

My student life has been full of ups and downs. However, I have learned a lot from my journey. I have learned that students should have determination and desire for learning, and they should be creative. As a teacher now, I am keen to improve students' creativity and my professional development. I am always hungry to learn new ideas from each and every one. As William Wordsworth said in his poem 'stopping by woods on a snowy evening,' 'And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep. I have to keep on doing many things as a teacher.
The Success Story of Using Focused Free Writing for Promoting Critical Thinking

- Sabreena Ahmed
  (jibon2000@hotmail.com, sabreena.a@bracu.ac.bd)

Introduction

I serve as an Assistant Professor at the Department of English and Humanities, Brac School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Brac University. I have completed my Ph.D. on using higher-order thinking tasks in English composition classrooms, from Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University, Malaysia. My research interests are 21st-century skills, sociolinguistics, critical thinking in writing, and teaching English as an international language. I look forward to academic collaborations within the country and abroad to develop myself as a scholar.

Background and context

I have noticed that students in English composition courses struggle with generating ideas at the prewriting stage. That is why I often think about finding a way to make the prewriting stage interesting for the students so that their writers’ block does not hinder their writing.

In 2016, I started my Ph.D. in International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM). As I was looking for possible topics of my research, I found that “Focused Freewriting” is a technique that is a less researched area of composition studies in ESOL contexts. Even though it was not the final topic of my Ph.D., I decided to explore the technique of teaching writing among international students of IIUM.

Let's answer these questions.
- How do you teach writing to your students?
- Do you follow any specific strategy to teach writing?

Steps that I followed

Focused freewriting is a more acceptable form of freewriting in which a person writes on a given topic non-stop for 10 to 15 minutes (Fawcett, 2018). This way of writing helps the writer in thinking about that topic and generating ideas related to that.

As a first step, I contacted a friend who worked at the Centre for Languages and Pre-University Academic Development (CELPAD), IIUM. I asked her to allow me to conduct my study with her students which required three of her regular classes. She agreed and both she and I began our classes
that included focused freewriting tasks under the pre-writing stage of writing. The students belonged to level 4 proficiency in English (according to the IELTS band score). The level of the students was measured by CELPAD at the beginning of their joining the four language skills as part of their requirement for entering their main departments of study. These focused freewriting sessions were delivered for three weeks.

In session one, we showed two images, out of which students chose only one to write about.

![First image of session one](image)

*Figure 1. First image of session one*
Figure 2. The second image of session one

The students looked at the first picture and wrote about whatever they could think of non-stop for ten minutes. Then we opened the floor for discussion where the students read their writing aloud and discussed the salient ideas that emerged. After the discussion, we asked them to focus on only one idea that seemed prominent in their focused free writing and develop an argumentative essay on that topic.

On the second day, we showed the following series of images to the students, and they asked to continue the same routine of ten minutes of focussed free writing, followed by an argumentative essay on a selected theme they have come up with.
Figure 3. The first image of day two

Figure 4. The second image of day two
The third session was a bit different as we showed them an eight-minute short film titled “Room 8”, made by James W. Griffiths and produced by the Independent Films Gravity Production. This movie, a winner of the British Academy of Films and Television Awards (BAFTA) 2014, was one of the short films of the Bombay Sapphire Imagination series 2013. The film is set in a Russian prison where a prisoner, with his hands tied behind their back, is seen being pushed by two soldiers as they walked ahead. After a while, the prisoner enters a prison cell where a man is sitting at a table and reading a book by the only window in the room. The room has a box placed on the only bed on one side of the room. The prisoner looks at the box and touches it. The other man forbids him to do that. However, out of curiosity, he opens it and realises that the box is the tiny prison cell that both of them are in. He then finds out that whenever he opens its lid and puts his pointer finger in, the ceiling of his prison cell opens up and a hand appears, just like his. He excitedly keeps the box on the floor and asks the other man to open the lid for him. He puts a stool at the corner of the prison cell, and when the other man opens the lid of the box, the ceiling of the room is opened in the same way. The prisoner happily jumps over the wall to have his freedom. Unfortunately, however, a gigantic hand comes from behind and puts him into the small matchbox. The camera pans to the same prison cell viewers saw a while ago, and shows “the other man” putting the matchbox into a drawer of the reading table, which is full of matchboxes trembling; as if the prisoners trapped in them are trying to get out. The students wrote about whatever ideas they thought of in the focused freewriting session and we discussed them together.
Let’s answer these questions.

- What prompted Sabreena to focus on “Focused Freewriting”?
- How did Sabreena introduce the changes in the writing process?
- What role did she play as a teacher during focused freewriting sessions?

Signs of success

Focused Freewriting Sessions

The ideas generated by students in the focused freewriting sessions were analysed with Facione’s Core Critical Thinking Skills (2015) Framework (please see Appendix A).

For writing prompts of session one, the students came up with ideas as the handicapped women is “optimistic”, “everyone deserves happiness” and “the light of hope in the window”. For the image on the two boys, the students wrote “skin colours don’t matter in friendship”, “we should avoid racism”. In session two, the ideas that they wrote were “humanity”, “stop war”, “world is a better place without war”. The video on the third day made the students think of the ideas “freedom”, “Renaissance”, “we should be happy with what we have”, “too much curiosity is not good”. These ideas showed how then either interpreted, analysed, evaluated or explained each of the writing prompts and displayed critical thinking.

It was also observed that the students’ length of the focused freewriting paragraphs increased from the first session to the third session which corresponded with Herder and Clement’s (2012) study. The practice of focused freewriting helped them to get rid of writers’ block and write more about the writing prompts.

Essay writing sessions

The students’ essays were analysed with the “Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric HCTSR” by Facione and Facione (2014), (please see Appendix B). In the case of the first and second essays, the majority of the students scored either 2 or 3 in that refer to “Unacceptable and “Acceptable” level of Critical thinking respectively. However, in the third essay on a war theme, most of them scored 4 which denotes “strong” critical thinking skills (Facione & Facione 2014). The analysis showed that the practice of refining a single idea from focused freewriting helped the students in putting their critical thinking in the final essays. Two of the students did not show much improvement in scores and wrote memorised essays for the third session which confirms their dependence on rote learning.

Let’s answer the question.

- What signs or evidence of success did she notice?
Further plan

I apply focused free writing practice not only in composition courses but also in other courses that I teach. Especially, dissertation students may be benefitted by practising focused freewriting on a particular topic to confirm their interest in research prior to embarking on research journey.

Let’s answer the question.

- What is her plan regarding focused freewriting?

Conclusion

Promoting critical thinking through focused freewriting may not be discerned by looking at only one or two sessions. As teachers, we must practice this for a long period of time within a course to finally see the positive outcomes. The technique of making students write encourages critical thinking not only in an English composition class but also in other fields of education.

*The images used in this paper are from Google images collected in 2016.

References


## Appendix 1

### Facione’s Core Critical Thinking Skills

<p>| Skill       | Experts Consensus Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Subskill                           |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interpretation | &quot;To comprehend and express the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or criteria.&quot;                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Analysis     | “To identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions or other forms of representation intended to express belief, judgment, experiences, reasons, information, or opinions.&quot;                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Inference    | “To identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information and to reduce the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation”.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhancement approach and teachers' success stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>&quot;To assess the credibility of statements or other representations that are accounts or descriptions of a person’s perceptions, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intended inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation.&quot;</th>
<th>Assess the credibility of claims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>&quot;To state and to justify that reasoning in terms of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, and contextual considerations upon which one’s results were based; and to present one’s reasoning in the form of cogent arguments.&quot;</td>
<td>State results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Regulation</td>
<td>&quot;Self-consciously to monitor one’s cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis, questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one’s reasoning or one’s results.&quot;</td>
<td>Self-monitor Self-correct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Explanation**

- **Assessment:** To assess the credibility of statements or other representations that are accounts or descriptions of a person’s perceptions, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess the logical strength of the actual or intended inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation.

- **Evaluating:** Assess the quality of arguments that were made using inductive or deductive reasoning.

- **Explanation:** To state and to justify that reasoning in terms of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, and contextual considerations upon which one’s results were based; and to present one’s reasoning in the form of cogent arguments.

- **Self-Regulation:** Self-consciously to monitor one’s cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results educed, particularly by applying skills in analysis, questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting either one’s reasoning or one’s results.
Appendix 2

The Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric HCTSR

Strong 4: **Consistently does all or almost all of the following:**

- Accurately interprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Identifies the most important arguments (reasons and claims) pros and cons.
- Thoughtfully analyses and evaluates major alternative points of view.
- Draws warranted, judicious, non-fallacious conclusions.
- Justifies key results and procedures, explains assumptions and reasons.
- Fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons lead.

Acceptable 3: **Does most or many of the following:**

- Accurately interprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Identifies relevant arguments (reasons and claims) pros and cons.
- Offers analyses and evaluations of obvious alternative points of view.
- Draws warranted, non-fallacious conclusions.
- Justifies some results and procedures, explains reasons.
- Fair-mindedly follows where evidence and reasons lead.

Unacceptable 2: **Does most or many of the following:**

- Misinterprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions, etc.
- Fails to identify strong, relevant counter-arguments.
- Ignores or superficially evaluates obvious alternative points of view.
- Draws unwarranted or fallacious conclusions.
- Justifies a few results or procedures, seldom explains reasons.
- Regardless of the evidence or reasons, maintains or defends views based on the self-interest or preconceptions.

Significantly Weak 1: **Consistently does all or almost all of the following**

- Offers biased interpretations of evidence, statements, graphics, questions, information, or the points of view of others.
Fails to identify or hastily dismiss strong, relevant counter-arguments.

Ignores or superficially evaluates obvious alternative points of view.

Argues using fallacious or irrelevant reasons, and unwarranted claims.

Does not justify results or procedures, nor explain reasons.

Regardless of the evidence or reasons, maintains or defends views based on self-interest or preconceptions.

Exhibits close-mindedness or hostility to reason.
Teaching Writing Online: Incorporating the 4C’s of 21st-century Skills in a Tertiary Level Writing Class

- Nusrat Gulzar
(ngulzar@du.ac.bd)

Introduction

I have been working as an English language teacher since 2015. My first job was in the Department of English and Humanities at The University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, where, besides teaching Applied Linguistics courses, I supervised postgraduate theses and was an editorial board member of the student magazine Muse. The following year, I joined my current workplace, the University of Dhaka. Since then, I have been teaching ELT and Applied Linguistics courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate level at the Department of English.

In May 2020, I led online development workshops for the faculty members of my department on using ICT tools to teach online. About my current research work, I am collaborating with one of my department colleagues on a research paper which investigates public university teachers' experiences of Emergency Remote Teaching. I am also collaborating on a project on developing an online resource hub for primary teachers of English in Bangladesh which is funded by the A.S.Hornby Educational Trust.

I presented papers at international conferences mainly on ICT integration in teacher education, engaged pedagogy, use of e-content and mentoring. I co-authored a chapter on e-portfolio implementation research, issues and strategies with Dr. Helen Barrett from the University of Alaska, USA, which was later published in Steve Mann and Steve Walsh’s The Routledge Handbook of Language Teacher Education in 2019.

Before you read Nusrat’s success story, answer these questions.

- How do you incorporate technology for teaching writing skills?
- What websites or apps do you use for teaching writing?

Background and context

This paper focuses on the use of online classroom teaching or instructional strategies to help promote the practice of the 4Cs of 21st-century skills. Emphasis will be given on the practicalities and usefulness of a few simple digital tools in fostering student interaction in online writing classes.

I have been teaching and researching Academic Writing since 2015. Over the years, I have developed
confidence in utilising technology and different student-led techniques in my classes. Additionally, since 2018, I have been researching the affordances of using ICT tools in teaching EAP. My technological-pedagogical knowledge as well as my classroom teaching experiences have shaped my understanding as a practitioner. I not only learned to introduce innovative techniques in my classes but also tackled teaching challenges with resilience and determination.

In early 2020, we were forced to shift our regular face-to-face teaching to online mode due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In November that year, I conducted my first online writing class with first-year students of the department. Despite having years of experience in teaching writing using technology, preparing for my first online lecture was not all easy for me mainly because I was nervous and anxious about developing sound online communication with my learners. As a teacher who advocates for a student-led approach to teaching, I hoped to encourage students to practise writing essays online as well as involve them in meaningful interactions. However, I was not sure about the strategies I needed to adopt in my lessons. I remained doubtful about my skills for maintaining good virtual communication with my students. While preparing for my online class, I realized that I needed answers to the following questions:

- *Will it be challenging to maintain communication with my students?*
- *Will they participate in the sessions? If not, then what?*
- *Can I conduct pair work/ peer feedback sessions online?*
- *Can I make my classes interactive?*
- *How can I encourage them to be active and regular?*
- *How can I encourage them to practice writing remotely?*
- *What about electronic feedback? Will that be enough for them to understand their progress/ improvement?*

For about two weeks, I contemplated my new role as an online teacher. To understand the demands of online teaching, I explored useful strategies related to inclusive learning opportunities, providing meaningful feedback, modification of textbook content to fulfill online class requirements (conversion to pdf copy, preparing worksheets, selection of online materials to promote better understanding). I pondered over the fact that for effective and sustained learning, the aspect of maximizing student interaction in the classroom cannot be compromised or overlooked. As we used the soft version of the textbook, most students disapproved of the idea of reading lesson contents from the screen. They often felt demotivated to respond to questions and complete tasks mainly because they felt isolated at times. As a result, some were irregular in class, some participated actively while a few of them found it challenging to keep track of their submitted or pending work. For them, getting adequate chances for collaboration and interaction during lessons was a very significant factor without which, learning and practice became difficult.
I realised my students were not enjoying my lessons and I was drifting away from my teaching goals. I reflected on my classes each time. Eventually, I worked out a plan to support and enrich their learning experience. I was aware of the impact of virtual interactions, the sense of invisibility in classes or other words, the absence of body language and gestures in online classes. I continued investing my time in understanding the principles of computer-mediated writing instructions and therefore, rethinking my teaching style and approach to meet the expectations of my students. My realisation was that students need a collaborative environment to perform well in writing.

Let’s answer the questions.

- What prompted Nusrat to change her online teaching style?
- What change did she introduce to her teaching?

**Rationale**

Writing revolves around the idea of investing time, thinking and effort in a systematic and effective manner to attain proficiency. Students gradually develop knowledge about the audience, points of view and reflective thinking as they continue practising writing in a guided environment. The process approach, which is thought to be the most effective method to teach writing in the second language, requires learners to engage in sophisticated as well as interlinked stages to produce final writings. As opposed to the product approach, the emphasis here is mainly on the learning process itself rather than the finished product. Teachers, therefore, have to be aware of several key aspects related to material selection, feedback delivery, content and student progress. They need to assist students in understanding lesson content as well as encourage them to carry out peer and group discussions, provide feedback on their drafts and check homework together and independently. The mentioned activities are considered to be essential in developing a sense of authorship and writing confidence among learners.

In the case of online learning and teaching, the scenario can be quite different. Especially, when our everyday teaching and learning practices involve efficient and timely use of technology, it remains important for teachers to think of the possibilities that multimedia tools and digital applications have to offer in teaching writing skills. Because, in any online writing environment, an extensive amount of written exchanges takes place among students and teachers for the sake of maintaining communication (Warnock, 2009). They are always involved in texting, emailing, commenting and all of these tasks involve writing in English. Many may find it hard to communicate in an essentially text-based environment (Warnock, 2009). As a result, students often do not feel interested in communicating with peers or even with their teachers during online discussions and lesson practice. They stay silent or ‘muted’ and keep their cameras turned off due to a sense of inhibition or self-awareness of their written English and online communication skills (ibid.). The commitment to read, respond and write simultaneously can be challenging for many students if they are not offered guidance.
While teachers may concentrate on learner performance and their abilities to understand and produce written texts, the aspect of learner-learner interaction often remains overlooked or ignored. Swan (2002) highlights the value of online ‘discussions’, which, according to him, is more equitable and democratic than traditional classroom discussions. Furthermore, to familiarise students and make them well equipped with the key skills of the 21st-century (Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking and Creativity), it is important to emphasise the value of student interaction and learner engagement in language teaching. These four competencies are essential for preparing students for the future. Students who are competent in these core skills are prepared for handling complex challenges in the workplace and beyond in this twenty-first century and those who are not.

After thoroughly analyzing my observations, class lecture recordings and reflective journal entries, I planned to convert textbook activities to online tasks and utilise the affordances of a few simple digital tools to help students practice the four C's in a virtual environment. The tasks were mainly related to-identifying thesis statements, using the funnel approach, matching transitional words, writing topic sentences, underlining concluding statements and keywords. I assumed that if students practice the four C's effectively through the given online tasks (i.e. writing thesis statements or doing brainstorming on an essay topic), the sessions will turn out to be interactive and engaging. I, therefore, decided to gradually introduce the following digital tools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Competencies (Four C's)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Padlet</td>
<td>To encourage class participation (i.e. group work), discussion, peer feedback and reflection</td>
<td>Critical thinking, communication and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamboard</td>
<td>To assist in collaborative brainstorming</td>
<td>Creativity, critical thinking and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocaroo</td>
<td>To deliver audio feedback and establish one to one contact</td>
<td>Communication and critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoom breakout rooms</td>
<td>To negotiate meaning and ideas with one another.</td>
<td>Critical thinking, collaboration and communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Tools used in writing class*
Steps I followed

Aims

I was determined to carry out my intervention of promoting the practice of the four C’s in writing classes. My aims were the following:

- To ease the transition from offline learning to online learning
- To make writing lessons interactive, meaningful and most importantly, engaging.
- To keep students motivated and allow them to take charge of their learning.
- To create a positive impression about peer and teacher electronic feedback.

Using Padlet for individual work and peer feedback

At first, I decided to introduce one tool at a time and gradually incorporate that into regular classroom activities. I intended to start off with a tool that is easier to use and navigate. I found Padlet to be helpful in documenting and collating information on virtual walls. With the provision of using multimedia, Padlet allows for effective collaboration among students. To familiarise my students with Padlet, I posted a short 15-minute recording on how to post on Padlet. The next week, I shared a link to a Padlet wall on Google Classroom and asked them to visit the link for textbook activities that day. They were required to do brainstorming to find out supporting details for body paragraphs, finding out topic sentences and keywords from an essay. Students visited the Padlet wall and posted their answers on the wall. Most students could post their work on the wall, except a few who faced trouble signing in with their accounts due to network issues. The next week, students read out their classmates’ thesis statements (posted as homework) on Padlet and left constructive comments that, in turn, helped each one of them reflect on their written sentences. During the synchronous sessions, they were found to be very open to peer feedback. By practising textbook activities interactively using Padlet, students developed their communication or interpersonal skills, critical thinking skills and creativity.
Google Jamboard for brainstorming tasks

To boost their confidence and motivation in practising the four C’s while accomplishing the writing tasks, I decided to introduce another useful tool called Jamboard. Students’ positive responses from the last two week’s practice encouraged me to use Jamboard for group and peer work for the draft stage. While the students were learning how to write Cause and Effect essays, I opened a new assignment for them on Google Classroom on ‘brainstorming using dialogues and pictures’. The task was adopted from the textbook and students were informed about the aim of using this new tool for brainstorming. Working in Jamboard helped students become efficient in incorporating media and interesting dialogues in their Jams. They created beautiful Jams with colourful pictures and texts; the experience allowed them to use written English as well as images in creative ways.
Vocaroo for oral feedback delivery on tasks

Finally, to help students value the feedback they receive from their teachers, I attempted to deliver short audio feedback through Vocaroo on their draft essays which was also well received by the students. Vocaroo is a simple tool used for providing verbal feedback. My students loved to hear their teacher's voice and many of them commented that it boosted their confidence and that they could develop a strong connection with their teacher through such type of communication.

Zoom breakout rooms for collaborative discussion and group tasks

Another very interesting technique that I adopted to promote student thinking and collaboration is using breakout rooms for peer feedback and group discussion. I used this feature in Zoom frequently with my students while completing the textbook activities. Students liked the idea of meeting and conversing with their classmates online and completing tasks together. One of the tasks was writing a topic sentence based on the given supporting details. Students negotiated their understanding and posted their answers on Padlet simultaneously. This task enabled them to practice all four C's effectively during synchronous sessions.

Final stage: Collecting Student reflections

To gauge student satisfaction, I asked them to write a short reflection. A short questionnaire, consisting of several open and close-ended questions, was administered when I was done with the ninety percent of the course syllabus. The key purpose was to introduce the idea of reflective writing and self-evaluation to them and to collect their feedback on my use of different tools in teaching writing.
Let’s answer the questions:
- How many steps did Nusrat take to solve the problem?
- Why did Nusrat use several tools?

Signs of success

The intervention successfully helped students to become more interactive and autonomous. After the first few classes, certain changes were witnessed. Most students became regular in class, participated in activities and raised questions during the class sessions. They viewed peer and teacher feedback positively and looked forward to virtual conversations (in breakout rooms) on writing tasks. Many of them voluntarily commented on their experiences of participating in collaborative and individual tasks. In their opinion, the opportunities encouraged them to 'unmute' themselves and 'speak' and 'participate' in activities or oral discussions. They frequently used the chat feature of Zoom to answer or ask questions and leave comments.

Overall, the students became much more spontaneous, pragmatic and motivated to undertake any tasks that involved multimedia. They also learned to evaluate their learning performance and were very eager to get feedback on their essay drafts. Most of them reacted positively towards constructive feedback they received from their teacher and classmates through Padlet or Google Docs. Besides learning to accept constructive comments from peers, most students learned how to deliver peer comments or suggestions effectively. Most importantly, students grew as confident individuals who developed essential skills such as nurturing their authorial identities through trial and error, practice, revision and production. Interestingly, they completed all tasks including a short project with creativity and enthusiasm. Surprisingly enough, one of them sent me a voice-recorded message to inform me about her experience of attending interactive classes online, and many others requested more chances to participate in breakout room tasks. The instances or signs of their writing development and their overall satisfaction regarding the online classes made me feel happier about my online teaching skills.

Let’s answer the questions:
- What signs or evidence of success did Nusrat notice?
- What does she want to do in the future?

Further plans/ implications

From my success story, it is quite evident that the core competencies can be supported by regular classroom activities and tasks. Such attempts can also promote interaction in online classes which is a key factor in developing writing proficiency. Moreover, the following implications can be made based on the above story:
Teaching writing online has to be linked with pedagogical implications.

The practice of the core competencies can be encouraged through meaningful tasks, both online and offline.

Efficient use of technology increases the prospects of promoting a student-centred approach to teaching writing skills.

Available technology tools are adequate for promoting creative opportunities for practising L2 writing.

It should also be noted that the underlying purpose of any ICT-led intervention to teach writing should not be about overemphasizing the aspect of technology use. Rather the focus must be on researching effective strategies that encourage practising the four C's effectively, through the incorporation of digital tools. It is equally important to shed light on the aspect of the skills teachers need to develop in order to go forward with such new interventions. For example, engaging in continuous professional development may help teachers gain insight into the emerging trends and practices on effective utilisation of technology to support the practice of four C's in language classrooms.

My plan is to work on the positive outcomes I received from my intervention. When the world will be back to normal and when educational institutions will resume their regular teaching activities, I believe there will still be more scope for implementing technology tools in teaching Academic English. Therefore, I plan to introduce a student writing blog where the department students will contribute their best pieces of writing. This opportunity will help them develop a sense of audience, improve authorship skills and help them become more self-directed individuals. What is more, such an initiative will support students’ development as confident writers with strong competencies in navigating technology tools.

Conclusion

Teaching writing online is a recent phenomenon. Teachers and students are still learning to understand the intricacies of digital technology and their affordance in supporting the development of L2 writing. However, it is undeniable that interaction remains a key aspect in online learning, especially during the time of the pandemic when each of us is struggling to cope with the world despite all odds. We need to concentrate on strategies that encourage students to participate in online tasks. After all, writing is best practised when there is sound communication between students and teachers and when they can exchange ideas through collaboration.

References


Promoting Gen Z's Wellbeing in the English Language Classroom

- Geeta Bhattarai
(geeta.bhattarai88@gmail.com)

Introduction

Being in the field of English language teaching for more than a decade, I love to interact with students by establishing a good rapport with them and their parents as well as bringing new techniques and strategies to the classroom. Currently, I am an English Language Arts Facilitator at Ullens School, Lalitpur. I am also pursuing MPhil in English Language Education at Kathmandu University. My professional memberships include NELTA, TESOL, IATEFL and Toastmasters International. I have presented papers on Teaching writing, Teaching listening, Teacher and student wellbeing, Impacts of social media on Gen Z using energisers in classroom teaching, and The importance of infographics in English language teaching in different national and international conferences. My interests include research and publication related to language teaching, learner autonomy and teaching post-millennials. Moreover, I have written course books on social studies and some articles based on research done in the field of ELT.

Before you read Geeta's story, answer the following questions.

- Have you ever struggled to teach the current generation who are more into technology? Why or why not?
- Have you ever used any noble approaches to teach the learners of the current generation who are more into technology? If yes, what type of strategies have you used? If not, explain why you have not used any noble approaches yet.

Background and context

It has been more than a decade since I have been engaged in English language teaching. I began teaching right after my School Leaving Certificate (SLC). However, the zeal for teaching was within me from my childhood when I role-played a teacher with my siblings and did caricature of my teachers. I always wanted to become a teacher. To pursue my dream, I completed my Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in English Language Teaching. On the one hand, I was getting the educational qualifications and on the other hand, teaching experience was helping me to grow as a teacher. While I was still getting my qualifications in English Language Teaching (ELT), I worked in different schools. The journey of teaching from a school in Butwal to schools in Kathmandu gave me opportunities to learn
and implement a variety of teaching techniques and understand the culture, goals, and interests of the students. While teaching in some of the schools of Kathmandu, I found that the students focused more on extra-curricular activities than on their studies. The generation that is being talked about in this story has a different perspective than my generation. It piqued my interest, and I began to research on their generation.

Generation Z or iGen as they are called are born in the age of technology. They are also famous for the term Post Millennials as they are believed to be born after millennials. Lancaster and Stillman (2002) in Reilly (2012) has specified this generation to be born after 2000 till the present, and Patel (2017) has defined Generation Z as the people born between the late 90s to 2010. So, basically, they are the individuals born at the beginning of the 21st century. As they were born and grew up in the era of technology, they are characterised as tech-savvy. They are also known for multi-tasking and are considered to be social and speedy.

When it comes to learning, Generation Z prefer learning by doing, group or pair work, experiments, visuals, etc. They have a very short attention span, therefore, they find difficulty in listening to the instruction or the lecture for a long time. Gathering all this knowledge and collecting information about Gen Z helped me understand them. This led me to understand how their well-being was affected and was leading to the failure of their development at the growing stage. I was genuinely concerned about my students because their challenges were different than mine and I felt that they needed a proper guidance. So, I started focusing on the four aspects of wellbeing: physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing of my students. After focusing on their wellbeing, I felt that my students were more interested in the class, showed active participation, maintained good relationships with me and their friends, and most importantly, showed signs of success in language learning.

**Steps that I followed**

To promote the four aspects of student wellbeing, I first started studying and understanding them. My knowledge helped me understand my students and their needs. I learned that physical wellbeing is not just the absence of diseases but having a balanced state of mind, body and spirit. Physical wellbeing takes a vital role to affect mental wellbeing. So, to promote physical well-being, students were asked to limit their screen time, and asynchronous classes were more focused. Twenty minutes of break time in between the synchronous classes was provided to the students wherein they could relax and rest their eyes. During the class, they were given hands-on activities, quick writes, etc. I would give the activities that would help them to get connected with nature because I believe spending time in nature helps to maintain our physical wellbeing which indirectly boosts mental wellbeing.

Another aspect of wellbeing is mental wellbeing focused on coping with stress and learning efficiently. To have increased effort and persistence, better enjoyment and interest, proactive responses to mistakes and disappointments and higher academic achievement, autonomous and positive motivation were focused in the classroom because negative motivation lead to high risk for experiencing mental health
difficulties, lack of self-regulation which leads to poor academic performance. So, I started focusing on decision making, active participation and confidence building of the students. Moreover, I made the students share their problems and experiences for which they were asked to write about their experiences, discuss and debate on the things that were affecting their mental health.

Social wellbeing was the next aspect I focus on. It emphasised maintaining social responsibility and keeping good relations with others. In other words, it promoted positive state of mind in students in terms of building relationships with their classmates. As a teacher, I played a great role to value the students’ social wellbeing by educating them on netiquettes – they learned how to behave and be aware of the situations while taking the classes synchronously and asynchronously. They also learned to deal with their classmates by speaking in a friendly manner.

Emotional wellbeing is connected with one’s emotions. It reflects the state of managing feelings and expressions. My students of Gen Z are prone to stress and anxiety. So, to alleviate their anxiety and frustration, I focused more on their self-esteem and self-respect. I tried to assure that everyone in the class values each other’s perspectives. When engaging in group work, presentations and project work with their friends, they learned to understand their friends’ emotional state.

Let's answer this question.

- What did Geeta do to promote learner's mental wellbeing?

Signs of success

As a teacher, I could see some signs of success through the projects, assignments and activities focusing on all the aforementioned aspects of wellbeing. Starting with one of the signs of success in maintaining physical wellbeing, students were asked to prepare a project for World Environment Day focusing on recycling, reuse, reduce and plantation. Instead of writing a paragraph or an essay or reading news and articles, they were asked to spend some time in nature and create something. All the students did a marvellous job but I would be sharing my favourites here. Student A as shown in figure 1 created a planter using a plastic bottle. He also gave a complete procedure of reusing when sharing this. Student B shared that she along with her family had been saving tissue boxes, cereal boxes, chips packets, etc. for a couple of months so that they would give all the stuff to a company that recycles the items and makes new things out of it. This made them develop a good connection with their parents and most importantly being aware of the environment by accepting the concept of sustainable development.
Enhancement approach and teachers' success stories

Figure 1. Student A reused a bottle into container/planter

Figure 2. Student B collects empty boxes and gives to the company that recycles
In addition, I frequently gave my students choices with classroom activities. Since my focus was to enhance their decision-making skill and boost their confidence, I gave them two or three tasks and asked them to do any one of them. For example, I gave them the assignment to prepare a dream book where they had to explain their dreams. So, they were given choices to either draw images, describe the dream images or do a combination of both. This gave them a chance to showcase their skills which they had honed up. Similarly, to enhance their creative writing skill, they were asked to develop a short story or create a poem about the future of the world. Some reflected the perfect world whereas some expressed the terrible world. I gave such topics so that as a teacher it could help me understand my students’ mental state and their understanding. Figure 3 is one of the examples of the poem that my student created. Hence, this is how their mental wellbeing was promoted in my class.

![Figure 3. A poem created by my student that expresses her ‘Future of the World’.](image)

Similarly, I used energisers to make the class lively and interactive. Hangman, Skribbl.io, and Puzzles are some of the games that my students played before their class time. Sometimes, they interacted with each other by playing 'Would you rather…?', 'Guess the word from the picture', etc. They were engaged in storytelling and discussion of Deep Questions which ultimately built good relations with each other. One time, I played Pictionary with my students (See figure 4) where we had to guess an item that was drawn on a screen by a student. The student had actually drawn a geometry box but other students guessed that it was a house or a car, or a radio. On the one hand, it was fun and full of entertainment; and on the other hand, it was letting students socialise with each other.
Finally, to promote emotional wellbeing, I focused on engaging, connecting and motivating students. I did recordkeeping of the students and made portfolios of each student. Noting down the interest, activity, thoughts and perceptions helped me to look for the students who were dealing with emotional issues. Whether it was by organizing a one-on-one meeting or by having a meeting with students and with their parents or by calling them out, it was necessary to pay attention to their emotional needs. I asked my students to share and reflect on whatever was going on in their minds. I also encouraged them to take part in school clubs that would give them a chance to share their feelings and emotions. At the end of the day, I asked them to share on how they spent their day, how fruitful it was or to mention incidents that took place in any of the classes. I encouraged them to use emojis (as shown in figure 5) to express how they were feeling on a particular day.
Further plans

Promoting Gen Z students’ wellbeing is quite a challenging task for any teachers. On the one hand, you need to use new strategies and techniques so that the learning process becomes effective, and on the other hand, teachers need to give extra to maintain student wellbeing. I will say that teaching and learning, and promoting wellbeing should go simultaneously. Now I realise that I could only focus on some of the students but I could have focused on the well-being of all the students. For that, a teacher needs to conduct in-depth research, and second, she needs to come up with an excellent plan so that she could focus both on academics and students’ wellbeing. I have decided to take it further by doing a case study on promoting the wellbeing of Gen Z in English language class.

My interest in Gen Z students has always been encouraged me to research more about them and the new strategies that I could use in the class to make it more engaging and interactive. So, I have planned to complete my MPhil research on Teaching English to Gen Z. In addition to this, I prefer to write and share information about Gen Z. I am also writing an article related to the topic which I am planning to publish so that my colleagues, other teachers, educators and researchers could find it useful.

Let's answer these questions.

- Do you think in your own teaching and learning setting, you can use some of the ways that Geeta adopted to engage learners? If yes, which ones are they and why? If not, why do you think these ideas do not work for you and what could be the other ways to involve learners?

Conclusion

Being a digital native and remaining active in social media online sites, Generation Z is prone to stress and anxiety. According to Csobanka (2016), this generation is smart but lacks emotional intelligence. They do multi-tasking but have less concentration or memory power, they suffer from chronic sleep deprivation due to excessive use of the internet or social media. So, dealing with the kids of the new generation becomes a great challenge for the teachers who belong to the other generation and are taught by older generations. To achieve success in academics, a teacher of this generation needs to prioritise their four aspects of wellbeing as well. Especially when teaching remotely, a teacher needs to give more emphasis on maintaining their well-being then only the teachers could achieve success in enhancing Generation Z’s wellbeing. To sum up, it could definitely lead to overall development by balancing out the students’ progress academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

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Effects of Online Group Discussions on First Year EFL Undergraduate Learners' Academic Oral Presentations

- Zohur Ahmed
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Introduction

I am an educator and researcher. I have been working as an Assistant Professor of English at East West University, Bangladesh and have been teaching English in Bangladesh and India for the last 17 years. I teach English language courses to undergraduate students and ELT courses to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. I design language learning materials and develop language tests for English language learners of different proficiency levels. My other professional activities include supervising post-graduate dissertations, producing teacher training materials, conducting professional development workshops for teachers, mentoring, and giving training to English language teachers. I am curious about issues related to EFL/ESL teaching and study them through reading and research to contribute to publications. I have authored and published several articles in national and international journals. I have also co-edited the book English Studies in the Marketplace (2018). I read works on fiction, philosophy, and travel in my leisure time.

Before you read Zohur’s success story, answer the following question.

- How can we make the participants of an online classroom engaging?

Oral presentations are common in tertiary institutions throughout the world which are used to teach and evaluate students across all disciplines. After graduation, presentation skills are still used in job interviews as part of the selection process. Overall, presentation abilities, one of the aspects of communication skills, are essential for every tertiary-level student. Briefly, presentations are an integral component of many students' academic experience in higher education and their future profession (Tsang, 2020). Therefore, an essential soft skill that higher education students should learn before graduating is the capacity to present information and ideas publicly, effectively, and eloquently (Živković, 2014). However, oral presentation skills have been reported to be one of the major difficulties EFL undergraduate students face during their tertiary education (Mahfoodh, 2014). Particularly, EFL students have been reported to face a great deal of anxiety induced by academic oral presentations (Ka-kan-dee & Al-Shaibani, 2018; Kalra & Siribud, 2020; Tian, 2019; Toland et al., 2016).

While teaching a compulsory foundational language course titled Improving Oral Communication Skills to first-year undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic, I noticed that my students
suffered a great deal from a form of debilitating anxiety about their speaking performance. I also noticed that the anxiety was particularly acute for the two oral presentations that the freshers were required to complete to pass the course. In the usual face-to-face learning situations the students are usually provided with a teaching assistant and tutorial sessions to practice and sharpen their speaking skills. Students have been found to socialise with their peers and seniors and learn from them in the form of serendipitous and social learning in the normal pre-pandemic learning environments. However, these learning resources and opportunities were missing when online education was adopted because of the nationwide closure of all educational institutions in Bangladesh due to the pandemic. This prompted me to ponder and plan out learning activities to help a group of 28 Bangladeshi EFL students deal with their oral presentation anxiety.

Let’s answer the questions.
- What steps did Zohur follow to create online discussion groups?
- How did he ensure student participation?

Steps that I followed

I met my class twice a week, virtually, on Sundays and Tuesdays, from 01:30 -03:00 PM using Google Meet. According to the guidelines of the university, I used Google Classroom for setting up a virtual classroom environment where I posted learning materials, assignments, and announcements. In the first class, upon logging into my classroom through my official G Suite (now Google Workplace) account, I encountered 28 stamp size icons that popped up on my Google Meet window. The online class was uncomfortably still and silent. I greeted my students “How are you?” only to be greeted back with no response, with all the icons on my screen, faceless, motionless, and muted. I proceeded nonetheless with my online teaching to improve my students’ oral communication skills.

“Welcome to my class. Please switch on your cameras. Click on the link in your Chatbox and read the course outline. You have 8 minutes to read”, I instructed using the routine pauses, the falling tones between each sentence. After 8 minutes of complete silence, I began explaining the course outline to the students. When students were asked if they had any questions or doubts regarding the course outlines, students remained totally and strangely silent. For the first lesson, according to the course outline, students were required to introduce themselves. I asked students, one at a time, to switch on their camera, unmute, and introduce themselves. Everyone’s self-introduction contained the same content presented mechanically, with a quivering voice and without eye contact, in almost the same order: name, hometown, age, school, passing year, majoring subject, aim, and hobby. My years of experience of teaching speaking skills to these groups of students helped me figure out their anxieties and nervousness in speaking English in front of an audience and now with the added pressure of facing a camera.
In the third online class, I formed groups of 5 to 6 students in each. I selected one student from each group and made him/her a moderator of the group. There were 5 groups in total: 3 groups with 5 members and 2 groups with 6 members in each. I assigned each group a name of the planets such as Neptune, Earth, Pluto and so on. I set up separate Google Meet session for each group (See Figure 1). Students were required to meet online outside of their regular class hours using the designated Google Meet links. Students were instructed to spend 30 minutes a day for five days a week to practice speaking in the form of online group discussions (OLGD) on any topics of their choice. Students could choose any time between 9 am and 9 pm on weekdays for discussing any topics of their choice. They completed an online version of McCroskey's (1970) Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety (PRPSA) at the end of the third class.

I made surprise visits to the online group discussion sessions to ensure student participation. The moderator was told to keep a record of attendance and to report the progress and problems of OLGDs to me once every week. The moderators were also responsible to ensure that no participant spoke Bangla, the mother tongue, during OLGDs. During the online classes when students from a group were performing poorly in speaking tasks due to nervousness, lack of practice, or for any other reasons self-reported by the students to the teacher, the moderator of the group would be asked if the student was attending OLGDs, and how he/she was performing in the OLGD sessions.

Figure 1. Online discussion groups with Google Meet links
Let’s answer the questions.

- What signs of success did he notice?
- What type of online tools can be appropriate for online group discussion sessions?

**Signs of success**

Both quantitative and qualitative data collected from all the groups indicate that the OLGD activity was successful to a certain extent in decreasing anxiety associated with student speaking. The PRPSA was administered at the end of the semester after students completed two oral presentations. Online focus group discussions (OFGD) with the students regarding the usefulness of the activity revealed that students found the activity useful in dealing with their stresses and anxieties prior to and during the two oral presentations.

In the first administration of the PSPSA questionnaire, students’ average score was found to be 156 indicating a high level of anxiety for the two upcoming oral presentation tasks. According to McCroskey (1970), scores on the PRPSA are categorised as low anxiety (34–84), moderately low anxiety (85–92), moderate anxiety (93–110), moderately high anxiety (111–119) and high anxiety (120–170). However, the second administration of the questionnaire registered a relatively less amount of anxiety with an average score of 125. Although the anxiety level was reduced at the end of the semester, students’ anxiety level according to the PRPSA scale remained moderately high.

Themes that emerged from the OFGD data indicate that the learners perceived the online group discussion sessions to be immensely useful in handling their AOP anxiety indicating the considerable success of the activity. Other indicators include learners’ willingness to communicate ideas regarding how they used the activity, the moderators’ overall positive report regarding the frequency of OLGDs and so on. Almost all learners expressed their positive opinion and spoke freely about the activity. They further recommended including such activity in other courses. Learners also showed inclinations for continuing to use the discussion groups even after the course ended.

One of the reasons why the OLGD activity was successful has been the availability of a non-threatening, supportive platform for practicing speaking. The students could freely socialise with their peers and could practice in the presence of a smaller audience of only 4 to 5 classmates. Secondly, as students had no opportunity to meet their peers physically during the nationwide pandemic lockdown, they were able to share their learning challenges, find common problems shared by all, and get feedback on their performances from their classmates through the OLGD sessions.
Further plans

Let’s answer these questions.

- How does Zohur want to incorporate online group discussion sessions into formal curricula?
- How can online group discussion sessions develop soft skills among the learners?

I wish to extend this activity in several ways. First, I would like to make the OLGD sessions more formal and accountable. To achieve this, each member of a group could be asked to maintain a logbook/journal for recording topics discussed, difficulties faced, and duration of speaking by an individual in each OLGD session. The written accounts could be used to assign participation marks and later could be added to the total marks for grading. Since no mark was assigned for attending the OLGD, some
students expressed dissatisfaction as they needed to work extra without credits. Students seem to be more willing to invest in their time and effort when they see that their efforts are rewarded or graded.

Second, peer evaluation of the OLGD practice sessions for the two oral presentations could be incorporated. Students may be provided with the same rubric used by the teacher for evaluating the presentations. Evaluations of the presentation practice sessions by the peers in this fashion may yield better performances and systematise the learning processes involved in the OLGD sessions. Opportunities for additional practices and incorporation of peer evaluation in the OLGD sessions may also further reduce the oral presentation anxieties faced by students in the final presentation performance.

Third, every student from a group could be made a moderator by rotation instead of keeping one student as the moderator for an entire semester as this may create an unintended power imbalance among the participants within the groups. Taking turns in moderating a group by every participant is likely to ensure equal participation and students would consequently learn to shoulder responsibilities equally. When the responsibilities are shared by everyone, this may result in developing other skills including learning to cooperate, collaborate, negotiate, and may lead to more speaking practices for every participant.

**Conclusion**

Although no statistically significant relationship between PRPSA scores and participations in the OLGD session could be established, it was apparent that the OLGD sessions worked as an effective learning strategy and a catalyst for reducing the oral presentation anxiety and improving the oral communication skills of the students in my class. The positive reinforcement and motivation of the students generated by the OLGDs had a significant impact in addressing the problem.

As was highlighted by the participants, aside from OLGDs they wish to engage in more outcomes-based activities that require oral presentations in English foundation courses and other content courses. Apart from its potential in improving learners’ presentation skills through reducing anxieties and enhanced participation in speaking, OLGD has the potential to offer a non-threatening platform for students’ academic socialisation, especially during difficult times such as during the pandemic when students could not meet face-to-face to share their common concerns. With the scaffolding of OLGDs and working collaboratively, EFL students in other contexts may be able to cope with the challenges of speaking in English in public.

**References**


Experience in Nepal: ELT Makes a Difference!

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Introduction
In my life, success has followed hard work. Equally important is the determined effort. In 2018, I was a junior research scholar at the English Language Department in Kathmandu University. I was involved teaching from 2014 to 2019 as a Spanish Language Instructor in Daffodil Public School (DPS) and Daffodil Boarding School (DBS.). Later, I was a researcher and lecturer of English at Global Academy of Tourism and Hospitality Education (GATE). I love to utilise my free time by doing exercise, travelling, shopping, volunteering, doing nature photography, drawing, driving, doing permaculture, healthy cooking, listening to music, researching astrology, playing card games, and reading new topics that give me ideas about new research.

Before we read Prateet’s story, answer the following questions.
- How successful is Prateet and what steps did he follow to be successful?
- What kind of challenges and difficulties has he faced in his life?
- What are his hobbies?

Background and context
I used to question myself when I hiked through all the areas of my life. Where I touch, feel, and see, and think of myself, I always feel alone. When I look back my life, I once had to take a break from my schooling due to my health issues. But, I believed in God and trusted upon with medical researcher, Dr. Sashi Kumar Thapa (a Senior Physician; gastroenterologist of Himal Hospital & Norvic International Hospital) who cured me by saying, “don’t worry my child you will be fine”. Taking his words and visiting him every month, I was under medication for six years. Now, I am cured!

When I got my Master’s Degree in 2017, I felt as if I have gained a lot; however, I realised that I had yet to learn more to share with others. I developed a positive inclination towards reading. Subsequently, I started teaching in schools, institutes and joined seminars, and did volunteering in academia. Being a teacher, I gone through the highs and lows. The low paying teaching job was not a motivating factor. Nevertheless, the positive vibes inside me made me determined to obtain higher education and become better.
Steps that I followed

I became sick from Ulcerative Colitis in 2008 but my mind forced me to join the National Institute of Open Schooling (N.I.O.S-Noida Board, Delhi) to check my education skills in the same year. From 2002, my education was getting weaker day by day. I would always be in a rush. When I joined the course, I would manage my time by waking up at 03.30 am; I would do some reading and then catch a microbus at 05.30 am to go to my office. In the beginning, I would do attendance in the office at 06.00 am, and go to classes at 06.15 am as it was closer to my office premises. My classes would run from 06.30 am to 08.30 am daily. My duty would start at 10:00 am and continue until 19:00 as I was a librarian and system administrator. My managing director of the office would tell me, “not to keep your both feet in two different boats while you are in a lake”, I took his word for granted but I did not want to go back from my goal! So, I completed the coursework in time; ranked 1/900 students from Nepal in 2009. A.D.

In the past, I developed exam phobia as a result of being away from my classes due to my health reasons. My schoolmates would come to meet me and enquire about my health report. I was trying to recover from the NORVIC Hospital following the rules and regulations, and medical treatments’. While I was recovering from my sickness, in addition to medication, I was already at the age of 20 when I had first joined Proficiency Certificate Level in Patan Multiple College (affiliated with Tribhuvan University). Then, I joined Lalitpur College at Kupondole in Science Stream taking Biology as my major subject. While continuing higher education, I scored 84% in college internal exams, i.e. top 3 rankings among 22 students. College administration had a hope that I would be one of the good scorers in their board exam, but when the final exam was closer I became sick again and I had to cancel my studies of science stream for 1 year as I needed to do bed rest!

Later, I joined Patan Multiple Campus (community college). I loved it because I did not have to wear a uniform like in private schools. I also found that around 4500 (forty-five hundred) total students visit the college premises daily for their study; they seemed to have a belief that they would complete graduation in time. I gained little faith from this college: followers of political parties, greetings, and tea parties, students from all around Nepal. The students were from poor and middle-class communities and they used to travel from rural areas. But, the lecturers would care for students who were just new to the humanities stream, people used to say my/our group “Major English Students Team!” Not even that, I and my team won two free ships (grants) continuously for two years during my PCL study. It created hope for me to step ahead.

Now, let’s find answers to these questions:

- Why was Mr. Baskota always in a rush, and what were the signs of his success?
- What kind of career goals does he have?
Signs of success

I experienced a different world opening up to me; excited by a new encouraging environment, I excelled academically. I learned that if I try hard, I can succeed. If I want something badly enough, I possess the ability to take advantage of those opportunities.

I worked in different offices with the hope that I could plus my salary, save money to buy books and other kinds of things which are in need. But, I always denied the loan system- the reason was: if I took a loan from anyone, I thought I would be in a stressful situation and would not be able to pay back if I had to lose my job. I would pay my tuition fee upfront with the money I earned. It was the example of my father, a banker who made me save money, “when it is in need, you can spend for your purpose”.

I knew there were so many things to do in life. The daily task of being a student was doing assignments on time, as I believed I was in a learning phase that always needed to do work sincerely. With the help of my professors after I joined Pokhara University, I changed my learning habits, which was fruitful for me to complete Masters in Arts with good grades. I also believed that getting a high score and taking awards from the Ministry of Education was not a big deal, everyone could get the certificates, but if the students did not utilise their thinking abilities in their desired field, then those certificates are valueless.

I took ownership of my learning. I started to find ways and means such as recorded lectures, consultations with professors and forming study groups to enhance my learning. I put myself under a strict routine at home to read, listen and learn. The primary experience gained from this home-schooling was to take a strong step to become an M.Phil. scholar, which I believe is an essential part of a researcher. As a scholar and researcher, I wanted to develop my career as an IT professional, proofreader, lecturer, and scientific researcher. I also wanted to pursue my knowledge on research on teacher training to develop my skills in an anthology of current practices which can help me specialise in methodology in language teaching (Richards & Renandya, 2002) and second language teacher education (Burns & Richards, 2009). I thought that pursuing my dreams could be most difficult and filled with challenges, but having many obstacles in my career path I always tried to be positive.

After joining the Kathmandu University School of Education in the department of English as a scholar and researcher with the guidance of professors, first, I learned how to work on research. In this field, with support from friends, I took part in a number of national and international seminars/webinars. Then I paid some fees to join international conferences and learned a lot from international scholars and researchers on how to give presentations by sharing/writing papers, giving a poster, verbal presentations, improving teaching and learning behaviors and conducting workshops. Later, I applied for the European Council, France who paid me certain stipends which allowed me to visit Europe and take part in various conferences. The visit to Europe was the most learning experience for me. It was truly rewarding, and the council supported me by sponsoring some aspects of my program. I extended my plan to visit Norway upon the invitation of a friend who invited me to travel to Norway. I visited Norway and shared some ideas with a few professors at the University of Oslo. My visit to
Norway was short due to only a few days’ visa. However, the interaction with the professors was truly rewarding because, as a consequence of that, I changed my ideas for research papers (dissertation) for M.Phil. and returned to Nepal. The visit was important and resourceful. Those two countries and a few provinces of Europe like Strasbourg, Gare de l'Est, Paris, and Oslo were my dreamlands.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, when the university was closed for a prolonged period of time, I adopted the distance learning and online classrooms using ‘Skype, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom-Meet, Zoom, Office 365, Whova’, and ‘other online tools to teach my classes and deliver the much-needed learning to my students, which enabled them to keep learning and continue their education. In my field, in teaching languages to young learners since 2008, I walked through educational technology into teaching. As such, my classes were fully based on Audio-Visual Teaching and Learning. After the covid-19, I needed to divert my teaching patterns, my teaching skills, and so in presenting my contents I upgraded into 3rd parties classroom applications like ‘Zoom, Microsoft Team, Google Connect, Padlet, Mentimeter, Quizlet’, and so on adding to my time-table. Their parents were also happy about their ideas which came from the collaborative work. Those collaborations with their friends and parents make them think about new personalised learning projects. When they participated in the new mode of learning it developed students’ creative, divergent, and convergent thinking. I also followed the ‘Incubation Model’ that has the best educational work of art, expressive freedom in the classroom, and collaborative creative thinking skills to solve the daily classroom problems. I mentored them to develop their projects in other subjects which were their responsibility to be self-motivated, disciplined, working in groups, developing imagination and resiliency.

In my childhood, I was fond of watching several TV serials and copying some of the characters like Hanuman. We were fond of being wrestlers like Lord Hanuman and next to an archer like Prince Arjun. Later on, the creative skills helped in creating/designing different learning projects about solar systems and the like.

**Further plans**

Each day brings new learning opportunities to me. Second, Teaching and learning English simultaneously (Tickoo, 2003) came to me as a ladder that appears as the passion for teaching. So I have one goal, keep teaching and learning, which is following the maxim of learning by doing. I will continue my study of research in education like my ancestors’ did in Varanasi (India), Kathmandu (Nepal), and Manigram (Nepal). I will love to work in the new field of criticisms of teaching and learning connecting through psychoanalytic and deconstruction theory. I will also get in touch with a few universities abroad that have the Neuroscience course in Doctor of Philosophy.

Now, let’s find answers to these questions.

- How did Mr. Baskota achieve his goals?
- How did he deliver his lessons during the Covid-19 pandemic?
Conclusion

At last, no one ever got success in her/his life without struggle. Learning by doing is always in need to do more for stepping ahead. I learned a lot from my parents and grandparents, and tried to accomplish different things in my life by taking different steps from mind, body, and heart. I feel that my life is full of drama, but I shall not forget my goals as I am in the field of education and research. Thus, what I see as the vision for me in the future is truly a journey for learning and practice. I am thankful to all those whom I ever met in my life for their generosity and kindness! Had I not been called by my professor and not continued my M.Phil., I would not have learned new things, new places, and new countries. I could learn about their cultures, foods, and way of living, which is also part of my learning process. This was an educational journey full of rewarding experiences and achievements. From a naïve, young boy to become a professional taking part in international and national conferences as a presenter and participant. Now it has given me a new professional and educational identity as people know me by my education and by what I do as a profession.

References


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This book introduces an enhancement approach to teacher development and presents success stories related to teaching and learning of EFL teachers and teacher educators of Bangladesh and Nepal. This publication is an attempt to value teachers' strengths by acknowledging their successes that they have achieved and also to lay a foundation on a strength-based approach to teacher development which is more a bottom-up approach. Each story written by authors categorically talk about their teaching and learning successes, the steps that they followed to achieve them, the signs of successes and their plan to extend them further. Any teacher or teacher educator particularly working in the developing contexts may find the stories interesting and useful as these stories can generate some context sensitive practices that can be adopted or adapted to their local teaching learning contexts.

Publishers

Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA)

Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA)