

## **Classroom Challenges of Secondary Level English Teachers at Remote Government Schools in Nepal**

**Rabu Ranjit**

(BRAC University, Bangladesh)

\*(raburanjit@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

The study was conducted to explore Secondary level English teachers' classroom challenges in the government schools of remote Nepal. The purpose of the study was to identify classroom challenges of English teachers at the secondary level and analyze how the factors affect English Language Teaching in the classroom. Twenty English teachers responded to the questionnaire, four were selected for the interview and five agreed to participate in focus group discussion. The main findings of the study were; the teachers do not understand students' local language, overcrowded classrooms, students' mostly use their native language to communicate, limited lesson hours, students' poor linguistic background and poor classroom condition. The most interesting finding is that none of the teachers was English graduates. They were from other streams like Major Nepali, Math, Commerce etc. Learning and applying various teaching methods and classroom management techniques, matching students' linguistic level and the learning situation, making use of time, and self-reflection can help tackle English teachers' challenges.

**Keywords:** Challenges; English teachers; Government School; Remote; Secondary level.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers, particularly secondary level English teachers, are likely to face numerous obstacles in the classroom. Language teaching encompasses a variety of elements. A teacher educates and pays attention to students' language abilities, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and fosters excitement, a positive attitude, and motivation in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers must comprehend their students' levels, what they should learn, how such learning affects them, and how lessons can benefit them in the future (Derakshan, 2015). As a result, language teachers must educate pupils on how to improve both academic and personal skills. However, it becomes a critical concern when English is taught as a foreign language. When it comes to locations where English serves limited functions, teaching English as a foreign language is difficult (Khan, 2011). It was obvious from the researcher's

\*Corresponding author's e-mail address

teaching experience in five remote Nepalese schools. She had numerous obstacles when teaching English in the classroom, including overcrowding, difficulty in classroom management, a lack of discipline among students, pupils utilizing their native language excessively, noisy classrooms, and so on. According to Mishra (2015), "the rural areas lack adequate schools with proper atmosphere and affordability that accommodate to the changing requirements and expectations of the class."

There is a severe scarcity of trained English teachers in many districts of Nepal. The substitute teachers find themselves teaching English despite a lack of understanding and experience in the subject. Because teachers have very limited training in supportive theory and practical applications, they may fail to effectively embody instructional methodologies. Emery (2001) cites some concerns that arise as a result of inadequate teacher preparation: teachers' incapacity to deal with challenges that arise in the classroom context due to a lack of training, teachers' low language competence, and hiring instructors whose English is not their subject area. Such difficulties arise in rural regions due to a shortage of skilled teachers (Mishra 2015). Furthermore, the English teaching process can be difficult when it comes to the teacher's qualification, degree of language ability, and training, as these factors might undermine teachers' confidence (Emery 2012). Teachers with little teaching training may endeavour to successfully embody teaching methods (Littlewood, 2007). It is difficult to apply proper teaching methods and strategies since teachers do not consider how to transfer four language abilities as well as students' motivation and excitement for studying and practising English (Ansai, 2012).

Above all, the researcher's experience as an English teacher at the secondary level in a government school interests me for this research topic. The author had experienced the classroom challenges too. Therefore, she was curious to know whether the classroom challenges at the secondary level in other remote government schools are similar to my experiences and wanted to find common factors affecting English Language Teaching in the classroom so that she can come up with some possible solutions to address the issues.

### **Teaching English in Nepalese Context**

English language instruction in Nepal has been going on for roughly a half-century. In 1951, the first English language school opened its doors to the public. Previously, education was restricted to members of the royal family, and there were no public schools throughout the country. In the early 1950s, following the restoration of social equality in the country, Tri-Chandra College began offering English courses under the supervision of Patna University, India. Tribhuvan University, the country's first university, was founded in 1959 and placed a great value on its English curriculum. However, after a decade, a national-wide master plan known as The National Education System Plan (NESP 1971-76) was enacted, bringing about a significant transformation in the curriculum, textbook, test, and assessment systems.

First, this strategy reduced the weightage of English courses (from 200 to 100 points) established by the previous system. Second, it cut the number of English credit hours from 15 to 10 from high school to university levels (Mall, 1977). The Plan removed English as a compulsory school subject but included a possibility for students to choose any of the United Nations languages, including Chinese, French, Spanish, and German, rather than English. According to Awasthi (1979, p.64), the majority of instructors and students supported "continued English in the secondary level." Meanwhile, the administration decided to "transition from English to Nepali" as a

medium of teaching in schools (Malla, 1977, p. 69). Later, in 1981, Tribhuvan University changed the structure of English syllabi, giving campus-level English a weightage of 200 marks rather than 100. The semester system was likewise phased out, and the annual method of teaching and assessment was reinstated (Mall, 1977).

## METHOD

The research was conducted in seven remote areas of Nepal. The researcher used a purposive sampling method to select the government schools. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are applied for this study. The random purposive sampling method is used to collect responses.

## Participants

The questionnaire was shared with people in the researcher's network via email, Facebook group and Messenger. After collecting 20 responses, 4 participants are selected for an online interview to explore the issue in-depth and Focus Group Discussion is arranged to dissect the issue. The inclusion criteria that are considered for selecting the teachers for the response included their teaching experiences in remote government schools. Due to the pandemic, the researcher used an online medium for data collection.

## Data analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis procedure is used to analyze the questionnaire response, interview data and focus group discussion information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Challenges faced by the respondents (English teachers) in the classroom

The objective of the study was to identify the challenges faced by English teachers in the classroom of the government school in remote areas. To achieve this objective, the participants were requested to indicate their opinions on four Likert scale questions in the questionnaire. Their responses were scored and the results were as presented in the tabulated form and explained one by one.

1. To what extent did you feel prepared for each element in your teaching? Please mark one choice.

**Table 1. Questions and Responses 1**

	Not at all	Somewhat	Well	Very well
Content of some or all subject(s) I teach.	5.26%	15.79%	52.63%	26.32%
Pedagogy of some or all subject(s) I teach.	0%	31.58%	63.16%	5.26%
General pedagogy.	0%	31.58%	52.63%	15.79%
Classroom practice in some or all subject(s) I teach.	0%	31.58%	47.37%	21.05%
Teaching in a mixed ability setting.	10.52%	42.10%	31.58%	15.80%
Teaching in a multicultural or multilingual setting.	10.52%	42.10%	26.32%	21.06%
Teaching cross-curricular skills e.g., creativity, critical thinking etc.	0%	31.58%	63.16%	5.26%
Use of ICT (information and communication technology) for teaching.	5.26%	36.84%	36.84%	21.06%
Student behaviour and classroom management.	0%	31.58%	36.84%	31.58%
Monitoring students' learning.	0%	31.58%	47.37%	21.05%

In general, 26.32% of respondents feel prepared for the subject, 5.26% respondents feel prepared for a pedagogy of the subject, 15.79% respondents feel prepared for general pedagogy, 21.05% respondents feel prepared for classroom practice in the subject, 15.80% respondents feel prepared for teaching in a mixed ability setting, and 21.06% respondents feel prepared for teaching in a multi-cultural or multilingual setting. Similarly, 5.26% of respondents feel prepared for teaching cross-curricular skills e.g., creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving), 21.06% of respondents feel prepared for use of ICT while teaching, 31.58% of respondents feel prepared for students' behaviour and management and 21.05% respondents feel prepared for monitoring students' development and learning.

From the data collected, we see that 35.78% of the teachers do not prepare well for their classes. Preparation considering content, pedagogy, teaching cross-curricular skills, students' behaviour, monitoring student's development and learning, teaching in a mixed ability setting or multicultural or multilingual setting and use of ICT are necessary. Teachers in government schools fall a lot behind in anticipation and adaptation in teaching using various teaching methods.

2. Thinking about your ELT (English Language Teaching) practices in the classroom, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

**Table 2. Questions and Responses 2**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Strive to develop new ideas for teaching and learning.	0%	0%	36.84%	63.16%
Open to change.	0%	0%	42.10%	57.89%
Develop practical support for the application of new ideas.	0%	5.26%	52.63%	42.10%
Plan lessons regularly and deliver them within a given time.	5.26%	15.79%	47.37%	31.58%

Thinking about ELT practices in the classroom, 63.16% of respondents strongly agree that they need to strive to develop new ideas for teaching and learning. 57.89% of respondents are open to change. Meanwhile, 42.10% of respondents strongly agree that they should be able to develop practical support for the application of new ideas, 31.58% agree that they should plan lessons regularly and deliver them within a given time. From the collected data, it is seen that some teachers do not pitch new ideas and do not consider the regular time management for their teaching. It is also clear that most of the teachers do not plan their lesson regularly and deliver it within time which results in a lack of professionalism.

3. In your teaching, to what extent can you do the following?

**Table 3. Questions and Responses 3**

	Not at all	To some extent	Quite a bit	A lot
Get students to believe they can do well in classwork.	0%	31.58%	36.84%	31.58%
Help students value learning.	0%	15.79%	63.16%	21.05%
Craft good questions for students.	5.26%	31.58%	15.79%	47.37%
Control disruptive behaviour in the classroom.	0%	36.84%	31.58%	31.58%
Motivate students who show low interest in	0%	26.32%	42.10%	31.59%

	Not at all	To some extent	Quite a bit	A lot
classwork.				
Make my expectations about student behaviour clear.	10.52%	31.58%	31.58%	26.32%
Help students think critically.	0%	36.84%	31.58%	31.58%
Get students to follow classroom rules.	5.26%	15.79%	31.58%	47.37%
Calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.	0%	31.58%	42.10%	26.32%
Use a variety of assessment strategies.	5.26%	36.84%	15.79%	42.10%
Provide an alternative explanation (e.g., when students are confused).	0%	10.52%	26.32%	63.16%
Vary instructional strategies in my classroom.	5.26%	26.31%	47.37%	21.06%
Support students through the use of digital technology, e.g., computer, tablets.	10.52%	21.06%	36.84%	31.58%

In teaching, 31.58% of respondents can get students to believe they can do well in classwork, 21.05% of respondents can help students value learning, 47.37% of respondents can craft good questions for students, 31.58% can control disruptive behaviour in the classroom, 31.59% respondents can motivate students who show low interest in classwork, 26.32% respondents can make their expectations about students behaviour clear, 31.58% respondents can help students think critically, 47.37% respondents can get students to follow classroom rules, 26.32% can calm a student who is disruptive or noisy, 42.10% respondents can use a variety of assessment strategies, 63.16% tries to provide an alternative explanation when students get confused, 21.06% respondents can vary instructional strategies in the classroom, and 31.58% respondents can support students through the use of digital technology e.g., computer, mobile phone, iPad, tablet etc. In the data, we can see that 30.36% of the teachers do not take the classes seriously and do not give their time in making the class more constructive such as the use of digital technology, providing an alternative explanation, varying their instructional strategies, helping student think critically, motivate towards learning, craft good questions and help student value learning. The weakest spot in teachers among the data is seen in the practice of traditional and less efficient methods of teaching which they have not been updating themselves with.

#### 4. To what extent your students: (see table 4)

**Table 4. Questions and Responses 4**

	Not at all	To some extent	Quite a bit	A lot
Comprehend, produce and use the English Language.	0%	73.68%	21.06%	5.26%
Seek materials and resources to supplement their learning.	15.79%	63.16%	21.06%	0%
Follow your instruction and supervision inside the classroom.	5.26%	26.32%	47.37%	21.06%
Listen to your lesson attentively and initiate healthy discussion.	0%	36.84%	57.90%	5.26%
Participate in peer work and group work activities.	10.52%	15.79%	52.63%	21.06%
Complete assessment before class ends.	5.26%	52.63%	36.85%	5.26%
Accept constructive feedback and improve on it.	5.26%	52.63%	31.59%	10.52%

In the classroom, 5.26% of respondents that students can comprehend, produce and use language, 63.16% disagree that students seek materials and resources to supplement their learning, 21.06% respondents feel that their students follow their instruction and supervision inside the classroom, 5.26% respondents feel students listen to their lesson attentively and initiate healthy discussion, and 21.06% respondents respond that students participate in peer work and group work activities. Furthermore, 5.26% of respondents think students complete the assessment before class ends and 52.63% of respondents disagree students accept constructive feedback and improve on it.

In the data, we found that on average 51.87% of the students do not show much of their interest in any activities such as the use of English, seeking out materials, listening to teachers attentively, participating in group work accepting constructive feedback and improving on it. The table also shows that the students consider English as a less prior class since only a few students try to take it seriously.

5. What is the medium of communication and instruction in your class?

**Table 5. Questions and Responses 5**

	Not at all	To some extent	Quite a bit	A lot
Students use L1 (mother tongue) frequently.	15.80%	31.58%	10.52%	42.10%
Both teachers and students use the target language.	5.26%	73.68%	5.26%	15.80%
Both teachers and students switch codes according to need.	26.31%	15.80%	31.58%	26.31%

As the medium of communication and instruction in the class 42.10% of respondents agree that students use L1 (mother tongue) frequently, 15.80% of respondents agree both teachers and students use the target language, and 26.31% of respondents agree that both teachers and students switch codes according to need. From the data collected, 63.15% of classes do not use the English language instead they use L1.

6. Please estimate the broad percentage of students who have the following: (see table 6).

**Table 6. Questions and Responses 6**

	none	1%-10%	11%-30%	31-60%
Students for whom English is not a second language.	26.32%	21.06%	5.26%	5.26%
Low academic achievers.	0%	21.06%	26.32%	42.10%
Students with special needs.	21.06%	47.36%	21.06%	10.52%
Students with behavioural problems.	10.52%	52.64%	31.58%	5.26%
Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes.	5.26%	31.58%	10.52%	21.06%
Academically gifted students.	21.06%	52.64%	21.06%	5.26%

In the classroom, 42.10% of respondents agree that there are students for whom English is not a second language. Meanwhile, 42.10 respondents agree that the classroom consists of 31-60% low academic achievers, 47.36% of respondents checked there are students with special needs in the classroom and 52.64% agree they have students with behavioural problems. In addition, 31.58% agree that there

are students from socio-economically disadvantaged homes and 52.64% agree that there are 1-10% academically gifted students as well.

From the data, it is seen that 29.06% of students in each class have background problems such as English not being 2nd language and having socio-economic disadvantage due to which they have low academic achievement. It is seen that students have behavioural problems and some students need special care too.

7. What percentage of class time is typically spent on each of the following activities (see table 7).

**Table 7. Questions and Responses 7**

	more than 10%	20-30%	more than 50%	within 40%
Recording attendance.	89.48%	0%	0%	0%
Keeping order in the classroom maintains discipline.	52.64%	36.84%	5.26%	0%
Actual teaching and learning.	0%	10.52%	42.10%	10.52%
Assessment.	52.64%	26.32%	10.52%	5.26%

Based on the data 10.52% of respondents spend 60% of class time recording attendance while 36.84% of respondents spend 20-30% of class time keeping order in the classroom maintaining discipline. Similarly, 42.10% of respondents spend more than 50% of class time in actual teaching and learning while 52.64% of respondents use 10% of class time in assessing students. From the data, we found out that 76.31% of the teachers are diverted more than half of the class time. Their time is mostly spent on attendance, maintaining order and discipline in the classroom due to which the class gets only minor time in actual learning.

8. How strongly do you agree or disagree that you have control over the following areas of your planning and teaching in your class?

**Table 8. Questions and Responses 8**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Determining course content.	42.10%	52.64%	5.26%	0%
Selecting teaching methods.	52.64%	36.84%	10.52%	0%
Assessing students learning.	42.10%	47.36%	10.54%	0%
Disciplining students.	31.58%	63.16%	5.26%	0%
Determining the amount of homework to be assigned.	36.84%	57.90%	5.26%	0%

In terms of planning for teaching in the class, 52.64% of respondents agree they have control over determining the course content while 5.26% disagree that they have control over it. Similarly, 36.84% of respondents agree they have control over selecting teaching methods whereas 10.52% disagree they have control over it. Likewise, 47.36% agree that they have control over assessing students' learning while 10.54% disagree they have control over it. In the same way, 63.16 respondents agree they have control over disciplining students but 5.26% of respondents disagree on it.

From the data collected, it is seen that in a government school, teachers teach the students without planning which includes determining course content, selecting teaching methods, disciplining students and determining the number of assignments. Out of these, most of the teachers do not plan their teaching methods and assess students' learning as they practice their same past methods.

9. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this ELT (English Language Teaching) class?

**Table 9. Questions and Responses 9**

	strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
When the lesson begins, I have to wait quite a long time for students to quiet down.	0%	15.79%	63.16%	21.05%
I lose quite a lot of time because of students interrupting the lesson.	0%	26.32%	47.36%	26.32%
Students in the class take care to create a pleasant learning atmosphere.	15.79%	57.90%	26.31%	0%
There is much disruptive noise in the classroom.		5.26%	68.42%	26.32%

In an ELT class, 15.79 per cent of respondents agree that they must wait a long time for students to quiet down. In addition, 26.32 per cent of respondents agree that students interrupting class cause them to lose a significant amount of time, 26.31 per cent of respondents disagree that students in the class take care to create a pleasant learning environment and 5.26 per cent agree that there is a lot of distracting noise in the classroom. According to the data, teachers face disruptions in ELT classes as a result of noise, disruption, and interruption from students. As a result, it becomes difficult to create a pleasant learning environment.

10. In teaching a culturally diverse class, to what extent can you do the following?

**Table 10. Questions and Responses 10**

	Not at all	Quite a bit	To some extent	A lot
Cope with the challenges of a multicultural classroom.	5.26%	21.05%	52.64%	21.05%
Adapt my teaching to the cultural diversity of students.	5.26%	10.52%	52.64%	31.58%
Ensure that students with diverse backgrounds work together.	0%	5.26%	47.37%	47.37%
Raise awareness of cultural differences among students.	5.26%	21.05%	31.58%	42.10%
Reduce ethnic stereotyping among students.	5.26%	26.32%	36.84%	31.58%

In teaching a culturally diverse class, only 21.05% of respondents can cope with the challenges of a multicultural classroom, 31.58% can adapt to the cultural diversity of students, 47.37% can ensure that students with diverse backgrounds work together, 42.10% can raise awareness of cultural differences among students and 31.58% can reduce stereotyping among students. Considering the data collected, it can be seen that teachers face problems in culturally diverse classes due to the lack of teacher's experience in such scenarios, unable to cope due to the cultural backgrounds, unable to adapt to the teaching methods needed and maintain the harmony due to the cultural diversity of students.



The analysis revealed difficulties encountered during English language instruction in the classroom. The teacher's voice, classroom management, teaching strategies, learning strategies, English communication barriers, vocabulary knowledge, lesson planning, and classroom motivation were just a few of them. All of these factors had an impact on teachers' overall English teaching performance.

### **Teacher's Voice**

The teacher's voice was mentioned by 15 teachers as one of the many difficulties they faced in the classroom. Teachers are thought to be "professional voice users" (Martin & Darnley, 1999, p. 1). One of the most crucial instruments for maintaining control and order in the classroom is the teacher's voice. Indeed, English language teachers, in particular, require the capacity to 'throw their voices,' that is, to employ 'voice' effectively in a variety of contexts, distances, groups, and student levels (Martin & Darnley, 1999; Richter, Nusseck, Spahn, & Echternach, 2016). The teacher's voice was mentioned by 15 teachers as one of the many difficulties they faced in the classroom. Teachers are thought to be "professional voice users" (Martin & Darnley, 1999, p. 1).

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Example Taken from the questionnaire:

"Students complained that they did not comprehend my explanation because my voice was not audible. It adversely affects students' attention. I am aware that controlling my voice is important." (Participant 1)

Example Taken from Interview:

"Students do not understand my English. They complain that I speak English most of the time. They insist that I use the Nepali language or try the local language to make them understand the content. I doubt how students will learn when the target language is less used in the classroom." (Participant 2)

The skill to communicate ideas effectively is indispensable for teachers. The way teachers communicate has a significant contribution to the creation of a positive learning environment. One of the most important aspects of communication is articulation (Martin & Darnley, 1999). Teachers can take control and make use of various articulation, intonation, tone, and body language to divert classroom conditions to the one which is expected other (Dugdale, 2019; Richter, Nusseck, Spahn, & Echternach, 2016). This way, teachers can gain students' attention as the aforementioned communication devices will help teachers deliver the message clearly.

### **English Communication Barriers**

One of the difficulties identified by 16 teachers was a communication barrier in English. Good and successful communication allows a sender to convey an idea and express feelings. However, if a language, such as English, is not a speaker's first

language, he or she may struggle to deliver their message or, in the case of a teacher, the lesson clearly (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011). Such challenges can be considered as communication impediments. To be an English teacher, one must be fluent in the language. That is, the language should be understandable, comprehensible, and intelligible to receivers (Gallaway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2014). English communication was a potential obstacle to expressing their lectures to the pupils for the teachers, who were essentially EFL users of English in this circumstance. Linguistic complexity such as word usage, pronunciation, syntax, and general coherence and cohesion place significant demands on English teachers.

#### Examples Taken from Focus Group Discussion

“Students have difficulty understanding my English and they mostly use their native language.” (Participant 2)

“I often found it hard to talk in front of the class. I now am aware that pronunciation is an indispensable skill English teachers have to master.” (Participant 3)

The above quotes show that the English competence possessed by the teachers is one of the challenges. Krashen (1981) states that the quality of a given knowledge or lesson depends on how it is demonstrated. For this reason, teachers need to first understand the knowledge that they will transfer and communicate it well so it can facilitate effective knowledge acquisition. The problem faced by the teachers in this area can be solved if the teachers increase their communication skills in both in native and target language. As their language competence increases, their confidence will also rise.

#### Teaching Strategies

Based on the data 15 out of 20 teachers stated that teaching strategy has been their major challenge. They realised the fact that teachers need to utilize various strategies to accommodate students' different needs and interests (Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016) as this will help students learn more effectively. While the teachers are aware of this responsibility, they are not well equipped to do so especially because they mostly have large classes.

#### Examples Taken Focus Group Discussion

“We tried to teach the students through games to motivate them and encourage their participation and contribution during language learning. However, they did not seem to care and they did not understand how this game worked, leading to students losing interest in the learning activities. I felt distressed so I went back to teacher-centred teaching strategies which turned out to work.” (Participant 4)

“I was equipped with the knowledge about various teaching strategies and I usually picked on depending on students' emotional or psychological state. However, sometimes it is hard for me to explain the concept verbally, therefore I often used TPR as it allows me to use body expression to communicate. In

addition, to motivate the students, I would give them some rewards.” (Participant 1)

“I always tried to involve my creativity when designing classroom activities so I can be sure that the students understand the given lesson. For instance, I used various games and even made them dance. Unfortunately, it did not work as expected. I guess the biggest challenge here is to identify their interest, what they enjoy doing to help them learn. Then I discovered that my students were competitive, so the use of games would work. Turned out, there was some kind of discrepancy and unbalanced domination between the high achievers and lower ones. Such a situation did not help everyone equally.” (Participant 3)

When it comes to teaching, a perfect approach does not exist (Prabhu, 1990), so using various teaching strategies can help the student learn better. It is the teachers’ responsibility to identify which strategies that work. It can be done through knowing the students as a person so teachers can be more sensitive about students’ needs and interests.

### **Classroom Management**

All teachers reflected that managing the classroom has been the most challenging thing to do. The majority of respondents agreed that the larger the class, the less each student gets to make individual contributions. A teacher cannot have drilling sessions with students who need to work on their English completely. Most rural government schools have a large number of students. As a result, high noise levels from the class and the class next door, unmanageable seating arrangements, and lack of discipline in the classroom occur. Teachers’ classroom management might also influence both students’ and teachers’ attitudes which then will affect students’ learning motivation and their views on student reliability (Richards & Bohlke, 2011).

#### **Examples Taken from Interview**

“I am still clueless about managing my classroom. That is why sometimes teaching is not my passion despite my love for kids.” (Participant 2)

“Classroom management has always been my issue, especially on how to control the students’ behaviour and attention effectively.” (Participant 3)

“Sometimes it is hard to identify, even to guess why my students lose interest in the lesson. It leads me to question my classroom management skill.” (Participant 5)

According to Emery (2012), one of the most mentioned problems encountered by English teachers is that “overcrowded classes and the effect of such conditions can have on teaching and learning” (p. 4). Nurkamto (2003) also lists one of the challenges in teaching English that is the size of the classroom. Likewise, Baker and Westrup (2000) state several problems of teaching large classes, such as “desks and chairs are

fixed or difficult to move; students sit close together in rows; little space for the teacher and students to move in the classroom; walls between classrooms are thin, and noise will disturb other classes" (p.2). Consequently, the teaching and learning process must require a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere, otherwise, teachers might fail to fulfil students' needs and achieve learning goals.

One of the factors of a successful classroom is classroom management. Managing the classroom will usually take a lot of consideration. It can also be influenced by teachers' instructional design, students' ability, and school facilities (Delceva–Dizdarevik, 2014). Most importantly, classroom management, as well as teachers' design of instruction, has to always consider students' varied needs and competencies. Students' views on teachers' backgrounds can also become a challenge. For example, students might expect their English teacher to have an English education background; when this expectation is violated, students might be less interested as trust is not built between them. In addition, students' psychological and cognitive states should also be considered when managing the classroom. Young learners might struggle to focus as their attention span is short. For this reason, teachers might want to design classroom activities that can stimulate their interest and motivation.

### **Monolingual Class**

Students speaking their mother tongue pose a special challenge to a teacher. All respondents agreed that students tend to speak more of their native language amongst themselves and no English. According to them, enforcing the "English only rule" did not help because English is taught only for 40-45 minutes of class time. Other subjects use the 'Nepali' language as the medium of instruction. Due to these English teachers are obliged to teach/interpret the content in Nepali or local language. Most secondary level teachers are hired from other places. They do not understand the local language. In second language classrooms, teaching the language is mostly done by using the target language itself. This way, teachers and the students can reflect on how far they have learned the language (Johnson, 1995). It will also facilitate the students to have more target-language language experience and exposure through classroom interaction. But in our classroom, teachers need to use either native language or Nepali as a medium of instruction to teach English. Otherwise, students will disturb the class or lack interest in the content being delivered (Participant 3).

### **Students' Poor Linguistic Background**

There are 15 respondents who agreed that students who do not have a good level of English at the secondary level pose a serious challenge to a teacher. They said that there are students who cannot even distinguish and trace the English alphabet properly. Meanwhile, 5 respondents partially agreed to say that not all students have a poor linguistic background. There are mixed language ability students in the classroom. Few know grammar and sentence structure too. But it is difficult to address their needs individually. Teachers also said that 'our students know their level of English. Therefore, they fear the language. They feel embarrassed to use the language. And so, they skip the class or leave early from school to avoid the English class. Some students hijack the lesson because they are less motivated towards English due to their inability to use the language.

Bista (2011) asserts that the English language in Nepal does not have enough exposure to various techniques of language learning opportunities. Besides, teaching English depends on several educational factors e.g., classroom, teachers, curriculum,

the need of the society, and cultures in Nepal. Instructors of English as a second or foreign language find it difficult to implement necessary plans in the classroom. It is generally agreed that teaching English where the language is not spoken in daily life is hard. To learn the language effectively, sufficient exposure and background knowledge are needed, otherwise, learners will find it difficult to learn English which then makes them demotivated (Khan, 2011).

Another issue regarding linguistic problems is the first language or mother tongue interference. Both teachers and students frequently talk using their mother-tongue language which unconsciously affects their English performance (Fatiloro, 2015). Additionally, Pande (2013) describes when teachers and students speak in their mother tongue. They sometimes use English words amid the sentences and disremember that every language varies in stress, intonation, and pronunciation.

### **Students' attitude towards learning English**

Based on the data 10 teachers indicated that students' views on English influence the way teachers perform, especially when delivering the content materials. In addition to their views, learning styles also contribute to their learning behaviour, self-confidence, and attainment. For such reason, teachers can benefit from identifying students' learning styles so they can adjust their instruction accordingly (Awla, 2014, p. 242; Wong & Nunan, 2011).

Pande (2013) asserts that "it is a common misinterpretation among students that English is the most difficult of all subjects" (p.416). Similarly, Fatiloro (2015) states that the challenging difficulty in teaching English as a foreign language is meeting students' awful attitude in practising English. For instance, students can be fearful of speaking in front of their classmates, particularly when it comes to the presence of a competitive student in the classroom.

#### **Examples Taken from Focus Group Discussion**

"It has come to my surprise that students' competence is not well distributed. Some of them had no problem following the instruction and lesson at one go while some others were struggling even after some repetitions. Having said that, I could also see a common ground. They liked to do non-complicated classroom activities (although some of them were still struggling to keep their focus)." (Participant 4)

"Students' English competence in the classroom seems to be different between those with a private school background and those without. The former ones are more superior in their academic performance, but they tend to easily lose interest when the learning pace slows down. This kind of psychological state adversely affects their attitude and motivation to learn the language." (Participant 3)

In most second language classrooms, the major challenge experienced by the students is that they have very limited vocabulary and grammar awareness (Hasan, 2016; Chung, 2016). The reason for this might be that the students do not understand why they need to learn these words while they do not use them outside the classroom

where their real-life happens. They do not find it meaningful (Maruyama, 1996; Hoa and Main, 2016).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study was set out to identify classroom challenges experienced by English teachers at the secondary level in government schools of remote Nepal. The findings indicated that teachers' voices, English communication barriers, teaching strategies, monolingual classes, class sizes, students' learning styles, and classroom management challenges English teachers. Looking back, teachers were aware that having that know-it-all attitude is not helpful. All respondents belonged to either Science or Management academically. They entered into education as an English teacher because they assume English is easy to teach. Later, they realized that language teaching is the most challenging task, especially where the language serves limited purposes. It is difficult to motivate learners in the absence of exposure. Also, the learners have very less linguistic knowledge which adds more challenge when they upgrade to secondary level.

Teachers have to plan their lessons targeting mixed levels of students. Although teachers are aware of lesson planning and strategies, they find it extremely overwhelming to deliver them as they plan because students interrupt the class. Teachers are mostly distracted due to noise from the other classes and students are not interested in learning English because they have fear of the English language.

Based on the findings and discussion, the researcher suggests the following points:

- 1) Create mutual classroom norms and values. Make sure every student agrees to it and follows. Convince your students for seating arrangements. Seating arrangement helps to reduce noise and establish discipline in the classroom.
- 2) Negotiate with school administration to shift your class before lunch break. Since we are very much concerned about the lesson hour/class time, you can request the principal to schedule your class during the first hour of the school day. In that way, you can deliver your lesson enthusiastically and students will be actively engaged. The issue of class bunk and students skipping class will be reduced.
- 3) Plan your lesson short and include more students talking and moving time. As teachers, you may want to give more to the students which are good but think, are they ready to grab it?
- 4) Engage your students in activities to learn. You should know that people learn by doing things. Take them out of the classroom sometimes, maybe in the playground or any open space where you can probably play games. In this way, you will also build good relationships with your students which is also an important element that helps to reduce your classroom challenge. Use locally available props to help students better understand the lesson.
- 5) You can try 2 minutes of English talking time in the classroom. Include 'Cold call' in which your students can ask questions or share opinions with their peers in English for 2 minutes.
- 6) Reduce fear of English among students. You can share your experience of learning English. Be down to the earth. You can also tell them the implications of learning English.

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