

<https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v25i1-2.49734>

Functional Analysis of 'Teacher English' Used by Content-subject Teachers: A Case Study

Kamal Kumar Poudel

Abstract

Providing 'quality education' through English is a challenge for the prestige and survival of private schools in Nepal. In this background, a private school in Kathmandu, having realized that its content-subject teachers had to be better-equipped with the classroom-based English language proficiency, offered the researcher to conduct a short-term teacher training program on 'teacher English' for them. With a view to preparing for the short-term 'training course', the researcher undertook to investigate the current status of the affairs. The present article reports on an observational case study, informed by the grounded theory methods, on the usual classroom teachings performed by nine content-subject teachers at the school. The major functions of the 'teacher English' served as the basis for the thematic analysis of the data. As the findings of the study, fifteen classroom functions of the 'teacher English', were identified, namely, greeting, introducing the lesson and lesson activities, defining, checking understanding, asking, instructing, giving feedback, encouraging, controlling, personalizing/labelling, asking for and giving permission, cautioning, thanking, attracting attention and closing the lesson. Finally, the study recommended that the forthcoming teacher training should target at these functions of teaching English with a view to building on and improving their classroom English.

Keywords: *'Teacher English', content-subject, case study, function, utterance.*

Background of the Study

The study began as a project aiming at evaluating and helping to improve the ways in which the content-subject teachers used English at a private school in Kathmandu. Therefore, a thorough investigation into the existing state of what the school authority termed as 'teacher English' was the first step to take. The next step involved planning the modality and procedures of what was needed to overcome the problem. The final step was to implement the results in the real classroom situation so as to bring about the

desired improvement in the actual workplace. To my understanding as a researcher, an observational case study would serve best initially, followed by a teacher training program based on the case study results as an intervention. Differently put, it was an exploratory case study targeted at producing an outcome to be implemented later on as an intervention in the form of a teacher training program. The present article reports on the classroom observation-based case study carried out as a prelude to a teacher training program aiming to further capacitate the content-subject teachers for a better classroom delivery in the English language.

Prior to the observation, the purpose of the study was briefed to each of the participant teachers. The participants had varying expectations of the teacher training program, including “to communicate, teach and perform classroom activities in English properly and in a well-managed way” (Teacher 1) and “to help satisfy parents/community as an English-medium school” (Teacher 3). At this point, I could somehow envisage that one of the challenging tasks for me as the trainer, later on, would be to address the variety of individual needs and expectations of the participants in terms of their subject areas and levels. With the purpose of investigating the current statuses of the ‘teacher English’, I observed the participants’ (teachers’) class presentations prior to the actual training program, which took me three days.

The case study was conducted to find out the answers to the following questions.

- i. How do content-teachers communicate with their students in English as they teach?
- ii. What are the shortcomings and strengths of the English used by them for classroom communication?
- iii. What are the language contents, stemming out of the ‘teacher English’, which need to be addressed in the forthcoming teacher training program as an intervention?

Thus, this study, though a small-scale one, is potentially beneficial for people associated with various aspects of classroom pedagogy in a number of ways. First, it explores and informs those people about the strengths and weaknesses of ‘teacher English’ employed by the content-subject teachers, and thus, provides the institution with insights into the formation of future policy, plans, and programs for improving the actual affairs. Secondly, it provides content-subject teachers (and English language teachers, too) with some ‘tools for action’ - ‘teacher English’ in the form of the actual utterances useful for classroom communication. Thirdly, it provides pedagogic researchers with data that can be examined from perspectives other than the functional one (as in this study). Fourthly, and most importantly, this study illustrates the diagnosis and preparation of a resultant intervention for action research in similar situations.

Methodology

This section describes the methodology employed for the data collection and analysis processes which are discussed under the headings of ‘theory of the method’, ‘approach’, ‘design’, ‘participants’, ‘data’, ‘instruments’ ‘data collection procedure’ and ‘data analysis method’.

Theory of the method

The school authority’s notion of ‘teacher English’, which in general is called classroom English, is justifiable both theoretically and practically. Referring to a somehow similar notion, Mani and Deepthi (2010) observe that “in classrooms, it is essential that all teachers use appropriate language to set a model for their students” (p. 4). Moreover, as our experience suggests, appropriate classroom language largely determines the success of classroom activities. Right from the beginning of the research process, the actual use of ‘teacher English’ was observed. In its essence, the study was underpinned by the grounded theory method which, according to Glaser (1978), is guided by the fundamental query, “What is happening here?” (p. 25) and starts with the data rather than being based on any preconceived theoretical lenses as the priori.

As stated earlier, the data collection task was conceived as being pre-supplementary to the forthcoming teacher training. It was conducted as a prelude to the actual ‘action’- a study into the ways the teachers were naturally doing in their respective work stations (classrooms).

Approach

Consistent with the grounded theory methods, the study was predominantly guided by the qualitative approach to research which is to say that it was “based on textual rather than numerical data” (Howitt, 2016, p. 534). Since the only source of the data in this study was the teachers’ communicative utterances to be subjectively interpreted, it would be pointless to work out numbers and statistics while collecting the data and analyzing them. Therefore, in this report, verbal data were interpreted descriptively as opposed to numerical data analyzed statistically.

Design

At a more specific level, the study was based on the case study design which, to follow Silverman (2013), is the study of a case or a limited number of cases occurring in the natural setting. Indeed, the present research was an exploratory case study targeted at finding out the actual situation in which the English-medium classes were being operated. It was, in particular, an institutional case study in that the data were fully drawn from a single institution, i.e. a private English-medium secondary school located in Kathmandu.

The participants

The school had a total of nine content-subject teachers who had to be better equipped in terms of ‘teacher English’ as a result of the project. Their classes were observed in the respective classroom settings. Each subject was observed twice. If different teachers taught the same subject (in different classes) each of them was covered for variety. Table 1 provides a glance of the observation.

Table 1 Observation Description

S.No.	Teaching subject	Class	Participant code	Frequency	No. of participants
1.	Social Studies	Nine Seven	SoStT1 SoStT2	1 1	2
2.	Mathematics	Ten Seven	MathT1 MathT2	1 1	2
3.	Health & Physical Education	Ten Eight	HPET1 HPET2	1 1	2
4.	Science	Eight	SciT	2	1
5.	Computer	Eight	CptrT	2	1
6.	Upper KG	UKGT	2	1
	Total				9

The data

The entire data were extracted from the observation of nine classes, all in English-medium, taught by nine teachers of six content subjects (details in Table 1). The primary raw data were obtained to be processed and interpreted from the functional perspective to ultimately determine the functions of ‘teacher English’.

Instruments

The major instruments used for collecting the data were a diary and an electronic recording device.

Data collection procedure

During data collection, I recorded the class presentation using a portable electronic audio recorder, simultaneously noting down the data in a diary and preparing memos to remind myself of the context of the utterances. My diary recording concentrated solely on the communicative utterances used by the teachers. In this sense, the data were “unique (in the sense of singular) and bounded” (Casanave, 2015, p. 129). Therefore,

the findings should be understood as particular instances unique to the teachers in the given institution and they should not be generalized to any wider context. I obtained the whole data in three consecutive days.

Data analysis process

The individual utterances used by the teachers for classroom communication and activity were coded and categorized under the functions of 'teacher English'. In other words, the data were thematically organized, presented, and interpreted as a process of analysis. In doing this, the contexts of the use of the utterances were carefully considered in line with the memos. As part of the analysis process, I identified the commonly observed classroom functions of 'teacher English' which were recorded and noted down out of the raw data. Then the data were coded under fifteen functional categories as presented in the text that follows. The forms actually uttered in the course of the classroom presentation have been presented under the respective functional category as the list of key utterances (LKUs). The specification in brackets at the end of each utterance indicates who uttered it (see Table 1).

Results

Fifteen themes of 'teacher English' emerged as a result of the analysis process. In this section, they have been categorized and presented as the functions of 'teacher English'. So, the functional categories identified were: greeting, introducing the lesson and lesson activities, defining, checking understanding, asking, instructing, giving feedback, encouraging, controlling, personalizing/labelling, asking for and giving permission, cautioning, thanking, attracting attention, and closing the lesson.

1. Greeting

The participants used some stereotypical utterances, which functionalists call phatic expressions, just for establishing contact with the students in the beginning of the lesson, mainly for making rapport with them. The following list of the key utterances (LKUs-1) emerged.

LKUs-1

- 1) Good morning (HPE T1; Cptr T; Math T2).
- 2) Good morning, Class IX (SoSt T2).
- 3) Good morning, students (UKG T).
- 4) Good afternoon, students (HPE T2; Sci T)
- 5) Hey! How're you? (SoSt T1)
- 6) Are you fine? (Sci T)
- 7) Grade X. How do you feel today? (HPE T2)

As LKUs 1 depicts, 'Good morning' (1) is the most commonly used expression for greeting. Notably, four of the expressions (1, 2, 3, 4) are verbless forms with three of them (5, 6, 7) being the interrogative form.

2. *Introducing the lesson or lesson activities*

As the data reveal, 'teacher English' was substantially employed for familiarizing the students with that day's lesson. It was evident from the data that, while doing this, the participants employed it for marking transitions and signaling the activity just ahead. While introducing the lesson or lesson activities, they used it as pre-teaching strategies, mainly for recalling the previous lesson(s) and/or orienting the students to what they were going to learn/do in the lesson immediately ahead. Differently stating, these classroom utterances pointing either to the past or to the future were discursively apparent as outlined in LKUs-2.

LKUs-2

- 1) Last time we talked about... (Sci T).
- 2) Do you remember? (Sci T)
- 3) Today's lesson is.... (Sci T).
- 4) We usually do 'practical' on Wednesday (Sci T).
- 5) We are going to....today (SoSt T1).
- 6) Today, we are going to learn about... (HPE T2).
- 7) Today, I'm going to teach you.... (HPE T1).
- 8) Shall we...? (Sci T)
- 9) We are discussing about#... today. (Math T)
- 10) We are entering to Unit 6. (HPE T2)
- 11) The topic is.... (HPE T1)
- 12) First of all... (Cptr T)
- 13) I'll explain pictorially. (Cptr T)
- 14) Well, I'll show you (Cptr T)
- 15) I'm going to ask the questions. (Math T1)
- 16) I'm going to define....(Math T)
- 17) I'll tell you a joke now. (SoSt T1)
- 18) Let me divide you into groups. (Cptr T)
- 19) Let me repeat..... (Sci T; HPE T1)

As LKU-2 shows, the first two utterances (1-2) are past-pointing and the rest of them future-pointing. It is also apparent that some utterances (3-11) were used for introducing the lesson whereas the others (12-19) either for signaling the activity that was to take place a few moments later and/or the one that was just at hand. Formally, fifteen of them (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17) are in the declarative; two of them in the interrogative (2, 8); two in the imperative (18, 19) and one of them (12) in the discourse-marking phrasal form.

3. *Defining*

It was found that the participants used 'teacher English' for defining the meanings of words and objects so as to facilitate their concepts for the learners. In the present study, the utterances in LKUs-3 were found in service of this function.

LKUs-3

- 1) That word is EASE (HPE T2).
- 2) 'Disease' is the opposite of 'ease' (HPE T2).
- 3) 'Moderate' means.... (SoSt T1).
- 4) This word can be divided into 'demos'+ 'graphy'. 'Demos' means... (HPE T2).
- 5) The computer is just a machine (Cptr T).

LKUs-3 indicates that the teachers, even being non-language teachers, played with the meanings to clarify concepts. Nonetheless, the last utterance (5) was employed to define an object.

4. *Checking understanding*

The data paradoxically indicate that, in the classroom context, teachers simply asked what they already knew about. In a number of instances, the participants were found using 'teacher English' with a purpose of finding out whether the students knew something as general understanding (pre-existing knowledge); or whether they had understood the content being taught/already taught. The utterances under this function (LKUs-4) are queries intended for checking, rather than for knowing-so not for asking.

LKUs-4

1. The second word is ...? (HPE T2)
2. What do you mean by....? (HPE T2)

3. How many words? What are they? (HPE T2)
4. Do you know the names of...?(HPE T1)
5. Can you tell...? (SoSt T2; Sci T)
6. Do you know about...? (HPE T)
7. Excuse me. What's a computer? (Cptr T)
8. What did we learn today? (HPE T)
9. Which letter is this? (UKG T)
10. What's the spelling of..? (UKG T)
11. Is she correct? (UKG T)
12. Can you say the letters? (UKG T)
13. Understood everybody? (Maths T2)

As can be seen in LKUs-4, some utterances (2, 4, 5, 6) were intended for checking the students' pre-existing knowledge of the content whereas some others (1, 3, 7, 8, 10) for checking what was already taught to them, and the rest of them for checking what they had just been taught or being taught (9, 11, 12, 13) so as to ensure the students' understanding of the content while keeping the lesson going. From the formal perspective, most of the utterances (2-10) are in the interrogative whereas a few (1, 12) are in the declarative-all realized as questions.

5. Asking

The data reveal that, in contrast to 'checking understanding', the teachers asked about things they were not informed about-thus to fulfill an information gap between them and the students. In a number of cases, as in LKUs-5, the teachers used 'teacher English' to get information about things related to the lesson and/or the students themselves.

LKUs-5

- 1) Have you done your homework? (SoSt T2)
- 2) Really? Can you do it now? (Cptr T)
- 3) Which page are we on? (HPE T2)
- 4) Which rhyme do you want to sing? (UKG T)
- 5) Can you spell..? (UKG T)

All of the utterances in this LKUs were intended as heuristic tools for discovering some information from the addressee(s), the students. Similarly, all of them are in the interrogative form. The verbless utterance 'Really?' (2) is a discourse marker.

6. Instructing

It comes from the data that the teachers used 'teacher English' for the regulatory purpose, which means that it in some way was used to control the students' behavior/activity. LKUs-6 displays the utterances serving this function.

LKUs-6

- 1) Sit down, please (UKG T).
- 2) Open your exercise book (UKG T).
- 3) OK, take your seat (HPE T1).
- 4) See page no... (HPE T2).
- 5) Turn to page 30 (SoSt T2).
- 6) Please look at exercise 4 on page 30 (SoSt T2).
- 7) Please turn over the page (HPE T2; SoSt T1).
- 8) Find the exercise on page 29 (HPE T1).
- 9) Do exercise 6 for homework (HPE T1).
- 10) Get ready with your pen and paper (Math T1).
- 11) Note it down (HPE T1).
- 12) Do your class work within 15 minutes (Maths T1).
- 13) Follow me please (UKG T).
- 14) Work in pairs (Cptr T).
- 15) Discuss in groups (Cptr T; SoSt T2).
- 16) Hands up/ down! (UKG T)
- 17) Raise your hands (UKG)
- 18) Repeat after me. (UKG T).
- 19) Keep quiet (SoSt T2).
- 20) Please keep quiet (Math T1).
- 21) Come and sit down here. (UKG T).
- 22) Please stand up (UKG T).
- 23) Everybody, sit down (UKG T).
- 24) Roll no five, please. (HPE T1)

All of the utterances in LKUs-6 were aimed at getting things done. A great majority of them (1-23) are in the imperative form whilst one of them (24) is a verbless, phrasal instruction.

7. Giving feedback

A considerable number of utterances were used by the teachers in the classrooms to provide the students with the knowledge of the result of their doing or performance. Utterances with this functional characteristic are presented in LKUs-7.

LKUs-7

- 1) Well done! (Cptr T)
- 2) Very good (UKG T; UKG T).
- 3) Great! /That's great! (HPE T1; Math T1)
- 4) Excellent! (Cptr T)
- 5) You've done a good job (SoSt T1).
- 6) Good job everybody (UKG T).
- 7) That's beautiful (SoSt T1).
- 8) Interesting/very interesting! (HPE T1)
- 9) Wow, how interesting! (HPE T1)
- 10) Nice work, Binit (UKG T).
- 11) Fantastic! (UKG T)
- 12) All right (Sci T).
- 13) You are a good boy (UKG T).
- 14) How beautiful!(SoSt T1).
- 15) Congratulation! You know the answer (HPE T1).
- 16) You're right (Sci T).
- 17) Good enough (HPE T1).
- 18) It's OK (MathT1; HPE T1).
- 19) Try once again (Math T2).
- 20) Well, it's wrong (SoSt T2).
- 21) Wrong answer...(HPE T2)
- 22) Definitely not (HPE T2)

LKUs-7 demonstrates four functional sub-categories which I would call appreciation, information, reservation, and rejection. The utterances in the 'appreciation' category, which consist of most of them (1-15), are very highly positive in connotation. The 'information' category includes expressions of information (16, 17, 18) and is positively connoted. The 'reservation' category includes an utterance with mild rejection (19) but is still encouraging. However, the utterances under 'rejection' (20, 21, 22) are negative sounding and involve such words as 'wrong' and 'not'.

Formally, most of the utterances in this list (1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 21, 22) are verbless phrasal exclamations used as discourse markers whereas some of them (3-the second part, 5, 7, 13, 15-the second part, 16, 18, 20) are the declarative and one of them (19) is imperative.

8. Encouraging

The participants also used 'teacher English' to encourage and prompt the students to perform some kind of task or continue it further. The utterances serving this function have been presented in LKUs-8.

LKUs-8

- 1) Please carry on (Cptr T).
- 2) Go on! Go on!! (Sci T)
- 3) Come on! (SoSt T2)
- 4) Never mind! (HPE T2)
- 5) Keep it up! (SoSt T1)
- 6) Try again (SoSt T1; Cptr T).
- 7) Don't give up (HPE T2).
- 8) Go ahead (SoSt T2).
- 9) Give it a try (Sci T).

The utterances in LKU-8 are of two categories-performance and continuation. The utterances of the 'performance' category (1, 3, 9) encourage the students to do/start doing a task and those of the 'continuation' category (2, 4, 5, 6, 7) encourage them to keep the task longer. All of the utterances are in the imperative form.

9. Controlling

In loose contrast with 'encouraging', a set of utterances were found in association with controlling or stopping the students from doing something or performing a task. The utterances associated with this function of 'teacher English' are listed in LKUs-9.

LKUs-9.

- 1) Give up/Leave it (SoSt T2).
- 2) Let it be (HPE T2).
- 3) No need to go further (Math T1).
- 4) Stop it (SoSt T2).

- 5) Be quiet (SoSt T2; HPE T2).
- 6) No noise please (UKG T).
- 7) Wait until I tell you (SoSt T1).
- 8) Do your job/work (HPE T2).

On the surface, the last utterance (8) may seem to be out of this function. Yet, in its natural context of use, it was employed by the teacher to stop a student from side-talking while doing classwork individually, hence was associated with controlling. From the formal perspective, nearly all of the utterances (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8) excepting no. 6, which is a verbless phrase, are in the imperative form.

10. Personalizing/labelling

Some uncomfortable-sounding (if not rude) expressions were also uttered by the teachers while teaching. Those expressions were 'uncomfortable-sounding' in the actual context since they were used for personalizing, labelling or even accusing the students. The utterances under this functional code are presented in LKUs-10.

LKUs-10

- 1) You look very funny today. Yeah? (SoSt T2)
- 2) You funny girl! (SoSt T2)
- 3) Being the first girl you..... (HPE T2).
- 4) Are you making fun of me? (SoSt T2)
- 5) Who is that naughty student? (SoSt T2)
- 6) You always make disturbance. I know (SoSt T2).

What makes these utterances 'uncomfortable-sounding' is the use of the labelling words such as 'funny' (1, 2), 'fun' (4), 'naughty' (5) and 'disturbance' (6) further emphasized by 'I know'. In utterance 3, the positive-sounding phrase 'first girl' was employed for a negative connotation. The forms the utterances are in include the declarative (1, 2, 3, 6) and the interrogative (4, 5).

11. Asking for and giving permission

Some permission-related expressions were noted down as data. In this analysis, they have been presented under two sub-categories: asking for permission and giving permission.

a. Asking for permission

In a few cases, the teachers asked for permission to do something from their students, as in LKUs-11.

LKUs-11

- 1) Shall we begin now? (HPE T1)
- 2) I'm sorry but I must go out (Cptr T).
- 3) Can I use your instrument box? (Math T2)

As is observable from LKUs-10, two of the utterances (1, 3) are in the interrogative form and one of them (2) in the declarative form.

b. Giving/denying permission

As opposed to 'asking for permission', some utterances were associated with giving or not giving permission. They are presented under LKUs-12.

LKUs-12

- 1) That's OK (HPE T1; Math T1).
- 2) Yes, you can (SoSt T2).
- 3) I'm afraid not (HPE T1).
- 4) OK, sit down (Math T1).

Of these four utterances, three (1, 2, 4) are associated with giving permission and one (3) with denying it. Similarly, three of them (1, 2, 4) are in the declarative form and one (3) is a verbless phrase used as a discourse marker.

12. Cautioning

Probing into the data, it occurs that the teachers used 'teacher English' for notifying students for carefulness. The utterances expressing this function are displayed in LKUs-13.

LKUs-13

- 1) The bell is going to ring (HPE T2).
- 2) Why are you always late? (SoSt T2)
- 3) Why are you being lazy? (HPE T2)
- 4) Be careful. You may fail (Math T2).
- 5) Try to be on time (SoSt T2).
- 6) I'm telling up to 10. 1, 2, 3, 4..... (UKG T).

Most of the utterances (2, 3, 4, 5, 6) are self-evident of the function but the first one (1) seems, on the surface, to be informative. Nonetheless, contextually it is not because, in the classroom context, the teacher was alerting a student to finish the task fast, thus prompting him by using this. From the formal perspective, two of them (1, 6) are in the declarative form; two (2, 3) in the interrogative form and the rest (4-the first part, 5) in the imperative form.

13. *Thanking*

It was also explored that the 'teacher English' was also used for thanking either as formality in a phatic fashion or to express gratitude, as in the ways shown in LKUs-14.

LKUs-14

- 1) Thanks (Sci T; HPE T2).
- 2) Thank you (SoSt T1, SoSt T2, Cptr T; Sci T; HPE T1; HPE T2, Math2).
- 3) Thank you very much (UKG T; Math T1).

It is typical that the utterance 'thank you' was common to most of the cases-used by seven of the nine teachers. The utterances are in single-word (1) and multi-word (2, 3) phrasal forms.

14. *Attracting attention*

The utterances used by the teachers were meant for getting the attention of the students. Four utterances serving this function were explored (LKUs-15).

LKUs-15

- 1) Oi... (name)! (SoSt T2)
- 2) OK, UKG! (UKG T)
- 3) Listen to me please (Math T2).
- 4) Excuse me (Cptr T; UKG T; SoSt T1).

Interestingly, the form 'oi' in utterance 1 is a non-honorific (so, not very polite) vocative borrowed from the Nepali language. Utterance 2 is also a vocative. Although utterance 3 superficially seems to be an instruction, it was used for attracting the students' attention. Utterance 4, which is a polite expression in English, was a commonly observed one. Formally remarking, the first two (1, 2) are verbless address words whereas the rest of them (3, 4) are imperative.

15. *Closing the lesson*

Among other functions, all of the participants in this case study used 'teacher English' to bring the class to a natural close in various ways as presented in LKUs-16.

LKUs-16

- 1) Your homework is... (SoSt T2; UKG T).

- 2) We conclude before the bell goes (HPE T2).
- 3) Thank you (HPE T2).
- 4) I think I have to conclude (HPE T1).
- 5) OK, this much today (SoSt T2; Math T2).
- 6) Now, note down your homework (HPE T1; SoSt T1).
- 7) Let's conclude (Cptr T; Math T1).
- 8) Let's not be very long. (Cptr T).

The utterances in LKUs-16 are of two categories which I call pre-closers and actual closers. The pre-closers are those which signal the closure of the lesson (1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8) and the actual closers are those which declare the closure of the lesson (3, 5). A typical strategy of closing the lesson is assigning homework (1, 6).

Discussion

Consistent with the spirit of the grounded theory method, the study began with the data, thereby bracketing the relevant literature and theories earlier. In this phase of the article, I bring the postponements to the fore. Then the discussion follows through the evaluation of the functions of 'teacher English' with the complexity of the form-function relations in mind and then suggesting the potential re-integration of the functions of 'teacher English'. Next, 'teacher English' has been discussed from the classroom management perspective. Finally, the major limitations have been pointed out, and some future directions stemming from the limitations have been suggested.

Linking the study to relevant theories and literature

The study, like a tripod, could be viewed with three theoretical lenses, namely, the human capital theory, the grounded theory, and linguistic functionalism.

The human capital theory views schooling and education as deliberate investment targeted at increasing the economic productivity of individuals (Muyia, Hairson, & Brooks, 2004). Interpreting the private school scenario from this perspective, like in a free-market, the parents and students are 'clients' and the principal is the 'manager', accountable for the wishes of the 'clients'. This explains why parents choose a 'good' school for their children in the Nepalese context—a school that can identify itself best in terms of quality education through English as one of the strong measures. This also explains why, in the context of this study, the school authority realized the need for a good quality of 'teacher English' through a teacher training program.

Methodologically, grounded theory assumes that "people, including researchers,

construct the realities in which they participate” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). That is to say, in grounded theory research, the researcher’s subjective interpretation objectified by context leads to theory formulation. That is why the study started with the data observed in the real setting of classroom teaching prior to preparing a strong theoretical and/or conceptual framework. In fact, it was aimed at investigating the real workplace problems to be addressed later through a teacher training program so as to bring about desired improvements in the current situation.

Linguistically, the study took its perspective from linguistic functionalism. Functionalists in linguistics propose that language exists to serve certain functions. From the functional perspective, we use language to replace activities which, in its absence, we would have to ‘do’. As we use language in its productive mode, we express some kind of purpose internal to us. There are almost an infinite number of such purposes for using language (Finch, 2003). More simply, language is a tool used for carrying out some kind of action realized as behavioral categories such as a request, an offer, permission, and the like, and is actualized in the form of utterances, if speech, and scripts, if writing. This explains that teachers use language (‘teacher English’ in this study) as the main medium of classroom communication and as an activity catalyzer.

The teacher in the classroom substantially uses language for a number of purposes, no matter what he/she is dealing with at hand—a content-subject or language itself as a subject. On such occasions, he/she mainly uses it for communicating with learners and for the implementation of teaching-learning strategies (Salaberri, 1995). As we can commonly observe, he/she uses it as an activity catalyzer. In the case of a content-subject, he/she uses language as a medium of instruction or content delivery whereas, on top of that, in a language classroom he/she uses it for language development in the learners. Language, as it is used by the teacher in the classroom for communicating with learners and for implementing teaching-learning strategies, and as an activity catalyzer obviously seems to be like ‘classroom language’, a typical variety of the language used by the teacher for classroom communication and activity catalyzing. Thus, we can make a claim that ‘teacher English’ exists as a form of classroom register.

Form-function relations and functional re-integration

To reiterate, the functionally oriented thematic analysis of the data resulted in fifteen classroom functions, namely, greeting, introducing the lesson or lesson activities, defining, checking understanding, asking, instructing, giving feedback, encouraging, controlling, personalizing/labelling, asking for and giving permission, cautioning, thanking, attracting attention, and closing the lesson. This section concentrates on the discussion of the results from the functional perspective.

The complexity of form-function relations could be observed in bulk in this research also. By this complexity, we mean that a linguistic form can convey a number of communicative functions, and contrarily, multiple forms can potentially be associated

with a single communicative function (Criper & Widdowson, 1974; Salager-Meyer, 1994). These kinds of overlapping relationships could be marked both with the functional categories (sub-headings under the 'Results' section) and the key utterances listed with them. As explored in this study, the form 'Thank you', for example, is associated both with thanking and closing the lesson. On the other hand, it is simply one of the three ways of thanking and one of the eight ways of closing the lesson.

The complexity mentioned above can be better managed by taking insights from the relevant literature in sociolinguistics. Thus, their number can potentially be reduced to five broad, macro-categories by integrating the similar ones together. For instance, the functional categories 'greeting' and 'thanking' can be merged as the 'phatic function' suggesting that language is used for social interaction (Crystal, 2007). Similarly, 'instructing', 'encouraging', 'controlling', 'asking for and giving permission', 'cautioning', 'personalizing/labelling' and 'attracting attention' can be organized under a single heading and conceptualized as the 'regulatory function', meaning that language is used to direct the addressee(s) to do something (Criper & Widdowson, 1974; Jakobson, 1973). Likewise, the categories 'giving feedback' and 'closing the lesson' can be integrated as the 'communicative function', which is to say that we transmit our statements, arguments, reports, ideas, analysis, synthesis, techniques of problem-solving, etc. to the receiver(s) (Robinson, 2003). The inquiry-oriented categories, namely, 'asking' and 'checking understanding' can be merged into the 'heuristic function' implying that language is used to investigate the speaker's environment (Halliday, n. d., as cited in Keenan, 1975). In a similar vein, the category 'defining' largely overlaps with-so, can be coded as-the 'metapedagogic function' or "language for language teaching" (Poudel, 2017, p. 239).

The form-function complexity can also be identified at the level of the key utterances or 'tokens', to borrow Zhu's (2014) term. To take a few examples, the utterance 'Listen to me' (LKU-15) has been attributed to the category 'attracting attention' on the basis of the context of use in this research but in other contexts, it might also serve as a token for controlling, instructing, and so on. Likewise, the expression 'Good job everybody' (LKUs-7), which has been interpreted as a tool for 'giving feedback' here, may also serve other functions such as thanking, appreciating, etc. in other contexts. What all this implies is that 'teacher English' needs to be contextually meaningful.

'Teacher English' and classroom management

The language used by the teacher in the classroom, both for communicative purposes and as an activity catalyzer, matters a lot for classroom management. Besides making teaching effective, many classroom problems can be solved with the use of appropriate language (Macias, 2018) on the one hand, and "... the fact that the teacher always shouts at the students is irritating" (Keser & Yavaz, 2018, p. 557), so is likely to result into classroom conflict, on the other. In this connection, some shortcomings inherent

in a few instances in this study can be pinpointed. In some cases, the utterances were impolite, harassing and even accusing. The category 'personalizing/labelling' itself is an irony in this regard. On the contrary, such positive categories as proposing, requesting and so on, which are desirable for a better classroom environment and more effective teaching and learning, were not especially noted. Direct, didactic (if not 'barking'!) classroom language on the part of the teacher may help develop, in learners, negative attitudes toward the teacher, class, subject, institution and learning after all. Therefore, suggestions are extended to avoid using 'uncomfortable-sounding' (if not rude) 'teacher English'. This, in turn, leads to the recommendation of teacher training and professional development aimed at addressing the issue of the existing 'teacher English'.

Limitations and future directions

This study was conducted amid some limitations. First and foremost, it was limited to a single private school in Kathmandu. So, it was confined to nine teachers of six content-subjects operating in English as a medium of instruction. Methodologically, it was an institutional, exploratory case study based on a three-day classroom observation applying an electronic recording device and a diary as the equipment/tool for collecting the data, and was carried out by the researcher for conducting a three-day teacher training program to be held at the school with an objective of improving 'teacher English'. Therefore, it will not be very reasonable to generalize the results of this study to the larger context. As a future direction, this study should be extended in terms of objectives, samples, procedures, time and other resources to achieve more varied and reliable results. Moreover, the data could have been interpreted from such perspectives as grammar, culture, aspects of pedagogy including teaching methodology, comparison, classroom management, subject specificity or further coverage, learner autonomy, and so on.

Reflection and Conclusion

To reflect, I was able to diagnose the real problem that existed in the content-subject classrooms. As the trainer, I would now plan to maintain and consolidate what the teachers already knew and was appropriate as 'teacher English' and what they did not. Now I was in position to better plan for the training. Initially, my aim in planning an intervention would be to transform the classroom from a place of tension and stress caused by the shortcomings inherent in 'teacher English' to a humanistic and joyful atmosphere by preserving and consolidating the strengths. The actual task for me, thus, would be to develop a teacher training program-an intervention that helps the concerned teachers to improve their classroom skills, and the institution to enhance their image as a provider of quality education in the medium of English.

References

- Casanave, C. P. (2015). Case study. In B. Paltridge, & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Research methods in applied linguistics* (pp. 119-135). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Criper, C., & Widdowson, H. G. (1974). Sociolinguistics and language teaching. In J. B. Allen, & S. P. Corder (Eds.), *Papers in applied linguistics* (Vol. 2, pp. 155-209). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2007). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finch, G. (2003). *How to study linguistics* (2nd ed.). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: The Sociology Press.
- Howitt, D. (2016). *Qualitative research methods in psychology* (3rd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Jakobson, R. (1973). Functions of language. In J. B. Allen, & S. P. Corder (Eds.), *Readings for applied linguistics* (Vol. I, pp. 53-57). London: Oxford University Press.
- Keenan, E. O. (1975). Review. *Language in Society*, 4(2), 247-253.
- Keser, K., & Yavaz, F. (2018). Classroom management problems pre-service teachers encounter in EFL. *Cyprot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 13(4), 511-520.
- Macias, D. F. (2018). Classroom management in foreign language education: An exploratory review. *Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 20(1), 153-166. doi:doi.org/10.15446/profile.v20n1.60001
- Muyia, F., Hairson, N. R., & Brooks, K. (2004). Human capital theory: Implications for human resource development. *Human Capital Resource Development International*, 7(4), 545-551.
- Mani, P., & Deepthi, S. (2010). *English for teaching*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
- Poudel, K. K. (2017). The metapedagogic function of language: Language for language teaching (Cases from the Nepalese context). *Research in Pedagogy*, 7(2), 239-253. doi:10.17810/2015.6
- Robinson, P. W. (2003). *Language in social worlds*. UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Salaberri, S. (1995). *Classroom language*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Salager-Meyer, F. (1994). Hedges and textual communicative function in medical English written discourse. *English for Specific Purposes*, 13(2), 149-170. doi:10.1016/0889-4906(94)90013-2
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research* (4th ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Zhu, W. (2014). Rapport management in strong disagreement: an investigation of a community of Chinese speakers of English. *Text & Talk*, 34(5), 641-664. doi:10.1515/text-2014-0021

Contributor:

Kamal Kumar Poudel, Reader in English Education and a NELTA life member, teaches at Master's level at Tribhuvan University, Mahendra-Ratna Campus, Tahachal, and has considerable experience in teacher training. A PhD scholar in functional linguistics under T. U. Faculty of Education, he has got numerous research articles published nationally and internationally.