Humanizing English Language Pedagogy: A Case Study of Kathmandu Valley School in Nepal

Narendra Raj Paneru[1]

[1] Head of the Department (HOD) Department of English Education, Sanothimi Campus, Bhaktapur (Tribhuvan University)

[1]Corresponding Author: **ORCID**: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5267-3314 Email: nrajpaneru@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper highlights the prevailing practices of dehumanized ELT pedagogies in Nepal, with a special focus on issues like cultural insensitivity, language hegemony, rote learning strategies, teacher-centered approaches, non-differentiation of teaching, and limited authentic language use. Employing the generic qualitative approach, this study used tools such as interviews, observations, and focus group discussions with purposively selected six English language teachers and eight students from six schools in Kathmandu Valley to retrieve data to explore the issues of dehumanization and humanizing strategies in ELT practices and their implications for diverse language learners in the context of Nepal. The study found that there are dehumanizing practices in the Nepali ELT milieu, and they can be humanized using soft skills, culturally responsive pedagogy, and student-centered learning.

Keywords: Humanized pedagogies, cultural sensitivity, linguistic diversity, student-centered learning, authentic assessment, community engagement

Introduction

This diversity necessitates an ELT approach that is not merely inclusive but also shows deep respect for the diverse linguistic and cultural identities of every student, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, including all castes, creeds, and ethnicities. The development of systematic education in Nepal shows an evolution in the educational approaches since the National Education System Plan (NES The rich cultural and linguistic diversities of Nepal present unique challenges to English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal. Its multitude of languages— over 120 in count— showcases the rich ethnic tapestry in the country (National Statistics Office, 2024), drafted way back in the early years of the 1970s to the most recent School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016-2023. Each of the policy documents reflects increasing endorsements of effective English language instruction (Yadava, 2007; Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, 2016).

However, the policy provisions only are insufficient to address the uneven disparities and biases in the classroom caused knowingly or unknowingly by the teachers or other authorities which often pose challenges to existing ELT pedagogies, dehumanizing them (Parajuli, 2024). It

is when education focuses only on the cognitive aspects, overlooking the personal attributes of the students as well as their inherent creativity that leads to the dehumanization of education (Agustinova et al., 2022). Moreover, inattentive treatment of the teachers' and students' agency, identity, and culture in the classroom also causes educational dehumanization (Andrews et al., 2016). In this context, the humanization of education appears to be a pedagogical need that is supported critically by Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), which enhances learning by employing students' cultural knowledge and experiences while creating a sense of belonging and engagement in the learning environment (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Likewise, student-centered forms of education as enunciated by Rogers (1969) give the greatest regard to student perspectives and experiences as those factors that generate greater incidence of motivation, engagement, and volition by the students themselves. Moreover, the infusion of soft skills into the pedagogies of ELT shows the more outward learner-centered and social aspects of education regarding skills of communication teamwork, empathy, and critical thinking (Robles, 2012; Zarifsanaiey et al., 2016; Paneru, 2024). Further, studies also emphasized the importance of students' language for success and brain function in the classroom (Cummins, 2001; Kleifgen, 2010).

Culturally responsive teaching advocates integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the learning environment to create an inclusive and engaging classroom atmosphere (Gay, 2000; Caingcoy, 2023). Ladson-Billings (1995) expressed similar ideas, calling for a culturally relevant pedagogy wherein effective teaching practices ought to be based on the students' cultural experiences and perspectives. Relevant content and instruction can, thus, increase student engagement and achievement while validating different identities.

In a similar vein, Robles (2012), Zarifsanaiey et al. (2016), and Paneru (2024) pointed out that soft skills, such as communication and working in teams, should be incorporated into English language teaching. In his paper, Robles (2012) directly addresses executive perceptions of the top soft skills required in the contemporary workplace, to help students become equipped to survive and flourish in a globalized economic context. Therefore, by engaging students in interactive and collaborative activities that build soft skills, teachers maximize student engagement, competence, and preparedness for the job market.

In addition, Cummins (2001) emphasizes the cognitive advantages accruing to bilingual education and the necessity of valuing students' native languages while learning. Culturally and linguistically responsive approaches articulated by García and Kleifgen (2010) validate the means to encourage the academic success of English language learners. Bilingualism and the incorporation of the native language into the classroom to increase the development of academic achievement and cognitive ability would entail support from teachers. Similarly, Sharma (2015) and Phyak (2013) pointed to some of the existing challenges that lie ahead for the provisions of English Language Teaching, such as the lack of resources and the lack of training for teachers, especially in the rural area of Nepalese secondary education. Reforms have been strongly reiterated by Poudel (2018) as important responses to the inequity situation and the quality improvement of ELT instruction practices. These challenges have necessitated contextually relevant and culturally responsive ELT pedagogies to meet the diverse languages and cultures to which students belong.

The School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023) of the Government of Nepal obliges the corporation of child-centered strategies and thus embodies the tenets of humanizing ELT pedagogy. This, in turn, constructs a policy framework for the equitable distribution of educational opportunities to all learners. Norton and Toohey (2011) and Wenger (1998) argue that the relationship between language learning, identity formation, and social change is ambiguous, thus giving importance to sociocultural settings for learners' various experiences and identities.

Critical pedagogy frameworks such as Dillard (2016), Freire (2000), and Benesch (2012) advocate for opening the space for dialogues around equity and social justice. Such an understanding works towards empowering and culturally responsive learning environments that endorse the engagement and empowerment of students. Barton and Lee (2013) examine the intersection of language and culture with technologies in online contexts, shedding light on how digital technologies are used to create inclusive and humanizing language-learning environments in virtual spaces.

In contrast to the theoretical backing for a humanized version of ELT, the practical scenario in Nepal presents several challenges: these include a lack of resources; inadequacies in teacher-training programmes; and standardized curricula that are unable to cater to linguistic diversity (Sharma, 2015; Phyak, 2013; Poudel, 2018). There are innumerable constraints on the practical implementation of a humanized approach to ELT in Nepal, particularly in the areas of child-centered methodologies/techniques: lack of resources, poor training of teachers, and standardized curricula that fail to address the linguistic and cultural diversities of the concerned students effectively.

This study seeks to investigate how a humanized approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) is practically implemented in Nepal, focusing on child-centered methods and techniques. The study reveals the perceptions and experiences of English language teachers in Nepal in the areas of child-centered teaching and learning activities. Considering the opportunities that these methods have opened for practice, the focus of this paper is closely on some of the challenges faced by teachers in putting this into action. Besides, the study also delves into the perceptions held by English language learners in Nepal regarding child-centered teaching in enhancing language proficiency and cultural awareness. In addition, the study intends to discover the barriers to child-centered teaching implementation in ELT and discuss possible ways of overcoming these barriers. On the other hand, the study will also evaluate the extent to which teachers and students are aware of the consequences of child-centered pedagogies for teaching and learning experiences. Finally, the study aims to draw some concrete recommendations aimed at bridging the gap that has emerged in the implementation of child-centered teaching strategies for the ELT context in Nepal.

The present study intends to look as far as possible at child-centered methods/techniques within the specific setting of English Language Teaching in the Nepalese context. It employs qualitative inquiry and consists of four English language teachers and eight school-level English language learners in Nepal. The research is not going to look into broader systemic issues within the Nepalese education system. Rather, it will focus on micro-level dynamics of classroom practices concerning ELT. The study wishes to investigate how far 'humanized' teaching and

learning activities can be implemented within the Nepalese ELT context concerning the challenges and opportunities for humanizing ELT pedagogies for diverse learners in Nepal.

Methodology

The present inquiry engaged a generic qualitative approach— used when a study doesn't strictly align with "one of the established qualitative methodologies (Caelli et al., 2003, p.1)" thus, it offers the researcher a certain degree of flexibility while drawing the necessary strengths of established methodologies (Kahlke, 2014)— to examine English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy's humanization in Nepal's multifaceted educational contexts. The field research entailed purposive sampling involving six English language teachers and eight learners from six schools within the Kathmandu Valley, ensuring representation from a variety of linguistic, ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds. For the study, data were gathered via multiple methods, such as semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions for triangulation. The retrieved data were analyzed using thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), engaging in processes of familiarization with the data, coding significant excerpts, identifying recurring themes, and reviewing these themes for coherence and relevance. The identities of all participants were anonymized to protect confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms to the participants.

Results and Discussions

As guided by the objectives of the study, the analysis of English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogies in Nepal into two overarching themes- dehumanized ELT pedagogies practiced in Nepal and the efforts to humanize ELT pedagogies in the country. Both themes present a fuller account of the present state of ELT practices and future possibilities for improvement and reform in the Nepalese educational landscape. The debate unfolds through an exploration of sub-themes within these two broad themes to offer insight into challenges, possibilities, and/or ways forward in creating better quality and more inclusive language education in Nepal.

Dehumanized ELT Pedagogies Practised in Nepal

Under this theme, several issues were identified and discussed in six sub-themes: lack of cultural sensitivity in teaching practices; language dominance and marginalization; rote learning and memorization; teacher-centered instruction; lack of differentiated instruction; and limited authentic language use.

Lack of Cultural Sensitivity in Teaching Practices

This sub-theme explores the absence of cultural sensitivity in ELT practices in Nepal; teaching methodologies disregard students' various cultural orientations and backgrounds. Teachers are likely to cling to premade materials and methodology, ignoring the cultural and linguistic diversities found in Nepalese classrooms. This creates an alienating space for the pedagogical approach, where the students are distanced from their cultural identities and experiences.

Teacher A said that the curriculum was not adequate since it did not include the cultural diversity of learners. He complained that "our curriculum does not take our students' culture into account." He finally put across the problem of having to engage students with material that hardly relates to their experiences, stating, "It's not easy getting them to engage with it when all they encounter is so distanced from their lived experience." Student A, in full agreement, further stated how the themes in English class are often not directly relevant to their life and culture; hence, carving interest and motivation in them is a lot more challenging. The classroom vignette from Kathmandu illustrates this disconnect well: Students in the class battle to read a passage about a Western holiday because it does not 'speak' to the experiences of their culture-highlighting a clear need for culturally responsive teaching practices to do away with this.

In many multicultural educational situations like Nepal, cultural sensitivity in ELT practices is a pervasive issue (Parajuli, 2024). Instead, culturally relevant teaching practices provide students with engagement and performance in the classroom that bridges the chasms created by students' cultural legacies (Gay, 2000). Standardized curricula tend to have totally dehumanized approaches to ELT and deny the cultural identities and experiences of learners (Sharma, 2015).

Language Dominance and Marginalization

In various multilingual contexts, minority languages are found marginalized because of the presence of the dominant languages. This sub-theme examines this phenomenon in the context of the Nepalese ELT, where mostly language minorities are dominated by dominant languages such as Nepali and English. In these contexts, the emphasis on English proficiency for academic as well as socioeconomic success poses a threat of marginalization to the minority languages and undermines the language identities of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This language dominance neglects mother tongue instruction, leading to language loss and cultural erosion among marginalized communities (Majidi, 2013).

This is supported by Teacher B, who stressed the pervasive perception of English as the major pathway to success, leading to the marginalization of students from minority language backgrounds. In his words, "English is seen as the ticket to success, so we prioritize it over other languages. But this marginalizes students from minority language backgrounds." In line with Teacher B, student B wishes that they could be instructed in their mother tongue since they are unable to grasp English very well and, as such, feel devalued. This conviction wins some affirmation from the vignette, where Indigenous students in rural schools— although having numerous languages in their background— cannot progress in English language teaching, exposing the systematic marginalization of minority language speakers in the education system. These verbatims and vignettes provided a thorough justification for a policy for and practice in ELT that is inclusive and strengthens linguistic diversity, valuing students' native languages in education.

The marginalization of minority languages in ELT is a crucial issue in Nepal, where English and Nepali often overshadow indigenous languages (Sapkota, 2018). Literature affirms that language classrooms using diverse mother tongues can enhance the maintenance of linguistic diversity and promote a sense of pride toward cultural heritage (Cummins, 2001).

2976-1344
****

Unfortunately, with the predominance of English as a medium of instruction, the linguistic rights and identity of minority speakers are neglected (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

Rote Learning and Memorization

One of the prevalent ELT practices in Nepal was rote learning and memorization. Students passively memorize the facts without critical engagement or interaction. This is associated with the culture of focusing only on examinations and standardized tests, which works against the development of higher-order thinking in students, pushing them away from cognitive engagement and artistic expression. Teacher C highlights the systemic pressures on the students, making them prioritize exam results over critical capacities, saying, "Our educational system prioritizes exam results, so students memorize facts rather than engage critically. This doesn't prepare them for challenges in the real world." Similarly, Student C expresses frustration with the emphasis on memorizing, saying, "We spend way too much time memorizing vocabulary for exams, but it just doesn't feel like real learning." The accompanying vignette demonstrates the reality: members of a classroom in Kathmandu copying English vocabulary lists for their upcoming exams, stressing memorization rather than modalities of meaningful language engagement. This aligns with the findings of Bhandari and Bhandari (2024), who pointed out it as one of the major problems in Nepali ELT. These trends point toward the urgent need for reforming pedagogies from developing abilities toward rote memorization to deep learning and critical thinking skills that prepare students to apply the knowledge in real-life settings.

An interesting observation is that the prevalence of rote learning and memorization in the schools of Nepal replicates global trends in education (Pandey, 2016). Research shows, however, that these practices inhibit deeper learning and develop critical thinking skills (Nabors, 2014). An interactive communicative approach to ELT supports better acquisition of the language and even higher-order thinking skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Nonetheless, the uninterrupted state of examination-oriented pedagogies continues to bring a dehumanized approach toward ELT in Nepal.

Teacher-Centered Instruction. Teacher-centered instruction, which has been marked as one of the problems in ELT pedagogy in Nepal (Bhandari & Bhandari. 2024), is another dominant practice found in this investigation. The study found instances of teacher-centered instruction, where educators dominate the classroom, relegating students to passive recipients of knowledge. This practice hinders student engagement and participation in the classroom, which ultimately diminishes the learning experiences of the students. Consequently, students cannot develop essential critical thinking and communication skills (Otukile-Mongwaketse, 2018; Bhandari & Bhandari, 2024; Shah & Basnyat, 2024).

In line with the arguments discussed above, Teacher D acknowledges the need to shift away from being the sole authority figure, stating, "I'm accustomed to being the authority figure in the classroom, but I realize I need to involve students more in their learning." Conversely, Student D expresses dissatisfaction with the passive nature of their learning experience, noting, "Our teacher does most of the talking in class. We just listen and take notes. It's not very interesting." The accompanying vignette depicts a traditional classroom scenario where the teacher delivers a lecture while students passively absorb information, reflecting the imbalance of power dynamics and limited student engagement. This underscores the importance of

adopting student-centered instructional approaches that empower learners to take an active role in their education, fostering greater engagement, autonomy, and critical thinking skills.

In many educational settings across the world, including Nepal, teacher-centered instruction still prevails, where a highly hierarchical teacher-student relationship has been established (Rijal, 2017). However, research underscores the significance of student-centered approaches, which enable learners to participate actively in their learning (Harmer, 2015). This student-centered learning environment throws open opportunities for greater engagement, autonomy, and motivation among students by changing the thrust from teacher instruction to student involvement.

Lack of Differentiated Instruction. This theme addresses the non-differentiation of ELT practices and how teachers do not adjust how they teach and use materials for a variety of different student learning needs. The one-size-fits-all approach overlooks individual differences in learning styles, abilities, and preferences, which results in many students becoming disengaged with the material and experiencing inequitable learning outcomes.

For teacher E, "I always find it very difficult to accommodate the individual learning needs of my students. It's a tall order to provide personalized support while teaching such a big class," while student E has a point when he says, "Some lessons are way fast for me, and some are slow, I wish our teacher could pace the lessons according to the needs of everyone." The accompanying vignette reveals the picture of a classroom in which the classroom teacher takes the one-size-fits-all instruction course that ends up frustrating and disillusioning students who have different levels of learning abilities. This difference highlights the drive of the concession, where speedy and differentiating instructional strategies will take place so that students' varied learning needs can be satisfied, along with promoting a contiguous environment for student success.

Tomlinson (2001) aptly noted that Differentiated instruction is essential for catering to the diverse needs of learners and promoting inclusive education. However, the lack of resources, large class sizes, and standardized curricula in Nepal often impede the implementation of differentiated teaching practices (Phyak, 2013). Individualized instruction should form the tenet of successful second language acquisition where the different linguistic competencies, socio-cultural backgrounds, and cognitive styles of learners are fully taken into account (Harmer, 2015). An individual, flexible, and adaptable style of teaching brings down all barriers to an environment where all support, academic, and social-emotional development can surface for all students.

Limited Authentic Language Use

This theme delineates the limited shreds of evidence of genuine language use in ELT classrooms, wherein language learning remains simulated context-bound and script-bound dialogues. The absence of authentic communication disallows students from acquiring language and developing fluency skill sets. The impartation of such skills would have come only through contexts that allow for the use of language in real-life scenarios.

Teacher F complains: "We focus so much on grammar drills and textbook exercises that we forget to provide authentic language experiences for our students." Then again, Student F states, "I can conjugate verbs perfectly, but I struggle to hold a conversation in English. We need more opportunities to use the language authentically in and outside the classrooms." There, in the vignette, students are engaged in textbook dialogues while their capacity for impromptu communication and spontaneous interaction is left untapped. These verbatims and the vignette, therefore, reiterate the point of employing authentic language use in ELT education for meaningful language use and fluency development.

Authentic language use is an indispensable part of developing communicative competence and proficiency in a language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Nevertheless, in traditional ELT practices in Nepal, often, the functional aspects of language are neglected, with an undue emphasis on the formal aspects, such as grammatical accuracy, at the cost of the communicative skills themselves (Sharma, 2015). Research stresses incorporating real materials, tasks, and interactions into language instruction to make a meaningfully rich learning experience (Brown, 2007). It is thus envisaged that students will become rich in real-life communication by employing role plays, discussions, and project-based learning, where fluency and intercultural competence are assumed to develop within the dichotomy of classroom input and real-life communication.

The six sub-themes under this heading throw some light on the starkly dehumanized nature of ELT pedagogies practiced in Nepal, where cultural insensitivity, language dominance, rote learning, teacher-centeredness, no differentiation, and limited authentic language use prevail. It becomes clear from the literature and the expressions of teachers and students that these problems derive their very being from systemic constraints of standardized curricula, congested classrooms, and resource limitations. Yet literature stresses the need for the employment of humanizing pedagogy that ingrains cultural sensitivity, linguistic diversity, student engagement, differentiated instruction, and authentic language use as its guiding pillars within the ELT practice (Cummins, 2001; Gay, 2000; Tomlinson, 2001). Addressing these sub-themes in conjunction with humanizing tactics will hence facilitate offering frontiers of learning environments in ELT classrooms that are open, equitable, and empowering to the students and their diverse backgrounds, identities, and realities in Nepal. Humanizing the ELT Pedagogies in the Context of Nepal

Humanizing the ELT Pedagogies

Transitioning to humanizing the ELT pedagogies in the context of Nepal, seven sub-themes illuminate pathways toward more inclusive and effective language education. Firstly, culturally responsive teaching practices acknowledge and integrate diverse cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, fostering inclusion and cultural pride. Secondly, multilingual instructional approaches leverage students' linguistic diversity to create inclusive learning environments. Thirdly, student-centered learning activities empower learners to take an active role in their education, promoting engagement and critical thinking. Fourthly, authentic assessment practices evaluate students based on real-world tasks, fostering meaningful learning experiences. Technological integration enhances language learning opportunities, catering to diverse learning styles and expanding access to authentic language input. Additionally, community engagement and collaboration foster partnerships that support students' language learning and cultural

integration. Finally, the integration of soft skills into ELT pedagogies prepares students for real-world communication, promoting holistic development and empowering learners beyond language proficiency.

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

The theme delves into the possibility of culturally responsive teaching practices in the ELT context in Nepal. In this respect, it brings to the fore the need to acknowledge and consider students' varying cultural backgrounds in a curriculum to ensure a more inclusive and engaging atmosphere of learning. The teachers who are culture responsive actively integrate aspects of students' cultures into their teaching. These include language, traditions, and values, all of which make their learners feel a sense of belonging and cultural pride.

Teacher A maintains that he does it consciously when it comes to Nepalese culture, saying, "I consciously try to integrate Nepalese culture into my English teachings." In the same way, Student A recognizes that relevant content in their culture affects their learning: "When our teacher gives examples from our culture, it makes English learning so much more interesting and relevant. Our experiences seem to matter." The accompanying vignette provides evidence of a curriculum situation whereby traditional Nepalese folktales are related to engage and enthuse students in a lively discussion. The inclusion of cultural aspects in the lesson allowed the teacher to teach language skills while also developing the students' appreciation of their cultural heritage in a more inclusive and enriching learning experience.

Culturally responsive teaching practices have been touted for equity and inclusion in education worldwide (Gay, 2000). By integrating the students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, teachers can make the learning environment supportive and empowering (Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, there is also the need for ongoing teacher professional development and support in the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy to strategically incorporate them into ELT practices (Sharma, 2015).

Multilingual Instructional Approaches

As far as this sub-theme is concerned, it examines the implementation of multilingual instructional practices in ELT classrooms in Nepal from the perspective of student linguistic diversity. Teachers use added languages in lessons that build language development and the cultural exchange that arises from students' multilingual resources as they create classrooms that embrace students' linguistic diversity, thus creating inclusive learning contexts in which students' language identities are valued and acknowledged. Teacher B recommends the use of students' mother tongues alongside English. It states, "Though I encourage students to use their mother tongue alongside English in the classroom, it helps to understand a concept well, but it is also about glorifying their linguistic heritage." In line herewith, Student B adds, "To use our language in an English class makes learning easier and less boring. It denotes our language being valued also." This vignette shows how a rural classroom teacher conducts a language talk within multilingual-resources-intensive learning during which students' varieties participate in a discussion with the teacher in Nepali and English about the topic. With the use of these languages, the teacher enables the learners to have an interesting experience where they learn from other students their different languages and cultures. By using such multilingual instruction,

a teacher celebrates the language heritage of students and transforms a setting where learning enters as the validating environment for diversity in language. Multilingual instructional approaches would encourage linguistic diversity and improve outcomes for language learners (Cummins, 2001). Taking mother tongues of students as a part of the curriculum will ensure more inclusivity and effectiveness in the environment of ELT (García & Kleifgen, 2010). However, sufficient resources and support for the successful implementation of multilingual instructional approaches are necessary since there may be challenges related to language policy conflict and teacher training (Sapkota, 2018).

Student-Centered Learning Activities

As far as this sub-theme is concerned, it examines the implementation of multilingual instructional practices in ELT classrooms in Nepal from the perspective of student linguistic diversity. Teachers use added languages in lessons that build language development and the cultural exchange that arises from students' multilingual resources as they create classrooms that embrace students' linguistic diversity, thus creating inclusive learning contexts in which students' language identities are valued and acknowledged. Teacher B recommends the use of students' mother tongues alongside English. It states, "Though I encourage students to use their mother tongue alongside English in the classroom, it helps to understand a concept well, but it is also about glorifying their linguistic heritage." In line herewith, Student B adds, "To use our own language in an English class makes learning easier and less boring. It denotes our language being valued also." This vignette shows how a rural classroom teacher conducts a language talk within multilingual-resources-intensive learning during which students' varieties participate in a discussion with the teacher in Nepali and English about the topic. With the use of these languages, the teacher enables the learners to have an interesting experience where they learn from other students their different languages and cultures. By using such multilingual instruction, a teacher celebrates the language heritage of students and transforms a setting where learning enters as the validating environment for diversity in language. Multilingual instructional approaches would encourage linguistic diversity and improve outcomes for language learners (Cummins, 2001). Taking mother tongues of students as a part of the curriculum will ensure more inclusivity and effectiveness in the environment of ELT (García & Kleifgen, 2010). However, sufficient resources and support for the successful implementation of multilingual instructional approaches are necessary since there may be challenges related to language policy conflict and teacher training (Sapkota, 2018).

Authentic Assessment Practices

In this sub-theme, the focus is on authentic assessment: evaluating students within the context of real-world tasks and performances about their language competence and communicative abilities. Teachers create assessments that might replicate instances of authentic language use, including presentational and project-based performances, but will allow students to showcase their capacity to be effective language users in actual situations.

Teacher D opines, "I believe in assessing students' language skills through real-life tasks instead of tests. Providing a more accurate picture of abilities and fostering deeper learning," mirrors a popular belief among students as expressed by Student D, "That is more relevant to how we'll use English in the real world," as a preference for real-life replication in speaking and

writing assessment instead of tests. The vignette illustrates this: the students were acting out a simulation in a classroom in Kathmandu of a state business negotiation using English. Here, the teacher assesses the students on language use, negotiation skills, and critical thinking based on performance in the role-play, thus providing an authentic assessment. Therefore, we propose that authentic assessment can also provide valid information about what the student did with the language and provide meaningful learning situations that correspond with the uses and applications of that language in the real world.

Authentic assessments have also increased the likelihood of providing a fuller and more accurate picture of students' communicative proficiency and overall linguistic capabilities (Wiggins, 1998). Hence, integrating tasks/performances from the real world into the assessments would evaluate students' language abilities and offer valid feedback on their areas of improvement (Brown, 2004). However, such smooth application has to be enacted by careful planning, training, and support for validity, reliability, and fairness in scoring (Moss, 1992 et al.).

Technology Integration

The incorporation of technology in ELT practices in Nepal is a common phenomenon today. Educators in Nepal recognize the value of electronic tools and resources in expanding language-learning opportunities. Teachers integrating technology into instruction have created highly dynamic and engaging learning experiences, especially by extending lessons beyond the classroom through online tutorials, multimedia presentations, and virtual language exchanges that enhance authentic language practice.

Similarly, Teacher E affirms the added value of technology in lessons. "I include technology in my lessons to give extra materials and chances for language practice. Further, it engages students and serves a variety of learning styles." Supporting the quote is Student E, who likes using technology for language learning: "I enjoy using technology in my English class. It makes things more interactive and opens opportunities for us to learn about different avenues of the language in a fun way." This vignette captures the picture: a classroom in Pokhara, where the teacher introduces an online language-learning platform. Here, students enthusiastically engage with interactive lessons, practice exercises, and language games, which fosters collaboration and exploration of language skills in a digital environment. Technology integration empowers educators to enhance student possibilities by meeting varied approaches to learning in providing interactive experiences in language learning in the realities of the digital age.

It has been increasingly widely adopted around the globe into ELT, bringing lots of advantages such as motivational enhancement, personalized learning experience, and development of other language skills (Stockwell, 2010). With technology being an instrument, it would be a boon in Nepal for distance learning students to take learning beyond walls since they often have little opportunity to access traditional learning resources (Sah, 2020). Cost-effective access to technology, digital literacy skills, and infrastructure limitations should be addressed for a more equitable technology-enhanced ELT in socioeconomically diverse contexts (Warschauer, 2003).

Community Engagement and Collaboration

It looks at how community involvement and interaction with other communities lend their hands to humanizing ELT pedagogies in Nepal. Teacher-parents, local community members, and other interested persons are involved in the whole educational process, which leads to constructive partnerships that support students in their language learning and cultural integration.

Teacher F has a well-built perspective on the role of community. "I believe in building strong partnerships with the community to enrich students' learning experience. By collaborating with parents and community members, he makes the learning environment very much supportive," she adds. A statement made by Student F captures almost the same idea, "When our teacher involves our parents or local community members in classroom activities, it makes learning more meaningful and relevant to our lives." The vignette provided exemplifies this type of collaboration: in a school in Lalitpur, the teacher of English organizes a cultural event, where students hold their talents in language and culture for display to their parents and community members. The activities help build bridges among the localities and develop a better appreciation for linguistic as well as cultural diversity. It is indeed with community engagement and collaboration that the educator can make the learning environment inclusive and open toward different perspectives and produce meaningful learning experiences.

Realizing that community engagement and collaboration have better constructs in quality language studies, thus incorporating schools and families into the wider community to support students' learning and well-being (Carney & Rappleye, 2011). In a very different Nepal with culture and languages diverse in quite a significant society, the involvement of citizens with their non-direct engagement in ELT defines worthy spaces for students while validating their cultural identity, making way into intercultural understanding, and strengthening its social fabric (Phyak, 2013). However, the best community engagement would only happen within an atmosphere of mutual respect, communication, and collaboration of the educator, family, and community members-recognition and visibility by all and sundry of the multiple needs and perspectives within the community (Baker, 2011).

Integration of Soft Skills in English Language Teaching

In the ELT pedagogies, integrating soft skills in language learning has begun to enjoy great recognition for making learning authentic as it prepares learners for real communication in the real world. Teacher A has elaborated on the point, "Incorporating soft skills with language learning activities is important; it increases the students' communication abilities and improves their overall personal development." Teacher B also mentions, "Collaboration, critical thinking, and so on are the soft skills that are central in acquiring the English language. I create several chances for students to develop those skills in class organically." Also, Student A goes on to share such an integration benefit, as he states, "Talks and group activities in my English class enhance my language skills, among other things, to be more able to function with people in teams."

Such an aspect becomes more significant considering Nepal's cultural reality and how paramount education should be sensitive to culture and inclusive. Sapkota (2018) highlighted how important it is for culturally responsive teaching practices to build an inclusive learning environment by embedding soft skills development in ELT lunch. It further creates relevant

culturally empowering experiences for learners from different backgrounds by embedding soft skills development in language instruction. In addition to this, the promotion of differentiated instruction, as described by Paneru (2024), coincides with the integration of soft skills in so far as it enables educators to differentiate individual learning needs and their holistic development.

In one of the classrooms' vignettes on Kathmandu, students role-play and engage in group projects where they hasten learning in their abilities in communicative competencies, problem-solving, and team building in English. This does not amplify their ability to manipulate the language; it also nurtures interpersonal skills. Therefore, even classrooms such as those thrown at students, with activities requiring authentic language use and engagement in meaningfully rich interaction to be prioritized in establishing an environment for learning that forces language along with soft skills-style-based mastery.

The very ambitious practice of integrating soft skills into ELT will represent, quite holistically, an approach that represents all possible diverse needs and capabilities of learners. Culturally responsive teaching practices and differentiated instruction thus give ground to humanizing the pedagogy in English language teaching for inclusive, empowering, and meaningful learning experiences for students in Nepal and beyond.

An exploration of these seven sub-themes separates glimpses into the very present condition in ELT pedagogies in Nepal and opens opportunities for humanizing practices toward creating equity, inclusivity, and effectiveness in language education. Aside from these major areas, the contribution of soft skills in bringing holistic development to language learners remains vital. Integrating activities with soft skills such as collaboration and critical thinking, communication, etc., related to language learning will contribute towards more meaningful and relevant learning experiences for different types of language learners in Nepal. Hence, such integration achieves the overall purpose of humanizing ELT pedagogies because it values students' holistic growth and well-being beyond mere language proficiency. However, the success of humanizing ELT pedagogies, including developing soft skills, depends on ongoing professional development, resource allocation, and collaboration of stakeholders to address challenges and promote equitable access to quality language education for all learners in Nepal. More studies and activities are needed to enlighten and motivate on applying humanized pedagogies in ELT contexts, including soft skills integration, in various educational environments by empowering educators, raising community engagement, and instituting inclusive learning environments to embrace and celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity.

Conclusion

In the Nepalese ELT landscape, dehumanized pedagogies significantly unveil the challenges such as cultural insensitivity, language dominance, rote learning, and teacher-centered instruction, which collectively impede the attainment of equitable and inclusive language education. Amid such a historical milieu, integrating soft skills with ELT stands as one of the most consequential pathways to humanizing pedagogies and nurturing the development of the entire person, going beyond mere language proficiency. These expressions of teachers and students attest to the same, emphasizing how collaborative, critical thinking and communication skills-based activities must invariably be incorporated within the domain of general language training. By implicating culturally responsive teaching and differentiated strategies, teachers can

foster inclusive and empowering learning environments that respect and appreciate the myriad cultural backgrounds of the students and ensure that no learner is left out.

These findings are buttressed further with some highly illustrative vignettes of classroom situations where soft skills integration into ELT provides contexts for meaningful learning experiences beyond the paradigm of standard domain language instruction. With this pedagogical stance, teachers are placed well to prepare their students for a future in an ever-changing world where soft skills are increasingly seen as mandatory for navigating varied socio-cultural and professional contexts. When applied as avenues for transformational teaching and learning, humanizing ELT pedagogies, especially soft skills integration, are best realized when there is a unified effort to come to the rescue of systemic issues in realizing fair determined access to quality language education for all learners in Nepal. The vision of an inclusive and empowering language education could be achieved when professional training and development are viewed and funded as a collaborative effort from stakeholders for a hopeful engagement of teacher education in Nepal's context.

References

Andrews, D. J. C., Bartell, T., & Richmond, G. (2016). Teaching in dehumanizing times. *Journal of Teacher Education, 67*(3), 170–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487116640480

Baker, W. (2011). Intercultural awareness in teaching English as a lingua franca. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 11*(2), 197–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2011.556736

Barton, D., & Lee, C. (2013). *Language online: Investigating digital texts and practices*. Routledge.

Benesch, S. (2012). *Critical English for academic purposes: Theory, politics, and practice*. Routledge.

Bhandari, B. L., & Bhandari, S. (2024). English language teaching problems in Nepal: Teachers' perspectives. *Journal of NELTA, 29*(1), 141–155. https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v29i1.72642

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. Pearson Education.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.

Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). 'Clear as mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200201

Caingcoy, M. (2023). Culturally responsive pedagogy. *Diversitas Journal, 8*(4), 3203–3212. https://doi.org/10.48017/dj.v8i4.2780

Carney, S., & Rappleye, J. (2011). Education reform in Nepal: From modernity to conflict. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513587

Cummins, J. (2001). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*. California Association for Bilingual Education.

ISSN: pISSN 2976-1344   eISSN 2976-1352
AMC Multidisciplinary Research Journal (AMRJ)
Volume: 4   Issue: 1, Year 2025
****

Dillard, C. B. (2016). Turning the ships around: A case study of (Re)membering as transnational endarkened feminist inquiry and praxis for Black teachers. *Educational Studies, 52*(5), 406–423. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2016.1214916

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.

García, O., & Kleifgen, J. A. (2010). *Educating emergent bilinguals: Policies, programs, and practices for English learners*. Teachers College Press.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education. (2016). *School sector development plan 2016–2023*. Government of Nepal.

Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Kahlke, R. M. (2014). Generic qualitative approaches: Pitfalls and benefits of methodological mixology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 13*(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691401300119

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Moss, P. A., Girard, B. J., & Haniford, L. C. (1992). Validity in educational assessment. *Review of Research in Education, 19*(1), 109–164.

Nabors, M. L. (2014). *Critical thinking in education: Teaching for tomorrow*. Rowman & Littlefield Education.

National Statistics Office. (2024). *National population and housing census 2021: Population composition of Nepal*. Government of Nepal. https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/files/result-folder/Final_Population_compostion_12_2.pdf

Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching, 44*(4), 412–446. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000309

Otukile-Mongwaketse, M. (2018). Teacher-centered dominated approaches: Their implications for today's inclusive classrooms. *International Journal of Psychology and Counselling, 10*(2), 11–21. https://doi.org/10.5897/ijpc2016.0393

Pandey, R. (2016). *Rote learning in education: Reexamining strategies for the classroom*. Educational Review Press.

Paneru, N. R. (2024). Pedagogical paradigm shift: Integrating soft skills into English language teaching. *ILAM, 20*(1), 146–163. https://doi.org/10.3126/ilam.v20i1.67316

Parajuli, N. R. (2024). The adverse effect of dehumanizing practices on student engagement and learning in English language teaching classroom. *Tribhuvan Journal, 3*(1), 32–43. https://doi.org/10.3126/tribj.v3i1.70802

Phyak, P. (2013). Language ideologies and local languages as the medium of instruction policy: A critical ethnography of a multilingual school in Nepal. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 14*(1), 127–143. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2013.775557

Phyak, P. (2013). Linguistic diversity in Nepalese education: A critical analysis of language policy and practices. *Nepal Educational Review Journal, 5*(3), 15–29.

Poudel, G. P. (2018, January 7). Integrating ICTs in English language teaching: Teachers' perception, strategies and challenges. *NELTA ELT Forum*. https://neltaeltforum.wordpress.com/2018/01/07/integrating-icts-in-english-language-teaching-teachers-perception-strategies-and-challenges/

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Rijal, M. (2017). The challenges of multicultural education in Nepal: A pedagogical perspective. *Nepal Education Studies, 6*(2), 47–60.

Robles, M. M. (2012). Executive perceptions of the top 10 soft skills needed in today's workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly, 75*(4), 453–465. https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569912460400

Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become*. Merrill.

Sah, P. K. (2020). English as a medium of instruction in South Asian education: Negotiating inequality of access in Nepal. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 21*(1), 22–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2019.1644876

Sapkota, B. (2018). Language policy and its implications for minority language speakers in Nepal. *International Journal of Multilingual Education, 4*(1), 23–35.

Shah, R. K., & Basnyat, S. (2024). Learner-centered teaching in Nepal: Insights from basic school teachers, students and administrators. *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations, 23*(1). https://doi.org/10.52783/lpi.138

Sharma, A. (2015). Dehumanized teaching practices in Nepalese classrooms: A critique of standardization. *Nepal Journal of Educational Research, 3*(2), 12–29.

Stockwell, G. (2010). Using mobile phones for vocabulary development: Testing the use of mini-tests. *The Language Learning Journal, 38*(1), 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571731003757512

Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms* (2nd ed.). ASCD.

Warschauer, M. (2003). *Technology and social inclusion: Rethinking the digital divide*. MIT Press.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance*. Jossey-Bass.

Yadava, Y. P. (2007). Linguistic diversity in Nepal: Perspectives on language policy. In *International Seminar on Constitutionalism and Diversity in Nepal*. Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University.

Zarifsanaiey, N., Amini, M., & Saadat, F. (2016). A comparison of the effectiveness of simulation-based and traditional teaching methods on the acquisition and retention of CPR knowledge in nursing students: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism, 4*(1), 16–20.