

Teaching English in Nepal from the Students' Perspective

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Abstract

The English Language Teaching (ELT) and learning situation in Nepal is mostly criticized by the general public and the academia for not being as effective as expected by the curriculum. Many research reports and research papers describe that the ELT situation is still satisfactory in Nepal. One of the most relevant evaluators to describe the situation of teaching English is the group of students who stay in the class to learn what the teachers teach in the English classes. This paper is a part of a wide-ranging research accomplished with the Emerging Faculty Research Grant from the Research Coordination and Development Council (RCDC) Rector's Office, Tribhuvan University. It was conducted with the objective of analyzing the students' perceptions towards the teachers' classroom practices and activities. This survey research was based on the information from 400 students studying in 16 secondary schools of Lumbini Province with the help of a questionnaire to rate the activities of the English teachers. The gathered information was sufficient to prove that the ELT situation does not seem to be as it is criticized and it is gradually changing and developing in Nepal that makes us become hopeful for the future. The findings of the study will help developing the ELT situation of Nepal.

Key words: Pedagogical strategies, classroom organization practice, lesson delivery, personal engagement strategies, student participation

General Background

The history of English language teaching (ELT) in Nepal is relatively recent; however, considerable efforts have been undertaken to develop it into a more effective educational practice. Over the past few decades, various government and non-governmental initiatives have introduced teacher education and professional development programs aimed at improving the quality of English instruction and, consequently, enhancing student achievement. Despite these interventions, the overall status of ELT in Nepal remains unsatisfactory and continues to attract criticism from multiple perspectives (Bhandari, 2021; Giri, 2020; Kshetree, 2018; Panthee, 2019). One of the most significant concerns relates to the pedagogical approaches adopted in English language classrooms and the extent to which teacher training translates into effective teaching practices. The issue of transfer of training whereby teachers are

expected to apply the skills and knowledge acquired during training to their classroom practice remains particularly weak at both the school and university levels (Bhandari, 2021; Panthee, 2019). Empirical studies consistently reveal that while training programs are frequently implemented, their impact on day-to-day teaching practices has been minimal, resulting in limited improvement in student learning outcomes (Giri, 2020; Kshetree, 2018). These findings present the core challenges of ELT in Nepal which are not confined to the structure and content of training programs but also extend to the contextual application of pedagogical strategies in diverse and often resource-constrained school environments.

In Nepal, various universities offer teacher education programs at different education levels, from bachelor's level up to Ph.D. with the primary goal of preparing competent educators to meet national educational goals and demands. All of these programs are designed to enhance the quality of teaching across the educational institutions. In addition to university efforts, the Government of Nepal has implemented several teacher training initiatives and invested significantly through projects aimed at improving school education. Similarly, institutions like the University Grants Commission have supported educational research to assess and enhance teaching and learning practices at both school and tertiary levels (Bhandari, 2021; Giri, 2020). Despite these ongoing efforts and substantial investments, the outcomes of teacher education and training programs have not met expectations. Research suggests that while some improvements may occur immediately after training, these are rarely sustained in long-term classroom practice. Panthee (2019) mentions that this issue is particularly acute in the teaching of English, where even after more than 18 years of formal study, including at the master's level, many students struggle with basic communicative competence. Giri (2020) describes that the effectiveness of teaching is commonly evaluated through multiple measures, such as student achievement, professional growth of teachers, and overall school improvement. However, direct classroom observation—both announced and unannounced—remains one of the most reliable means of assessing teaching effectiveness, as it provides insights into how teachers engage students and apply training in real-time classroom settings.

Teacher education serves not only to enhance the professional competencies of educators but also to directly improve student learning outcomes and overall classroom dynamics. The core intention behind governmental investment in teacher education is to elevate teaching practices in ways that positively impact students and ensure a more effective learning environment (UNESCO, 2021). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) are in the view that high-quality teacher training helps educators become more aware of their professional responsibilities, fosters reflective teaching practices, and encourages continuous development toward instructional excellence. Teaching remains a complex and demanding profession, yet it is still often undervalued in many societies. A persistent belief that teaching is an innate talent undermines the potential of structured teacher education to reshape and elevate teaching quality. However, OECD (2019) claims that research underscores that effective pedagogy can be learned and improved through targeted training programs. The ultimate aim of contemporary education

systems ensuring quality education for all is closely tied to the quality of teacher preparation.

Earlier studies, such as Hada (2008), argued that many of the issues surrounding educational quality could be addressed through high-quality teacher training. More recent research supports this perspective. For example, Borko and Putnam's (1996) seminal work in the *Cognitively Guided Instruction* (CGI) project demonstrated that professional development can significantly alter teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and beliefs, leading to improved classroom instruction and enhanced student achievement. This view has been reinforced by recent empirical studies showing that sustained and context-specific professional development positively influences both teaching practices and learner outcomes (Avalos, 2019; Hill et al., 2020).

Different kinds of training programs are provided to the teachers with the sole aim of improving the classroom practices, which means transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes in the actual classroom situation. Unfortunately, the classroom practices have not been found to be as according to the aims of those training programs and education programs. The academia, society and the teacher trainers and the researchers in this area are in the view that the teaching and learning of English is very weak and dissatisfactory which requires to be reformed as soon as possible for receiving the expected results in English. In such situation, we wanted to study the classroom activities of the English teachers focusing on how the classes are started, conducted and concluded by the trained English teachers teaching in the basic level classes of the government aided schools of Nepal and this paper focuses on the views of the students towards the English teaching in the high schools of Lumbini Province.

Research Methodology

As it is a part of a comprehensive research, this paper only focuses on the students' views about the teachers' English teaching activities. The paper is based on a survey study. For this we designed a questionnaire with rating scale about the frequency of different classroom activities of the English teachers. The questionnaire was distributed to the students of eight private secondary schools and eight government aided secondary schools purposively selected from four districts of Lumbini Province. Rupandehi and Dang were selected as the districts of Tarai and Arghakhanchi and Palpa were selected as the hilly region districts. This paper is thus based on the responses of 400 secondary level students from 16 schools of four districts of Lumbini Province.

What Students Tell About Their Teachers' Activities?

While studying the English teachers' classroom practices and teaching activities we have gathered information from various stake holders like teachers themselves, their head teachers, teacher trainers, students they teach and we ourselves as well observed the classes and gathered data. In this paper we only focus on what the students replied about their English teachers' activities and classroom practices. For this, we requested the sample students to fill out a questionnaire with varieties of statements about the

teaching activities of the English teachers and the responses are categorized into five groups that are presented here.

Instructional Planning and Teaching English

In this section we have gathered the students' responses in the following five statements of the questionnaire as presented in Table 1.

SN	Activities	Always	Sometimes	Never	Remarks
1	Prepares well to teach	50	100	250	
2	Teaches everything systematically	50	270	80	
3	Starts and ends the class in right time	150	200	50	
4	Summarizes the subject matter of the day	50	110	240	
5	Revises previous lesson before starting new lesson	40	203	157	

Table 1: Teaching and Planning

As presented in Table 1, students' perceptions of their English teachers' planning and classroom organization practices at the secondary level in Lumbini Province illustrate a complex scenario. The findings suggest notable strengths in punctuality but persistent weaknesses in lesson preparation, summarization, and revision. A particularly striking observation is that 62.5% of students reported their teachers never prepare well for lessons, while only 12.5% noted consistent preparation. This pattern implies that lesson planning is not a systematic practice in many classrooms. Previous studies in Nepal similarly highlight this concern, indicating that although teachers recognize the importance of lesson planning, systemic and contextual barriers often prevent the effective transfer of training into classroom practice (Action Aid Nepal, 2022). Inadequate preparation has been shown to compromise lesson coherence, reduce teacher confidence, and negatively affect student learning outcomes (British Council Nepal, 2022).

Regarding systematic teaching, 67.5% of students reported that their teachers employed systematic approaches only sometimes, while just 12.5% observed such practices consistently. These findings suggest that while teachers make some effort to maintain structure in lessons, their approaches lack consistency. This pattern aligns with Atuhurra and the RISE Programme's (2022) analysis of Nepal's enacted curriculum, which identified gaps in instructional alignment and systematic delivery across secondary classrooms. Without a consistent structure, students may struggle to build upon prior knowledge, thereby limiting the effectiveness of instruction. One of the relatively positive findings concerns teacher punctuality. A majority of students (37.5% always and 50% sometimes) indicated that their teachers began and ended classes on time. Since instructional time-on-task is a critical indicator of teaching quality, punctuality plays an important role in ensuring the effective use of allocated hours (Sharma, 2023). However, as noted by the British Council Nepal (2022), punctuality

alone does not ensure quality instruction unless it is accompanied by careful preparation, interactive pedagogy, and student-centered methods.

By contrast, summarization and revision emerged as significantly underutilized practices. According to the data, 60% of students stated that their teachers never summarized the day's lesson, while 39.3% reported that their teachers never revised the previous lesson before introducing new material. Both practices are essential in language education, as they help consolidate knowledge, create continuity across lessons, and foster long-term retention (Pokhrel, 2023). Practitioner reflections in Nepal (ELT Choutari, 2023) further suggest that teachers often neglect summarization and revision in favor of "covering" the syllabus, particularly in large classrooms and exam-oriented contexts. The limited use of these strategies represents a missed opportunity to scaffold student learning more effectively and enhance outcomes in English language education.

Thus, we can say that the findings suggest that while secondary level English teachers in Lumbini Province generally maintain punctuality and attempt systematic teaching, they often fall short in areas that demand reflective preparation and active pedagogical strategies, such as planning, summarizing, and revising. These results seem to be in line with the broader criticisms to the Nepali ELT, which encourage applying the teacher-centered practices and limited enactment of learner-centered pedagogy (Phyak, 2021). Strengthening professional development with a focus on practical lesson planning, scaffolding, and low-cost techniques like summarization and revision could substantially improve classroom effectiveness.

Lesson Delivery and Teaching Materials

The lesson or contents delivery is the most important part of teaching for the teachers as it is a bit different quality of every human being and a teacher needs to have the quality of expressing whatever s/he has in their mind. We have studied the teaching behaviour of the teachers asking the students about whether the teachers use pictures, charts, ICT device etc. to clarify the content, whether they use the students' mother tongue to make things clear by sharing their own experiences and the responses from the students are presented on the Table 2 below.

SN	Activity	Always	Sometimes	Never	Remarks
1	Uses teaching materials like pictures, charts	10	40	350	
2	Uses ICT devices in teaching	20	50	330	
3	Uses your language to teach English	80	240	80	
4	Makes things clear to most of the students	60	190	150	
5	Shares experiences related to the content	30	50	320	

Table 2: Lesson Delivery and Teaching Materials

As shown in the Table 2, students' evaluations of their English teachers in Lumbini Province regarding the use of teaching aids and lesson delivery strategies. The data show a very limited use of traditional visual teaching materials, such as pictures and charts. Only 10 students reported that their teachers *always* used such resources, while 40 mentioned *sometimes*, and the majority (350) noted *never*. This suggests that visual support in teaching English is rare, which contrasts with recommendations that visual aids enhance comprehension and learner engagement in EFL classrooms (Harmer, 2015; Ur, 2012). Similarly, the integration of ICT devices in teaching was also reported as minimal. Only 20 students stated that teachers *always* used ICT, 50 indicated *sometimes*, and 330 said *never*. This pattern indicates that ICT-based pedagogy is not yet embedded in secondary English classrooms in Lumbini Province. Such findings resonate with previous studies in Nepal, which highlight limited access to technology and insufficient ICT training for teachers as persistent challenges (Bhandari, 2022; UNESCO, 2022).

The use of students' first language (L1) as a pedagogical strategy was, however, more visible. A total of 80 students reported that teachers *always* used their language in teaching, 240 said *sometimes*, and only 80 reported *never*. These results suggest that code-switching between English and L1 is a common practice in English classrooms. Research in the Nepalese context has shown that such bilingual strategies can help students comprehend difficult concepts, reduce anxiety, and promote classroom interaction (Poudel, 2021; Probyn, 2019). In terms of lesson clarity, 60 students observed that teachers *always* made things clear to most learners, 190 mentioned *sometimes*, and 150 *never*. This uneven distribution reflects variability in teachers' pedagogical effectiveness. While some succeed in clarifying lesson content, others fail to ensure comprehension for all students, which is consistent with broader concerns about teacher preparation and classroom practices in Nepal (Khaniya, 2020; Shrestha, 2020). Finally, teachers' use of personal or contextual experiences related to the lesson content was reported as rare. Only 30 students stated that teachers *always* shared experiences, 50 noted *sometimes*, and a significant majority of 320 said *never*. This suggests that secondary English teachers in Lumbini Province often overlook contextualization and personal engagement strategies, which are widely considered important in communicative and student-centered pedagogy by Richards (2017) and Farrell (2019).

In this way, the results concluded in this part highlight that English teachers at the secondary level in Lumbini Province tend to rely heavily on lecture-based approaches with minimal use of teaching aids, ICT resources, or experiential teaching. Although they frequently use students' mother tongue to aid understanding, other modern strategies for effective lesson delivery remain underutilized. These findings underscore the need for professional development programs that strengthen teachers' skills in ICT integration, learner-centered methods, and contextualized pedagogy to improve English language teaching outcomes in Nepal.

Questioning and Interaction

We have also collected information from students about the English teachers' activities of asking questions and supporting them to answer the questions successfully. Some teachers keep asking the questions to the individual students and some ask the questions to the whole class or some groups in the class and it also matters how much they wait for the students to answer the questions. This part presents the responses from the students about these matters which is shown in the Table 3.

SN	Activities	Always	Sometimes	Never	Remarks
1	Asks questions individually	50	80	270	
2	Asks for the groups of students	140	60	200	
3	Waits for some time to respond	25	70	305	
4	Helps you answer properly	20	80	300	
5	Helps you ask any question from previous lesson	15	55	320	

Table 3: Teachers Question and Student Support

As illustrated in Table 3, students' perceptions of their English teachers' questioning techniques and supportive practices during lessons reveal important insights into classroom interaction. The findings suggest that although teachers occasionally use questioning as a strategy, individual attention, wait time, and scaffolding remain limited. The data indicate that only 50 students reported their teachers always asked questions individually, 80 said sometimes, while the majority ($n = 270$) stated never. This finding demonstrates that individualized questioning is rarely practiced, which restricts opportunities for personalized engagement and formative assessment. Previous research emphasizes that questioning individual learners allows teachers to check comprehension, ensure accountability, and encourage participation, particularly from less confident students (Cotton, 2001; Walsh, 2011). The underutilization of this strategy in the observed classrooms reflects a preference for generalized questioning, which may marginalize quieter learners and reduce equitable participation.

Group questioning appeared somewhat more common. A total of 140 students indicated that teachers always posed questions to groups of learners, 60 reported sometimes, and 200 noted never. This suggests a preference for engaging multiple students simultaneously rather than focusing on individuals. While group questioning can foster collaboration and peer interaction (Harmer, 2015), over-reliance on it without balancing individualized questioning reduces teachers' ability to monitor individual progress effectively. Another notable finding concerns the issue of wait time. Only 25 students reported that teachers always allowed adequate time before expecting a response, 70 noted sometimes, and 305 said never. Research consistently shows that sufficient wait

time enhances both the quality and depth of student responses, while also encouraging higher-order thinking (Rowe, 1986; Richards & Lockhart, 2007). The absence of wait time in these classrooms likely discourages reflective answers and reinforces rote responses.

Supportive scaffolding also appeared to be limited. Only 20 students reported that teachers always helped them formulate proper answers, 80 indicated sometimes, and 300 said never. Similarly, just 15 students reported that teachers always encouraged them to ask questions from previous lessons, 55 said sometimes, and 320 noted never. Such results reveal a lack of scaffolding strategies, which are critical in EFL contexts where learners often struggle to articulate ideas due to linguistic barriers. Scaffolding techniques, such as rephrasing, prompting, or modeling responses, are widely recognized as central to communicative and student-centered pedagogy (Farrell, 2019; Mercer & Howe, 2012). Their absence underscores the persistence of teacher-centered orientations that limit student autonomy and classroom dialogue. Thus, the findings from Table 3 highlight the underutilization of questioning techniques and student-support strategies in secondary English classrooms in Lumbini Province. Teachers appear to rely primarily on group questioning, with limited emphasis on individualized questioning, wait time, or scaffolding. These gaps align with broader critiques of English pedagogy in Nepal, which emphasize the dominance of traditional, teacher-fronted practices at the expense of interactive and student-centered approaches (Poudel, 2021; Shrestha, 2020). Strengthening teacher training in effective questioning strategies, dialogic teaching, and learner support could therefore play a crucial role in fostering deeper engagement and comprehension in English language classrooms.

Feedback, Support, and Remediation

In the English classes the teachers need to support the students in many ways to make the students clear about the things taught to them. They should not remain unclear in the class once the teacher finishes teaching. Thus we also tried to gather the students' views regarding the feedback support and remedial teaching in the English classes. The Table 4 presents the responses from the students.

SN	Activities	Always	Sometimes	Never	Remarks
1	Gives immediate feedback	100	150	150	
2	Re-teaches anything unclear by the students	10	40	350	
3	Checks homework in the class	10	50	340	
4	Gives class work and checks in class	50	250	100	

5	Suggests online resources, books for your study	10	20	370	
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Table 4: Teachers' Feedback and Remedial Teaching

As presented in Table 4, students' perceptions of their English teachers' feedback and remedial teaching practices in secondary schools of Lumbini Province provide valuable insights into classroom support mechanisms. The findings reveal that while immediate feedback is relatively common, other forms of remedial teaching such as re-teaching, homework checking, and recommending learning resources are notably limited. A relatively balanced distribution was observed in relation to immediate feedback: 100 students reported that teachers always provided it, 150 noted sometimes, and 150 stated never. This indicates that although feedback is a common practice in some classrooms, it lacks consistency across teachers. Feedback is widely recognized as one of the most powerful influences on student achievement, as it clarifies misunderstandings, sustains motivation, and guides improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Ur, 2012). The fact that nearly half of the students reported only occasional or no feedback underscores the need for its more systematic incorporation into instructional practice.

By contrast, re-teaching unclear content was found to be extremely rare. Only 10 students reported that teachers always re-taught when learners struggled, 40 mentioned sometimes, and an overwhelming majority ($n = 350$) indicated never. This suggests that teachers often do not take additional steps to ensure comprehension when initial explanations prove inadequate. Remedial teaching practices, such as re-explaining difficult points or adopting alternative instructional strategies, are particularly critical in EFL contexts where learners' proficiency levels vary widely (Farrell, 2019; Richards & Lockhart, 2007). The absence of such practices may exacerbate learning gaps, particularly among weaker students. Likewise, homework checking was also reported as infrequent. Only 10 students stated that teachers always checked homework, 50 noted sometimes, and 340 said never. Homework plays a significant role in reinforcing learning, promoting accountability, and providing teachers with opportunities for feedback (Cooper et al., 2006). Its neglect in these classrooms suggests a lack of systematic follow-up on independent learning tasks, which diminishes their pedagogical value.

On a more positive note, classwork checking appeared to be more prevalent. Fifty students reported that teachers always monitored classwork, 250 said sometimes, and 100 indicated never. This finding suggests that teachers are more inclined to review and correct work completed during class sessions than work done outside. While checking classwork provides opportunities for immediate correction and support, over-reliance on in-class monitoring at the expense of homework checking may restrict opportunities for learners to develop independent study skills, which are considered essential in language education (Nation & Macalister, 2021). The practice of suggesting additional resources such as online materials, reference books, or other supplementary learning aids was

reported as extremely limited. Only 10 students indicated always, 20 said sometimes, and 370 said never. In the digital era, encouraging students to engage with supplementary resources is increasingly viewed as a key component of promoting learner autonomy and extending learning beyond the classroom (Benson, 2013; Reinders & White, 2016). The absence of this practice reveals a significant gap in fostering independent, resource-based learning in secondary English classrooms in Lumbini Province.

In this way, the findings in table 4 suggest that while some teachers provide immediate feedback and occasionally check classwork, the broader practices of remedial teaching, homework monitoring, and resource suggestion are generally absent in secondary English classrooms in Lumbini Province. This reliance on limited feedback mechanisms reflects a teacher-centered approach that prioritizes coverage of curriculum over individualized learner support. To strengthen English language teaching, professional development should emphasize not only the importance of timely and constructive feedback but also the value of remedial teaching and resource-based learning in addressing diverse learner needs.

English Class Management and Student Participation

For the present study we also asked the informant students about some activities related to the classroom management and overall impression of the students about their English teachers. The information we gathered from the students is basically divided into five different activities and the result is presented in Table 5.

SN	Activities	Always	Sometimes	Never	Remarks
1	Moves around the class while teaching	200	150	50	
2	Helps students participate in classroom activities	40	60	300	
3	Listens to your views and ideas in the class	10	150	240	
4	Replies your questions properly	150	200	50	
5	Helps you develop your English	20	80	300	

Table 5: ELT Class Management and Student Participation

The Table 5 presents students' perceptions of their English teachers' classroom management and practices aimed at promoting participation in secondary schools of Lumbini Province. The findings suggest that while some aspects of classroom management, such as teacher mobility and question handling, are relatively positive, student participation and learner-centered practices remain weak. One of the strong practices reported was the teachers' movement around the class while teaching. A large

proportion of students (200 *always* and 150 *sometimes*) noted that their teachers moved around, while only 50 reported *never*. Teacher mobility in the classroom is an important nonverbal behavior, as it enhances classroom control, maintains student attention, and reduces physical and psychological distance between teacher and learners (Burgoon et al., 2016; Kusanagi, 2022). This finding indicates that many teachers in Lumbini Province recognize the importance of physical presence and monitoring during instruction.

However, teachers' support for student participation in classroom activities was reported to be low. Only 40 students stated that their teachers *always* encouraged participation, 60 said *sometimes*, and a large majority (300) said *never*. This result suggests that most English classes remain teacher-fronted, with limited opportunities for active student engagement. Student participation has been widely linked to increased motivation, better retention, and the development of communicative competence (Dewaele & Mercer, 2018; Sato, 2019). The underutilization of participatory practices reflects a gap in adopting communicative language teaching (CLT) principles, which remain a challenge in many Nepali schools (Shrestha, 2020). Listening to students' views and ideas was also found to be minimal. Only 10 students reported *always*, 150 *sometimes*, and 240 *never*. This indicates that students' voices are often neglected in English classrooms, reinforcing the dominance of teacher-centered discourse. Recent research emphasizes the importance of dialogic teaching and student voice in promoting agency and critical thinking in language education (Mercer & Howe, 2012; Walsh, 2021). The lack of attention to students' perspectives suggests that English classrooms in this context may not yet be fostering democratic, interactive learning environments. In fact, teachers' responses to students' questions were relatively encouraging. One hundred and fifty students reported that teachers *always* replied to their questions, 200 said *sometimes*, and only 50 said *never*. This finding suggests that teachers make efforts to address student queries, which is important for building trust and promoting classroom interaction. Research shows that when teachers respond effectively to questions, students feel valued and are more likely to engage in future learning interactions (Waring, 2017; Walsh, 2011). Finally, the majority of students reported that teachers provided limited help in developing their English skills. Only 20 students said teachers *always* helped, 80 said *sometimes*, and 300 said *never*. This finding reflects a significant weakness, as the primary responsibility of ELT teachers is to facilitate learners' language development through scaffolding, meaningful input, and communicative activities (Nation & Macalister, 2021; Richards, 2017). The absence of such support indicates that many teachers may focus more on content delivery than on actively guiding language acquisition. Thus, the findings of Table 5 highlight a mixed picture of ELT classroom management and participation in Lumbini Province. While teachers often move around the classroom and respond to student questions, they fall short in promoting student participation, valuing learners' voices, and directly supporting language development. These patterns echo broader critiques of ELT in Nepal, where traditional teacher-centered methods persist despite policy-level emphasis on communicative and learner-centered approaches (Phyak, 2021; Shrestha, 2020). To

improve classroom practice, professional development should focus on fostering student participation, integrating dialogic pedagogy, and enhancing teachers' ability to scaffold language learning effectively.

Conclusions

In this paper, we requested the students of the selected schools to evaluate their English teachers' classroom teaching activities from entering into the class to going out of the class. We found that the students were more positive about their teachers and they evaluated their English teachers to be slightly better than what we found in our class observation. The students were found to be rating the English teachers' teaching of English in positive way regarding their preparation, punctuality, lesson planning, use of teaching materials etc. as well as their questioning style, feedback and conclusion of the classes etc. Thus this shows that the students are to some extent satisfied with their English teachers and teaching of English which is also a sign of development in ELT. Though the responses are not fully positive towards the English teachers we can be hopeful that the situation has been changed and gradually we will have good ELT situation and satisfied students and stakeholders from the perspectives of the students.

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