# Ensuring Engagement in English Language Learning Activities: Teachers' Practices in Sunwal Municipality.

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the practices employed by English language teachers in Sunwal Municipality to ensure student engagement in English language learning activities. As language acquisition is significantly influenced by student engagement, the research focuses on identifying the strategies, methodologies, and classroom practices that promote active participation among learners. Through qualitative methods, including interviews and classroom observations, the study explores how teachers adapt their teaching techniques to enhance students' motivation, interest, and overall involvement in language learning activities. The findings highlight the importance of varied instructional approaches, interactive activities, and a supportive learning environment in fostering engagement. The study also addresses the challenges teachers face in maintaining consistent student involvement and offers insights into potential solutions to improve teaching practices in the context of Sunwal Municipality. The results contribute to the broader understanding of effective language teaching strategies and provide valuable recommendations for educators to enhance student engagement in English language classrooms.*

*Key words*: Engagement, instructional method, language acquisition and practices

## Introduction

The teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language in the contemporary educational landscape is deeply intertwined with the concept of student engagement. As the pedagogical focus shifts from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered experiences, ensuring meaningful student involvement has emerged as both a critical goal and a persistent challenge for language educators (Ly and Education, 2024). Engagement, in this context, transcends mere compliance or participation; it encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions that are integral to successful language acquisition (Amini et al., 2017). Learners who are genuinely engaged are more likely to invest effort, sustain motivation, and participate actively in communicative practices that foster language development.

This study, grounded in the pedagogical realities of Sunwal Municipality, investigates how English language teachers conceptualize and enact engagement in their classrooms. Situated

within a rapidly evolving educational context, the municipality presents a microcosm of Nepal's broader efforts to enhance English language education, particularly in public and community-based schools where resource constraints, diverse learner backgrounds, and large class sizes often pose significant instructional challenges.

Drawing from qualitative data generated through in-depth interviews and systematic classroom observations, this research seeks to uncover the lived experiences of English language teachers as they strive to foster an engaging learning environment. It examines the array of instructional strategies, classroom activities, and adaptive techniques that teachers employ to stimulate students' interest, support sustained attention, and encourage active participation. Particular attention is paid to the nuanced ways in which teachers negotiate curricular demands, contextual limitations, and individual learner differences in their pursuit of effective engagement.

In doing so, this study aspires to make a meaningful contribution to the discourse on language teaching practices in under-researched local contexts. It not only amplifies the voices of frontline educators but also offers practical insights and pedagogical implications that may inform teacher training, curriculum development, and policy interventions. More broadly, it aligns with the global recognition that engaged learners are at the heart of transformative language education, and that understanding teachers' engagement-enhancing practices is essential to nurturing such learners.

By examining the specific practices within Sunwal Municipality, this research sheds light on the interplay between teacher agency, instructional design, and learner response. It underscores the value of contextually grounded, reflective teaching approaches that acknowledge and address both the affordances and constraints of real-world classrooms. Ultimately, the findings affirm that ensuring engagement in English language learning is not a peripheral concern, but a foundational component of pedagogical effectiveness and educational equity.

## Literature Review

Student engagement has long been recognized as a cornerstone of effective language acquisition. Engagement, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Mekki et al., 2022), is essential for meaningful participation and sustained learning in English language classrooms. In the context of second or foreign language learning, engaged learners tend to exhibit greater willingness to communicate, higher motivation, and increased achievement (Peng and Woodrow, 2010). Thus, fostering engagement is not a supplementary task but a fundamental responsibility of the language educator.

## Pedagogical Strategies and Learner Engagement

The role of pedagogical strategies in enhancing engagement has been extensively documented. Researchers such as Salazar Cruz (2019) argue that communicative and student-centered methodologies—like task-based learning, cooperative learning, and project-based instruction—are instrumental in fostering active learner involvement. Similarly, Salih and Omar

(2024) emphasizes the importance of contextualizing language tasks to make them relevant to learners' real-life experiences, thereby increasing both interest and engagement.

## Teacher Practices and Classroom Dynamics

Teacher practices significantly influence classroom engagement. Supakorn and Network (2020) underscores the importance of interactional competence among teachers, which involves the ability to manage classroom talk to facilitate learner participation. Similarly, Komlosi-Ferdinand (2023) highlight the teacher's role in creating a psychologically safe and emotionally supportive environment that nurtures students' willingness to engage in the learning process.

## Motivation and Learner Autonomy

The interconnectedness between motivation and engagement is well-established in second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2001). When learners perceive tasks as meaningful and feel autonomous in their learning, they are more likely to invest effort and sustain attention. Self-determination theory (Wood, 2016) further suggests that environments which satisfy learners' needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness foster higher engagement levels.

## Cultural and Contextual Influences

Engagement cannot be fully understood without considering the sociocultural and institutional context in which language learning occurs. In low-resource or rural educational settings, such as many found in South Asia, engagement is often hampered by large class sizes, lack of materials, and traditional rote-based teaching methods (Johnson, 2022) Yet, context-sensitive adaptations by innovative teachers have shown potential to mitigate these constraints and support engagement even in challenging environments.

Despite the rich body of literature on engagement in language learning, several critical gaps persist—particularly in context-specific research focusing on underrepresented regions like Sunwal Municipality in Nepal. Much of the existing scholarship is either theoretical or based in urban and resource-rich educational settings, offering limited applicability to rural or semi-urban contexts where pedagogical challenges are markedly different.

Moreover, while the global discourse has emphasized learner-centered approaches, few empirical studies have explored how teachers in localized settings interpret and implement such methodologies to enhance engagement. The unique constraints and affordances of the Sunwal Municipality, including linguistic diversity, infrastructural limitations, and sociocultural factors, remain largely unexamined in the academic literature.

Most importantly, the perspectives of teachers—their voices, adaptive strategies, and everyday classroom realities—are often underrepresented. There is a pressing need for qualitative, practice-oriented investigations that not only document what teachers do but also illuminate why they do it, how they respond to engagement challenges, and what insights their lived experiences can offer to the broader pedagogical community.

## Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of English language instructors regarding their practices to ensure student engagement in English language learning activities. The qualitative paradigm was deemed most appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives, contextualized within their professional environments (Halme et al., 2024). Specifically, this research aimed to capture the nuanced and situated strategies employed by teachers to foster student involvement in language learning classrooms.

The study was conducted in Sunwal Municipality, located in Nawalparasi (West), Nepal, a region that encompasses a variety of secondary schools where English is taught as a compulsory subject in Grades 11 and 12. The participants were ten English language instructors currently teaching at this level. These participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria of accessibility, availability, and willingness to contribute meaningful insights relevant to the research focus (Ames et al., 2019).

In order to ensure equitable and practical participation, a first-come, first-served basis was used within the purposive sampling frame. This approach was particularly effective in managing the selection process ethically and transparently, while maintaining the relevance and adequacy of the participant pool (Demanuele, 2025). All participants were provided with detailed information about the study and consented voluntarily to be part of the research.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the practices adopted by the teachers, semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary data collection tool. This method enabled the researcher to explore participants' lived experiences, pedagogical philosophies, and practical strategies in a flexible yet focused manner (Ruslin et al., 2022). The interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions, allowing participants to elaborate on their practices, reflect critically on their instructional decisions, and share illustrative classroom experiences.

Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. Interviews were conducted in a language of the participants' preference (English or Nepali) to ensure comfort and clarity, and all data were subsequently transcribed and, where necessary, translated into English for analysis.

In order to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, classroom observations were conducted as a supplementary data collection method. These observations served to triangulate the interview data, allowing for the cross-verification of teachers' reported practices with their actual classroom behaviors (Williams, 2021). Observation sessions focused on teaching techniques, student-teacher interactions, classroom dynamics, and the use of instructional materials aimed at enhancing engagement.

The data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed thematically using MAXQDA. A coding framework was developed inductively, allowing key themes to emerge organically from the data. The researcher engaged in a continuous process of data immersion,

coding, categorization, and interpretation, aiming to identify patterns and variations in teachers' engagement practices. The integration of interview narratives and observational insights provided a richly textured account of instructional strategies and contextual challenges.

## Discussion

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the practices employed by English language instructors in Sunwal Municipality to enhance student engagement in the classroom. As engagement remains a cornerstone of effective language acquisition, it is imperative to analyze not only what teachers are doing well but also the gaps that hinder optimal pedagogical outcomes. The discussion, therefore, centers on the dual realities of better engagement practices on one hand and the persistent limitations in ICT integration, innovation, and adaptability on the other.

## Positive Practices for Engagement

The study revealed that the majority of teachers are deeply committed to fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. Many instructors employ interactive strategies such as group discussions, question-answer techniques, storytelling, and context-based explanations, which have proven effective in promoting student participation. These practices are grounded in humanistic and communicative pedagogies that prioritize learner involvement, reduce anxiety, and encourage expression—especially important in language learning contexts.

Moreover, a significant number of instructors demonstrate an intuitive understanding of the need to vary instructional methods to sustain attention and interest. The use of humor, real-life examples, and local cultural references were noted as effective means of capturing and maintaining students' attention. Teachers also reported making conscious efforts to develop rapport with students, monitor individual progress informally, and provide verbal reinforcement—all contributing positively to learner engagement.

## Limited ICT Integration and Traditional Pedagogies

Despite these commendable efforts, a critical finding of this study is the limited integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the teaching-learning process. Although all participating instructors expressed awareness of the potential of ICT to enhance language learning, very few demonstrated the active use of digital tools, resources, or platforms. Classrooms remained largely dependent on textbook-driven instruction, with minimal incorporation of multimedia, interactive applications, or online content. This lack of ICT integration appears to stem from a combination of infrastructural limitations, insufficient training, and a lack of institutional support, compounded by teachers' hesitancy to experiment with unfamiliar tools.

In addition, the classroom observations confirmed a heavy reliance on traditional pedagogical methods such as lecture-based instruction, rote learning, and grammar-translation techniques. While these methods offer structural clarity, they often limit opportunities for student-

centered interaction and fail to align with the communicative goals of modern language education. The absence of project-based learning, task-based activities, or reflective assignments further suggests a resistance to instructional innovation.

## Innovation and Professional Stagnation

Another notable concern lies in the limited inclination toward pedagogical innovation. Many teachers conveyed a sense of professional inertia, adhering to long-standing methods without active pursuit of contemporary strategies. Although they acknowledged engagement challenges in their classrooms—such as declining student motivation, passivity, and distraction—few showed a willingness to revise or update their teaching practices accordingly. This reluctance may be partly attributed to a lack of professional development opportunities or supportive peer networks, but it also reflects a comfort with familiar routines and a cautious attitude toward change.

It is particularly telling that instructors expressed significant concern about their students' low levels of engagement but did not correlate this concern with their own need for instructional renewal. This disconnects points to a deeper issue in teacher preparedness and reflective practice. Without a culture of ongoing pedagogical inquiry, innovation remains peripheral, and engagement challenges persist without systematic resolution.

## Human Dimension and the Need for Support

Importantly, the study recognizes that the limitations observed are not simply a matter of individual teacher reluctance, but are embedded within broader systemic and contextual constraints. Teachers often operate in resource-constrained environments, with limited access to training, mentoring, or technological infrastructure. Their hesitance, therefore, must be understood within the realities of their teaching contexts, workloads, and institutional expectations.

## Conclusion

This study sought to explore the practices of English language teachers in Sunwal Municipality as they strive to ensure student engagement in classroom learning activities. Through the voices and experiences of ten dedicated educators, the research offers a window into the realities, challenges, and aspirations of those working on the frontlines of language education.

It is clear from the findings that teachers recognize the centrality of student engagement in language acquisition and employ various interpersonal and instructional strategies to foster an interactive learning environment. Their efforts—rooted in commitment, care, and contextual knowledge—are commendable and reflect a genuine concern for students' learning experiences.

However, the study also reveals a concerning gap between pedagogical intention and innovation. The continued reliance on traditional teaching methods, coupled with minimal use of ICT tools and limited exposure to professional development, reflects an urgent need for systemic support and capacity-building. While teachers express anxiety over disengaged students, many remain hesitant or unequipped to adopt new approaches that could transform their classrooms into

more dynamic, learner-centered spaces.

What emerges from this inquiry is not a critique of teachers, but rather a call to action—an invitation to policymakers, educational institutions, and teacher training bodies to invest in the ongoing growth of educators. Engagement in the classroom is not only the responsibility of individual teachers; it is a shared endeavor that demands resources, mentorship, and a culture of continuous learning.

At the heart of this study is a deeply human story: one of teachers who care, who try, and who often feel the weight of systemic constraints. Their voices echo the need for support, inspiration, and innovation—not just for their own professional fulfillment, but for the betterment of their students. By listening to these voices and acting upon them, we take a meaningful step toward more engaging, equitable, and effective English language classrooms.

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