

Student Discourse in Nepal's Secondary English Classrooms: Practices and Patterns

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Abstract

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There has been little research into student discourse in Nepal's secondary English classes although student talk plays a crucial role in enhancing language and cognitive abilities. For an extended period, student discussions have been overlooked or tightly regulated, leading to restricted chances for genuine interaction. This research aims to examine the practices and patterns of student communication in secondary English classes within the context of Nepal. It specifically seeks to investigate what students discuss and how they engage interactively throughout lessons. The researcher employed a qualitative research design within an interpretive framework. Using conversation analysis (CA), the research concentrated on Grade 10 students from four secondary schools in Nepal's Sudurpaschim Province. Data were gathered across a year using 12 hours of audio-recorded classroom observations along with comprehensive field notes. The results show that students often communicate and seek clarification in the Nepali language, frequently starting discussions in their native tongue to convey meaning. Student interactions are mainly reliant on the teacher, featuring

repetitive greetings, fragmented syntax, and a significant dependence on non-verbal signals like raising hands, nodding, and gestures. Moreover, a hierarchy is present in which students with superior English skills lead interactions, whereas those with lower proficiency stay passive. This research aids educators and teacher trainers emphasizing the importance of translanguaging as a useful resource for engaging students. Researchers benefit from empirically grounded insights into how local communication styles and gestures affect English dialogues, establishing a basis for future research on multilingual teaching approaches and learner autonomy.

Keywords: classroom discourse, illocutionary aspect, interaction, language learning, power relation

Introduction

Humans create and rebuild their worlds through language, but also through language used in conjunction with non-linguistic symbol systems, behaviors, technologies, artifacts, devices, and unique ways. Classroom discourse varies from other conversational forms as it is shaped by educational settings (Skidmore, 2006). In classrooms, early elicitation sequences are characterized by teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation (IRE), with interactive activities frequently following the IRF sequence; gradually, researchers substituted “evaluation” with “feedback” to highlight interaction’s role in delivering information about language use (Mehan & Wood, 1975; Lee, 2008; Nassaji & Wells, 2000) as discourse (Jørgensen & Louise, 2002). Convincingly, Adger (1984) says interaction is favored because it allows teachers to verify students’ comprehension level.

In Nepalese English classes, students talk with each other and their teachers in terms of learning language. Students play an important role in creating a classroom environment conducive to learning and their talk helps in developing language and thinking skills (Walsh, 2011). In Nepal, secondary schools where English is used as one of the main languages in national level exams like the SEE, there has been very little exploration of student talk even though it could be used as a means to examine teacher effectiveness and students' learning (Sharma & Phyak, 2019). For a long time, teachers have been the main focus and students' talk has been ignored, which has resulted in few chances for real communication (Cazden, 2001). Communication is considered when the language user identifies a context that needs the conveyance of information to establish a convergence of knowledge so that this situation can be altered for interaction (Behnam & Pouriran, 2009). Students try to ask questions whenever they have difficulty to grasp the content.

The student discourse can occur with a partner, group, whole class, or student-to-teacher level. Their involvement in discussion and their engagement also come within conversation by which they can engage in. It is believed that teachers have to contribute solely to the success of discourse, but there is a pivotal role for students in language learning (Anana, 2019). Studying the student discourse in school’s English classes in Nepal is a novel area since researches have not been carried on yet. Using Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (1978), the study aims at examining what and how students talk in Nepalese secondary English classes. As Nepal is a country of many languages, knowledge of these factors can guide the use of English through tasks that are appropriate to local situations (Ellis, 2003). Thus, I tried to explore how students talked and what their classroom interactive activities were here.

Review of Literature

Discourse analysis deals with the study of discourse in connection with the language in use. In the same way, classroom discourse involves the language and interaction that occurs in classes. In it, the language and dealings of pedagogues for instructional purposes happen with teaching and learning layers. Classroom discourse analysis locates student talk as a co-constructed tool for language development through different functional aspects of language and social-cultural perspective of learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Halliday, 2004). In a recent book, Walsh (2011) describes key techniques like "extended learner turns" and "form-focused feedback" that push the learner's agency beyond just the usual initiation-response-feedback (IRF) pattern. Studies around the world have shown that interactive discourse increases fluency and helps learners negotiate meaning in ELT (Johnson, 1995). Nevertheless, in teacher-dominated classrooms, students are rarely given an opportunity to speak,

which prevents them from developing their communicative competence (Cazden, 2001). Student Discourse in Nepali ELT Contexts Secondary English classes in Nepal tend to retain the post-colonial characteristics, whereby students' memorization for rote exams is the main activity and student discourse is basically controlled (Phyak, 2018). Likewise, Sharma and Phyak (2019) discovered that Grades 9-12 rural students who are mostly answer display questions and make interactive turns less than 20% of their lesson time, whereas urban students are around 40% interactive.

Discourse of students is seen in the use of language, activities, and learning intentions. Contrarily, Task -based language teaching (TBLT) and other task-based methods have been successful for instance, Giri (2017) witnessed exploratory talk when learners were involved in group activities. In spite of this, code-switching and dominance issues persist, as outlined by Sah & Li (2020). The statement emphasizes a significant tension in multilingual education: despite efforts to create inclusive, equitable classroom environments, the linguistic practices of code-switching and power imbalances related to language dominance continue to shape interaction patterns. Referencing Sah & Li (2020), the passage uses their findings as concrete proof documenting how systemic issues—such as which language holds prestige and which speakers dominate discourse—remain unresolved even after pedagogical interventions.

The changes in context need to be taken into consideration to conduct this kind of analysis. Even while multimodal discourse practices in modern language instruction are becoming more widely acknowledged by academics, this crucial aspect has been mainly ignored in previous studies conducted in Nepali secondary schools. The majority of earlier research has concentrated on conventional, unimodal methods of language instruction and discourse analysis, neglecting to take into consideration the variety of multimodal resources that students and teachers frequently use in increasingly multilingual and technologically advanced classes including digital texts, visual representations, gestures, and interactive whiteboards. This gap is especially important because Nepal's fast evolving educational environments, such as the integration of educational technology and policy changes toward multilingual education, clearly call for analytical frameworks that account for these multimodal practices. According to Gee (1999, p. 11), we actively utilize written and spoken language to construct or create possibilities. Language is stretched in discourse extending to the use of language in social contexts and semester system-based classes (Jora, 2026) highlighting conversation.

Interactional Approaches

Interaction approaches are being used to analyze the interactions that are prevalent in educational settings. In the early 1970s, research on language in schools began to move from a focus on discrete chunks of language to communicative affairs for "understanding what is tried to be conveyed and the exemplary status of language in the enterprise" (Hymes 1972, p. xxviii, as cited in Adger & Wright, 2015, p. 859). Adger and Wright (2015) opine that these approaches are the main ways of studying school-setting language. These approaches connect initiation, response, and evaluation (IRE) to reveal classroom interaction. They follow the tripartite sequence of feedback, follow-up, and evaluation. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) add that classroom interaction goes through the stages of initiation, response, and feedback (IRF). IRF keeps the conversation open by providing follow-up that encourages more student participation, whereas IRE stops discourse by having the teacher determine whether the student's response was correct or incorrect.

The IRE pattern is the focus of interaction approaches. This sequence (Adger, 1984, p. 249, as cited in Adger & Wright, 2015, p. 859) can be viewed in the following discourse in which the teacher is checking his students' understanding of her ways for a math worksheet:

Teacher: What will you color in this row?

Students: Blue

Teacher: How many blue squares?

Students: Three

Teacher: Same on twenty-five, and twenty-six, the same thing.

In the class, interaction is the central aspect of English language teaching and learning. Primarily, teachers and students talk in terms of teaching and learning items. They interact with each other for the contextual matters from the texts. Within IRE pattern, teachers and students talk in the series of communication. Furthermore, teachers initiate questions, students respond the questions of teachers, and teachers evaluate their students.

Methodology

Qualitative research highlights the real experiences of persons and happenings of events. A qualitative research method was used for the study in order to understand student discourse in authentic classroom settings, focusing on depth rather than breadth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Discourse analysis is a qualitative method by which student interactions during English teaching and learning can be analyzed (Ten Have, 2007). Then, by conversation analysis (CA), a strand of discourse analysis that examines talk in interaction, the authors have critically analyzed students' contributions in English classes. From an interpretative perspective, the paper tried to understand how the students' language assisted them in making meaning and language learning (Schwandt, 2000). Four secondary schools in Nepal's Sudurpaschim Province were purposively selected for this study which were considered in terms of context and accessible after getting approval from principals (Patton, 2015). The four schools were selected because they were essential to collect the data regarding student discourse. The sample of this study was Grade 10 students involving 50 students, whose discourse was observed. Data were gathered through non-participant observations of intact English lessons three times per school over one year (September 2024-June 2025), spaced at intervals to capture evolving patterns. Classes were observed for 9 times, verbal interactions through audio recording were made for 12 hours, and detailed field notes describing both verbal and non-verbal cues were taken. I established rapport with principals and teachers before the first observation. Transcription of audio recordings was done in Jeffersonian CA conventions (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017). The manual thematic coding resulted in patterns such as turn-taking and code-switching, but interpretation was done by the researchers so that the complexity of the context has not lost. I crosschecked notes and transcriptions for maintaining validity of the study.

Results and Discussion

The study showed that in Nepalese secondary English classes, teachers lead most of the talking and often use a pattern where the teacher asks a question, a student answers, and the teacher gives feedback. Mostly, teachers speak, and students often give short answers that show they understood, instead of really explaining their thoughts. However, classes that use structured pair or group work, ask open questions, and encourage students to take risks when speaking show more equal participation, longer student responses, and more English use. This suggests that focused changes in teaching—

especially in how questions are asked, how interaction is supported, and how Nepali is used wisely—can really help students get more chances to speak and get better at talking in English in Nepal's multilingual secondary English classrooms.

Use of the Nepali Language in the Classroom

In the case of Nepal, students follow their teachers in other contexts. When the teacher asks students questions in the target language, students enjoy answering in Nepali. Teachers and students advance the cultural agenda primarily through face-to-face interaction, and it is this interaction itself that puts teaching and learning into action (Huth, 2011). Students try answering their teachers' queries even if they are unable to tell them in full sentences. Teachers teach English, adopting the Nepali language. Students request their teachers employ Nepali to repeat and tell to clear their confusion. While students are asked questions, they answer in English as much as they can. But the intention of the students is to adopt the Nepali language. Students tried to answer in Nepali when teachers interacted. The TA of Sanjeevani Secondary School was talking about "Interpreting Charts and Diagrams" which can be shown as:

T: You have to interpret charts and diagrams.

Ss: (Binod) sir exammā chārt diieko huncha ki? hāmīle interpret garne? Is a chart given in the exam? [Should we have to interpret it?]

T: Yes. You have to interpret and write sentences about the chart. You should write in one or two sentences.

Ss: Sir. Sir, hāmīle pie chārt mā diieko kharca anusār garnuparcha, sir? [Should we do the question according to what is given in the pie chart, sir?]

While visiting Sanjeevani Secondary School we noticed that Grade 10 students kept using Nepali language even though the lesson lasted 40 minutes. Close to half time they were using Nepali for main activities like answering teacher questions. Mostly, students code-switched to Nepali language for clarity. Teachers were also demonstrating translation techniques which is very much in line with the idea of two languages or translanguaging where different language skills are used for better understanding (Garca & Wei, 2014). From the data, it was clear that students were the ones who started the conversation in Nepali and used some English for memorized answers. This finding is consistent with research in other sites and shows how heavily Nepal's education is still influenced by exams (Sah & Li, 2020). This prominent use of Nepali in interaction supports the sociolinguistic perspectives of code-switching as facilitating L2 learning rather than signifying incompetence, as it allows for meaning negotiation even in settings where resources are limited (Lin, 2013). This practice, among many others, highlights the importance of educational approaches that allow for the use of mixed discourses instead of sticking to monolingual standards (Phyak, 2018) in classes.

Language of Greeting, Addressing, and Ending the Class

A language class consists of lots of things that construct its discourse. The linguistic activities are practiced to maintain or repair gaps and entities to be taught and learned. In this respect, students acquire language in collaboration with teaching activities set by teachers. The classroom is the landscape in which students can reflect on their language possibilities, and teachers can assess how much they scaffold for better and more effective learning. Contrastingly, students wrap up the networks

of learning by participating in activities together and converging elements of learning into one aspect. Greetings, addressing, and endings make the linguistic environment effective, successful, fruitful, and nourishing for learning. Students communicate more if they are autonomous (Jora, 2020) in terms of learning.

Teachers and guest tutors were often addressed in English using standard greetings like "good morning, sir," "thank you, so much," and "welcome, good bye." These greetings were a combination of respect for teachers and commitment to classroom decorum. Students in my recordings and observations consistently greeted teachers with courteous, unreported English, refraining from using Nepali accents. The language highlighted their respect and concern for manners. TB from Smarika Secondary School was welcomed at 7 a.m. after arriving there, just like everyone else. He reciprocated them immediately. When TB entered the class, students greeted as:

T: Enters the class.

Ss: Good morning, sir [by standing].

T: Good morning. How are you?

Ss: Fine, sir.

When the teacher entered the class, students greeted their English subject teacher. They showed their courtesy to the teacher with his entrance into the class. All the students stood and announced good morning, sir, to their teacher together. They did not sit until the teacher reciprocated. But students never expanded their language beyond greeting phrases. The following interaction can be looked at for understanding greeting:

T: Enters the class. [The teacher looks at every student heading towards them.]

Ss: Good morning, sir.

T: Okay, students. Thank you; sit down, please. Is it writing time or study time? Is it time for writing time, students? Okay, writing.

Ss: Yes, sir. Writing [We are writing.]

In the virtual class, students greeted individually, i.e., on the basis of time of joining to class. The teacher opened the virtual class. Students joined classes within five minutes. But students' joining was continuous until the end of the class due to the network problem. In this way, students greet to teachers in the class either in their arrival or departure from the class. Culturally, Nepalese students become polite to their teachers and obey their teachers in the class. They depend on their teachers and take them as the source of the knowledge. Nepali students show due respect to their teachers.

Students' Use of Words, Structures, and Cohesion in the Classroom

Interaction takes place in academia; teachers and students talk in the context of class. They interact regarding exercising, solving questions, managing the content, and teaching learning activities. Students use words or phrases for greeting, talking to the teacher, and participating in the interaction. They greet teachers whenever they enter the class and converse by applying discourse markers. Their utterances are incomplete, and they produce few sentences while they are participating in the talk to teachers. As students remain the main contributors to interaction, their words, structures, and cohesion are important for linguistic analysis.

Words

Discourse markers are the words or phrases used in the interaction. Students utilized them in the process of communicating by greeting their teachers and using discursive devices. When TC entered the classroom, his students greeted him very heartily. The teacher used the following conversation from the textbook of Grade 9. While answering the questions of teachers, students used words like sir, yes sir, no sir, please sir, and thank you. In the class of TB, students greeted the teacher while entering the classroom and inculcating the lesson:

T: Listen. Reading part! Here is a written request from students at Gadepani Chiura Secondary School. They send it to the head teacher for his acceptance and involvement in the tour. Students, who is ready to read it?

S1: Me, sir. T: 'Me' means Avan Ojha?

S: Yes, sir. T: Okay. Then start reading.

S: He starts reading from the book...

T: [After his turn] are there any other students for reading?

S: Yes, sir, can I? T: Okay, Kirtika! Read it.

This excerpt displays teacher T leading supplementary readings of an "inquiry letter" to the head teacher, with emphasis on oral fluency through choral recitation. Interactive pedagogy involves teacher scaffolding, volunteer participation, and turn-taking to enhance confidence and pronunciation in limited resources (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The use of peer-to-peer reading aloud by students indicates readiness, which is consistent with communicative language instruction and task-based approaches that promote autonomy despite sociolinguistic challenges (Ellis 2003; Phyak, 2018). These techniques improve fluency, understanding, and discourse in multilingual environments within Nepali society.

Structures

The production of language is influenced by the syntactic patterns that make up its sentences (Creswell & Cressell, 2018). The structures observed in student interactions were mainly incomplete, with isolated words, phrases, or chunks being more prevalent than complete sentences. While some students were able to construct or expand their own original full sentences while reading from course materials, they faced challenges in doing so. Most responses were sub-sentential, consisting mostly of single words or chunks, and only a few were complete sentences (Richards & Rodgers 2014). I observed the Grade 10 class of TB at Smarika School and students reacted as follows:

T: What is the title?

Ss: Reporting statements, sir

T: Okay, change it: He said, "I am a teacher."

Ss: [Change] He said that he was a teacher.

T: Good. [Showing the picture from the book] Who is in the picture?

Ss: Students

T: What are they doing?

Ss: Participating

The structures of the classroom discourse were based on words, phrases, and sentences. The

above vignettes elaborate on the fact that students' discourse consists of various structures. It is revealed how students yield the patterns of their own side to classroom discourse. As TA's and TC's classes were recorded and noted down on the diary, it was discovered that discourse markers were commonly found in students' language. Undoubtedly, they said, 'Good morning, sir, Excuse me, sir, and other types of words and phrases to clarify that their discourse is based on the words and phrases, or chunks, occurring in the conversation. The above excerpt from the classroom illustrates limited syntactic competence of students in reported speech transformation, as they converted "I'm a teacher" to "He said that he was an instructor" with teacher supervision, exhibiting comprehension of basic tense backshift but relying on rote response rather than independent production. Nevertheless, responses to descriptive questions about the visual representation turned into one-word fragments, suggesting sub-sentential output and difficulties in expanding enclosed clauses despite contextual cues.

Cohesion in the Language of Students

The meaning of the term cohesion is sticking together. With the help of cohesion, sentences can be connected here semantically and lexically. It is linking a text together with reference words and other devices so that "the whole text is clear and readable" (Bailey, 2011, p. 115). When sentences are developed in the text, they have to be linked. The sentences should provide semantic linkage. Cohesive devices, for example: but, moreover, theirs, hers, and other connectives and transitions come in the occurrence of sentences in the text. Students produce sentences, but they barely use connectives. They state sentences without caring cohesive markers used in the texts. Remarkably few students use cohesive markers and coordinating conjunctions.

Secondary institutions in the area were typical, with students using connectives sparingly to create sentences and limiting text-level cohesion. While students were occasionally prompted to use pronouns to extend sentences when asked, they seldom employed reference words consistently and may have been left with no clear instruction on cohesive devices (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Students produced limited extended responses even when given ample space, frequently without appropriate teacher feedback to emphasize cohesion gaps; conversely, they tended to favor pronouns and coordinate conjunctions in sentence construction. Students at Janamanash School, taught by TD, were asked about "reporting statements" but did not consider cohesive connections beyond just coordination. The teacher questioned the students one by one in language learning as in classroom discourse (Jora, 2022). The students were replying in accordance with the order they were assigned. They were not incorporating cohesive devices into sentences. The answers selected by them were word-based. For their usage of cohesion, the following interaction can be looked at:

T: So, we're in unit two, reporting statements. So, before we start today's class, revise what we discussed yesterday. What about what we discussed yesterday?

Ss: Reporting statements [Said all students in a single voice]

T: Yes, general definition of reporting sentence statement, I'm going to ask you.

Ss: Reporting statements: reported speech

T: Reporting statements means reported speech. Manju, what are the rules to be considered in changing reported speech?

S1 (Manju): comma and inverted comma

Choral repetition is a common feature of most secondary ELT classrooms in Nepal, including

Sanjeevani and Smarika Secondary Schools, where choral repetition for "reporting statements" and "Reported speech" leads to rote learning but not clear comprehension. At Sanjeevani's TA'S interactive class, students did not address tense backshift, pronouns or auxiliaries while responding to reported speech rules. On a more critical note, their answers did not possess cogent tools: they ordered and recited sentences, using words, chunks (e.g.), and flows without connectives and conjunctions, and creating lexical entities rather than linking ideas. This transcript accentuates disengaged speech, which is capable of being cohesion-deficient.

Students' Cultural Influence in the Interaction

During their time in Nepalese English classrooms, students mix linguistic and non-linguistic elements in conversation, frequently using Nepali words and markers such as *Chain sir*, *Feri vanidinus sir*, *Halkā bhandinu na sir* in the classroom interaction. In general, it is not necessary to use full English structures when teachers are requesting explanations (Paltridge 2012). The analysis identified widespread L1 (Nepali) impact on classroom interaction, including students' use of Nepali discourse markers and complete replies in Nepali, aligning with translanguaging approaches in multilingual EFL settings (García & Wei, 2014). Interactions were predominantly teacher-initiated, as students rarely volunteered contributions without prompts, thereby constraining opportunities for spontaneous oral production. This trend also reflected cultural influences, with students incorporating local communicative styles into their English attempts. They spoke in a harsh and flexible voice while answering and questioning their teachers. For this, we can look at the talk:

T: Interpret this pie chart. [Said by drawing a pie chart on the whiteboard.]

Ss: Sir, purai lekhne? Ani thorai bhanidinun sir. [Sir, should we write the whole? [If so, give a little answer, please.]

In a multilingual secondary English class in Nepal, this classroom discourse snippet captures nuances of sociolinguistic dynamics such as code-shifting and student autonomy struggles. It is presented alongside supplementary material (drawn on the whiteboard) that serves as ostensibly illustrative prompt for students. Depictivity in visual analysis, which is essential for ELT and critical thinking, is emphasized in students. In line with this, Sinclair and Coulthard (2015) view that classroom interaction is based on IRE or IRF patterning. This skill requires them to write in Nepali and English. "Thorai bhanidinun" is used by the student to provide an example of how to read or write well with only one word. Requesting clarification, it indicates uncertainty about the scope of work and is seeking help from scaffolders. In diglossic Nepal where English is the medium but Nepali is more used for informal negotiation (Gautam & 2019), students often switch from English to Nepali. This is not defiance, but rather a practical way to alleviate cognitive burden. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development suggests that students rely on teacher guidance to understand the chart and require minimal assistance. The request for "thorai bhanidinun" (a model answer) is similar to this. "Sir" is a stronger expression of hierarchical teacher authority; the plea shows politeness.

Students' Non-verbal Cues or Gestures in the Interaction

The English language classroom is anchored by students, who serve as models for teachers to develop and promote advanced learning and additional skill development in future courses. Their language learning activities involve both spoken and non-verbal communication, with my attention

directed towards their nonverbal skills. Generally, hand-raising took place when students were directly called on or prompted, acting as a nonverbal request for the teacher's attention and demonstrating a wish to establish connection through multimodal methods (Kendon, 2004) and the use of information communication and technology (Jora & Joshi, 2025). Until the date of our subsequent visit to the sites that we selected for my data collection, we could not get an opportunity to observe all the physical classes due to the lockdown caused by COVID-19. We recorded many virtual classes on the recorder from my home in Dhangadhi. Students in classes that we observed behaved non-verbally. In the class of TB, students seemed to be performing different non-verbal activities. These features can be noted in this example:

T: Who reads the email?

Ss: Some students raised their hands. [Signal to say the answer]

T: Okay, Ritu! [One of the students raised their hands to say the answer.]

S: It is a message sent or received from online sources.

T: What are the components of the email? Ss: [Look at the teacher by standing], Amrita]

T: Okay. Say your answer, Amrita.

The students of Glacier Academy reacted with gestures. They displayed the behavior of non-verbal communication. When TC was teaching English, he asked questions voluntarily. Consequently, two students stood, and three raised their hands. He went to the back side of the class, and one student stood. The teacher asked the reason for standing. The student answered, Can I say the answers? Some were nodding their heads. The questions and answers were:

T: What is the infectious disease?

S: A girl raised her hand.

T: Say the answer.

S: Disease caused by a virus, sir.

Gestures, facial expressions, and body posture were used by students to interact linguistically. Teachers utilized question-and-answer techniques, resulting in responses from both parties involved. From the other side, students reacted with their own nonverbal communication. Non-expressive forms of interaction were used to complement verbal responses. Students exhibited distinct body language as they engaged in discussions with TB and TC sirs. Several individuals raised their hands, looked at the teachers, and stood up from their seats. They gestured, muttered to friends, and got up from their chairs.

In this study, students behaved non-verbally in their pace of interaction. They used the discourse from the angle of gesturing. They linked their language with nonverbal manners. Simultaneously, they signaled their friends to give answers. They raised their hands to answer the questions uttered by the teachers. Furthermore, they stood while other students nodded to indicate 'yes or no' options. When teachers asked questions, some students pervaded communication by whispering. Teachers perpetuated classroom interaction for the effective learning. Agreeing with this, students talked in gestured-based ways and they sat a bit. To get the data on non-verbal type, students used the following type cues along with the communication:

T: Use connectives.

Ss: Sir, from one clue? [We have to ask a question?]

T: Yes, you can. [Being soft to the question of students] Fronting the whiteboard, what is the main difference, right? That is her financial condition. [Yes, her financial condition!] So that's a connective; another one is in order to [The right hand was used while giving the answer and giving clarification.

Ss: [silent], meaning agreeing with the teacher's ways.

In the class, students of Janamanash Secondary School used non-verbal language while dealing with their teachers. In that sense, they became silent when they did not know the answer, and they did not like to say the answer. They looked at their teachers as curious to show agreement as the non-verbal cues. Furthermore, students at another school, i.e., Sanjeevani Secondary School, used non-verbal language in the following expressions:

T: Have you taught students? [He assigned the class work to students.]

Ss: Yes, sir. [Nodding their heads]

T: Which prepositions are used in the A number?

Ss: sir, to, on, for [with the smiling face]

The use of non-verbal communication and visual language is a common practice among secondary students in linguistics classes at Sanjeevani Secondary School, where prepositions are taught alongside written words. The non-verbal cues of nodding, smiling, curious, and raising of hands have multiple functions, including affirming comprehension, signaling engagement, or encouraging turn-taking in teacher-student interactions. Non-verbal language is used to compensate for limited verbal proficiency in ELT settings, which are exemplified by the behaviors of multilingual secondary schools in Nepal (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) and these behaviors reflect sociolinguistic dynamics.

Nonverbal signals of confidence and rapport with the teacher are reinforced by students nodding after saying "Yes, sir " in non-verbal areas. The use of nods in classroom communication aligns with kinesics and promotes positive relationship dynamics between teachers and students. In the listing of prepositions (to, on, for), smiling face signified enthusiasm or refreshment in correct memory, and it is important to note that positive affect promotes motivation in grammar-related tasks. In EFL settings, smiling often reduces anxiety by encouraging active participation (Dörnyei, 2020). Exquisite gazes at the teacher and hand-raising exemplify increased interest and voluntary turn-taking, embodying learner-centered practices. Cues in secondary contexts of Nepal also address diglossian challenges allowing fewer vocal students to contribute before contributing verbally (Sinha & Bagchi, 2021) in classroom learning.

The Emerging Discourse in the Language of Students

In classes, students perform diverse roles while interacting, participating, and collaborating with other students and teachers. They ask questions related to the text to their teachers. Notwithstanding, they request that their teachers repeat the contents that they want to learn or that they have imperfectly comprehended. They also interact with their friends in terms of learning. Students cooperate with their friends in doing several diverse activities. Though students do not communicate more with teachers, they converse in accordance with the nature and needs of the lesson. They converse nonverbally using altered facial expressions and gestures. Students look at something deeply, show some type of feature for saying something, and sit a bit differently to indicate they want to ask or say something. Similarly, they expect to interact with teachers and even with friends. Sometimes they generate non-

verbal expressions for the conversation. Primarily, they communicate through different nuances of the language.

While visiting Sanjeevani School, we observed diverse student discourses where students connected learned items to their goals, explaining teachers' questions slowly without denying tasks and completing them honestly. Students' interactions with the teacher were inconsistent, but they remained polite and adhered to her instructions. The topic of the lesson was "Writing Rules and Regularities." The emergent discourse that students employed can be seen in the following exponents of interaction:

T: Today's topic is writing rules and regulations.

Ss: Listen very carefully. [Being very curious and attentive to the teacher]

T: Let me discuss the rules. They are the rules of schools. Students should arrive at school on time. We are not allowed to have mobile phones. We are not allowed to paint walls. Students should not fight each other. The school area should be neat and clean. Students should enter in school uniforms.

Ss: Shall we copy the sir? [Speak in a polite way.]

T: Yes. You should.

Ss: [Being silent]. Copy the rules from the board.

The Nepalese secondary school's excerpt displays a teacher-led discussion on school regulations, which leads to students being compliant with the rules through copying and writing. A structured, teacher-driven atmosphere that emphasizes rule adherence and routine is demonstrated through students' verbal requests, silence during action, and affirmations combined with deferential behavior. Despite the hierarchical nature of Nepal's culture, compliance in ELT classroom settings is evidence of authoritative management that fosters discipline and empower students to take charge through guided practice (Harmer, 2015). Student etiquette such as Do you think we should copy? "Should we begin writing? seek consent, emphasizing teacher primacy. South Asian EFL contexts typically follow sociolinguistic politeness strategies through this code of conduct, which minimizes disruption and conveyed respect (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Sitting after an affirmation and "following the teacher" are signs of internalized obedience, with a smooth transition from verbal rules to written content and classroom discourse (Jora, 2021). This is a form of active listening, and silence serves as the way to maintain harmony and focus (Wang & Winters-Quest, 2019) in classroom discourses.

Students in classroom interactions use a unique communication style of raising hands, standing up, shifting in seats, and whispering to peers when asked by teachers to describe meanings of difficult words, often using discourse markers in soft tones while remaining selective silent or shy if uncertain. Rather than over-stretched, they depend on teachers when in uncertain times, signaling readiness with body movements but not answering every question.

Students use their local language and cultural terms in the form of discourse and discourse markers. Regarding this, we learned about the emergent discourse in the 10th grade class at Smarika School by observing. We made an audio recording and wrote field notes on whatever discourse existed. The topic was "Giving Permission, Withdrawing Permission, and Reporting Permission." When I was there, students interacted as:

T: Can you give me your book?

Ss: Yes, sir. I can give you it. [A girl said by standing] A boy student stood and said, Yes, I can. [Standing very polite]

T: There are also structures for reporting permission. You're allowed to, or you aren't allowed to. Can you change the sentence into the reporting permission of the sentence 'You can take my notebook'?

S1: [Excuse me, sir.] Could I say the answer, sir?

S2: [Stood for saying the answer.] Yes sir. Do I say the answer, sir?

S3: I stood to give the answer.

In this way, we can find various types of discourse among students, both verbal and non-verbal. The above-mentioned examples illustrate the emerging discourse among students. To be specific, standing, raising hands, saying answers, excuse me, whispering, etc. were used by students during class observation. However, they might be seen as normal in their usage. Students use them in typical cases. In the classes, students also said, Could I say sir? (i.e., *ma bhanu sir?* in the Nepali language) Saying in polite language is another discourse that existed in classes. Students mostly answered when teachers asked them what the next way of expressing discourse was. Being silent was part of the new discourse when students did not know the answer and were confused about how to answer questions. For telling to repeat, they said, "What did you say, sir?" Or please repeat, sir. Could you dictate slowly, sir? Students only use the short and a specific language. It is believed that students only produce short answers, chunks, and word-based texts.

Power Structure and Social Structure in the Student Discourse

The classroom enables students to create hierarchies of interaction based on their level of communication, where proficient speakers claim front benches to actively engage teachers, while less skilled speakers sit at the back and remain passive. Vocabulary strength drives this divide, positioning proficient students as leaders while others serve as passive observers, potentially reducing their participation. This spatial and behavioral stratification highlights the influence of language proficiency on the composition of active and passive roles in class dynamics.

The data collection sites we experienced in my secondary school were reminiscent of the ones where students' English communicative abilities were evaluated, making proficient speakers more active and some passive. Incompetent students felt inferior and powerless because their vocabulary was restricted, and they avoided classroom interactions and activities. Conversely, pupils proficient in the English language regarded themselves as potent learners who controlled discussions by frequently providing answers to their teachers. Power structure existed due to the use of English. As the embodiment of the power and social structure, I try to mention as:

T: Question. [Asking for permission.] There are the questions. Neha, please?

Ss: May I use your cell phone to call my mother?

T: Good another. You please pointing (Moving chin) another one?

S: May I go to bookstore to buy books?

T: Okay, very good. Thank you. Sit down, please. Dinesh, please?

S: May I use your camera to take photograph?

This classroom data demonstrates that in a secondary ELT class in Nepal, the teacher-led role-play activity involves polite permission requests (e.g., You use my cell phone?), where the instructor nominated students and uses nonverbal cues like chin-pointing to regulate turns. Engaging in contextually appropriate utterances, students demonstrate their new communicative skills through formulaic politeness strategies, while the teacher's affirmations promote participation. Developed

fluency in real-life scenarios is often achieved through structured interaction during EFL role plays, which helps build confidence amidst Nepal's multilingualism (Ladousse, 2014). Modal structures are applied across modal structures for students' diverse requests, reflecting the role-play to replicate real interactions and reduce anxiety when speaking.

Aspect of Illocutionary Act in the Student Discourse

For example, in classroom interactions, pupils use performative verbs to express illocutionary speech acts such as orders and promises, threats, and advice. In order to achieve communication objectives, teachers must encourage participation, while students must remain silent to prevent errors when uncertain. Under the guidance of their teachers, they actively engaged in early discourse at Janamanash School by greeting the teacher who arrived, which was recorded on audio while the observer watched. This reflects determined attention to detail and objective reflection. The classroom discourse that I observed and recorded is as follows:

T: [Entered the class.]

Ss: Greeted him saying good morning, sir!

T: Reciprocated them saying morning. So, we've discussed about we give permission hai, how we withhold discussion, and how we report permission. Is it? Um, so, can anyone tell me how we give permission? [Pointing to a girl] Okay, you. What are the words that we used to give permission?

S1: Can I take your bag?

T: It's asking for permission. After that I'll write them on the board, okay.

A Nepalese secondary ELT classroom at Janamanash School features a customary greeting and an early teacher-invented examination of permission speech acts, which highlights structured discourse patterns that promote student engagement. Through the exchange of words between students and their teacher, rapport is established and cultural norms are respected. The conversation then proceeds to review content on permission and nonverbal pointing to nominate a responder. This builds rapport and allows for culture respect within the classroom. The teacher corrects the student's request for an off-topic topic, which demonstrates how routines can enhance practical competence even in small errors (Olshtain & Celce-Murcia, 2000). In hierarchical South Asian EFL settings, the greeting functions as a discourse marker, creating cohesion and signaling lesson readiness, which is often used to affirm authority before academic tasks (Walsh, 2011). Despite Nepal's multilingualism, the teacher's clarification is an example of an illocutionary force that guides students toward target forms.

Conclusion and Implications

This study looked at the practices and patterns of communication among students in secondary English classes in Nepal with a focus on analyzing the conversations and interactions among students during classes. Students frequently use Nepali as their language of choice and seek clarification through conversation in their mother tongue. The teacher is the primary determinant of student speech, with fragmented syntax, repetitive greetings, and a heavy reliance on non-verbal signals such as hand-raising, nodding, or gestures. In a hierarchy where students who speak better English than others are more likely to engage actively in conversations, while those with weaker English skills tend to sit at the back of the room or remain silent. Simple word-based responses are produced by students who rarely use a cohesive device or connective system to connect ideas. Despite the emphasis on accuracy

in structured drills, students receive more equal and extended participation when teachers use open-ended questions.

This study is a fresh perspective on student communication in Nepal, which has traditionally been more concerned with teacher-led instruction. This provides more realistic insights into how English dialogues in a multilingual environment are influenced by local communication styles and multimodal resources. This research provides a deeper understanding of multilingualism in EFL settings by exploring how sociolinguistic dynamics and cultural politeness strategies impact classroom participation. The study employs Conversation Analysis and non-verbal cues to demonstrate the importance of analytical methods that account for multimodal discourse practices in changing educational contexts. Cross-checking of notes and transcriptions was done to ensure validity. There is a need to investigate the impact of educational technology on discourse. More attention needs to be given to exploring ways of teaching that allow for greater autonomy.

The use of a student's mother tongue needs not be considered blatant, but rather viewed as an effective means of engaging and understanding the learner. Professional training seems to equip teachers to manage multilingual classrooms, with a focus on how to leverage students' existing linguistic resources to bridge any gaps in English proficiency. To enhance student engagement, teachers require to incorporate structured pair/group work and move from closed-ended display questions to open-end questions that demand more complex student responses. For creating student friendly classes, this study can be a milestone in school education.

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