Chalkboards to Clicks: A Narrative Study of Flipped English Classrooms in Nepal

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Abstract

The flipped classroom has progressed across the world, yet ELT remains virtually untouched in Nepal. This narrative inquiry study investigates the experiences of four secondary English teachers in the Kaski district who have taught for over one year with the flipped classroom model. Engaging professionally through semi-structured individual interviews, a focus group discussion, and classroom observations, the study revealed teachers' stories of resistance, adaptation and pedagogical transformation. The study found that there were many success stories with benefits such as enhancements of student classroom participation, autonomy, and interaction. The study also noted challenges such as inconsistent internet access, low student engagement, teacher-centred pedagogical resistance, heavy teacher workloads, and low access to the internet, devices, education, and training. The study argues that there needs to be more flexible and adaptable programs, and institutional frameworks of support with training programs of a digital literacy orientation. The study called for an increased role of the teacher's voice as a mechanism for educational change to support a more inclusive, adaptable, and sustainable program to support mobile educational materials. The study focused on the flipped classroom pedagogical model in Nepal as a unique program in the ELT.

Keywords: English language teaching, flipped classroom, learner engagement, technology integration

Introduction

Technological advancements are incorporated into teaching methods globally. One such advancement is the pedagogical model of the flipped classroom, where teaching is reframed. Class instruction is removed and replaced with interactive and in-class student-centred pedagogical activities, discussions, action problem solving, and cooperative learning tasks (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Hamdan et al., 2013). The model gained popularity in 2002 when chemistry teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams first pioneered the model, and in 2012 with the formalisation of the model through the Flipped Learning Network. It integrates principles of active learning, constructivism, and blended learning, thus allowing students to control the learning pace and immerse themselves in the content during the contact hours (Flipped Learning Network, 2014; Prince, 2004).

The model of flipped learning has grown in popularity, and the reported positive impacts of flipped learning on student engagement, language learning at higher thinking levels, and positive thinking promote the theory. However, it has largely gone undocumented in low-resource contexts, particularly in Nepal. Learning English in Nepal remains 'Lecture and Teacher-centred' based on the understanding that educational approaches should create environments that promote speaking, thinking and autonomy. The educational system is fundamentally shabby in that it is devoid of the principles required for real-world use of language. Considering the findings of Lamsal (2022), there is evidence that teachers in the Nepalese context view the flipped classroom positively in terms of encouraging classroom engagement; however, they experience challenges such as unreliable internet access, device and digital literacy scarcity, cultural learning preferences such as teaching in a traditional, directive style, and high workloads. This contradiction in the evidence about flipped classrooms and the context of Nepal speaks to the importance of and the necessity for research to inform how such a model can be adopted and implemented in educational structures that are resource-poor and culturally different. If there is no evidence to support Nepalese ELT research, modernisation efforts are most likely to be unsustainable.

Thus, the purpose of this narrative inquiry is to investigate the experiences of Nepalese teachers of English at the secondary level who have implemented a flipped classroom. More specifically, this study intends to (1) document the narratives of teachers concerning their journeys of transition, resistance, and paradigm shifts from chalk and talk to flipped instruction, (2) enumerate the benefits, and the socio-cultural, technological, and pedagogical challenges encountered, and (3) provide informed suggestions that focus on the problem of the standard of English teaching in Nepal and propose a viable model for the integration of flipped learning. This study amplifies the voices of teachers by employing narrative inquiry in educational reform in the context of Nepal, while also contributing to the growing body of work on the integration of new pedagogical practices in less developed countries.

Literature Review

Consider a classroom where students can watch a video lecture at home, take some time to write down their questions and be ready to discuss, create or solve some issues in accordance with the instructions of their teacher. It is the essence of flipped learning, a paradigm that replaces traditional content with traditional lectures and transforms class time into a place of inquiry led by students. English classes can use flipped learning as a potential method, as the participation of the students and the mastery of the language are vital in this case, and Nepal adheres to digital tools in education. To prepare the narrative investigation of the experiences of teachers, the literature review will consider the concepts of flipped learning, its application in English language teaching, and its possibilities and challenges in Nepal.

The Fundamentals of Flipped Learning

Flipped learning transforms the classroom and provides the in-person time options of interactive activity by moving direct instructional content, which is normally delivered via screencast or video, out of the classroom (Bergmann and Sams, 2012). It has four pillars, namely flexible environments, the culture of learning change, planned content, and professional educators (Flipped Learning Network, 2014). These two pillars lead to the replacement of the teacher-centred sage on the stage paradigm by a student-centred guide on the side paradigm since they set up spaces where students make decisions on how and when to learn (King, 1993). In order to make classroom time supportive of cooperation, critical thinking, and individualised support, educators choose what students are going to investigate in classrooms in the outside environment (Arfstrom et al., 2013).

Its origins date back to the 1990s, when Eric Mazur developed peer instruction in order to promote in-class discussion and meaning-making as opposed to memorisation (King, 1993; Mazur, 1996). In 2007, chemistry teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams began recording courses as a substitute for classes that were missing. They discovered that this enhanced in-class communications and supported those students who missed the classes (Bergmann and Sams, 2012). Their work resulted in the Flipped Learning Network, a research and practice-sharing platform, in 2012. Research supports the student-centred philosophy of flipped learning by showing active learning is a better way to enhance critical thinking, engagement and academic performance (Prince, 2004; Michael, 2006). Pre-training is one of the significant techniques that will reduce the cognitive load of students and enable them to accept the demanding tasks in the classroom (Musallam, 2010). Arfstrom et al. (2013) attribute case studies in Clintondale High School of Michigan and Byron High School of Minnesota that have been studied to indicate an improvement in involvement, better performance in exams, and a reduction in discipline issues.

Flipped Learning in English Language Teaching

Flipped learning is a world-changer for English language learners as it enables access at a self-paced rate to material that enhances comprehension and reduces anxiety. By giving videos on lower-level skills such as grammar or vocabulary, teachers can use the remaining class time to engage higher-order skills such as text analysis or practice of real-world communication (Marshall and DeCapua, 2013). The ability to pause and repeat lectures is advantageous to the students, especially those studying a second language, as they will understand the lectures before meeting the teachers and other learners (Lamsal, 2022). This is in line with the research that has shown that flipped classrooms boost academic language proficiency by making the language more closely related to a native speaker (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013).

Fahim and Khalil (2016) found that in a Middle Eastern institution, flipping English courses positively affected the engagement of students, particularly with the assistance of such resources as video platforms. Sakulprasertsri (2017) explains that flipped learning fosters 21st-century skills, such as collaboration skills, in Thai English classrooms, yet teacher training and technological access pose a challenge. Nevertheless, Strayer (2012) cautions that when assignments are not clear, the commencement of classes such as language classes can engulf the students, and hence the need to have systematic instruction.

Flipped Learning in the Nepalese Context

The English schools in Nepal can be used in flipped learning, as education is shifting digitally. According to the study by Lamsal (2022), this methodology is popular among English teachers working in secondary schools, and the researcher also pointed out that it contributes to the students becoming active and independent learners. Flipped classrooms reconsider the conventional classroom practices by incorporating conversations, debates, and projects that support the idea of student-centred learning (Lamsal, 2022). The tools, such as digital slideshows and collections of videos, engage students as substitutes for lectures with the help of dynamic information.

Nepal, in its turn, has specific troubles. It cannot be implemented effectively due to the lack of internet connectivity, especially in rural regions, especially among students from low-income families (Lamsal, 2022; Arfstrom et al., 2013). Power interruptions and low standards of digital literacy among teachers and students complicate the situation, as well as creating high-quality movies requires much time (Lamsal, 2022). This does not discourage teachers, who suggest increasing the number of online activities, the ingenuity of students, and adequate classroom preparation (Lamsal, 2022). This has been supplemented by Shakya et al. (2016), who found that in Kathmandu Valley, teachers were motivated to use flipped learning because of its benefits in relation to student engagement and success in school. However, the scarcity of comprehensive studies in

Nepal underscores the need to have regional research.

The possibilities of flipped learning are clear, but there remains a lack of them, especially in Nepal. Little has been done on rural situations since most of the research has concentrated on the Western or metropolitan scenario. However, as much as Lamsal's (2022) work is a good move, there is a need to conduct more research based on its small scope. The perspectives of parents and students are not represented sufficiently because they are a crucial part of a full picture (Arfstrom et al., 2013). Narrative investigations such as this one have a great opportunity to document the lived experiences of teachers since the long-term consequences of the English competence in Nepal remain poorly comprehended.

Constructivism and connectivism, two complementary theories, serve as the foundation for this study and offer a prism through which to view how flipped English classrooms promote learning in Nepal's digital age.

Constructivism

Constructivism holds that students are active producers of knowledge based on experience; they build on prior knowledge in both the social and contextual context (Vygotsky, 1978). The work of flipped classes is that students study the material at home, developing an initial mental picture that is developed in the classroom during projects or discussions (Michael, 2006). As flipped classroom teachers push students to learn according to their level of readiness and develop tasks to challenge and support students, the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), developed by Vygotsky, is of particular relevance (Arfstrom et al., 2013). To fit the various classrooms of Nepal, the learners of the English language should first be introduced to the basics of English through videos and then apply them in group projects, which are culturally sensitive (Lamsal, 2022). Constructivism informs the focus of the study relating the role of teachers to support student-centred and meaning-making experiences in flipped English classrooms.

Connectivism

Learning is viewed as a process of establishing networks between people and resources, as well as technology, as long as expressed in the digital age concept of connectivism (Siemens, 2005, ref. in Lamsal, 2022). Flipped learning builds a dynamic learning system where the student-teacher, student-peer, and student-online interaction occur (Pacansky-Brock, 2013). It is especially so in Nepal, where students are able to study without being in a traditional classroom due to digital tools such as movies and social media platforms such as Padlet (Lamsal, 2022). Connectivism underlines the fact that technology can foster independence and collaboration, which is crucial to English language learners who have to negotiate international communication.

It guides the study of educators who use digital networks to enhance student engagement and overcome challenges such as poor internet connectivity. The collaboration between constructivism and connectivism has been used to introduce flipped learning as a technologically and socially mediated activity where students actively engage in developing their language proficiency via experience and networked learning. This framework guides the narrative inquiry by focusing on the response of the teachers in the Nepal educational context, which is unique in its nature.

Methods and Procedures

Research Design

The qualitative research method employed in this study was a narrative inquiry, which is an appropriate method to explore the personal accounts of participants and lived experiences in the context of Nepali flipped English classrooms. Narrative inquiry is most suitable to understand how individuals formulate meaning out of their lives and thus is ideal in examining the change in the mode of instruction used in traditional (chalkboard-based) to more modernised (technologically enhanced, click-based) instructional methods. The design allowed exploring the perspectives of the teachers and students in detail, recording their challenges, successes, and views on the flipped classroom model in a Nepalese classroom. This approach aligns with the qualitative studies of flipped classes, where the majority of studies usually concentrate on the experiences of the participants to draw educational conclusions.

Data Collection Tools and Techniques

I utilised a semi-structured interview schedule as my principal instrument in the collection of qualitative data. Individual interview guides were developed for the in-depth interviews with certain subsets of educators. These interviews aimed at understanding the educators' readiness to employ flipped classrooms, the difficulties they experienced, and their overall perceptions of the approach and its impact on learners' engagement. To aid educators in reflecting collectively on their experience of moving from a conventional, teacher-led classroom approach to a flipped classroom practice, a set of focus group discussion (FGD) prompts was designed. The FGD gave participants the opportunity to juxtapose different viewpoints, articulate common difficulties, and expand on matters that might remain hidden during one-on-one interviews. Along with interviews and FGD, classroom observations were conducted as an ancillary technique of data collection. The observations were captured using a structured checklist designed to capture in detail the activities that took place in the classroom, the nature of the interaction between the teacher and the learners, and the technological resources that were integrated into the lesson. The use of this triangulated technique provided thorough and contextual insights into the implementation of flipped classrooms.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed thematically with a narrative approach, merging narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) with thematic analysis. This made it possible for the study to retain the depth of the teachers' unique experiences while isolating shared themes among all participants. All semi-structured interviews, the focus group discussion, and the classroom observation notes were fully transcribed. A professional translator translated the Nepali interviews and discussions into English, and a second translator provided back-translation for consistency and accuracy. The transcripts were read multiple times to gain an intimate understanding and familiarity. Initially, all data for each teacher (individual interview, focus group participation, and observation notes) were treated as a self-contained narrative. For each teacher, key episodes were selected and retold in concise narrative summaries with the exact words of the participants in the same chronological sequence as originally voiced (e.g., "from initial resistance to gradual acceptance").

Then, the re-storying constituted the core of the findings of the study. All transcripts and re-storying were uploaded to NVivo 14. For preliminary analysis, line-by-line coding (open coding) was followed by focused coding aimed at generating larger themes. During the analysis, the following significant themes emerged: Access to and adaptation of technology; changes in teaching and learning roles; and challenges regarding the context and the culture. The four case studies were compared to discover the commonalities and the differences. These were refined using constant comparative analysis until the themes were saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The results of the interviews were compared and verified with data from the focus groups, direct observations from the classroom, and participant materials (e.g., videos, screenshots of Google Classroom). The primary themes and reconstituted narratives were verified with the study participants in member checking to ensure participant agreement and authenticity. Results were presented in the form of compilation stories that integrated the teacher participants' voices with the themes from the data and were juxtaposed with students' verbatim text and field notes from observations. This thematic and narrative analysis of teacher participants' stories and the lived experiences that they represent will provide valuable and actionable insights for ELT in Nepal.

Results and Discussion

This paper suggested that in flipped classes in the English language in Nepal, independent learning is encouraged, and interaction among the students is developed. The reverse of the conventional teaching model, the flipped classroom has turned out to be a successful pedagogical method to make the students more active and responsible in their learning. In this method, the students initially can learn instructional content at home, by means of video clips, tapes, or Internet resources, and then in the classroom

environment, they can spend time on interactive, discussion-based, and collaborative tasks. This model will assist students to develop as communicatively competent, critical thinkers and self-directed learners in the Nepalese context where English is taught as a secondary or foreign language. Another lesson was also realised by teachers that students were better equipped, motivated, and confident to engage in discussions in the classroom once learning materials were exposed to them.

Nevertheless, as many of these benefits exist, the implementation of the flipped classroom in Nepal has several obstacles which hinder its success. The unstable internet connection, particularly in the rural and semi-urban regions where most of the schools are located, is also one of the greatest challenges. A lot of students belong to families that cannot afford digital devices and strong data connections, as they have low incomes. This leaves access to online video, virtual assignments and an interactive platform hard. This digital divide increases the disparity between the private and public schools because the latter usually possesses a superior technological capacity and training areas.

On the other hand, public schools have a difficult time using technology because of low budgets and the absence of technical services. There is also the cultural and pedagogical tradition that affects the adoption of flipped learning in Nepal. The traditional teacher-centred approach, whereby teachers are treated as the ultimate enforcer, and students are passive receivers of information, remains the order of the day in the classrooms. The students are used to lecture-based learning, and in the beginning, they might be unwilling to learn on their own, or they might feel anxious about the self-learning aspect of the flipped classes. Teachers are not exempt, as they struggle to change their roles to that of being the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage. They also have to work hard to come up with teaching videos, record, and edit them, to come up with an interactive activity in the classroom, hence they are burdened with more work. This model cannot be maintained easily without institutional support and incentives.

Furthermore, the development of new practices is still inhibited by economic constraints. Low-resource schools are not able to invest easily in digital tools, software, or training programs to teach their teachers. Learners with poor economic backgrounds tend to share gadgets or use borrowed phones or school computers when doing online assignments. Such constraints do not allow the full potential of the flipped approach.

Nevertheless, a lot of educators remain innovative and firm and implement basic technologies like mobile phones, offline videos, and print materials to adjust the flipped paradigm to their reality. The schools and policymakers need to train teachers on digital pedagogy and offer financial or technical support to those schools that require it to achieve wider success. Prioritising community-based interventions, like community digital centres or resource centres, may also be useful in combating inequality. The government and schools should focus on enhancing the digital literacy of both teachers and students.

On the whole, the results of this research can provide some important insights into how flipped learning can be implemented locally and be used in the context of

low-technology and low-income countries like Nepal. The study emphasises how, with sufficient help, inventiveness, and adaptability, a flipped classroom can turn English language instruction into an active process of learning by means of collaboration and engagement as well as learner-centred learning. The work also adds to the wider picture of the adaptation of the technology-enhanced pedagogies to various learning contexts and cultural backgrounds, so that teaching English would become more inclusive, meaningful, and future-oriented.

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into teachers' and students' experiences of the flipped classroom model for teaching English in Nepal. The data for this study were collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. The analysis of data from multiple sources led to the identification of three major themes these were (1) the Use of Technology, (2) Shifts in Teaching and Learning, and (3) Local Challenges. These themes represent the participants' collective and divergent experiences regarding the availability of technology, the change of pedagogy, and obstacles to the use of the flipped classroom approach.

The Use of Technology

The first major theme recorded from the data was the importance of technology in enabling flipped learning and the obstacles and benefits that technology offered. Both teachers and students reported that technology was the basis for the organisation, instruction, and retrieval of learning resources. They, however, acknowledged the fact that technology requirements often serve as obstacles to engagement, especially to participants from resource-constrained environments.

Eased Technology Access

The availability of technological devices and reliable internet was a major issue. Several students reported that they did not have personal devices such as smartphones and laptops. They were dependent on the devices of family members, which led to device-related family disputes and reduced study time at home. Some learners expressed that having their phones shared between siblings prolonged and sometimes prevented access to video lessons. Teachers also acknowledged these problems and explained that their internet access issues within their community contributed to the problem of the timely uploading of the teaching videos. Students especially expressed concerns about cost and how it restricted their ability to watch videos. Students explained that the videos were sometimes long and that their ability to watch videos frequently was also determined by the cost of the videos. What was observed in classrooms provided some evidence of the above. These students explained that their reason for not watching the videos was not due to disengagement, but that they did not have the technological capacity to finish the assigned videos. In these instances, teachers would have to reteach the content.

Learning the Technological Skills

Notably, the challenges also provided opportunities for learning in the use of technology. Teachers expressed that, in the long run, the challenges helped them gain more competency in developing instructional videos and digital content creation, resulting in the enhancement of their creativity and purpose in teaching. Teachers expressed that they added other skills, such as recording voice-over lessons, screen recording, and creating presentations that could be synced with videos. Students also gained knowledge of some online educational tools. Teachers instructed their pupils on how to use Google Classroom, which became the standard channel for distributing materials, providing assignments, and running brief quizzes. Due to YouTube's simplicity and easy access, it continued to be the dominant site for educational use. Furthermore, students and teachers exchanged materials across mobile phones, which suggested the use of informal digital communication in supporting flipped learning.

Tools Used in the Flipped Classroom

The combination of freely available online platforms (such as YouTube and Google Classroom, and Messenger) was pivotal in the study's findings regarding the use of the flipped approach. Students indicated that although they enjoyed the ability to watch videos on their phones, they often faced challenges that limited their engagement, including buffering, data restrictions, and the unavailability of personal devices. The teachers also pointed out that the use of these tools required extra time and planning. For both students and teachers, the tools available were a double-edged sword, as technology both improved and diminished the educational experience.

Changes in Teaching and Learning

The second major theme was a visible transformation in classroom interactions and student engagement, resulting from the flipped classroom model. This theme focuses on the alterations in teaching approaches, student participation, and instructor workload during the implementation.

Students Taking Charge of Learning

The most notable positive outcome was the increase in students' active engagement in their learning process. Students appreciated their independence and flexibility as they were able to learn at their own pace. Learners were able to pause videos, rewatch lectures, and prepare for class activities ahead of time. This preparation allowed students to gain a greater understanding of the material and improve their participation. Students reported that they felt a greater sense of independence and acquisition of their own learning, a marked change from conventional teacher-centred approaches. Teachers also

noted students were more ready and able to do the activities involving higher-order thinking skills. Classroom observations supported this assertion. Students participated more willingly and readily in classroom dialogues, as they had already studied the lesson material through video content.

More Classroom Interactions

Teachers reported that flipped classrooms resulted in students working with peers more readily and collaborating with their peers more during the lesson. Students watched the instructional videos at home. As a result, teachers used class time for student-centred learning activities such as discussions, group work, presentations, and activities where students solved problems. Complaints regarding student disengagement during group work were less frequent, and teachers reported that students were more willing to participate in the discussions and share their ideas, in contrast to the traditional lecture. In flipped classrooms, more student talk time was observed. Group discussions were more focused, and students exhibited more collaboration and participation. Teachers further emphasised how this was one of the most meaningful outcomes of the flipped model since it fit comfortably with the principles of communicative language teaching.

More Workload for Teachers

Nonetheless, changes were primarily reported as requiring substantially more time and effort from teaching staff. As other changes were reported positively, there were added tasks of preparing videos, editing and uploading content, and responding to student queries. Teachers had a more senior workload, which included school duties, paperwork, and other extracurricular activities. They also pointed out that it was increasingly difficult to create a balance between video preparation and their daily workload. One of the teachers was quoted as saying, "They spent most of their time camping documents and were most of the time, I guess, stem overloaded and stressed out." There was a consensus that the teachers appreciated the pedagogical advance that the flipped classroom offered. The staff, however, felt the sustainability of these initiatives was at risk without some organisational support.

Local Issues

The last theme encapsulated the contextual and socio-cultural challenges that informed the use of flipped classrooms in Nepal, and these included cultural Normative positioning, the levels of school support, and the gaps in the economy.

Cultural Normative Positioning of Teacher-Centred Pedagogy

One of the most striking of these challenges, and the most culturally oriented, was the students' preferred and indeed, a positive acceptance of a more traditional, teacher-

directed pedagogy. The students in the class preferred when the teacher taught the lesson instead of using the video lesson because they felt they could understand the lesson better when the teacher talked directly to them. As a result of this imbalance, teachers tended to provide more explanation in class, even more than they had planned. Students still referred to the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and authority despite video lessons because of the cultural norms they had internalised.

Differences in School Support

The differences in the availability of technology support in private and public schools were also very pertinent. Private school teachers reported more digital tools, better Wi-Fi, and more support from administration; public school teachers reported gaps in support, tech, devices, training, and support geared to training. The research also discovered that some of the teachers, particularly those who had been educated in private institutions, had more proficiency in using digital devices, which positively impacted the successful use of the flipped classroom model.

Financial Problems and Inequality

The economic issues were a primary barrier for students. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds had more problems accessing their own devices to use the video. Some of them had to use the school's computers, or borrowed someone else's device to do the video tasks. This led to a lack of participation and some students not keeping up with their schooling.

Conclusions

This narrative inquiry study investigates the experiences of four secondary English teachers in the Kaski district who have taught for over one year with the flipped classroom model. The data gathered involved interviews, focus groups, and observational data, which made it possible to determine that technology was both pivotal and complicating to the implementation of the flipped classrooms. Teachers and students experienced challenges like poor internet connections, fewer devices, and expensive data plans. All the same, both sides improved their tech use; in particular, teachers made videos for their lessons, and students learned to use Google Classroom and YouTube. Phones were the primary devices for accessing the flipped materials, which underscored the flexible and accessible tech use for educational purposes. The move to flipped instruction was also an opportunity for transformation in the students. They were able to take more ownership of their learning and were more involved in discussions as well as in activities in the classes. In contrast, teachers had more responsibilities because they were tasked with preparing videos and had additional duties to cover in the schools. The contextual challenges were also apparent; for instance, many students opted for teacher-centred classes, the level of

support provided by schools was uneven, and students from low-income families had limited access to the internet. All of these challenges defined the extent to which the flipped classroom approach was realised in English classrooms in Nepal.

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