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Unveiling English Language Anxiety: Lived Experiences of Nepali Secondary Students in a Multilingual Context

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Abstract

The study examines English language anxiety among secondary students in Nepal, a nation marked for its diverse multilingual realities where English has emerged as a marker of socio-cultural prestige and economic privilege. Using the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, the study investigated the lived experiences of eight purposively selected students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis; the themes drawn were fear of negative evaluation, low linguistic self-confidence, societal pressures conveying that a person is smart only if he or she is good at English, minimal exposure to English in real life, fear of making mistakes, teacher-student relationship, peer comparisons, and coping mechanisms. Findings reveal that students experience heightened anxiety due to societal expectations that place intelligence and success on being proficient in the English language, coupled, of course, with low exposure to real-world English use. Teacher feedback and classroom environment are equally vital in moderating anxiety; encouraging teachers can help build learner confidence, whereas negative criticism only elevates the fear. Feelings of inadequacy are also increased through peer comparisons; on the other hand, coping strategies like self-affirmation and informal practice reduce anxiety. The study thus highlights the urgent need for training teachers to provide emotional support within pedagogy, training that embraces cultural responsiveness, along with creating further chances for English practice beyond the classroom space. By tackling these socio-psychological impediments, teachers could render the learning environment more inclusive towards learners.

Keywords: *fear of negative evaluation, linguistic self-perception, coping strategies, limited exposure, classroom dynamics, cultural pressure*

Nepal: Linguistic Scenario and English

English has gained the status of a global language, and most widely spread international language in the 21st century since almost a quarter of the world's population uses it at a useful level (British Council, 2013), for it is the language of communications, science, information technology, business, entertainment, and diplomacy. It has spread worldwide in recent days and even deviated from its native form in various forms of world Englishes (Crystal, 2012).

Despite being small in area, Nepal is a multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic country since it has been a conglomeration of people of different groups of people in history (Yadava, 2014). According to the population census, 2021 total of 124 languages have been found active in the territory of Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021) among these Nepali is the language spoken by the largest number of the population (44.86%). Nepali which was earlier known as *Gorkha Bhasha* or *Parbate Bhasha* has been used as the language of the state for a long and proficiency in the Nepali language has been a prerequisite for literacy, education and employment opportunities (Gurung, 2014). But there is another scenario prevalent in the country regarding the use of language in education.

The History

The very first modern educational institution, Durbar High School (1854), established after then Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana returned from his foreign trip to the United Kingdom, is known to have laid the foundations of modern education in the country. From that very date, English language teaching was formerly introduced in Nepali education.

It was ever since the British came to contact to Nepal in the latter half of the 18th century, English started influencing Nepali elites (Kerr, 1999, cited in Paudel, 2016) and this influence reached to the rulers of the nation after teachers from England and Bengal were assigned to teach at Durbar High School (Paudel, 2016). For a long time, English education was privileged only for ruler class children (Bista, 1991, p.122) and admission to this school had been seen as the door to elevation to the higher class. Later other schools and the very first higher education institution, Trichandra College (established in 1918) opened in the country. Those institutions hired the teachers educated in English medium from Indian and British universities. This established

English education as a passport to a lucrative status in the society (Bista, 1991) and since then English proficiency has been taken as an additional asset to one's personality in the Nepalese society. This divided society in two classes- the English knowing elite and the English not-knowing common folks.

Subtle Resistance to the English Language

However, after the fall of the Rana regime, various initiatives were taken to assure the central position of the Nepali language in education. In 2002 BS Gopal Pandey 'Aseem' demanded the government of Nepal to make necessary provisions to write SLC examination in Nepali medium (Pokharel, 2013). After one party dictatorial Panchayat system was introduced in the country, the government adopted one language policy and the Nepali language got the status of the language of the nation. During this period the number of Nepali speakers also considerably increased (Gyawali & Khadka, 2016). Nepali was introduced as the medium of instruction; yet some of the prestigious schools were providing English medium education, which was privileged to the elite class of the society. Meanwhile, Nepal was exposed to the western world as one of the emerging tourist attractions. This was to open newer dimensions of employment to the aspiring youths in the tourism sector and this required English.

During this period, government-aided schools running throughout the country emphasized Nepali as the medium of instruction. National Education System Plan (NSEP), 1971 mandated English as a compulsory subject in the school education (Rana & Rana, 2019), however, the medium of instruction in the schools was strictly Nepali. Yet children of elite families were sent to the famous private schools of India, and abroad (Phyak, 2016). After the political changes of 1991, the door to run schools from the private sector opened and many institutional schools opened one after another. These schools attracted students, for they offered English medium classes, and sending children to private schools has become a status symbol (Phyak, 2016).

Growing Influence of English in Recent Days

Before the re-establishment of multiparty democracy in 1991, there were a few private schools in the country, which were mostly centered in the urban centres and affordable to well to do families only. But after 90s many schools run by the private sector, popularly known as *boarding schools,* mushroomed from the rural to small urban towns as the constitution of 1990 opened doors to liberal economic policies in the country (Phyak, 2016). These schools attracted majorly the middle-class families, which always counted in the majority, and gained popularity against government-funded community schools. This has posed a challenge to the government-aided community schools as they began running out of students. In recent years many of the community schools to have decided to shift to English medium. This is the global spread of content teaching in English or EMI that influenced Nepali education system too (Shah & Li 2018). In the latter half of 20th century, several factors such as the acquisition and transmission of scientific and technological knowledge, international communication, the acquisition of ideas and values necessary for accelerating the modernization process, reference language, library language and regional *lingua franca* brought English at the level of professionalism. The growing influence of English is subordinating Nepali and brought Nepali society in line with the universal hegemonic supremacy of English identified by Crystal (1997) in the forms of historical tradition, political expediency, and the desire for commercial, cultural or technological contact.

The above discussion justifies the growing need of ELT in the present context of Nepal. Though an English teacher may not have to worry about the students' exposure to English especially in those schools adopted EMI and have begun teaching the content in English but yet the performance of the public schools in SEE examinations in the recent years is in downward trends (Republica, 2019). Paradoxically, Tribhuvan University, the largest and oldest university in Nepal, has started to offer question papers in both English and Neapli languages (Republica, 2024). Majorly students underperform in subjects like English, Mathematics and Science (Ministry of Education, 2014).

Studnets' Failure: A Dent on the National Ambition

A well-educated population is the prime ambition of the nation. It is key to national development because well-educated people make skilled and equipped human resources. For this, countries allocate a huge amount of budget in the education sector. Despite immediate priorities, like fighting against Corona pandemic, and saving the economy from being derailed due to long stretched lockdown, the Government of Nepal opted to put quality education in the budget priorities in the fiscal year 2077/78 B.S. In this fiscal year, the government has allocated 11.64% of the total budget in education (ICAN, 2020). Apart from this, several donor agencies every year fund in billions. World Bank has allocated USD 11 million to the Ministry of Education’s Covid-19 response plan in 2020/021 (Global Partership for Education, n.d.). Apart from this, School Sector Development Plan- SSDP (2016-23), funded by different donor agencies with a total budget of 10.58 billion USD is in the pipeline at present (Ministry of Education, 2016). Despite these all, the main output of the school education, i.e., SEE examinations have regularly shown downward trends (Dixit, 2019).

There may be various factors such as social, scholar or biophysical responsible for the students’ failure (Roman, 2014). Referring Piaget (1995), Roman further points out that approximately 50% of school success being due to intelligence and the remaining 50% is due to “non-intellectual personality factors, and terms of organizing school activity, teaching methods” (p.170).

Cherif and Movahedzadeh (2013) point out that failure causes lasting damage to the personality of the students, and sometimes it influences the individual's lifetime. The high failure rate is “a national tragedy, and it contributes to the low graduate rates” (p.35). The teachers feel frustrated when their students fail, they may generalize it as the failure of their teaching (Dawley, 1999). There are many things, such as motivation, academic preparedness, students’ attitudes, instruction techniques, the relevancy of the subject matter, and some external efforts, i.e., the need to sacrifice study hours for work, cost of education, etc. as the factors influencing students’ failure (Cherif & Movahedzadeh, 2013).

Students Failure in English

English is neither used significantly in the territory of Nepal as a mother tongue nor as a second language or an official language. Its status in the country is mere as of a foreign language. Yet it is highly recommended as the medium of instruction in the reputed schools and all the tertiary level programmes. It is a library language too because most of the academic information in different institutions are searched in English. Schools are adopting it as a medium of instruction. Strong favor from the parents, students, and teachers to English as a linguistic capital as it is taken as a key to developing English skills and better education (Shah & Li, 2018). For these, parents force schools and children to improve English. They send their children to coaching classes or prefer sending them to private schools (Paudyal, 2019). However, in public schools, most of the students come from lower-middle-class families who cannot afford expensive tuition fees. These schools very often underperform in the national level examinations such as, SEE because of under-resourced classrooms, teachers' affiliating to party politics, absenteeism of students and teachers, lack of subject teachers, and inadequate funding (Ghimire, 2020). A data from 2015 reveals that 67% of the total students from public schools failed in then School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination and about 70% of total students enrolled in the first-grade dropout in ten years. Out of the total failed students, about 90% failed in English, mathematics, or science (Teach for Nepal, n.d.). This consistent failure of students is putting a dent in the nation's education policies and developmental ambitions.

Second Language Acquisition Debate and English

When an individual acquires a language other than the mother tongue, it is called the second language and the process is called the second language acquisition (SLA). SLA has been defined in academia as "the study of the individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first language as young children and to the process of learning that language" (Saville-Troike, 2006, p.2). For Ellis (1997) it is the systematic study of how people acquire a second language, which is a phenomenon influenced by the inner cognitive factors of the learners as well as by the factors such as social condition and input. Average children acquire control of most of the L1 grammatical patterns before they are five or six. During this time, any other languages significantly exposed to the learners are also acquired naturally (Saville-Troike, 2006). This phenomenon is known as simultaneous multilingualism.

In the case of Nepal, natural and significant exposure to the English language is practically impossible. Most of the children begin learning it only after they are sent to schools. In such a case, the acquisition of the additional language takes place only after the significant acquisition of the first language. This phenomenon is known as sequential multilingualism (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Language Learning Difficulties

In the case of the country like Nepal, the natural L1 speaking environment of English is unavailable, English is not a second language but a foreign language as it is a case of learning a language that is not generally spoken in the surrounding community (Yule, 2010). In such a case, learners learn it under the influence of their instructors. Here the entire process of target language acquisition takes place in a planned artificial situation. It is quite different from the natural process of language acquisition because the learner, here, cannot get adequate language exposure to the target language, and that hampers his/her entire acquisition process (Dilaimy, 1999).

Factors Affecting Language Learning

Traditionally first language interference and currently more frequently used term cross-linguistic influence causes hindrance in the acquisition process of the second language (Dilaimy, 1999; Schweers, 1989). It is considered one of the major causes of learning hindrances of a second language.

Apart from this, several linguistic and non-linguistic factors influence the learning of a target language. Kim and Lee (2010) examine some linguistic and non-linguistic factors influencing the English proficiency of the learners. They take language distance, and language affinity as the major linguistic factors and some economic indicators such as per-capita income, the export share of GDP, globalization index as well as total schooling years, number of tourists visiting inland, number of internet users, and colonial experience by an English speaking country as the non-linguistic factors. Thirunavukkarasu (2011) categorized such factors in similar two categories, but he further categorized linguistic factors as applied linguistic, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors. Similarly, he further categorized non-linguistic factors into physical, social and psychological factors. He argued that some personal factors such as age, intelligence, aptitude, attitude, and motivation also influence second language acquisition.

Anxiety: A Strong Affective Factor

Saville-Troike (2006) puts motivation and attitude under affective factors that influence second language acquisition. She adds one more factor under this category as anxiety level. Anxiety makes a considerable influence on one’s language learning because it negatively correlates with L2 proficiency in the foreign language classes

(Saville-Troike, 2006) lack of anxiety raises one's confidence and leads him/her to more risk-taking and adventurous behaviours towards learning.

Anxiety is basically a term used in psychology. It is defined as:

> …the tense, unsettling anticipation of a threatening but vague event; a feeling of uneasy suspense. It is a negative affect so closely related to fear that in many circumstances the two terms are used interchangeably; like anxiety, fear also is a combination of tension and unpleasant anticipation (Rachman, 2004, p.3).

However, Rachman clarifies that there are some visible distinctions between fear and anxiety in terms of causes, duration, and maintenance. He takes 'fear' as "a reaction to a specific, perceived danger"(p.3) and as an identifiable threat whereas anxiety is a state of "heightened vigilance rather than an emergency reaction"(p.3). Anxiety is not easily predictable and has no clear borders. It is unpleasant and unsettling.

It is also defined as, "…an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure" (APA, n.d.). In other words it is "…a mental and physical state characterized by specific emotional, physical, cognitive and behavioral symptoms. It is a reaction It is an adaptive reaction which mobilizes the organism and helps it defend attack or avoid an anxiety stimulus" (Kralova & Petrova, 2017). When anxiety is seen as "the mind and body's reaction to stressful, dangerous, or unfamiliar situations" (Jovanovic, n.d.). It pushes an individual into the corner of insecurity and distress.

What is Foreign Language Anxiety?

Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed that a specific type of anxiety which is manifested in terms of students' uncomfortable experiences in language classes and offered an instrument. They named it Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and proposed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), to measure this type of anxiety. This anxiety towards foreign languages comes under situation-specific anxiety. It is one of the extensively researched interdisciplinary areas under second language research (Liu & Huang, 2011). Most of the learners in a second or foreign class undergo this situation. It makes their study less enjoyable and brings learning troubles to them. They become less engaged in classroom discussions and reluctant to interact in the classroom (Alqahtani, 2019).

Learners’ anxiety towards foreign language comes under situation-specific anxiety and is termed as ‘foreign language anxiety (FLA)’. It is one of the extensively researched interdisciplinary areas under second language research (Liu & Huang, 2011). Most of the learners in a second or foreign class undergo this situation. It makes their study less enjoyable and brings learning troubles to them. They become less engaged in classroom discussions and reluctant to interact in the classroom.

There are two approaches to identifying foreign language anxiety (Horwitz & Young, 1991, as cited in Kráľová, 2016). The former is the transfer approach – where FLA is viewed as a manifestation of other forms of anxiety, and the latter is a unique approach – where foreign language achievement is correlated with FLA but not with other types of anxiety.

Sources of Language Anxiety

Young (1991) lists six potential sources of language anxiety, i.e., personal and interpersonal anxieties, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language teaching, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures, and language testing. Among them, personal and interpersonal issues are the most discussed rubrics in SLA academia. Under these issues, low self-esteem and competitiveness are the two significant sources of learner anxiety. She mentions Bailey (1983) who contends that competitiveness can also lead to anxiety when language learners compare themselves to others or an idealized self-image. Referring to Leary, she discusses that it can also be incorporated with social anxiety, and anxiety specific to language learning such as speech anxiety, shyness, stage fright, embarrassment, social evaluative anxiety, and communication apprehension. Learners’ attitudes and beliefs toward the target language can also be the sources of language anxiety. Learners acquire their first language subconsciously, and after this, their affective filter gets activated. This may make them conscious while getting the target language input. Apart from this, motivation is also a key factor to shape the learners’ beliefs towards the target language (pp.426-27).

Another possible source of anxiety is the teachers’ beliefs about language teaching. Teachers who believe that they must control the class and correct the students' errors immediately may considerably contribute to language anxiety in students. Similarly, learner-instructor interaction can also be a source of anxiety. The teacher's authoritative behavior in the classroom may discourage students from participating actively in the teaching-learning activities. Students' worries about incorrect responses and teachers' possible punishment turn them into passive participants in the class. The way the teacher corrects students' errors also keeps students in the corner of insecurity because they may be afraid of being a jest in the class (Young, 1991, pp.428-29).

Anxieties associated with classroom procedures refer to the worries of the students about their role in the class. In most of the classes, students prefer not to be asked any question when they have to respond in the target language. It is also associated with the personal factor, i.e., confidence. Lack of confidence in the students forces them to disprefer talking in the target language in the class. Similarly, anxieties related to language testing are also rooted in the worries about the examinations. Most of the students in the class do not adequately concentrate on the teaching-learning activities as they keep worrying about the unfamiliar questions they may be asked in the tests (Young, 1991, p. 429).

Causes of Language Anxiety

Zhang and Zhong (2012) listed out the following as the possible causes of language anxiety:

Learner-induced Anxiety. Learner-induced anxiety is possibly caused because of learners' erroneous beliefs, unrealistic high standards, poor language abilities, self-perceived incompetence, inclined competitive nature, and dispositional fear of negative evaluation (Zhong & Zhong, 2012, p.27). Horwitz (1988) carried out a study on the varying beliefs of university students studying a foreign language academic course and the results of the study indicated that students showed great concern over the accuracy of their utterance. In the results of the study, students showed great concern over the accuracy of their utterances. They thought that the target language should not be attempted unless correction and they should not guess the meanings of the unfamiliar words (Zhang & Zhong, 2012, p. 28). Horwitz (1988, as cited in Zhang & Zhong, 2012) also found that some students were quite unaware of the difficulties of the language learning, and they believed that two years or less is sufficient for them to become proficient in another language. Once they failed in their expectations, they got frustrated and anxious because of the clash of the outcomes and expectations.

Classroom-related Anxiety. Young (1991) identifies classroom-induced anxiety as mainly related to such variables as teachers, peers, or classroom practices. Teacher-related factors of language anxiety are associated with the teacher's beliefs about language teaching, the manner of error correction, the level of perceived support, and the teaching style. These factors are likely to make learners alert and anxious. other classroom-induced factors such as peers and classroom practices are equally responsible for raising the anxiety level of the students.

Teachers' beliefs about language teaching have also been identified as another source of language anxiety in learners. It is probably caused when instructors consider their role as a constant error-corrector rather than a ‘facilitator’. They do not promote group work for fear of losing control of the class, and they believe teachers should be responsible for most of the talking and teaching. Normally students also expect the teacher’s pivotal role in this regard, but the more the teacher makes him/herself active in the class, the less the students get space for participation. Even the teacher opens the floor to the students in the class to speak up but extended silence may lead her/him be impatient and he gradually takes hold of the class and lets students less space for participation and finally, students may be desperately wedged into the situation of being passive listeners. This pushes the entire class into a vicious circle of non-communication. This may make students more reserved and they may even hesitate their errors corrected.

In parallel with teacher-induced anxiety, there is peer-induced. For example, Allwright and Bailey (as cited in Zhong & Zhang, 2012) indicated that some very competent students feel great peer pressure because their linguistic superiority over others might stir up resentment and jealousy from their peers. Consequently, they may knowingly make mistakes, yet by which teachers probably find fault with them, or simply withdraw from the classroom interaction to find a way out of their dilemma. Thus, the less competent learners are not the only possible candidates susceptible to anxiety; even the high-proficient students are likely to fall into the ditch (Young, 1991).

Skill-specific Anxiety. Speaking a foreign language itself is an anxiety-provoking experience for many students. Price (cited in Zhang & Zhong, 2012.) presented a report on interviews with highly anxious former language students who indicated that his participants could not care less about their imperfect pronunciation. Specifically, several people felt ashamed of their Texas accents. Also, some learners felt uncomfortable that their ability to make small talk or oral production was denied as a result of their poor vocabulary of the target language (as cited in Zhang & Zhong, 2012). Apart from pronunciation, students are found anxious about their poor vocabulary or overwhelming rules of grammar. Most students are found more anxious about unprepared free speech (Horwitz et al., 1986). Thus, out of four language skills speaking is highly anxiety-provoking (Young, 1992). But listening comprehension is also not less anxiety-generating “if it [the discourse] is incomprehensible” (Young, 1992, p.168). Therefore, the task of listening comprehension is one of the contributing sources of language anxiety. Just as seen in listening and speaking, reading in a second language, too, may be associated with language anxiety (Zhang & Zhong, 2012, p. 30). Reading skills are also anxiety-creating. It is found in various studies that readers’ language anxiety is aroused because of the unfamiliar culturally-related content or its high level of difficulty (as cited in Zhang & Zhong, 2012). In addition, readers are afflicted with recurrent frustrations when they are incapable of comprehending every word and idea in a text (Lee, 1999, Zhang & Zhong). Another skill that is likely to elevate anxiety is writing. When students are supposed to write in the target language, they get anxious. Those are students’ worry about their linguistic capability in target language, their worries about their writing deviated from TL norms, worries about what the teacher favours etc. (Lee, 1999, Zhang & Zhong).

Society-imposed Anxiety. Many children very often show the symptoms of anxiety which is usually overlooked by the authorities or the parents. They may feel uneasy coping with strangers, peers, or teachers in the classroom. This is a kind of social anxiety in which children are intensely afraid of being noticed, judged, humiliated, or embarrassed. Data shows that almost 13% of the general population suffers from social anxiety at one time or another in their lives (School Matters Blog, 2011). This type of anxiety may show symptoms like fear of unknown people or situations; fear of being judged; anxiety about being embarrassed or humiliated; fear others will recognize the anxiety; and dread of events even weeks in the future. Such psychological fears are exhibited physically through blushing, profuse sweating, tremors, stuttering, inability to initiate conversations, avoiding eye contact, and rapid pulse. The fears that cause the symptoms of anxiety are out of proportion to the reality of the actual situation. While adults may recognize this, children do not (School Matters Blog, 2011).

School children are more vulnerable to having such type of anxiety and it is visible in different forms according to the age of the child. At the basic level school children's social anxiety presents itself as a difficulty or extreme reluctance to: read aloud or answer questions; begin or participate in group discussions; write answers on the blackboard; and perform music or athletics activities. Teenagers' symptoms of anxiety include additional things such as: skipping school; drug or alcohol abuse; fear of public speaking; difficulties in dating or employment; and fears of using public restrooms (School Matters Blog, 2011).

Society-imposed anxiety here refers to language anxiety caused by a society that embraces identity formation, cultural connotation, and parental intervention. Anxieties related to identity formation center primarily on the process labeled "subtractive bilingualism", a term coined by Lambert (cited in Ellis 1994) as where members of a minority group learn the dominant language as L2 and are more likely to experience some loss of ethnic identity and attrition of L1 skills. One anxious English-learning Norwegian-speaking student respondent in Hilleson's (1996, as cited in Zhang & Zhong, 2012) introspective study talked about her discomfort at losing her own linguistic identity. She not only felt uncomfortable in English but she manifested attrition of her Norwegian language skills. Possibly the people who see learning English as a threatening process as "subtractive bilingualism" are more likely to be stressed and fall into the fossilization of English interlanguage and deviation of their L1 skills. In addition to identity formation, cultural differences should be taken into account when addressing the issue of language anxiety (Horwritz, 2001, as cited in Zhang & Zhong, 2012). Some learners may bring their own cultural values or habits with them into the language classroom. For example, a Nepali student may feel that listening silently to the teacher in the classroom is part of discipline and learning can be assured this way.

A Brief Survey of Empirical Literature

Liu and Huang (2011) used rubrics like the foreign language classroom anxiety scale, English learning motivation scale, Background information (of the learner), and performance in English (participants' scores) as the measuring tools of language anxiety. They conducted the study on 980 participants (617 males, and 363 females) who were first-year non-English major students from various disciplines such as law, engineering, mechanics, and economics and management at three universities in China.

Javid (2014) has made an attempt to identify Saudi EFL learner's language anxiety. He retrieved data from randomly selected 216 freshmen students enrolled in the preparatory year program at Taif University. He found that Saudi preparatory year students bear a medium level of language learning anxiety.

Ali (2017) aims to develop and validate a brief scale when such scale is lacking for the direct measurement of English language learning anxiety developed in the Egyptian context. He used exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on 362 EFL learners enrolled in their first year at the College of Education, Minia University, Egypt. He found that the scale consisted of four subscales: speaking anxiety, writing anxiety, reading anxiety, and listening anxiety. He concluded the brief scale has good reliability and adequate validity and the analysis results supported the conclusion that it is a reliable and valid measurement instrument.

Baran-Bucarz (n.d.) reported on a study investigating whether the actual level of FL learners' pronunciation and the pronunciation level perceived by students can be considered significant sources of anxiety. It is hypothesized that both pronunciation levels are related to language acquisition, with the latter being a more important determinant than the former. To measure the subjects' degree of anxiety, he applied the Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986)'s *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale*. And, found that the actual level of pronunciation was diagnosed with the use of a Pronunciation Test, consisting of a Perception Test and two Production Tests (word and passage reading).

Methodology

This study has adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of secondary-level students in Nepal. Emphasizing on Heidegger's (1962) hermeneutic interpretation of lived experiences and van Manen's (1990) practical lens, hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to uncover the meaning of lived experiences within participants' specific sociocultural contexts. This approach has equally provided an in-depth understanding of how students perceive and navigate their realities. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select eight students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to ensure a broad representation of perspectives. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, which is also recognized as an effective tool for eliciting rich, detailed narratives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Regarding the data analysis, it has employed the qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, i.e., transcribing, coding, thematizing based on the essence of participants’ experiences, analysing the gathered information through the iterative processes of immersion, reflection, and interpretation of hermeneutic cycle (Gadamer, 1975). Ethical considerations were properly embraced through the informed consent obtained from all participants, and measures taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Similarly, trustworthiness was maintained through credibility (prolonged engagement with data and participants), dependability (detailed documentation of procedures), transferability (rich, contextual descriptions), and confirmability (reflexive journaling to mitigate researcher bias). These measures ensured that the findings authentically represent the lived experiences of the participants.

Results and Discussions

This results and discussions section examines the multifaceted nature of language learning anxiety by exploring themes through the lived experiences of the participants. These key themes include the fear of negative evaluation, linguistic self-perception and low confidence, cultural pressure and societal expectations, and limited exposure to English in daily life, which highlight the socio-psychological challenges faced by learners. Other themes, such as the fear of making mistakes, teacher-student interaction and the teacher’s role, and peer comparison and group dynamics, reveal the influence of classroom dynamics and social interactions. Lastly, participants shared their coping strategies and methods of overcoming anxiety, providing insights into resilience and self-regulation. These themes collectively illustrate the complex interplay of personal, cultural, and environmental factors shaping learners' experiences.

Theme 1: Fear of Negative Evaluation

The fear of negative evaluation emerged as one of the major themes as a significant source of anxiety for many participants in this study. This anxiety was deeply rooted in the students as the pressure of being judged by their teachers and peers while speaking English. It is much fearfully magnified in the Nepali context where English is often regarded as a symbol of prestige and success. In this regard, participants consistently highlighted the emotional toll of the fear that led them to feel hesitation to speak in public and avoid the opportunities to engage in communication in English. Maya, a female participant, shared:

> *Whenever I have to speak English in front of the class, I feel like everyone is just waiting to judge me. I can't help but feel embarrassed, even when I know the answer. I feel and have found that people usually do not listen to my contents, but the mistakes I have made while speaking in English. Thus, I have this sort of anxiety in speaking in English in front of the people though I could communicate in Nepali well to them.*

Maya's response highlights her internalized fear of being judged, even though she is confident in her response. Such constant fear of scrutiny can prevent students from expressing themselves in public, even though they have good knowledge. In the same line, Kiran, a male participant, stated that "*….it's terrifying…. I feel like if I make a mistake, everyone will think I'm not smart enough. It makes me hesitate before speaking".*

His statement reflects a deep-seated fear that making a mistake will negatively affect how other people regard his abilities. Such emotional weight of the fear and poor self-worth creates a barrier to speaking in English in public. Such type of anxiety can prevent students from taking risks in language learning, ultimately hindering their progress. Another participant, Anju, expressed her anxiety in relation to the pronunciation as:

> *I think teachers always focus on pronunciation, and if it's wrong, it's like you're doing something wrong. I feel anxious even before I start. You know, I*

> *am a student from Newar family and cannot speak English in English accent and get teased.*

Her response reflects a very common fear among students that wrong pronunciation— might be due to their mother tongue interference, or others— might lead to criticism or negative evaluation from teachers. It indicates that when perfect pronunciation is strictly expected, the anxiety due to such reason might be paralyzing the students to speak in English in the classroom.

In the same vein, Samir described his discomfort during group activities while the teachers or friends "*compares me with others who are better"*. His experience also reveals that peer comparison intensifies language anxiety and can lead to feelings of inferiority. Such social comparison theory —individuals often assess their own abilities based on how they perceive others— can worsen anxiety making them hesitant to speak up.

Such fear of negative evaluation as experienced by the participants is well-documented in the literature on language anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) identify it as one of the central components of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) that may lead the students to avoidance of speaking opportunities, negative judgement, hierarchizing the students. Students get less exposed since they, as the reflections of Kiran and Anju, often feel they are under close scrutiny, not only from their teachers but also from their peers. Similarly, Aida (1994) supports the reflections of Maya and Kiran that fear of making mistakes can lead to a decrease in students' self-efficacy and language participation. It also illustrates the connection between the fear of negative evaluation and reduced confidence in speaking, especially in the Nepali context, where the societal value of English as prestige. As participants argued that teachers' role is crucial in shaping students' language learning experiences, Tanveer (2007) also pointed out that teachers' feedback—whether positive or negative—can significantly influence the emotional climate of the classroom.

The fear of negative evaluation is a major component that causes anxiety in English language classrooms. All the participants echoed that the students have got high stress due to the societal expectations, the constant scrutiny from both teachers and peers, the judgements for their language abilities that create their language anxiety. Such anxiety can be reduced via creating a supportive and empathetic classroom environment where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process rather than as failures.

Theme 2: Linguistic Self-Perception and Low Confidence

Another major theme, linguistic self-perception and low confidence, refers to the students' anxiety regarding their assumptions about their potentially inadequate English skills. Such poor self-confidence regarding the language, such as perceived deficiencies in vocabulary, fluency, and accent, creates anxiety in them. The participants expressed that their self-perception was shaped by the gap between the language skills they had and the idealized standard of English they aspired to reach or as are aspired to by their teachers/seniors. In this regard, one of the participants, Pradip, shared:

> *I always feel like I don't know enough words. Even though I know the grammar, speaking is a different challenge. It makes me feel insecure. I find myself poor in English especially in speaking. However, I could manage to read and somehow write. Speaking—maintaining the grammar and fluency—is the most difficult for me.*

His statement highlights the gap between theoretical knowledge (like grammar) and practical skills (like speaking) that lead him to feelings of insecurity and create anxiety. Similarly, Bina found herself "*not good enough in English*" since she had "*very limited vocabulary*" and when she wanted to speak in English, she got "*stuck*". Her response highlights the direct connection between limited vocabulary and her language anxiety. Her perception as "*not good enough,*" reflects her low self-esteem that prevents her from taking risks in her spoken language.

Another participant, Rashmi, shared her concerns about her Nepali accent: *"It's not just the vocabulary; it's also the accent. I sometimes think my accent is too Nepali, and people won't understand me….Nepali dogs barking in English— nobody understand: neither Nepali people nor English people."*

Her fear of not being understood due to her Nepali accent reveals her anxiety due to cultural and linguistic factors. Her anxiety is not only about her linguistic competence but also socio-psychological— she feels that her accents often carry social stigma, leading to concerns about social acceptance and judgment (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

In the same vein, Suman stated his fear of not being "*able to speak fluently like others*". He further revealed that when he wanted to speak, he "*felt"* that he would "*miss some words and make mistakes*". His anxiety, caused by low self-confidence, is due to his deep-rooted fear of fluency and error-making.

As participants experienced, MacIntyre (1995) argues that self-perception and low self-confidence are pivotal contributors to language anxiety. Similarly, Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy highlights the importance of students' belief in their abilities to influence their language learning outcomes. For Nepali students, this often manifests in a fear of judgment based on their perceived deficiencies in speaking English.

Theme 3: Cultural Pressure and Societal Expectations

The cultural pressure and societal expectations to perform well in English is another prominent theme. In the Nepali socio-psychological sphere, proficiency in English is often understood as a marker of intelligence, success, and social status. In this regard, participants expressed their emotional stress due to their cultural pressure and societal expectations. In this case, Bina, articulated that:

> *In our society, speaking English is seen as a sign of intelligence, success and prestige. From the first day of school, the child is expected to speak English fluently. If you speak in Nepali, it's like you haven't learned anything and you're not modern enough.*

Her statement reflects the Nepalese societal belief that speaking English is synonymous with being educated, success and modern. Such societal expectation creates a tense environment for students and causes anxiety. Similarly, Pradeep, shared his struggle with his parental, familial and societal expectations: "*I feel pressure, especially in family and public."* He further revealed that if he could speak English fluently, he felt like "*I'm failing to meet the expectations"*. His reflection regarding the societal expectations pronounces his social settings where individuals may be judged by their language abilities. Such social settings of societal standards cause anxiety.

Similarly, Maya expressed her pressure in English proficiency due to the neo-liberal job market where English is "*a must*" criterion. She articulated that "*there is so much emphasis on English, especially in the job market"* and "*people judge you based on how well you speak it."* Her concern about the role of English in her career reflects the strong societal emphasis on the language in Nepal as a gateway to better employment opportunities, a tool to excel in professionalism.

In the same vein, Samir highlighted how familial expectations affected his sense of self-worth with the English language:

> *In my family, everyone expects me to speak good English. They want me speaking in good English. They judge me in my proficiency in English. They wish to see my abilities, intelligence, integrity and success in my English. Sometimes, I feel like I can't live up to that standard.*

He illustrates the personal, parental, and familial pressure and expectations that many Nepali students face. Such parental, familial, and societal expectations create pressure on the students that contributes to the anxiety.

Liu and Littlewood (1997) have also discussed such societal expectations regarding language proficiency that might worsen language anxiety. In this study, the participants have also faced similar experiences that linguistic competence is not only academic but also cultural and social. Thus, English in Nepal is taken as a symbol of success and upward mobility that might cause much anxiety in the students to meet the societal expectations.

Theme 4: Limited Exposure to English in Daily Life

A significant theme identified in this study was the limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Several participants noted that they rarely had the opportunity to practice English in their daily lives, which exacerbated their anxiety when required to speak the language in public or social settings. For these students, English was something that existed primarily in the classroom, making it difficult to use and practice outside of academic contexts.

Kiran, a male participant, shared, "I only get to speak English in class, so when it's time to speak outside of school, I struggle. It makes me nervous." Kiran's statement reflects the disconnect between classroom learning and real-world usage of English. Without sufficient exposure to English in daily life, students often struggle to internalize language structures and vocabulary, making it challenging to speak confidently when the need arises outside the classroom.

Suman, another male participant, expressed frustration with the lack of practice opportunities: *“My friends don’t speak English much, so I never have the chance to practice. It feels like I'm constantly out of touch.”* Suman’s experience highlights how the absence of a language-rich environment limits students’ ability to develop fluency. Without opportunities to use English regularly in informal settings, students may feel disconnected from the language, which only increases their anxiety when they are required to speak it.

Rashmi, a female participant, also discussed the lack of exposure at home: *“At home, we always speak in Nepali, and my friends also use Nepali. Speaking English is just for class, so it feels unnatural.”* Rashmi’s verbatim underscores how the dominance of Nepali in personal and social spaces contributes to her feeling of “unnaturalness” when speaking English. Without regular exposure to English in informal contexts, students may struggle to make the transition from classroom English to real-world English use, further increasing their anxiety.

Anju, another female participant, suggested a potential solution: *“If we had more English interactions outside the classroom, it would be easier to improve. But the lack of exposure limits us.”* Anju’s comment highlights the importance of language practice beyond the classroom. Without regular interactions in English outside of formal education, students are left with limited opportunities to develop fluency, leading to increased language anxiety.

Schmitt (2002) supports the idea that limited exposure to a foreign language can result in anxiety and decreased confidence. In the Nepali context, where English is primarily learned in the classroom, the lack of real-world practice opportunities is a significant contributor to language anxiety. The disconnect between classroom instruction and external use of English prevents students from gaining the fluency and confidence needed to speak the language effectively.

In conclusion, the lack of exposure to English in daily life is a crucial factor in the language anxiety experienced by Nepali students. Without regular opportunities to practice English outside the classroom, students often feel unprepared and anxious when they are expected to use the language in real-world situations. Addressing this gap could help reduce anxiety and improve students’ confidence in their language abilities.

Theme 5: Fear of Making Mistakes

A dominant theme that emerged across all participants was the overwhelming fear of making mistakes, which significantly contributed to their hesitation in speaking English. The fear of error and the resulting avoidance behavior were consistent throughout the interviews, suggesting that anxiety related to making mistakes plays a critical role in the participants' language experiences. *Rashmi* (Female) expressed her fear poignantly: *"I’m terrified of making mistakes. Even when I know the answer, I stay silent because I’m afraid I’ll say something wrong."* Her statement reflects a common tendency among language learners to self-censor, fearing that a mistake will negatively affect how others perceive their language abilities. This fear often leads to silence, even when the speaker knows the correct response, highlighting how error anxiety can undermine one's willingness to participate.

Similarly, *Pradeep* (Male) shared his reluctance to speak: *"I avoid speaking because I don’t want to sound foolish. Even small mistakes make me feel embarrassed."* Here, Pradeep’s self-consciousness underscores how even minor mistakes are magnified in the minds of language learners, causing embarrassment and a reluctance to communicate. This resonates with the findings of Bailey (2005), who argues that error anxiety often leads students to withdraw from speaking opportunities altogether, as they fear humiliation or ridicule. For many participants, the idea of making a mistake was not just about the error itself, but also about how that error would be perceived by others. The stakes of error were thus inflated, making the experience of language learning more anxiety-inducing.

The fear of standing out due to errors was another consistent theme. *Suman* (Male) noted, *"In group discussions, I stay quiet because I’m afraid my mistakes will stand out. It’s better to be silent than to be wrong."* This insight reflects the heightened anxiety that group settings often provoke, as the risk of being singled out for a mistake becomes a significant deterrent to participation. Language learners often feel as though their errors are under a magnifying glass, and in group discussions, this fear is compounded by the social dynamics of comparison with peers. The desire to avoid negative judgment can lead students to remain silent, even when they have valuable contributions to make.

Rashmi (Female) also provided insight into how lingering anxiety about mistakes can affect students after the fact: *"If I make a mistake, it stays with me for hours."* This lingering anxiety after an error occurs suggests that the emotional toll of language mistakes extends beyond the immediate context. The anxiety does not simply dissipate once the conversation is over; instead, it continues to haunt the learner, affecting their confidence and willingness to engage in future speaking opportunities. This aligns with Bailey's (2005) discussion on the prolonged impact of error anxiety, suggesting that fear of mistakes can have a long-term detrimental effect on language acquisition.

In addition to these personal experiences, it's essential to consider how cultural perceptions of mistakes influence language anxiety. In societies like Nepal, where English proficiency is highly valued as a marker of intelligence and success, the fear of mistakes can be compounded by external societal pressures. Making a mistake while speaking English may not only be seen as a personal failure but also as a failure to meet social expectations. This dual layer of anxiety—both internal and external—can make the fear of mistakes particularly paralyzing for language learners.

The fear of making mistakes is an intrinsic part of language anxiety. As Bailey (2005) posits, error anxiety is a major factor that contributes to a lack of speaking confidence. This theme clearly illustrates how fear of making mistakes limits students' opportunities to practice and refine their language skills, creating a vicious cycle where anxiety perpetuates silence, which in turn inhibits language development.

Theme 6: Teacher-Student Interaction and Teacher's Role

The role of the teacher emerged as a pivotal factor in shaping the participants' language learning experiences, particularly in relation to their anxiety. While some students found that teacher support and positive reinforcement helped reduce anxiety, others felt that critical or dismissive feedback heightened their stress. This theme reflects how teacher behavior and the quality of teacher-student interaction can either mitigate or exacerbate language anxiety, influencing students' confidence and willingness to engage in English-speaking activities.

Kiran (Male) offered an insightful reflection on how teacher encouragement affects his anxiety: *"When the teacher encourages me, I feel more confident. But if the feedback is negative, it makes me even more anxious to speak next time."* For Kiran, positive reinforcement is a critical factor in alleviating his language anxiety. Encouragement from teachers seems to boost his self-confidence, making him feel more comfortable speaking English. This highlights the importance of supportive and constructive teacher feedback in fostering a positive language learning environment. In contrast, negative feedback exacerbates Kiran's anxiety, pushing him further away from speaking in class. This aligns with Tanveer's (2007) argument that teachers' reactions to student mistakes can either reduce or increase language anxiety. Negative or overly critical feedback not only impacts students' confidence in the short term but can also create a lasting fear of making mistakes in the future.

Similarly, *Suman* (Male) noted that some teachers are more skilled at creating a supportive atmosphere: *"Some teachers make us feel comfortable by acknowledging our efforts. But some just point out mistakes without offering guidance."* This dichotomy reflects a critical distinction between teachers who provide feedback in a way that encourages learning and those who focus solely on pointing out errors without offering solutions or encouragement. In the latter scenario, students may feel disheartened and less likely to participate, as they begin to associate speaking English with negative reinforcement.

Anju (Female) also emphasized the role of the teacher in reducing anxiety: *"A good teacher knows how to make you feel less anxious. But when teachers are too critical, it's hard to overcome the fear."* Anju's experience highlights the delicate balance teachers must maintain when providing feedback. While constructive criticism is important for improvement, overly harsh feedback can lead to feelings of inadequacy and heighten anxiety. Teachers who can create a safe space for students to make mistakes without fear of judgment are more likely to reduce anxiety and foster a growth mindset.

Rashmi (Female) appreciated teachers who showed patience: *"I appreciate teachers who give us time and don't rush us to speak. It reduces my anxiety when they show patience."* Patience is a critical component of teacher-student interactions, as it allows students to process their thoughts and express themselves more clearly without the pressure of being rushed. Rashmi’s preference for patient teachers suggests that learners need time and space to overcome their anxiety and speak confidently. Patience, coupled with positive feedback, can help students build the self-efficacy necessary to engage more fully in English-language activities.

This theme resonates strongly with Tanveer (2007), who highlights the crucial role of teacher support in mitigating language anxiety. Teachers who provide encouragement, patience, and constructive feedback help students develop the confidence needed to overcome their fears and engage more freely in speaking activities. In contrast, a lack of support or overly critical feedback can exacerbate anxiety, creating a cycle of fear and hesitation that is difficult to break.

Theme 7: Peer Comparison and Group Dynamics

Peer comparison emerged as a significant contributor to the participants' anxiety, with students frequently comparing their language skills to those of their classmates. This comparison often led to feelings of inferiority and intensified language anxiety. Participants noted how they felt nervous or discouraged when they perceived their peers as speaking more fluently or confidently, which hindered their own willingness to speak.

Bina (Female) expressed how comparing herself to others in group work heightened her anxiety: *"In group work, I always compare myself to others. If someone speaks better English, I feel like I’m not good enough."* Bina’s statement reveals how social comparison within the classroom setting can be a source of stress. The competitive nature of language learning often leads students to focus on their perceived shortcomings, rather than their own progress. *Samir* (Male) had a similar experience: *"In class, I always compare my speaking to others. If they speak more fluently, I feel more nervous about my own skills."* For Samir, the fluency of his peers becomes a yardstick by which he measures his own abilities, and when he feels he doesn’t measure up, it exacerbates his anxiety.

Pradeep (Male) also acknowledged the impact of peer comparison: *"I get distracted by others who speak better English. It makes me anxious because I don’t feel as confident."* For Pradeep, the anxiety triggered by his peers’ superior speaking skills made it difficult for him to focus on his own speaking. He found himself preoccupied with how others were performing, which ultimately hindered his ability to engage confidently in conversations. This reflects Dörnyei's (2005) research, which emphasizes the role of social comparison in language learning anxiety. According to Dörnyei, comparing oneself to others, especially in a competitive classroom environment, can lead to feelings of inferiority and reduce the willingness to speak.

Maya (Female) further explained how peer comparison undermined her self-esteem: *"The comparison with classmates makes me doubt my own skills. It's hard to focus on speaking when I'm comparing myself to them."* This statement underscores the debilitating effect of comparison on self-confidence. When students focus on how they measure up to others, they may start doubting their own abilities, which can create a barrier to effective communication. Instead of concentrating on their language use, students may become consumed with self-doubt, leading to further anxiety.

As Dörnyei (2005) highlights, peer comparison can be a major source of anxiety in language learning environments. Students often measure their progress against that of their peers, and when they perceive themselves as lacking, it can diminish their motivation and confidence. The comparison dynamic creates a vicious cycle where students' insecurities hinder their ability to speak, and their reluctance to speak further perpetuates feelings of inadequacy.

Theme 8: Coping Strategies and Overcoming Anxiety

Despite the pervasive anxiety associated with speaking English, many participants shared effective coping strategies that helped them manage their fears. These strategies ranged from self-affirmation techniques to practicing in informal settings, all of which were aimed at boosting confidence and reducing anxiety.

Samir (Male) discussed his approach to managing anxiety: *"I try to calm myself before speaking. I remind myself that it's okay to make mistakes and that it's a part of learning."* By reminding himself that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process, Samir reduces the pressure he places on himself to be perfect. This mindset shift allows him to approach speaking with less fear and more self-acceptance.

Rashmi (Female) employed a similar strategy, stating, *"I try to practice speaking with friends outside of class. It's less formal and helps me feel more comfortable."* Practicing with friends in a low-pressure environment allowed Rashmi to build confidence before engaging in more formal speaking situations.

Anju (Female) also found that visualization helped her reduce anxiety: *"I imagine myself speaking confidently in front of others. It helps me mentally prepare."* Visualization is a well-established coping mechanism in language learning, allowing students to mentally rehearse their performance and envision success. This technique not only reduces anxiety but also helps reinforce the belief that they are capable of speaking confidently.

These coping strategies align with the work of MacIntyre (1999), who found that learners who actively engage in positive self-talk and visualization techniques are better able to manage language anxiety. These methods not only reduce immediate feelings of fear but also help shift students' overall attitudes toward language learning, making it a more positive and empowering experience.

the findings from this study highlight the complex nature of language anxiety among Nepali students learning English, with key factors such as the fear of making mistakes, teacher-student interactions, peer comparison, and coping strategies playing significant roles in shaping their speaking experiences. The fear of making mistakes emerged as a dominant barrier, leading to self-censorship and a reluctance to participate in conversations. Teacher feedback, both positive and negative, was found to significantly influence students' anxiety levels, with encouraging teachers helping reduce fear and fostering confidence, while critical feedback exacerbated stress. Peer comparison, particularly in group settings, further heightened anxiety, as students often judged their abilities based on the performance of others, leading to self-doubt. However, students also employed various coping strategies, including positive self-talk, visualization, and informal practice with peers, which helped alleviate some of the anxiety and build confidence. These findings underscore the importance of supportive teaching methods, a non-judgmental classroom atmosphere, and the need for targeted interventions to address language anxiety, ultimately fostering a more conducive environment for language learning.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of English language anxiety among Nepali students, highlighting various factors that contribute to their hesitation and fear when speaking English. The findings suggest that fear of negative evaluation, poor linguistic self-perception, societal pressure, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom significantly impact students' language-learning experiences. These factors, combined with the fear of making mistakes, create an environment where students often avoid speaking English, limiting their opportunities for language development. The role of the teacher emerged as critical in either alleviating or exacerbating this anxiety, with positive reinforcement fostering a sense of security and confidence, while critical feedback tended to increase students’ stress. Additionally, peer comparison and group dynamics were found to amplify feelings of inadequacy, particularly when students compared their language proficiency to that of their classmates. Coping strategies such as self-affirmation, peer practice, and a focus on communication rather than perfection were identified as effective means for students to manage their anxiety and improve their speaking skills.

Key Implications and Contributions

The implications of this study are wide-ranging, particularly in the context of language teaching and learning in Nepal. First, there is a need for teacher training programs that address the emotional aspects of language learning, enabling teachers to provide constructive feedback while creating a supportive and non-judgmental classroom environment. Teachers should be encouraged to use strategies that reduce anxiety, such as positive reinforcement, patience, and individualized attention. Furthermore, culturally responsive pedagogy that acknowledges the societal pressures faced by students is essential. The study also calls for increased opportunities for English practice outside the classroom, as informal peer interactions and exposure to the language in real-world contexts can reduce anxiety and improve fluency. The findings of this research also emphasize the importance of addressing socio-cultural factors, particularly societal expectations regarding English proficiency, by promoting a more inclusive view of language learning that values communication over perfection. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on language anxiety by highlighting the specific factors at play in the Nepali context and offering practical insights into how educators can support students in overcoming these challenges. It underscores the importance of a holistic approach to language education, one that integrates emotional support, cultural awareness, and linguistic skill-building.

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