

Role of Child Friendly Environment in English Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of child-friendly environments in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepalese community schools. A descriptive survey research design was employed, drawing data from both primary and secondary sources. The sample consisted of 25 teachers and 25 students selected through non-random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews, and analyzed descriptively with the support of frequency tables, means, and standard deviations. The findings revealed that child-friendly environments enhance English learning by fostering active participation, reducing fear, and promoting learner-centered teaching. However, schools face challenges such as limited resources, economic constraints, lack of teacher training, and insufficient parental support. The study concludes that effective ELT in Nepalese schools requires strengthening physical infrastructure, teacher training, and inclusive practices. These findings provide insights for policymakers, curriculum designers, and school administrators in improving the quality of ELT through child-friendly environments.

Keywords: *Child-friendly, child labour, class, effectiveness, English language teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

The global prominence of English has established it as a crucial second language in many countries, including Nepal. Effective teaching of English, however, presents significant

challenges for educators. A key factor influencing successful language acquisition is the learning environment. The concept of a Child-Friendly School (CFS), as outlined in Nepal's National Framework of Child Friendly School for Quality Education (2067), provides a holistic model designed to ensure a safe, inclusive, and effective educational space. Such an environment is not merely about enrolment but focuses on building school capacity to deliver quality education tailored to children's needs and potentials.

A CFS guarantees a healthy and secure environment—physically, mentally, and emotionally—where children's aptitudes are respected, discrimination is prohibited, and community participation is encouraged. Within this framework, English Language Teaching (ELT) can transition from traditional, teacher-centric methods to more engaging, learner-centered approaches. A child-friendly environment (CFE) in ELT can reduce students' mental stress, increase motivation, and create authentic language-use situations, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. Despite its recognized benefits, the implementation of CFE principles in Nepalese schools, particularly in ELT, faces substantial obstacles. This study, therefore, seeks to explore this gap between policy and practice.

English language is a medium of communication in the world. It is necessary to learn as it is an international language. In Nepalese context to teach English language is difficult thing. Most of the schools in Nepal are still being run in a conventional way in terms of management and teaching learning. The school environment is monotonous for children. Teachers act as dictators and they keep students in fear. No effective local materials to teach English are made available at schools. The children have a kind of mental stress to English language because they can't find suitable environment by their teachers. The students want to be involved in household works rather than going to school. Children are not self dependent so they need to care and protect, thus it is the responsibility to care as well as provide them basic necessary thing, such as education, health facilities, happiness, rest, love and affection with good and portable environment, where they don't feel any types of exploitation, neglect and misbehavior. Children are not able to advocate their right. So the protection should be provided to them by us.

The general objective of this study was to analyze the role of a child-friendly environment in English language teaching and identify the challenges associated with its implementation in Nepalese community schools.

Existing literature highlights the importance of child-friendly environments in education. UNICEF's Asia Pacific Report (2006) outlines principles such as child-seeking, child-centered,

inclusive, effective, healthy, gender-sensitive, and participatory schools. Poudel (2008) emphasizes learner-centered teaching with brainstorming, comfortable physical environments, integrated curricula, active student participation, and alternative assessments. Khaniya (2007) discusses inclusiveness beyond mere enrollment, ensuring equal opportunities. Studies like Yacat and Ong (2001) address child abuse in schools, masked as discipline, and advocate for awareness of children's rights. In ELT contexts, Chang (2010) explores children's literature for young learners, while Ghimire (2010), Negi (2009), Singh (2008), and Thami (2008) examine teacher roles, non-verbal communication, motivation, and classroom management. Harmer (1991) and Doff (2008) provide practical ELT strategies. The Constitution of Nepal (2016) guarantees children's rights to education, health, and protection from exploitation, aligning with child-friendly principles.

This study draws on child-centered learning theories, particularly constructivism, which posits that children actively construct knowledge through experiences in supportive environments (Piaget, 1954; Vygotsky, 1978). In ELT, this translates to interactive, fear-free classrooms where social interactions scaffold language acquisition. The National Framework of Child Friendly School (2067) operationalizes these theories by emphasizing nine aspects: effectiveness, inclusion, gender perspective, participation, health/security, physical conditions, teaching/learning processes, mother tongue instruction, and school management. These align with UNICEF's (2006) model, promoting holistic development and reducing barriers like child labor or discrimination, thereby facilitating effective second language learning.

DATA AND METHODS

The study was conducted in 25 government-aided community schools within a specific district in Nepal. These schools were selected as they represent the primary institutions tasked with implementing the national CFS framework, often while facing significant resource constraints. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This design was appropriate for gathering information about the current practices, perceptions, and challenges regarding CFE in ELT from a targeted group of respondents. The target population comprised English teachers and students in government-aided basic schools. A non-random purposive sampling technique was used to select 25 English teachers and 25 students from grades where English is a core subject, ensuring the participants had direct experience with the phenomenon under study. The primary tool for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Two separate questionnaires were developed: one for teachers (containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions)

and one for students (primarily closed-ended). The questionnaires were designed to elicit data on perceptions of CFE, its implementation, its impact on ELT, and existing challenges. To ensure content validity, the questionnaires were reviewed by two experts in education and ELT. Their feedback was incorporated into the final instruments. A pilot study was conducted with a small group of teachers and students not included in the final sample to check for clarity and reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the closed-ended scales, yielding a coefficient of 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Data were collected through the self-administered questionnaires distributed to the selected teachers and students. The purpose of the study was explained, and informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and ethical compliance. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Quantitative data from the closed-ended questions were analyzed using SPSS software (Version 25) to calculate frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed thematically, identifying recurring patterns and themes. Prior informed consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by not recording any personal identifiers. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Responses from Teachers

The analysis of open-ended questions revealed several key themes regarding teachers' perceptions and experiences.

Understanding of Child-friendly Environment

Teachers defined a CFE as a safe, healthy, and inclusive space free from fear and discrimination, where children feel happy, secure and motivated to learn. They emphasized the importance of peaceful and comfortable surrounding that encourage idea-sharing and respect for students' needs and abilities.

Implementation in Nepalese Context

Teachers acknowledged the value of the CFS concept but reported inconsistent and partial implementation. Major obstacles identified included a lack of resources, inadequate training, and socio-economic barriers that prevent schools from fully realizing a CFE.

Impact on English Language Teaching

Teachers expressed a unanimously positive attitude, stating that a CFE is particularly crucial for second language learning. They reported that it boosts student motivation, allows for the application of child-centered methods, and helps create realistic, engaging language practice situations, making ELT more fruitful.

Challenges in Community Schools

Teachers faced multifaceted challenges, including:

- **Student Diversity** : Managing classrooms with students of varying abilities (slow vs. Fast learners) and from different linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Lack of Support** : Insufficient support from School Management Committees (SMCs), a lack of trained teachers, and the burden of teaching multiple classes simultaneously.
- **Resource Scarcity**: A chronic shortage of teaching materials and textbooks.
- **Language Proficiency** : Teachers' own hesitancy in speaking English and students' lack of interest or awareness of the importance of English.

Responsible Stakeholders

Teachers identified a collective responsibility for creating a CFE in ELT. Key stakeholders mentioned were English teachers themselves, students, parents, school headmasters, SMC, local government bodies, and national policymakers.

Quantitative Responses from Teachers

Quantitative responses from teachers are presented in Table 1, with means and standard deviations calculated by assigning values: Very Good=4, Good=3, Average=2, Poor=1.

Table 1

Teachers' Responses on Child-Friendly Aspects (N=25)

Statement	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Average (2)	Poor (1)	Mean	SD
Distance between children's home and school	3 (12%)	10 (40%)	9 (36%)	3 (12%)	2.52	0.87
Inclusion based on disability	7 (28%)	10 (40%)	5 (20%)	3 (12%)	2.84	0.94
Inclusive training to teachers	8 (32%)	11 (44%)	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	3.00	0.87

Statement	Very Good (4)	Good (3)	Average (2)	Poor (1)	Mean	SD
Inclusiveness in extracurricular activities	10 (40%)	11 (44%)	4 (16%)	0 (0%)	3.24	0.72
Inclusion based on caste and ethnicity	7 (28%)	12 (48%)	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	2.96	0.84
Earthquake-resistant building made of brick and cement	5 (20%)	12 (48%)	1 (4%)	7 (28%)	2.60	1.08
Rooms with enough light to read and write	15 (60%)	8 (32%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	3.52	0.65
Number of classrooms on the ratio of students	10 (40%)	13 (52%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	3.32	0.63
Comfortable bench-desk for students	15 (60%)	5 (20%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	3.40	0.82
Library management	9 (36%)	8 (32%)	4 (16%)	4 (16%)	2.88	1.05
Annual action plan formulated and school activities conducted accordingly	8 (32%)	12 (48%)	4 (16%)	1 (4%)	3.08	0.81
Annual lesson plan prepared by all subject teachers	8 (32%)	10 (40%)	4 (16%)	1 (4%)	3.08	0.81
Locally prepared reading materials including textbooks made available	4 (16%)	13 (52%)	5 (20%)	3 (12%)	2.72	0.88
Teaching and learning based on computer	6 (24%)	7 (28%)	5 (20%)	7 (28%)	2.48	1.09

Teachers indicated moderate performance in areas like inclusive training ($M=3.00$, $SD=0.87$) and classroom ratios ($M=3.32$, $SD=0.63$), but lower in computer-based teaching ($M=2.48$, $SD=1.09$) and earthquake-resistant buildings ($M=2.60$, $SD=1.08$). Continuous evaluation was reported by 40% of teachers, with 68% receiving demand-based training. Female teachers were present in 64% of schools, and child clubs existed in most. However, community meetings and mother-tongue materials were lacking.

Quantitative Responses from Students

Table 2

Students' Responses on Child-Friendly Aspects (N=25)

SN	Statement	Yes	%	No	%
1	Learning English is interesting	25	100	0	0
2	Your teacher uses different teaching materials in your class	16	64	9	36
3	Your English teachers give you punishment if you cannot have done your work	7	28	18	72
4	Your teachers are friendly	18	72	7	28
5	Your English teacher uses computer to teach you	13	52	12	48
6	Child club is formed at your school	14	56	11	44
7	Child club holds different extracurricular activities in your school	14	56	11	44
8	Your school has clean drinking water supply	23	92	2	8
9	Your school has clean toilets	15	60	10	40
10	You are taught English by female teacher	14	56	11	44
11	You can read books in library	13	52	12	48
12	Scholarship has been provided for girls	22	88	3	12
13	Your English teacher makes you do difficult home works	7	28	18	72
14	Your English teacher helps you to learn English more	11	44	14	56
15	You can sit easily on the bench	22	88	3	12
16	Your teacher makes you work in group	13	52	12	48
17	Your teacher uses different teaching materials in your class	5	20	20	80
18	Your health is checked up at school	12	48	13	52
19	You have secured more than 60 marks in English subject	17	68	8	32
20	Your teacher uses audio-video materials to teach you	5	20	20	80

All students found English interesting, with 72% viewing teachers as friendly and 72% not receiving punishment. High access to clean water (92%) and comfortable seating (88%) was noted, but low use of audio-video materials (20%) and health check-ups (48%) persisted. Scholarships for girls were common (88%), and child clubs existed in 56% of schools.

Child-friendly environments reduced dropout rates and enhanced participation in ELT, with inclusive practices and extracurricular activities improving achievement. However, challenges like insufficient materials and non-facilitative environments persist.

Recent evidence supports these findings. A 2023 study by UNESCO on Nepalese education highlights that child-centered approaches in ELT increase engagement by 25% in supportive settings, but resource gaps in public schools hinder progress (UNESCO, 2023). Similarly, a 2024 report by the Nepal Ministry of Education notes improved enrolment in child-friendly schools but calls for better teacher training to address multilingual barriers (MoE, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a child-friendly environment plays a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of English Language Teaching by fostering a safe, motivating, and student-centered learning space. It promotes participation, reduces anxiety, and facilitates practical language use. The primary obstacles to its implementation in Nepalese community schools are multifaceted, encompassing physical infrastructure deficits, economic constraints, inadequate teacher training, and a lack of sustained support from governing bodies. To realize the goals of the National Framework of Child Friendly School for Quality Education, it is imperative for policymakers, school administrators, and teacher training programs to collaboratively address these challenges. Future efforts should focus on providing targeted teacher training, ensuring resource availability, and strengthening monitoring mechanisms to successfully integrate child-friendly principles into everyday English language teaching practices.

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