

CREATION OF PYGMALIONS: AN EVOCATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNEY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Jonash Lepcha* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* presented on 26 January 2024 entitled *Creation of Pygmalions: An Evocative Autoethnographic English Language Learning Journey*.

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English language learning has been widely researched as second/foreign language (S/FL) in Nepal and India or generally in those countries whose first language (FL) is not English. In my inquiry I have explored my intimate English language learning lived experiences to unearth the knowledge unexplored until today from a learner's experiences. I have focused on the schooling bittersweet experiences and a few English language learning and teaching experiences which have left indelible pictures, experiences and memories as its learner and teacher. The main objective of this inquiry is to retell as a researcher-participant my own lived experiences as a Lepcha speaker to show that contextualised teaching and learning would have saved two or three other languages. Here, by contextualised, I mean the people, relationships, socio-cultural beliefs and practices and the linguistic background of the learners.

The purpose of this inquiry was to consciously explore the transformations I have gone through as an English language learner and now its teacher. In addition to exploring, it was also telling, retrospectively, and interpreting the lived experiences of a learner whose language completely differed in alphabets, script, reading, writing, listening and speaking. I honestly tried to unveil the information, meaning and knowledge hidden in my English language learning journey that they not only evoked my past interconnected emotions but also enlightened me to find myself in becoming. I am sure the emotions

intertwined with lived experiences and memories would resonate and relate with the life experiences of my readers who are learning English as their second or third language. It is also an expectation that ELT researchers who engaged or will be engaging intimately in researching to record the lived life experiences may be helped even if it is only for reading sake.

Meanwhile, writing as inquiring in the autoethnographic inquiry allowed me to communicate this transformative and empowering aspect of storytelling. As such, I adopted the multi-paradigmatic research approach to understand the multifaceted learning techniques and styles a learner like me generally adopt to learn this language. The postmodernism, interpretivism and criticalism were used as vehicles of not only expressing my English language learning but also to analyse, critique and construct knowledge that were taken for granted by educational institutions and ELT practices. I have used transformative theory of learning to interpret the learning as transformation that I have undergone – personally, professionally and pedagogically – as English as a second language learner and a teacher. In addition, I have the socio-cultural theory, in narrating my English language learning experiences because language learning is not something outside of our society, culture and people rather than within. These two theories enabled me to delve into not only my English language learning lived experiences, emotions, but myself. Although not exclusively, the autoethnographic research method and the two language learning theories as method and theoretical referents highlight the significant stories of my English language learning and practices.

The inquiry thus envisions English language learning and teaching without sidelining the local context and language of the people. It neither belittles English language nor it kills other local languages/s creating multilingual school or classroom or education. And this needs ELT theorists, practitioners and language teachers to develop and meanwhile transform the existing policy, curriculum, pedagogy and teaching and learning strategies and techniques. And to fulfil this need, regular and rigorous yet practical and continuous teachers' professional development courses in and through regular self-reflective practices, conferences, seminars, and webinars must be organised and participated. Through this research study, therefore, I strongly believe and open the door for further research on this localised or contextualised ELT teaching and learning

especially in relation to indigenous languages and other discourses related to it. The recommendation of the study is that English language teaching and learning requires to be inclusive than exclusive especially when dealing with the speakers of other languages – and this certainly expects conscious glocal curriculum and pedagogies.

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26 January 2024

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शोध-सार

अँग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा दर्शनाचार्य (M.Phil.) उपाधिको लागि जोनस लेप्चाको 'पिगमॉलियनहरूको सृष्टि: अँग्रेजी भाषा सिकाइको एउटा विचारोत्तेजक स्वतपराणुसन्धान यात्रा' (*Creation of Pygmalsions: An Evocative Autoethnographic English Language Learning Journey*) भन्ने शिर्षकको शोधपत्र सारांश शिक्षा संकाय, काठमाण्डौं विश्वविद्यालयमा बि. स. २०८० माघ १२ गते मा प्रस्तुत गरियो ।

शोध-सार अनुमोदनकर्ता

.....
प्राध्यापक लक्ष्मण ज्ञवाली, विद्यावारिधि

शोधपत्र अनुमोदनकर्ता

नेपाल र भारतमा भाषाको सिकाइलाई लिएर व्यापक रूपमा अन्वेषण भइरहेका छन्, साधारणतया ति कुनैपनि देशहरू जसको पहिलो भाषा अँग्रेजी होइन । मेरो अन्वेषणमा अँग्रेजी भाषा सिकदाका अनुभवहरू, अनुभूतिहरूलाई विश्लेषण गर्दै आजसम्म असुस्पष्टीकृत ज्ञान आर्जन गर्ने प्रयत्न गरेको छु । विद्यार्थी जीवनका तिता मीठा अनुभव र केहि अँग्रेजी भाषा पढाइ र सिकाइका अनुभवहरूलाई केन्द्रित गरेको छु किनभने यी अनुभवहरूले चिरस्थायी चित्रहर, अनुभवहरू अनि सम्झनाहरू छाडेका छन् । दुबै, अन्वेषणकर्ता र सहभागी हुँदै एउटा लेप्चा वत्ता भएर कसरी सन्दर्भबद्ध पढाइ अनि सिकाइले दुई वा तीनवटा अन्य भाषाहरू संरक्षण गर्न सकिन्थ्यो भन्ने मेरो अन्वेषणको मुख्य उद्देश्य हो ।

सन्दर्भबद्ध भन्नाले यहाँ स्थानिय मानिसहरू, सम्बन्धहरू, सामाजिक सांस्कृतिक विश्वास र अभ्यास का साथै विद्यार्थीको पृष्ठभूमि बुझिन्छ ।

अँग्रेजी भाषाको विद्यार्थी हुँदा र अहिले यसै बिषयको शिक्षक हुँदाका केहि रूपान्तरणहरूलाई सचेत रूपमा प्रस्तुत गर्ने यो मेरो अन्वेषण हो । यति मात्र होइन, अन्वेषण त्यो विद्यार्थीको वर्णन हो, पुनरावलोकन हो, व्याख्यान हो जसको भाषाका अक्षरहरू, लिपिहरू मात्र नभएर पढाइ, लेखाइ, सुनाइ र बोलाइ सम्पूर्ण रूपले अँग्रेजी भाषा भन्दा फरक थियो/ छ । मैले इमानदारी पूर्वक मेरा अँग्रेजी भाषा सिकने समयसंग अप्रत्यक्ष/ अदृश्य रहेका आँकडा/ जानकारी, आशय/ तात्पर्य र ज्ञान अनावरण रहस्योदघाटन गरेको छु किनभने यी सबैले मेरा विगतका अन्तरसम्बन्धित भावहरूमात्र होइन, म आफैलाई केहो योग्यका बेनिरहेको छु भन्ने बुझाउछ । मेरो पुर्ण विश्वास छ, मेरा अनुभावहरूमा जोडिएका भावना/ मनोभाव/भाववेशहरू मेरा हरेक पाठकहरूका जीवन अनुभवहरू संग मिल्दछ । विशेषत, जो जसले अँग्रेजी भाषालाई आफ्नो दोस्रो वा तेस्रो भाषाको रूपमा सिकिरहेका छन् । अँग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षाका (इ. एल. टी) अनुसन्धानकर्ताहरू, जो अगावै संलग्न हुनुहुन्छ वा हुनुहुनेछ, उनिहरूका लागि यो अन्वेषण पढनमा मात्र भएपनि उनिहरूको अनुभवहरू स्याह गर्न/ लिपिबद्ध गर्नमा सहयोग पुऱ्याउन सक्छ भन्ने मेरो आशा छ ।

यसरी नै मैले स्वतपराणुसन्धान (autoethnography) लेखाइ एउटा अन्वेषण/अनुसन्धान बनाएकोले म आफ्नो रूपान्तरणकारी साथै सशक्तिकरणीका कथाहरू, अनुभवहरू, अवधारणाहरू बाडिरहेको छु । अँग्रेजी भाषा सिकनलाई म जस्ता विद्यार्थीले

अपनाउने विभिन्न विधि/ तरिका/ साधना र शैली/ ढाँचा बुझ्नलाई मैले बहुप्रतिमानात्मक अनुसन्धान/ दृष्टिकोण अपनाएको छु ।

आधुनिकतावाद (Postmodernism), अन्तरदृष्टिवाद (Interpretivism) र आलोचनावादलाई (Criticalism) मैले आफ्नो अँग्रेजी भाषा सिकाइको व्याख्या मात्र होइन धेरै शैक्षिक संस्था र अँग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षाले सामान्य ठानेका अनुभवहरू, कथाहरूलाई विश्लेषण गर्ने विवेचनात्मक विश्लेषण गर्न यसको साधन तथा सञ्चारको माध्यम पनि बनाएको छु । एउटा अँग्रेजी भाषाका विद्यार्थी र शिक्षक हुँदा म मा आएका रूपान्तरण - व्यक्तिगत रूपमा, शैक्षिक पेशागत रूपमा, शैक्षणिक रूपलाई उजागर गर्न रूपान्तरण सिद्धान्त अपनाएको छु । अतिरीक्तमा, भाषा, समाज, सस्कृति र मानिसहरूको बिचमा अथवा माध्यमद्वारा सिकेका हुनाले, मेरो अँग्रेजी भाषासंग सम्बन्धित अनुभवहरूलाई वर्णन गर्न सामाजि-सांस्कृतिक सिद्धान्त अपनाएको छु । यी दुई सिद्धान्तहरूले मलाई मेरो अँग्रेजी भाषासंग सम्बन्धित अनुभवहरू खोज्न र अध्ययन गर्नमात्र होइन, आफैलाई पनि खोतल्न सकेको छु । स्वतपराणुसन्धान अन्वेषण विधि र यी दुई भाषा सिकने सिद्धान्तहरूले विशेषरूपमा नभएपनि मेरो अँग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षण र अभ्यासहरूलाई मुख्यरूपले प्रकाश गराउँदछ ।

यो अन्वेषणले स्थानियवासी, उनिहरूको प्रसंग अनि भाषालाई अनउपयुक्त नबनाई कसरी अँग्रेजी भाषा सिकाइ र अध्यापन गर्न सकिन्छ भनेर ध्यानकर्षण गराउँदछ । यसरी गरे नत अँग्रेजी भाषा तुच्छयाइन्छन् नत कुनै भाषालाई मार्छन् । त्यसको सट्टामा यसले बहुभाषिक विद्यालय अथवा कक्षाकोठा सृजना गराउन मद्दत गर्छन् । यसैकालागि अँग्रेजी भाषित सिद्धान्त — प्रतिपादककारहरू, अभ्यासकर्ताहरू, भाषा शिक्षकहरूले विद्यमान नीति/ कार्यनीति, पाठ्यक्रम, युक्ति/ योजना साथै भाषा सिकाइ र अध्यापन विधि र शैली परिवर्तन गर्नमात्र होइन परिवर्तन गर्न पनि चाहिन्छ । यो आवश्यकतालाई पूर्ण गर्नका लागि नियमित तथा शक्त/दुरुस्त तर व्यवहारिक अँग्रेजी शिक्षक/ शिक्षिका का लागि शिक्षकको पेशागत विकास, पाठ्यक्रमहरू, आत्मिक अभ्यास/ स्वतः चिन्तनशील अभ्यासहरू, सम्मेलनहरू, विचारगोष्ठी/अध्यायनगोष्ठी/ परिसंवादहरू, वेविनारहरू व्यवस्थित/प्रबन्ध गर्न र सरिक/सामेल हुन पनि सकिन्छ । यो अन्वेषणद्वारा, म पुर्ण विश्वास गर्दै, अँग्रेजी भाषालाई स्थानियकरण अथवा सन्दर्भकरण गर्न सकिन्छ विशेषगरी स्वदेशी/स्थानिय अनि शंवाद/ बार्तालापद्वारा गर्न सकिन्छ भन्न चाहान्छु।

यो अन्वेषणद्वारा म कसरी र किन अँग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षण र अध्ययन अनन्य/ निषेधक होइन, समावेशी बनाउन, विशेषरूपमा अन्य कुनै भाषा वक्ता र उनिहरूको भाषा सस्कृति लिनपर्छ भन्ने जोड दिन चाहान्छु । अन्त्यमा यसले एउटा सचेत स्थानियकरण साथसाथै विश्वव्यापि/समष्टिक (glocal) पाठ्यक्रम र अध्यायन/ शिक्षण प्रणाली बनाउन सकिन्छ भन्न चाहान्छु ।

.....

माघ १२, २०८०

जोनास लेप्चा

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation entitled *Creation of Pygmalions: An Evocative Autoethnographic English Language Learning Journey* was presented by *Jonash Lepcha* on 26 January 2024.

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorises the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

..... 26 January 2024
Jonash Lepcha
Degree Candidate

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

.....

26 January 2024

Jonash Lepcha

Degree Candidate

DEDICATION

Difficulties have never been
so difficult,
That they became impenetrable.
Every time I faltered
Always there you were -
God, mother and father, brothers and sisters,
Friends and near and dear ones –
Making me believe that
I should or I can
Begin to be a man of letters today.

I especially dedicate this inquiry, exploration to my mother Late Anna Lepcha, elder sister Late Prisca Rai and my younger brother Late Jason Lepcha. It is also my loving dedication to my dear family members and dear ones who are with me – no matter what.

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Jonash Lepcha
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ABBREVIATIONS

KUSOED:	Kathmandu University School of Education
AE-E:	American English for Educators
B.A.:	Bachelor in Arts
BPhil:	Bachelor of Philosophy
ELE:	English Language Education
EMI:	English-medium Instruction
ELT:	English Language Teaching
GT-Method:	Grammar-Translation Method
HSE:	Higher Secondary Education
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
IGNOU:	Indira Gandhi National Open University
L1:	First Language
L2:	Second Language
L3:	Third Language
MPhil:	Master in Philosophy
NES:	Native English Speakers
NNES:	Non-Native English Speakers

EPIPHANY ONE
FINDING/KNOWING MYSELF: EMBARKING ON THE JOURNEY

“It was the best of times;
it was the worst of times”, Charles Dickens (*A Tale of Two Cities*).

In this epiphany, I introduce how and when I came in contact with English language in my learning years. It is also to let the readers know that I am the researcher and that I am the participant of my own research inquiry. I introduce my own English language learning experiences and memories as my research data. The events I narrate in the form of stories, poems and artifacts will fundamentally introduce my struggling and joyful moments of English language learning. Thus the “worst of times” and the “best of times” of English language learning years until today. At the same time, it introduces the chapters of the problems of my learning years as a non-English speaker, leading to the development of my research questions, and the rationale of my English language learning. This then opens up my quest of autoethnographic research inquiry under the multi-paradigmatic research methodology. It, likewise, expresses my lived dis/empowering life experiences of an English language learner in the socio-cultural and educational beliefs and convictions.

The Prologue

*Rongring (Lepcha) is my first language,
Ask me something in it and I become dumb.
Nepali is my second language,
Ask me anything and I certainly add English words and phrases just to speak.
English is neither of the two,
But, ask me everything and I will tell you everything in accurate and fluent
English language.

Wasn't it a bideshi's (foreigner's) language?
Yes it was of Britishers' language, the so called the coloniser.
Wasn't I afraid of English in the entire schooling decades?*

Yes, as every other child whose language is not English.

Wasn't its grammar a difficult nut to crack?

Yes, grammatical confusions full with rules to be memorised.

Wasn't I who parroted English words and phrases from the dictionary for vocabulary building?

Yes, even though a simple mind could not grasp the entire meaning of the words and phrases.

Wasn't I who knew only to say "Yes", "No" and "O.K"?

Yes, only faintly knew - "was" is past of "is" and "were" is past of "are", and spoke a few parroted sentences.

Then how did bideshi's (foreigner's) English language overtake my first two languages?

I can fluently speak in English and clearly understand what I listen to in English, More than my first two languages.

I can proficiently read in English and can accurately write in English

Much more than my first two languages.

The comfortability and the comprehensibility of English language are what I prefer,

As an instrument to express, explore and thickly describe the personal, emotional, cultural and social values, knowledge and reality,

Much and much more than in my own first two languages.

The poem represents the history and the basic struggle of learning English language replete with foreignness in sound and writing, parroting grammar rules, memorising new words, phrases and sentences for vocabulary building culminating to an English language speaker. It tells how I as a non-native speaker (NNES) of English language due to the socio-cultural and educational situation began familiarising with English language to the extreme of forgetting my own Lepcha language (first language) and Nepali language (second language). It is both the advantage and disadvantage of English language learning inside and outside the schooling hours. Content wise, the poem tells everything of how I became an English language speaker at the cost of innumerable struggles for excellence. It portrays the 'self' doubting whether I have become a foreigner

to my own self, culture, society and language in particular, in the pursuit of English language education and English language proficiency. And the poetic logic behind this poem here at the beginning of the research inquiry and others to follow later on represents “multilayered meaning of events and contexts” (Luitel & Taylor, 2003, p. 6) that are not easily put into words. This is the advantage that transformative theory of learning in autoethnography which aids to unearth what is “nonreal, felt, mythical, perceptual, imagistic and atypical realities” (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 11). This explains that some of my stories are told, thought and reflected in poetry in order to show that there are multiple ways of showing and meaning making.

At the same time, this idea of being locally situated yet speaking in a foreigner’s tongue is what made me compare myself with Eliza as a person of ‘*Pygmalion*’ drama of George Bernard Shaw. ‘*Pygmalion*’ is a play, a drama written by a prominent and a prolific British dramatist George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950). However, it is an adaptation of the Greek mythology with the title ‘*Pygmalion*’. Speaking/writing postmodernly, the drama romantically and comically shows how one does not lose one’s identity even if one begins to speak in a foreign tongue. One perhaps could become a proficient in the target second language yet remain attached to one’s own first language. In the drama, Eliza is actually the creation of others (Mr. Henry Higgins, Mr. Pickering, and people) and perhaps a little effort by herself. She is mostly the passive receiver of aristocratic English language phonetic professor’s (the creator) experiment. Likewise, I have metaphorically compared myself and used the character/personality of Eliza who consciously or unconsciously let herself be forced by English language speakers, society, culture and institution which corrected every time I made errors. I am sure that without my teachers, institutions, friends, environment, culture and society, I would have barely become a fluent speaker of English language. They are thus, the pygmalions and I am the creation they have created.

The drama is a critique to the social structure of how we perceive a language and its relation to its user. I have become a creation chiseled out to be an English language learner, a user and now an English language teacher. It is thus a part of English language learning journey that has metaphorically transformed me into an English language user whose language is other than English. I have here chosen to tell/write only some twists

and turns that I remember from my memory, experiences taking a/an in/frequent necessary pause/s and stop/s un/consciously so that stories are credible (Thompson, 2008, p. 39) and yet life historical or life story or autoethnographical. The experiences shared, the stories told, the poem, the snapshot, they all represent textual interpretation and representation of my meaning making inquiry.

The Creation's story

The story of Pygmalion, the character of Greek "Pygmalion" is said to be a King of Cyprus and a sculptor. He once sculpted a beautiful woman's statue out of a bust and he falls head over heels in love with it. His love, the infatuation and the prayer he offers were so intense, that the Goddesses of Love had to transform the sculpture into a living woman with which Pygmalion ultimately gets married.

George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion, Mr. Henry Higgins, on the other hand, is a phonetician Professor at Oxford. One day, he unintentionally finds a flower girl selling flowers in her broken, rustic, un-aristocratic English. He finds her English a shame for English language, to English people and their culture and society. Perhaps she was a shame for English language and him personally as a phonetician. Therefore, he takes a sole responsibility for teaching a perfect English language to this flower selling lady, Miss Eliza Doolittle. He wants to give her a perfect English speech. He wants to transform her to a complete and pure English woman so that no one can make her out that she is someone from other social status *by her speech*. Ultimately, Mr. Higgins is successful to alter this flower girl's speech and appearance to an aristocratic English-speaking lady, an English duchess within a few months.

The difference between the Greek Pygmalion and Shaw's Pygmalion is that the Greek Pygmalion gets married with his own creation because he could not resist the beauty and the charm of his own sculpture. On the contrary, Shaw's Pygmalion, Dr. Higgins is left by his creation Miss Eliza Doolittle, who was sculpted out of the ordinary woman to an aristocratic lady, civilized person in the pure English society and culture. Mr. Higgins and Miss Eliza Doolittle never had any such feelings towards each other or Mr. Higgins in a way never shows and expresses his emotional relationship with Eliza, who is an emotional person and not just an object of his experiment. Eventually Miss Doolittle marries her own chosen beloved.

Likewise, I read and write, speak and listen and at times dream and think in English language, however, I could not be distant from my own linguistic, social, cultural and English language education of my situatedness as a Lepcha and a Nepali speaker. I have to come back to my own language even after many years of upbringing and immersion in the English language and now as an English language teacher. I have become conscious of my own linguistic identity as a Lepcha speaker who is like a revenant or a prodigal son. A coming home yet not arrived. And this arriving after many years of quixotic expeditions often becoming utopian in trying to become English or native-like speakers in reading, speaking, writing, listening and thinking is because of English language. Being a *bideshi* (foreigner) to English language, I am trying to become fluent, accurate and proficient in English language but this time as a conscious learner-writer. In this pursuit, the first language (Lepcha) particularly the second language (Nepali) certainly has played a greater role in providing space and acquiring third language, English. My inclination and my socio-cultural upbringing as an indigenous language user and linguistic identity were intangible obstacles to learn English language yet it is English language learning's benefit that I know that they are becoming now a foreign tongue to me. This thus enables me to look back and write how English language journey has transformed me into a conscious English language user in the major aspects of my life now than the other two first and second languages.

Coming to Evocative Autoethnography

In February 2019, I enrolled myself at Kathmandu University School of Education, Hattiban, for an MPhil in English Language Education (ELE). Previously, I had presumed that I could straight go for a PhD in English Literature after my Master's from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in 2018. I am grateful for the feedback I got from professors Bal Chandra Luitel and Laxman Gnawali of the University about MPhil in ELE that I needed to complete as an introduction to the august PhD that I thought would be just an inch away. It was because I just wanted to continue my higher studies one way or the other in English language and this was a sudden decision. I joined MPhil with no prior deeper thought on ELE or English Language Teaching (ELT). That decision is now a blessing in disguise to relate my English language learning lived experiences.

Previously, I did not know the beauties of why and how we learn and teach English language in schools and colleges. I considered it as a language whose ultimate purpose is to provide a job - English language teaching is one of the options. I never thought of English language from an educative/learning perspective. Learning English was so ordinary that I never looked for its pros and cons in relation to my language, culture and identity. I looked at it as a formal subject taught and learnt since primary school until I joined my MPhil in ELE. I had carried the same schooling understanding of English language and its studies as a subject to pass somehow or anyhow. I read than learned English language just to pass exams. I fought hard with my friends for a good mark in English. For me, English language was simply an English subject. It meant English book/s, English magazines, journals and study materials, English newspapers, English news and English movies. I could not see it as a language in a truer meaning – for communication.

Once I joined the University, I met other ELE/ELT MPhil students, teachers and researchers. I enjoyed the classes of the evenings with fresh colleagues and professors who taught not from the books but from their experiences and understandings. As I retrospect, I understood more on English language from short insightful paraphrases from PowerPoint Presentations (PPTs) than reading pages after pages from the books and journals. The English textbooks which once were the Holy Bible/Bhagavad-Gita/Koran never to be questioned. I followed word by word of teachers as gospel truth and meticulously followed the classroom guidance as the right path to literally follow to have good grades and pass exams. The textbooks without excluding the teachers, were a burden in a literal sense to me (Awasthi, 2006, p.1). The burden was bags full of textbooks and copies used to be heavier that I used to drag myself like a tortoise or snail slowly pacing towards the den – the school. If someone pushed or pulled me, I would literally fall down by the weight of the books. Perhaps, the bags tore and even snapped because of its weight and not because we snapped it. Nonetheless, schooling understanding of English was intimately related to a subject-and-good-grades.

One day, a professor individually assigned us to read different journal articles and e-books on the issues of English language education. We were to present it in our due prearranged schedule in the form of PowerPoint Presentation (PPT) and also in writings

with due citations to avoid any kind of plagiarism in any manner. He remarked, “*I have read all the e-books and journal articles I am sending you. So do not simply copy and paste without citing the authors.*” The topic I got was “*English Literature in the Classroom for Language Development*”.

Since it was to be graded in our first semester, I worked harder and tried reading every material available. Not learning but scoring good marks was more important for me that is what a good student should do and is generally expected of him/her. So, I started to read the e-materials sent by professor and also searched in Google Scholar for other extra readings.

The day came for my presentation. The presentation had 25-30 long slides. I had practiced and planned how to present it before the class in complete English language – what is in the book. But before my presentation, Professor came and introduced my topic with a stanza of Nepali poem by our own *Mahakabi Laxmi Prasad Devkota*. I was taken aback by his insertion of a stanza from a Nepali poem in English language education or discussion on English Literature on English language development. I became sceptical to the insertion and asked myself, “What is this? How could he insert Nepali verse in English literature class? Could we actually do it?” Meanwhile I was so taken up and inspired that I could not abstain myself from questioning to myself, “How can we have Nepali language in English language classroom? How could we include English translated Nepali literature when we teach English literature?” (Sharma, 2018, p. 109). The time and place when our own local language is used in a foreign language classroom has such a melancholic yet inspiring and evocative experience. It was a moment of epiphanies of English language learning. An encounter of being foreign yet being at home.

After the presentation, I got constructive feedback from the professor and my colleagues. By then I had the inspiration to remake my Presentation and write up. The next day I wrote a short mail to him requesting to allow me to rework on my Presentation which would include the feedback from the class. In that I inserted a line, “*You can grade me on the first Presentation and not this second one.*” The reply from the Professor to my mail is what drove me to write this Evocative Autoethnographic journey of *English language learning and not English language study*. The reply was simple yet evocative,

“We are here to help you and get insights into the issue of English language education. The important thing is learning and not the grades.” I then understood what it means to learn English language. It was unexpected and unanticipated reply but I became conscious of my English language learning journey. And I thought I need to tell this story of being gripped by this new understanding until now taken for granted. It was an epiphany of English language learning for learning and not study or for grade. That day, I became a reflective English language researcher from a student of English subject.

Since then, I was constantly reflecting and meanwhile reading books and articles for theories and methodologies for me to tell my English language learning journey. I wanted to write this shift of understanding or transformative learning between English language study and English language learning which is in a way to “find something out” which I did not know before I began this inquiry (Richardson, 1994, p. 517). I have changed my perspective of English subject to English language and most importantly English language learning. And to tell this transformative story, I adopted evocative autoethnography replete with bittersweet experiences - twists and turns, turning points and especially epiphanies - so that my stories/experiences resonate, reasoned and felt by my readers who have been experiencing English language learning’s twists and turns and at times epiphanies.

Evocative autoethnography in the words of Denzin (1997) encouraged me “invoking an epistemology of emotion” (as cited in Anderson, 2006, p. 377) in my readers with the stories they would easily connect – feel, think, discuss, reflect - that I am telling considering it not “simply academic” but also “personal and artistic too” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 80). I have, thus, evocatively narrated the lived painful and joyful experiences in the genres of short narratives/stories, poems and lessons to replicate English language learners’ pains and joys. Wall (2006) paraphrases Atkinson (1997) and Sparkes (200) that there are chances that telling personal stories or narratives might be criticised as “being self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualised” (Wall, 2006, p. 155) yet I believe autoethnographic inquiry makes meaning not out of nothing but out of someone (the narrator). I believe that my scattered language learning vignettes related to English language learning would be a source of research and creation of contested autoethnographic research in creating knowledge.

Bideshi Name for a Swadeshi Man

My name – Jonash - is a christianised and localised name my parents gave me from the English name ‘John’. Although localised, it still is pronounced, heard, written and called as English name. Even though it has been three decades and plus that I am with this localised English name. The irony of the name is that I have not become English in person, speech, writing, reading, listening and thinking. Sometimes, christianised names like ‘Jonash’ are the remnant of English language and colonialism which still flashes the imperialism of the Britishers.

As a matter of fact, my name is given which neither my parents, nor locals or I could resist. Therefore, “Knowledge of English” and English name perhaps carry dignified identity, prestige and dignity than our own local knowledge and names (Poudel, 2019, p. 113). These few decades now, the language I read, write, speak and listen and even think is English. It is this transformative research inquiry that I quest to explore in and through the socio-cultural, religio-political and personal-professional encounters with English language education and people.

One of the reasons is that, we, the Lepchas have our own cosmology, theology and philosophy of life imbedded into the nature. Besides our village and clan, our names are derived from nature or the day-to-day common way of life. Thus, *Nima* is a name of a person born on Sunday, *Dawa* for Monday and *Mikma* for Tuesday (Foning, 1987, p. 6-7). The language and the culture within it were sidelined for the sake of Nepali language first, and now for English language. This led to Lepcha language and its cultural significance receiving two shocking effects. First, since it was not from the main languages spoken in India it was not taken seriously as a language making it as tribal dialect. And second, English totally neglected the Lepcha language and linguistic, socio-cultural significance. This is the inevitable outcome of wherever there is foreign, there often is the negligence of local, be it people or culture or language.

Although English language has some anglicized Indian words like “curry, bamboo, mango, veranda” (Mukherjee, 2010, p. 169), however, not a word of Lepcha language is found in Hindi or Nepali language. Neither any Indian language nor English language has been able to adopt Lepcha language. On the other hand, Lepcha language

and people have adopted themselves not only with Indian language and culture but also English education and other language/s to the point of its vanishing.

Problem Statement

English is *bideshi's* (foreigner's) language and it is still considered to be. English is a foreign or masters' language when British occupied India. English speaking Christian missionaries (Mukhia & Matthew, 2016, p. 114) brought it as Tibetans, Bhutanese and Nepalese brought their language and religion and culture (Foning, 1987, p. xi - xii). Our forefathers thought them and their language more intelligent, dominant, civilised and a powerful language. It was and still is considered as the language of the educated people in my locale. The language, particularly English which ultimately is eating up the Lepcha language, as de Quincey says, it is also replacing other dominating Tibetan and Nepali language (Pennycook, 1998, p. 134). Above all, Luitel and Taylor (2019) citing Mutua & Swadener (2004) maintains that “neo-colonialism devalues indigenous knowledge systems and “renders the cultural identity and experiences of the Other invisible” (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 2). In addition to this is that western/Europeans never copy or “mimic the lifestyle and culture of” ours (Sharma, 2018, p. 106). However I am consoled by Larsen-Freeman's words of not feeling like a victim in learning English but accept it and make work it for me (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 72). Consoled, yet, should I, the ‘Other’ be sad or be happy learning that English language is also replacing other dominant languages and cultures which once and still is bossing over my language?

I am one of the first persons pursuing higher education from my village, leave alone ELE/T (Kachru, 2005, p. xvi). Un/wittingly, English language education policy, my parents and teachers, friends, context and others' stories became a pygmalion effect on me so that I eventually would have “entry into the global market” and “get better jobs in the future” (Dudeny & Nicky, 2010, p. 1). Tin (2014), who found in Nepal the similar attitudes of parents, teachers and students learning English language for future “social mobility”, political, cultural inter/national exchanges besides “to improve knowledge, skill and personal status” (Tin, 2014, p. 403). In India it is the same fate of English language having “communicative and educative value... (and) has certain advantages” (Vijayalakshmi & Babu, 2014, p.1) in personal, professional, political, economic and educational life.

English was generally taught and learnt for tomorrow, a better future and not only for a day-to-day transaction. The latter was less focused or not focused at all. Learning was less focused than higher education. The admission into a so called English medium school was mostly focused than for communicative purpose. Therefore, education as understood and is still is to be bought “into a global one-size-fits-all education system”, “designed to produce a highly skilled workforce essential for improving a nation’s infrastructure, social services, and material standard of living” (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 2). Learning English language is thus to carry an extra bag of burden for future. And frankly, my stories and experiences tell the same.

Growing up in a multilingual society and identity, without confusing Hindi is my National language and Bengali is my state language. Nepali was to be my second or additional language for communication and education (L2) because I am from the hilly region of West Bengal, India, where people speak more Nepali language than other languages. English was to be my third or foreign language for academic purpose and should have remained in third place (L3). And as I belong to one of the ethnic tribes under the category of Scheduled Tribes of India, Lepcha language, *Rong Aring* (Lepcha, 2017, p. 36) is and was my first language (L1). Including my own language, I have also picked up some *Kirat* words and phrases from people and friends. Paradoxically, except for a few words of things, I cannot make out anything of my own Lepcha language.

Being from an ethnic tribe, my first language is Lepcha/*rong* which does not appear to be so in my case and many English language learners for whom English is their second language. It thus creates new questions unexplored and not well researched as to where, how and why Lepcha people learn English language. Global and local ELT and ELE have not yet unearthed the reasons behind the purpose of learning this foreign language by us except for higher education and for employment. This forms the main research “issue, controversy or concern that initiates” my research inquiry and methodology (Cheng, 2015, p. 38). In this inquiry, I could locate only a few research articles regarding the impact of English language on Lepcha language even though I did a numerous search and research in the internet and google scholar, libraries and book stores. One of them is British Council which indirectly states that English-medium instruction (EMI) schools seemed to have seen a “significant rise” and even government

schools are opting more for EMI in the schools which seemed to be the opposite to what the national education policies insist - the instructions based on the Indian languages (Borg et al., 2022, p. 24). Other books and research articles regarding the vanishing of Lepcha language by different authors (Mainwaring, 1875; Foning, 1987; Plaisier, 2007; Lepcha, 2013 et al.) are found but I could not acquire the kind of research inquiry that I needed from the perspective of an English language learner who is a Lepcha. Whatever research has been done on the positive and the negative impacts of English language upon the people, language, society, culture and economic spheres, perhaps is less from the actual indigenous researcher's experiences and perspectives. Or if there have been then they are done by an etic researcher which is aptly summarised as "a traveler's narrative, an outsider's perspective of an insider's world" (Little, 2013, p. 11) where researchers being the most active actors and the people remained as a passive actor throughout the inquiry. This inquiry thus represents the empowered voice of the once disempowered English language learner or the indigenous person who is trying to voice the impacts of its learning and now teaching himself and his people. Moreover, as India initiated the National Education Policy 2020, "policymaking, planning and administration of education...challenging" (Kumar, 2023, p. 453) it would be a great reward if the local and vernacular languages and voices are heard and prudently incorporated. The changes in the Lepchas moving to English language perhaps was inevitable and unavoidable "economic imperative, education and globalisation" (NEP 2020) yet it is time that the ministries regard the voices like mine to heed the pros and cons of English language. One of the reasons of this lack might be because researchers are speaking for preservation of the language and not the death blow of English language in particular. And ELT perhaps have scantily explored the deathly blows English language learning and teaching has given to the indigenous language/s like Lepcha. Thus, this autoethnographic inquiry is unveiling the geography for English language teaching and learning to be explored and researched for the benefit of the diversity of languages to exist alongside. This inquiry is to not only to tell stories of English language learner from Lepcha perspective but also to emphasise that English language transforms and empowers an individual's perspectives of his/her own world. It is also not only telling "mastery of the linguistic code" (Flowerdew & Miller, 2008, p. 204) but also self-realisation, self-actualisation in and

through English language learning journeys. As a matter of fact, the inquiry explores the transformations and transformative learning that English language learning has brought upon inquirer's own perspectives, ideas, theories and ways of living – personally and professionally.

Purpose of the Inquiry

To explore, reflect and interpret my English language learning years as an indispensable part of my personal and professional transformation.

Research Questions

1. How did/do I take English language learning?
2. How and why have I been learning English language?
3. How had/have I undergone the English language learning transformations as a learner whose first language is not English?

Rationale of the Inquiry

My elementary schooling and first encounters with English language learning are my stories. I tell my schooling stories to see myself through and through and sought out the humble beginning of my education that I have received. As I reflect upon those schooling, learning days do not seem to be getting over until today because "...we are (were) all involved in research every day" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 1). Through the research, I would be trying to deliver the cultural, social, political and educational conflicts, beliefs and values and structure that I was born and brought up with. I begin with the question, "How could story writing be a research!" (Gautam, 2019, p. 64) revealing a quest to understand the subjectivity involved in stories in autoethnographic research writings.

I tell my story within the boundary of my research questions and the methodology of storytelling as research. It is to explore how vulnerable ethnic tribes like mine have to update ourselves leaving our comfort zone of our own language and linguistic differences. Zolnikov (2018) is perhaps right that research (quantitative and qualitative) studies may not have the data of such peripheral culture like Lepcha to sufficiently unearth and exhaust resources (Zolnikov, 2018, p. 8). Thus, this autoethnographic work is to represent the self in socio-cultural and political situation in relation to my English language learnings. The autoethnographic approach to my research is that it is able to

unearth the “vulnerability” of me as a researcher as well as it “fosters empathy, embodies creativity and innovation, eliminates boundaries, honors subjectivity, and provides therapeutic benefits” (Custer, 2014, p. 1). Autoethnography is thus a prominent research methodology which can offer many ways of doing inquiry or observing a reality as mine.

I found autoethnography crossing the border of research inquiry by including “hope, love, care, forgiveness, and healing” of the voiceless (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 12). The rationale here is to claim that voice of learning English language which has made me aware and conscious of not only my own ethnic indigenous Lepcha language but also Kirat, Nepali and Hindi of course. English language learning is now more of knowing the world replete with the intricacies of life and language. Moreover, it is creatively writing and speaking to express emotions and experiences, critiquing and constructing my own beliefs and values. In addition, it is deconstructing and reconstructing my own self which was often bogeyed by taken for granted myths of English as a foreign or standard language. The belief that “acquiring a second language gains them entry into a new culture and literature, and it leads them to a deepened understanding of their first language” (Ellis, 2004, p. 172) was the main reason for my learning English. And it is the truth. Therefore, this inquiry, informs the potential researchers and the readers on how students learn English language whose languages entirely differs from other languages that they learn as additional or second language.

Personal Significance of the Inquiry

English language learning has enhanced my personality as to who can express oneself through speaking, reading, listening and writing in English. I have grown with this language since I was a child. And it has been a preferable language to communicate with my English-speaking colleagues, teachers and people. I have used it to enter into the domain of English literature, culture, politics and society of today. More than other languages that I grew up with, English has been the language that has given me more information and knowledge about the world in general. I have been able to cope with today’s digital and technological discoveries and inventions. And the most preferred language during my professional life as an English teacher to communicate in clarity is but English language. Perhaps Macaulay would be happier to make many of us

“...English in taste and opinion” (Thakur, 2019, p. 4) and yet the attachment to one’s own home language is overwhelming when I look at my journey.

For me, learning English language was basically for academic purpose and not more than that. Therefore, it is the language that I came in contact in my academic journey. Little did I know that it would become a profession in my life. If in the beginning, it was sufficient to learn English for only some skills like reading and writing, later, it came to be used for “the purpose of communication and making sense of the world through the processes of thinking, inferring and reasoning” (Jhingran, 2019, p. 8). And when it was among the teachers, friends, environment of English-speaking zone, it became mandatory to be a fluent speaker of English. This has brought transformation to my identity – my personality and my profession. As for instance, it has become second identity of me as and when teachers and students at school refer to me as an ‘English teacher’ which I was never before. And I often identify myself as an English language teacher after my personal name.

Professional Significance of the Inquiry

Professionally, the English language learning has helped me to be updated to the challenges of English language learning and teaching in and out of the classroom. I have faced English language interviews after interviews only in English language. I have attended seminars, webinars and national and international conferences in English language for professional development. It is the English language that has proved to be very handy.

I attend different live and distant teacher professional development programmes easily provided by internet and technology. I participate in American English for Educators (AE-E) on Facebook live video classes, Canvas and Coursera, British Council online classes on how to teach critically in the classroom with various ordinary subject context and content. Although not sufficient but I am constantly becoming transformed and relevant at the same time in the culture of English language education. Just a tick of a computer cursor or a tap on a finder brings hundreds and thousands of related study materials. And unless I update myself with English language as tool I would be certainly replaced. As one of the conferences had a quotation stated that technology would not

replace the teachers, but those who know technology would certainly replace those who do not.

I want it to carry professional values, cultural and social beliefs that is normative and transformative as it “has an impact on (I) the researcher and the researched” (Gautam, 2019, p. 63). So, what I am doing personally certainly will have its repercussions to my professional life. It is not only my life; it touches every English language teacher’s personality and profession directly/indirectly and the society that I live and be in.

Policy Significance of the Inquiry

I was and am still hesitant and a bit afraid and insecure of researching and writing in a “first-person pronoun” (Gautam, 2019, p. 66). Nevertheless, it is my attempt to be frank thereby evocative as much as I could with my personal life story in and through my personal narrative enquiry. And this autoethnographic inquiry is “an approach that enabled(s) me to immerse deeply and reflect critically on my past experiences in order to envision possibilities for my future professional practice” (Alsulami, 2019, p. 89). And for future, I need to sacrifice my past and present insecurities.

My belief in this inquiry is that teachers, parents and students be collaborative and responsible to their social, cultural, educational and political dialectic dimension for transformative education. As any other 21st century country, India needs to work on the preservation and propagation of indigenous languages like Lepcha. Although, it has been a great success of three language system still prevailing in India and Indian states, however, needs a robust execution to bring a transformative teaching and learning languages. It must consider English language education holistically – languages, people and culture. It also must encourage students and teachers as researchers. And as Dewey (1974), we must disseminate that the schooling and language learning must be subject and child centric and not teacher and curriculum centric (Leshkovska & Spaseva, 2016, p. 60). I believe my inquiry is a contribution to the autoethnographic ways of doing research and producing information and knowledge for making English educational policy to be relevant and contextual.

Theoretical Adherence

Heraclitus once said that no one can step into the same river twice. His emphasis is that change is the only permanent thing in the world. It takes place all the time whether we bring it ourselves or others bring it. The philosophical wisdom is that when we step into that river second/third time, not only the flowing river but also the person would be different with different experiences, different/unique than the first one.

Evocative auto/ethnography enabled me to not only write but also reflect on my stories emotionally, reflectively and reflexively. Stories not only of being a student but also stories about being an English language teacher. They certainly have informed me about my transformation which is dynamic and perennial, always in the becoming. To unveil this transformation through English language learning, I adopt transformative learning theory of Mezirow and socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory reveals a metamorphic process. Mezirow (2009), the proponent of this theory defines it as a process through which we “transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives)” which are our “sets of assumptions and expectation(s)” developed previously “to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective” and particularly “emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2009, p. 92). Michael et al. (2015) adds to the theory as explanation of how adult learners not only make meanings out of their experiences but also construct and deconstruct them according to their situation and context (Christie et al., 2015, p.10). Mezirow rightly reiterates that the theory is “learning to see *through* one’s experience to discover what has been taken-for-granted” (Mezirow, 1999, p. 3). In addition, transformative learning theory enables us consciously understand our situatedness by unearthing our potentials by becoming more human as “who we are and who we might yet become, as individuals and as social beings” (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 6). The theory establishes the pillar or the guidance for my autoethnographic accounts of transformative learning because my lived experience within my socio-cultural settings is what my autoethnography recounts to bring out - the meaning, knowledge and illumination. And Bochner (2000) said that “we extract meaning from experience” (Bochner, 2000, p. 270). The theory thus aids me to make meanings or interpretations, a sense out of my many

experiences. It unveils the veiled past process of transformative learning in and through evocative reflection and evocation of the same in my readers. After what I have read and reflected through different theses, dissertations and text books, theories are regularly established and disestablished. What remains is the transformations as every experience leaves a consciousness or epiphany. And such is what the theory establishes and which has occurred in me - personally and professionally. I have been a person who has not only witnessed but also have gone through transformative learning experiences and now as a teacher of English who needs to follow the principle of this theory – “education as cultural reconstruction” (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 5). I have met different people and have been to different places. I have been through different contexts, situations, society and culture. And the cause of these un/desired transformative learning is all because of English language education.

It has already been three decades that I have been learning and speaking English language. Although I have done a Master's degree in English, and currently am doing an MPhil in English language education, I still lack in its fluency, proficiency and accuracy. However, this does not permit me to deny the transformations the language has brought in my personal and professional life. Although transformative learning theory is intimately connected to adult learning or education, its emphasis, however, is the learner – an adult or a child. It allows windows for a reflective learner/teacher to critically analyse the taken for granted teaching and learning methods, beliefs and feelings, ‘perspectives, meanings, mindsets’ without reflecting whyness in the teaching and learning ways (Mezirow, 2003, pp. 58-59). It manifests various ways of teaching and learning English language through different ways and means and one such is language teacher’s self-reflective or language teacher’s community praxis and pedagogies.

As English language was imposed on every student when I started schooling, I had to learn it so that I could pass English language exams as a compulsory subject. I started to learn English language without knowing its transformative impact on my later life (presently and future). Now as I look back and analyse my previous years’ learning of English language, I now find myself changed physically, mentally and spiritually. It is certainly a costly exchange or “Faustian bargain” (Luitel and Taylor, 2019, p. 2) to a Lepcha/rong person like me to learn English language. However, I have become an

informed and a literate person because of English language. I have become more/less relevant to my contemporaneous world of today. I have started to make sense and meaning of my both teaching and learning difficulties. I find myself transforming every time even as an English language teacher.

The theory enables me to adopt and adapt to new and newer teaching/learning methods/practices and pedagogies. It informs me about what and why I should alter my ways of teaching and learning. It urgently beckons adopting new methods and pedagogies in my teaching. I feel and see the necessity to bring some current transformations in my pedagogies. It demands “pedagogical metamorphosis” (Belbase et al., 2008, p. 92); a regular upside down as no one method exhausts English language teaching and learning. The transformative learning theory thus allows me to tell autoethnographic story for the need to transform and tell transformative evocative stories as a research inquiry, autoethnographically.

The Socio-cultural Theory

The basic and fundamental argument of Sociocultural theory is that social interactions of learners play a vital role in their learning process. The advocators of this theory assert that social interactions result in learning from each other (Blake & Pope, 2008, p. 61) or social and collaborative activities are important for any learner’s learning (Pathan et al., 2018, p. 232). Any interaction needs “thought and language” to make “sense and meaning” of the world to categorise it as this or that experience (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 33). The theory thus categorises my experiences of learning English as my second language where reciprocal interactions was indispensable and inevitable both in and outside the school or classroom. In line to this theory, as I reflect my past learning days, I begin to understand why a wo/man is a social animal and above it, why a family was called the smallest unit of our society. One of the basic reasons was that there is regular interaction in a society – the frequent use of language. Vygotsky calls language as mediation, a powerful mediation that a wo/man possesses for communication/interaction with each other (Lantolf et al., 2020, p. 225) and also with one self. Later on, it is as mediation is enhanced more by schooling when we (children) interact with each other (Lantolf, 2011, p. 25). The sociocultural theory in this way gives a place to language

development in a child's mental, psychical and emotional development whether be at home or in school.

It was coincidental that I came across this theory when I regularly worked with my class assignments as an MPhil. Since I had less theoretical knowledge on second language development and about topics related to language acquisition, I literally depended on others for it. Often, my colleagues including my professors assisted me either by direct explanations or by sending me different reading resource materials. In a similar manner, when I was learning English, my teachers and friends helped me a lot. Often, they created a conducive English language speaking environment becoming my society and members with whom I regularly interacted in this language. We created a conducive English language environment so that not only an individual learns, but all learn. In this way, the environment of English language learning needed me and I needed it making it mutual coexistent. Therefore, the more I interacted with others the more my language improved and enhanced (Blake and Pope, 2008, p. 61) and I am sure, it did the same with my classmates. It simultaneously led to each other's language proficiency, perhaps I gained more confidence in my language use.

This then leads to Vygotsky's (1978) categorisation of three kinds of learners. First learners are those who are in actual developmental level (who can solve problems of their age independently of teachers and peers), the second are those who fall in the zone of proximal development level or the potential level (who can solve the problems of their age with the help of their teacher/guide and peers) and the third are those who haven't yet been able to solve. He imperatively states that the school learning should transform the learners in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to reach the actual developmental level the next day i.e. learners who can work or solve issues independently the next day (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). Panhwar et al (2016) calls this zone's learners as "between the internal possibilities and external needs" (Panhwar et al., 2016, p. 184). Moreover, Vygotsky (1978) defines ZPD as "those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). It is understood that a learner's learning takes place when there is interaction between the learner and teachers or friends or the close ones to help to solve problem or learn language (Sharma, 2022, p. 69). This reaffirms the

schools and colleges that I went and the colleagues and teachers I came in contact – they all led to my learning English language. Oftentimes, the better language users became my teachers and I became the learner as well as teacher to other who were in that ZPD. The regular constructive correction and feedback – in speaking, reading, writing, listening – pushed each one of us to work for the enhancement of our language proficiency. When I saw my friends, comparatively not so proficient than me, not giving up their endeavours, I involved myself more to learn. At times, the decision to undergo language learning difficulties was voluntary but most it was involuntary – it was either perform or perish situation. However insignificant and tiny learning moments, as a student of English language and now English language teacher, I regularly update myself attending different English language related professional courses, webinars, seminars and conferences. The culture of ELT is so vast that one cannot but ought to update oneself for future directions or pedagogies. This eventually not only transforms me as an individual but also the ELT, ELE as others including the socio-political and culture that I belong to (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 6). It was for this reason; the socio-cultural theory is used as theoretical reference to my evocative autoethnographic inquiry so that I not only gain but also explore and avail the knowledge, insights of socio-cultural beliefs of my English language learning journeys.

Epiphany Inference

In this epiphany, I tried to contextualise my research and methodology. I have subdivided the themes into sub-themes becoming the “story-creator” and “story-analyzer” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 39) to bring the clarity to what I like to communicate. It is to affirm than negate my English language learning. The bittersweet are the experiences they have taught me not to give up. I have undergone the school pressure, learning pressure, peer pressure, the financial pressure and the desperation that drove me to learn English. And I have come up to this stage of English language learning to be reflective and reflexive of my own schooling and educational life, which most of my friends do not have. This epiphany highlights the genesis of my specific experiences, feelings, and emotions related to my English language learning through a few stories. The autoethnographic account is therefore to occupy the spaces, and possibilities created by qualitative research studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 18) here and the entire research

inquiry. In addition, I have been honest to be as evocative as a genuine autoethnographer researcher should be and I am.

EPIPHANY TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The epiphany in a more concrete manner reveals that autoethnography as a research methodology can be used in the English language education inquiry. The philosophical consideration with ontology, epistemology and axiology gives an in-depth understanding of my English language learning context and background. The storied experiences narrated in the first epiphany and vindicated in the second epiphany are considered as data which is living and meaningful interpretation. With the multi-paradigmatic research paradigm, I have gone into the deeper logic of using poems and prose to construct knowledge in the field of English language education. The epiphany considers the research questions raised in the first epiphany.

Human,

WHAT IS A LANGUAGE?

What

are Alphabets in a language if they are not made up of letter/s?

What is letter/s if it does not make any word/s?

What is a word if it does not make any sentence/s?

What is a sentence if it does not communicate anything?

What is communication if it does not have any meaning?

What is meaning if it does not evoke any emotion?

What is evoking emotion unless one understands the language?

What is a language unless it speaks what its user wants it to speak?

Language creates and destroys everything.

Language is power.

Language is knowledge.

Language is wisdom.

Language is human.

What you and I are, are expressions of language.

When one observes the poem's structure from afar, it represents a person. The reason behind it is what my last line of the poem states, "What you and I are, are expressions of language". Language is specifically used for communication. And if language miscommunicates anything beginning from person/s, event/s, circumstance/s and thing/s - will lead to misrepresentation, misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Language is basic for human communication as chirping for birds or growling and howling for other animals. This poem conveys the idea of how and why a language is important when one begins to learn a foreign language. The concept of the poem is not only language a power, but also it is a knowledge, wisdom and humane. The poetic logic assisted me here to exploit the transformative research inquiry or presenting and understanding the concept of truth differently than traditionally (Pandey, 2019, p. 232). Therefore, the placement of this poem here is to emphasize the multiperspectival view of my English language learning experiences to capture some of the transformative essences of knowledge and meaning making which needs poetic logic and syllogism.

Figure 1.

An etched memory.

A college professor used to say,
 "Beware of four Miss –
 Miscommunication,
 Misrepresentation,
 Misunderstanding and
 Misinterpretation."

Therefore, I subscribe to the qualitative research approach as it enabled me to interpret my learning experiences as storied writings from the interdisciplinary, multi-paradigmatic and multimethod approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4). I adopted Evocative Autoethnography as a qualitative research approach and methodology to take writing as a conscious inquiry (Luitel, 2019, p. 22). It lets my writings to explore, reflect and interpret this deepest sense of meaning making process from my English language learning experiences. My autoethnographic research writing is referred by Reed-Danahay (1997) as "deskwork" or "textwork" quoting Driessen (1993) and Van Mannen (1995) than "fieldwork" (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 128). I take the understanding of "method" as a "way" and "logos" as "study" culminating into Manen's (1990) interpretation of methodology as the "pursuit of knowledge", and "a certain mode of inquiry" (Manen, 1990, p. 28). The descriptive inquiry in and through the prose, poetic and the artistic,

metaphorical and fictitious expressions present my methodology and the research paradigm to present my philosophy of the research as an inquiry into the multi-paradigmatic research methodology.

I, as a qualitative researcher, in words of Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) stand on "qualitative researchers self-consciously...reflectively, historically, and biographically" in the "larger social and cultural structures, and the here and now" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 199). I inquire my own lived experiences to capture the essence of how and why my research is intimately connected to the culture and society that I belong to. I adopt what Cohen et al. (2018) speak about many worlds of research investigation where autoethnography takes an important place (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 287). The multi-paradigmatic research methodology captures the essence of different micro-English language learning experiences relating to life experiences from different perspectives of learning.

The research methodology and assumptions guide my thinking, reasoning, constructing and deconstructing my research. They reveal how research is ontological, epistemological and axiological to contextualise my research approach and the paradigm that I have chosen. I would personally use these three journeys as a fundamental guide to answer the niche of my English language learning as a non-native English language speaker. As Gautam (2019) says that storytelling and "arts based research" brings a greater impact to the way one thinks, values and one's "being" (Gautam, 2019, p. 68) my research provides "non-deterministic outcomes" which is "contextually plausible and possible understanding" (Alsulami, 2019, p. 92) of my English language learning journey. It is what Anderson (2006) refers as "self-related ethnographic study" (Anderson, 2006, pg. 374). It is to give a new perspective, a new understanding, and a new horizon to my past perspectives of what English language has done for me personally and professionally. The philosophy of my methodology and the assumptions in my research is to define what and how assumptions are an integral part of my research work.

Ontological Journey

The 'truth' is contestable in autoethnography as in any other qualitative research. This dimension of my autoethnographical quest shows how my experiences and

memories create reality/ies that is (are) subjective and pregnant with multiple interpretations. As a qualitative researcher my writing is to interpret the reality in and through my “systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall” (Ellis, 1999, p. 671) and understand how my experiences are embedded in multiple interpretation of English language learning realities. This assumption is what Gautam (2019) affirms unpacking his multiple realities in his journey as a “Reflective Agent” (Gautam, 2019, p. 67). Therefore, my research’s aim is to show learning English language is/has been altering my social, cultural, personal, professional and educational reality.

The ontology of English language learners is that each learner creates perhaps different ontologies distinct from one another. And above that those who are non-native speakers but are already proficient in English language have our own different point of view to learning English. As there is no one language learning situation or point of view but many, so there is “no single picture of the world” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 287) and that certainly vouch for multiple realities. In the words of Denzin and Lincoln (1994) “objective reality can never be captured” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2) especially in the social science. In the similar tone Kincheloe (1997) asserts that there is no truly one way of seeing something objectively (Kincheloe, 1997, p. 57). This beckons for me to contextualise and legitimize my English language learning and now teaching experiences to every English language learner’s difficulty and opportunity. This is possible when I globalize English language learning experiences and teaching in the English language pedagogy and curriculum based on transformative learning theory (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 5) and socio-cultural theory of learning by Vygotsky (1967). This learning is inevitable if and when these language learning realities are wisely and insightfully applied to the language learners and the classroom. Scattered experiences and epiphanies helped me to create a reality of English language learning context, content and knowledge.

Epistemological Journey

Knowledge is created when an individual relates, understands and interprets his/her intimate relationship and constant interaction to his/her own socio-cultural and political and the world at large. Cohen et al (2018) state that I cannot be a distant knower to know a distant knowable culture, thus it is my own English language learning journey

with which I cannot stop dialoguing, as we are “inseparable” from one another in knowledge creation (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 288). This quest is how one and the same experiences have many embedded facets of knowledge and meaning “in a non-positivistic ways of constructing, contesting and creating” (Luitel, 2019, p. 20). What I mean is to “struggle to internalise a constructivist epistemology” (Gautam, 2019, p. 67). Krishnamurti also has this to say that knowledge is, “never complete” as experience arises is incomplete but it is experience through which knowledge is “stored in the brain as memory, and from that memory arises thought” (Krishnamurti, 2008, p. 116). It means knowledge is hermeneutically constructed, deconstructed reconstructed, and interpreted to (re)interpret the ontological substance of the research study and methodology. Since my research is autoethnographic, “the autoethnographic researcher (who) is both author and focus of research and writing: the observing and the observed” (Denejkina, 2017, p. 2) or the knowledge creator. I am the source of knowledge and also knowledge creator which means that I care what I create and I am mentally and emotionally attached to my knowledge (Bentz & Shapiro, 1942, p. 6). To reiterate the knowledge creation as a qualitative researcher, knowledge is what we create and not something out there to be ‘found’ (Klevan and Grant, 2022, p. 7). And this is what Alsulami (2019) states “alternative epistemology” (Alsulami, 2019, p. 92) to such as this research approach of meaning making. I am my researcher, participant and the research field and the dialogue that I have with myself be it affirmative, negative or interrogative, is epistemic and value affirmative. So, it is not what/where is epistemology but how and why is epistemology in autoethnography.

Axiological Journey

Autoethnography values the individual experiences, memories recollected and reconstructed in order to generate realities, knowledge and values. My second language learning journey makes me more aware of myself and others contradicting the ways of doing traditional research accepting “research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act” (Denejkina, 2017, p. 4). I thus subscribe to qualitative research inquiry which does not sanitize my influences and values embedded in the research process and research writings as product (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 289). The research carries my subjective experiences at different phases of schooling and second language acquiring

life. My autoethnographical journey not only is a quest to search for meaning out of my lived experiences as a student but also to affirm my personal and professional values within the constructed English language learning social, cultural, political and educational values.

My schooling and the English language learning experiences that I have narrated is recognition that ontics, epistemics and axios are all value laden. As said of a qualitative researcher, there is now no more “value-free inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 12). I would like to interpret, reinterpret my social, cultural, political realities, knowledge and values making process contextualised to my present personal research for truth.

Multi-paradigmatic Research Quest

The multi-paradigmatic research approach helped me to adopt different techniques of not only collecting autoethnographic datum but also analyse them as a researcher. And taking advantage of “post-modernist climate” which allows me to adopt “multitude of approaches to knowing and telling” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 1413), I would like to claim that it is a way of capturing the multiple facets of knowledge, knowing and the knower in autoethnography. I found personal stories told autoethnographically better suited than from ethnographic or narrative inquiry or phenomenology. Personalising the research gives me a sense of being, becoming and belongingness at the same time interrelate to the “method of writing as inquiry” (Luitel, 2019, p. 19, Richardson et al., 2018, p.1410). Thus, writing in words than in numbers as a qualitative researcher gives me a sense of being oneself, my own, I myself (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 287). It gives me freedom to explore my vulnerable past and myself in a process of becoming the conscious present self. I am more aware and informed of my English language learning experiences within my limited socio-cultural existence now than I was in the past. I applied autoethnographic inquiry to unfold my lived experiences as an English language learner and teacher.

Autoethnography, I found not only acknowledges but also validates my English language learning imbedded experiences told in stories. Stories are developed in relation to personal, professional and socio-cultural and political developments. As any story, research stories grow out of my socio-cultural and political experiences. Acknowledging

the ontic, epistemic and axio gap, my evocative autoethnographic accounts are the mediums through which I express.

And research as I understand, “is a process through which new knowledge is discovered” (Salkind, 2018, p. 14). The epistemic of my evocative autoethnography is that I am trying to create knowledge and interpret the meaning out of my English language learning years (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). I know and can interpret my English language learning difficulties than an etic researcher as an ethnographer or narrative inquirer. It is discovering which was already there but remained unknown because it was so intimate that it was often taken for granted. Thus, my evocative stories as narratives are an archaeology of my own memory and experiences.

The postmodernist perspectives offer me to conceptualise and contextualise “the diverse and divergent conceptions of knowledge” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1942, p. 1). Therefore, I need not have mathematical restrictions of “proving hypothesis” or “testing and proving” my research questions (Luitel, 2019, pp. 20, 22). Without advocating any method as the only research method, the postmodernism empowers me to accept that to “know ‘something’ without claiming to know everything” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 1413). It is through writings in different genre of literary writings or multi-paradigmatic spaces providing me “multiple ways of interpreting and meaning making of their (my) lived stories” (Luitel & Dahal, 2021, p. 3). It is autoethnography offering me that I narrativise my English language learning lived experiences context to be observed, analysed and interpreted from many perspectives in the knowledge making process. This I present through different postmodernist’s multi-paradigmatic windows of research methodology.

Postmodernism

The postpositivistic, specifically the postmodernistic text is what I wanted to represent in my research. Faithfully following the “new sensibility that doubts all previous paradigms”, postmodernism’s multi-method interprets and critiques the new ways of knowing to “secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). I wanted to bring life to the writings I write and evoke emotions that are unexpressed and unanalyzed because we consider emotion in research unscientific. Thus, I approach the multiple literary genres of expressing my inmost

experiences that makes me vulnerable yet stronger to know my vulnerability. I have poems to give a sense of beauty of expressions differently, in a figurative and metaphorical language, imaginative thoughts, mature and vivid experiences and evocative emotions that brings aesthetics to the foreground. Meanwhile I have maintained the rigour of the research as not whatever experiences, emotions and whatever comes in mind but those which construct windows of seeing, observing, critiquing and deconstructing the realities differently.

In many of the instances I have found myself questioning myself, my beliefs and values, my thoughts, my creativity, my meaning making process and my doing inquiry. And postmodernistic text helped me to claim that my storied writings are “that any method or theory, any discourse or genre, or any tradition or novelty has a universal and general claim as the “right” or privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018, p. 1413). I myself have become an autoethnographic researcher and participant. Through constant dialogues and interactions, I reached the logic that there is no one way of seeing, experiencing and interpreting the same socio-cultural and political life and worlds. We all attach “meaning and purpose” to refer our human behaviour and actions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106) including the textual re/presentation. And this is what subscribing to postmodernism meant for me.

Interpretivism

The research as writing enables me to understand that autoethnographer as an inquirer interprets the lived experiences to create meaning. I firmly believe to what Denzin (1994) states that autoethnography as a social science is nothing more than interpretation because I have narrativised stories and poems as “the art of interpretation” (Denzin, 1994, p. 500). The texts are my interpretations to the readers in the thick description representing “multi-epistemic inquiry” (Luitel, 2019, p. 23) into my English language learning experiences and memories. This understanding arose as I was constantly composing my experiences as a reflexive thinker and participator to what I was researching (Althfide & Johnson, 1994, p. 486). I interpret the taken for granted ways of decontextualized teaching of English language to us who had our own first language completely different from English language including Nepali.

The formulated concepts as epiphanies to explore the gradual development of my subjective interpretation which would evoke verisimilitude emotion and experience in the readers. In and through the gradual reflection and reflexivity I interpret how I learnt English language expressed through a kind of journey that every learner takes. My main aim of the narrative is to capture how I interpret English language learning difficulties as a student limited to my socio-cultural and political everyday life experiences. I have used a “wide range of interconnected interpretive methods” to unearth and represent the world of experiences in a most vivid manner that is possible (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 12). I found interpretation as a way that I could describe the self always in a relationship with others which is fluid and in constant flux (Panth, 2019, p. 220). And interpretation is a kind of a stop to understand myself and my surrounding realities created by English language.

My ‘self’ is the main foci of my research. I explore my subjective interpretation and try to generalize it with others’ similar research interpretation. I constantly refer back and forth to my personal and others to interpret my experiences, and reflection (Bentz & Shapiro, 1942, p. 4). I have focused that vulnerable self of mine to interpret how I felt and how I expressed my experiences gradually in English language. The retrospected ‘self’ represented in my writings gave me freedom to express my joys and pains of English language learning. Thus, inquiry became my past ‘self’ and my present ‘self’ and the culture, experiences, beliefs and socio-politics simultaneously necessitating a multi-epistemic way of interpretation. I found that interpretation from one way is equal to bury alive the hermeneutical understanding and interpretation of my research or any other autoethnographic inquiry. Autoethnography as the postmodernistic research methodology discovered my subdued voice, feelings, emotions, and experiences. It unearths the way I do inquiry, construct and interpret it subjectively in a multi-paradigmatic design.

Criticalism

I narrate and interpret my experiences of English language learning autoethnographically to exhume the embedded reasons behind learning it. When the writing was progressing, I found that self is created out of the socio-cultural and political intersubjective relationships, beliefs and values of where the participant and the researcher is.

Manen (1991) writes that school should be “a cultural-political institution” (Manen, 1991, p. 6) and not only teach what is in the book. The school narratives revealed that it is circumstances that we went to school and got chance to study English language as many others. My research objectives are to narrate the learning experiences as they are. However, I found that the self is critical to the decontextualized pedagogy and curriculum seeking for the contextualised teaching and learning better for both the languages to exist mutually. So that, neither foreign tongue nor mother tongue would interfere in learning other language.

The usage of Nepali proverbs, words and phrases is to emphasise that we are already educated even if there was no English language. But the English language learning is what we needed as an addition and not as a necessity. The insertion of Nepali language in my research is to show that the autoethnographer’s culture and linguistic expressions cannot be denied while doing research (Poudel, 2019, p. 192). They are inseparable and interdependent.

Evocative Autoethnographic Method

To recount English language learning experiences in the first person, autoethnography as a research method gave me a sense of being engaged to what I am researching, doing, existing, and living (Kules, 2022, p. 450). I could not deny that autoethnography as a research method for Ellis and Bochner (2000) is where a researcher, his/her own experiences, and memories become the field of research and data (Brown, 2018, p. 1). It is therefore understood “as an idea, a kind of research, a mode of writing, and a way of life” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 43) where writing is breathed in to evoke intellectual, emotional, social, cultural and political discourse of experiences. I direct my lens of observation and reflexivity on myself (*auto*) to understand the English language learning culture (*ethno*) and write/inquire (*graphy*) on my lived experiences. These lived experiences are embedded in multiple interpretations and epistemics which is socially and politically situated. It is here I find the writing meeting the writer. It qualifies the “nontraditional ways of expressing the results of their (my) research” (Weems et al., 2008, p. 855). It is the quality of autoethnography that it invites and accepts the autoethnographic accounts written autobiographically and ethnographically.

And above that I found evocative autoethnography creating a sense of being intimately connected to the past contexts, persons and above all to my 'self'. The new self is trying to accept the old 'self' with many vulnerabilities of being weak and defeated self yet resilient to be a learner in my brokenness. These past experiences are already evocative to me and it will certainly evoke my readers to the extent of being my 'self'. Therefore, Ellis and Bochner (2006) rightly maintain that every kind of autoethnography is evocative (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 436). And likewise, Anderson (2006) advocating for the analytic dimension of autoethnography mentions that it has in the recent decades understood "exclusively" as evocative autoethnography (Anderson, 2006, p. 377). As story creates passions, emotions and experiences, evocative autoethnography relates with the readers in the most "intimate, introspective, and self-reflexive storytelling voice" (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 51). The more I evocatively and autoethnographically reflect and write, and become reflexive of my English language learning experiences, more I find that exclusive quantitative research methodology needing to reconsider some of its principles.

Evocative autoethnography as a method is to personalise the research and not only become nostalgic and emotional or become too self-obsessed to the extent of being narcissistic and solipsistic. And my choice of it is because it provides me "motivations, emotions, imagination, subjectivity, and action in ways less available from other sources" (Wall, 2008, p. 40). I see myself as the field of inquiry where I as the researcher analyse my own cultural, social, and political personal self-experiences. It feels like I am dissecting myself with all the sharp-edged tools and equipment. And when I do it, I become the past me personally, intellectually and emotionally. Furthermore, it gives me an emotional excitation to recite English language learning events with teachers and friends. My language learning has enabled me to not only relish my past learning experiences but also to explore its motivations, imaginations and my subjective principles of whores I am at present and who I would be transformed into in future.

Significantly, the autoethnographic research embedded in the evocative telling of stories create both catharsis and is "therapeutic" (Ellis, 1999, p. 677) for me as a researcher, participator and reader. Autoethnographic writings are thus is personal, "confessional, emotional, therapeutic, creative, unconventional" (Wall, 2008, p. 12). The

adjectival qualities clarify that evocative autoethnography is not limited to a way of doing research, method and paradigm. It touches every experiential aspect of a human person who is sensitive to empathise and meantime rational enough to be logical or scientific. I want to be subjectively descriptive to exhaust my heart, head and body of feelings, emotions, experiences and logics so that readers feel and become embodied to my narration meeting themselves as the goal of evocative autoethnography (Anderson, 2006, p. 377). Meanwhile, I want my readers to have both the emotional and intellectual recall and ultimately a purgative and therapeutic relief of being healed. Ultimately, its purpose is thus to give meaning to our often-meaningless existence (Bochner and Ellis, 2016, p. 76). And this is the purpose of evocative autoethnography and my sole aim of meaning making research process.

Data Generation

In order to generate autoethnographic data, I have completely let myself be observed, analysed and reflected upon again and again. In order to enrich the textual representation, I have depended upon my lived experiences and memories, events and their epiphanies, in-depth. I have depended upon my stories as data. Therefore, I have profusely used a variety of autobiographical and autoethnographical texts/forms like short stories, poetry, fiction, dialogues, arts and artifacts, and epistle/s. They are the conscious windows of the present to understand itself, the present and future. The purpose of using them as data is to create cultural-social-political and educational knowledge that autoethnography must represent and does.

I have storied my experiences, memories and flashbacks with thick and rich description embedded with authentic reflection and reflexivity. The research has led me to know myself more in and through my reflection, introspection and analysis as data of my life experiences that are intimately connected to my English language learning (Dyson, 2004, p. 188). Stories in any form – prose or poetry - are the tools of my data to unearth the embedded knowledge and insights. To generalise my individual lived experiences and memories, I frequently moved from the past to interpret the present and future so that my autoethnographic accounts resonate with the lived experiences of my readers.

One of the data generation techniques that I depended upon was some of the autobiographical notes. They helped me to understand that it is a linear narration with perhaps a few reflections on some events. On the other hand, autoethnography, I found, is a linear/chronological narration with an in-depth reflection of autobiography and reflexivity and interpretation of ethnography for meaning making process. In line to this, Ellis (1997) asserts that “Evocative autoethnography connects the autobiographical impulse with the ethnographic impulse” (Ellis, 1997, p. 132). It refers the epiphany of an individual lived experience as the epiphany of the group to which he or she belongs. I found that autobiography is more of confession, and autoethnography is more than a confessional – it is an ethnographic quest to manifest the epiphanies of lived experiences intimately connected to my culture, society and my way of being and doing. Forsaking the validity, generalizability and reliability, the rigid three traditional criterion of research, I have flexibly moved from verisimilitude, believability, resonance and the vulnerability of autoethnographic accounts and lived experiences (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2008, p. 6). Similarly, in my evocative autoethnography data generation, I have depended upon the evocation of similar bittersweet experiences, feelings, and readers’ rationale which s/he experiences while learning English without burying them in “jargon” or verbosity or making it too abstract (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 79). In line to this, as Keles (2022), I have focused more on my past lived experiences and feelings’ re/interpretations, reflections and meaning making endeavours than on “precision and accuracy” of them in honesty and integrity (Keles, 2022, p. 2038). And for that I involved to create a rich and thick description that resonates my readers’ lived experiences and feelings bringing alive their own experiences and feelings. I have tried to describe in detail the lived experiences narratively, poetically, autobiographically, and autoethnographically.

Quality Standards

Every research is a quest of contesting and constructing knowledge or truth. As a qualitative researcher, I must claim that even after a serious introspection, reflection and reflexivity I am unable to exactly interpret my English language learning lived experiences and memories. I am unable to claim exclusively that truth is this or that in exact words or phrases. One of the giants of qualitative research, Denzin (2009) has this

to say, “We can never know the true nature of things. We are each blinded by our own perspective. Truth is always partial” (Denzin, 2009, p. 153). To grasp this abstract truth and qualify it with my claims into the practical field where others see, read and react is a difficult and different task unless prescribed and described in a multi-paradigmatic way. And even after that, truth and qualitative representation are always questionable to be contested for further investigation. This is what I have found as I delved deeper into different level of my consciousness and at times experiences as they popped out of my exploration.

And autoethnography did not let me silence my self’s voice to speak something meaningful and truthful. When I think, speak, feel and act, I cannot be detached of my activities and context neither they can be detached of me. Moreover, it is not only my voice and story, it is also the voices and stories of people with whom and who will be thinking, feeling, speaking and acting as I in those situated society, culture and values. My evocative stories of English language learning helped me find my own self, my values and my subjectivity in the research text than I would have found in the positivist’s scientific “representation and objectivity” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 35). Holman Jones (2015) therefore states that autoethnography emphasizes on “proximity, not objectivity (which) becomes an epistemological point of departure and return” (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015, p. 23). Precisely this is what I am focusing on my epistemological claim because as human persons, we do not think and act mechanically but we act sensitively, rationally and emotionally developing dynamic, relational and ethical life-world. In context of relationality of autoethnography, Keles (2022) emphasises one of the tenets of a good autoethnography which is to “invite readers to imagine themselves (in) your shoes” meaning that readers must feel, think and reflect my transformative language learning as their own stories and life (Keles, 2022, p. 2035). Therefore, as long as this evocative autoethnography evokes similar search, research, emotions, meanings and knowledge creation in a storied form that is enough of my transformative research inquiry.

To maintain the autoethnographic research quality, I remained faithful to the thick and rich description of the experiences or about my ‘self’ narratively. This aided me to autoethnographically conceive, produce and process the ways of knowing differently and

uniquely (Luitel, 2019, p. 26). I believed in Denzin's (2009) words on my autoethnographic representation and narration as "equally powerful methods and strategies of analysis and interpretation" as other qualitative research methodology like arts-based or poetic or ethnodramatic (Denzin, 2009, p. 146). I have tried to portray my being, becoming and my creation within the socio-cultural and political consciousness of English language education. Animating the past experiences narratively I create the past situation as real in the spirit of post-positivistic text, researcher and the researched where I have described my vulnerable self as authentic as a postmodernistic text could be (Dyson, 2007, p. 37). I believed in the autoethnographic writing and interpreting story as "a process of conducting research" where I am never away from what I have inquired (Holt, 2003, p. 19). The autoethnographic research led me to believe that objective and scientific representation is secondary to rigorously engaging in multi-paradigmatic approach which genuinely details and also depicts the description and interpretation of my 'self' as human and scientific as knowing should be.

I knew that there are truths, realities, meanings, knowledge, values and interpretations embedded in educational, socio-cultural and political experiences in me, which figures and statistics and other inquiries would take it for granted. Although vulnerable to be misunderstood, misinterpreted and misrepresented I have "reveal(ed) my personal struggling, without feeling a sense of fear and my personal engagement in a journey, in order to convey my understanding of a reality lived, experienced and constructed" (Dyson, 2007, p. 37). And as a qualitative or more specifically autoethnographic researcher should be, I have overshadowed the objective presentation of research by focusing on my subjectivity and aesthetically presented my truth or knowledge claimed (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 434). In order to do this, I not only vindicate it by storying snippets in simple description of experiences and being sufficiently retrospective and reflective to create reflexivity as Stacy (2015) claims "experiences worth writing about deeply, analytically, and creatively" and that my storying the experiences is "a legitimate, important, and telling methodology" (Adams et al., 2015, pp. 4, 5). Even a tiny or short-lived experiences might have wisdom and insight hidden in it needing its exploration, introspection and epiphanies.

As I write reflectively upon some of my bittersweet schooling and English language learning experiences, they evoke emotions still fresh and evocative. The story narrated from my experience is though “semi-fictive and imaginative” it would certainly “serve as a context to make sense of actions in terms of ways we perform them, build our relations in the world, and reason rationally for transformative effect” (Belbase, 2019, p. 115). I am sure that my research would also transform my own and my readers’ and other researchers’ perspectives on transformative education for even an insignificant event/story could be made into a data for inquiry (Pandey, 2019, p. 232). It would certainly inform my second language learning and teaching theories, practices and pedagogies from the perspective of a transformative learning theory as a learner and a teacher.

Why I insert myself in this context is because as Spry (2018) autoethnography is “not about the self (me) at all; perhaps it is instead about a willful embodiment of “we” (others)” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 1091). I am un/wittingly others and they are me. The writings show that I am an incredibly, inevitable, indispensable and an unavoidable part of my writings and the culture, society, politics and English education that I grew up with.

Trustworthiness

As an autoethnographic researcher, I have rigorously de/selected only those stories, poems, dialogues, metaphors which show the truthfulness in my research narration. I have maintained explicitly the narratives to be as close as my real/actual learning experiences so that my readers especially those who question my narratives’ trustworthiness be ensured that they are honest and truthful accounts of my upbringing and culture (Maanen, 1988, p. 92). I believe that my research will certainly resonate the similar if not entirely different language learning experiences. In order to do that, I as Ellis (1997) have concentrated more on “being true to the feelings...than to getting all the “facts” in the exact order and time sequence” (Ellis, 1997, p. 130). I am sure that the readers would certainly relate to my stories of difficulties, successes and epiphanies on them. My reflexivity of the stories, poems, artifacts is as sincere, emotional, believable and rigorous as any autoethnographic data. As I show my culture in and through them, I

show myself, my situatedness in that culture of second language learning which is transferable and generalisable with other transformative inquiry stories.

Verisimilitude

The snippets and vignettes that I have included/excluded in/from this research is not foreign to every English language learners' experiences and realities. Although, my readers and I differ spatially, temporally and socially, we have similar opinions, ideas, arguments and inquiry regarding our encounter with English language. I have firmly believed in the evocation of similar if not the same and exact story to memory, questions and assumptions and actions and reaction of my readers (Ngunjiri et al., 2010, p. 6). The dialogical and metaphorical logic involved in storying my experiences would certainly engage my potential readers of second language. Additionally, the experiences and memories told in the form of different literary styles like story, dialogue and poems are not exactly the scientific/objective truth, however, they bring in the verisimilitude that reverberates with the stories, poems, dialogues and narratives of those who learn English as their second language (Dyson, 2007, p. 41). For me, verisimilitude happens when my readers easily connect with my success and failure stories/narratives to their own stories of success and failures. This quality standard and its lifelikeness resolves the issue of textual representation that autoethnography needs (Luitel & Taylor, 2003, p. 7). I am able to relate with them and they are also able to relate and travel with my stories. In other words, they think what I think, feel and be, which gives birth to a new relationship. And as long as my narratives reverberates the likeliness or similarities with readers, my inquiry's objective is met.

Pedagogical Thoughtfulness

My evocative confessional tales of learning English language as its learner and now as its teacher, not only resonate the similar language learning experiences but also informs and acknowledges the similar transformative language learning experiences of my readers. As confessional tales are autobiographical (Maanen, 1988, p. 77), I realise that my storied experiences contribute to my readers, researchers and scholars of second language learning empowering their pedagogical thoughtfulness. My autoethnographic transformative inquiry or storytelling is to "provide the reader with richer, depthful, strong and oriented textuality...to communicate and provoke the reader for intended

pedagogical thoughtfulness” (Luitel & Taylor, 2003, p. 3). Eventually, the potential readers become conscious of their situatedness (socio-cultural context), experiences, research inquiry and methodology to carry on the transformative learning practices and research inquiry.

Vulnerability

I found that doing evocative autoethnography is an extremely challenging research method. It is locating oneself in the myriads of lived experiences in the culture that was fluid which sometimes escape our analysing eyes, emotions, and reasonings. At times, the taken for granted faint memories and experiences as I was recollecting and recording, flickered through my memories becoming prominent than those that I thought would be better. The storytelling was at times risky because people or readers might take it for granted or judge or analyse me as the person in the story and not a transformed person not only physiologically but also mentally, spiritually and psychologically (Ellis, 2004, p. 34) and pedagogically informed teacher. This often threw me at the verge of stopping my inquiry as it exposes my pains, struggles, difficulties and particularly everything of who I am (Dyson, 2007, p. 40). I have feared of being misread, misinterpreted, misunderstood and misinformed by the readers and researchers while reading and analysing my work (Tullis, 2013, p. 251) about my self and about the people and community I write. In my entire research inquiry, particularly those where I have felt completely exposed, I was empowered by what Ellis (1997) said about vulnerability in autoethnography is to tell “with authority over coping with our vulnerabilities” (Ellis, 1997, p. 116). This vulnerability seeks experiential, emotional and rational connection with my readers, as many of us learning English as our L2/L3 have undergone the moments that Brown (2010) words, “I’ve been there” before (Brown, 2010, p. 1). Being vulnerable is, therefore, my dare to show my imperfections and open for feedback and even criticism. In addition, Custer’s (2014) words empowered me to take and tell my vulnerable stories as something that “determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose” (Custer, 2014, p. 4) which I required in my autoethnographic research inquiry and transformative as well as socio-cultural theoretical inquiry. Although I could not be completely unbiased, yet I have shown my vulnerability to be emotionally and intellectually reasoned, discussed and deciphered.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics in autoethnography seems to be one of the many “challenges and concerns” (Ngunjiri, et al., 2010, p. 8). As an autoethnographer I write as Denzin and Lincoln (2018) that autoethnography as any other qualitative research is not only an inquiry but “a moral, allegorical, and therapeutic project” because it makes us morally responsible to oneself and for others of whom we write ultimately (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 21). Autoethnography thus is more heartfelt and heart healing than heartless and heart wounding. It tells both the bitter and sweet experiences intimately connected to the I and his/her inquirer interrelated and indispensable socio-cultural and political relatedness with others’ experiences, emotions and intellects. The storied experiences in narratives are ethical as they affect those who I write about. I found it full of ethics that teaches me how to think, feel, experience and write as a moral person. Believing and following the golden rule of ethics “Do unto others, as you want others to do unto you” or “Do good and avoid evil” or “being and doing good” (Luitel, 2019, p. 26) is my only hope and believe that I do not have any direct even indirect harming myself nor anyone or any institution’s name and respect. Adams et al (2020) warns that being an autoethnographer I must be ethically serious on what and how I present others and myself including the society and culture that I am writing about (Adams et al., 2020, p. 3). Therefore, as a responsible ethical autoethnographic and a conscious transformative inquirer I am responsible that my research process and product are truthful and knowledgeable for the benefit of the potential researchers and research, readers and learners of English language education.

An Ethical Researcher-Participant

When I write autoethnographic story, not only me but of whom I write are vulnerable to be misinterpreted, misrepresented and misunderstood. Even after knowing it, I am letting my guard down to be insecure once again to be observed, analysed, criticised but reconstructed to be a new person. It is not meant for any pity or spite. For I believe everyone has experience as a story and everyone tells, writes and interprets it differently according to the context. As an autoethnographic inquirer, my experiences and memories are my data which become living because as data they speak and tell my interpreted lived experiences which as Denzin (2009) puts “Data are not silent” (Denzin,

2009, p. 146) they are living and speaking. As I try to make these data speak in my writing, I do not speak and write about something or somebody remaining at a distance to describe and interpret it as a spectator. I become my story and writings including my interpretation is but myself.

I write about myself, my person, my emotional and intellectual self which is not only vulnerable to be deconstructed but to be reconstructed anew in understanding my context and my 'self' in relation to other people and socio-cultural and educational beliefs. I have to let myself to be this vulnerable as to portray autoethnographically the uncertainty and fear of oneself to be naked once again. Thus, when the research critique, researchers and readers read and evaluate my research writing, they literally judge me as to who I was and I am (Ellis, 2004, p. 172). I also carry transformative learning impact of my inquiry. Therefore, when I share or reveal my own self, my privacy, my humanness, my values and beliefs and personhood including my ethical and moral convictions, they are at a higher risk to be openly debated from the ethical consideration of what inquiry should be (Denzin, 2009, p. 146). It is a difficult task to compromise with oneself as to what I should write or tell and what I should not write or tell (Ellis, 2004, p. 131). But I cannot deny the rights of the readers who want to know what happened. Though I was already made aware of the danger of "telling personal stories in/as research" as it "carries personal, relational, and ethical risks", (Adams et al., 2015, pp. 5-6) yet this is me who is risking to be vulnerable for the sake of truthfulness. My readers would see me through my socio-cultural interpretation as well as my society and culture through me. And for this reason, I must record what is ethically sound not only for my inquiry writing but also for the culture and people I write about. I have to at times be compromising my beliefs, values, ethics and these things for the sake of creating knowledge and knowing for others.

Informed Consent

In order to evoke my memories of the past, I have spoken in phone with two of my classmates, my primary school teacher and my father. We related some of the stories of preschooling, schooling and the child I was. I have sincerely spoken with them about my inquiry informing them about the possibility of including our stories in my inquiry writing. They heartily and affirmatively gave their permission without anything in return. They have consented that I am writing about him/her in such a manner that they won't be

directly identified or would their personality, profession and personhood might be in danger in any way – directly when we met during holidays time and during phone calls as a kind of sharing. I asked their consent to write about them and particularly the experiences of learning English language together.

My research on autoethnography and sociocultural theory informed me that when I write I always had to write in my full awareness because what I write affects not only me but also people involved in my writings as characters whose right of good name and work that I cannot harm for my convenience and good research product (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 131). Meanwhile, I was also informed that research and therapy go hand in hand in autoethnography particularly when dealing with “emotional topics” (Ellis, 2004, p. 135). They break people but they also heal or unite people. However, some of the people and experiences I have related in my inquiry are so vivid that I cannot but tell even though my narratives tried to use the pseudonyms or pseudo characters. They are perhaps easily identifiable. I, therefore, informed my characters who might at times be at odds at the way I narrativised the story and sketched them for my inquiry writing.

Confidentiality

I do not write about people to take revenge on the person concern but to understand the lived situation to create a new space and time for both of us and the readers where learning, forgiveness, love, care and concern emerge out of them. It is more of a healing than scratching a healed wound into a fresh one that is bitter and painful.

In order that the character may not be identified I have used pseudonyms, pseudoevents and pseudospacio-temporality. And I have maintained this technique of inquiry writing throughout my research process. The descriptions are truthful but the meaning and knowledge are conveyed to the readers without the person being identified as him/her.

Intersubjective Ethics

One of the main concerns of autoethnography was ethics of writing about others who directly and indirectly influenced me to write and about whom I have written. It is because when I write I write not only about myself but about others also. It is not that I have included them from here and there but they come to my story involuntarily and

spontaneously because of the intersubjective relationship between us. This shows how autoethnographic story telling is certainly about the 'self' but it is also about the culture and people I belong. Even after this inquiry writings I need to continue my friendship and my relationships with my characters which is important as we continue our journey of learning and teaching ahead. This I adopted as autoethnography is all about ethics of care and concern and being responsible to one another at present and in the forthcoming days.

Epiphany Inference

The epiphany is basically of the autoethnographic methodology and qualitative data generation. It vindicates the methodology and the use of multi-paradigmatic research approach. This autoethnographic inquiry has the post-modernistic text and use of postmodernism, interpretivism and criticalism to observe and analyse both the text and stories as data. Autoethnography with transformative and socio-cultural theory aided my exploration unearthing English language learning and context-based interpretation.

EPIPHANY THREE
 CONSTRUCTING THE PAST SELF TO CONCEPTUALISE THE PRESENT SELF: A
 SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

The epiphany introduces the blanketing impact of English language in the socio-cultural and linguistic inclination of Lepchas towards English. The change has come into the Lepcha language because of the schooling and education, the use of other language/s in the day-to-day communication, belief system and religion, the diaspora of Lepcha for job opportunities and the circumstance/s of the time and place. This then concludes with the consciousness of Lepcha towards their language because of the support of English language education. Although English language may have caused a change in the way Lepcha looked at others (people, culture, language, religion), it has not destroyed their language.

What does/do belong to me?

My father tells me -

“I am a proud son of a proud rong,

We have our language; we have our song.

I was born here as my forefathers-mothers

And I will die here as my forefathers-mothers.

What is my, belongs to my father

What belonged to my father belonged to my grand-father,

And...what belonged to my great-great grand-fathers-mothers belong to my great-great
 grandfathers-mothers.

I was never told of the history of migrating to the place where we have made -

Hamro mato, hamro ghar, hamro jagga-jamin ani hamro khola-nala

(Our soil, our house, our lands and our rivers and streams).

I was told, *yo hamro bhasa ho, yo hamro mato ho, yo hamro ghar ho, yo hamro jagga-
 jamin ho, yo hamro khola-nala ho,*

(This is our language, this is our soil, this is our house, this is our lands, these are our
 rivers and streams)

Pahad-parwat dekhi liyeyra, yaha vayeyka sabi chara-churungi, sabi-sabi hamro
(Beginning from mountains and hills to birds and birdlings; Everything is ours).

Alas, I am here to claim or reclaim...but what...?

Lepchas' history in English language.

Storying the History

Stories have social, cultural and political meanings and have both visible and obscure/hidden values. They reflect people, their beliefs and their ways of living, being and knowing. Stories aid people to immerse themselves in a society that they live in. They help the outsiders to in/enculturate in a new society and culture. And certainly, stories carry history embedded with cultural significance which guides its course. Stories create identities, protect and preserve culture, society and individuals. Stories are also transformative. However, stories can also be dis/empowering.

Lepchas have histories embedded in and with stories. Therefore, as a Lepcha child, I grew up with Lepcha stories and becoming a story teller or historical narrator. Lepchas have various stories based on their legends, myths, folklores, proverbs and songs to name a few, created both for children and for adults for various purposes (Tamsang, 2008, p. ix). Stories shape children's "behaviour and attitude or our Rong tribal society as a whole...Lepcha culture...(having) a deep and lasting (e)ffect on us" (Foning, 1987, p. 85). The stories are educational, social and cultural as they grow and continue with the tribe and within the tribe.

Therefore, everyone has a story to tell and I am both an inquiry-storyteller (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 76). An inquirer is a storyteller. And being one, for me, story is an inquiry and is knowledge. History has proven an important aspect of who tells and who writes the story (Fine, 1994, p. 70). Our story is that we are used to oral story telling but not writing story which as oral story telling involves the important life related experiences, emotions and reasoning (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 21) and transformations. In line with Kramp (2004) I quote Green (1991) "the sounds of storytelling are everywhere today" (Kramp, 2004, p. 107). And autoethnographic, transformative story telling enable us to not only reflectively and reflexively write and interpret ourselves, our socio-cultural and historical beliefs and values, it empowers the story teller to creatively critique and analyse one's place in relation to them (Adams et al., 2015, pp.1-2). Stories

are told from different perspectives although it is the interpretations of situations, characters and meanings. I still remember how I grew up in a family, society and culture who told stories.

Foning (1987) mentions in his book, *Lepcha, My Vanishing Tribe* on how we Lepchas have inherited the story telling in our DNA (Foning, 1987, pp. 4 - 5). The stories of the past reflect both the painful and joyful lives we had. We continue to tell stories of how and why we suffered during the struggle against the unjust occupation of our land “*Ne Mayal Lyang*” (motherland) by the outsiders, and recently *Gorkhaland* agitations on identity, language, economic and other developments which is already 111 years old now (Saha & Chakraborty, 2019, pp. 18, 24). It is also on how the heavy *अडसङ्गीको पहिरो* (1968 landslide) that almost wiped away the entire village, how and why we face the deaths of family members, how and where we fought with भुत (ghosts), and how and when each of us were born. One of the fascinating tales is that old people remember the events/incidents than the day, date and the year we were born. As Harari says that human beings “think in stories rather than in number or graphs” to both associate and disassociate individual roles, people, community, contexts and experiences (Harari, 2019, p. 235). It was these stories of what, when, how and why they were to what, when, how and why they are. I wanted to capture life always in the becoming than in being. I continue the same story telling as my becoming an English language learner and create a new understanding of oneself in story form (Williams & Zaini, 2016, p. 34). And inquiry as transformative told in a story has a different taste and meaning making process that the inquirers must look to qualify it than quantify for researcher’s “present and future actions and reflections” (Luitel & Dahal, 200 (Dahal, 2021, p. 2). In this way, autoethnographic storytelling is transformative as well as socio-cultural research inquiry.

Genesis of Lepcha and their Language

Contentious, however, the fact is that Lepchas have their own identity and language. The Lepcha call themselves and are called by others as *rong* (Mainwaring, 1875, p. vii). Molommu (2018) states that there are no historical records of the Lepchas migrating to where they are now living – the Kanchenjunga basin – although there seem to be researchers and their works claiming their migrations to this place (Molommu, 2018, p. 364). Lyangsong (2008) considers the Lepcha language as one of “the oldest and

richest languages of the world” (Tamsang, 2008, p. iv) but is found to be in a neglected state for its urgent protection and preservation.

There are various references as to the meaning of the term ‘Lepcha.’ Plaisier (2007) in her book *“A Grammar of Lepcha”* narrates the word ‘Lepcha’ deriving from Nepali word *“lapca”* or *“lapce”* referring to the “derogatory connotation for the “inarticulate speech”” (Plaisier, 2007, p. 1). Tamsang writes that ‘Lepcha’ word is anglicised by the English people and is also a derivative of “Lepchao” from Nepali *“lapcha”* or *“lapche”* meaning the waiting place at the wayside or a place for direction to travelers (Tamsang, 2008, p. i). Foning (1987) states that ‘Lepcha’ entitlement is given by the Nepali speakers and not only anglicised but were also called the ““vile speakers”” (Foning, 1987, p. 57). These show that the term ‘Lepcha’ is just an entitlement given by the foreigners – Nepali, Tibetan and English. However, the Lepcha people call themselves as ‘rong’ and their language as “rongring” (Plaisier, 2007, p. 2) with our distinct language, entirely different from other local and foreign languages.

There are Lepcha dictionaries and grammar books by Mainwaring (1898), Grunwedel (1898) and Plaisier (2007) although considered to be not “the comprehensive grammatical descriptions of the Lepcha language, but rather as Lepcha textbooks” (Plaisier, 2007, p. 6). However scanty, they shed light on the gradual language consciousness brought about by English language education. The autoethnographic storytelling not only informs by its method but also by the theories I have adopted here to not only work for the preservation and promotion of Lepcha language, but also the research or researchers should involve in newer ways of knowing through storytelling as writing. This painful realisation, autoethnographically speaking is emotional yet this changes our “perception of the past, inform their (our) present, and reshape their (our) future” hoping for a better “transformative effect” (Custer, 2014, p. 2). The research approach and the theories show that Lepcha language isn’t going to die soon if sustainable education within the framework of multilingualism is emphasised in our English language classroom teaching and learning.

Shift from Rustic Religion and Language

Lepchas’ language including their religion predates colonialism (Little, 2008, p. 229). They considered themselves as the “Beloved Children of Mother Nature and God”

(Tamsang, 2008, p. i) and their homeland is called “hidden paradise” (*ne mayal lyang*) or the “land of eternal purity” (*ne mayal maluk lyang*) (Plaisier, 2007, p. 1). The land, according to Foning’s book “*Lepcha, My Vanishing Tribe*” (1987) “...is a land of plenty, a paradise and a garden of Eden...created for her pet and the chosen people, the Rongfolk” (Foning, 1987, p. 2). There is a general belief among the Lepcha that their ancestors were created directly by their creator god Itbu-debu-rum somewhere near Mount Kanchenjunga (Bentley, 2008, pp. 102-103). The Lepcha creation story is similar yet different to that of the Christians. The narrations and characters are different but one can readily relate them as similar but not exact. As there are versions of Christian creation story of Adam and Eve as the first parents of human beings from the soil, so there is the first man, Fadongthing, and the first woman, Nuzaongnyoo, created out of the pure snow of Mount Kanchenjunga (Tamsang, 2008, p. 3). The Lepcha are the progenies of these proto humans or the parents.

Among many versions of creation stories, one of them is as follows:

Itbu-moo, the Mother-Creator, creating everything upon earth and in the heavens, set about executing and fulfilling her great plan. She created and shaped Kongchen-Konghlo (Mt. Kanchanjunga?) and other ‘chyu bee’ or mountains, and called them males. Then, as complements to these mountains, she created the ‘daa’, the lakes, and called them females. After what she thought was completion of her work...she realized that her achievement was lacking in something...Itbu-moo created the first man, Tukbothing, who later came to be known as Fudongthing. Even after this, she was not satisfied...she thought of giving Tukbothing...a companion, ... So, it is said that taking out a little bit of ‘nung yong’ or the marrow from Tukbothing’s own bones, Nazong Nyu was created... It so happened that these two, the last and the best of Itbu-moo’s creations started living like husband and wife... (Foning, 1987, pp. 85 - 87)

This and other creation stories of Lepcha are now gradually replaced by the Bible’s creation story. Although, this creation story runs parallel to Christian story of creation, the Lepchas’ ancestors were considered as brother and sister and not husband and wife as in the Bible. This is perhaps how “religious suppression” (Rahman et al., 2018, p. 2) or the death blow to the Lepcha people by the foreigners especially the

'Europeans', is leading to their gradual but inevitable downfall (Mainwaring, 1875, p. xii). Nevertheless, it was because of such religious' similarities in their belief systems that there are more Lepcha Christians than there are Buddhists (Tibetans) or Hindus (Nepalese) (Foning, 1987, p. 157). Perhaps it was easy for the missionaries to convert them showing such similarities or the innocent Lepcha genuinely changed their religion and themselves. Nevertheless, the change of religion certainly did never mean the change of language. But it happened. This testifies that wherever there is change of religion, there is seen the change of language. The change of religion led to the change of local religion, culture, values and certainly the change in the language. As I relate my story from the perspective of a transformative inquirer, I believe I represent the society, culture and people that I belong to which is individual yet cultural. And transformative research inquiry composed as autoethnographic storytelling is able to show this change impacted not only my culture but me as an individual whose story creates empathy seeking for different possibilities. This, however, needs an autoethnographer or transformative inquirer to have deeper introspection and further inquiry within the framework of storytelling as inquiry.

The Diaspora of Lepcha

Various research works, journal articles, books and magazines have been published on who is a Lepcha by various writers who claim that Lepcha originally belong to Sikkim (Dattamajumdar, 2012, p. 185; Subba, 1985, p. 61; Plaisier, 2007, p. 1). Lyangsong (2008) in his book "*Lepcha folklore and folk songs*" claims that there is no record of Lepcha having migrated to anywhere or from anywhere (Tamsang, 2008, p. 7). Molommu (2018) emphasising the unique origin of Lepchas claims that although there are various theories of Lepcha's origin yet there is no any certain evidence of it (Molommu, 2018, p. 366). They are found to be living in Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts of West Bengal, Samsti village of Bhutan and Illam district of Nepal for ages now (Plaisier, 2007, p. 1; Dattamajumdar, 2012, p. 186). Nevertheless, we cannot deny diaspora of Lepcha which has been taking place due to various reasons then and now also.

Once the only Lepcha populated Sikkim state, Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts of West Bengal are now characterized by mixed population and religions. A plethora of

research works evidenced that the Lepcha were a simple people who loved to freely roam the jungles hunting for food, shelter and cloth (Little, 2007, p. 81; Plaisier, 2007, p. 4). The advent of other people – Nepalese, Tibetans and English men/women – arrived with their socio-cultural values and beliefs, language and expressions and religions (Foning, 1987, pp. 281 - 283). Except a few Lepcha, majority of them follow others' religions, especially Buddhism and Christianity.

Religion in this way, is one of the reasons how Lepcha people got distanced from their religion, though rustic in nature for the Tibetans, Nepalese and English or Christian people. The change of religion brought changes in Lepcha's ways of life, their traditional belief system, and socio-economic and cultural values. It brought changes in their relationship with nature. Eventually, it is changing the language of the Lepcha entirely to English after Nepali. And there are various reasons why Lepcha people have had to lose their language.

The Shift in Language

There has been a controversy as to which family of language does rongring belong to. The researchers classify it among the Tibeto-Burman family of language spoken in Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal, India, Nepal's Ilam district and Bhutan's Samsti district (Plaisier, 2007, p. 1; Dattamajumdar, 2008, p. 1) including some similarity with the Naga dialects of North-East India (Foning, 1987, p. 150). The coming of foreigners in Lepcha's land, advent of new religions, cultures, beliefs, perspectives, livelihoods and ultimately their language (both script and dialogue) particularly schooling paving the way for shift in other languages. The shift to Nepali, Hindi and English language is now evident as many Lepcha not only read and write but also converse and think in these languages (Dattamajumdar, 2008, p. 6), I myself being the foreigner to my own language (both in script and communication). The main force leading the shift of one's language to other foreign languages is the English education and employment-economic opportunities.

Figure 2.

A diamante/diamond poem.

Lepcha
Beautiful but Dead
Agonising Becking Resurrecting
Country People Films Songs
Learning Reading Writing
Beautiful and Alive
English

Encounter with Foreign Language

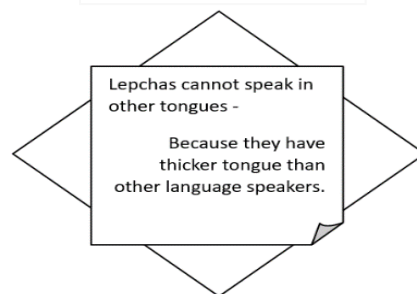
My father is a *rong*. He was born and brought up in a *rong* family, society and culture. Their only mode of communication was *rongring/rongaring*. He and his family believed in *bongthing* or *mung*'s practices or shamanism (Lepcha et al., 2021, p. 9). Every one of his family and society communicated in Lepcha until foreign language (Tibetan, Nepali, and English) and foreign religion (Buddhism, Hindus and Christianity) took over their language and themselves.

I was born in this Lepcha family. But by then the entire family communicated in Nepali except in a few cases whenever another Lepcha man/woman from the other village visited my father. However, they constantly shifted from Lepcha to Nepali for some appropriate words and expressions as today's generation constantly and unconsciously inserts English and Nepali words in their daily dialogue. Above that, I grew up as a Christian, the most popular foreign religion of those days and even now, along with other foreign religions - Hinduism and Buddhism. The matter of fact is that I grew up in a mixed language, society, religion and culture. Nepali was and is the lingua franca in my entire village and at home also. It was the first language I came in contact with and it has continued to be with me until today. It was and is the only lingua franca in the entire place or locale or the lingua franca even in the government institutions like schools.

There is certainly a change in the use of languages between my father's generation and my generation. If they have used the *rongring* constantly shifting to Nepali, my generation use Nepali language frequently inserting English words and phrases. And recently, it is English overarching both Nepali and Lepcha language. Learning Nepali language was quintessentially so natural that I never felt it forced upon except for reading and writing. I wish we had learnt English language as this. But it is different in English language learning which I literally struggled to learn to read, write, listen and speak. English language sounded, written, spoken and read entirely different than Nepali and Lepcha language with which I was quite familiar. It was so foreign that

Figure 3.

A myth or a fact?



my Lepcha tongue and hand could not pronounce and write it then. English language still has foreignness even though it has been two decades and more that I've been learning English.

My education in schools is where I first met with English. And it is the schooling which worked as a catalyst in completely shifting my language to English. The language my forefathers-mothers did not know existed is now the language of their great grandson. The language my father and mother thought as superior and foreign is now a common becoming almost like a lingua franca of their sons and daughters. This is in line to what Lantolf (2011) has to say regarding sociocultural theory's on how learners empower themselves after the acquisition of second language to relate their "mental and communicate activity" (Lantolf, 2011, p. 24). English language, in this way has become now my bread and butter as an English language teacher in an English medium school. To show this transformative learning and its impact on my culture, autoethnographic storytelling is thus best suited research inquiry for me.

The Need to Shift to English

English language has been changing the story of Lepcha people and their language since it was brought. We now no more tell our myths, legends and life story in our language but in foreign language – Nepali and English. It is now almost our story as people can witness Lepcha children learning English as one of the compulsory subjects besides other foreign languages in schools. Lepcha language was already "dying out" (Mainwaring, 1898, p. 1) years back when perhaps the first Lepcha grammar was published. Ambiguous as it is, there might be a gradual but an entire shift to English language in the near future.

English language which began with alphabets, letters, words and sentences is now often the language for my entire communication. Meanwhile, I do not have even a faint incident where I have spoken a complete sentence in Lepcha language except a few common words. Presently my own language has become a foreign language to me. Furthermore, the foreignness in English language has transformed into a common language of my generation. No matter what, everything that was foreign in English language has almost become my lingua franca with my immediate circle of job and opportunities.

I have only my surname as Lepcha but in tongue I am more of English and Nepali speaker than Lepcha speaker. I am one example of language lost/death or as Grunwedel (1898) writes “that was dying out” years before in the Preface of the Lepcha dictionary, ‘*Dictionary of the Lepcha-language*’ (Grunwedel, 1898, p. 1). On the other hand, I am an example of language keeper/user – of English. There are many Lepchas like me who do not know our own language but are perhaps expert in English or other language/s. And there are contextual reasons behind like socio-economic, cultural, political, educational and linguistic battle between Nepali and Lepcha in the hills of Darjeeling and Kalimpong (Lepcha, 2013, p. 330). These contexts-initiated situations where I became a suitable example for the death of Lepcha language to mother the foreign English language.

Ultimately, the language loss/death is the loss of my religion, socio-cultural beliefs and values while adopting Christian or Buddhism or Hinduism, or Tibetan or Nepali or English language (Plaisier, 2007, p. 4; Pradhan, 2012, p. 3-4). It is written that “imperialism and colonialism brought complete disorder to colonized people, disconnecting them from their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world” (Smith, 1999, p. 28). Moreover, the loss of these is the loss of identity. If I have learnt English language at the cost of Nepali language, I have learnt these two languages at the cost of my own Lepcha language. I have become a carrier of these two foreign languages to survive, leaving my *jungle* language to drown in the oblivion! So, have I benefitted anything in becoming a Nepali and now an English language learner and teacher? Or have I lost anything in not learning my own Lepcha language? These questions nightmares me as I become conscious of my identity, in particular my linguistic identity.

Other important questions, then, has English language really killed my Lepcha language? And does English language have power to kill Lepcha (or any) language? The answer is both yes and no. The reason for the ‘no’ is that it has made *rong* (Lepcha) people conscious of their own language (*rongring*) and its beauty. It has aided in the appreciation of other languages and preserve the beauty of one’s own language. The questions must be answered not by questioning ourselves, “Should we let Lepcha language die because English language is there to kill?” but “How many of us use English language (so called killer language) to preserve and promote our language?”

(Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 70). And this is what this research inquiry is all about – becoming conscious and transformed English language learner and teacher yet a Lepcha.

Epiphany Inference

The epiphany synthesised the general overview of how English language has taken over the place of Lepcha language amongst Lepcha folk. I began the narration from the poem, continued in the change of religion through a short story, schooling, education and communication giving a clear story of how there is a drastic shift of Lepcha language to English language. With the help of this narration, I want to exactly place the question of change or metamorphosis that has occurred in my personal, professional and linguistic abilities. I highlighted the fact that English language is the shift caused by some other embedded causes like shift in religion, daily communication, schooling, and diaspora for job opportunities. In this way, I have shed light on the contextual impact/force that coerced me to learn English language.

EPIPHANY FOUR

MOSAICS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

In this epiphany, I have tried to narrate my life events as stories/narratives beginning from the early schooling till I completed my madhyamik (Grade 10). The aim of this chapter is to show the struggles I had to go through to be a fluent speaker of English language. The narratives portray how English language was forced upon and how it became the language to be feared throughout my schooling time. In addition, here are some stories which could be termed as my simple strategies to learn English language. I have tried to describe not only the way I learned English language but also the situations/circumstances in which I grew up. Therefore, this epiphany is an anthological, autobiographical and autoethnographical.

Tussle between English and Rong

The majority of Lepcha people in my village were unschooled when I began my schooling. We Lepchas are nature lover and dweller. “*Mutanchi Rong Kup Rum Kup*”, the shout means “*Beloved Children of Mother Nature and God*”. We were and we are nature lover and we eat what Mother Nature and God gives us. Meanwhile, most of us, if not majority believed in “*Padi lekhi k kam, halo joti mam*” (Will your education gives you food or your ploughing in the field?). A very popular Nepali saying that defined our rustic reality and compulsion that put education secondary. This has led me to believe that transformation has to be brought as it is a necessity for our transformative learning and transformative practices – “questioning and rejecting...the assumptions by which they (we) had lived” (Christie et al., 2015, p. 17) in order to be relevant and open other windows for meaning making.

Before I started schooling, I was as unlettered as my parents and some of my villagers. I grew up in the midst of animals, birds, crops, flowers, insects, plants, soil, stones, trees, scarcity and poverty. I loved being at home and work with my family in the field, ploughing the land arable for planting maize, millets, beans, and yams. As we belonged to a farmer’s family, we toiled every day in our or others’ fields cleaning or growing up crops and plants which were never sufficient.

And contextually speaking, Reed-Danahay (1997) exactly words my autoethnographic English language learning, “each writer has peasant origins, but has become an educated, literate cosmopolitan whose narrative expresses both desire and regret about leaving home” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 127). I have certainly benefited a lot after learning English language yet I also have lost my own vanishing *rongring* language and the culture. It has taken me away from my language. And this is what I call Hamletian dilemma - to be satisfied that I learnt English language or to regret because prioritising English language I am losing my own Lepcha language and identity. Although Larsen-Freeman (2007) claims that English language is not the cause of the “decline, even death, of other languages” in particular local (indigenous) (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 69). Learning English language created a ghost of my own Lepcha language and culture that taunts and haunts me, although English language itself is now becoming the medium of communication to this uncertainty and dilemma. It is a mutual conflict of two languages and I am the consciousness in between. And this is transformative language learning theory in its most sublime role as it enables me to see the apparent yet veiled identity of a learner who is the receiver of English language learning transformation.

The Beginning

In the beginning days, I was excited and curious to hold pebbles (later pencil, pen and copy) and draw whatever teacher wrote for me on the desk. It was called “*dhunga klass*”. Here we collected small chips of stones and placed them on the chalk written letter or number by the teacher on the desk. Slate came later which I never had to write upon when I began my schooling. My primary and high school teachers may not have read Gijubhai’s *Divaswapna* (1962) or Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), or Max van Manen’s *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (1990) and *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness* (1991) and theories and methods of how and why of teaching children. Although my primary teacher was all alone in the school, I never saw him tired. His daily teaching up to grade four until 2 pm was sufficient for my “physical, emotional, intellectual, social, perceptual, and personality development” that “humans (I) undergo as they (I) grow older” (Blake & Pope, 2008, p. 59). Gradually I began to differentiate

alphabets of English as capital and small letters as A, a; B, b; C, c....and a new sentence begins with the capital letters and not with small letters.

I became happy to learn ‘A’ referring *only* for ‘Apple’, ‘B’ *only* for ‘Ball’, ‘C’ *only* for ‘Cat’, ‘D’ *only* for ‘Doll’, ‘E’ *only* for ‘Elephant’ and so on. The paradox of learning English was that ‘A’ for ‘Apple’, ‘E’ for ‘Elephant’, ‘F’ for ‘Fan’ and other strange pictures of fruits, animals or things which was seen only in pictures and not in reality. Experiential learning and teaching were less encouraged and emphasised. Some of the decontextualized English language teaching examples of learnings are as expressed, ‘A’ for ‘Apple’. I did not know it as a fruit neither had actually seen it, nor even had tasted except in picture. An image of an apple looked delicious. Why could not ‘A’ for ‘Ant’ which we often saw it, played with it and spent our time with it. Ant that we used to see it everywhere, even in the school! I had no idea that ‘A’ is also for Aeroplane which flew over our sky once in a while. Similar is the letter ‘B’ for ‘Box’, ‘Bus’ that we often saw to hide ourselves or rode it once in a while..., as ‘C’ also for ‘Cap’, ‘Cup’ that we have worn and the latter we used for tea than we saw only in picture. Likewise, letter ‘E’ is for ‘Elephant’ which I never saw it except in pictures instead of ‘Egg’ which we daily have seen it, eaten it, and stolen it. ‘S’ for ‘stone’ upon which we walked, jumped and ran every day than ‘Ship’ or even ‘Sheep’. I gradually learnt that they are the beginning letters for many other words. I learnt that a, e, i, o, u are vowels and other left overs are simply consonants. I did not know ‘A’, ‘a’ and ‘an’ mean one or single and indefinite and ‘The’ stands for definite/specific and certain. Although the teacher literally translated these words and images into Nepali, it still was something foreign to be memorised and vomited it in the exams. The beginning of schooling itself sowed the seed to become a producer and not a creative thinker of learning.

I learnt English numerals as 0, 1, 2, 3... to write as “Zero”, “One”, “Two”, “Three” and so on. Similarly, I learnt Nepali क, ख, ग ... and १, २, ३, ४...the Nepali letters and numerals. I always thought that Capital letters of English was Nepali क, ख, ग...(*Byanjan Warna*) and Small letters अ, आ, इ...(*Swar Warna*). Simultaneously, I did not know why English is different than Nepali which does not have any Capital or small letters of the same alphabets. Wasn’t one enough? Being from an unlettered family, learning was “to pronounce and sense the meaning of the words and sentences in Nepali

and English” ((Yamphu), 2019, p. 242) was difficult and at times waste of times. So, I followed the general path of learning, memorise everything from the rhymes to the simple and common answers. In addition, teachers used to tell us, “Your answer to the question begins from the question only”. This I never could understand even after a hard look at the questions and wonder, “Where is the answer?” So, even the questions I used to learn by heart in order not to write wrong answers to the questions. I never knew, answers are the children of questions or simply put, you cannot answer when there is no question.

However, memorisation was not the only technique I used to acquire English language. Have used many styles and strategies to become a proficient English language speaker. Nunan (2015) mentions four different styles used by students who were learning English as their second language. The first is ‘concrete learners’ who tended to learn English language from “games, films, video, audio tapes, talking in pairs and practicing English out of the class. The second is ‘analytical learners’ who tended to learn from studying grammar, English books, reading newspapers, finding their own errors and so on. The third is ‘communicative learners’ who learn by “watching and listening to native English speakers”, conversing with friends, from watching television in English, using English language as lingua franca in “shops, on public transportation...”. And the fourth is ‘authority-oriented learners’ who “preferred the teacher to explain everything”, their own textbook, writing everything in their notebook, learning by reading and so forth (Nunan, 2015, p. 158). The following vignettes explore these four different types of learning styles with different techniques and strategies which I never knew were used similarly by learners who learnt English as their second language. This also shows that there is no one size fits all style or technique or strategy used by English language learners which perhaps depended upon contexts and circumstances.

Fun of learning English

English was fun to learn when I began my schooling although I passed the classes mugging up everything – alphabets (both capital and small letters) and numerals. A beautiful rhyming that was catchy in tune, intonation and mesmerising sound was perhaps the reason I still remember the nursery rhymes.

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky.

Another one is,

“Johnny, Johnny.”
“Yes Papa?”
“Eating sugar?”
“No Papa?”
“Telling lies?”
“No Papa.”
“Open your mouth?”
“Ha-ha-ha!”

And while reciting these rhymes of English and numerals, I used to nod my head every time in order to create a rhythm. It was easy in that way. During those pre/primary schooling I parroted alphabets and numerals because they were taught in singing or rhythmic form. Similarly, I learned “A *bata* Apple; B *bata* Ball, C *bata* Cat; D *bata* Dog; E *bata* Elephant” until Z *bata* Zebra. As I reflect these days back and forth, I seemed to have learnt them because English grammar was not yet introduced. It was introduced in later years. Gautam (2014) states that grammar should not be in children’s early learning years as it would obstruct their language fluency. Children might remove themselves from fun and funny ways of learning English (Gautam, 2014, pp. 28-29). It would have given birth to fear of it being too abstract then.

Those beginning learning days, indirectly was making me to “go through the process of learning to think and thinking to learn” (Blake & Pope, 2008, p. 59). Otherwise, as a four- or five-year-old boy would not have remembered it now or what Belbase (2019) puts it, “recollected and reflected on key moments of my early childhood experience” (Belbase, 2019, p. 109). Most of the childhood experiences are forgotten or faintly remembered as they are easy to escape in these many years yet these faint memories are able to decipher and create meanings relatable and reasonable. And autoethnographically speaking the fleshing out certainly has my subjectivity and

interpretation, yet they are not fictitious and irrelevant. They have certain sociocultural and transformative impact on the person that I am today.

Inglisai Inglis (English Everywhere)

Gradually, the 1992 year was warming up in the month of February after a cold month of December and January. As always, the parents were occupied in buying new or lending school uniforms and textbooks and exercise copies, pen and pencils for their children. The senior students were happy and excited to join their new class. However, the happiest ones were the children who were beginning their schooling that year. And I was one of them. Although, I did not know how to write any alphabet/s, I had parroted basic alphabets and zero, one, two, three to ten (or more?). The villagers would frequently ask these questions to children who were beginning their schooling. If I imagine, a conversation would always have been in this manner.

First villager: Jonas, iskul janey ho? (Are you going to school?)

Me: Hajur! (Honourable yes)

Second villager: Malai A, B, C, D...vana ta? (Tell me A, B, C, D...)

Me: (Excitedly) A, B, C, D ta sajilo xa. Aei, Bei, Cei, Dei, Eee, Aff, Gei, Hech, Hye, Jai, Kay, Hel, Hem, Hen, Ho, Pi, Kyu, Aar, Ess, Ti, Yuu, Vii, Doublu, Ekss, Wy, Jet. (A, B, C, D is easy. A, B, C, D, E...)

Third villager: A bata k awmxa? (What comes from A?)

Me: A bata Appl. Appl maney aifal. (A for Apple. Apple means Apple)

Fourth villager: B bata k awmxa? (What comes from B?)

Me: B bata Bal. Bal maney goli. (B for Ball. Ball means ball).

Fifth villager: C bata k awmxa? (What comes from C?)

Me: C bata Cat. Cat maney biralo. (C for Cat. Cat means Cat.)

Sixth villager: D bata k awmxa? (What comes from D?)

Me: D bata Dol. Doll maney gudiya. (D is for Doll. Doll means doll.)

Seventh villager: E bata k awmxa? (What comes from E?)

Me: E bata Elpant. Elpant maney hati. (E is for Elephant. Elephant means Elephant).

Eighth villager: O ho! Lu aba esley अ, आ, इ, ई vanxa hai. (Okay! He'll also say A, Aa, E, Ei).

Me: Hunxa (Again excitedly)! Ao, Aaa, Chatai, Badai, Chataw, Badaw, Chatari, Badari, A, iiss, Oo, Aww. (Okay!)

Ninth villager: क, ख, ग...vann ta? (Tell me Ka, Kha, Ga...?)

Me: (Again excitedly) Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha, Anga, Cha, Chaa, Ja, Jha, Yan...

Tenth villager: Lu aba 0, 1, 2, 3...10 samma van ta? (Okay! Tell me Zero, One, Two, Three...upto Ten?)

Me: (Again excitedly) Jiro, Wan, To, Thiri, For, Fie, Siks, Sen, Eit, Nin, Ten, Elwen, Twlve... (Zero, One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten, Eleven, Twelve...)

I was sent to the community school run by one of our relatives even though there was a missionary school nearby. The missionary school was considered better than to our community school. The teachers were better and educated from Kalimpong and nearby villages while I had the teacher who had just completed his grade ten. The teacher never had any experience of teaching nor he was sent for any kind of professional development courses. Teachers' professional development (TPD) courses never existed and stakeholders might have concluded that it is not needed. It was perhaps common people considered madhyamik passed is someone who can easily teach their children in village. It might be also because there was no one who had more eligible degrees than madhyamik. Perhaps, it was a kind of compulsion than their own free choice. The students in my school were from *garib pariwar* (poor family) who were *huda khaneyharu* (have nots) or who could not afford to pay. Conversely, the students in the missionary school were from *dhani pariwar* (rich family) or *huney khaneyharu* (the haves) or who could afford to pay. Nevertheless, everyone in the village was found excited when a child begins to go to school. And this kind of conversation between village adults and children used to be normal.

My school was just a twenty-minutes of walk from my house. We had to cross three small streams which ran between my village and the school. Later on, it took us hour or so to reach school because we talked, sang, laughed, played, fought and spent our time playing while going to school. Sometimes we even bunked the entire school day

playing in streams, catching fish or *gadela* (a kind of small fish generally we find it in small streams) with the dead skins of earthworms, collecting small round stones, relishing *aiseylu* (Himalayan raspberry) and eating raw cardamoms or playing in *chipteti dhungo* (big long stone slab sitting inclined so that we could rolled up and down it).

The path to the school meandered through small hills, a small sherpa village, streams, rocks and stones and jungle of trees and grasses. The path at times was so small that not even two could walk together. It passed through many rough paths of stones and pebbles that could wound and anyone could fall off the cliff if one is not very careful. We had to walk up the hill and come down the same. Rainy season was the most difficult as the streams grew bigger and the way became slippery. Many of us were found bitten by leeches. Poisonous snakes used to be seen especially green ones on the way or near by the trees and bushes basking the sun. Not only that we also could see varieties of flora and fauna, colourful birds chirping on the trees like *jureli* (bulbul), cuckoo, *chibey* (black drongo), *vadrayo* (grey-backed shrike), *kyaki*, *Nyawli* (great barbet), *charchare* (rufous sibia) and seasonal flowers like orchids, *sunakhari* (dendrobium densiflorum) in variety, *sayapatri* (marigold), *gulaf* (rose) blooming with mesmerising beauties and fragrance. We were interested in these beauties than alphabets, numbers and *akshars* (letters and words) written in black on a white paper. The school education thought that these daily interactions with the nature and surrounding are disturbances than something that are helpful in school's teaching and learning activities. My traditional schooling system failed to consider experiential learning experience created from the surrounding environment forsaking the "real life" events becoming a "place for (passive) listening" where "knowledge becomes formal, static, and dead, while the child is treated as immature, superficial being egoistic, impulsive and confused behaviour" (Leshkovska & Spaseva, 2016, p. 59). This brings to the fore the necessity of pedagogical thoughtfulness through Freire's (1993) "banking concept of education" (Freire, 1993, p. 72) which is rightly reiterated by Manen (1991) that children come to school from "somewhere" and are not "empty vessels who come to school merely to be filled with curricular content by means of special instructional methods" (Manen, 1991, p. 7). This kind of schooling and pedagogical system are changing due to the advent of transformative learning practices

which prepares a reflective, reflexive teachers who take multiple ways of English language teaching and learning practices and pedagogies.

Gradual Shift to English Language

I was a shy person and spoke very few words. It was very uncomfortable feeling to sit and talk with strangers. In the beginning days of the schooling, whenever I had to go to toilet, I just ran out of the class and slowly came in without taking any permission. Perhaps these were the first days so sir did not say anything. Later the teacher taught me to request him in English, “Sir, may I go to toilet please?”, “May I come in, Sir?” I had to repeat after him for some time and memorise it so that I can use it whenever I have urgency without understanding the meaning of a letter or a word or phrase. However, my requests often were limited to words like, “Sir, toilet”. Since I did not know how to ask permission to come in, I just loitered near the door so that teacher could see me and ask me to come inside. Nunan (1998) calls this method of teaching English as “constructing a wall” by rightly laying down the “linguistic ‘brick’” where the beginning was greetings, then to alphabets, sentences, tenses and literature and writings (Nunan, 1998, p. 101). Learners like me carefully and gradually advanced stepping on each step of learning English language from the classrooms.

Meanwhile, the normal Lepcha greeting “*Khamrimo anam*” or Nepali greetings “*Namaskar* or *Namastey Sir!*” changed to English greetings, “Good Morning Sir!”, “Good Afternoon Sir!” and “Good Evening Sir!” Very often, I could not say until which hour of the evening we are to say “Good Evening”. So, whenever I met my school teacher in the evening anywhere, before parting our ways, I used to greet him, “Good Night sir!”

Just to utter these three phrases in different times used to be difficult and confusing. I used to wait my friends to greet the teacher so that I could follow what they say. I followed what the group said and also how the teacher reacts to the greeting. And to utter these foreign words I had to turn and twist my young tongue and practice a lot. Often, I swallowed and murmured English words and phrases than I actually pronounced them. Most of the time I memorised when to say and how to say what and repeated these English greetings because teacher and elders told us to greet elders and respectable people. We carried familial and socio-cultural practices and values to our classroom and

school except that it was in another foreign language. In this way we learned from one another. These activities of learning days and the narration shows that sociocultural theory's conception of how a learner's learning is affected by people around (adults and friends) but how socio-cultural "beliefs and attitudes affect how learning takes place" (Ameri, 2020, p. 1530). I would not have learnt these basics of English language greetings or education if I had not interacted with my immediate people and environment around. It is sure that many a times, they were disempowering experiences, however, learning is promised after every error. But who dares to make errors consciously unless we are children who come with our own experiences and language which school limits to a formal teaching and learning?

Bideshi's Bhasa in our Iskul (Foreigner's Language in our School)

I clearly remember an incident of 1994. I was in grade two. My younger brother and I were in the same grade. When all of a sudden, a teacher told me to teach the table of *Two* to grade one as he sat looking at how I write. He handed me a used broken chalk and a cloth made duster. I hesitatingly went and wrote it somehow on the portable blackboard which could be pushed or turned to any class for the only one teacher to write. Although I had no difficulty in writing, the problem started when I started to recite it in Nepali (Hindi?) for students to repeat after me – *Do Ek Do, Do Do Char, Do Tin Cha, Do Char Aat, Do Pan Dus, Do Cha Barah,..* Suddenly, the teacher slammed the table with a stick that startled every one of us. He demanded me to recite and teach the table in English without looking at the blackboard. First, I was startled and second, I was dumbfounded. I did not know how to recite the table in English except the beginning. With the best calculator 'the breaking of fingers' behind me, I started to fumble and whisper and haltingly began,

Two One Ja Two (Two one is Two)

Two Two Ja Four (Two two is four)

Two Three Ja Six (Two three is six)

Two Four Ja Eight (Two four is eight)

Two Five Ja Ten (Two five is ten)

Two Six Ja Twelve (Two six is twelve)

Two Seven Ja...(Two seven is...)

As I was nervous already, I suddenly got stuck. I got confused to count, and ‘*the breaking of fingers*’ did not help me and more to that, I forgot what comes next.

The teacher stamped the table with the stick, making all of us to shudder in fear. The whole school went into a dreadful silence. No one breathed for fear of being asked and beaten. Everyone’s attention got stuck on me and the teacher. Students who did not understand remained shocked with wide eye opened, with a very sensitive ear to hear even a soft breath. Those who knew the situation but did not know how to recite in English, remained bowed down and dumb. I bowed my head and became immobile as a statue. I began to feel my own warm breath stuck in my throat and choking me from inside. I got sweat on my palms and my forehead. I blushed and became red of being looked at by all the students and teacher at the same time. I felt for the first time, that everyone knows me and my weakness. I became aware of how I may be looking, my dress, my shoes and who I am. I felt ashamed that I did not know the table of two. I felt myself so naked that I started to feel ashamed externally to be looked at and internally telling myself how I would feel in-front of my friends. The shame was so overpowering that I wanted the teacher to just flog my back and send me off. I was stuck in that moment of eternity of fear and anxiety. Instead of assisting me to solve this problem of reciting with prompts thereby motivating me to complete the recitation and move on to another similar problem, he was there with frustration, anger and threatening. In and through his help or someone’s assistance I would have developed skill like cooperation, sympathy, and confidence which lacked in that crucial time. As Vygotsky (1896-1934) believed that this would have enabled interaction creating “socio-cultural environment (which)is critical for cognitive development” (Blake and Pope, 2008, p. 60). Perhaps my teacher did not know that the environment of learning must be conducive (fearless or shameless) to be created by the teacher himself/herself for the students. I think I understood his rage but he did not understand my innocence.

The teacher who was normal just before, hardened his face and became red. He said, “Lata (Dumb)! Goru (Ox)! Gowjey! I will fail you. Your brother will pass and go ahead of you!” I remained bowed down for some time until it started to ache my neck and shoulder. It was so tiresome that I felt a kind of heavy weight kept behind my neck and shoulder for a long time.

I became aware that English language in Math or Math in English language is a difficult nut to crack. Moreover, English as a compulsory subject was another difficult nut which would ultimately drive me through delirium and fevers every time especially during exam time. Since then, English and Mathematics became a lifelong nightmare who walked, ate, worked, slept and woke up with me but never became friend of me. I used to think, “Why are subjects like Math and English at School?”, “When would I get rid of them?”

I usually found it hard to understand English text used in other subjects. For then I had no alternative but to work hard and memorise the whole tables both in English and Nepali as it is, and be promoted to grade three which was more difficult than grade two. I was already struggling with my English language, Mathematics in English language added inconveniences and pain staking learning. These two subjects were like the sword of Damocles making me panic as and whenever I came across them. I used to be anxious and in a surreal catch-22 situation created by these two subjects. Just by taking the name and thinking these subjects made me feverish and perspiring. Later, I found out that English and Math were the nightmares of most students and for some it was a lifelong friend or foe. A consolation was that after grade ten, I could opt out Math from my studies which I did when I joined Humanities only to meet it unfortunately in Economics! It was not only an experience of learning, it was also experiences of teaching, being responsible and becoming more confident. This taught me to be active, hardworking, and develop a habit to memorise and be helpful to weaker students.

Engravements of English Language

The beginning days of the school was fun filled. I started to make friends and became comfortable with them in repeating rhymes the teacher taught. I parroted the lesson without digesting it to be vomited during the exams. Perhaps I was egocentric then because of which I did not think what others think of me and what I thought of others which sometimes made me reckless (Blake & Pope, 2008, p. 60). Once I got a little taste of how to write, I did not leave any empty space, empty paper, empty house wall, the stones, the bark of trees and bamboos, even my hands and fingers could not escape my name imprinted on them.

I used to write my name in the pages of books and copies, house walls, *aangan* (courtyard), engrave it on the trees and stones including my pencil and pen. It was a learning by mistakes because every “learning process were states of disequilibrium, due to an imbalance between what was understood and what was encountered” (Fawcett & Garton, 2005, p. 158). It was a time to explore and learning by doing i.e., put into writing on whatever that is learnt. This is how I started my beautiful schooling days. Rudimentary as it is, it has become a lesson for me to learn and has become my research context pregnant datum. Every nook and corner of the walls showed my name in capital letters, “J.O.N.A.S.H. L.E.P.C.H.A”, because small letters were difficult to write and remember. Moreover, the latter was taught only after we were taught capital letters. Thus, it was a curiosity, an exploration and perhaps a sign that I was learning. The school taught me to know and write, and I started it with my name wherever I could write.

The writing on things became irresistible for me. When I did not have pencil, I used charcoals, stones and often stolen chinks from school. The kitchen walls, *chulho* (fireplace) darkened by smoke and soot and stones were found scribbled with my names on them. For me writing on them was learning to write English but for the adults they were just nuisance. Often, the adults made comments like “*ghar kornu*” (writing on house walls), “*ghar maila banawmnu*” (dirtying the house) and “*kam napawmnu*” (useless/workless). “*Ghar, dailo, vitta ma kornu vaneyko rin lagnu ho. Rin lagxa... Nagar vaneyko sundainas?*” (To scribble on the walls of the house is to live in debt. Don’t do...don’t you listen?”), were the often-heard comments by the angry adults. Sometimes, I used to be beaten or my ears or temples were pulled for messing the cleansed walls, doors, and yard by my parents. However, I never stopped writing until I realised that we are poor and *rin* (debt) is bad for my mother and father. This consciousness has never left me and it is still a haunting insecurity.

Vomiting English

In 1996, I was in grade 4 (four). It was towards the evening of someday. One of my uncles, who lives in a bazaar nearby came to our village. Since he knew how to speak in English, he started asking simple questions that a child going to finish four had to know by hook or crook.

Uncle: What is your name?”

Me: I am Jonash Lepcha.”

Uncle: How old are you?”

Me: I am 9 years old.”

Uncle: What is your school’s name?”

Me: My school name is Dhingtang Iskul.

Uncle: “Say, my school’s name is Dinta school (poor’s school).” And he continued, “Which class do you study?”

Me: I read in class four.

Uncle: Say ‘I study in class/grade four.’ And he continued asking, “Where do you live?”

Me: I live in Mirik busty.

Uncle: What is your father’s occupation?

Me: My father’s occupation is farmer.

Uncle: What is your mother’s occupation?

Me: My mother’s occupation is farmer.

Uncle: What is your aim?

Me: I want to be police inglispector.

Uncle: Say, ‘I want to become a police inspector.’

Every school going student, particularly those who are above one grade was expected to at least know the given conversation in English language. The students were constantly asked these questions and the students mugged them up. I might not have known how to formulate these grammatically correct sentences or might not have understood the meanings of many these words and phrases used here. But since I was expected to know them, I mugged up both the questions and the answers. I never left even a punctuation mark to mug up if it is in the answer. The spoon-feeding pedagogy was so relevant, mechanical and comfortable that later it was like Pavlov’s experimentation of dog. We never questioned, and whatever was given at a particular time and demanded we spontaneously produced the same without any thought, realisation and reflection. I never wanted to leave this spoon-feeding pedagogy as a student as I became complacent to get all the answers from my teacher. I did not have to exercise my memory in reflecting and thinking as reproduction or memorization and its production

simply worked. For a better student in the class meant exact reproduction of what the teacher had given – pen and pencil assessment or speaking through memory (Manandhar et al., 2022, p. 285). And this is where my theoretical referents become strong to reveal where our traditionalistic spoon-feeding pedagogy failed and needs to be revised contextually.

As I continued my schooling, I did not know what to become, why to become and how to become someone in future. However, if someone asked me what or who I would like to be in future, I always answered “I want to become a police *inglispector*”, even though I did not know the meaning of the word ‘aim’. I knew who is a police inspector but I did not know how to pronounce and correctly spell it. I literally followed the pronunciation as ‘English *pector*’ and not Inspector. Moreover, it is not because I needed to study to become a police inspector but movies showed policemen/women catching thieves and criminals and beating them up. Perhaps it is because of these movie scenes, we used to play “*Chor Police*” (Thief-Police), a game where some of us pretend to be police and some of us pretended *chor* (criminals/thieves). The police’s work is to catch them and beat them to the dust. However wrong, this action of beating someone freely, I think, interested me to become police inspector rather than a reverence to the office/job.

I did not find it hard to relate the word farmer (*khetiwala*) with my parents’ occupation. Actually, it was not the word that was abstract but because the word referred to a work that I have seen and done myself. Since we depended upon agricultural crops for our sustenance, my parents toiled in the field from the morning till the evening. Due to such, I was used to with the agricultural tools like *kanta* (a three-fork like tool), *kodalo*, *kachiya* (serrated sickle), *hasiya* (sickle), *faruwa*, and *halo-juwa* (traditional plough) that hilly region farmers use every day. And when the teacher taught us who is a farmer, I could easily relate the work that a farmer does and the agricultural tools s/he uses. This is how a contextualized teaching and learning enhances our second language learning acquisition. Many such other Nepalisised words of English language helped me to acquire English language like – *Gilas* (glass), *pilate* (plate), *tabl* (table), *kup* (cup), *mug*, *jug*, *pype* (pipe), *pen*, *pencil*, *fontain pen* (fountain pen), *ink*, *copi* (copy), *church*, *roman katholik* (Roman Catholic), *protestan* (*Protestant*), *pant*, *half pant*, *bag*, *matchis* (matchbox), *cement*, *muffler* (muffler), *sirt* (shirt), *filam* (film), *tibi* (television), *jutta ko*

sol (shoe sole), *jutta ko lase* (shoe lace), *feet* (measurement of feet), *plastik* (plastic), *kitab ko kover* (books' cover), *paisa ko not* (note), *iskul* (school), *iskul unifom* (school uniform), *daktar* (doctor), *hospital*, *phon* (phone), *kyaset* (cassette) and many other words to name a few. I was always after learning English language interpreting and reinterpreting out of what is/are available to create meanings (Mezirow, 1994, p. 222). This learning was both inside and outside the school.

Funny English Language

English language is a funny language. I often found it hard to figure out some of the English words which is both singular and plural. I often got confused when we were taught that every singular form has its plural form. In order to make plural form, either we need to add simply the letters '-es' or generally '-s'. But there were some words which is both singular and plural at the same time. I often got drowned in this confusion.

*Why is one fish,
Also many fish?
Why is one deer,
Also many deer?
Why is one sheep
Also many sheep?
Why is one news
Also many news?*

Likewise, I was completely confused how two different words are pronounced same and yet have two different meanings. Homophones were literally confusing to me. I was easily confused especially while writing. I could not figure out neither the correct spelling nor the meanings of words.

*If English is not confusing
Pronounce 'knows' and 'nose,
If they are different then
Do 'Ice-cream' and 'I scream'
Then, I can't say 'know' for 'no'
You can't say 'not' for 'knot'
He can't say 'eight' for 'ate'*

We can't say 'be' for 'bee'
And they can't say 'bye' for 'buy/by'
Therefore, we need to make sure
That an hour is not our
That peace could be piece
Similarly, plane could be plain
And sea is see
Weather is not whether
Weak is not week
As Two is not to or too
And what I write may not be rite, right?

I often mistook and could not proceed ahead due to my limitation of homophones repertoire. This led to many of my grammatical errors in my writing.

I looked at my wrist watch
For a cricket match to watch
But I have my money in the bank
To pay for this game near the river bank
While people bathe in the near desert
I relish myself in the sweet dessert.
As cricketers swing their bats to sixes
My place is visited by bats for dishes
My best player's hamstring tears
I begin to cry in gallons of tears
While well-wishers write letters for quick recovery
I fume over letters to begin that is not too wordy
The cricketer gets fine
As I struggle to pay the fine.

The homophones and homographs of English language is really funny and difficult for a learner. There are not only two meanings, they often get mixed up in the mind creating errors in language. And when they are used without knowing the meaning, the language gives a different meaning than expected/communicated. All these often lead

to miscommunication and misunderstanding. Unless we are careful about them and their use, our English language is still basic. For this, perhaps it is better that learners are regularly exposed to more homophones and homographs. This once again highlights the importance of communication between teacher and student as this rote learning becomes meaningless depriving a child his or her right to think, reflect and communicate properly.

Paket (Pocket) Dictionary

“Good Morning sir!” the classroom filled with 40 students greeted.

“Good Morning! Basa (sit/बस)!” the teacher growled a command to sit.

“Did you write the meanings of difficult words in your lesson?” he asked the whole class.

“Yes sir!” majority of students responded except a few including me who did not have dictionary.

“What about you?” he asked me directly.

“Sir, I don’t have dictionary,” hesitantly I answered.

“Copy the meanings from your friends and show me tomorrow,” he suggested me as he continued the class.

The next day,

“Did you all do the comprehension exercise of the chapter?” the teacher asked us all.

Except a few better students of English subject, many of us murmured in confusion. Seeing this confusion, he told, “Complete the comprehension exercise tomorrow. Now let us go through other exercises.”

Meanwhile, the teacher came towards me and asked, “Show me your work.” I quickly flipped through the pages and showed him the copied meanings of words.

He asked, “Did you buy dictionary?”

I replied, “No sir.”

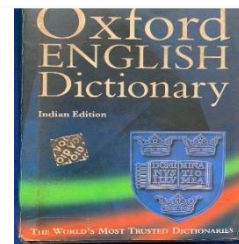
“Then better you buy a pocket dictionary, English to Nepali”, he told me emphasising on having one dictionary for each student.

“Yes sir,” I said with blushing humility.

The next day,

Figure 4.

A photograph of a dictionary.



“Did you do your work?” the teacher asked me.

Scared but haltingly I replied, “Yes sir.”

“Did you buy the dictionary?” the teacher asked.

Mumbling the words I replied, “No sir.”

During my high schooling, English teacher was never a strict person. However, many of us froze to the marrow because of his personality. He was physically a well-built Chettri, tall and handsome. He always wore a black coloured spectacles. A big hoarse voice, his sense of neatly dressed man with a polished black or red shoe drove us to the corner of the classes. We dreaded him and his English subject. I never had the gut to speak a word before him, neither behind him. The greeting to him was both a sincere respect and a fear driven respect. Nonetheless, he was a caring person.

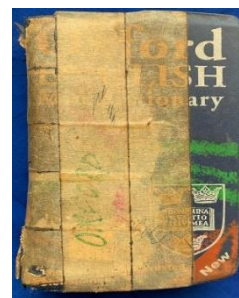
The story of buying dictionary continued but I could never buy it. My parents could not afford to buy a small pocket dictionary. The school fee, buying textbooks and copies, the school uniform and shoes, and regular buying of fountain pen and pencils were already a big financial burden to the poor family. I blushed with twin shame – shame that I could not afford a small pocket dictionary of two or three hundred and that I am poor. My parents could never buy one pocket dictionary for me until I myself bought one after my matriculation.

One of the most important items considered for learning English was English to Nepali translated dictionary. English to English dictionary was not only expensive but also was beyond our understanding. There were varieties of dictionaries like Ajanta, Oxford, Cambridge and many others. I always desired to have one but I could not afford it. I could not enjoy the excitement of having a personal dictionary with me to find the word meanings or to show off. Since dictionary never came as an item to buy when school sent Book list, parents did not buy one even if it is told by teachers. Sometimes I did not have textbooks, even an old re/used for us leaving me with less study or learning materials.

I saw many of my friends having dictionaries to search new words and meanings. Those who had both textbook and dictionaries, they always completed their work on

Figure 5.

A photograph of a dictionary.



time. They were considered as good “successful” students (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011 , p. 37). And I had to wait for him/her to first finish and then copy it literally. Whenever I borrowed it from others, I only got puzzled seeing thousands of words clubbed together in thin pages. Therefore, there was not only a shame to not have a dictionary but another, to not know how to search for the wanted words and meanings whenever I lent it from others. Not only that, I did not know how to find out the meanings of the words. It used to be like “*Kalo Akshar Bhainsi Barabar*”(For an illiterate, *alphabets are just shapes in black*). Having a dictionary was not enough if I did not know how to search the words for their meanings.

Nevertheless, dictionary was a great help in learning new vocabularies if not sentences. It helped to develop a reservoir of English language vocabularies. However, it was at times slow and tedious than using the context to learn the meanings of words. In the context-based learning new vocabulary, the teacher or facilitator would guide the learners through a process of how one can assume or figure out the meaning in and through general meanings of the words that learners know (Nunan, 2015, p. 155). Parents never encouraged using dictionary as a material or as a resource for learning English. For them what mattered is that their children pass the exams and get promotion to another higher grade/s. The school should have responsibly inserted at least a pocket dictionary as one of the books in the book list making it a compulsory. Perhaps the school took English language learning for granted or they might have focused on learning bookish English. It may not have considered the dictionary as one of the instruments to learn English vocabulary or they just ignored it. Everyone, the teacher, the parents and students only wanted good grades after mugging up everything including grammatical rules.

English Grammar: A Dhunga Mithai (A Stone Sweet)

English grammar classes were miserly fun

It was always dried, dead and done

Sentence, Verb, Adjectives, Noun, Pronoun

Plenty of definitions, scanty of examples

Did nothing but forced us to drown

My learning days was scarily fun!

Present Tense, Past Tense, Future Tense
Within them is simple tense and perfect tense
Every grammar class was full of tense
Aithan parney (nightmare of) subject-verb-object
Bideshi examples with bideshi subject-object
Verbs often slipped in between to object.

The difficulty in English grammar
Was hundreds of grammatical rules.
Like me students could neither understand
Nor could a good English teacher explain
Ended creating every nightmare possible
Made not one but hundreds of us all owl.

Each time I wrote, I broke one rule
Breaking every time every rule
It wasn't my choice to be ruleless
Was the subject which was ruthless.
English was better without grammatical rules
Left were broken rules, nay every grammatical rules.

Often the grammar classes and teachers,
left me in a vegetative stage, in coma,
Could not figure out what is told
Heard only dos and don'ts, mistakes and incorrect
Which scared me enough to mug up everything
And pass the exam without anything.

The definitions during the classes
The same in the question papers
Came with every question marks
Leaving me nothing but memories
That killed the interest to learn
That necked the fun.

Grammar is basic to any language. However, it has a lot of teaching controversy – whether we should or should not teach English grammar in our school to enable the learners learn a language. If my schooling days used GT-Method first then moved on to Direct Method or Audiolingual method which today is changing to eclectic method or communicative method which still leaves the question unanswered ‘Why should we teach English grammar for its proficiency?’ In my point of view, in order to master it, we often forget that it is to be used as means to acquire the target language. Likewise, is English language acquisition through English grammar. It was to be used as a means to learn the target language but often learners like me were buried in grammar and its rules. Ur (1996) opined that grammar is helpful in learning the target language if it is used as a means to master the target language (Ur, 1996, pp. 77-78). On the other hand, it is often seen and experienced that grammar teaching and learning is the issue both for the English teacher and its learner as we focus more on the form and structure and rules since the beginning of our schooling.

Grammar to any language is perhaps difficult. I personally found it difficult to grasp what is the mistake I am regularly making – Is it my language or is it my grammar or is it my pronunciation or is it my spellings or something more than that? Since there used to be so many mistakes in my English, I dared not make mistakes to pass in English subject. As I lacked accuracy in my grammar, I had no other options than faithfully following whatever the teacher has taught us or dictated in the copies during the classroom (Lightbown & Spada, 2009 , p. 138). I often sought for instant result of grammar learning and result than what Ellis (2002) considered that grammar teaching and learning’s especially teaching having a “delayed rather than instant effect” (Ellis, 2002, p. 167). And since this result was not seen instantly, I had only one strategy – mug up everything not leaving any punctuation mark even if it is just a comma. Parroting is not learning; but it was meant to save me from the beatings and scolding of teachers and parents. The main aim was not failing in exam and repeating the same class.

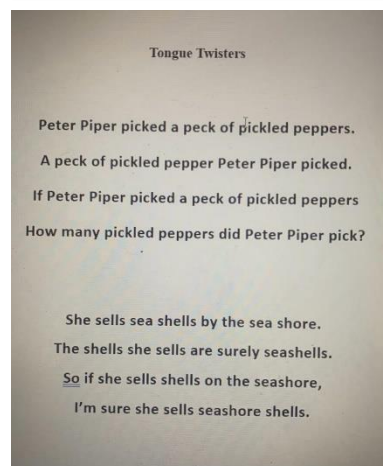
Other issue was the examples in the textbook. They were complete with foreign names and contexts like - *Peter runs, John ate an apple, Mary sings a song*. Bhatt (2020) emphasising the importance of grammar instruction in schools mentions that it has to be based on appropriate context as they may not be getting enough exposure of it outside of

the class (Bhatt, 2020, p. 156). I think the textbook and the examples included in them were foreign to our daily situation and contexts. I used to find it so abstract that I could often daydream. Therefore, we had one Nepali saying, “*Ratan Das Ratda Ratdai Gayo Sas*” (*A parrot person breathes last parrot*) which I think is made for students like me. Pokhrel (2021) rightly paraphrases the despises English language learners have with their grammar book because of its “complexities” (Pokhrel, 2021, p. 141). This is reflected in my endeavour that after memorising everything, I used to be so tired and exhausted of energy to speak. Often, during and after memorising lessons tirelessly, my mouth got hurt as throat went dry. And there was my friend whose house was at the top of our village. His entire family was so studious that my parents and villagers used to say, “*Hera, parai bahun ko chora-choriharu. Eka bihani wutxa ani tala bato ma ki bari ma aayera gunu-gunu padi rahanxa. Hamro chai ajhai pani wochyan ma ni xa. Hamroharu kam lagdaina. Wutxas ki ma awm?*” [Look at the brahmin’s sons and daughters. They get up early in the morning. They either come down to the way or go into the field to study. And look at ours still in bed. Our children are useless. Will you wake up or should I come (*threateningly*)]. I used to hear my friend’s voice reciting the lessons and chapters in his loud voice down from my house. Memorising was physical draining and becoming a machine which learns without reflecting as just input is required to make it act on command.

The difficulty differed between with each student. I never understood how is the same instructions were enough for some and scant for student like me. It created constant fear and anxiety of failing in school’s every exam and in future. I think every student had his/her own ways to overcome the problem of grammar which unfortunately I found very rare as most of my classmates had the same problem of grammar – grammar meant its rules to be memorised – which seems to be still prevalent in testing, teaching and evaluating the learner’s language skill (Bastola, 2016, p. 31). The teachers used to teach grammar deductively with definitions followed by a few examples.

Figure 6.

A photograph of a tongue twister.



After that he used to tell us to do likewise and show him/her the work next day like mathematics problem to be solved. During the class hour I thought I have understood and know the techniques but whenever I sat to do it myself, every sentence confused me. My copy used to be full with red ink. And red mark of ball pen in every word and sentence was the only hallmark of my English language writing in my copy. This further shows that English language teachers need to alter their styles, approaches, theories and techniques or strategies to teach English grammar as it is difficult for a second language learner.

Killing the Hero

I was not good in any of the four skills of English language – reading, writing, listening and speaking. My scanty English reading was entirely limited to my school books. I used to read Nepali novels like of Prakash Kovid's "Arko Janma" (Next Birth), Hindi comics of Nagaraj and Super Commando Dhurva. Although I had heard English superheroes' comics of Superman, Batman, Phantom and Spiderman, I had never read any because of the dread of not understanding anything. It is perhaps English language did not have the relishing satisfaction of enjoyment in reading then. Similarly, I didn't listen to any English song. I only listened to English words or phrases whenever my parents were searching for Hindi songs or Nepali songs in their Philips FM Radio once in a blue moon. English language proficiency was so poor that I only knew - is, are, was, were, absent, present, thank you, welcome and a few simple words. I never used English language or words to communicate with anyone because of my shy character, the dread of making mistakes and particularly being laughed at. Moreover, there was a kind of prejudice that government school's students do not know English. And it was a fact. This, in a way, led me to judge myself and those who were studying with me as someone who do not know English. This and other prejudices capsuled my creativity, interest and openness.

It was October, 2002, when I was enjoying our dashain and tihar holidays at home. A priest from the church announced free English classes for those who are interested in learning English. I had interest in learning English and my parents sent me to attend these classes regularly. I joined the classes with perhaps 18 or 19 students. Except a few students, majority of us were from the

government school who did not know how to communicate in English. These few students were fluent speakers of English as they had been studying in missionary schools. Whenever I saw them, I used to feel low and anpad (illiterate). One of the many memorable memories of learning English was tongue twisters. It was fun to learn to pronounce because I saw a few students also struggling like anyone of us.

One evening, the priest called us and told us, "Today, let us do storytelling." Those who knew English shouted a big 'YES'. But I did not. I was afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by my own friends and others. I made my place in between my friends. We were asked to make a circle and tell a complete story. First has to begin, second, third, fourth...are to continue the story and the last one is to end the story properly. So, the priest made a student who knew English to start the story saying, "King is the main hero of your story." First began with, "There was a king, who was handsome and rich" (in a perfect English).

Second continued (haltingly), "He had a beautiful wife and two children, a prince and a princess."

Third (constantly pausing for a while) continued, "The prince and the princess always played in a big yard filled with colourful flowers."

Fourth added, "The King was brave."

Fifth added to it, "The King had killed hundreds of his enemies."

Sixth continued, "Once he killed a lion."

Seventh said, "He killed a bear."

Eighth continued, "He killed a cat too" (everyone laughed).

Ninth said, "He was never afraid of anyone."

Tenth said, "The King died."

The tenth student was no one but me. I did not know what to say because every possible answer I thought my previous mates told it. I did not know how to continue or what to do. As my turn was approaching nearer, I got more blushed and confused. And finally, when it was my turn, I had no option but to kill the hero himself so that I don't have to say anything more.

Lack of vocabulary and lack of communication skill in English language stunted my English language proficiency. We were not encouraged to communicate in English either by school or by anyone. We were limited to our reading English school texts and if available short story from here and there. Neither at school nor at home, I had the environment of English speaking. The school focused more on enabling the students to secure good score in exams and home preferred the language that is understood by everyone – Nepali. I had no other strategies as a student because I could not visualise my future studies. I was limited to my studies. Nunan (2015) states that GT-method perhaps is the reason that learners like me not only struggled to read and write in English but were also “incapable of understanding the spoken language or so to speak themselves” (Nunan, 2015, p. 48). Bastola (2016) lays emphasis on confidence development of learners in the target language whether in grammar or for any four skills development in a country like Nepal or India (Bastola, 2016, p. 32). The fear of being judged, lack of vocabulary and especially lack of confidence as an English language learner often stopped me from speaking anywhere – at home, with friends and at public events.

Moreover, I never came across anyone with whom I could speak in English. Anywhere, at school or at home we communicated entirely in Nepali. Therefore, lack of environment, resource persons and materials, required motivation and lack of self-consciousness all led to the stagnancy of my English language competency. And meanwhile, whenever there was opportunity, I always avoided/dreaded the time, place and people who communicated in English. It was/is usually expected of a student who is studying in higher grades to at least speak some words and sentences in English. And I had neither words nor language to make sentences. There were times, when I met *bideshis* (*foreigners*) but I always shut myself thinking I can't communicate in English because I don't know English. I was embarrassed to speak in broken English with anyone, or in front of a few or many. And as said earlier, it was expected that a school going child's learning English at school should enable him/her to have communication in English language both in Nepal (Adhikari, 2010, p. 1) and India. Bhatt (2020) paraphrases the finding of Bastola (2016) regarding teaching English grammar deductively that traditional teaching methods and pedagogies is so ingrained in our English language teaching that it is difficult to alter in our practices (Bhatt, 2020, p. 153).

So, are English language teacher who need to change their age-old methods, techniques, strategies and pedagogies emphasising grammar teaching and speaking?

Autoethnographical vignettes in this way becomes a transformative research inquiry which is also socio-cultural.

A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed

In 2001, I was in class VIII in a government run high school. I had a friend, from a nearby village. Most of the time we walked school from home and home from school - together. It was imprinted in our head that some people like my friend is born intelligent than like me, always struggling, and there is no medicine in being born like him or me (Holt, 1995, p. 3). He was good in his studies by knowledge and also in memorising the lessons. He used to speak more than me. He was a better speaker since then and I was and am still a better listener since then (Lightbown & Spada, 2009 , p. 32). He scored more than me in all the subjects taught in the school even though we had the same school, same classroom, same teachers, same instructions we received, same subjects and textbooks and same classmates.

It was perhaps one of the wednesdays, at around 8 O'clock in the late morning. We two of us were walking to the school as any other usual day. As always, he was speaking more and I was listening more. Out of the blue, "Jonash let us speak in English!" Rajesh suggested me inquisitively expecting a big 'YES!'

He was eagerly expecting my affirmation to his opinion. Meanwhile, I was not only blushing but was taken aback by the sudden explosion of English-speaking idea. I became aware of my surrounding and looked around to see if anyone was listening to our secret conversation. Then I felt a kind of heat slowly produced in my body which moved to my ears and shoulder. Instead of giving him the answer, I got more concerned of my speaking in English for the first time. I felt glad that I can speak in English but at the same time ashamed to speak in English with all these questions, "Can I also speak in English?", "How can I speak in English when I do not know anything?" "What is the use of it?" "What happens if I speak in English?" "Will my friends around me be appreciating me when I speak in English?" "What if others see our English speaking?" "Won't they laugh at my English speaking?", "Won't they ridicule us in-front of others?", "What will I do if they do that?" I was thinking very hard. Meanwhile, I tried to

answer him in English but could not speak anything. I even mentally tried hard to translate Nepali sentence word by word into English but not even a word came out. I felt so awkward to deny or to accept the offer because I literally could not say anything in English!

When he found me hesitating and only silence as the answer, he encouragingly continued, “Madhyamik is coming soon. It will help us. And above all, we are completing our school within these two years. After two years we will be speaking a very good English.” Encouraged by this future prospect of becoming a proficient English speaker, a kind of “wow English” came up but doubt persisted that I can speak in English? It made me more silent and hesitant.

Meanwhile he was in his full swing, “Jonash! Come on man! We can! Try it. Let others laugh. No problem.” Suddenly, his right hand hunched on me as he came and rested it on my shoulder. Afraid of being seen speaking in broken English by others with fear and joy for the first time I dared to speak haltingly and hesitatingly, “How?”

It was so difficult to speak one word of English that it almost choked me. He was going normal and said, “Do not worry. We speak what we know.” Being aware of no one around, I spoke second time, “What to speak?” He said, “Let us memorise words from the dictionary. Each day a new word. And when we speak let us use it. My brother knows many words. He knows big words that has nine or ten letters like ‘flocinaucinihilipilification’. Have you heard this word before? No, isn’t it? But my brother memorises these kinds of words daily from our big dictionary.” Again, with hesitation, I confirmed haltingly, “Ok. But I don’t have any dictionary. Not even a small pocket dictionary.” He reassuringly said, “It is okay. But tomorrow onwards let us speak in English. Ok?”

He was very happy and excitingly said, “You know I am not joking. Really, our English is bad. So, let us speak in English and not in Nepali from now on. We will speak English, both going to school and while returning home”. Imagining the prospective of English language speaker one day, I smiled and reconfirmed with my “O.K!” and parted our ways for the next day. The next day, he was waiting for me to go to school together. As soon as we began walking to school, he started his English and I started to listen. Sadly, this plan failed because neither of us could teach each other the correct way of

speaking that is not only fluent but grammatically accurate also. The learning space that we had created broke because we lacked real interaction with people who would have assisted us to come out of our ZPD zone successfully. However, this journey shows that sociocultural theory explains how I journeyed to become a member of English language community (Donato & MacCormick, 1994, p. 453). And English language journey is at times hard and unforgiving.

Learning English language in this way does not only need environment and resource persons, but the one who knows the language. What do we teach to one another when we speak whatever way we want and whatever vocabulary we use? It does not matter if we use simple words or not, simple or complex sentences, what matters is understanding the conversation and replying it. Nunan (2015) paraphrases Halliday emphasising the need of pair and group work in student's speaking enhancement stating that when we speak, we want three things to be done by our speaking – acquiring “goods and services, use it to socialize, and use it for pleasure” (Nunan, 2015, p. 56). And we two needed the second and third aspects of speaking in English or rather the third one. I, often, shied away however I did enjoy speaking in English even though it was completely a broken English.

Being a Prisoner: Student

In the beginning, the school was the place I always felt like going. I enjoyed the school time being occupied either with reciting alphabets or poems, learning basic math or writing A, B, C, D... In school, I played more than I studied. I learnt to play with friends. The reason was that I did not have to work at home or in the field. I did not have to spend my time playing all alone at home or go around the village with some of my friends who had become monotonous. Except the exam times, perhaps nothing disturbed me from enjoying the schooling. Unfortunately, the happy story of schooling did not last long as I began to have difficulties in remembering alphabets of both English and Nepali, multiplication, subtraction, addition, division and remembering poems. The homework increased daily with the textbooks and copies. At times, I got beaten up by teacher for not doing homework or not remembering tables or poem. I enjoyed the playing times but not the study hours. I impatiently used to wait for the day to end and run home. Later, I liked staying back at home playing and working than going to school. I felt like it is a prison

where teacher is a policeman with a stick who could beat anyone anytime anywhere – mercilessly at times. When I look back at my schooling back from 1992 in Kalimpong, India, until now, it is mixed of both bittersweet memories. Most of the experiences I now think back are worth reflecting and have both positive and negative aspects. And I am sincerely grateful about the school, teacher, teaching, parents, I myself and learning. Even if school and classrooms’ disciplines were loveless, prisonlike, teachers were policelike, parents were overbossing like forceful and coercive, we ourselves acted servantlike, “...a life-time prison full of rules and regulations; it was more or less like a military training camp” (Mtemang’ombe, 2019, p.189) was like a nightmare, they are still my stepping stones to education. As I retrospect to introspect, the transformative learning theory and socio-cultural theories, were and are playing simultaneously a fundamental change to bring this understanding.

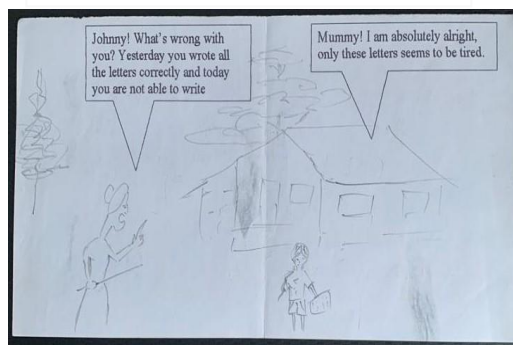
I think, often the schools took corporal punishments for granted. It used to be at times more of personal expression of anger of teacher on students or of anybody when s/he started to beat students. Teachers used to come with stick. I am not sure whether stick was teacher or teacher was stick or each of them used one another as end and means. And it was a local and perhaps it was and is also a global phenomenon as Rai (2019) tells that “I often came home with slapped cheeks, twisted ears, and painful knuckles and palms. School, for me, was fearful” ((Yamphu), 2019, p.

242). Mistakes or errors were like “committing crimes” which could be solved only by stick and a wrong way to teach as my transformative language learning emphasises (Manandhar, 2022, p. 285). It used to be at times regular but I never heard my parents or other parents complaining about it. I think they considered it as a necessity to teaching and learning.

When I reflect upon the bamboo stick, it killed interests, ideas, and expressions. It killed creativity. Just seeing the stick used to make me threatened and afraid that I would be beaten. I was so scared of teachers that I used to hide behind table, tall grass, behind a

Figure 7.

A photograph of a difficulty.



big stone, inside the house, in the crowd, markets or shops or anything those block his seeing me. I used to peek her/him through a hole until s/he crossed the place I was hiding. It was a phobia and sometimes it was crazy search for hiding places. However, as I not only retrospect to this particular aspect, the stick although was scary, it became as well the push for me to work harder. It made me work hard and remember everything that teacher gives as homework or classwork. However, the fear of being beaten was always haunting me. As Rai (2019) puts it rightly than the school at times felt like “a lion’s den” where the teacher is the lion, the king who could do anything ((Yamphu), 2019, p. 242). As a prisoner, I had to do what every student did and beckoned by the bell – get up, sit down, go out and come in the classroom.

As I now see my schooling in retrospect especially the school as prison, I remember the school bell. At first, I perhaps enjoyed the bell as it commanded us to sit, stand, change of period etc. Later, it often reminded of criminals and thieves in movies who had to run around for everything as the bell rings. After some years of schooling, it was irritating and was a real nuisance. Teachers and students wore wrist watches and the classroom also had wall clacks. However, I never could decipher the meaning of school bell ringing every forty-five minutes. We were aware of the time when a teacher should enter and leave the classroom. Every one of knew when and how long are the break times. I wonder about the necessity of the bell. The bell conditioned us like a machine which runs only when the key or start button is pressed and goes off when pressed stops. We were like machines which remained deadlike unless someone rang the bell to get up, sit down, run out and run in. We were so depended upon the bell that it became a habit to go out and come in only when the bell rings, otherwise we used to stay inside the classroom I am not sure whether it the bell which makes the school, students and teachers move and function. These beginning schooling experiences were like intentional participation in the “cultural, linguistic and historical settings” and also involving in “interactions within families, peer groups, educational institutions, workplaces, sport activities” (Fahim & Haghani, 2012, p. 693) as a began to grow up mentally, physiologically and socio-culturally.

Epiphany Inference

In his epiphany, I have narrativised the primary to high schooling evocative English language learning experiences. I have given a few glimpses of lived experiences as encounters with English subject as English language. I faced many obstacles than opportunities to learn it – school, home and environment. My shy personality, hesitations, prejudices (both mine and others), and lack of motivations inhibited my proper grooming in English language. Although we had English text books of History and Geography, the teachers perhaps did not explain the chapters in English as they focused more on Nepali language. However, these bittersweet experiences laid a strong foundation to learn and increase my English language proficiency.

EPIPHANY FIVE
PART I
EXCERPTS FROM NEPAL DIARY

This epiphany attempts to portray my struggles learning English to be a fluent English language reader, writer, listener and speaker, and presenter. It explores my comfortability while moving to a new place, new circle of people, new schooling. It is, frankly, a confession of my struggles and my vulnerabilities out of which I have made a leap in learning English language. Learning English language was not my cake eating years. Yet, if it was not the road that I had not taken, my story would have been different.

The ‘U’ Turn: All for English Language

In 2003, I was in grade ten. This is the year where most of us sincerely prepare and wait for the State Board Examination called *Madhyamik* or matriculation. Matriculation had been a pain in my neck throughout my grade ten. Since I was just an average student, I constantly doubted myself passing the exam. Moreover, I was one of those students who often passed only in final exams. In those doom days, I had heard many stories of bright students who regularly failed to score good marks or even failing the board exams. Another scary story of board exams was if one fails in the first attempt, he/she would be failing again and again for some years. However, a consoling story of the board exams was also luck. People said that it also depends on the luck of students to pass the exam. The best example of luck and hard work was some of my schoolmates who had been regularly writing their third or fourth board exams but failing every time. I had heard that the questions are really tough to solve. In all these confusingly anxious situations, I knew only one medicine to all these exams - mugging up every possible answers.

Ultimately, when the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education published the result in March, 2004, I could not believe that I passed with second division. The happiness was not in passing in second division but that I don't have to give matriculation second/third or fourth time or forever. In celebration of passing this iron gate, my parents offered prayer in the church and gave me a packet of chocolates to

distribute to the children in the village. Meanwhile, I was still not believing that I passed. I constantly asked myself – did I pass because of my hard work or is it luck? Did my mugging up help or is it my understanding? At the same time, my parents were happy and elders gave their blessings with the ‘*syabasi*’ (congratulations!) and ‘*ramro padnu hai*’ (study well!), ‘*keta padnu ma ramro xa*’ (the boy is good at studies), etc. My family knew the sacrifices they had to do to make me study well and I knew the difficulty of studying hard with limited educational and human resources. Nevertheless, it is the students who go through the pressures of studies, teachers, friends and parents and I am sure pressure is also vice versa.

The narration above is just to show what and how I understood education as such. I gave importance to every subject that we were taught in school – English, Nepali, Mathematics, History, Geography and Science. It is because of understanding that passing in exams is the sole purpose of education and nothing more or nothing less. And for passing in exams, mugging up was the only solution and not understanding what is taught or what I have in that chapter, for there were no questions based on the concept or comprehension as today. I had always felt the need to learn English language and I was ready to sacrifice things to learn English. For I thought if there is no English there is no future. I was in search of a door to this world of English and I got it when my family made a plan to send me to go to Darjeeling. This narrative ultimately helped me to adopt transformative learning theory and sociocultural theory so that what I inquire resounds everyone’s narrative regarding English language learning and the ‘U turns’ with epiphanies. The transformative learning theory assists me to “challenge the current assumptions” of English language learning so that its hope of becoming a “better individuals” building “a better world” is possible (Christie et al., 2015, pp. 10-11). Likewise, sociocultural theory informs my research inquiry that “social life is primary in the learning process” (Blake & Pope, 2008, p. 62). English language learning has certainly metamorphosed me into an English language teacher pregnant with lived experiences which tell stories of my socio-cultural and educational upbringing.

Englisai English (English Everywhere)

It was the early morning hour of 5th June, 2004, that I took an hour or so journey to Darjeeling from Kalimpong. Although I belonged (then) to Darjeeling district, I had

never ever been to Darjeeling. I was excited with the expectation to go to Darjeeling, a popular tourist place in West Bengal. Another reason of excitement was to be enrolled in a missionary run school that is entirely based on English medium instruction. It was my first missionary school as well as first English medium school as a student. I had shown my great interest to study in a missionary school when I was in a government school because I knew that missionary school provides good education - and good education meant English education which unfortunately, my parents and the resource person could not work it out. Nevertheless, it is in Darjeeling (residential house) that I actually encountered English in every corner of the building in the form of English quotations, library full with English books, everyone communicated only in English, the entire medium of instruction was in English, the newspapers and books and textbooks were in English, and a common way to speak with friends while eating was English - to mention a few for example. English was in every nook and corner of the building. It was *Englisai* English, English everywhere. Once in a while, I thought that I am in a foreign land with foreign people. At the same time, I was determined that one day, I would master the language, however, never imagined being a researcher of ELE/ELT. I needed it because I needed to mediate my “connection to the world, to each other and to themselves (myself)” (Lantolf et al., 2020, p. 227). This aspect of sociocultural dimension of English language learning was missing from my previous schooling understanding.

The English environment provided by the institution encouraged me to try every possible strategy, either suggested or self-made, to master English language. I used all three kinds of speech that Vygotsky proposed – social, private and internal (Blake & Pope, 2008, p. 61). I tried as much as possible to converse only in English with friends, teachers and also went to only those environments which would benefit me in improving my English language like library or seniors who speak entirely in English. I adopted the techniques and strategies adopted by my seniors to gain proficiency in the language like reading a lot, making a dictionary and using new words that I got from my reading. And very often, because of my shy character, I had time to spend with myself in self-talking, reflecting and improving my English language. Therefore, whenever an English language learner is in such a motivating and encouraging situation as this, one cannot but should try to learn it.

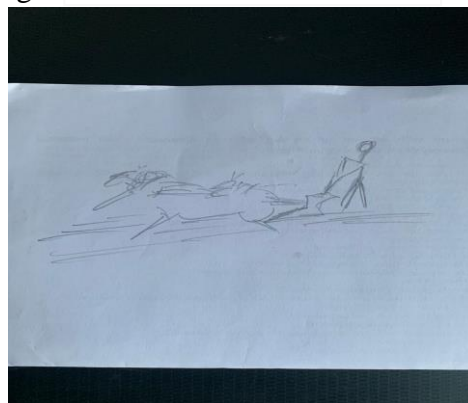
Unlettered Mother's Wisdom to her Studious Son

February is the month when we the villagers start agriculture. It is the beginning of warm month after a cold winter. People start to clear or burn their fields of dry grasses, twigs and branches, plastics, stones and wastes so that they don't obstruct the oxen and *halo* (plough). The first crop that we plant is maize. After clearing the field, we do *parma khelnu* (go to each others' family – labour/work without money) to carry *mall* (dry cowdung) in *doko* (local basket/carrier made out of bamboo's skin) to the field to scatter it among ashes and fertilise the land. Once in a while, we also offer *sramdaan* (family who cannot afford to give food/wage to their workers due to poverty, villagers plan a day to go to that family and help it to do agriculture). I was very interested in doing every kind of work. My interest was more on doing house chores and helping the family than going to school. It was more exciting to plough the field with oxen and help the family.

I still remember that it was one of the Mondays of February 1998, when I was studying in sixth grade. It was the first day of the week to go to school but it was the day to plough our field. I was extremely excited to plough the land, however, my mother thought that I better go to school that day. I grumbled and reluctantly dressed myself and pretended to walk to school. Instead of going to school, I hid myself in an *amliso jhyang* (tiger/broom grass) near to my house. Mother who knew all my tantrums that morning had noticed me hiding behind it but she neither called me home nor asked me to go to school. My uncle who was the *hali* (ploughman) had already started to plough the land. In tenterhooks and with palpitating heart I waited for an hour or so when I heard my mother's threatening voice, "*Tow ya awchas ki lina awm? Luga fereyra ja tala bari ma kam garna.*" (Do you come by yourself or shall I come to get you? Change your uniform and go to the field to work). Believe me, even before she completed saying it, I ran home, threw my bag, changed my clothes and reached to my uncle in a minute.

Figure 8.

A ploughman and oxen.



And in the evening, tired and exhausted as I was dozing off near the *chulo* (fireplace), my mother, who was silent until then startled me with this question, “*Towlai iskul jana mann xaina?*” (Don’t you want to go to school anymore?). I remained quiet because I had no answer for it. She continued threateningly, “*Yedi mann xaina vaney thik xa. Tero baw jasto euta sano jamin banawmnu. Matna suru garnu ani tero baw ra kaka jast hunu. Towlai tha xaina manxeyharuley k vanxa vaneyra? Matthu ko chora-choriharu matthu ni hunxa. Alikati ni saram lagdaina? Padxu, thulo maxey baninxu vanney lagdaina? Aru lai dekhawmxu vaneyra aaris lagdaina? Tero baw jasto huna lai ho iskul jana mann nalageyko? Afu ta anpad vayo, vayo, chora-chori anpad, gwar nahos vaneyko yestai xa chalchalan. Hami padawmnu parxa, padnu parxa vaneyra dukah garxaw, timeyru chai yesto?* (If you don’t want to study, then it is okay. Become a farmer like your father who has nothing but a small plot of land. Start drinking alcohol and become a drunkard like your father and uncle. Do you not know what people say? The sons and daughters of drunkard are drunkards only. Don’t you even hesitate? Don’t you feel and think that I will study and become an educated/successful man? Don’t you feel jealous of showing it to others? You don’t want to go to school because you want to be your father like? Thinking that my sons and daughters don’t become like me, unlettered, but the behaviour and attitude of you all shows different. We think that we need to make you educated, lettered, but why are you like this?) Meanwhile, my father was silently sitting there as a king lion but tired and exhausted due to day’s work. Becoming lettered and educated was imagination and hope of the unknown future but becoming my fatherlike was in front of me. Since then, I started to devote my time for studies and work hard. I met many obstacles but I have tried my best with what I could. My success and failures are my stories that I am researching narratively here.

My mother who herself never went to any school, however, she knew the importance of education. She knew education has the power to uplift any poor man or woman. She knew the situation, context and people changing for better, all because of education. She was unschooled but was never uneducated. Whenever she scolded me or anyone regarding studies, it is all because she had seen education bringing changes to the lives of educated people themselves, their families and their society. She knew the transformative impact of education in an individual’s life as well as that of his/her

society. Manen (1991) in his pedagogical thoughtfulness emphasises this need of parents/teachers to strengthen relationship and “openness to children and young people rather than being governed by traditional beliefs, discarded values, old rules, and fix impositions” (Manen, 1991, p. 3) so that children would be fit to any kind of his/her contemporaneous world.

My mother could not go to school either because there was no school or due to socio-economic circumstances. One of the reasons, she often quoted, was that she had to work for her family as the eldest daughter. She had to help her parents in the terraced fields so that her family is not burdened more than they were already. She had to work for her younger siblings. However, curiously, she used to write her name and surname in all the twisted letters/forms whenever we requested her signature on our report cards. This lived experience of my mother who was unlettered taught herself to sign her children’s report card motivates me to work hard and be educated. I understand the significance of education in my/our life whenever I reflect back and relive this experience of life lesson an *anpad aama* (unlettered mother) once gave to her *padantey/ghokantey chora* (studious/parroting son). She has taught me with her lived world what Dewey has taught the world through his book that “Life is a self-renewing process through action upon the environment” (Dewey, 1916, p. 2). Education empowers one to come out of the environment – conducive or inconducive – for better.

The purpose of education is thus to go beyond one’s immediate way of living, family, village and neighbours. Education is not only meant for better future but it is also for better living as a person in a society. Parents’ selfless love is shown when they say that their children should not be like their parents – farmer or anyone – but always better than their parents. They want better for their children even if they are going through difficulties, tensions and debts. They want better food, better bed, better school and better education for their children. In matters of education for their children, parents do not negotiate.

A Good Ghost of English Language

It was 5th June, 2004. I was sent to Darjeeling for my secondary schooling. Although I knew some basic English from my previous school, it was a drop of water in the ocean of English learners and learning. Since I was a shy person, I had to be

threatened, forced and cajoled every time to speak in English. And sincerely, I was trying my best to improve my broken English conversation. Sadly, it often began and ended in simple 'yes' and 'no'. All my efforts were going down the drain.

The consolation was that the seniors of the institution always gave me ideas to improve English. Some of them used to tell me that when I know English, I would begin to see dreams in English. I always waited for this to happen. In my desperation to improve, I tried memorising the words, phrases and sentences without understanding their meanings. Every night before going to bed, I frequently prayed that I would see dream in English. But dreams never came in English. It was all about my village, my mother, father, brother/s, sisters, relative/s, cows and oxen, goats, rocks and hills, trees and forests, rivers and fish, and the places' etched in my mind. Every possible dream that I dreamt was only in Nepali language, the home language.

And believe me, I literally died many times to see at least one dream in English, or uttering an English word would have been enough. But it never happened until I reached grade 12. By then, I had become better English language user. Although I had some inhibitions of the language, I did not stop learning. I never gave up trying to improve my English vocabulary, writing and speaking in particular. I was trying hard. Then one night, I suddenly had a dream of conversing in English language. I got extremely excited that I now know English. The prediction is true that I dreamt in English. The day was extremely a joyful day. Later, the dreaming in English became regular. First dream was the beginning for other thousands of dreams in English language. Gradually, seeing dreams in English language became normal. However, the English language learning has not stopped. And the outcome of English language education has taken me from an "individual experience towards cumulative experience of the human kind" (Leshkovska & Spaseva, 2016, p. 59). This autoethnographical story telling or writing as inquiry is "consciousness raising" as it explores my "internal and external conflicts" which I am rationally striving to communicate it through my English language learning lived experiences (Christie et al., 2015, p. 12). A stereotypical understanding of a ghost of English as a difficult subject that brings goosebumps and eerie feelings have transformed me to an English language user fluently and accurately.

English at Home

Robert Lepcha, an uncle used to visit our village often especially during festivals like Christmas, Dashain and Tihar from a nearby bazaar. And since he knew how to communicate and write in English, he often spoke in simple English with us - the school going children. Everyone was jealous of him speaking in English without any hesitations. And one of my ardent interests was to be an English speaker like him. My parents always encouraged us to speak in English with him. The fact is that we always shied away from any chance of speaking with him. Although we used to blabber out whatever basic English was taught and mugged up from school, we never could speak more than our name, age, school's name, parents' name and their occupation/s. We spoke one word or phrases or one simple sentence. And I was proud to answer at least these basic questions which normally every school going student knows. We were often shy and afraid of English language especially when questions were asked in English.

It was in December, 2004. After a year in an English medium school in Darjeeling, I had become a regular speaker of English. Although I was struggling to communicate entirely in English, I literally used to speak it everywhere with my manageable English. Whoever I knew could speak English, I just intentionally blurted out English words, phrases and sentences. No matter what, I had to show my English to those who knew English and also to those who did not know it. I wanted to show that I could speak in English. Moreover, all my family members wanted to see me speak in English especially my mother. She always encouraged me to speak in English with my uncle. Perhaps she had the belief as everyone that real/actual education is when one begins to converse in English with anyone anywhere. Everyone in my village and others praised the students who spoke in English, especially with the priest in-charge and sisters in the village or anyone who knew English. I am not sure whether my friends spoke in correct English without any grammatical error or not, but it was a pride for the family. People used to compliment, "Hera, falano ko choro/chori English ma boleyko. Hamro chai khi?" (Look here, neighbour's son/daughter speaking in English. Where are ours?") I am sure my parents, the villagers and others praised my friends who conversed in English who spoke English.

And fortunately, it was a wintry Sunday evening, after Christmas, around 4 or 5 pm. I was home for a few days for winter holidays. Every one of us were near the kitchen chulo (fireplace). Suddenly Robert uncle comes in greeting every one of us. Soon he joined us all uttering the word, 'aachyussss...' (expression one does when he/she feels cold).

After greetings, my family and other friends wanted to see me speak in English with him. They said, "Speak in English with Robert uncle. We want to see it."

Although, I did not want to lose the chance of showing my English, I showed my hesitation. As they were coaxing both of us, Robert uncle spontaneously asked me in English, "So, when did you come home?" And I proudly continued the conversation replying in English, "Just a few days ago. And how are you, uncle?" He replied to me immediately in his composed manner, "I am good. And how long is your holiday?"

I told him, "I have only a few days left to return to Darjeeling."

He rained down another question, "How is life in Darjeeling?" And I replied to him, "It is going good. And what about you?"

In the manner of a proficient speaker of English, he said, "Somehow chalta hai (going on). Anyhow chalnu parxa (have to walk)."

Meanwhile, everyone in the kitchen kept a golden silence. They were looking and smiling at each of us. They did not say a word but listened to everything we spoke, what we spoke and how we spoke. I am still not sure, whether they understood our conversation or not, but they were surprised and became happy to see me speaking in English. This shows that schooling is when one begins or could speak in English language with others (Adhikari, 2010, p. 1). This kind of conversation is very rare in a village like mine because we do not have people who knows English. Anyone who could speak English language was considered educated. Until then, no one in my village had dared to speak with my uncle in English. I was the first one to begin and end English conversation with him. I am sure my uncle might have laughed at my English language competency, yet he never stopped talking in English. He encouraged me to speak in English and I did. This gave a push to my self-esteem of being a one who knows how to speak in English language. It was a chance to show my English language and I did not

decline the opportunity. It was a learning by making mistakes. It was a self-imposed learning to boost my self-confidence and self-esteem.

Pocket Money – Push for English Language Learning

Staying and studying in Darjeeling from 2004-2007 was a gateway to the world of English language learning, adaptation to town culture and values. The institution where I stayed trained its new students for a complete one year so that they could cope up basically with English medium school it was affiliated with. And since English was the medium of instruction in that school, it was mandatory for every student to have its proficiency. Thus, the institution gave a rigorous training in English language besides other religious subjects.

Every month, the institution gave a pocket money of Rs 70 to each student. The students could use the money to buy stationaries or use it for other purposes. We often spent it for buying bathing and washing soaps, or on pen and copies, or socks and gloves or sometimes eat momos and chowmeins (noodles). However, it was clearly defined who would receive and who would not receive the pocket money. It was entirely based on the number of times that one is caught speaking in Nepali or other language/s. Each time when one is caught/found speaking in other than English, Rs 10/- was reduced from the total 70. It was rarest that all of us got all Rs 70 by the end of the month. At times we got only Rs 30/40/50/60. Sometimes, some of us got only Rs 10/20. It was often, that out of 50 students, at least some amount was always reduced from some students. Sometimes it happened that one or two students did not get even a paisa by the end of the month.

Although this was involuntarily forced, I have benefitted a lot out of it. Speaking in English was not my problem, but the pocket money drove me every time to speak in English, however broken was my English. I spoke less but whenever I had to, I did it in English only. And why I did less speaking is because I was ashamed of being not understood and making myself a joke. The other reasons were lack of vocabulary, lack of proper pronunciation, lack of confidence, fear of grammatical errors, and particularly being judged as a weak student or weak in English. And I never wanted to be counted as the one who has weak English.

The other important reason of speaking more in English and not being caught speaking in Nepali was to get the full pocket money. And this was further caused by the

fear of not having little things to live in a town. My parents could not send me money every month from home. They neither could come personally to give me. A two ways fare including foods would have cost my family a good sum of money. Since I did not think of becoming a financial burden to my family, I tried not to miss the chance of getting 70 rupees from the institution. Pocket money was the only source of money for me for many months. Just to avoid this desperation of lack of money compelled me to speak in English. In this way, money became an external motivator for me and made me a more successful language learner. This crisis, therefore, brought not only proficiency to my English language but also made me one of the students of the institution who had more English vocabulary. English language learning environment, English speaking peers and self-driven strategies and techniques worked as scaffolding and assisted me to acquire English proficiency (Blake & Pope, 2008, p. 63). Eventually, I came out as a student who had a better repertoire of English vocabulary and proficiency of that language than most of my classmates.

One December Day: A Monologue

It was in 2004, my first December month in Darjeeling. Darjeeling in that December and day was as cloudy and cold as every other December month and day. I already was suffering from chilblain, which I had never heard before although I myself am from Kalimpong. I had my swollen itchy toes and fingers even after regularly wearing a pair of warm double socks and gloves in hand. Every day's morning sun - even a touch of it - was the best way to begin any day. And since it was cold, every one of us always ran to a corner of the basketball court where the morning sun first used to shed its warm rays in the entire property with Telegraph, English newspaper for us all.

It had been eighth month since I had been in Darjeeling. It had been the same months that I had been trying to learn English language. English was the only language of the institution while speaking, reading, writing, listening, singing, and praying. Thus, English quotations were beautifully written everywhere in the pictures hanging on the walls. The only paradox was, that even after all these facilities, my English never improving to go for the secondary education. Meanwhile, I was completely tired and exhausted of myself. All my techniques and strategies got no result. With a little success

of my strategies and feedbacks offered by my teachers and seniors, I could improve only basic English language related to sentences, phrases and vocabularies.

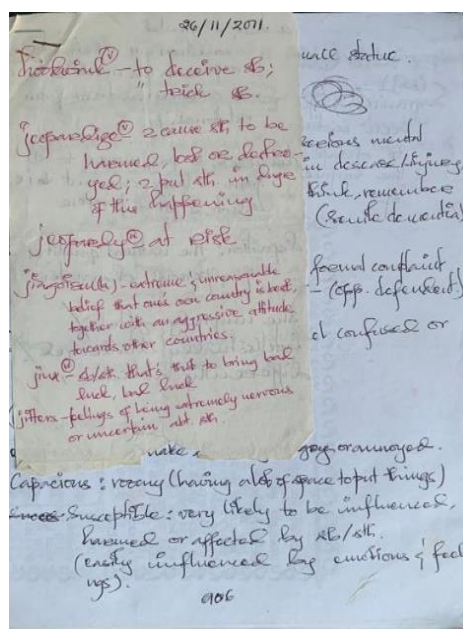
English language pressure was so much that I was fighting within myself with these questions - What am I doing here? What shall I do and why is English so hard? Will the institution tell me to go back home? Shall I go back to my village and continue my studies in the previous school? Will others mock me and tell that I could not learn English and came back? If not what to do? How could I improve my English so that I can go to a better English medium school this year? Besides, the one question that persistently haunted me and my mind is “How do I improve my English?” All these questions, Lantolf (2011) calls as the ability “first, to use external mediation and, later, to internalize it” (Lantolf, 2011, p. 27). The external here refers to context, people, language and environment which became the means to reflect and explore my different moments of English language learning.

My dear Dictionary

Dear Dictionary
You are my creation
Helper of my desperation
The Linguist of my language
The Noam Chomsky of my Language
Development
You always made me to move from -
Is to was
Are to were
Rise to arise
Singular to plural
Many to several
Big/small to bombastic
Dress to attire
Famous to infamous
Proud to pride
Search to research

Figure 9.

A self-made dictionary.



Speak to communicate

Short to precise

Difference to indifference

Colour to discolour

Control to decontrol

Face to deface

Similar to dissimilar

Deforestation to afforestation

Industry to industrious

Belief to superstition

Believer to atheism

Begin to initiate

Religion to irreligion

Sleep to slumber

Regular to irregular

Substance to substantial

And many more like these -

Apostrophe, bifurcation, corollary, dexterity, ephemeral,

Fabrication, globalisation, historicisation, inebriation, jeopardisation,

Kinesthetic, labyrinth, monoculture, nephrology, onerous

Proliferation, reiteration, queer, serendipity, tenterhooks

Ubiquitous, verisimilitude, xenoglossophobia, yesteryear, and zealous.

Dear dictionary,

I made you my teacher

To become your student

You became the language

I your speaker.

Meaningful was the fight for existence

Meaningful was struggle

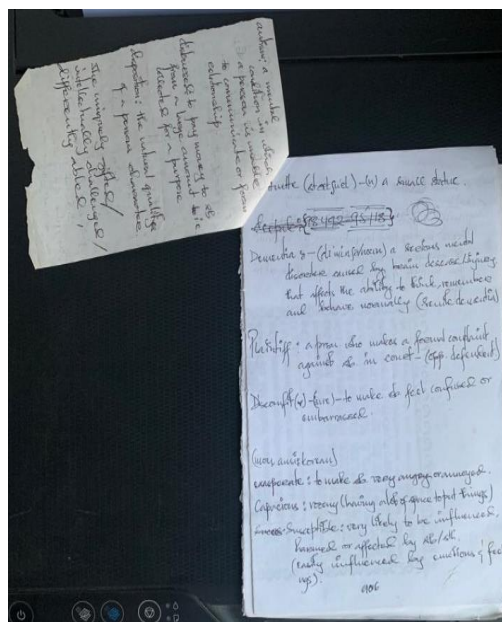
And meaningful finally is the victory still to be won.

Parroting English dictionary perhaps was one of my best strategies to master English language. I invented this strategy when I found that I am unable to converse with others or write anything. It was also when I could not understand what I was reading. I often wondered - How do others understand everything that they read but I don't? Or are they just pretending that they know every meaning of the word they read in the text? May I also pretend like those who pretend that they know the language? I, therefore, devised a plan to memorise the whole mini oxford dictionary. I said to myself that I would literally parrot every word in it. Singh (2023) rightly quotes Wilkins (1972) and speaks my words saying that without the help of grammar only a little can be communicated but without vocabulary of the target language, nothing can be communicated (Saud, 2023, p. 2). So, I began this strategy with a full confidence to begin with the letter 'A' and finish with the last word from the letter 'Z'. However, I stopped after I reached to five or six pages because a new strategy came up – reading anything that I find in and around me. I started to jot down every new and difficult words in a small self-made note as my own dictionary. This self-made dictionary was a collection of torn out used and old copies and papers. I diligently worked on it and started to memorise at least two/three words per day. It was a new strategy not only to improve my vocabulary but also to increase my reading skill. As I see it, I think this strategy was extremely useful, yet at times it was monotonous and tiresome. It was more of manual work whose result was very difficult to see in reality.

Meanwhile, I did not leave any stone unturned to learn English language. I wanted to learn English from/in everything in and through my reading. Reading included my school text books, newspapers, library books and whatever I find besides them. As

Figure 10.

Another self-made dictionary photograph.



said earlier, my English language reading was very poor although I was quite a voracious reader of Nepali and Hindi language. English was a devil that I had to avoid as much as possible. I often wondered looking at my friends and seniors who were not only reading fluently but also were writing and speaking proficiently. I never understood how is that that they understand everything and I understand nothing of the same passage or a sentence! There were times when I had to give up reading English books/papers just because I did not understand anything after reading or rereading them. One of the funny things was English prayers which I daily recited was nothing but a recitation of prayers. Recitation meant vomiting what is parroted. It did not affect me in any way. It had become mechanical until one day, the rector of the institution said, “Understand what you are reading and what you are saying.” This is how I understood the word ‘*Amen*’ which he said means ‘Yes and let it be.’ So, I started to write down the words and translate difficult English words of the prayers into Nepali to learn English. And to be familiar with these new words and meanings, I wrote them in prayer slips which I could read out during our prayer hour. I am not sure how many of my friends and seniors understood those new words and meanings, I was always encouraged by them. This gave me some of the platforms where I could not only memorise new words but also use them to be familiar.

Eventually, this strategy helped me to develop receptive and productive vocabulary and consciously use them in my reading, writing, listening, speaking and presenting. I come across many English words which I “can recognize but not use” and also words which I not only recognise but also use them for different purposes, setting and context (Nunan, 2015, p. 111). This is true to what transformative learning theory stands for that “transformation rarely occurs unless the individual is convinced it is necessary” (Christie et al., 2015, p. 17). I was desperately in need of vocabulary development techniques and strategies whose ultimate end was proficiency in the target language. This writing process itself is the testimony which shows that I use variety of words to describe one and the same thing in various ways. Thus, at times it became verbose and at times it became inappropriate.

To Read or Not to Read!

Reading books in English language was the boring work to do. Every time I picked up a book, I found it hard to finish even the first page. The limitation of my vocabularies from simple to complex words, phrases and sentences became an obstacle that often made me tired. In the beginning days of my English language learning days, I had to read and reread the same sentence again and again as I did not understand anything out of it.

When I went to Darjeeling, for the first time I saw a library in my life. For everyone, the library had various kinds of books on different subjects like religion, god, the bible, novels, story books, and newspapers. On the other hand, I saw there were only two kinds of books – one thin book and thick books. I considered thin books simple and easy to read. And when I picked up these books thinking that I could read easily, I often got stuck in the first or second page due to lack of reading habits. And whenever I saw thick books, I wondered “Could anyone read such a thick book like this or that?” Meanwhile, I thought that reading thick books improves learners’ English language quickly. I still remember a first thick book that I picked up to take short cut to learn English only to be despaired after two or three pages.

Although I had a desire to learn and improve my English, sadly, I did not know how to improve my English. I started to pick up thick books for my reading. It was fun to start but soon I gave up reading the book due to difficulty in pronunciation, meanings, sentences and what actually the author/authoress wants to say. I often used to read the acknowledgement and the dedication because they were simple. Most of my reading time went in flipping the pages of dictionary than the pages of the books that I was reading. Sometimes, looking for every word in the dictionary discontinued my reading enjoyment, comprehension and speed. Later, my seniors suggested me that I don’t have to understand every word but what I could make out of what I read. I faithfully followed this principle of language learning, but I was not satisfied as I could understand very little or not at all. I thought that it is better that I don’t read the book/s that I don’t understand.

After some time, one of my seniors advised me to read simple children story book to begin with to motivate myself to read books. There I started to choose thin books which I considered could be within my English vocabulary limit. Since there weren’t

many such books, I moved on to other books those were thicker than those very short stories. This reading, gradually, gave me enough motivation and encouragement to try reading other books in library and increase my English language vocabulary.

The first complete English book that I read in Darjeeling was the '*Famous Five*' by Enid Blyton. Development of reading habit was slow and tedious but rewarding. Slowly, my reading developed as hobby and interest. Meanwhile, I started to read big and thick novel of Sydney Sheldon and others. I used to read books very slowly so that I understand every word, phrase and sentences. The reason for my slow reading was that I jotted down every word or phrase that is new to me. Whenever I did not understand sentences, I used to reread them slowly and carefully to understand it. I had to reread the whole page after I found at the last sentence of the page that I forgot what I read in the first line of the page. As a vulnerable English language learner and now as an English language teacher, I am sure I would have done it better if I had someone who knew the techniques and strategies of reading from basic, intermediate to advance. Nunan (2015) states that reading builds "facility in the language" thereby fostering "independent learning" (Nunan, 2015, p. 64). A regular social interaction with my teacher would have helped not only "co-construct knowledge in collaboration" but also would have "gain(ed) control and reorganize their (my) cognitive process" (Lightbown & Spada, 2009, pp. 118-119). This I do not regret as reading aided me to explore the world of English literature and English world.

To Write or Not to Write

Writing was something that never interested me. It always bothered me to get hold of a pen and write. Nunan (2015) paraphrased Sokolik (2003) that writing is "both a physical as well as a mental act" and the latter is responsible to generate ideas and "thinking about how to present them effectively in the form of a written text" (Nunan, 2015, p. 78). And writing in English language, when a learners lack basic grammar and basic vocabulary is extremely challenging. Whatever I wrote during my schooling years were all memorised answers and nothing from my own. Even a sentence used to be parroted including the semicolon, punctuation mark or full stop. I never knew that writing is one of the skills a learner needs to develop while learning English language. I wrote only for the exams and home works. I never wrote anything more than what was asked by

the questions. Whenever I wrote, my grammatical errors, lack of vocabularies, lack of expressions and lack of support and encouragement were abundant.

The other reasons of lacking in writing skill might be getting hurt on the fingers. Or the lack of sufficient writing materials like pen and pencil, and copies besides text books. The financial constraints forced us to have limited writing materials to only buy when needed and just enough. I used to collect unwritten blank sheets of used copies and make a new copy of it. Even half empty page/s used to be included in my new copy. We often had to use broken pencils sharpened by half broken blade/s. Poverty drove me everywhere including poverty in writing.

To Listen or Not to Listen

Personally, listening to songs was my hobby. I loved Hindi and Nepali songs. I even have heard Lepcha song/s. I loved the rhythm, the voice, the tone and modulation and the sheer beauty of music. Sometimes, it equals the beauty of poetry. It changes your mood, sentiments, emotions and situation. Lems (2018) rightly puts the fact that “learning a song or musical instrument is analogous in many ways to learning a language” (Lems, 2018, p. 15). However, I use to pay a very less interest in the lyrics/words in song/music. I considered it as a means to drive away one’s boredom and add more happiness/excitement. I had concluded music as a means to refresh you at the end of the tired day because my parents played radio only at the bedtime or whenever they came to rest for a while from the field. I had not considered listening to songs as a means of learning a language until then. I had never listened to any English song in complete or heard any conversation that is purely English ever before I came to Darjeeling. In Darjeeling, people in and around me said that listening to English songs is a plus point to learning English language. Someone had encouragingly mentioned a passing comment, “If and when you begin to understand English rap battle, think and know that your English has been improved.” Encouraged by these new advices and the desire to improve English language, I made a plan to listen to English songs. But how do I do it? So, I started to gather cassettes of English songs – collected the thrown away old cassettes, lent it from the seniors or bought it from the market. Where do I listen to it? Thus, every time, instead of spending money on some essential stationary items, I saved some money from my pocket of Rs. 70. After collecting some money I bought a

Walkman to listen to English songs and improve my English. To own something small and say that you own something of your own give a mysterious happiness. As English language learning environment was conducive, I started to listen to English songs like ‘*O’ My Sleeping Child*’ by Michael Learns to Rock and ‘*I have a dream*’ by Westlife and others to name a few. In the beginning days I did not understand any word of the song. Slowly I got a few words of the song and later on became a regular listener of English songs although I never understood every word of the lyrics. Nevertheless, I enjoy the sweetness of the song and the simplicity rather than going through word by word which is important for a language learning. And these days, English language teachers use music as one of the strategies of teaching English to the second language learners for different functions – pronunciation, intonation, fluency, accuracy and poetic beauty in it. Since then, I have started to grow up with English songs until the recent ones.

To Speak or to Remain Dumb

When I went to Darjeeling, I had a very few countable English vocabulary. I was zero in English language communication. Although the environment was motivating, my shy personality and low self-esteem made me hesitate every time. Some of the inhibitions I had while learning to communicate had these phrases like - “I don’t know English” and “I cannot communicate in English.” Whenever I tried to speak in English, I became conscious of my language limitation, wrong pronunciation, wrong grammar and thus fear of being judged and being laughed at. Often, these imagined fears and inhibitions blocked the opportunities for more exposure and beneficial interactions with people which would have enabled “mutual comprehension through negotiated meaning. Although the director constantly reminded us, “Try to speak in English. Make mistakes and you will learn.” He used to add after every now and then, “Show me your improvements in English?” It often gave a violent outburst of desperation of either perform or perish.

Often, I remained silent to avoid speaking in English because I did not know what and how to speak in English. Keeping silence in the midst of proficient speakers of English was the technique I invented. To avoid embarrassment of my bad English, I kept silence. Whenever someone spoke a fluent and a good English, I used to look at their lips. I used to observe the movement of their lips and imitate it whenever I see myself in the mirror. Whatever opportunities were provided and I created ultimately created a

transformative and socio-cultural space where I could claim that knowing English language certainly “reduces a person’s social marginalization” (Nycyk, 2021, p. 251). These vignettes show that learning the second language needs often exiting from the comfort zone daring to challenge yourself to a duel – fight with yourself who is scared and the other self who is trying to increase English language fluency and accuracy in whatever social and transformative activity.

Epiphany Inference

Schooling was never the fortune of my parents. Neither of them did have any formal or informal schooling and education. Nonetheless, they made sure that their children would be going to the school and be educated in English medium school. Therefore, I considered to have substantially narrativised my English language learning backgrounds, experiences, persons and events. The purpose of the chapter was to capture the beginning struggles of learning English and outperform friends in studies leading to the development of four skills of learning second language. These strategies I took up to learn English perhaps resonate with my readers to evoke the emotional relationship with my stories. Another reason behind my telling these stories here is to process the research that English language learning was slow and yet rewarding at the end. The beginning years of my learning this language has been an inevitable and unavoidable struggle which has taken me onto this autoethnographic research under the transformative and sociocultural theoretical frameworks.

EPIPHANY SIX

PART II

NEPAL DIARY: AN EXILIC-HOMELY EXPERIENCE

This epiphany continues the previous chapter as Nepal Diary: An Exilic-Homely experience. The purpose of this chapter is to explore and show a small yet important vignettes of English language learning experiences. This chapter explores the epiphanies out of my ignorance after arriving in Nepal. It exposes my stereotypical prejudices and assumptions about Nepal and Nepalese people, culture and society in relation to English language learning experiences. I have learnt and unlearnt many of the things in Nepal, of which, a few experiences and event narrated are interrelated to English language learnings in formal and informal settings.

Home Away from Home

To be in one's own home, place or country is comfortable and complacent. Not everyone thinks or considers or even feels going away from home to a strange land. Not everyone has the gut to go to other country seeking comfort. However, there is/are often unseen reason/s behind when someone considers studying or working or even emigrating to other nations. It is frightening to think or imagine the unknown – pains and aches caused by unknown difficulties. And a country which differs socially, culturally, politically, individually and educationally frightens everyone. It is physically, mentally, and emotionally draining. Fortunately, Nepal was and is never a pressure for me to adapt, however, the feeling of being someone not from here is always there. I have felt this many a times that I am a stranger in Nepal or at the same time that my own place or country is foreign or stranger to me. When I am in Nepal, people consider me as someone from *khola pari ko chimeyki* (*neighbours from the other side of the river – Mechi river of the east of Nepal*). And when I am in my own home place, my family and friends consider me as Nepali from Nepal. I often felt and feel that I belong to neither of the two places – neither to Nepal nor to Kalimpong (India). Bhattacharya (2018) rightly puts my dilemma that being foreigner or stranger, being “the Other (is) in both places” (Bhattacharya, 2018, p. 11). The sense of belongingness from here or from there never

rests until I the sensing and feeling self stops being a foreigner here or being a foreigner there.

In addition to the dilemma, being a shy person since a kid is perhaps why I was a person with less words and less friends. Or is it because of inheriting Lepcha's fundamental trait of being shy and less interactive than other tribes' wo/men? When I was growing up, my words and friends became lesser and lesser. I struggled to make close friends even in my own village. I played with only a few friends. I often spoke and played with ants, grasshoppers and trees. I rarely went to my friends' house for playing or sleepover which was common in a village. Whenever I went, I returned home as early as by 3/4 AM. I always felt suffocated and insecure in a new place. Thus, a shy individual or an introvert like me who gets easily tired in public, it was beyond my imagination and possibility to travel to an unknown country like Nepal. I suddenly decided to travel Nepal after my Higher Secondary Education (HSE), which neither my family nor I had planned. The decision was made on the spur of the moment of not staying at home or village or doing something in future. I wanted to go somewhere far and do something. And it didn't matter whether it was home town/country or a foreign country! Thus begins my Nepal's journey.

An In/formal English Classroom

It was a boring day of 2008, in Godavari. I was a new arrival in the institution. We used to have different English language classes. Afternoon classes was the most boring of all the classes. But we had to join it compulsorily. And above that any class after the lunch was the most boring of all the classes.

One of the activities to improve our English language was speaking classes. One day, the facilitator asked us to describe the friend sitting next to each other. I had a better English than some of my friends. But I always lacked appropriate vocabulary. So, I had to think before I spoke anything. And describing someone was not an easy task as everyone of us was new to one another. I felt my heart was skipping its palpitations as my turn approached nearer. I began to have dry throat. My mind started to rush in search of words as my eyes started to observe what my friend sitting to me looks like. I started to perspire on my palms and fingers as pen started to slip of my grip. I blushed slowly from my ears which I could feel its heat entering from by nape then to my ear and spreading

throughout my face. I felt the blood rushing to my ear and becoming stiff and very careful to what and how others are describing each other. My ears became so sensitive that I could hear my friend breathing and murmuring words. If my ears were keenly listening to others, my eyes were observing minutely the personality of my friend and my mind was searching for the words to describe him appropriately. Everything was rushing so fast until they stopped and waited for my turn. I stood up hesitantly and falteringly said, *“My friend’s name...is...Amrit. And he is from...Jhapa. And he is...handsome. And he is (falteringly)...hardworking. And he is...thin. He is my friend. And he is a good friend. Thank you!”* after that I sat down without waiting permission from my teacher with a red face and hot ears.

And meanwhile my friend described me as, *“My friend Jonash. And...and...he is from Kalimpong. And Kalimpong is India. And...his eyes look Chinese? Japanese? He play guitar very very nicely. And he is...beautiful...hmm...but...but his face is long.”* Everyone laughed including me. Sensing the wrong adjective for a man, he immediately corrected it, *“Oh...he is...(hmm)...handsome?”* Everyone again laughed. Perhaps he was searching for the appropriate word to describe me but slipped his tongue and said ‘beautiful’. Although the way of teaching and learning is quite informal here yet it was worth knowing what others find in me. This creates confidence and fresh friendship between learners especially whenever it is ice-breaking context and situation.

Once in a while, it is the slip of the tongue when we say or write inaccurate words to describe something/someone. It is because of the limitation of our English language repertoire. Inadequacy of vocabulary often led to the inappropriate use of words for various things, persons, contexts, content and situation. He knew that ‘beautiful’ refers to a female person/character but when told to speak in front of friends it slipped his tongue. However, we learnt to describe our friends, our place and our surroundings which is basic and real-life learning. This shows that we are aware or conscious of appropriate language use. And in addition, these kinds of activities improved our English particularly our describing vocabulary or the adjectives. This kind of communicative activity while learning English language actually focuses on the ability to use the target language appropriately than improving the grammar skill of a learner (Negi, 2018, p. 57) which often is time consuming and also out of context. I have witnessed a major

miscommunication taking place when we mispronounce, misspell, or use inaccurate words and phrases, which a sentence not only misses the point but also the meaning that we want to communicate. It will be a complete miscommunication and misunderstanding whenever we use words/phrases inappropriately.

Moreover, this shows us that public speaking is not everyone's cup of tea and perhaps difficult for those who lack vocabulary in the target language. We learn not only to speak in public although hesitantly and with constant gap fillers. But it takes courage to speak in front of one's friends and public because we are afraid to make mistake/s publicly even though it is inside one's own small/large group. Although speaking is not the only reason when we learn English language, but also used for many other purposes like reading, writing and listening as it is the second most frequently used language in Nepal after Nepali for various purposes of communication (Pandey, 2022, p. 1). Now the other ways to measure one's own English language ability is to compare with others so that we may improve. I liked comparing my English language capability with others because it gave me impetus to improve more.

English Versus English

It was one of the happy days in Godawari of 2007. I wanted to know the English textbooks prescribed by the CDC for grade XI and XII. I was thinking that English in Nepal is not as advanced as in India and English language competency of students studying here is not better than mine. With this pride in attitude and mind, one day, I opened an English textbook of grade XI. And what I learned has etched in my mind. I still think of my stupidity of judging without any foundation and reason.

The textbook had both prose and poems that I had never read before. I found the lesson replete with English words, phrases and statements that I had rarely and at times never had come across in my entire English learning days in Darjeeling. I was dumbfounded when I found this line in one of the poems, "Child is the father of man". I still wonder at the unfathomable enlightenment it had and still has. I became conscious of my English language limitations and especially the depth of my language knowledge, understanding and reflection. How dare I consider that the two years in an English medium school is sufficient perhaps more to judge Nepal's Curriculum Development Centre's (CDC) prescribed textbook of English language for Grade 11 is inferior to

mine? The use of vocabularies and the sentence structure created complexity of the text whose meanings and conclusion I often could not make out. Even after many readings, the text completely went above my English language ability to understand anything. Then I realised, although generally, the standard of English that the students of Nepal supposed to maintain. Then I started digging more on the subject of English language education in Nepal.

Another delirium I had was how Nepalese could speak English when Nepal and Nepalese were never dominated by English imperialism, colonialism and English language – British India? I often asked myself ‘Why should the Nepalese speak/learn English? What is the benefit of English when all the transactions take place in Nepali? I also wondered which English do they follow – British English, American English, Australian English, Indian English or Nepal’s own Nepali English (Dewan, 2022, p. 106). For I came to know that it was not a colonial language but an imported language by the Nepalese ruling elites for various purposes in which one is for education (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022, p. 19). My false illusion had to be broken and these things certainly broke this illusion but also gave a new understanding.

The fact of English being American, New Zealand, Australian, African or Indian including Nepalese English was completely a foreign to me. I knew only British English as colonial English and nothing more or nothing less. I did not know English has so many variants. If anyone was to ask me ‘What variant of English do you speak?’ I would not have understood the question itself first. Until I came to Nepal, I never knew each variant of English was distinct from one another in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Only later I came to know that there are variety of local varieties of Englishes which scholars call it “world Englishes” which is “not confined to former British colonies alone” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 539). However, for me, there was no any distinction. I understood English as English and not any other kinds of English. Even, the often-used word like ‘yes’ became problematic to me when someone said that ‘yes’ is ‘yeah’ or ‘yah’.

Yes or Yeah

In 2007, I was in Godawari. There I met an old man, Jeffrey. He was a fluent speaker of English from Singapore. Since he was living with us, he always

communicated in English to us all. One fine day, after our class, at around 12 noon, Jeffrey came and joined us for lunch. Since he knew that we take English classes regularly, he used to joke us all about which English we are learning and speaking in – British, American, Singaporean.

Jeffrey: Good afternoon!

Me: Good afternoon! How are you sir? (in my broken English)

Jeffrey: I am good and what about you? (in his perfect English)

Me: I am fine. Thank you!” (adding) “Please come and join us for lunch.”

Jeffrey: Thank you! (immediately adding) “after you.”

Me: Okay. Yes.

We served our food and set down in a table and started eating.

Jeffrey: Which English do you speak in Nepal – American, British, French or Indian? (in his perfect English once again)

Me: We use British English in Nepal.

Jeffrey: Is it? I thought you use mixed of British and American English.

Me: Yah!

Jeffrey showed a kind of surprise at my ‘yes’ as he added: The Americans generally use ‘Yeah’, while the Britishers use ‘Yes’.

I became aware that ‘yes’ is used differently by two different countries which until that day I did not know. I was ashamed that I did not know the ‘yes’, which I frequently used in my daily conversation. I was thinking to myself that I do not know even a basic difference between two yesses. I thought both of them affirm the same consent giving sense. I did not know that these two yesses are used by different native English-speaking countries like England and America.

There exactly is no apparent difference in these two as I started to delve into English language. However, they might depend upon formal and informal context and situation. I find ‘yes’ as the appropriate word instead of ‘yeah’. The first sounds more formal and appropriate to any situation and person. The latter sounds informal and mostly used with friends and colleagues than in a formal language, person, situation and context. I do not see any specific in/formalness in the usage of these two words. Many of us use it interchangeably with the same purpose and meaning. This small incident and others

where we have plenty of both spelling and pronunciation differences of the same language, but still, it is English. This perhaps shows us whoever owns the language can manipulate its pronunciation and meaning. The use of English language is already becoming the language of the majority of the population as it is driven by globalisation (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 12) and it is a fact that it will be the lingua franca for most of us all in a decade or so.

Our Native-English Teacher

Although I was avidly a curious learner, I was a shy English language learner who judged English language as ‘difficult and I do not know anything’. However, I always wanted to see what kind of people are English wo/men who ruled India for more than two centuries. In addition to this, I wanted to converse with a native English language speaker to gauge my English language level. Until 2008, I had met only a few native English language speaker but I never had a chance to converse with them personally. Or know them personally.

It was the month of March, 2008, when Jeremy from England came to stay with us in Godawari. The director of the institution announced humorously, “Here is Jeremy from England. Although he is not a teacher, but he will guide you for a month or two for your English. He is from the country where English originated. And you are lucky to learn English from *the native English man*. So, you can ask him anything, but know that he does not understand Nepali.”

I still remember the English personality he carried along with him. Although Jeremy was around 60 years old and retiring from his job, he always looked fresh and motivating. He was tall, fair and handsome. His face always blushed crimson red. His hair, eyebrows and mustache were yellowish. It was like golden morning sun reflection although was slowly becoming grey. His white fingers were sleek and long. He looked strong and uncompromised. He always wore well ironed pant, half shirt and his red shoe. He literally was *an English man with English habits* - eating, sleeping, waking, talking, smiling, laughing and living. He always smiled and seemed happy. He was very frank and friendly with every one of us. With all these, his personality and presence spread an aura of superiority amidst us. I always felt that I need to learn a lot from this English man

besides English language. We always called him ‘Jeremy sir’, which he often said he does not deserve to be called one.

Jeremy was a native speaker of English. He has had been speaking, listening, reading and writing in English for his whole life. His mother tongue was English language as opposite to ours as Nepali, Adivasi, rongring etc. He had spent his 60 years of life in and around people who communicated *only* in English language. He literally had lived an English life. I loved the way he spoke English, his pronunciation and intonation. His accent differed with our English and it was hard to understand if we are not careful in listening. Often, we did not understand what he was asking or talking about. We had to ask him to speak slowly and sometimes repeat the whole sentence. And he was always ready to do it. Meanwhile, he also had the same problem of misunderstanding of what we are asking or saying to him. Thus, some better students had to rephrase what we asked or said to him. He spoke with clarity than anyone of us. He spoke without hesitations and stress to words, phrases and sentences. One thing I noticed in his speaking was that he was sharp or clear in in his accent. He pronounced every word accurately and proficiently. His language was like the dialogue of Hollywood actors and actress who speak slowly and clearly. He had a command over the language and its use perhaps being a native. All these and more made me to surmise that English people are better in many things than most of us. The first thing is that we use their language to learn many of the things in the world. I felt lucky and happy to learn English from a native English teacher but I also felt a kind of hesitation that constantly stopped me from being frank with him.

Jeremy came to spend some free time with us after his retirement but he voluntarily took up English teaching for a few months. He listened to us interestingly and corrected our English pronunciation and accent then and there which benefited many of us. And at times, he used to make fun of our English saying, “Is this British English that I have never spoken or heard? Or Is this American English? Or is this *Nepaul* English?” And we all used to laugh with him saying “Nepali English” or “both” or “mixture”.

One of the many activities that he used to teach us is playing English music in a CD and Cassette player/recorder. It is perhaps known to him that learning English language with a native speaking man is somewhat uneasy and uncomfortable. Therefore,

I am sure, he might have thought a strategy. So, one day, he instructed, “Let us listen to an English song.” To which everyone excitedly chorused, “Yes!” And he added, “But you need to write down the lyrics on the page and tell me when I ask.” We all responded ‘okay’ to the instruction.

He played four or five English songs, some known and some unknown. Each time, he asked us to write and recite the lyrics of the song. I could not figure out the lyrics so I added only a few haphazard words. It was difficult to remember and write down at the same time. Often, the pronunciation of singers was extremely difficult to decipher. As soon as the first word came the second, third, fourth starts coming. Ultimately, my page remained half empty with a few hurried random scribbles. However, I noticed that this informal environment of learning English was “less threatening” (Muhamad & Rahmat, 2020, p. 1) with a man than learning in a formal environment with a teacher.

I always had a kind of inhibition of speaking English with people. When I met Mr. Jeremy, the native speaker of English, I became aware of myself that I am not capable to compete with him in English language because it is their language. I became aware that English people ruled India and other commonwealth countries linguistically because they can command with their language and voice. I became more aware of my English language limitation regarding my accent, intonation, and vocabulary. I found that native speakers although speak English in different accent and tone from us, they still speak in English. It is their English we speak yet it is their English that they don’t understand. Why don’t they understand the same English that we speak, read and listen. Is it only because of pronunciation or are there more than that?

English language is a global language as it is spoken everywhere but differently. And yet it is localised in Nepal and in India as it is differently spoken differently in different corners of the world. The beginning of English language in Nepal, I found, was not a direct colonial British imposition rather was a “contact language between” the rulers of Kathmandu and the British in India since two and half centuries (Khadka, 2022, p. 125). So, as generations went by, English language seemed to be replacing Nepali language’s the once sacred “greater space” in education, IT, including the “Nepali job market” (Poudel, 2019, p. 113). Therefore, a sea of change brought by English language permeates even those countries’ languages, people and job markets which/who never

competed with it as Hindi and other dialects of India and the Indians. I found a gradual shift of language from Nepali to English among the people, intellectuals and philosophers of Nepal especially in the urban places like Kathmandu. The question is, “Will English language change Nepal as it changed India at least in education?” And if the answer is yes, “Would it be at the cost of the disappearance of the existing more than 123 languages and dialects in Nepal? (Shrestha & Gautam, 2022, p. 13). A dilemmatic answer perhaps lies in the inclusive teaching and learning method and pedagogy in the mother tongue and English language in the early period of schooling. For there is a constant positive research debate regarding the better learning of foreign language like English if it is taught in learner’s mother tongue or in a “well-planned multilingual” classroom (Pun, 2019, p. 65). The stakeholders of education and its policy makers of the country need to weigh its pros and cons impartially.

Epiphany Inference

In this epiphany, I have tried to narrativise the stories related to English language learning in Nepal. Besides English language, I had an opportunity to learn basic Latin and Greek grammar however they have been unused and they have to be learnt again if I have to. I have only faint memories of words and phrases of these languages. This shows that a language has to be used regularly if one needs to be proficient in that language. What I have found out of these life related experiences, persons and events are that the more I use the target language in my daily use, it polishes itself. And to use the target language, the learners need to have conducive environment where interactions with persons become an important aspect. The environment and persons I came across after I had developed a certain vocabulary repertoire, I became confident to write more, speak more, listen more and read more. So, the more I was exposed to English language environment and persons, I learnt more. My self-doubt about myself decreased thereby developing self-esteem, self-confidence and language conscience.

EPIPHANY SEVEN
COURAGE TO MAKE MISTAKES

It is a blessing and a sweet surprise that I was the first to do Bachelor studies from my family followed by my brother and nephew now. Although the studies weren't in English literature, however, the textbooks and the medium of instructions were entirely in English in my case. As a matter of fact, the epiphany continuous to unearth some of my bittersweet experiences of learning English language both in and out of Nepal and India. The narrated incidences and storied experiences are from my Bachelor studies in India. This chapter especially explores the narratives and stories of polishing English language. The variety of texts here represent the learning outcome of learning English since many years of exposure to English language.

*When did my childhood go?
Was it when I found my mind was really mine,
To use whichever way I choose,
Producing thoughts that were not those of other people
But my own, and mine alone
Was that the day!*

(Childhood by Marcus Natten)

Higher Studies

It was June, 2008, I was sent to Kolkata for my B.A and BPhil. I went with a senior friend who guided me throughout our journey, beginning from booking the bus ticket to eating and sleeping until we reached our destination. I just followed his instruction because he had been to Ranchi and thus was more fluent in Hindi speaking. He could negotiate with anyone easily and also; he had a big physique. I was not even his noon's shadow. As soon as we reached our Institution, I found students from all over India were there to study. They belonged to different states of India like Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Orissa, Bihar, Kerala and from West Bengal itself. I became close to the students from Darjeeling and Kalimpong as they were from my districts and some of

them were my own classmates and seniors/juniors when I was in Darjeeling. Although, it was not groupism, however, it was a group among many other groups made up by students from the same place. Students easily got into their own groups like Nepali speakers or people from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Nepal easily formed a group/joined an existing group, the North-East students joined their own group from North-East states, Adivasi students like Oraons, Santhalese joined their seniors' group from Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, Bengalese had their own Bengali speaking group. It was due to various linguistic and state affiliations, it was natural for each of us to seek or wanted to be included in such groups. The sense of where should I belong always followed me and that I had to belong to this or that group. In my opinion, everyone seeks for his/her own group who speaks his/her language, when s/he is in a strange foreign land/place. Belonging to a group provided me safe feelings – moral, physical, emotional, social, relational and educational. It was like a rush to belong to a community or group or even not being “a stranger in all spaces” (Bhattacharya, 2018, p. 14) of college or years. However, there as well like in Darjeeling, the only permissible mode of communication, teaching and learning was entirely in English language. There I came to know the importance of knowing and learning English language as it was the language that ultimately grouped every one of us including the teachers and professors there. In addition to this is that one needs also to have a rich vocabulary repertoire to understand English language instructions and reading un/prescribed textbooks by the college or government of the state. Since higher education is an individual pursuance, I came to realise the needs of the students to have English language proficiency, competency and accuracy in all the four skills of language – reading, writing, listening and speaking. It is because English language works as a gatekeeper to higher studies, career, and job opportunities besides being a successful person” (Borg et al., 2022, p. 22). The understanding of it being the language of the educated perhaps will remain for some years.

My English language developed during my higher studies. I improved my vocabulary thereby polished it in accuracy and competency. I read books of wide variety of English literature of William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and other popular writers of English language. It is in my Bachelor studies I read extensively and intensively the

popular English literature works like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Odyssey*, *Illiad*, *Don Quixote* and many other works which never whet my appetite of reading and learning English language. This reading habit increased my reading hobby and do my further study on English literature and now MPhil in English Language Education (ELE).

I also read philosophical books of eastern and western philosophy, different philosophical and theological commentaries and journals, periodicals, magazines and newspapers. I became a regular visitor to the college library during short break, long break or even during study hours. I used to spend my time reading books after books with the only aim of improving my English. Often, words and their meanings did not bother me because I wanted content and not literal meanings of words and things. I started to use the technique of understanding the used words based on their context and content. The study provided me a platform where I could not only basically improve my language competency but also improved upon all the four skills of language learning. I not only used the new words in my daily communication with friends and professors, I used to use them in my research assignments and papers. This ultimately enabled me to create an identity as someone who write stories and poems in English language or someone who has better English than majority of the students. This basically brought accuracy and proficiency in my language and personality as an English language speaker/learner. Since I developed a good repertoire of the language, it became easier for me to get through the viva-voice and written exams. This is the impact of transformative learning stories which show the stories of overcoming “personal limitations and difficulties and develop qualitatively new possibilities” (Illeris, 2014, p. 160). These transformations perhaps encouraged me to participate in any English writing competitions such as story writing, poetry writing and even won one or two of them. The following poem is one of the outcomes of English language learning which I wrote when I was in my 3rd year of Bachelor study in Kolkata in 2010.

The Heart is Where the Family Is

*Mother expelled me from her womb,
I cried for my exiled,
While she joyed for a third life brought alived,*

Knew not I that there is much joy in the umbilical separation.

There was love, I knew not, on the sticks of my father,

Care and concern in his every threatening voice,

His absence was the question of protection,

His presence the answer of providence.

The Siblings' Battle to sit, sleep near mother was a constant,

With heavy loss of one tooth of one, bruised to the other,

Nose bleed of another, hot and sweat reddened body,

And yet often won that duplicate cry.

We ate one food, slept in the same room,

Shared one love, grew different life,

Under the shelter of one roof of hay,

That made one house night and day.

We fought one battle of poverty to live rich,

Relished one happiness in many sorrows,

Accepted the defeat as our own,

Standing separately but for one goal:

Give as much you can, receive as less

as you can.

Went to meet the God on Saturday and

Sunday,

But He met us every evening,

We asked He gave: Nights to sleep, days to

work,

comfort in tears, and love in all,

I pray and He knows and makes - 'MY

FAMILY'.

Figure 11.

A photograph of Indian currency.



I wrote this poem in 2010, when I was doing my Bachelor studies in Kolkata. It was in one of the creative writing competitions where poetry was one of them. I got first prize of rupees of three hundred (Rs.300/-) for this poem. I still write poems, songs and short stories in English, Nepali and Hindi when I am most inspired by something or

somebody. It is my most intimate poem that I have ever written. I wrote it after many thinking and imagination based on my emotional, intellectual cognizance of family experiences. It consists of my family, my mother and father, my siblings, our livelihood and our beliefs, values and culture. It tells the story of struggles, pains, joys, separation, providence and protection in the whirlwinds of poverty. It gave me a time to look back and explore my experiences that I would not share with any other person except through writings. Whenever my prose writing is unable to express my emotions, thoughts, reasons, beliefs, I adopt poem as it offers language that is beyond prose writing. In this way, writings gradually became an important part of me to release my emotions, thoughts, desires and dreams. It gives me wings to fly for a short time from the depressing reality of uncertainty and hopelessness. It is my emotional, intellectual and experiential release that gives me satisfaction, catharsis or panacea of my troubled mind and heart.

I have taken the poetic liberty of a poet where s/he could create his/her own world and language. Words like ‘joyed’, ‘alived’ are my own creation when I came to know that a poet has the liberty to create words of one’s choice that usually is not permitted when writing a prose. It is a kind of search for the exact words/expression. It shows that my choice of opting for poetry as some of the snippets and vignettes here is precisely for this reason that it does not limit my way of communication. And as far as I know this creative aspect of English literature is not there in other creative aspect of language. The poetry aspect of English language has empowered me to use poem as a mode of communicating meaning, knowledge, and wisdom that are socially, economically, culturally and politically constructed.

Generally, poetry as such was a very difficult or rather it was an abstract concept when I was taught during schooling time. I understood it very little. We memorised everything - the title, its author and the whole poem to recite in front of the teacher or the classroom. Not only that, we were often asked a question in exam like “*Write the poem Daffodil*” for four (4) or five (5) marks. And it used to be a mark scoring question than other questions like grammar or literature. There used to be many poems, and I always tried to memorise every poem in the book just for the sake of scoring pass marks in English because I never passed in English subject with a clear pass mark. Memory played

a greater role in memorising and later on vomiting everything including commas and full stops. As I now reflect upon those memorising activity in our primary and higher schooling, it was a good activity to use our brain even if it is for short term. Although vomiting everything after memorising is an issue, but everything that is memorised is not forgotten. There are always remnants of it like increase of vocabulary repertoire, proficiency in pronunciation, soft skill development like self-confidence, and certainly language development. Many argue against this memorising aspect of language learning; however, I have benefitted it a lot when I memorised words, phrases, quotations and even sayings. And now it is one of the means I communicate with my potential readers. I am using poetry writing as an autoethnographic inquiry which tells stories and resonates past lived experiences of learning English. Luitel (2019) rightly puts forth the use of poetic logic in his autoethnography as to “express ineffability associated with my visions” (Luitel, 2019, p. 28) as is mine. The intimate, inexpressible lived events and experiences are subtly expressed in and through poetic logic.

And since we were constantly provided platform for competition and writing articles for college’s wall magazine and bimonthly magazine, I wrote a short article in dedication to my mother in 2015. I still remember the happiness that I felt when I saw my first English article in college magazine in the year 2015. I dedicated this work in remembrance of my mother who passed away all of a sudden. I am not sure if my mother ever thought and knew that I was very close to her. I was very close to her, perhaps the closest. It might be natural that every child feels closest to their mother or father as I feel and experience it. Although selfish it might sound, however, I am sure, my mother was the closest family member to me than any other members. I am sure, she would have felt proud if she had seen her son’s writing about her in English language. And autoethnography lets me explore, reflect and interpret this deepest sense of meaning making process from my English language learning lived experiences.

An Undeclared Saint

Anna, the name she received the time her family became Christian. She lived that name and died immortalizing it in others’ hearts and minds. Without any hesitation I declare that she lived as if she is the only Christian living in the whole

world. And also that she died a most serene death as if no one will die such an august death.

People and children addressed her as 'matim' (aunt), 'boju' (grandmother), 'anna didi' (elder sister Anna), 'anyu' (aunt), and the most loved name a woman receives from her children 'aama' (mother). She grew up in the house of poverty. As the eldest, she worked as a servant girl for the up-keeping of her family. Her committed life is evidenced by her fidelity to her 'arranged marriage', her husband, the family and her faith.

She worked and shouldered the onus of the entire family affairs. For any new undertaking, she would start with a prayer. She rarely missed the religious activity. She diligently taught her children how to pray and respect religious beliefs of people. She brought up her children to a firm faith. She knew that a religion makes a person if not a saint.

The schooling was never her destiny yet a twisted and turned readable name would be there in children's report cards. She wanted her children to be educated at any cost. She dreamt and sweated to witness herself. She perhaps committed the sin of pride when she saw her children reading school textbooks and other extra books – English and Nepali. She got excited when her children passed to higher classes and schools. Let God decide the parental pride upon their offspring's success as sin or reward to what he/she deserves.

She was loving and it often it camouflaged in punishments. She did hurt others yet she was what a normal human person could be. She did those hurtful deeds not to destroy or kill someone but to survive and live amicably. One must fight and stand for one's life. Above all else, she never let anyone pass by her house without a word or two or a mug of water or a salt black tea.

A saint in Christian understanding is one who has been extremely close to God. S/he bears all kinds of pains, sufferings, and misfortunes with grace. S/he is always altruistic. S/he gives his/her life for others. Whatever life might offer, pains or joys, riches or poverty, s/he dedicates them to God. And s/he prays and lives a good religious or human/moral life to the full. S/he lives a good Christian live. And when my mother passed away, I wanted her to be a saint like any other Christian saint

because saint/s are the most precious person both for God and for people. Faithful believe that they are the closest to God and them. And this was the reason, I wanted my mother to be a saint. It is surely a human frailty to commit mistakes or be at fault, however, more important is how one has lived his/her life. For me, my mother lived a saintly life as a Christian and as a human person. And this long English article that I had ever written was in the name of my mother. English language in this way is transformative.

Moreover, I always thought of writing stories or poems in dedication to my parents and siblings but the technique of writing these things never came particularly in English. I lacked appropriate vocabulary to express my emotions, thinking, thoughts, opinion and ideas. Although I lack the native like speech and writing, I have at least to some an extent, have the non-native repertoire, proficiency and competency of English language. And autoethnography has been a rightful research approach that I have chosen to unearth these un/conscious lived experiences of pain and joy, success and failures and un/learning. It is not only “expanding knowledge” or “acquiring new truths” (Kenny, 2010, p. x) for me, it is also to claim that autoethnographical approach of seeking to present truths as multidimensional.

Becoming an English Academy Secretary

The college where I did my Bachelor had four language academies – Hindi, Bengali, Santhali and English. English academy was the most prestigious and everyone desired to be the secretary of the academy. I wanted to be the secretary of it yet my apprehension of being insufficient in knowledge and especially language skill always gave goosebumps to me. It was disempowering not to be and also experiencing incapable of being one. I had always wondered the work the secretary of the academy would do. I wondered the kind of English language competency a student needs to have to become the secretary of this academy. And it was a serendipity when I got selected. I did not understand if it was a punishment or it was really because of my better English language competency. I accepted my portfolio with some hesitations and anxiety. I started to write and keep the minute of every academic session. Often, a minute used to be two to three pages long which I literally struggled to write and rewrite. And above that I had to meet the President of the Academy for every forthcoming session of the academy to discuss

what we were to have in the next session. Moreover, he always marked my writing with his red pen. He used to comment, “*I don't understand what is this?*” and underlined it with red pen. Often, I found my note completely removed and the insertion of his minute. It at times used to be his minute than the minute that I had recorded.

He emphasised on writing short sentences and I was completely opposite to his instructions. My one sentence used to run two or three lines. At times, it used to be four or five lines. I tried making short sentences, but due to the frequency of using *commas, and, but*, my one short sentence would become lines. My conception of English writing was one short sentence could never express what I meant or want to state. Moreover, one short sentence does not explain much. Therefore, I used ‘*and*’ as often as possible to explain everything in one sentence. The sentence not only had many grammatical errors, it made the sentence difficult to understand or make any sense out of it. Even after correcting for two times, my minutes used to have red marks. The senior secretary used to say that he never got red marks on the minutes he prepared before writing it in minute book. And here I was, literally having the whole page full with red marks. Red pen thus often became a threat to my writing. It has a kind of identity of power. The power which made me fail many times. Whenever I see and hold this red pen, now as a teacher, it reminds me of my insecurities of being failed or failure. Red pen and red ink often gave me goosebumps.

For me sentences were right but it was wrong for the professor. He found every sentence wrong either in grammar, appropriate words or misspelling of words. Almost every time, it was grammatical errors. Therefore, at times he used to write one word ‘*verbose*’. I remember the day when I first came across this word. I went to my room and searched its meaning as ‘too wordy’ meaning I use many words to explain a same point which is unnecessary or my sentences used to be full with dictionary words which actually was unnecessary.

As I now reflect back to those days, I could see myself a sincere learner who wanted to practice writing. Since I had some vocabulary, I was eager to use them in my every kind of writing. The verbosity that my professor wrote on my minute often was perhaps I used words whose exact meaning I did not know. This led me to write many unnecessary words and phrases including sentences. And the sentences became longer as

I added words after words. It is therefore, the learners need a proper guidance from teachers or peers so that they are able to explain in a few appropriate words. Scaffolding is thus required in the beginning of any learning where peers or teacher's support would help the learner complete the task independently later on or assistance could be "diminished or stopped" until s/he is capable of doing things by himself/herself (Pathan et al., 2018, p. 233). The writing certainly enhanced my writing in all the other subjects like History and English subject itself. It gave me confidence in writing. It helped me polish my language and also proficiency.

An English Classroom

There is a stage set up as a traditional English subject classroom. A few desks are arranged facing towards the audience with a portable blackboard adjacent to them. Near to the blackboard is a table. On the table, there is a box of white chalk with some strewn broken pieces. There is an upside-down haggard cloth made duster to rub the blackboard. When the blackboard is rubbed off, some dusts easily fly off to the ground or on the desks. It sometimes even enters into the nose of students directly.

And there is a bamboo stick.

Once in a while, some students were rubbing the duster on their palms to rub them on their friends' cheeks. They chase each other creating havoc and confusion. But, as soon as the teacher enters with an English textbook through the entrance of the stage, there is a dead silence.

He begins the class as soon as he comes in.

Students: Good Morning Sir! (All greet their English teacher standing on their feet).

Teacher: Good Morning! (His hands automatically reach to a piece of chalk and goes near to the blackboard.) Everyone should write this sentence as it is (writes in the blackboard with a chalkboard), "My name is Ram."

Students: Silently copy whatever is written on the board as if not copying is lazy and uninterested in learning.

Teacher: Remember (emphatically)! You begin a sentence with a Capital letter. Okay?

Students: Yes sir! (*Students never ask why and the teacher also does not tell them why. He just shows them how. A rule is a rule – one does not ask question*).

Teacher: Did you understand? (*Waits for the 'Yes' from his students*).

Students: Yes sir! (*Hesitantly affirm to his expectation*).

Teacher: Rohit, show me what did you write? (*He checks Rohit's copy and is satisfied*) *He looks at some of the writings to confirm whether his students copied what he had written on the board or not. At times, he pauses to meticulously rewrite the capital letter again and again with his red pen emphasising how Capital letter should be written. He also writes 'Good' in those copies who had literally copied his writing.*

Janaki: Sir, I have copied. (*Teacher checks her writing and writes 'Good' with his red pen*).

Jenny: I also finished. (*Teacher checks her writing. He signs his signature and silently goes to other students*).

Teacher: Dhiraj, did you write?

Dhiraj: I am writing. (*Hesitantly speaks as he struggles to hold his pen to write*).

The bell rings for the change of subject. In a matter of few minutes, the classroom begins to see the end of silence and seriousness – some knowingly cough signaling the teacher that his boring English class is over, some stretches their hands and breaks their fingers, some stretch their whole body and some begins to speak, a clear sign telling the teacher that they don't want his presence anymore.

However, the English classroom goes silently except some voices and murmuring of students. And there is teacher's police voice. The tradition continues...

Students faithfully copy whatever is written by the teacher on the board without any question because they were never taught to ask question. Panth (2019) rightly words this habit of not questioning and copying everything as it is written on the blackboard as if asking a question is a "sign of disobedience" (Panth, 2019, p. 221). It is perhaps that they are afraid of asking anything to the teacher thinking that he would get angry and

would beat them if he gets angry. Or they do not understand what they are writing/learning and why they are learning.

When I was doing my bachelor study in 2009, I watched a bollywood film “*Taare Zameen Par*” produced and directed by Aamir Khan himself. I found that I was like that protagonist boy of the movie, the dyslexic boy Ishaan. It reminded me of my learning days. Like me, Ishaan saw his alphabets, letters and numerals, images giggling and flying out of his texts and copies over his head. For me, it was so abstract especially the capital and small letters of English that I could easily get confused whenever I had to write in small letters. I never could figure out why English letters should have the capital letter when I begin to write a new sentence and why it has to be in small letters throughout the sentence. And these days what I see is that when we write in capital letters, it is to emphasise our point of view or the main point. I could not understand teacher’s instructions. Ishaan and other supporting protagonists revealed that every child is unique and has his/her own way of learning, learning strategies and styles, understanding and ways of expressing one’s thoughts. Adults and teachers must understand them and respect how each child learns.

Teachers never asked us our difficulties. Teachers interacting with learners perhaps has had created a learning friendly environment. In order for learning to occur, I think, interaction between teacher and student is highly expected and is quintessential. It is therefore desired that a learning takes place when there is “collaborate and interact with other people” (Pathan et al., 2018, p. 232). Except a regular number of students, s/he did not come to us. And I also let the class get over silently. I often patiently waited for the class or the school hour to get over. I used to wait for eternity at times. As much as possible, I avoided any encounter with the teacher. I never asked anything. I followed the teacher and his instructions literally. I sincerely completed the works assigned without any question because I did not like to be in trouble. To be away from the teacher was to do whatever is being told by the teacher.

Greekishly English

I have been blessed to come across some of the languages of the world besides English. Latin and Greek are the two languages that I was taught. In 2010, we were to learn basic Greek language so that we might perhaps read the Holy Bible in its Greek

translation. This is another difficult language that I came across beside Latin. As Latin, Greek language also has genitive, dative, accusative, demonstrative, nominative of declension. I found it not only difficult, it was next to impossible to write even a phrase. And we also had exam on this language, where we were to translate Greek sentences into English and English into Greek.

“Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma, Epsilon...” the professor began with the basic of any language - the alphabets. As every other beginning of new class, I was very excited to learn thinking that I would be reading the Greek version of the Holy Bible and original Greek mythologies of gods and goddesses. The other thinking was to read the work of philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, etc.,

Once, it was a Greek period. Every one of us was excited to learn Greek language. The professor entered in with his prepared note. We wished him good morning. Professor: Today we begin with Greek alphabets. Don't fear, it is not as difficult as the rumours about it. (Meanwhile, he smiles. And that smile hides mystery to be discovered). Professor: They are Greek alphabets. It is the language. So don't draw images or pictures.

Professor: (Going around the class looking at the alphabets written by us. He stands near to me seeing me struggle to write). Jonash, you are not writing. You are drawing. They are not drawings. They are alphabets. (We chuckled along with him as he moved ahead smiling).

Professor: (Stopping near the desk of one student, he looks at us all. He is still smiling as he says...) Don't draw symbols and signs. They are not mathematical symbols and signs. They are alphabets.

After a month...

Professor: Hey man, are you still drawing? You are still making signs and symbols instead of writing alphabets. (He continues to smile at us all even during exams).

As I reflect on this incident, it is still fresh in my mind to what I was thinking. I go back to those past days when I was introduced to basic English language. It was with alphabets. The capital letters which later got transformed into small letters without any reason. When the professor was saying all these words like ‘drawing and not writing’, ‘drawing symbols and not writing alphabets’ I constantly remembered of my childhood

English alphabets writing. Actually, I was drawing, drawing images, and drawing symbols and signs and not actually writing. It was literally taught by our teachers and our parents. And also, by our own older siblings and seniors. They hold our hands and helped us to draw alphabets saying ‘like this’, ‘like that’, ‘drag it up’, ‘drag it down’ and et cetera. And when I began to draw the alphabets myself, that would have been the greatest achievement. And since then, I have drawn symbols, signs and drawings until today. Sometimes, letters are like symbols and signs. They represent something beyond themselves. It is the human intelligence which creates language, alphabets/letters, words and phrases including the meanings.

Moreover, as always, grammar became an obstacle for me to construct a correct sentence. Every time I made a new sentence, it had grammatical errors. When others were doing fine, I was still struggling. In comparison to Greek language, grammar and rules, English language is easier although I struggled a lot. English language was easier as it was not only introduced when I was young but also the letters, words, sentences and meanings were taught and learnt in bilingual method. We were taught English and along with English we were also taught Nepali. We had to immediately translate the English words into Nepali. It later became mechanical and spontaneous that no one reasons out why do we teach English with Nepali translation. As for example, when we said ‘A.p.p.l.e’, we also had to say, ‘A.p.p.l.e. Apple. Apple *maney aifal*’ (Apple means apple). Although, *aifal* (apple) is neither an English nor a Nepali word. Likewise, ‘B.a.l.l. Ball. Ball *maney football*’ (Ball means football), ‘P.e.n. Pen. Pen *maney darpen*’. The Nepalisation of English language was extremely helpful to us to not only relate the things we had seen, eaten, played, and written with, but it was easy for us to relate what is what.

Meanwhile, the English words like ‘I.c.e.-c.r.e.a.m, Ice-cream. Ice-cream *maney* Ice-cream’, ‘X-R.a.y. X-Ray. X-Ray *maney (mean) Ex-arey*’ could not be translated into Nepali, so we were taught as they are pronounced in English. However, when we pronounced them in Nepali, it used to be as given above. Nepalisation or mother-tongue interference or assistance was there. And many linguists call it as a mother tongue interference or I would prefer to say the mother tongue assistance/beneficence of learning second or third language. Mother-tongue assistance/beneficence might have caused some

setbacks in learning English particularly in pronunciations and writings; however, it was one of the best tools of improving learning English language vocabulary. Sharma (2022) cautions that the usage of mother tongue in English classroom is beneficial for students who are poor in English language for interactions and meanwhile too much of exposure also might decrease learners' opportunity to learn English (Sharma, 2022, pp. 77-78). In the same manner, many would say or even discard Grammar Translation (GT) method of teaching second language is obsolete, yet it is because of this method, I have benefitted a lot. GT method would certainly enhance learners' vocabulary repertoire of not only one language but two languages. First, the target language and second the first language of himself/herself. It is because of the assistance of Nepalisisation of English language along with GT method, which ultimately helped me to memorise and relate/associate words to the things, tastes, touches and images.

Becoming an Architect of English

I gradually started writing English poems and songs. It was in 2010, I composed a religious English song for a song writing competition. The first song was to be sung in a big ceremony of the College. I gave my entry for the competition and later sent my song for it. Among 10 or 12 entries of songs, two songs were selected – one from a group of senior and mine. The judges found it difficult to judge the lyrics of the song as both seemed to be equally good. So, the judges called both of us for signing our song to be selected for the programme. I went with a guitar and sang it. The other group came and sang their song. Ultimately, it was decided that the song written by the other group is to be selected. I remember the day which instead of discouraging me, encouraged me. I said to myself that I am a good writer in English language. Until then I did not know that I could write a good song, I became zealous to write more in English language. Previously, when I did not have English language, it did not bother me to write. But when I started to write, the very first composed song was almost selected for a college programme. I thought that I can write better songs in English. Even a disempowering experience has something to empower the learner.

The second one was for annual sport anthem. Many students gave their entries and their songs including me. When the sport in-charge selected the song, it was mine. Here below is the lyrics of the song –

*Sports out, shout it out
Run a mile for a while,
Sweats out burn it out
Jump a mile for a while.*

*Fall but rise, lose but gain
Let your joy blossom again (2)*

*Songs of joy, joy of life
Blooming gay all the way,
Dance of win, grab it in
Fair game is our name.*

I never thought that my song
would be the winner after the first song

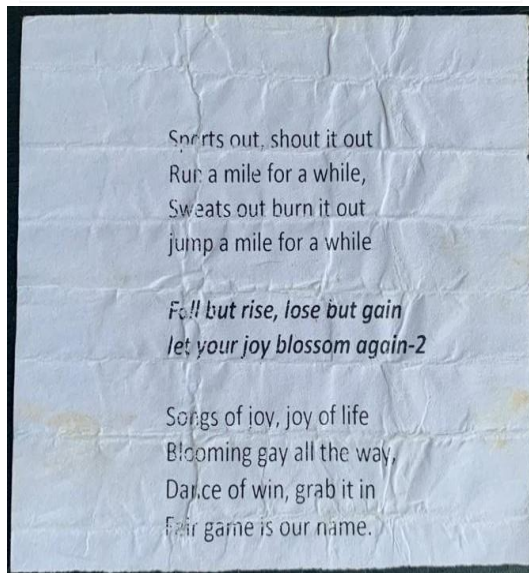
that I gave for competition came second. There were many students who had better English repertoire. However, my song was selected and someone composed a music and it was sung as sport's anthem of the college. I understood out of these two songs that songs have simple and catchy language that is understood by everyone. Whereas, research inquiry as this is serious not only in language but also in content.

Epiphany Inference

In this epiphany, I have shown how I, an English language learner, is now able to create some English language works. I had many language limitations when I began to learn English as a subject. It was due to my first/second language or due to my mother tongue/language interference. However, I could create some works that that changed my perspectives of myself as a creation to someone who creates. My English language began to change in the required skills of learning and acquisition. My vocabulary enhanced beyond my expectation. I became pygmalion, the creator. There is change in the identity of now no more as a learner but a teacher of English language, in another words, facilitator of English as a second/foreign language.

Figure 12.

A photograph of the first song.

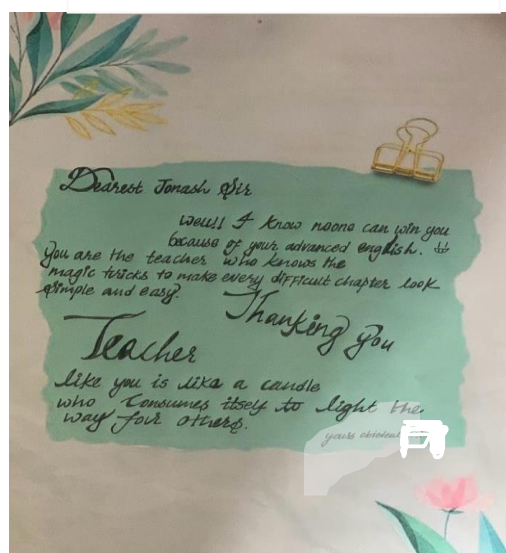


EPIPHANY EIGHT
TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING EXPERIENCES

What is a child? To see a child is
to see possibility, someone in
the process of becoming. (Max van Manen, 1991)

This chapter narrates my lived experience as an English teacher. I temporarily had taught private tuitions to my village children at home or taught English, Moral Science, and Social Studies and other subjects in my village school. In Nepal, I have taught Social Studies and Occupation although I was graduate in English subject. All of them have given me life experiences and learning platform to now professionally engaged in teaching English language as an English subject. These experiences and reflections have made me to this realisation that learning English language has to be facilitated by its teachers or mentors. And this is what I am facilitating here as a quest to become an English language facilitator or a transformative teacher.

Figure 13.
A compliment from a student.



Becoming an English Teacher

I never thought that I would be a teacher.

I never considered teaching

Should be my profession.

I always wanted

Being someone, different

Not only in body and mind, but heart also.

Sincerely,

In my wildest dream

*I never even had a day dream
Of becoming an English teacher
It was all a matter of time and
A matter of conscious decision.*

*Now being a novice English teacher
I ask every English language learner -
What does an English teacher expect
from his/her students
Who himself/herself was weak in English?*

*Nothing but,
English is not only a subject
It is also a language
Spoken not by a few but many
Not only here and there
But almost everywhere
Learn it to excel in the world of competition
And make yourself available for any.*

*In addition,
The variety of resources you have
The books, the media
The places you (might) visit
The people you (might) speak with
The job that you (might) seek and do
The technology that you have/will have
From a tiny to a giant information
That you claim in your knowledge
You will find in English.*

*So,
Learn to be phoenix
Deterred not by English language difficulties*

To hone the skills of the language
To polish your soft skills
Leadership, self-confidence, tech., etc.,
Re/create yourself in and through
English language
To used it as your tool.

Working as a Policeman: Teacher

The year was 2007. I was impatiently waiting for my +2 Board result. I was confident that I would pass it but I did not know whether it is in the first division or the second division. English language proficiency had made me confident that I can easily pass the Board. And when the result was ultimately announced in June, I was in seventh heaven. I had secured good grades in all the subjects. Seeing the report card, I realised that I had secured poor marks in my Madhyamik because I had no English language competency. If I had English language proficiency then, I would have done better not only in English but also in history, geography, science including mathematics. After coming to Darjeeling and learning English for a year, going to an English medium school and the efforts I put in to learn English was eventually paving a secure path for me. I had performed poorly in all the subjects during my Madhyamik examination but now I had performed better in all the subjects. This gave me a gut feeling that English would push me further in future. The result gave me confidence that I did not have in the previous years. Above that, I always wanted to teach in school as it would provide me some pocket money, although I was already earning Rs. 60 per day from *khetalapat* (working in someone's field or doing something for others to earn cash/kind).

One evening of April 2004, the sun was setting to the west giving its final touch to the day. I was in the kitchen helping my mother preparing for the evening meal. With a disturb mind and heart, I was waiting for my Madhyamik result as it had not gone as I had imagined. Suddenly, my uncle comes in the kitchen humming a song. As he sits on the pira/chintey (a local chair with short stand made out of wood) -

Uncle: Jonash, thikaw chaw? (Jonash, is everything okay?)

Me: I am very good. How are you?

Uncle: We are also good. (After a short hesitating pause) I am here to ask a small favour from you.

Me: Yes, please (I said politely).

Uncle: I want you to give tuition to my two children. I will give you Rs. 100 every month.

Me: (Hiding the excitement to hear teaching and money) I am not sure.

Uncle: You have given your madhyamik and as you await your result, why don't you do it? I will pay you.

Me: When do you want me to teach? I won't be free in the morning or during the day.

Uncle: Why don't you do it in the evening? My children, instead of playing games, will come to you.

Mother: Take it up. You will have pocket money for yourself later. And who knows others also might join you.

Me: What are the subjects that you want me to teach?

Uncle: They are weak in all the subjects – Math, English, Nepali, Moral Science, Science...

Me: Hunxa (Okay).

Uncle: Help them to finish their homework.

Me: Hunxa (Okay). Send your children from tomorrow at 4:30 pm every day.

Uncle: (Handing me Rs. 100 in advance, he continued...). Okay. I will send them to you from tomorrow.

The next day, I ran home to find two children playing and waiting for me already.

Every day, after *khetala*, I used to come home, running. My mother allowed me to use one of the rooms of the house for tuition. And it was not even two or three days, the village children started to join the two children saying, "Sir, teach us also". When I heard the word 'sir', I was very excited because I wanted to be called 'sir'. Although, I did not go to school to teach and being called sir, here were my tuition children who were calling me 'sir'. And I gladly responded to them 'yes'. I started to teach everyone. Later, some of the villagers personally came and requested me to teach their children. By the end of the month, I had almost Rs 600 even though some villagers did not pay at all. I gave the

entire amount to my mother. This is how I started to teach tuition, the beginning of my teaching career, an extrinsic motivation (Pandey, 2020, p. 108). Later on, after I went to Darjeeling, other senior students of the village continued teaching the children of the village.

I taught my tuition children with the stick in hand and a broken pieces of white dusty chalk and a portable blackboard. I do not still know how I got the stick with me. I think, it was so automatic and normal for a teacher to have a stick as s/he goes to teach, that I did not realise it. However, it worked to silence some students and also to use it as a pointer to the letter/s, numbers and words. I did not feel like beating small children, but at times, I had to beat so that they fear me and memorise the alphabets, words, poems, numbers or complete their homework. And the fear of being beaten, the children memorised the assigned tasks. One of the other punishments, I still remember, that I myself got and I gave was placing a pencil between two fingers and screw it. It used to be very painful. I now get goosebumps as I think about this punishment. It could have broken children's delicate fingers. My tuition children, they began their tuition with excitement but later on they began to fear me just because I used to beat them. I was satisfied that stick could at least make them memorise their lesson/s or silence them.

This same punishing teacher continued when I started to teach in school. I literally could not get rid of this unexplored, unreasonable and superstition that a teacher should always have a stick in hand. I think, the stick gave an identity of a teacher whose students must put unimaginable efforts, otherwise, stick is the reward. I considered corporal punishments are valid technique to make students avoid making mistakes and make them work which later transformed to how does a learner learn when he or she does not make mistakes or errors (Manandhar et al., 2022, p. 285). It is quite interesting to note that one and the same thing (stick) was used for two purposes – one is to create fear in the students and the other is to teach students. I am quite sure; the fear of stick overpowered the learning in the students. This epiphany would have remained untold in inquiry if I had not been an autoethnographer-teacher-researcher who is like language teachers who are “facilitators, sociocultural critics, caring professionals, and multicultural ambassadors” than simply a traditionalistic “knowledge-transmitting technicians” (Keles, 2022, p. 452). I had a thinking like of a policeman who is always vigilant in looking and finding out the

mistakes of people and punish them. I automatically expected and commanded how students were to be and how they should respect me. I used the stick to discipline them. If I was influenced by the unreflected culture of teaching of the past method and pedagogies then, now I am influenced by the reflected, informed and theoretically well-balanced methods and pedagogies. The inquiry has led me to realise that each of my students learning English as their second or third language has his/her own life history which I should always reconsider to regularly upgrade and modify my second language teaching and learning classroom pedagogies (Park, 2013, p. 2). This is the impact of transformative learning theory's essence that it empowers novice English language teachers like me to make use of their language learning experiences to reflect and execute the insights transforming the once taken for granted teaching and learning role and pedagogies in their classroom (Sifakis & Kordia, 2019, p. 1). And this also certainly supports my claim of socio-cultural impact not only in learning but also in teaching. It enables us to see the transformative impact of learning and teaching then and now. I am not sure whether fear of stick made them disciplined or it was just a pretension. I am not sure if my first teaching experiences with stick or without stick made me a democratic teacher or an authoritarian teacher or a teacher. Or did it make me a teacher? I doubt that my first day, first class did not transform me automatically into a teacher in the real definition and meaning of a teacher (Manen, 1991, p. 24). Transformative learning empowers the vulnerable self to tell such as this disempowering experiences and stories to inculcate reflective pedagogies creating constructive, empowering school and classroom experiences. This creates a space that Vygotsky (1978) for "self-creation and social creation" (Marginson & Anh, 2017, p. 122). However, teachers as policewo/men and schools as prisonlike concepts and experiences are changing and have to change for transformative learning and teaching.

Insecure English Teacher

It has been only a few years that I have been teaching English subject as an English teacher. However, I have taught other subjects in English like Science, Moral Science, Occupation and Social Studies far more than English subject. Opting for other subjects than English is because I did not have the courage to teach English subject. I always had self-doubt that I won't be able to teach English subject especially grammar

and writing. Even when there were English subject textbooks, I often gave up my desire to teach English. Although textbooks are considered as “reliable materials”, “support teachers”, “provide a guideline to carry on classroom instructions”, or even considered as “a staple diet for learners”, (Pokhrel, 2021, p. 140) they were still tiny in comparison to the baseless dread I had related to English language teaching in a school. As narrated earlier, English Grammar had been a pain in my neck - when I was a student and even when I was doing Bachelor. I could not overcome my fear of making errors and teaching wrong English to my students. I feared making mistakes. I did not think that an English teacher should make a mistake in his/her own subject. When the teacher himself is scared of making mistakes in English grammar, what grammar will I teach to my students? The other fear was today’s students ask many questions and what if I become unable to answer grammar questions? These inhibitions always prevented me from teaching English subject.

After I completed my Bachelor in May 2011, I went home from Kolkata to spend a few days with my family before coming to Nepal. Meanwhile, I was planning whether I should return to Nepal or stay back at home. As the mental and psychological dilemma was going on, a friend gave me a newspaper with a fresh vacancy post for a middle school. It was the vacancy post for an English teacher in Jorethang, Sikkim. Sikkim was and is a state where many people from Darjeeling and Kalimpong go and work. Some of the reasons perhaps are because Sikkim has Nepali speakers and the environment is friendly than other states of India.

I discussed it with my mother that I did not want to go back to Nepal. And as always, she said, “It is your decision. Do as you want. But do not regret it.” After that, I thought about it and finally decided to try in that school. The first interview of becoming an English teacher. Meanwhile, I considered this first attempt as stepping stone for future. So, even if I failed, I would have experience of interview – how to be presentable to the interviewer, how to answer questions and if asked, how much I expect my salary to be. As I planned all these, I thought of speaking only in English. I wanted to show the interviewer that I know how to speak in English and am capable of teaching English subject. Although, I minutely calculated everything, I was hesitating to go for it or not. I was nervous as to what would be the first question that s/he would ask me. How I would

Speak with him/her. And it was my first time speaking in English with other person than my friends and professors.

I had an old Nokia phone with me. So, one fine day, I took the courage to dial the new phone number I got it from the newspaper. As I was dialing the number, my palm started to sweat. My fingers got smudged with sweat and started to tremble. My heart palpitated twice at once – dhuk dhuk, dhuk dhuk (palpitation of heart). I dialed the phone number with much hesitations and fear of the unknown. As the phone started to ring, I immediately regretted dialing the number. I thought that I should cut it. But I did not cut it as I let the phone continue to ring. I was in complete delirium of thoughts and imaginations. My mouth became dry as my forehead started to perspire. My whole body began to tremble. I felt the shaking of my body as if earthquake has just come and come. Each ring was an eternity. After four or five rings, someone picked up the phone on the other side. I heard a clear voice of a man, “Hello!”

Me: Good morning, sir! I am Jonash Lepcha from Kalimpong (I hurriedly blurted out). Are you Mr. Rishab, the Principal of Sunrise School, Jorethang?

The man: Yes, I am. (He politely answered).

Me: Sir, I saw your School’s advertisement for an English subject teacher in the Himalaya Darpan and in TV. I got your phone number from there and I am calling to you for this vacancy post. (I spoke with trembling voice and body. Meanwhile, my hand was drenched with sweat and the mobile phone was already slipping off my grips. I tried to grip it hard).

The man: Yes. We had published an advertisement for an English teacher.

Me: I would like to come for the interview if you want me (I said with confidence although I did not know how to reach there all by myself).

The man: What is your education?

Me: I am a BA (General) student from Barasat Universtiy, Barasat. I am just graduated. (I said it in one breath and full with confidence).

The man: And where did you do your Higher Secondary Schooling?

Me: ('It is an easy and expected question' I said to myself) I completed my Higher Secondary schooling from St. Robert's School, Darjeeling and my Madhyamik from Algarah Higher Secondary School, Algarah.

The man: Great! (I thought he was impressed). So, are you sure that you want to teach English subject?

Me: Yes sir!

The man: Okay! (He continued after a breath of short pause and sigh) But this is not an interview. This is just a short conversation. If you are really interested in teaching English subject, I am coming to Kalimpong on 1st of June. Why don't we meet once again there? I will take your interview then and there. (The man told me in full authority and surety).

Me: Yes sir! I will be here in Kalimpong on that day. (I heard the click sound as he disconnected the phone).

As soon as I finished the conversation, I found myself not only trembling but also cold. I felt my cloth, it had got stuck with my body. I had sweated and drenched my shirt. I felt the nape of my neck, it was also drenched with sweat. I stood there for some time as a statue with the roaming thought and palpitating heart. I was happy and excited that I had just finished speaking in English with an unknown man on the phone. And I thought that I had done it extremely well. Slowly I let my body normalise. Feeling light, I walked out of my room excited yet silent.

Teaching was a decision that I took in a few hours. I did not know its pros and cons but I thought of giving it a try. Although, it would be my first attempt to be an English teacher, I wanted to have experience of being an English teacher. And I had considered that once I begin to teach, I am a teacher but it is a continuous teaching and learning journey that teaches me to be an English teacher who is also a learner – how to teach. This reflects Manen's (1991) concept of teacher who does not become a teacher just by deciding to teach and teaching for a while (Manen, 1991. p. 24). I knew that I am not equipped to teach English subject personally and professionally because of the lack of English language proficiency in grammar.

On one hand, I had confidence to teach English literature and writing and on the other hand, I was not confident in teaching English grammar with all its rules. I did not

want to be consciously drowned again in the murky and delirious problems of grammar. And yet, I thought of giving it a try. I thought that I would be learning as I teach. There was no escape of not teaching English because English grammar was and still is important for learning English language. There were two prescribed textbooks for English – one was for Literature and comprehension and the other one was for Grammar. Grammar was like math book which I didn't feel like opening. It was full with problems that I never could solve. It was full with examples as solutions that I could never understand. It was a book that I had kept far off.

Teaching grammar was a real challenge but teaching literature with the prescribed textbook gave me some courage that I could teach English. I am not sure how many English teachers begin to teach English subject as me. I am sure that to teach Grammar is a challenge for those novice teachers who begin to teach English grammar for the first time. I came to know it when I asked some of my colleagues, English teachers, how they have learnt English grammar. They said that English grammar was difficult when they were students. And it is a reality that many English teachers themselves have found English grammar difficult when they were students. As they began to teach, they began to understand and relearn it. This was a reiteration of Harmer (2007) that good teachers are who regularly update their pedagogies because they are constantly revising and reflecting their teaching practices for better (as cited in Kamali, 2021, p. 32). This enabled me to be conscious of Freire's (1993) concept of banking system of education where the students as "containers", "receptacles" and ignorant transformed into both "are simultaneously teachers and students" (Freire, 1993, p. 72). Even though I was quite good at speaking, I was still a learner, struggling with grammar. It is not that I never tried to learn it. I had tried to learn it by memorising its rules - deductively. The technique never worked except in few random cases like writing definitions and its rules during exam for a few marks. And these are some experiences where epiphany of transformative learning theory firmly establishes my English language learning experiences to "reevaluate" my own personal previously held "beliefs and attitudes and begin to interpret experiences in a new way" (Johnson, 2015, p. 18). I understood, the students do not have to be taught the way we were taught and learn the way we learnt English language. It is the way teacher facilitates the teaching strategies and techniques for the learning to take place. These resonating

similar experiences of un/learning while teaching and reflecting newer contextualised pedagogies empowered me to try this profession.

First Experience of Teaching English

In 2016, I was in Jhapa, Nepal. One evening, I substituted an English teacher to a group of boys in a hostel. I was to teach them some basic subject-verb-agreement and other grammatical rules. Until then I was just not aware of inductive method of teaching grammar. I only knew deductive ways of teaching English and its grammar. Although the boys had been going to the school and studying English as one of the subjects, they still lacked basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. They were thus basically beginners of English language.

Boys: Good afternoon sir!

Me: Good afternoon! Have your seat, please.

Boys: Thank you sir.

Me: Is English difficult?

Boys: Yes.

Me: What is so difficult in learning English language?

Boys: Sir, English grammar is very difficult.

Me: Do you think you need English language in Nepal?

One boy: I don't think we need English in Nepal.

Me: And why is that?

Boy: It is because we are Nepalese.

Me: Tell me what you are saying.

Boy: Sir, we are in Nepal and not in any foreign country. We don't go anywhere but be in Nepal. We don't speak with any foreigner but our own Nepali people. We were born here and we will die here.

Me: Okay. Give me some more examples.

Boy: Our daily communication is done in Nepali. To buy a chocolate, you ask in Nepali and not in English. To say something, we don't have to say in English.

People don't understand English. They can easily understand Nepali.

Me: Then why is everyone learning English language nowadays?

Boy: I don't know sir. But I think we don't need English especially grammar. And isn't it enough to speak in English. It is because we don't have its purpose in Nepal.

Me: ... (I let the question pass unanswered as I did not know how to respond to that question.)

English grammar or grammar of any language is difficult for any language learner. And there might be different reasons for it. The first reason could be that the learners do not have conducive environment to use their target language to the level that it has to be acquired and be proficient. They do not have friends at school or at home who speak in English. The communication at home/outside is entirely Nepali or Hindi or others. Second, our teaching grammar is entirely centred on exams where rote learning is more emphasised and encouraged. Grammar exam is at times vomiting only. Our focus, therefore, must be on the use of the target language in various places, emotions and behaviour encompassing various language skills. However, it is a question that we either do not know how to teach English grammar or it is actually difficult to grasp the norms of it.

I was a kind of learner in the above narrative. And what I have observed is that the one who is weak in grammar is also weak in reading, writing, listening and speaking – all the four skills. During my schooling, English subject was hard because it had grammar. I did not like grammar especially when it came to memorising the types of tenses, nouns, pronouns, verbs and adjectives. I found English grammar strange. I did not know where to put articles although I knew they are 'a', 'an' and 'the'. I knew prepositions but I did not know where it is used and why it is to be used. I did not know, why there are vowels when we don't have it in Nepali. I perhaps would have asked then, 'Why do languages differ from one another particularly grammar?'

I think, learning language must be like learning to speak at home. Everyone teaches and accepts the errors the child makes. Even if the child uses inappropriate words, s/he is being corrected in an extremely careful manner. I think, a child does not hesitate to make mistakes because people do not scold or stick him/her when s/he makes errors in speaking. While it is not the same as a learner/student. When a child makes a

grammar error in writing or speaking, there are people to scold or punish him/her. And whenever there are errors in writing, the red pen always threatened our learning curiosity.

One of the main reasons of lacking in English language competency or fluency is that students do not have resource materials or they lack the platform where they could show their learning or skills. We are not challenged to use the target language we are learning. If we could provide both the resource materials like books and platforms to use the target language, perhaps grammar won't be a difficulty. My experience of learning English tells me that reading makes one to cope up with the stress of grammar.

One must know the basic of the target language like a simple sentence, subject, verb and object, nouns and pronouns. However, it is not a necessity that a proficient speaker would have a good grammar in writing. Writing develops later on, although, it is where grammar is most noticed than in speaking. One can speak in words, phrases, clauses but it is not possible in writing. Grammar will certainly strengthen one's language but it must not be hard and forced when a learner begins to learn a language.

Profession Needs Professional Courses

The beginning of 2019 was a rush year as I shifted to Kathmandu from Jhapa. Since I had completed my MA, I was eagerly looking for an institution which would allow me to further my studies in English language. I had been to Tribhuvan University and to Bhaktapur for equivalence certificates of my secondary and bachelor education from India. Meanwhile, I got admission in KU, Hattiban and it was certainly a relief for me.

Until then, my idea of being an English teacher was textbook, copies, homework, class work, pen and pencil assessment and stick. I did not think any other method of teaching except a lecture method and Grammar Translation (GT) method besides Direct Method and at times Audio-Lingual Method. I did not have any professional courses to enhance my teaching neither I was interested even if they were free. I thought these professional courses are useless as it is more of theory than practical. Gnawali (2018) has clearly contrasted the utopic classroom the teacher's training programmes present which in reality is at times completely opposite to it (Gnawali, 2018, p. 257). I considered them as a waste of time, resources and energy. I thought, ultimately, everything relies on teacher's delivery – lecture – whether the learners understand anything or not.

When I joined KU, including the professors, the students discussed the way an English classroom learning and teaching should be. They discussed democratic classrooms. I understood democratic differently but never in relation to classroom teaching and learning. Democratic for me meant where people are the king makers. It is the government where people's voice matters more than the rulers. I could not understand what it means to have a democratic classroom. After regular participation in the group discussions and sharing with professors and friends, I came to know that a democratic classroom is where learners are more active. They are provided a most conducive environment where they engage in learning. Learning not only abstract concepts/realities but also actual/real place and people. In this connection, I learnt that classroom is like an organism where everyone is active. No one is passive. The teacher is a facilitator. It is here I realised that my schooling and classroom teaching was entirely based on teacher centric teaching method and pedagogy which are now becoming obsolete. I found the urgency of teachers equipping themselves with today's classroom learning and teaching methods and pedagogies. I realised that a teacher should not or ought to not enter the classroom with the past/obsolete mindset and techniques. It now becomes not only duty but duty with embedded morality. And to be so, professional courses, either short term or long term, are a necessity.

It was one evening class of March or April 2019. The evening classroom was very lively and was full with discussion. Although, everyone came from after schooling hour, no one showed the exhaustion during the class this professor.

Professor: How many of you attend teachers' professional courses?

Students: (Except a few, majority said no).

Professor: How many of you want to attend teacher's professional courses for free?

Students: Everyone said 'yes'.

Professor: There are online English teacher professional courses. They will provide you free courses and also will give you e-certificate at the end of the session. And they provide both short term and long-term courses. And how many of you know teacher's professional courses for English teachers?

Students: Except me, all my colleagues raised their hands.

Professor: Tell me some of the courses you have attended?

Students: MOC and American English for Educators (AE - E).

Professor: How many of you know MOOC?

Students: Only two or three hands were raised.

Professor: How many of you have attended these professional courses?

Students: (A few students raised their hands).

Professor: Kindly attend these professional courses. They will help you a lot. It is on different topics on how to teach English language. Are there any other professional development courses?

One student: Yes, there is American English for Educators. It is a live session which comes after every 15 days and it is of one hour.

Professor: Okay.

Student: After the live session, they will give you quizzes. You need to answer three right answers from the four. If your answers are correct, they will give you an e-certificate.

Professor: Yes. If you attend these online courses they will provide you an e-certificate. You can show them to the places you go for interview. We teachers are quite miser in spending money for professional courses. These online professional courses will provide you free courses. Try to attend it and equip yourself for the future.

A student: Ramesh must be having hundreds of such e-certificates. (Suddenly someone brings laughter in the whole classroom).

After the class -

Ramesh: Jonash, do you use Facebook?

Me: Yes, I use.

Ramesh: Then why don't you also attend this live session of American English for Educators (AE – E) in your Facebook.

Me: Yes, I want to attend it. But I do not know which day and time of this live session.

Ramesh: No worry. I'll remind you. There are many of us who are attending it. You will gain a lot of knowledge from this course. Later on, during the interviews for teaching, these certificates will help you.

After sometime, I got introduced to national and international English Language Associations like NELTA, ELTAI, SPELT and BELTA which often provide long-term or even short-term courses to English language teachers. These associations also work in collaboration with the international organisations like British Council, TESOL, IATEFL and other inter/national associations related to English language teaching and learning. These organisations and associations would help teachers to know themselves and their teaching practices. I began to consider teacher is a student in the case of teaching. S/he also should reflect upon his/her ways of teaching. And the best about these institutions is that they update teachers to the current English teaching and learning practices in the world. Britten (1988) said that ELT trends change rapidly necessitating English language professionals to keep in close contact with colleague so that they are aware of what is going on in the ELT world (as cited in Gnawali, 2016, p. 170) so that they can take these new ELT ideas, pedagogies and approach in their respective individual classrooms. And they certainly would transform teacher centric pedagogy to student centric pedagogy that is more inclusive and context-based teaching and learning. This became possible when I started to participate “more freely and fully” in the insightful discourse of continuous professional development course to “validate” and alter my English language teaching and learning lived experiences (Mezirow, 2009, p. 94). I started dismantling my preconceived assumptions and beliefs of my profession needing no upskilling or updating which sometimes was uncomfortable for me as an authoritative English language teacher.

Although not regular but participation in these short and long-term courses and conferences have enabled me to understand myself. I could reflect upon my practices and have learnt from others. I am able to reflect that if I preferred the lecture method then, now it is participatory. The learners are now no more audience, they are an active participator of the classroom teaching and learning. When my traditional classroom saw whether teacher knows the lesson they are teaching or not. Now it is not only that, teachers are to make the learners understand in their language. Students are the focus. Our education system must rightly be creating teachers and learners who inquires, asks,

analyses, critiques and creates in and through reflection (Gnawali, 2008, p. 69). Besides it, novice English teachers need a regular feedback and motivation by their senior language teachers, colleagues and even students which is “crucial for their self-improvement” and motivation to enhance their teaching and learning practices (Nycyk, 2021, p. 252). I think self-reflection on one’s own approach to English language teaching and learning also transforms a teacher and his/her teaching methods and pedagogy suitable for today’s hybrid world.

Is ICT a Threat or a Step Ladder?

The threat as an English teacher I face now is that I might be completely replaced by internet and ultimately by AI robotics. Classrooms might be empty of students because we have abundance of study materials uploaded in the internet freely. Even if learners are to pay for it, they could easily afford it. Teachers could attend both online and offline professional development courses freely in their own time. They can choose to do either way possible - synchronous and asynchronous. YouTube, Facebook and other social media and apps like Duolingo and Babel provide learning of languages besides English. Just a tick of a computer mouse or a tap of a cursor brings hundreds and thousands of study and learning materials. The traditional teaching and learning tools, techniques and strategies are already at the verge of oblivion if we do not equip according to this changing pedagogy and the generation of AI. How long should a traditional teacher fight with the changing pedagogies and emerging digitalisation of schools and classrooms? My identity as an English teacher is constantly threatened by the technology. The schools have started to transform the curriculum and digitalise their classrooms and teaching process.

In this regard, Taylor and Luitel (2019) warned it quoting from Infoys (2016) as “*fourth industrial revolution* characterised by emerging digital technologies, artificial intelligence, DNA mapping, robotics, nanotechnologies, 3D printing, biotechnologies, and the internet of things” (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, p. 1). Therefore, English teachers’ work is not only to teach English language but also to equip themselves and their learners for tomorrow’s technological challenges and opportunities. Although the condition of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) is still proliferating and vulnerable at the same time, yet it could be used to teach English language to create “dynamic,

engaging, and effective learning environment in ELT” so that its teaching and learning techniques, strategies and pedagogies adapt to the “evolving and adapting to the ever-changing needs and demands of 21st-century learners” (Saud & Laudari, 2023, p. 160). And if we want to be relevant, we need to educate ourselves so that we help our students to compete in tomorrow’s world. And for this, English language is likely to play a major role.

Professionally, English language learning has helped me to be updated to the challenges of English language teaching in and out of the classroom. I have faced interviews after interviews only in English language. I have attended seminars, webinars and national and international conferences in English language for professional development. I have taught English subject as English teacher and other subjects in English language. Therefore, it is English language that has proved to be very handy. And taking advantage of ICT (social media), I attend different live and distant teacher professional development programmes easily provided by technology. I participate in American English for Educators (AE-E) Facebook live video classes, Canvas and Coursera, British Council online classes on how to teach critically in the classroom with various ordinary subject context and content. Although not sufficient but I am constantly becoming relevant. All these quests are all because a transformative teacher needs to “foster the learner’s skills, habit of mind, disposition, and will to become a more active and rational learner” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 62). It is because, today, just a tick of a computer cursor or a tap on a finder brings hundreds and thousands of related study materials. And unless I update or upskill or enhance my English language teaching and learning with the help of technology as tool, I would be certainly replaced. As one of the conferences had a quotation stated that technology would not replace the teachers, but those who know tech would certainly replace those who do not.

Surviving among the Digital Natives

It was one of the Sundays of April 2021. I was a new English teacher in a school. I was full with enthusiasm of showing my powerpoint presentation skill. Since it was the beginning of the week, I was fresh. I had spent the previous whole day making it for classroom discussion. That day, I excitedly connected all the electrical and other devices with my new laptop before the class started. When

everyone was seated, with excited heart, I opened my laptop to show my presentation. Everyone could see the screen of my laptop on the wall except that there was no powerpoint. I could open the presentation in my laptop, but it was not shown in the projector. I got desperate. Meanwhile, the students started to chat softly and it grew louder – chat, talk, smile and at times a burst of laughter. I started to perspire from my forehead, nose and palms as I blushed red over my ear and face. Amidst a noisy class, a boy gets up and asks, “May I help you sir?” I hesitatingly accepted his help and said, “Yes please.” I needed an immediate help to cover up my shame. He came and opened the setting, did something there and pressed display. All of a sudden, my presentation was projected on the wall. And I said apologetically and admiringly, “Thank you.”

After that, whenever such things happened, I immediately sent one of my students to call that student who often came and helped me out. Seeing my helplessness, he once or twice taught me the technique saying, “It is easy sir.” And I used to murmur inside, “It is easy for you. But for me, it is hard getting it right.”

Today's generation are certainly well equipped with technology. They know small things of it like class presentation. They used to present better graphic presentations than mine. And they do not hesitate to help you out. Although, there might be some, which I am not aware, but there are always a few who know that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not their teacher's cup of tea. They help you. The problem is my hesitation as a teacher to seek help from my students because of being an adult and more as an English teacher. Vygotskian ZPD is the place of “good learning” because it is where the active agents of learning – teacher-student interaction – takes place (Verenikina, 2010, pg. 17). It is humiliating to seek help from one's students who we suppose to teach. However, I found out that it is also the other way round. The learners of today are more familiar to technological devices and skills than many of us (teachers). It is accepting one's limitation so that learning and teaching go along. This poem would enlighten a little about teacher's unfamiliarity and students' familiarity with the digital world of today.

Me: What are the games do you play?

One student: I play Free Fire and Mine Craft.

Another student: I play PUB-G and Valorant.

Another said: I play Valorant and Free Fire.

Another said: I play CODE – Call of Duty.

Me: I mean the sports our school provides and besides it.

First boy: I play Basketball and Futsal.

Second boy: I play futsal and football.

Third boy: I play table tennis.

Fourth: I do not like to play sports. I like e-sports.

Me: Thank you! Now what about the girls. Do you play any e-games/sports?

First girl: We girls do not play e-games like boys.

Second girl: I sometimes play PUB-G or Valorant. They are of my brother.

Third girl: I do not play e-games or any sports.

Fourth girl: These games are meant for boys only (Unhesitatingly).

Later that week, I gave two assignments as options to research and write a page on the pros and cons of the e-games/games they play or the social media they use. When I checked their assignments on the following week, I got many insights that I had never explored about e-games. One of them mentioned that he prefers Free Fire although he also plays PUB-G. His opinion is that Free Fire would take over PUB-G because the landscape and guns are in variety there. Another insight I gained from this assignment is that the Minecraft which I had often seen children playing had a big role to keep the children creative. And I had to observe one child playing Minecraft. I just could not imagine the way they chop woods and bricks to create home, the way they move their fictional character in and out of the house, hills and hillocks. I had known the negative impact of these e-games from friends and people but had never researched. People had said that e-games help in nothing but are a waste of time. The other observation is that the girls do not prefer e-games. They often consider e-games are meant for boys and thus only boys would play. However, the 21st century's main educational focus of e-learning is the transformation of the regular classroom to a digitalised one. Bhattarai (2021) proposes to use different language e-games to teach English language as it is not only “effective to teach language” but also it creates interest, motivation and fun both in

teaching and learning English language (Bhattarai, 2021, p. 203). A pertinent challenge to this is whether our English language classroom would be inclusive or not.

Epiphany Inference

This epiphany is the culmination of all the previous narrated learning experiences of English language. It is also the teaching English language (subject) experiences of a few years in the valley. A few years of teaching English language has taught me a lot about how to facilitate English language learning – with love and care and not with fear. It is more of facilitation than authoritarian. It is a matter of fact, many times, I follow a complete lecture method as it enables me not only to control the class but also how and what children should learn. It often happens in teaching English grammar to my students where I strictly follow GT Method (GTM). And a transformative English teacher, I understood, is the one who is ready to transform himself/herself for his/her learners who are digital generation who is ready to leave his/her comfort zone for the sake of his/her students.

EPIPHANY NINE
EPIPHANY OF EPIPHANIES AND MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

‘Standing on the shoulders of giant’ is what I can reiterate at the end of my dissertation chapter. I am a novice researcher because I could delve into my lived experiences because of the autoethnographic researchers and their research works in the field of qualitative research method. And like a normal examinee writing his/her last answer to a question paper, I am excited yet exhausted, anxious and nervous as I anticipate a good answer with my palpitating heart. I rush to write the last chapter in my best English language and its expressions as I opened the first page of it.

A step in the beginning

For

A hundred steps now

To

A thousand and more steps

For and to storying.

The Beginning/Genesis

Autoethnography. It was one of the many words that I had never heard it before. It was not in my English repertoire before. However, I had heard Anthropology which simply meant a scientific study ‘*logos*’ of humans ‘*anthropos*’ in relation to their behaviour, culture and society. The other terms similar were biography and autobiography. Although I had inclinations to both, I was more interested towards autobiography. And when one of the professors introduced *Ethnography* (another new terminology for my English repertoire) and later *Auto/Ethnography*, I readily jumped to the latter thinking it as a combination of auto/biography with some reflective vignettes of my education, culture, society, economics and politics.

I understood the saying, ‘Easier said than done’ when I started to write my dissertation. My consideration of research as simple with some vignettes shattered within a few months. I started to fumble on the very beginning of the research - the research topics - which alone consumed a lot of time. Therefore, in the beginning of my search for

research topics, *'The Genealogy/Archaeology of My English Language Learning: An Autoethnography'* was one of those few which I had thought about it. I had chosen it to erudite my English language competency, vocabulary in particular, and had a thought that it would impress and interest my research guide, professors and readers. However, after my serious discussion of this with one of my professors, I considered it is a vast and somewhat abstract. I was more on impressing others than knowing, introspecting and doing my research. Likewise, I arrived to a similar conclusion when I got the feedback and rethought on my second research topic, *'The Deconstruction of being an English Language Learner: An Autoethnography'*. I realised that I might not be able to exactly translate the research topic, the concept and theories behind it and justify it as it deserves. In addition, I realised that I needed to be a sincere and honest investigator and introspector of my research topic than simply an exhibitioner and showman of English language competency and skills. I perhaps understood, however incomplete, what exactly is to be an autoethnographic researcher, ELT researcher to be more precise. Fortunately, this misconception ended before it was too late.

There were many other research topics I had developed later out of my inquiry and discussion. Eventually a regular discussion, retrospection and reflection helped me to stick to the topic I have written my research inquiry. However, this topic itself has gone umpteen numbers of alterations. More than often, I felt dissatisfied with my own research method. I felt insecure that my self-reflection and reflexivity, subjectivity, confession and consciousness were not deep, reflective and evocative as it should be or as other evocative autoethnographers (Marciniak, 2022, p. 207). And above that, the research questions had to be changed or rephrased to a number of times. They either became verbose or they became too abstract or superficial. At times they had to be altered based on the flow of the story or the narratives.

Meanwhile, I often lacked the in-depth concept, understanding and knowledge of theories. Even though autoethnographic inquiry does not necessarily need theories, this lacking enabled me to read loads of books, research articles and journals and especially a regular discussion with teachers and my own colleagues. It is here, I came across the book *'Research as Transformative Learning for Sustainable Futures: Glocal Voices and Visions'* by Peter Charles Taylor and Bal Chandra Luitel as Editors. This clothed my

research method as theoretically sound. Besides this book, I dug out other hundreds of research articles related to my research inquiry from Google Scholar and Library Genesis. And ultimately, this is my research paradigm which privileged me to work in the “post-modernist climate” of “knowing and telling” (Richardson & Pierre, 2018, p. 1413). I consider my narratives, my research topic and research questions of this climate, knowing and telling. It is the dance of research topic, research questions and narratives.

Storying my Research Questions

While writing my inquiry, I came to know that for the answer I need, I first need to have the questions. Or for every answer I need, I need to have question. Without the inquiry questions, there was no inquiry or the inquiry purpose. I had to ask questions, an umpteen number of times, to get one good answer that was reasonably sound and logical. And the answer is potentially hidden in the questions - the secret I only understood it later. As and when I needed to delve deeper into or become more reflective and reflexive on my inquiry questions, I had to ask other questions within these questions to answer my inquiry agenda. The more I asked questions, the more I became reflective and conscious of my own identity. I became more evocative and at the same time analytical and critical.

Moreover, the inquiry questions enabled me to walk again on the past memory lanes reflectively and reflexively. In a way, it drove me through the memories that I had often hesitate to visit. I stopped at some places for days and hours, and at some places for an hour and at some places not even a minute but seconds. Nevertheless, all of them have helped me to accept both who I was and who I am. They taught me that history is unchangeable, already corked in a bottle inside me. It thus depends on us what we interpret and how we interpret. The most important is what I have learnt from this autoethnographic journey. And one more fact is that my inquiry questions allowed me to use the first-person narratives while being faithful to autoethnographic inquiry. Inquiry questions have enabled me to observe and analyse the present and prepare for the future challenges to be an English language teacher. They have shown me my vulnerable past making me more conscious of myself than I was before. I have become more responsible than I was before. In addition to these, I have become more conscious of my own identity, my praxis and pedagogy. In this way, Holman Jones (2005) states that autoethnography helps explore the connections between the “self, power and culture”

through the evocations of “emotions, thoughts, and beliefs by remembering, revisiting, and recreating” the past lived experiences (as cited in Kules, 2022, pg. 448). Likewise, a transformative English language teacher and a learner at the same time.

A Moulding for a Man

The first inquiry question was *‘How did/do I take English language learning?’* English subject was and is still taught as a necessary tool for English language proficiency. And the fundamental reason is for future employability. There is less chance of being employed in any sector if one does not have English language proficiency especially written and speaking ability (Clement & Murugavel, 2015, p. 116). And it has been years that I had been schooled and educated in English language directly and indirectly. In this span I have met more non-native English language speakers than native speakers. I have attended schools and colleges having English language as the only medium of instruction (Thakur, 2019, p. 4). I have only been in the non – native groups speaking English language emphasising on communication, grammar and creative writings – essays, stories and poems - of English language. And I have fared well in comparison to my friends in English language speech competitions, writing poetry and prose and debates like other typical English language classroom competitions. In addition to all these, I am an English subject teacher now. My colleagues and students know me as an English subject teacher. It might be a thus a significant question – How is that a learner of English language is the teacher of English subject?

Whenever I had to speak or write in English language, or until recently, I first thought them in Nepali - words, phrases and sentences - then I literally translated those into English language. It is because Nepali language was the lingua franca of my school, family and friends. As said earlier, Lepcha/*rong* was never taught nor spoken in my family except in few cases. Since we were familiar yet not proficient/expert in Nepali language, I used to remember both English and Nepali words for my vocabulary. It was learning both the languages – English and Nepali – at the same time. And Nepali, as my second language certainly played a greater role in acquiring English language. In this regard my indigenous language and linguistic identity were never obstacles to learn English which is now a foreign tongue to myself. It is instead, my second language –

Nepali – which aided me to learn English language especially enhancing my English vocabulary repertoire.

It is quixotic and utopian to try to become English or native like speakers in all the language competencies. However, the basic reason for learning the language is to become fluent, accurate and proficient in the target language. And the assessment of the language learning ultimately was entirely based on pen and paper (exams) – how much a student could score in writing. Pen and paper assessment was only reproduction and xerox of what is there in the copy – literally. I never knew that we can write differently or creatively out of our understanding or comprehension. Language used to be a on check our memory – how much I could reproduce than how much I have learnt.

Therefore, the questions ‘how’ and ‘why’ are the main research questions. English language was limited to school only. The school was limited to classroom and the classroom encapsulated English subject for forty or forty-five minutes. Ultimately, English subject was limited to exam – pass or fail, perform or perish. It was English alphabets, words, phrases and sentences. Therefore, if I ask anyone in my village what they understand by English, they generally understand it not as an English language but English subject like Nepali, History, Geography, Science, Mathematics and et cetera. This shows that it was never taught as a language like any other language – Nepali – for communication. When English subject was taught, it was entirely for exam and nothing more than it. And there was only one way of teaching – Grammar-Translation Method (G-T Method). It was a ritualistic schooling – teacher explaining every chapter in Nepali and making us write answers to the given questions. He showed us from where to begin and where to end. We used to bracket our answers to the questions with pencil or fountain pen.

The other peculiar pedagogy of English subject teaching was literally translating a sentence correctly – from an English sentence to Nepali language or from Nepali language to English language. “*What is your name?*” and the respond, “*My name is Jonash Lepcha*” – the direct translation of which is – “*K ho timro nam?*” and “*Mero nam ho Jonash Lepcha.*” The meaning is understood as speakers can make the sense out of it although it is not a grammatically correct sentence. Now, I know that it could be asked differently like “*Your name?*” and just the name “*Jonash Lepcha*”. It would have been

sufficient for an informal conversation which would have made a world of difference in learning English language. Instead, we were taught to be formal in reading and writing leading to very less communication ability in the traditional classroom. Even during exams of English subject, we used to be given either sentence or a paragraph which we had to translate into English or to Nepali. My traditional schooling considered learning English language is learning to correctly read and write and not for listening and speaking (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 21). Although this method is considered outdated, it is still practiced in some of our schools where English is taught as second language or the additional language. Either it is used by teachers or by his/her learners.

It is perhaps the ELT world then which did not explore the second language learning that seriously. They might have focused more on reading and writing abilities of learners than their listening and speaking abilities. And this is what the current ELT world is focusing now on exploring the new methods of teaching English as second language or any second language – transforming our age-old teacher centric pedagogue to a learner centric pedagogue or making it more inclusive. And being an English subject teacher now, it becomes my responsibility to adopt and adapt new methods of teaching and learning that make my learners not only read and write but also listen, speak and present in the target language. To come to this realisation of transformative learning I had to have umpteen number of interactions or communication with the current pedagogies, methods of English language education which is the “main process of learning component in sociocultural theory of learning (Pathan et al., 2018, p. 233). And I try to adopt holistic approach in and through my learner-teacher centric pedagogies where both the teacher and the students engage in their classroom discussions and interactions.

A Moulding of a Man

The second research question was - *‘How and why have I been learning English language?’* I am learning English as foreign language, my second language and my empowering language. Reiterating the argument of the first research question, English language teaching and learning was focused on the future of learners. It was for earning bread-and-butter. It was driven by a socio-cultural and educational belief of a secured future. It was more of hoarding knowledge and information than learning another language (English language) for insights, wisdom, information. Our success at school

drove the idea that we would become successful in future. And learning English was - as indispensable as fresh water for a fish – a must for it.

English language has made me more conscious of my personal struggles, my linguistic ability and my socio-cultural and political perspectives. I have become aware of my culture and that of others. I have been able to see what makes others as others and what makes us, us. This research question therefore is to locate my subjectivity, the subjectification of myself as creation and not a created object of English language (Foucault, 1982, p.778). In the first-person process of writing, I have become more involved personally, intimately and emotionally. Due to such, I immersed myself in my past events and experiences to unearth the real cultural and social beliefs of English language learning sufficiently otherwise I would have done it in the distant third person narrative (Cohen et al. 2018, p. 298). This research question as inquiry enabled my first-person narratives affective, emotional, and spiritual so that it resonates with majority of learners who are learning English as their second language. I do not portray English language as a threat to my language and identity but as a catalyst between me and exploring the world of knowledge and information. As language is to “serve” and not “overwhelm”, I am using it to convey meanings and interpretations of my experiences and reflexivity (Kachru, 2005, p. vi). My stories are thus the paradigm shift brought about by the English language learning in the linguistic, socio-cultural, educational and political life of an indigenous person.

The first-person narratives enable readers, professionals and researchers to relate with my stories as their stories. Although we differ in our socio-spatio-temporality, but the struggles, difficulties, facilities and opportunities are perhaps not that foreign to one another. Although not necessarily, I consider that they would feel and consider this as every learner’s story of competency development who is learning English as their second language or even their third language. If not then they would be better informed and knowledgeable about the challenges and opportunities that a learner needs to develop language competency. Ultimately, the professionals, educators, policy makers and teachers would be informed about how English language learning is to be facilitated who is a foreigner to his/her own language.

There is now a transformation of considering English as a subject to English as a language. The impact of this transformation is that this research is brought out by this and other such research questions. Therefore, the necessity of learning English language is not only bread and butter but also become relevant in today's teaching and learning process. Newer theories and methodologies, pedagogies, approaches, knowledge, information, insight, - new pedagogies of teaching and learning English language is regularly brought forth in national and international conferences and seminars. It is perhaps the language mostly used by the non-native speakers in the world as can be witnessed by the e-materials we find in – Google, YouTube, Facebook. All of them inform us that English language teaching and learning must be approached from a glocal perspective and pedagogies. And if I do not update and upgrade myself, I am just a mere student that the past expected me to be and not the person who could change the course of life. I thus still learn English and am attached with this language because the worldview this language provides perhaps might not be provided by any other languages of the world. It not only equips an individual but half of the world with the recent development of English language teaching and learning, methodologies, pedagogies, and research approach.

A Final Man or the Creation

And the third research question was *'How had/have I undergone the English language learning transformations as a learner whose first language is not English?'* My primary community school had only one teacher. He was the headmaster and the teacher at the same time. The adjectives like 'Jack of all trades...' or 'One man army' would sufficiently describe him. Although, once in a blue moon someone studying in the High school would assist him, however, he was the only teacher that we had till I completed my grade four. I still can't imagine how he managed to teach every subject to all the five classes from 9 am to exactly 2 pm in the afternoon - everyday. Besides schooling, he was perhaps required to do his own household works as any villager – collecting woods and cutting grass for the livestock. He showed his exhaustion except once in a while which I think is normal for a family man. And the only qualification for him to be a teacher was that he had matriculation certificate from the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (SEE equivalent of Nepal). No one perhaps asked if he had any training related to

teaching professional course and certificates to prove it, if he attended any national and international conferences and seminars, if he has done any research on teaching and learning, or if he has reflected upon his own teaching and learning methods. However, he was considered as omnipresent, omniscience and omnipotent by all of us as students as he provided every answer to the questions, wrote the correct spellings of words and could solve all the problems of mathematics. In addition, he never required teaching proficiencies that today's teachers are required. I am sure he was never interviewed and had to give his demo class just to find out his ability to assess his classroom management, the skill to teach and to communicate effectively with his learners. He taught all the four classes at the same time. He knew every subject or everything of every subject. He taught not only English subject, but also Nepali, Mathematics and Moral Science. He was my sir who had different avatars as Nepali sir, Math sir, Science sir and English sir. He was one sir with many identities. He was the sir that the time, place and educational situation demanded. He was a teacher who was feared by students (teacher with stick) but respected by villagers. People called him with utmost respect as '*Robert sir*'.

And being a teacher myself now, I must not just reflect him but emulate him. The question is, 'How do I do it?' The question is short but answer might be long or perhaps never ending. There is no any readymade answer or one size fits all methodology or pedagogy that would justify my statement to this question. However, what I emphasise is that a teacher needs to be relevant, contextual and reflective to be a transformative teacher. The time, place and educational situation or the need have changed and will change further. What remains is the adaptability to new methods of teaching and learning, a rigorous learning and become a reflective researcher.

The previous years of English subject teaching and learning was centred on teaching reading and writing through rigorous practices like mathematics. It should be now holistic or well-integrated now as English language's listening and speaking is as essential as the first two. The teacher training programmes might present us a monogenous well-resourced schools, pseudo well-equipped classrooms and students, however, it is the teachers, who do the greater work of employing the theory into action.

There are equal and strong arguments related to teaching English language only in the mother tongue or only in the target language (Khati, 2011, p. 43). However, a

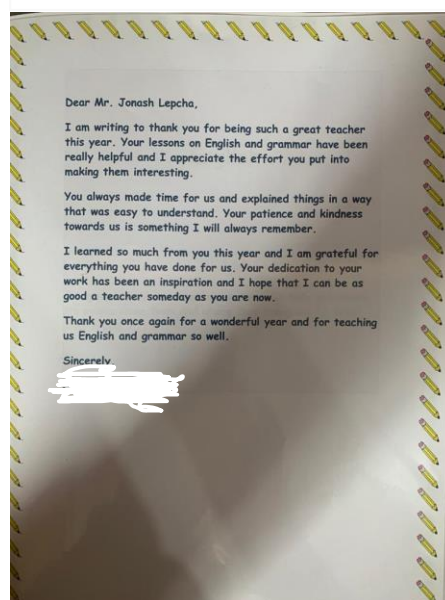
conscious and judicious ways of English language teaching methods and pedagogies must be used with today's language learners. English language teaching and learning need to be futuristic yet we ought not forget that education is for human civilization pregnant with human values, morality and ethics (Poudel, 2019, p. 16). It is then not only English language overall skill proficiency and fluency, but also inculcate respect for other linguistic variety and cultivate human empathy.

Epiphany Inference

The summary of this chapter is in a way the summary of the whole inquiry. The reason is that the whole inquiry is or was guided by the research questions. At times the narratives changed the questions but the basic premise of the inquiry questions on how I may have been constantly becoming a transformative English language learner and teacher now do not change. The three inquiry questions are the reflections and reflexivity of my own deep-seated questions that I always wanted to question and explore. Although they unsettled many of my beliefs, experiences, emotions, reflections, paradigms, methods, pedagogies and theories, they gave me reasons to adapt to new English language teaching and learning theories and practices. A teacher of English language is thus expected to a person who is flexible to not only theories and practices but also to new context, situation, place and time. A regular update and revision with reflection to my own language teaching and learning has made me a relevant English language teacher.

Figure 14.

Another compliment from a student.



AN EPILOGUE
SOME SNIPPETS OF REFLECTION

It has been four years of trysts between a vulnerable past me and a proud present me. To define my English language journey was tiresome and exhausting for many reasons. However, it was a meaningful journey that I dared to challenge myself. The epiphany explores the philosophy and beliefs of my research. It not only focuses on what I have done but what it has transformed me into. The epiphany is the acceptance of not only research method, theory but also acceptance of myself. A difficult task in the beginning of my inquiry was a leap in the darkness of MPhil in ELE in the School of Education Kathmandu University, Hattiban. As the journey began, I only knew that I thirst for exploring and learning more. The beginning did not whet my appetite of learning. It only made me thirstier and hungrier. The more I discussed and read, the more I knew that it is not enough discussion, reading and writing. Similarly, when I wrote I considered that my language cannot justify my vulnerabilities, my lived experiences, and my own past self unless storied.

Therefore,

*The road ahead
Looks beautiful
And enticing
But
One who walks on it
Knows the pain
And the gain.
Any journey's
Satisfaction is of the Ending as
Excitement is of the beginning.*

Figure 15.

A road to my village.



Writing is a Knowing

Knowing is not easy. Knowing outside of oneself might be easier as they are outside of us. Over there. I can observe it, analyse and produce the analysis of it.

Similarly, knowing what other is might be easier because it is someone other than me. The other. But to know oneself, I found, is beyond one's capability. What I wrote about myself, did not exhaust to what I am and what I wanted to write about. It could not express what I wanted to express. And what I wanted to tell could not exhaust the lived experience and its significance that I have journeyed through. The past me and the present me often disappeared when I started writing. Therefore, it was always incomplete. I found something always missing from my writing. I found the linguistic expressions incapable of expressing myself completely.

Many of us might argue that it is easy to recover the past. Others might say that it is because its static nature. However, it is next to impossible. As present, past is dynamic. It is enmeshed with different people, places, events, experiences, feelings, and reasonings and focusing on one means leaving many others. It is perhaps due to not only my linguistic limitation but also due to an intangible "struggle between our (my) multiple past experience and the demands of a new context" (Ivanic, 1998, p. 181) of writing this impassable journey of knowing oneself at present. However, this reflectivity and writing enable me to observe and analyse "my life history, teaching, and my student's lived experiences" (Park, 2013, p. 2) as a second language inquirer or as an English language teacher.

Moreover, the frequent visit to understand oneself is looking at the past – experiences, memories – of events, people and places. Since the past is scattered in puzzling pieces, I had to connect the dots with one another in a logical order so that the past me (self) and my lived experiences are created as approximately or exactly as they were in the past. The more rigour and deeper this diving into the past, the more I became reflective. I became an autoethnographic researcher. However, the ethics of being a human person and an academic researcher, either at times made me silent in some cases and open in some other cases.

This might be because I am not accepting what I was before and how I have been through it as I am scared "my true selves (self) to be seen and known by others including my well-wishers as readers (Brown, 2010, p. i). Nonetheless, metaphorically speaking there is no one who would like to be naked in public. It carries shame. It carries abomination. It is humiliating oneself all knowingly. And no one allows oneself to be

consciously naked in public. Same is writing. It exposes my weaknesses and my vulnerabilities. When an experience is put in black and white, it is revealing a part of me – a little or the most. It is scary. Meanwhile, whatever might be the writing, it reveals its author. It reveals author's feelings, experiences, relationships and... Not only that it reveals his/her secrets, beliefs, culture, society, ideas, opinions, arguments. It reveals him or her. And such an in-depth subjectivity involved in autoethnography either bondages or liberates both the research and its researcher.

Writing is a Hesitation

Towards the end of June, 2023, I was in university's library fumbling through nicely arranged books. I was desperately in need of an idea that could relate to my inability to express my lived experiences. I went through the series of books on English language education, English language teaching and learning, second language acquisition theories of learning but I did not find the book that I wanted. As I was strolling around the shelves of books, suddenly, a newly arrived book got my attention. It also had its Nepali translation and they were nicely stacked together in the shelf. The book's title was '*Things That Cannot Be Put Into Words*' by Marie-Sophie Beinke. My hand automatically pulled one of them out and randomly flipped through the 320 pages. It was dedicated to an unknown reader. I could not believe what the pages contained – empty of words. They were completely blank except the page numbers dotted at their bottom. I checked the Nepali translation, it was titled, '*Shabdama Nasameytiney Bhaw*'. The empty pages enlightened me with the thought that '*empty pages in a book, at times, speaks the truth than a thousand pages of books with millions of words.*'

When you don't say when you have to say speaks more than not speaking/saying. This is what Mannen (1990) mean when he says "epistemological silence" because something always remains indescribable yet we know what I should write or say (Manen, 1990, p. 113). It reveals half and half, it hides. Therefore, writing is hiding oneself with the profuse use of figure of speeches. I can now readily say that language itself is a metaphor. English language as any other language is thus full with figure of speeches like simile, personification, oxymoron, hyperbole, apostrophe, circumlocution, epigrams, irony, metonymy, paradox, pun and hundreds more. Language is ambiguous and yet one of the best symbols which helps humans to reveal and hide at the same time.

It took me a few years to write this inquiry. It took me every second of these years to decide what to write and what not to write. It was never easy for me to begin to write. I sometimes became languageless as I could not put down what I thought, felt, experienced, argued and opined. I ran short of words as I did not have any letter to begin with. Even after starting with a word, I often got stuck for the appropriate expressions in English. I often remained blanked for hours without doing anything. For days, I was often zoning out in past reveries. It was as if I was escaping from my pressing reality of the present to accept the past me who is fragile and weak. A potential hesitation of past me or the present me unwilling to be known (Hooks, 2008, p. 125). It was this beautiful hesitation that I found myself completely lost in. The hesitation is not that my inquiry is a cooked up, storied lived experiences but the hesitation of being judged as not having rigour that a research paper should be.

This dilemmatic situation occurred frequently throughout my research writing. It was then I found something important related to my research. I became conscious of whether I should put every lived experience, events, places and people into black and white. The vulnerability aspect of autoethnography regularly questioned my sanity of un/revealing everything of the past me. Although, at times, I enjoyed being lost in the past vulnerabilities, I found being vulnerable making me to seek for protection. However, this led to more hesitations than writing. And such hesitations sometimes completely blurred my past that I could never figure out what I was hesitating to write about.

Dilemma

A blank Microsoft word document

And I stare at each other

Again and again...

But we are not strangers

Yet we are not familiar.

I am empty of word

As the empty document

Both know that something

In it is the beginning of

Existence of both of us.

My blankness is
Reflected in the blankness of the Word
I have many things to say
But not a word I say
I remain wordless
As it is wordless

Both of us have
One similarity
Full and empty
A dilemma still freezes me – What and how to write?

Hope of an Inclusive Pedagogy

My autoethnographic inquiry writing within these nine chapters including this epilogue is although not everything however it is everything for my English language learning lived experiences. As said earlier in the previous chapter, the readers are the sole interpreter of my inquiry. However, I have learnt more than I expected from my writings in the postmodernistic, multi-paradigmatic approach to my research and writing. I firmly believe that this research writing becomes a constructive beginning for my further research, reflection and studies on English language teaching and learning to speakers of other languages especially my own Lepcha/rong language.

English language was emphasised to be learnt as a compulsory subject than my own immediate language – Lepcha/rong. The way of teaching English was one way method – teacher-centric in and through complete GT-Method. The pedagogy was centred around teacher's comfortability instead of students' comfortability with the language. Above all, it was one of the limited subjects to the classroom and to the school. To be more precise, it was limited to English as a compulsory subject in which we memorised and vomited everything for the exams. At times, we were forced to memorise answers of different length without understanding a single word in it. The reason of this was perhaps focus was more on grammar and pronunciation and their exact reproduction in writing and speaking. In addition to this was the inaudible, murmuring sound of words which was one of the best techniques to substitute difficult words and phrases. And due

to our first or second language tongue, it sounded *khichdi* of languages – English, Nepali, Hindi and Lepcha. This rote learning helped us a little but the time and energy we spent were not balanced. We memorised them just for the sake of memorising, for the sake of fear of stick and teachers. However disempowering is the past, the transformative theory's idea is that at times it is not only progressive, always successful, it is also transformation out of negative or disempowering pedagogies, curriculum and syllabus.

We never learnt it for the sake of using the language then and there. It was to be used in the near or distant future. We did not know the epistemology of English language learning. If I had learnt this, perhaps I would have consciously worked harder to master it. I was neither encouraged nor discouraged to learn English. The school did not focus on the creative expressions of English language. We become so blind that we copied everything – full stop, comma, semicolon, etc. Whenever I wrote English exams and if I could write everything memorised, I always felt satisfied. I thought it was the best exam that I had ever written. I was so spontaneous and mechanical that memorising for exams and vomiting exactly was like a default in me. I feared making errors or mistakes in English as it reduced marks.

Every language has its need particularly for communication. And teaching and learning only one language, only in one language is a disadvantage to the world of knowledge hidden in other languages. We need to use English language to unearth other languages and preserve them. There are news reports, research, debates on why languages are dying and the main foe of this reason is considered to be English language. We need to turn English language a double-edged sword in preserving and even reviving languages and dialects of the world – our region and our country. For this, we need to tell or speak from once the disadvantaged or the other world or the so-called indigenous world. We need to speak from the participants world. And autoethnographic inquiry provides this right of speaking in the first-person voice 'I' research, the researcher and the participant's voice at the same time. Autoethnographic inquiry as this must ultimately make us "better and just researchers and people" (Adams et al., 2020, p. 6). Meanwhile, we continue to research (write) even if it's just a snippet. I end this journey with -

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

(The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost)

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