

TEACHERS' IDENTITY AND DIGITAL LITERACY: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Ramita Deuja* for the degree *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* presented on 2 May 2024 entitled *Teachers' Identity and Digital Literacy: A Narrative Inquiry*.

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Teaching and learning scenarios after corona pandemic are believed to have changed. Teaching professionals who learned to use digital platforms for teaching during the pandemic continued when it went into physical mode. English language teaching is expected to change as the teachers integrate digital literacy skills in language teaching.

This research explores the stories of English language teachers who literate themselves to grow their professional skills. The prime objectives of this research study were to narrate teachers' professional- identity and to explore how English language teachers constructed their identity through digital literacy skills.

To accomplish my objectives, I chose an interpretive paradigm. I employed narrative inquiry as a research method to generate information from the participants about their experiences of a professional journey and integration of digital literacy skills for language teaching and learning. Four English language teachers were my research participants. I took semi-structured interviews, prepared field notes, and managed to have casual conversations to generate information. The information generated from the semi-structure interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded to generate themes in the making-meaning and analysis process. Finally, the themes were interpreted employing Wenger (1998) social theory identity formation.

The study result revealed that a teacher's professional identity is not fixed; it keeps changing in circumstances. Teachers starts the profession with the identity of 'a teacher'. Over time professional roles and the day-to-day activities, they perform to

address the situation change their identity. Analyzing the stories of language teachers, I found that teachers using their digital literacy skills to teach language shifted their teaching practice and changed their identity from traditional teachers to modern techno-friendly teachers. Apart from this teachers' digital literacy changed their academic status; most of the teachers are found pursuing higher degrees through digital mode. The study participants revealed that their digital literacy skills provided them with wider opportunities in the professional space. On top of all, integrating digital technology motivated the digital-friendly learner and improved their language learning. The study concludes that digital literacy skills are crucial to all teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill as they provide ample opportunity to create and use local materials and resources to change deep-rooted teaching methods and change the teacher's identity.

The study results are expected to contribute to the policy-making body integrating technology in classroom teaching, curriculum developers, and designers to plan the curriculum to make it digitally friendly so that the learners and teachers would study with full interest. Besides, it contributes to language teachers and teacher educators who want to survive in the profession familiarizing them with digital literacy skills that are considered crucial to be a teacher.

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Ramita Deuja  
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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.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the teachers who believe teaching is a Passion than a Profession.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CALL:	Computer- Assisted Language Teaching
CDC:	Curriculum Development Center
CEHRD:	Centre for Education and Human Resource Development
CoP:	Community of Practice
DL:	Digital Literacy
EFL:	English as Foreign Language
ELT:	English Language Teaching
ICT:	Information and Communication Centre
KUSOED:	Kathmandu University School of Education
MoE:	Ministry of Education
MOOC:	Massive Open Online Course
NELTA:	Nepal English Language Teachers Association
SLC:	School Leaving Certificate; now referred SEE (Secondary Education Examination)
SSDP:	School Sector Development Program

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of science and technology impacted almost all aspects of life including education. The progress gave birth to a new form of Digital Literacy (DL). Teaching and learning the English language in this techno-based era has largely changed. Language teachers' literacy is questioned as they deal with digitally smart children. The pandemic outbreak pushed teachers to teach in the digital platforms. The immediate situation obligated teachers to be digitally literate. The majority of teachers in Nepal are believed to be literate themselves. However, they faced a lot of challenges. To adjust to the new professional practice, English language teachers engaged with the digital world with an imagination to assimilate themselves into the newly introduced professional world. English language teacher aligned their practices addressing the demands of the situation and needs of the students. Change in teaching practice, I believe that change in teaching practice their identity in the workplace. Especially for English language teachers who are digitally literate, integrating technology in the English language classroom in the new normal can be a great source of knowledge. The new normal in the study refers to a situation when teaching learning changed into face-to-face mode after a long virtual mode. Hence, this study explores the stories of English language teachers who constructed and reconstructed identities through digital literacy skills in the professional space.

This chapter commences with my anecdote relating to my journey in the teaching profession and my experience of digital engagement and practice. First, I introduce my research agenda along with my narrative. Then, I present the incident, and how I happened to grab the topic of my interest. Finally, the chapter comprises the rationale of the study, problem statement, research purpose, research question, significance, and delimitation of the study.

#### **Prologue**

I was born in a middle-class family and was educated in a public school. English was one of the tough subjects for the students. I was one of the studious students but I was very good at English. Anyway, I passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam. I aimed to be a nurse. Therefore, I visited a nursing school in my town to complete the form. However, I returned without filling out the form

because the program was too costly for my family to afford. In the meantime, one of my schoolteachers instructed me to join an education stream with English as a major subject. I did so. Although I was not much good at English, I was fascinated by one of the TV serials named, 'Cathmandu'[a metaphorical name presented to Kathmandu city, one of the cities of Nepal] that used to broadcast at 7.pm during 2000s. I was a teenager then. The serial was about teenagers who used to speak English mixing some Nepali. Literally. I used to imagine myself speaking English the way they spoke. Although I had chosen the subject of my interest, English language learning did not go as I expected. I still remember English classes being full of struggles for me. I could not understand the classes full of lectures, and new terms such as linguistics, phonology, morphology, phonemes, speech organs, and pronunciation system. Reflecting on those days, I feel that if speech organs were presented through pictures and pronunciation were taught using audio-visual devices, it would be much clearer. We used to identify our teachers by giving metaphorical names. Such as dari sir [ the one who did not save for a long time], Jhole sir [ teacher who always carried the same bag]. If any teacher had taught us using technological devices, I guess we would have called Khatara English padaune sir or ma'am (A teacher who taught differently that really arouse interest of all the students. However, we did not see any khatara teachers during my higher education as well. Besides, I was deprived of digital devices and internet facilities that could facilitate self-learning as I do now. Possibly, all those past struggles are connected to make me more enthusiast to embed digital devices for learning and teaching in the present time.

My journey as a teacher, and my long teaching experience provided a strong rationale for this study. It was the day of December 18 years ago, wheat harvesting season, I was asked to prepare the yard, "*Aangan potnu.*"<sup>1</sup> My mother said before going to the field. One of my neighbors living next door offered to teach at the boarding school of my locality. I was just 18 then and preparing for my grade 12 board exam. I decided to visit the school. I was asked to write an application which was the only criterion that I had to fulfill to get the job. I did it and joined the school the next day. I was assigned Upper Kinder Garten (UKG) class which had more than 40 kids. I found the job tiring as children were playful due to their age. Interestingly, one of them was my nephew who used to scold me even at home for shouting at him

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<sup>1</sup> Wiping floor with mud and cow dung in Nepali



at school. During the first year of my teaching, I felt it was not a cup of tea for me. I could not make it. However, I continued. In the next session, I was upgraded to the primary level. As a novice English teacher, I did more reading than teaching.

Honestly, I was learning English those days. Gradually, I learned to teach. I started enjoying my job. By the time I had a master's degree in my hand, I was a secondary school teacher in one of the reputed schools of my district. I started teaching at +2, and at bachelor's level. By then, I perceived myself as an English teacher.

Reflecting on more than 15 years of teaching made me feel that my teaching was largely conventional. I found the teaching was conventional when I compare digitally integrated teaching at present. Teaching was more or less similar to the way my teacher taught me 20 years back which was highly lecture-based and monotonous. I used to feel quite awkward whenever I reflected on my teaching. On many points, I was not satisfied with my practice concerning pedagogy. Moreover, I also reflected my identity in the professional space. I found, may be an English language teacher. If I search for my explicit identity in my professional space, I may not find anything unique. Therefore, carving a new identity through practice I believe is the essence.

### **My Entry into the Digital World**

Then, the coronavirus outbreak led everyone to the digital world. After a month's pause, our school circulated the message to get prepared for virtual teaching. I got worried as I was not much connected with the digital world. I struggled in the early stage. I even could not create a group in messenger. Besides, using zoom, and scheduling classes were a great problem for me. Students used to annotate during the class [Annotate here refers scribbling on the screen]. However, I was helpless to solve the problems due to lack of digital knowledge. All these immediate situations forced me to engage more in the digital space and learn to solve these problems. I adopted the idea of (Ashadi et al., 2022), the study answers how teachers after the pandemic adopted the new scenario?, that truly reveals the world changes at any moment. I was convinced with the idea of Ashadi et al. (2022) who explored how teachers changed themselves in the compelling scenario. I decided to change myself exploring and adopting new possibilities. With strong determination, I learned to use apps like Zoom and Messenger group formation from YouTube tutorials. I educated myself to use google classroom when we happened to know we were going to use the app for teaching. Gradually, I started being connected with professional associations like NELTA and TESOL. I joined several webinars such as a week-long webinar

conducted by RELO-NELTA Centre another by NELTA Kavre, and the next was held by Pokhara Scribble Club which made me realize I have to learn more, I felt I was almost outdated due to lack of connectivity with the digital world and professional world. By and by I continued my interaction with the digital world what I termed digital literacy. Further, more than six months of continuous engagement familiarized me with the digital world. I did not stop there. I continued my engagement. Bit by bit, I experienced differences in my teaching and perspectives towards teaching. I happened to feel that I have somehow created an identity in my professional world where digital engagement became a solid bridge.

Teaching during the pandemic was a new beginning for me. I did everything differently. I understood the meaning of students' engagement in the language learning process. At present, I am both contented and proud to be an English language teacher. I have been using digital literacy skills for my professional growth that I learnt during the pandemic. Students in my workplace are provided tablets by one of the projects. I have been doing my best to utilize the digital sources available in my workplace and using digitally available resources for language learning. My engagement in the digital platform for self-learning, identifying useful resources, material preparation, storing the material in particular location and presentation of the materials in the classroom is genuinely a shift in my teaching pedagogy. I find a new teacher out of me. My digital literacy became a strong tool to change my teaching practice. I understand an English teacher is perceived differently in my professional space. My engagement in the digital tool, I feel, added wings on my fingertips, now I feel I can fly a jet named teaching.

### **How I have Approached the Topic**

I have been in the teaching profession for more than 15 years. I feel, I crossed the novice stage and survived in the profession. These days, my concern is to innovate and employ new activities to make my teaching and learning more effective and interesting. I reflected on my teaching and asked myself, what I had been doing to be different from others. Did I introduce anything new that presents my identity? Suddenly, my engagement in the digital platform, new teaching and learning skills during the pandemic, and the new normal clicked me. Practice, I believe, innovative enough to ensure a difference in my teaching practice. Digital use and integration are part of my professional life and my professional growth. My digital engagement made me feel I was doing something different. Digital literacy skill enhanced my

confidence and boosted students' motivation in language learning classes. All the engagements played a pivotal role playing in shaping me as a different teacher in my workplace.

I was assigned to review a book by Gary Barkhuizen's *Language Teacher Educator Identity*. I read the book with full enthusiasm, I love the author's narratives and the narratives of his participants. Norton (2013) noted that the social construct of investment cited in Barkhuizen (2020) amazed me a lot in which investment in language learning yields social capital i.e., social values. In this sense, investment in learning is an investment in identity formation. I continued my learning through digital means. I joined each link that I got during those days. I got the link to the Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) conference from one of my gurus. Clicked the link to hear Gray on identity. By the end of his presentation, one of the participants asked him what could be the further issue to work on language teachers' identity. He replied, "Now...um...people can work on identity and materiality." The phrase 'identity and materiality' clicked with me. When I reflect on my own professional experiences, digital devices, and multimedia have appeared as major components of professional materiality. Then, I used digital materiality in my proposal. However, the term became a subject to create questions, therefore I replaced the term with digital literacy. Although I changed the term my agenda is the same. Further, during the process of related literature review, I was fascinated by one of the responses in Aboud (2020) studies on the effect of E-learning on teachers' identity. One of the respondents in Aboud's studied stated "I am another learner which makes me a better teacher" (p.26). Moreover, my enthusiasm for the topic increased with continuous and rigorous discussion during advanced qualitative research classes. In a nutshell, the use of digital literacy skills for teaching and learning, I believe changes teachers' identity. Therefore, exploring teachers' narration about their professional journey, their initial encounter with digital platform and continuation of the newly learned skills in the English language classroom, and how all the shift changed teacher identity is my main agenda of this study.

### **Rationale**

Identity is a crucial aspect of human life. People keep themselves engaged with different professions to survive. However, human beings do not get satisfied with their survival. They always want to be identified by the people around them. Teaching professionals, who engage in different activities during their professional journey

would be identified with different identities. Teachers' identity, therefore, is a multimodal aspect that encompasses, how to be, act, and understand (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Beauchamp and Thomas further argue that the identity of the teacher is complicated where change occurs due to peripheral factors. In the meantime, integrating modern technology as an instructional tool enhances learners' cognitive and social skills ensuring their active participation which in the long run promotes their life skills (Alismail & Mcguire, 2015). Moreover, a study conducted by Byfield et al. (2016) to explore how learner initiates learning in the digital context revealed that language learning is largely mediated by technology. The focus of the study was on language learners' identity through digital literacy. However, my concern in this study is teachers' identity negotiation through digital literacy, which is crucial to explore since technology integration in teaching has become a crucial aspect of 21<sup>st</sup>-century education.

Digital literacy skills are believed to facilitate language teaching. Studying teachers and their enactment with digital tools and environment. Teachers' identity is connected with the actions they perform. he/she does. Pratolo and Solikhati (2020) investigated teachers' attitudes towards literacy in English Language classrooms; This study further reveals that teachers are positive about using digital literacy skills in language classrooms. This qualitative study, concludes digital literacy promotes effective teaching. However, knowledge regarding teachers' journey of digital skill learning, digital integration, change in self-perception, and innovative practices have been using digital literacy skills in the workplace and a new identity teacher created identity out of all the engagement is one of the unresearched areas that I want to study.

DL has become an inseparable aspect for teaching professionals since English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is a global act. Hence, the EFL teacher has to be informed about the global community, advancement, and innovation. Jiang et al. (2020) stated digital and multimodal practices create space in English Language Teaching (ELT). Similarly, Khanal (2017) points out that the learners' hands in the present time is filled with technology: Adopting technology in teaching and learning motivates learners in the learning process. In the existing scenario, digital literacy for both students and teachers found to be significant for better teaching and learning. However, the abstract aspect of process and product is not given attention. Therefore, I am curious to explore, teachers' stories of professional journeys along with

innovative practices. How they negotiate meaning out of their innovative practice, is my prime concern in this study.

The study encourages English language teachers to engaged with digital tools to foster their professional growth as well as pedagogy, which ultimately improves learners' achievement. Additionally, the knowledge constructed by this study would provide insight to the educational policymaker, and teacher educator. More importantly, EFL professionals working worldwide assume that they should practice their literacy in the community of practice and bring notable change at the community level. Community, in this study, I suppose is the space where we practice language teaching. This study will be equally supportive for novice teachers who genuinely enter the profession to be ELT professionals. Additionally, it supports teacher trainers designing training packages. The literature produced by the study develops insight to all the teachers in general, students, teachers and parents, how digital tools can be used for learning purpose.

### **Problem Statement**

21<sup>st</sup>-century students are smart enough to work in the digital environment. They are named 'digital natives' Prensky (2001) as they learn technology right from childhood. Therefore, I believe teachers need to be digitally smart to tackle smart students. Moreover, the Secondary Education Curriculum [SEC] (2021) aims to develop eight competencies for the learner, one of which is to enable the learners to use e-learning resources to enhance learning. In this context, teachers who are always the chief implementing body of curriculum are expected to be literate digitally. In this regard, it is pertinent to explore teachers' digital literacy and their literacy and practice in the professional space. Mudra (2020) highlights the use of digital tools an environment that ensures collaborative learning one of the components of 21<sup>st</sup>-century education. Thus, digital literacy for teachers is a demanding skill in the rapidly changing workspace. Though training and development opportunity is provided to teachers for their professional development (Neupane & Joshi, 2022), it is limited.

The Issue of identity construction is given greater importance at the national and international level. Focusing on identity issues some studies conducted in an international context, Wang et al. (2021) investigated constraints faced by the first-year ELT teachers to construct professional identity. Likewise, Afshar and Donyaie (2021) studied identity construction of Iranian EFL teachers through a consciousness-raising interactive workshop. Similarly, as far as I know, research conducted in Nepal

on teachers' development and identity has not paid attention to the digital practices of the teachers. Only a few researchers such as Paudel (2020) explored narratives of female Mathematics teachers' experience of identity construction. Paudel, in her study documented that teachers' digital integration assisted them in shaping their identity. Another study on teacher identity conducted by Baral and Phyak (2021) explored, how was the identity of a teacher constructed at the university of Nepal. Significantly, A very recent study on English language teachers journeys of professional identity construction by Neupane and Bhatt (2023) exposed quite interesting facts about the identity construction of the university teachers in Nepal. Neupane's study revealed the fact that university teachers' identity construction is highly influenced by the policy of the university though the teachers were enthusiastic to develop themselves professionally and cope learners need and interest. Mainly university policy influenced their identity that caused language teachers' identity crisis.

Apart from the Nepalese context, the majority of the available studies focused on the constraints of identity construction (Van Lankveld et al., 2017, Wang et al., 2021)). Besides, other studies tried to spotlight the strategies or how aspects of identity construction (Salinas & Ayalm, 2018; Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014). Hence, former studies on identity construction paid attention on problems that teachers have to face in the identity construction and the later focused on the process of identity construction. None of the studies available explored teachers' identity relating the use of digital literacy skills in the language learning process. Therefore, I found the issue pertinent to explore.

Concerning studies on digital literacy, teaching after the pandemic encouraged English language teachers to use the digital literacy skills, they learned during the pandemic. Meanwhile, researchers (Byfield et al. 2016; Mudra, 2020) paid absolute attention to digital integration-related studies although there were few studies available on digital literacy before the pandemic. It was found increasing after the pandemic. Mudra (2020) studied students' perceptions about digital literacy. Participant students in Mudra's study shared that their digital literacy skills provided them ample opportunity to explore new ideas through online means. Similarly, Byfield et al. (2016) study also reported learners are quite enthusiastic about integrating digital tools for language learning. Although few researchers were found inquisitive towards learners' digital literacy (Mudra, 2020) and documented the positive impact of digital literacy in language teaching and learning (Byfield et al.,

2016), the majority of the studies carried out on digital literacy were found to focus on teachers' digital literacy.

Kahveci (2021) studied how teachers' digital literacy enhanced teachers' self-efficacy. Likewise, Meihami and Esfandiari (2021) studied how teachers' preparation for the CALL program helped to grow them professionally. Meihami and Esfandiari (2021) investigated teachers' ability to practice digital skills for five years with the same participants. The longitudinal study revealed that teachers' age factors along with other factors largely impacted teachers' skill to employ literacy skills (Meihami & Esfandiari, 2021). Therefore, researchers have been accumulating the knowledge with diverse information related to digital literacy. However, none of the studies tried to connect teachers' digital literacy with their identity construction; neither in the Nepalese context nor in the international context to my knowledge.

Exploration of the teachers' experiences of being digitally literate before and after the pandemic, and their stories of success and struggle to integrate digital technology in language classrooms, nurturing teachers with digital literacy skill can provide new insight into the discourse of identity. The issue of teacher's identity as per the existing study is found constructed, reconstructed, and impacted by several factors. This study therefore is a small step to explore the stories of English language teachers' who placed their fingertips in the digital space to integrate digital tools to enhance their teaching and bring a paradigm shift in teaching. Bringing changing in teaching using innovative ways of teaching is believed to change not only the practice but also the identities. Yildirim (2008) states using new knowledge and skills in the language pedagogy provides opportunity to construct new identity. Irani et al. (2021) Also found out preservice teachers' active participation and engagement in the language learning process assist in identity formation process. Teachers' enactment in the digital platform I believe is a significant issue to explore to add literature exploring new fact in the particular issue. The pandemic, no doubt introduced a new era in English language teaching. Therefore, this historical change and the transformation it brought on teachers and their teaching must be studied.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore secondary-level English language teachers' narratives of professional journeys along with their lived experience of identity construction using digital literacy skills in the language classroom. This study

focused on finding English language teachers' digital engagement for their professional development and how they negotiate meaning out of their practice.

### **Research Questions**

This research study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- I. How do secondary-level English Language teachers narrate their professional journey and the adoption of digital technology in English language teaching and learning?
- II. How do English language teachers construct their identity through digital literacy?

### **Delimitations**

This study is delimited to the experiences of secondary-level English language teachers' identity construction using their digital literacy for teaching and learning purposes. Reviewing available literature projected that teachers' identity is not a stable. It is a continuous process. Hence, this study is guided by the belief that identity is not what existing theories say. It is in the process of construction.

### **Chapter Review**

In this chapter, I attempted to present an English language teaching scenario in Nepal and a global context grounded on my experience-based reflection. I further narrated my journey in the teaching profession. I recounted my monotonous language learning and teaching after I joined the profession. Apart from this, I explained what grabbed my attention to work on this agenda. Additionally, I discussed the rationale of the study referencing the global context that is demanding digital integration in education. I also presented a government policy that aims to integrate technology in teaching and learning. Most importantly, I discussed how teachers learn to teach in the virtual platform and integrated digital resources for teaching purposes. I problematized my research agenda by referencing English language teachers' digital practices during the pandemic and in the new normal. I presented two research questions based on the purpose of my study. Moreover, my research objectives delimited the study that I presented at the end of the chapter.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I have critically reviewed literature relating to teachers' identity and digital literacy. It highlights both similar and opposing ideas of the existing literature. "A review of the literature as the work of plowing, an important part of any research design process as just important as plowing is to farming" (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017, p.94). Further, plowing of available literature enables the researcher to make arguments stepping on the information collected and inflating the literature in the field.

This section involves the theoretical framework of my study. Likewise, it comprises thematic reviews: Teachers' identity, teachers' professional identity, and digital literacy. I have also brought available past literature in the related area. I also have fetched the literature concerning the ICT policies of Nepal that support my research agenda. Finally, this section includes a conceptual framework in a diagram form.

#### **Identity: An Overview**

Identity is an important aspect of human life. It starts from our birth and remains pertinent throughout our lives. Identity, in general, answers who the person is. However, we cannot confine the definition, as it sees the identity from different perspectives, such as who the person is as per his/her role or responsibility, character, behavior, practice, and, so on. Norton (2013) states that the identity discourse began in social science during the 1990s. Norton defined identity as "The way a person understands his or her relationships to the world, how the relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2013, p.4). Similarly, Gee (2000) emphasizes an identity is 'being recognized as a certain, "kind of person" (p.99), in a given context. Gee's focus on identity is a construct formed in a professional context. Identity for him is contextual. Meanwhile, De Costa and Norton (2017) argue that language teaching is an "identity work" (p.11). They further discussed that language teaching improves through pre-service and in-service training. Identity defined by the scholar reveals identity is largely contextual rather than individual. Although all the ideas of identity presented

provided insight into my study, Norton's concept of teaching as an identity work, I found is more convincing in my study.

Identity issues are believed to get pertinent space in academia as Barkhuizen (2020) claims that people are paying much attention to identity issues as it is a popular topic in conferences, presentations, research, and dissertations. He too, pinpoints human action and interaction with the context that defines what kind of person he/she is. Similarly, Darvin and Norton (2015) insist that identity is the social entity that changes over time and space and is the product of social interaction. Leontiev, 1981 (as cited in Lee, 2013) states teachers' identity is not created in isolation. Human involvement with tools and cultural artifacts situates the identity with the world around us. The majority of the scholars defined identity from their subjective perspectives. Their definition highlighted identity as circumstantial.

Conversely, scholars agree that Identity is not fixed, flux, and ambiguous (Barkhuizen, 2020; Gee, 2000; Norton, 2013). After going through the definition, I believe identity is a tool to analyze contextual action and interaction of an individual as it is contextually bounded. For the last two decades, teachers' identity construction has been one of the demanding topics for research with different issues such as teachers' practice as a professional, their way of applying theory and teaching-learning process, their teaching style, and social recognition (Salinas & Ayala, 2018). I also believe identity is contextually created, so I operationalized the term, "Identity" adopting Wenger's (1998) social theory of identity construction. Wenger defines identity as neither the way an individual thinks about themselves nor what another thinks and says about them. Identity is lived and a day-to-day process. In this respect, following Wenger's social theory, this study explores language teachers' identity. According to Wenger, Identity is a crucial component of society and keeps changing through the process of practicing new learning and the unique experiences we collect.

### **Teacher's Professional Identity**

Teachers' professional identity is largely associated with the pedagogical practice they perform as teachers since teaching is the prime job of a teacher. I conceptualize, that teachers' professional identity is constructed through their daily enactment in the professional space. However, the available literature I reviewed during my study reported diverse aspects that impacted the construction of the teachers' professional identity. A very recent study by Neupane (2023) in the Nepalese context revealed an interesting fact that influenced teachers' identity

construction the study showed that English language teachers' identity is adversely impacted by the policies and strategy of a university (Neupane, 2023). Moreover, teachers' experience of using technology and self-directed learning (Ashadi et al., 2022), experience acquired during practicum (Salinas & Ayala, 2018); (Irani et al., 2021), professional autonomy (Dilek & Altas 2022), educational background, professional setting and life experience (Fahd Aljuhaish et al., 2020), critical incidents (Kılıç & Cinkara, 2020), institutional policies (Mansouri, 2021), E-learning (Aboud, 2020), CALL preparation program (Meihami & Esfandiari, 2021), adoption of digital technology in language teaching (Yazici & Atay, 2023). The review of the available studies reported diverse issues that impact teachers' identity construction.

Further exploration on review showed that teachers' professional development in Nepal is impacted on three levels, Micro, Macro, and Meso (Neupane, 2023). The study disclosed that childhood learning and passion for language influenced teachers' decision-making at the micro level, a teaching-learning environment in the institution at the Meso level, and the priority of technical subjects in the university marginalized the identity of English language teachers in the Macro level (Neupane, 2023). In light of the study report, University teachers' identity in Nepal is highly frustrating due to the choice of technical subjects than language and literature-related subjects. Similarly, Baral and Phyak (2021) explored the stories of six junior university teachers (lecturers). The study result was quite surprising that the majority of the teachers in the university are recruited using 'the political bhagbanda system' [The political bhagbanda means selecting teachers based on their power relation in the political party] rather than their academic degrees and achievements. Another study conducted by Subedi (2023) brought similar findings regarding teacher's identity construction; as per his study, identity is impacted by hierarchy, power relation and social context. Neupane (2023) in his study explored that university teachers' identity is influenced by the need of the university, needs of the university keeps changing, which cause identity crisis in the language teachers' profession. Identity studies conducted in Nepalese setting is found demotivating for the inspiring teachers and students who are willing to choose teaching as a career. Conversely, another study conducted in the same context revealed that teacher can shape social capital (social respect) that is considered a strong identity through their innovative skill and pedagogy in their professional space (Sapkota, 2017). Teachers' professional identity

in the eyes of researchers is less similar. The existing scenario is providing space for novice research.

To explore teachers' identity, Dilek and Altas (2022) investigated the relationship between English language teachers' identity and professional autonomy. The study also focuses on finding whether gender, workplace, academic level of the teachers, and work experience matter in identity construction or not. The study findings revealed that a higher level of autonomy ensures a higher level of autonomy. However, gender, academic level, and work experience largely influence the process of identity construction. Similarly, Fahd Aljuhaish et al. (2020) conducted a study in a Saudi setting to explore the influence of contextual factors on teachers' professional identity construction. The study findings were quite similar to the previous study, as they revealed that teachers' educational background and professional setting affect the identity construction of the teacher.

Notably, Kılıç, and Cinkara (2020) did a critical case study analysis of 49 pre-service EFL teachers during learning. The study analyzed the critical incidents using three different themes, people, context, and outcome. The study findings revealed that incidents encountered in the preservice stage help the teachers to perform better which helped them construct professional identities. Another study Mansouri (2021) conducted to explore the lived experience of two Iranian female English teachers reported eye-opening insight about the identity of English language teachers. The study revealed that the leveling of teachers as native and non-native impacted teachers' identity. Additionally, different policies should be employed at each level. The positioning and the contradictory policy adversely impacted teacher's identity in the Iranian context.

Apart from this, a case study by Wang et al. (2021) explored early language teachers' experience of identity construction in China. The study disclosed unbelievable facts. He revealed that teachers were categorized into an attendant, a firefighter, a coolie, and a tramp. The study further implies that various factors like workload, unsupportive colleagues, large classrooms, and rigid curriculum strongly impacted early teachers' professional identity. The study highlights a new dimension of identity construction. However, this study is believed to provide a good lesson for aspiring teachers to struggle in their early career. This study provided a prior understanding of the work environment for aspiring teachers. Moreover, a prior understanding of the working environment prepares the teacher. Likewise, Irani et al.

(2021) studied how teacher educators' engagement practicum forms teachers' identity. The study reveals that teachers' meaningful engagement fosters their self-confidence and self-image. Therefore, engagement opens a new forum for identity construction (Irani et al., 2021). The study conducted in different settings confirmed that teachers' identity construction is complex.

Reviewing the identity construction process of English language teachers, I found it is more relevant to study teachers' identity construction journey concerning digital literacy. I believe the discussion on digital literacy and aspects connected to digital literacy I believe is a pertinent issue. Thapaliya (2014) examined teachers' Information Communication and Technology [ICT] use, teachers' perception, and the challenges they faced quantitatively with 47 teachers. Thapaliya in his study reported that although teachers are positive about using ICT in the language classroom, it is full of challenges related to time, and lack of knowledge. However, to cope with all sorts of challenges teachers use tools such as smartphones, computers, and tape recorders for teaching purposes. Similarly, a study conducted in the identical context by entitled teachers' perception and understanding of ICT Integration discloses that although teachers have been using ICT tools to motivate language learners by providing variety, the frequency is not less. The study confirms that teachers are challenged due to an insufficient material to integrate ICT. To study teachers' digital readiness to conduct online classes during the Pandemic Saud (2021) studied through online means. Saud's study findings reveal that teachers teaching at the secondary level were found to be digitally literate enough to conduct online classes.

Reviewing beyond the Nepalese context Meihami and Esfandari (2021) investigated the impact of the CALL program on teachers' identity construction of two EFL teachers for 8 months, during the CALL teaching program. The study findings articulated that teachers are motivated to use CALL in their language classroom. According to the study, teachers progressive teaching became the source of identity construction. A similar study by Kahveci (2021) explored teachers' digital literacy and self-confidence about gender. The study found a positive relationship between the use of digital literacy and self-confidence. However, gender has no role teachers' self-efficacy development. The studies available affirms that ICT integration in language teaching is an identity practice.

Finally, language teaching and constructing identities in the TESOL situation encounter several components as presented in De Costa and Norton's (2017) language

teaching and learning framework (DFG, 2016). It defines the identity component as meso level, macro level, and micro level indicating ideology, institutional practice, and societal practice respectively. These components are largely interrelated and the components determine teachers' identities which are legitimized concerning proficiency, practice, and skills (De Costa & Norton, 2017). After reviewing the literature related to professional identity it reveals teachers' identity is shaped by their self-image, role, ideology, and their practice in professional space. The present study is concerned with teachers' transformative practice, digital awareness, engagement with tools, and the environment to change identity with change in practice.

### **Digital Literacy**

Literacy was considered the ability to read and write. Literacy was limited to pen, paper, and printed form. Contemporary literacy goes beyond. The rapid growth of science and technology broadens the definition and implication. Literacy in the present includes digital literacy, due to its impact on day-to-day life. None of the aspects of human life remain untouched by the use of technology, and teaching is not no exception. The term digital literacy was first introduced by Gilster (1997). Digital literacy for him is the ability to understand and use digital resources for practical use via devices. Likewise, Bawden (2008) defines digital literacy as an Individual's knowledge, skill, and ability to incorporate digital tools and software in professional and social life. Similarly, Buckingham (2015) defines digital literacy as the ability to use various mediums to present a variety of information to users. Following these scholars, 21<sup>st</sup>-century education has to be well-thought-out in connecting and assimilating digital literacy for teacher professional development. Ferrari et al. (2012), sees digital literacy from a broader perspective. According to him, DL includes searching, storing, creating, and sharing information creatively, critically, and efficiently. Ferrari's definition doesn't limit digital literacy as an ability to use tools in the professional space. Adopting the aforementioned ideas and following Ferrari's definition, digital literacy for this study stands for the ability to handle digital devices, such as mobile, audio devices, laptops, projectors, and smartboards for searching information, storing, creating, and sharing creatively and effectively in the professional space.

Teachers nowadays are conscious about their professional identity by experiencing exposure to ICT skills. The world today has changed into a global village due to the rapid development of technology. Moreover, COVID outbreak

introduced the teachers to digital world and forced them to be digitally literate. Their continuous effort enabled them to perform several tasks in digital platform. Number of webinars on a virtual platform, and learned to use platform like zoom and google classroom, at the beginning.

### **ICT Integration in Teaching in the Nepalese Context**

The twenty-first-century teaching and learning process demands maximum use of technology to ensure teachers master teaching skills (Poudel, 2020). Poudel spotlights the government's provision of ICT integration to enhance teachers' and students' self-confidence and competitive skills to fit in a global context. Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) knowledge is considered crucial by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to achieve the goal of education. MOE (2016) School Sector Development Plan [SSDP], (2016-2023), documented that the long-term goal of education is to integrate Nepal with the global community. To achieve this, ICT tools will be maximized. The document further claims using ICT-related devices improves teachers' subject delivery. Besides, it also maximizes the learning access. It further pinpoints that textbook-oriented teacher-centered teaching focuses on rote learning where learning is limited to the absorption of criticality. Likewise, the National Curriculum Framework (2019) encourages teachers to use easily available devices like tablets, and smartphones to enhance student-centered universal learning. The policy further adds, the newly appointed teachers will be provided with a mentors enhance their skills and abilities. This policy document is positive to enhance digital learning. Therefore, the policy expects the teachers to be digitally informed.

ICT policy in Nepal was first introduced in 2000 and was revised in 2010. The 2010 policy emerged with a new provision of expanding internet access in schools collaborating with governmental and non-governmental organizations to produce skilled human resources and enhance quality education (Joshi, 2017). Likewise, the three-year plan (2011-2013) encourages schools to use ICT, the first strategy to encourage ICT in school-level education. As per the SSDP report, due to lack of infrastructure, using ICT is difficult and almost important in some parts. Shrestha (2017) a newspaper opinion writer rightly states if teachers can use social sites, they can use educational applications for teaching purposes.

The policy demands that teachers use technology to enhance teaching and learning even if they have lots of constraints. Everyone has to start from where they are and what tools they have. Joshi (2017) argues understanding and mastering ICT

skills is compulsory in modern society as it is regarded as the pillar and strong instructional tool. Most importantly, the government's fiscal year 2023/24 policy clearly stated that 40 % of the curriculum will be taught using technology. To implement the policy, the government has planned to manage at least one smart school in each municipality to implement the policy (Educational policy for fiscal year 2023/24). Policy documents and existing body of literature strongly support ICT integration in teaching and learning. Policy document (SSDP) considers both knowledge and the use of ICT to be essential for teachers. Notably, almost all teachers use mobile phones and are active on social media, which proves they are more or less techno-friendly. Apart from constrains, using cell phones to play songs or audio materials for teaching purposes, would be a good beginning. This study also inspires language teachers to use handy devices as language teaching materials.

### **Theoretical Intent**

The human learning process is perceived as a cognitive process; accordingly, it occurs when an individual internalizes knowledge. Sfard (1998) claims that the learning process is largely individual, and social context doesn't play any role. Thus, learning from the traditional perspectives is limited to content knowledge and internationalization. However, Wenger (1998) a contemporary scholar, responded to the isolated learning approach (Sfard, 1998, p.6) by purposing social theory of learning. The social theory of learning strongly opposes isolated learning and advocates learning as social process that takes place in a social context. Wenger's social theory of learning encompasses identity as a component, the social theory of identity construction is one of the components of social theory. Social theorist Giddens, 1993; as cited in Buchanan (2015), argues social structure allows an individual to engage in the social practice; societal structure according to him, provides space for identity practice. Both Wenger and Giddens advocates society is the place where an individual forms and reform's identity. However, they used different terms; Gidden (1993) sociological structuration and Wenger (1998) Community of Practice.

Wenger used Community of Practice (CoP) to refer to the contextual setting. Belongingness and participation in the social context are crucial factors that contributing to learning. Since, this study focuses the use of digital literacy skill in for professional identity construction that takes place in the school, classroom and professional space, all these places are the community of practice for the teachers.



Professional identity is the entity that largely connects with the professional world. Therefore, the process of learning, and transforming ideas in the workplace is a social process.

A review of the available study paying close attention to the theories employed to interpret teachers' identity, Poudel (2020) applied Vygotsky's Self in Cultural Historical Activity Theory. Baral and Phyak, (2021) used James Paul Gee's identity theory (2000). Likewise, Regni (2020) used Burkhuize's idea of identity construction. Apart from other theories employed to explore teachers' identity construction, I found few studies using Wenger's theory of identity construction. Tsui (2007) explored the lived story of a participant. The story was interpreted in the light of Wenger's CoP revealed identity formation is a complex process. However, teacher participants assimilated them in different contexts, gained competency, and legitimized. During the process of legitimizing their practice, teachers according to the study created identity. Moreover, Nguyen (2017) explored how teachers constructed their identity through their broad engagement with the community of practice. The study further highlighted that teacher self-initiated participation in multiple communities constructed their identity. Another study by Dewi (2022) found that CoP is always supportive of language teachers as it empowers EFL teachers to work innovatively for professional transformation. Moreover, Smith (2007) conducted a critical review study to find the use of Wenger's CoP in studies related to online and blended learning during 2000-2014. The study revealed that CoP was heavily referenced, whereas researchers used a few elements like joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire.

However, based on the objectives of my study, I adopted Wenger's (1998) social theory of identity formation. I believe identity cannot be constructed in isolation. Wenger discusses social theory of identity as a part of social theory of learning. Wenger (1998) argues learning is the outcome of social practice, and an individual constructs an identity through his collaborative practice in our day-to-day activities. Moreover, teachers' journey of identity construction through the use of digital literacy skills is all about day-to-day practice and lived experiences of the teachers. Wenger theorized that identity is not what we think about ourselves and what others think about us, it's our day-to-day practices that shape our identity. Hence, teachers' identity in my study is wrapped in their practices. My study believes that learning is a social process that takes place in the community. Hence, a

community of practice for my study is the workplace, colleagues, students, and professional groups.

Wenger (1998) defines identity as neither the way one thinks and talks about oneself nor other think and talk about the one; it is lived and day to day. He further adds, “Our identity includes our ability and inability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our forms of belonging” (p.145). Identity formation for him is a dual process; identification and negotiation of meaning. Identification is an individual’s investment in building association and differentiation. Identification and reification (the term reification is used to refer to concrete form to something abstract. Such as, we use the figure of ‘the blindfolded woman holding a scale’ to refer to justice (see Wenger, 1998, p. 58–62). Wenger (1998) stated that there are three modes of belongings that shape the entire process of identity formation. The process triggers individuals to literate themselves and practice innovatively. Accordingly, three modes of belonging as the source of identification are engagement, imagination, and alignment.

### **Engagement**

Wenger (1998) defines engagement as our practice that gives great sense of identifying who we are. It involves how we participate and what sort of activities we do in our practice. He further adds engagement is the source of identity formation. The engagement has a threefold process; ongoing negotiation of meaning, formation of trajectories, and unfolding of histories of practice. The conjunction of all three processes and engagement with them together construct identity. “Engagement transforms communities, practices, persons, and artifacts through each other” (p.175). Therefore, engagement is measured as one of the important dimensions of the power to negotiate and shape a favorable context to experience identity. Engagement in this study is represented as teachers’ digital engagement in the digital environment that develops teachers’ digital literacy that facilitates teachers’ integration of digital resources and tools for the language learning process. This study brings the stories of teachers who constructed their identity through their digital engagement to change their teaching practice and transform the community where they work.

### **Imagination**

“Creating images of the world and seeing connections through time and space by extrapolating from our own experiences” (Wenger, 1998, p.173). Imagination is creating a reality that expands the scope of reality and identity in the social context.

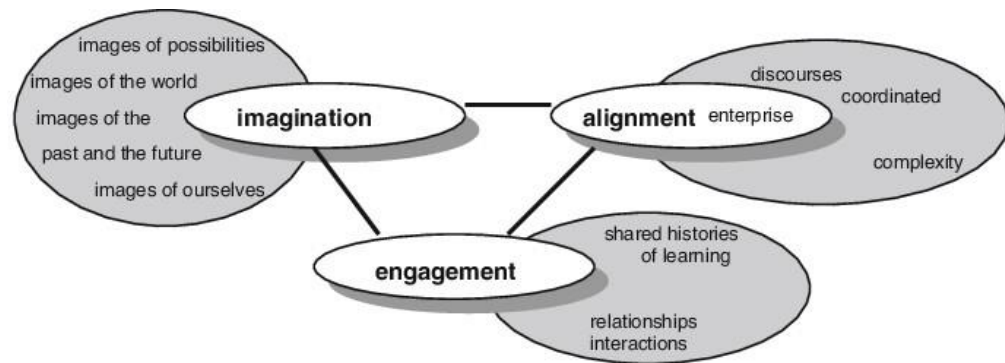
We generate ideas and choose alternatives based on our imagination. In this regard, Imagination is considered a crucial component that shapes our sense of our experiences. We negotiate meaning through our experience. Through the process of negotiation, we shape our identity. Our imagination that can make a big difference in our potential and identity. Wenger (1998) used the term imagination not as an individual fantasy, it is used as a significant aspect of human life that is true. “Imagination is one of the modes of belonging that consists of the real world, which expands the scope of reality and identity” (p.177). This study considers imagination as an important aspect because participants view teachers’ job as a creative process and engage accordingly. Thus, imagination becomes a source of creating a new reality, and identity at the individual level.

### **Alignment**

Alignment is defined as “Coordinating our energy and activities to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprise” (Wenger,1998, p.174). It is considered as one of the sources of identification. The identity of a group or institution becomes a person’s identity through the process. Alignment encourages us to see the effect of our action beyond engagement or reaches the level of power. Meaning is valued as it is made based on power. Wenger argues not everyone can create meaning as it is “economies of money” (p.197). The term ‘meaning’ is considered as “the process by which we experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful” (p.53). He further argues that all the activities we do and care about encounter challenges that are what negotiation of meaning. Therefore, all the activities we do in our professional space are the process of meaning negotiation. Alignment according to him, is an action that an individual performs in multiple that localities, developing competencies and changing viewpoints. Wenger (1998) argues that our alignment broadens our scope in the world. Therefore, through alignment, “we can produce valuable action and anticraft that create a new dimension of identity formation” (p.181).

Alignment is considered one of the important dimensions of this study. This study considers teachers aligning teaching pedagogy to the digital world and producing different results. Moreover, the main thirst of the study is to see how teacher aligned their pedagogy with digital technology and shaped new competencies.

The following figure summarizes the concept of Wenger’s theory.

**Figure 1***Modes of Belongings*

Source: Wenger, 1998.p.174

### Research Gap

Teachers' professional identities have a notable space in educational research. The majority of the studies focused on the study of pre-service and novice teacher identity construction (Delek and Atlas, 2022; Kılıç, and Cinkara, 2020; Mansouri, 2021; Salinas & Ayula, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Pre-service teachers are given priority in the study as their learning from critical incidents, positive and negative experiences, reflective practice, and knowledge gained during practicum are likely to support them in constructing their identity as EFL teachers. Studies conducted by Zare-ee and Ghasedi, (2014) focused on factors that affect professional identity construction. Similarly, the majority of the researchers who studied identity construction, concluded identity construction is contextual (Mansouri, 2021; Salinas & Ayala, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). On the other hand, Delek and Atlas (2022) studied teachers' autonomous practice for teachers' professional identity. The study focused on teachers' expertise in subject and pedagogical aspects. However, knowledge regarding teachers' autonomous engagement to literate themselves in digital technology and its integration is unexplored.

Apart from identity construction related to context, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge, few studies also explored digital literacy. Mudra (2020) studied English language learners' perception and their identity negotiation process in the digitally negotiated context. The studies explored knowledge of how digital literacy skills helped learners' learning process and how their self-initiated learning in the digitally mediated environment constructed their identity. Yazici and Atay (2020) also studied how ICT integration impacted teachers' identity. The study conducted in

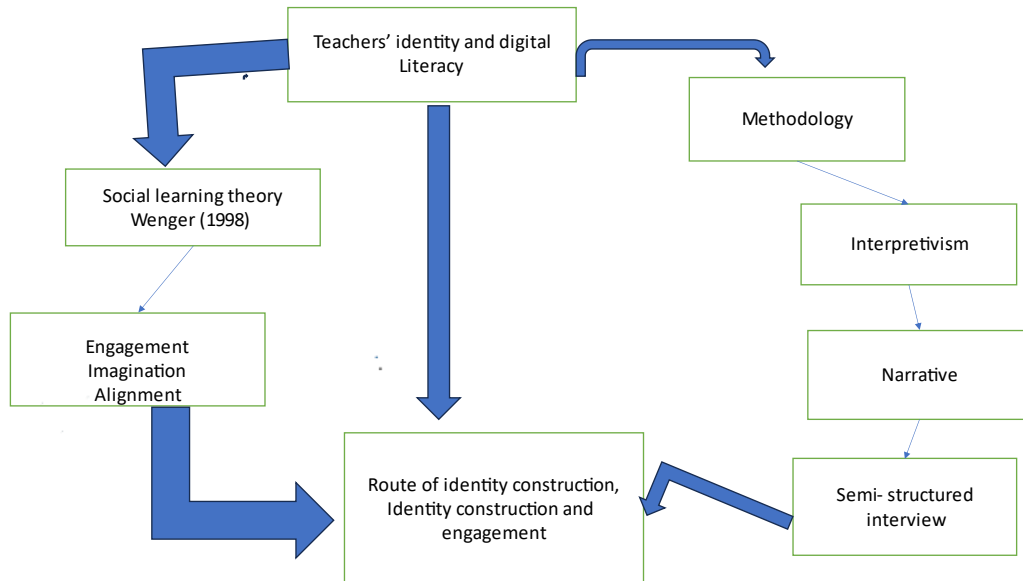
an Iranian setting revealed that ICT integration helped English language teachers carve the identity of positive and modern language teachers. Another study by Kahveci (2021) explored the relationship between digital literacy and self-efficacy in the English language teachers that documented digital literacy largely impacted the self-efficacy of the language teacher.

Reviewing the knowledge in the Nepalese context (Singh, 2021; Thapaliya, 2014) studied the Use of ICT in language class. The studies discovered teachers were positive to the use of ICT tools, however, they were challenged due to a lack of competency, materials, and teaching context. Another study was conducted to know whether teachers in Nepal are ready to teach online during school closure. The study evidenced teacher teaching at the Secondary level were ready to run virtual classes (Saud, 2021).

Therefore, research studies on teachers' identity construction focused on multiple aspects including digital literacy in Nepal and abroad. Nevertheless, knowledge about teachers who were less or not aware of digital literacy before the pandemic and learned the skill during the pandemic and continued using the skill in the new normal possibly framed a new identity, still to be explored. On this reality ground, I found the agenda of English language teachers' digital literacy and process of identity construction is unexplored. To fill the knowledge gap, I studied the issue.

### **Conceptual Framework**

After going through thematic, theoretical, policy, and empirical reviews, I have approached the gap in identity study, where the previous studies didn't focus on teachers, professional identity connecting with digital materiality. Scanning the theories led me to the above mentioned three theories. Theories of narrative inquiry help us understand, analyze, and evaluate stories (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). The following conceptual framework is a roadmap that guided my study. It is a diagrammatic representation of my work. In the study, I brought live stories of English language teachers who engaging in the digital environment as a created identity.



### Chapter Review

In this chapter, I presented available literature related to my study. I discussed how identity and teachers' professional identity perceived studying available literature in two themes. I also brought literature related to digital literacy and ICT integration in Nepal to screening the issue that I wanted to study. A review of the available literature guided my study showing me the gap I need to study. I further explained Wenger's (1998) social theory. In this theory, I mainly adopted three modes of belonging for identification; imagination, engagement, and alignment. I discussed the terms in detail presenting how I am going to operationalize the terms in my study. Finally, I concluded my chapter II presenting the conceptual framework in a diagram.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the methodological dimension which provides guidelines for the whole research work. The chapter incorporates philosophical considerations, research paradigm, and research approach. Along with philosophical considerations, the chapter incorporates research design, research tool, research site, participant selection procedure, and tools and techniques for data collection. Finally, the chapter discusses quality standards, and ethical issues that I considered during the research.

#### **Philosophical Considerations**

Philosophical assumption is the researchers' worldview that guides the whole research process including theory, methodology, and tools that we use for data collection. Philosophical assumption incorporates the nature of reality (ontology), the knowledge construction process (epistemology), and the influence of values and beliefs in research (axiology). "Philosophy is not about perpetuating the pre-existing truth; rather, it is a creation of truth like an act of art" (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017, p.51). In addition, philosophy for qualitative researchers is an effort to theorize understanding, experience, and practice. Similarly, Philosophy for Creswell is; a belief in ontology, epistemology, and axiology which deals with the nature of reality, knowledge, and its justification and the role of the researcher's position in the research respectively (Creswell, 1998). This research section deals with ontological, epistemological, and axiological considerations. These entities provide guidelines for the research study.

#### **Ontological Assumption**

Ontology is the science that deals with the nature of reality. Creswell (1998) states ontology is the nature of reality. Creswell further adds researchers in qualitative research hold multiple realities. Similarly, Guba and Lincoln (1994) assume ontology deals with questions like, 'What is the form and nature of reality? What is there that can be known about?' Hence, reality in the interpretive paradigm is multiple and it is constructed. In my study, reality as narrated by the participants is not static rather it has to be constructed by the participants. As participants' subjective interpretation and researchers influence in the exploration of truth, the nature of truth that we co-construct is relative. The ontological stand of my research is that the participants

possess their perspectives and practices on their identity construction in their professional space. Participants would have their own stories and experiences about digital literacy's role in constructing their identity, which cannot be generalized to others, so my ontological stance is relativist in this study. For me in the research, truth is different in context and individuality.

### **Epistemological Assumption**

Epistemology is connected to the knowledge accepted. Its prime concern is, how knowledge is constructed. It also focuses on the relationship between the researcher and the researched person and the explored idea (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Similarly, Creswell (1998) presents similar ideas. He points out that qualitative research researcher tries to connect to the participants to get subjective evidence. The epistemological stance in my research is subjective where each individual is unique and they construct their understanding in their way. Since my research design is qualitative and the paradigm is interpretative, knowledge is constructed through participants' stories, experiences, perceptions, and opinions. This study generates knowledge through the lived stories and experiences of the participants where the researcher connects with the participants to get evidence for the study.

### **Axiological Assumption**

Axiology deals with the position or value of the researcher and the participants' stories throughout the research study. Axiology is concerned with the value that a researcher gives to the experiences and stories of each participant in the study. According to Creswell (2013), each individual understands his/her role from his/her subjective perspectives which the researcher has to value. Therefore, I believe those teachers who engage with the digital world possibly have different stories regarding their digital engagement that plays a crucial role in identity construction. These teachers' professional identity needs to be explored and valued. Hence, I valued the different experiences shared by participants in the course of identity construction through digital literacy. The research assumes teachers are the agents of change, in this regard, this research study explores innovative practices used by EFL teachers to construct their professional identity valuing the ideas of each participant equally.

### **Interpretivism as My Research Paradigm**

A paradigm in a research study is a belief that guides the study conducted to teaching and learning (Wills, 2007). Interpretive paradigms view and interpret the world from actors' perspectives (Cohen et al., 2007). Cohen et al., further focus,



unlike positivism which gives much attention to meaning and interpretations. This paradigm denies a single reality. Interpretivism is non-statistical, it involves participants' perspectives and their context to make the meaning. The interpretive research paradigm focuses on social interaction and experience to construct knowledge. Taylor and Luitel (2012) argue that the interpretative paradigm considers an individual's ideas, opinions, and beliefs based on the context. The interpretive paradigm makes the researcher contextualize participants' stories being an insider rather than a pure researcher (Taylor & Medina, 2011).

I used interpretivism as my main quest, is to listen to the stories and experiences of my participants and make meaning out of them. In this research study, I explored the lived experiences and stories of English language teachers who used their digital literacy skills and knowledge for language teaching purposes and constructed their identities in the professional world. The information collected from the participants is interpreted further to make meaning.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry in the research study is the process of bringing participants' experiences into narrative form. Clandinin and Connolly (2000) stated that a narrative inquiry is "lived and told stories" (p.20). The motto of using narrative inquiry in educational research is to collect organized human experiences (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). Narrative inquiry begins with participants' live experiences that they (Creswell, 1998). Creswell further adds that narrative inquiry information is collected through individuals' stories and experiences shared chronologically. Another similar view about narrative inquiry is; that narrative inquiry brings lived and told stories that are connected to the workplace (Clandinin et al., 2016). A recent review study reveals sociolinguistics research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is prioritizing narrative ways of collecting information assuming only narratives can give strong consideration to the narratives by the participants (Neupane, 2023). I chose narrative inquiry for my study believing identity construction is a social process and only the narratives can justify the process of identity construction as stated by Neupane in his review study.

As a narrative inquirer, during information collection, I listened to and recorded my participant's experiences. The situation demanded so I unfold my stories to ease the conversation. I did so as narrative inquiry is an active collaboration with the participants (Creswell, 2013). I engaged my participants to get their life stories as if it is mine as stated: "Narrative inquiry is situated in a relationship" (Clendenin et

al., 2016, p.20). In this regard, presenting my own stories in the narratives supported my participants. Similarly, collecting lived human experiences and stories to make meaning is the prime concern of this study. Therefore, I decided to employ narrative inquiry in my research study, positioning myself in the same landscape.

### **Research Site and Participants' Selection**

The research site is where participants' experiences and events took place in the past and took place the current situation (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). Three municipalities of the Kavre district were the research site. I selected the district because it lies about 32km far from Kathmandu. However, the municipality includes the developed to remote municipalities therefore I selected four schools among number of secondary schools in the district. I picked three government added schools and one non-governmental school. I did so to observe the technology integration in the school as the schools were equipped with digital tools after the pandemic. I selected one non-government school purposively. The research sites I chose were equipped with digital tools such as smart boards, computers, and projectors to integrate digital resources in the learning process. Information for the research was collected after the pandemic since main motive of this study is to explore whether the teachers are continuing to use digital tools in the language classroom or not. If they were continuously using digital tools and resources even after the teaching and learning process turned to physical mode, and if teachers were integrating digital tools, was it changing their pedagogy? Finally, if all the changes were taking place, would it change teachers' existing identity or not?

Moreover, I selected four participants for my study two male and two female participants purposively. I selected Mr. Perfect and Mr. Conversant as my research participants because they were digitally sound. They facilitated hundreds of teachers along with their colleagues. So, I assume they are digitally literate. Likewise, I believe another participant, Ms. Multitasker, an M.Phil. scholar from an open university, I believe is digitally literate. Finally, Ms. Critical has been working in one of the renowned schools; an enthusiastic digital learner and user who largely digitalized her class even after the classes went into a physical mode in the new normal (the School Principal suggested me to go with her as I talked to him the purpose of my study). Further, all my participants are English language teachers working in the different institutions of Panauti Municipality. The participants of my study were quite experienced. I selected experienced participants so that I could get a bundle of

experiences. Therefore, I picked all my participants purposively based on following criteria: are they digitally literate? Is the workplace equipped with digital tools, and are they ready to provide me with the information required for my research study?

During my study, I met my research participants at several locations, sometimes at their residences as they were busy with the household job and called me in their residence and sometimes at a coffee shop. Truly, I reached into their world while hearing them. Based on my subjective observation and understanding, I have given metaphorical names to my participants. In this regard, I believe the metaphorical names, I have given suit them: Mr. Perfect, Ms. Multitasker, Ms. Critical, and Mr. Conversant. Here, I present a brief account of my participants.

### **Mr. Perfect**

Mr. Perfect was born in a village where all the youth used to join the British Army. Mothers in the village used to bless them, “British Army bhays ani bau baje ko name rakes.” [It means we wish you to join the British Army and make us feel proud]. The boy who grew up in such a scenario was suggested to join the army immediately after passing SLC exam. However, Mr. Perfect was not sure. He left the village in search of uncertain destiny. He was offered to work in a private school. He, at first was not sure whether to join or not. But survival in Kathmandu city demanded the job. Finally, he joined the school as a secondary-level English teacher. He was a very strict teacher. The teacher for him is the person who speaks a lot to make the concept clear in the silent class. Due to his strict nature, he possibly developed the nature of working as a perfect. Over time, he was offered to be the vice principal of the school. While working as a teacher he decided to apply for an English Teacher in Teacher Service Commission [TSC]. After two years he was selected as a secondary level English teacher. He was posted in one of the remote villages of Kavre district. His mother’s blessing did not work. However, he enjoyed his profession as a teacher. Mr. Perfect is now working as the youngest headteacher with an innovative mindset.

### **Ms. Multitasker**

Ms. Multitasker, a passionate teacher was born in a small village in Banepa municipality. Teaching used to be her childhood game. She used to go to school every day and paid attention to the teachers attentively. After school, she used to play teacher-teacher with her siblings. One day, her mother heard a loud cry in the backyard. She left her household chorus and hurried to the backyard. She was devastated when she saw her elder daughter laying on the muddy ground. Angrily she

asked, “What happened?” her little sister replied, “She always wanted to be a teacher and want us to be her students.” Another playmate added, “Yes, she never let us be a teacher. She even doesn’t want to play any other game.” Mother was a little calm she dragged her, holding her little arm, to the front yard, dusted her clothes, and said, “Game ma teacher bhayara huncha? Sachikai bannu parcha.” It means you need to be a real teacher not in a game.

Probably after 25 years, she has been teaching as an English teacher in the government school of Kavre. I found the name suitable for a lady like her. Truly speaking, she hardly managed time to talk to me about my research study. I have heard her daily schedule and even closely observed her. She has been working as a lecturer in a college in the morning, and in the afternoon, she works as a permanent teacher in a government school. Moreover, she is found to be facilitating teachers in the training center. Additionally, she has been pursuing her M.Phil. degree from an open university. On top of all, she is a mother of two kids. However, she has been handling several duties; mother’s duty, M.Phil. Scholar, lecturer in a campus, teacher in a public school and a teacher trainer. How does she handle all these tasks? I found the metaphoric name is suitable for her as she handles multiple tasks in a single day, possible at the same time. Besides, she was selected for this study because she is pursuing an M.Phil. degree at open university. Therefore, I assumed she was digitally literate.

### **Mr. Conversant**

Mr. Conversant was born in one of the remote villages of the Kavre district. He did his schooling at one of the schools in the village that was not resourceful. His father was one of the reputed and rich personalities of the village. So, opportunity to go to the town for further study. The Majority of his friends, on the other hand could not afford to go to the town and continue their education. He did I.sc (intermediate in science stream). He was waiting for his result back in his village. Meanwhile, He was offered to teach in the school from where he passed SLC exam. Mr. Conversant was eagerly waiting for the result to leave this job. But the craze of the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) exam did not let him ignore it. Due to pressure from his parents and teachers where he was working, he attended the exam. The result was published after a long time. He was not very excited to see his name on the selected list. However, it was great news for his family. Government permanent job was a matter of pride at that time. Mr. Conversant was upset and guilty for appearing in the TSC

exam. Teaching was never his choice. He wanted to be a successful businessman. However, he joined the job. He became a permanent secondary teacher in 2003 and was promoted to second class in 2012. He has been working as a training facilitator.

I named the person Mr. Conversant because I found him proficient in the subject matter, well-informed, and up-to-date in technology. I found the name suitable for him but not based on a few meetings during my project. On the contrary, Mr. Conversant is engaged a lot in converting his school into a smart school. Perhaps, he has been working with the same passion for about 40 years. I love to tell him the history in the teaching profession.

### **Ms. Critical**

Ms. Critical was born in Bhaktapur in a typical Newari family. Almost all the family members were bankers. Even the relatives were the bankers. She grew up in an environment that fascinated her to join the management faculty after her schooling. The girl had very good English from her childhood. She was a music lover and used to listen to English songs for an hour. Moreover, she used to open her dictionary when she encountered new vocabulary. Ms. Critical failed a few papers at the bachelor level. She was upset for a few days, but later she decided to utilize her leisure time working as a teacher at a nearby school. Working two years as an English teacher, she realized that she started enjoying the profession. Then, her willpower led her to give a few English major papers. Gradually the teaching profession became a passion for her. The same passion for the profession and strong willpower to update in the profession encouraged her to join the M.Ed. program in her mid-40s. On the convocation day she shared her feelings with her well-wishers with a caption, 'It is never too late to begin.'

I named her Ms. Critical as I found her truly critical. The word critical has several meanings but I have limited the word critical for her careful and analytical nature even before making minor decisions. A few meetings and frequent conversations made me realize that she is too critical of everything. One can't convince her until they bring solid reason. The word Critical here is used in a positive sense where one does not accept others easily, questions and doubts until satisfied. We often have strong arguments during the discussion as I cannot be convinced to make a small decision. She is critical that she arouses so many questions about each point of discussion. Even during our information collection talk, she raised so many

cross-questions relating to my probing questions. Therefore, I find the metaphoric name Ms. Critical is suitable for her.

### **Information Generation Tools**

Teachers' narratives gathered from the oral interview are the main sources of information. Semi-structured interviews were used as the main tool of data collection. A semi-structured interview is used in narrative inquiry where a researcher prepares general questions just to guide the interview maintaining the conversation without dictating (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). To collect true and lived stories, I established a strong rapport with my participants, I met them repeatedly, inviting them for a coffee and having a casual talk. In the next phase, I made them clear about my research and got oral consent.

The data collection process in the narrative inquiry, in my opinion, is lengthy. Although it was time-consuming. I enjoyed their stories and found myself in the same boat. Meanwhile, I am quite sure my participants did not get bored as I tried engaging them in making the interview two-way conversation, with my reflective sharing.

### **Interview**

Interviews are a largely accepted tool for information collection in qualitative research. The interview is conducted to get detailed information on certain topics. Turner (2010) states that an interview is a common tool to gather comprehensive information from an individual's experience on any topic. Cohen et al. (2007) further substantiate Interviewing with some guiding questions and probing questioning as per the situation elicits required information to elicit the information, they further argue probes help the interviewer to ask the respondent to elaborate, exemplify, and provide detailed information. Cresswell (2013) supports using interviews in a qualitative research design demands teachers use open-ended questions and arrange unstructured interviews. Collecting lived experience may not happen in structured questions. Therefore, in this study, I employed semi-structured interviews. I recorded the interview and took manual notes highlighting participants' facial expressions, body language, and other expressions contributing to meaning-making. I wrote my reflective journal during the interview, to substantiate the meaning-making process.

### **Informal Conversation**

During my research process, I realized informal conversation is a great source of information. I gathered amazing information through informal conversation.

### **Interpretation and Meaning Making**

Making meaning out of raw information is a crucial aspect of research. In narrative research stories are analyzed and presented narratively (Neupane & Gnawali, 2023). It is a way of presenting information after critical analysis of the information. To analyze the information collected, I adopted the data analysis procedure suggested by Jeong-Hee Kim (2017) that is; examining narrative data; reducing them to themes through coding and recoding processes, and presenting the data in narrative form in a final text. In the data analysis and meaning-making process I played with the information reiteratively to bring thick description and connect the findings in the light of a theoretical stand (Jeong- Hee Kim, 2017).

I applied semi-structured interviews and casual conversation as an information generation tool in my research study. During semi-structured interviews, I recorded the entire conversation. The interviews were in Nepali. Then, I transcribed the information and translated the English language very carefully to avoid missing any important information. I also used my reflective notes to add notable gestures that cannot be grasped from the recorded interviews. In the next phase, I categorized the information and coded it. Finally, I developed a few themes to address my research questions. Interestingly, while working on the theme I realized I missed a few pertinent information that would have answered my research questions. To get the missing chunk of information, I instantly called the participants in the messenger and requested for details. Moreover, I mailed the participants time and again until I finished my research work. Finally, I answered two research questions based on the meaning I made.

### **Quality Standards in my Research**

The quality standard ensures the quality of the research study we conduct. The research quality standard varies according to method, design, and paradigm we choose for our study. Trustworthiness and authenticity are the two quality standard criteria that must be maintained in a narrative research study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Similarly, Taylor and Medina (2011) also confirmed trustworthiness and authenticity are the quality standards of the interpretive research paradigm. Likewise, narrative inquiry considers a person's temporal change: events described in the past relate to the present and are likely to project the future (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). Therefore, time factors also seem to influence the quality standard of narrative inquiry.

Trustworthiness in the research study ensures trust among the participants, and I maintain strong rapport. Moreover, using the information only for the research purposes, I assured my participants of my trust. Moreover, participants' privacy is maintained by using pseudonyms.

Authenticity is another quality standard that has to be maintained in the research study. To maintain authenticity, I provided pieces of evidence of the whole data collection process. Moreover, I used participants' authentic information in the best possible way. In addition, to maintain the quality standards in my study, I sustained temporality, sociality, verisimilitude, and meaningfulness.

### **Temporality**

Temporality in narrative research is considering a temporal situation in a research study; that is talking about past and present and making meaning with prolonged engagement. To maintain temporality, I considered participants' experiences of the past, present, and even future, realizing that human stories naturally go back and forth.

### **Place**

The place and situation are the crucial aspects in narrative inquiry. To maintain I managed to meet my participants to where they feel comfortable. All three common places of narrative inquiry are maintained.

### **Sociality**

Sociality is maintaining relationships, building rapport and empathizing participants. When we want participants' life stories, we have to develop sympathy and empathy to maintain a close and intimate relationship (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). Showing sympathy and empathy I believe, opens the knot of each story which is likely to bring groundbreaking results in the study. Throughout my study, I maintain good rapport with my participants by being friendly to them. I also shared my stories with them to make them realize I am not an outsider; I have also faced a similar situation.

### **Verisimilitude**

Verisimilitude is the truth that is close to the reality. The lived stories shared by the participants are presented creating the context. The study reflects the detailed and true stories of the teachers who created their identities using their digital literacy skills. The study allows the readers to visualize the events in their lives.



### **Meaningfulness**

The study presents the stories of those participants worked as English language teachers for more than five years. Therefore, the stories presented are meaningful to both the researcher and the readers I tried to maintain meaningfulness in the study sustaining the true meaning of the text.

### **Ethical Considerations in my Research**

Ethics is the heart of narrative inquiry (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). In addition, the narrative inquirer has to pay attention to ethical issues that may arise during the process of listening and sharing the stories of participants. Maintaining an ethical issue is essential from the planning phase to the information collection and analysis process to ensure the quality standard of the research study. "Research itself has an ethical duty to demonstrate quality" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.121). Hence, to maintain ethical issues, I focused on these issues; informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and accountability.

### **Informed Consent**

Informed consent as a principle in research study concerns the participants' autonomy whether to be part of the study or quit at any time without any terms and conditions. It is one of the key ethical issues in human research (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). To address, he further suggests that the researcher develops a form acknowledging the participants and informing them about the purpose, duration, and method. In addition, prior consent offers room for the participants to withdraw approval if they are uncomfortable. I informed my research participants orally and assured them that they could deny consent at any point if they are uncomfortable both professionally and personally. I continued collecting information when the participants fully agreed to share their stories.

### **Confidentiality**

Assuring confidentiality in the study is crucial to preserve participants' right to privacy. "Confidentiality is about protecting your research participant's privacy" (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017, p.145). I assured confidentiality in my study not revealing their real names. I have used pseudonyms names for all the participants. I did not discuss the information and identification of my research participants with anyone. Likewise, the information that reveals the participants' identity is not revealed.

**Anonymity**

Maintaining anonymity in research studies ensures privacy, and prevents possible harm to the participants. To preserve anonymity in my study I have not revealed the real names of both participants and the institutions they have been working. Pseudo names are given to all the participants. The stories of the participants are presented as fictional stories.

**Chapter Review**

In this chapter, I presented my philosophical considerations along with my study's epistemology, and axiology. I explained all three assumptions on the baseline of the interpretive paradigm which I selected for my study. I implemented a narrative research design to collect narratives of English language teachers. Moreover, I discussed semi-structured interviews, field notes, and informal conversations as information-generating tools. I presented a brief account of all my participants in a narrative form to comfort the readers who were selected purposively. I followed temporality sociality, verisimilitude, and meaningfulness as a quality standard and used informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity as ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER IV

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ROUTE OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY

It is interesting to share that teaching after the pandemic was largely techno-integrated. Teachers' narration revealed that teachers before the pandemic were less or not aware of digital integration although the government policy is demanding technology integration in education. Corona outbreak invited a new era in education. It resulted in the use and integration of technology in teaching nationwide. The experience possibly left a positive impact on teaching. I believe English language teachers have been integrating technology in language teaching pedagogy. The shift in pedagogy eventually created a new identity in the professional space. Hence, in this chapter, I attempted to explore teachers' stories of their professional journey, their experiences, and the ups and downs they experienced along with the new chapter they encountered due to the Corona outbreak in their professional journey. This chapter also highlights teachers' process of construction and reconstruction of identity in the different phases of their professional life.

In this chapter, I present the answer to the first research question that is "How do English language teachers narrate their professional journey with the adoption of technology in English language teaching and learning?" this chapter also highlights the participants' stories relating to their professional journey along with their technology adoption in the changed scenario. The analysis of the participants' lived realities revealed that they were not interested in using digital skills, although the government trained them. They used digital literacy skills during the pandemic to address the demands of the adverse situations. My participants stories indicated that the pandemic's outbreak teachers faced many challenges adopting to the changing context. As teaching learning moved to virtual mode, they learned to use digital tools and digital resources for teaching. Although they learned digital integration to address the situation, they developed different insights through the digitally integrated classes. The newly developed insight largely changed their teaching when teaching and learning continued in physical mode.

#### **Route of Professional Journey**

Teachers' professional identity is believed to be a construct guided by their roles and practices in the professional space. For instance, when a person enters the

profession as an English teacher, the individual initially gains the identity of an English language teacher. Being a part of the teaching profession, when an individual enters a community of practice, it allows an opportunity to form a different identity (Wenger, 1998). For instance, teachers can change perspectives, change teaching pedagogy and practice, and keep engaged in academic research. Teachers possibly perform roles as per the roles given in the workplace. All the engagements help teachers to construct their identities. Members of CoP possibly construct and reconstruct different identities through their acts and engagement in professional journeys. A community for the teachers is a professional space where they act in professional activities. One of my participants, Mr. Perfect was not sure about joining the teaching profession at the beginning of his career and his teaching was conventional. Mr. Perfect memorizes his early career and identity as an English language teacher, *“Teaching in my early career was completely book-based. Teaching for me was showing my talent and transforming my knowledge. My classes used to be quiet. I was unaware of learners’ interests and choices. My duty as a teacher was to maintain silence and teach. Thus, I was named a strict English language teacher in my early career.”* Mr. Perfect in his early career had different perceptions about teaching. Teaching for him was just a job to transmit knowledge. It reveals his perception about teaching which is just a job of knowledge transmission. Similarly, his strictness with the students and maintaining complete silence in the classroom shows his inexperience with learners’ needs and interests. Mr. Perfect here carved another identity, ‘a strict teacher’. Moreover, Mr. Perfect, as a teacher, was unaware of the curriculum as he stated, *“Honestly speaking I was not aware of the curriculum. But I was informed about it as I was preparing for the exam of teacher’s service commission.”* His sharing shows that his participation in the Teacher Service Commission exam informed him about the curriculum.

Curriculum is an overall plan of teaching and learning. It provides a clear picture of the teaching and learning process. It provides a clear roadmap for the teacher providing why, what, who, when, and how aspects of teaching. A curriculum, according to Calub (2018), is a document that provides information about teaching and learning objectives, course description, teaching methods, materials to use, and ways to evaluate learning outcomes. The definition highlights the significance of the curriculum for teachers. Realizing the importance of the curriculum Mr. Perfect studies, the curriculum of the subjects to be taught before entering the class.

*“Nowadays, as a headteacher, I read the curriculum of all subjects and encourage my colleagues to follow the curriculum in the best possible way. “Keeping himself informed and encouraging his colleagues portrays his supportive nature. Possibly, Mr. Perfect was possibly identified as an informed and encouraging headteacher among his colleagues at that time.*

Mr. Perfect, in a short period, realized a change in his practice. Hence, he turned out to be informed about the curriculum and guided his teaching and learning activities accordingly. On top of all, Mr. Perfect did not limit his learning to himself. He shared it with his colleagues. Thus, his sharing of ideas in his community of practice (Wenger, 1998) paved the way for learning to be a continuous process. During the process, he not only educates himself but also encouraged others to be informed about the curriculum.

Ms. Multitasker, the next participant imagined to be a teacher since her childhood. Interestingly, her story highlights that she used to practice her dream in a game form. Here she stated, *“I could not remember everything clearly, but my mother said that I used to cry if I was not given the role of teacher while playing a game named, ‘teacher-teacher.’”* The statement highlights her keen interest and passion for the profession from her childhood. Her childhood imagination led her to join the education faculty. Ms. Multitasker didn’t think twice about joining an education college. With a big smile, she said: *“After finishing my schooling, I instantly decided to read the subject that paves my way to a teacher.”* Her imagination guided Ms. Multitasker. According to Wenger (1998), imagination is one of the sources of identifications. Wenger further adds that imagination is the process that involves imagining ourselves differently and exploring ways to engage ourselves in a larger space. Her engagement in the aspiring teachers’ course justifies that her imagination led her to the path of identity formation in the professional space.

Connectedly, joining teaching as a career 15 years ago and working continuously trying innovative activities are the engagements that align with her imagination. Moreover, Ms. Multitasker in her early career was a very confident teacher. At the beginning of her career, she created a kind of identity among her students and colleagues. Ms. Multitasker affirmed:

*I was proud to be a teacher and feel proud today as well. Teaching was a passion for me. My keen interest in the profession I believe made me confident. Moreover, I heard so many comments regarding my teaching*

*strategies from my students and colleagues. I was never proud. The acknowledgments encouraged me.*

Her narrations reveal that her passion for the profession became a motivating factor to present herself confidently in the professional space. Professional commitment is the outcome of a deep interest in the profession (Day, 2010). The willingness in the profession makes the learner to work in an innovative way and like the way they do and spend the time with the students. Ms. Multitasker's willingness at the beginning of her career carved the identity of a confident teacher. Her identity as a confident teacher probably was the outcome of her childhood imagination. Although she was confident, her teaching route was largely conventional. She used to think, to be a good teacher like her role model, she had to speak a lot to influence her students. She also articulated: *"I used to find my smartness occupying whole class speaking a lot. giving a lecture in a confident tone."* Mr. Perfect and Ms. Multitasker's prior perception is found quite similar. The meaning of teaching for both of them was knowledge transfer, being a teacher.

Although Ms. Multitasker's teaching method was influenced by her favorite teacher, she soon realized that she had to change her strategy. With a changed mindset, she tuned herself to the changed scenario. Regarding the change in pedagogy, she stated: *"The change is natural and demanding. We must tune ourselves with time."* She changed her teaching strategy and minimized her talking time encouraging her learners to speak and engage in the classroom activities. Here she stated.

*I was very conscious about students' engagement. All four skills of language learning are possible thorough students' active engagement. They can improve their speaking skill by speaking and listening by listening. Therefore, I designed activities engaging activities for teaching vocabulary and language skills.*

Her narration states that although she was identified as a confident teacher in the initial phase, it did not work as she realized she had to do something else to make her teaching and learning much more effective. Her narration affirms the research ideas brought by Varghese et al. (2005) in the study of identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse. The study reports that the identity is discursive, negotiation, and experimental. Following the result of the research study, we can confirm Ms. Multitasker was conscious enough to change her pedagogy. Furthermore, Tsui (2003)

also supports that teachers' identity is the combination of competence in the subject matter and the pedagogical activities they design. Therefore, Ms. Multitasker's competence helped her to change her pedagogy which eventually became a milestone in transforming her identity.

Unlike Ms. Multitasker, Mr. Conversant was uncertain about his career as a teacher. Teaching was not his first choice although he studied teaching-related subjects in grade nine and did teaching practice as a part of his practicum. Moreover, his entry in the profession after the intermediate level in the science stream exam reveals his inner attachment to the teaching profession. Mr. Conversant staring at the ceiling said, *'I joined as a teacher in the school of my village just to engage myself as I was waiting for my result. I taught using my prior experiences of practicum in grade nine.'* Mr. Conversant in his story indicated that his knowledge of practicum in the ninth grade assisted him to be a teacher. Wenger (1998) in his Community of Practice (CoP) argues that learning is a collaborative process. Thus, practicum for the prospective teacher is a strong root to start a career as a teacher as it provides an opportunity to learn from both mentors and peers. A study conducted reveals learners learn from other members of the community. Strong bonding among the participants of CoP helps an individual to construct an identity in the professional journey (El Masry & Alzaanin, 2021). Therefore, The practicum team became a learning community for the teachers as stated by Wenger.

Mr. Conversant's career route was unbelievable in the sense he joined the profession for a short engagement and continued with grand success. The history of his success in the TSC exam and promotion denotes his growing passion for teaching profession. He recounts his memory, *"I was selected as a primary teacher in 1989. Then, got selected as a secondary-level English teacher in 2003. After that, I was promoted to second class in 2012 and now, I am 1<sup>st</sup> class secondary teacher."* Passing the TSC exam and journey to a first-class Secondary-level teacher, I believe is a rare achievement. His story revealed that the root of his success was not only passion as stated by Ms. Multitasker. His career story signifies continuous work is the key to arousing passion and success in each career path.

Mr. Conversant was digitally literate, he was influenced by his teacher teaching in M. Phil. classes. He, for the first time, participated in the class with Power Point presentations during 2003. On this, he stated:

*I shifted to a bigger city in 2003. The school in the city was resourceful. At the same time, I enrolled in an M.Phil. program at Tribhuvan University (TU) where I observed my teachers' using slides. It was the first time I saw slide presentations, and from there I brought the concept of teaching sharing slides and started preparing my classes on slides. Later, I shared the ideas with the principal and encouraged all the teachers to prepare slides. The school gave some incentives for the teachers who prepare slides and present in the class. During that time, we were the first to use slides for teaching in the district.*

His story of using digital tools for teaching 20 years ago indicates his transformative practice. Mr. Conversant did not limit his expertise to himself. Teaching is a profession where a teacher creates space, social respect, and identity through transformative pedagogical practices sharing expertise with other professionals (Sapkota, 2017). Mr. Conversant's transformative pedagogy is the outcome of digital knowledge and skills that shifted his traditional book-based learning to PowerPoint presentations. Mr. Conversant was a person with a growth mindset. His enrollment in the M.Phil. program to update himself was a significant point to prove his progressive nature. On top of all, the adoption of digital practice in the classroom, sharing ideas with the school authority, and encouraging colleagues to innovative practices show his dynamic identity in the professional space. His strong commitment and interaction with his colleagues and school authority to transform the practice and their working community possibly left a strong image among his friends and community. A research study reported that teachers' strong commitment and dedication to improving the existing community of practice could bring long-term change in an individual and the whole community (Au, 2002). Another study conducted on the relationship between professional identity and autonomy reveals that teachers develop their professional skills when they get a chance to work autonomously (Dilek & Altas, 2022). Mr. Conversant's created a small community to introduce digitally integrated teaching. His story spotlights his autonomous engagements that paved the way for identity formation, and autonomous digital practice from the very beginning.

Ms. Critical's professional route, on the other hand, was strongly connected with English music. She was fond of listening English music. Her interest in English music and learning enthusiasm was the root of her professional route. Although she was born into a banker's family, she had never revealed that she was allured with the



tip-top readiness of her family members during office time. Similarly, the decision to join the teaching profession during her profession paved the way for the profession. She also confirmed, *“I joined a school as a teacher to spend my leisure time during my term break. I gradually started enjoying the job. Two years passed like two months.”* She revealed that two years of professional engagement helped her realize her inner potential in teaching. In due course, her commitment to get certified as an English teacher was a good example of her growing passion for the profession. With the same passion, she has been in the profession for 20 years. She recounts her story;

*Teaching, I believe is always a noble profession. Thus, it demands updating and sharpening skills. Children of this digital era are very smart and innovative. To solve the challenges while dealing with them, we have to think like them be like them. From the very beginning, I was quite confident in the content knowledge. However, I explored for new strategies to cope with students with diverse natures and backgrounds. Therefore, enrolled in Kathmandu University for a master's degree in English language education.*

Ms. Critical's story demonstrates that she was quite aware of the paradigm shift resulting from the development of science and technology. Adopting the gravity of the profession, she prepared herself. Her awareness of the transitional scenario in the professional space and her imagination to bring strategic change to cope with the expectations and needs of the students highlight her inner imagination that she wants to materialize. Additionally, her enrollment in the university degree aligns with her imagination to use innovative strategies and new possibilities to cope with the new generations expectations possibly a step to shape a new status in the professional step.

To summarize, all the participants, Mr. Perfect, MS. Multitasker, Mr. Conversant, and Ms. Critical possess a similar professional route. They were from different social and family backgrounds; their professional route was quite similar. Interestingly, except Ms., Multitasker none of them were willing to join the teaching profession as a career. Nevertheless, all three participants were found to be equally contented and progressive like Ms. Multitasker. All the participants envisioned career in the teaching profession and aligned their activities accordingly. Further, the participants engaged innovatively to shape their professional duty and image in the changing scenario.

### **The Turning Point**

The Covid outbreak was first identified in 2019. The situation blowout affected more than 200 countries in world. It compelled people to quarantine for a long time, and gradually government of Nepal decided to open a few sectors with some safety measures. However, educational institutions were closed forcefully maintain social distancing, which severely impacted the education sector in the majority of developing countries. UNICEF (2021) reported that many children were dislocated from the educational mainstream. In the meantime, the government of Nepal announced a lockdown from 24 March 2020. Most importantly, the National Educational Board postponed the School Education Examination (SEE) on the eleventh hour. Schools reopening was seen impossible. Schools were in the condition to lose the academic year 2020. To overcome the fear of losing academic year the alternative mode of teaching and learning was introduced. To respond the immediate situation, academic institutions started running classes in virtual mode by their initiation. Hence, the pandemic became one of the turning points for the commencement of digital teaching and learning.

Shift in teaching and learning was a must for all teaching professional to survive in the profession. Teachers with growth mindsets learned to use the gadgets and online platforms a bit faster than teachers with fixed mindsets' who believed that they were experienced and we were good enough with the way they had been doing. Mr. Perfect recollects his memory;

*I was little aware of technology handling. However, I have not directly used my skills, ideas, and digital platforms in my teaching and learning. When other institutions started teaching in virtual mode. first of all, I decided to meet my colleagues in Zoom for the very first time. Most of my colleagues were completely ignorant about online teaching. I facilitated them for a month and started searching for possibilities for students. Sluggishly, we started virtual teaching with grades 11 and 12. Later we tried to conduct the classes at the junior level as well.*

Mr. Perfect was the head of the institution, he also narrated that he was digitally literate. Although he didn't use his digital skills for language teaching, before the pandemic, he used to employ digital literacy skills for administrative work. Initial step he had chosen was helping the colleagues, which revealed that some of the growth mindset teachers like him were somehow literate and digitally informed

before the turning point. His imagination (image of possibilities of starting virtual classes) and engagement to facilitate his colleague, in the difficult situation probably, created an image of a positive mindset and digitally informed teacher and school leader among his colleagues. His engagement with the community of practice, and his imagination to execute virtual teaching step by step tiled an image of a strategic personality and heroic figure among his co-workers. Therefore, the pandemic I believe is a turning point that obligated teachers to imagine the profession in the virtual mode and align their engagement to fulfill the demands in the existing circumstances with great collaboration and co-operation.

Mr. Conversant narrated a similar story of how he brought existing knowledge to the students' and teachers' learning. Like Mr. Perfect, he was offered the role of a facilitator. On the same he stated, *“Personally, due to my prior knowledge, I was ready to teach virtually. However, my colleagues were illiterate in digital knowledge. So, I gave priority to them and facilitated for two weeks. After that, I was requested to facilitate teachers across the country.”* His sharing highlighted that he was experienced as well as digitally informed. Performing the role of an administrator. The digital skill of both teachers was valued; the turning point provided the value of the skills they gained earlier. As they narrated both of the teachers gained the digital skill on their own. Their investment in digital learning was appreciated. Hence, Mr. Perfect and Mr. Conversant both earned the digitally learned teachers' status. English language teachers' who were in teaching profession for more than a decade never even imagined teaching beyond book, chalk, duster, and lecture, pictured new pathways in the teaching profession. Teaching professionals who perceived their educational degree was enough for teaching until their retirement also realized the significance of digital literacy skill. Ms. Multitasker narrated:

*I am in the profession for more than 15 years. Before the pandemic, I had got opportunity to participate in trainings and seminars that taught us how to integrate technology into the curriculum. However, it was limited to training. Frankly speaking, we didn't try to use it in the class. But the pandemic created such a circumstance where digital platforms became the most. Thus, the ideas learned during training and workshops worked. I easily learned to teach in the virtual platform, using YouTube videos, English songs, movies, and different sites that I learned in training. I was competent to handle digital platforms for*

*teaching purposes, although I could not handle apps like Google Classroom in the initial stage.*

Ms. Multitasker's story highlighted that digital integration in teaching and learning was prioritized before the pandemic. The government was conscious of the significance of ICT integration in teaching and learning. Therefore, the government of Nepal trained teachers. The Ministry of Information and Communication stated that ICT integration in education will be focused on prioritizing training for teachers (MoIC, 2015). Ms. Multitasker deeply admitted that although teachers were trained, most teachers didn't implement the training skills, they learned during the training sessions. The sudden COVID outbreak obligated the teachers to use and digital platform for teaching and learning purposes. The immediate situation demanded teachers learn how to use devices, different digital platforms, and digital information for teaching and learning purposes. Her story reveals that if the scenario had not changed, teachers would not have implemented knowledge and skills they gained during the training sessions. They would not learn to use digital information for teaching and learning purposes. To address the immediate scenario teacher participants employed their prior knowledge. They further learned advanced digital literacy skills to use and integrate digital modes and resources to address obligatory situations. A study conducted on university teachers' identity construction using ICT tools in teaching and learning depicted that teachers' competency in digital literacy carves a new identity among students and colleagues because those who can handle digital devices are named modern teachers (Yazici & Atay, 2023). In this regard, the immediate situation became a milestone for the teachers to prove government's investment in teachers' training is not a waste, it aligns with the imagination of the policies and plans made for the integration of ICT in education. Ms. Critical narrated slightly different ideas;

*Teaching in my early career was conventional. However, I didn't limit my classes to the textbook. I used to bring printed materials to my classroom. I used to take my students to multimedia at least once a month. Moreover, I used to use CDs that were gifted to me. However, teaching virtually was entirely a new practice that I did after the pandemic.*

Her narration shows that teaching virtually was a turning point for all the participants. The digital platform was completely new to a few participants; however, it was familiar to others. Narration of all the teachers' participants reveals that

majority of the participants initiated their digital engagement by themselves. Teachers first literate themselves with digital skills and knowledge and then facilitated other teachers to use digital platform and resources in the English language classroom. Teachers' engagement during the pandemic changed teachers' status to some extent. The process can be connected to Wenger (1998) concept of Community of Practice (CoP), all the teachers whose common interest was to literate themselves to teach virtually were facilitated by two of the participants in the study. It reveals CoP is the best learning space. A study conducted to examine how the technology-based learning community supported EFL teachers' experience in language teaching practice revealed that teachers connected with CoP provided them strong support to be literate with Google functions and apps for professional development (Dewi, 2022). Therefore, participants in this study learned to use Zoom as a virtual teaching platform for the first time and other Google platforms through their engaging connection with Co p.

To summarize, the pandemic became a turning point for getting informed about new modes of teaching. The turning point introduced a new episode in teaching professional's career.

### **So Many Mentors**

“Learning starts from the cradle and ends in the grave.” A common proverb highlights learning is a continuous process that happens at any time and in any form. A human baby starts learning from its mother, family members, siblings, and friends and, goes to formal schooling. The baby then learns from teachers for a long time. Learning is contextual, sometimes it is goal-oriented and sometimes happens without any plan. Learning to integrate digital platforms for English language teaching, selecting the right materials, presenting in the class, and solving the immediate problem was full of challenges for teachers when teaching and learning changed to alternative mode, ‘online mode’. The government of Nepal announced to use alternative modes without showing concern about the internet facility, availability of devices, teachers, and students' readiness. Thus, teachers during the phase were in or die situation. Teachers responded the situation by learning from different people and means. Mr. Perfect in his story implied:

*I was always curious to learn new ideas. I kept myself engaged with digital platforms. I surfed the internet whenever I was free and learned innovative ideas. So, I am a self-guided learner. Although I was a self-guided learner,*

*there were so many ideas that I had to learn to execute in an alternative mode. I learned from webinars conducted by Nepal English Language Teachers Association (NELTA) where I met experts whom I never expected to meet. Besides, I learned from my colleagues. My role as a facilitator demanded me to explore more. I engaged myself day and night to make myself fit in the role of a facilitator.*

The narration by Mr. Perfect pinpoints that he was a self-guided learner who kept himself updated through digital engagements. He also revealed that he sharpened his digital exploration due to the long school closure. He solved issues he was not clear from national and international webinars conducted by NELTA. He also solved immediate issues from his colleagues having open discussions even during their tea time. On top of all, he learned from his participants while facilitating them. Therefore, Mr. Perfect himself as a teacher was ready to cope with immediate challenges. Besides, national and international webinar facilitator, his colleagues, and teacher participants from diverse backgrounds taught him to be a digitally literate teacher. MS. Multitasker shared a quite similar story of being a digitally literate teacher:

*I am pursuing an M.Phil. degree from distance mode education. Reading materials, writing, and sharing assignments demanded lots of digital learning and engagement. Therefore, I explored whatever the situation demanded. Moreover, my husband who was a bit more informed in digital tools handling supported me. Later, the university managed a few classes to help the learner to use digital platforms, and different sites for the learning process. Moreover, I joined several webinars during the pandemic organized by the NELTA center and NELTA Bagmati, trainings conducted by the municipality helped me to be confident in handling devices and using learning platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom and using digital information for teaching and learning.*

Her narration is quite similar to Mr. Perfect's. She learned a lot from self-initiation to improve as a scholar in an open university. Besides, she also participated in webinars conducted by NELTA and municipality. Moreover, she also memorizes her husband's contribution to her digital literacy. Hence, she claims her enthusiasm, her husband's support, and webinars were her teachers who facilitated to be literate digitally.

Similarly, Ms. Conversant narrated:

*I was little informed about digital tools and their use by my teachers during my M.Phil. Then, I attended a few webinars. I also learned while facilitating my colleagues and other participants across the country, I attended some workshops that taught the teacher how to integrate ICT into teaching and learning. However, I learned whatever I needed from my interests.*

Mr. Conversant's narration portrays he was a self-guided learner. However, he sharpened his digital skills by attending webinars, and his colleagues. Besides, he also learnt ideas while facilitating training sessions. Ms. Critical on the other hand, shares her diverse narration regarding her mentor.

*I loved to learn new ideas from anywhere and anyway. Teaching in the new platform was not easy. Therefore, I visited YouTube tutorials and Google to learn digital skills required to conduct online classes. In addition, I learned to solve immediate issues from my colleagues. My daughters also became my mentor since they were more techno-savvy than me. On top of all, I solved many minor issues while classes were running with the help of my students. Most importantly, I attended Webinars conducted by NELTA, which helped me a lot.*

Ms. Critical's narration portrays that her route of learning was similar to other participants. Her narration exposed a crucial aspect of the teaching profession that is learning happens even during the classes. The classroom is the best platform for learning for both students and teachers. Teaching, in my opinion, never happens without learning. My long experience in teaching taught me to be an enthusiastic learner to be a good teacher. Thus, she learned from her daughters, colleagues, students, and webinars. Ms. Critical further said, "Nowadays, I am learning so many innovative ideas and strategies from social media as well." She believes social media is the best platform to learning and sharing ideas.

The majority of the participants in the study revealed that digital learning during the pandemic was largely supported by national and international webinars. Baskota (2022, in his success story as an English language teacher, reveals that joining national and international conferences became a milestone for his learning. Baskota further shares his enthusiasm in conferences indicating his learning enthusiasm.

To summarize, learning is a continuous process. It takes place anytime and anyway. So, teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be broad enough and change their

mindset, to accept new challenges, and learn a new web of learning. Learning in the global era isn't confined to the four walls of school and teachers.

### **Learning to Learn Unlearn and Relearn in the Digital Space**

The 21st century is widely known as the digital age. Knowledge and information are captured in digital form. Teaching and learning are also influenced by digital practices. English language is the language of science and technology as it has gained the status of a global language. In this respect, technological changes largely impacted ELT. Therefore, integrating technology in English language teaching is pertinent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The pandemic forced to change existing educational and instructional modalities to digital, blending, or hybrid modalities to recover learning achievement Ministry of Education Science and Technology [MOEST], 2021).

Teaching professionals attempted to change modality to cope with the immediate challenges. When they use digital tools and resources, they realize the essence of integrating digital tools in language teaching. Therefore, this study focuses on the digital literacy practices of English language teachers to cope with the challenges after the pandemic. Under the theme in this chapter, I will discuss all my participant's stories and information on digital practices for the teaching and learning process.

Teacher's digital practices in this study enflamed to a larger space after the pandemic. The digital world before the Pandemic was believed to be limited to entertainment. Majority of cell phone users limited the devices to calls, chat, and entertainment. However, a handful of people I believe are using cell phones for other purposes such as learning for professional development and using directly for professional purposes. Ms. Critical narrated how she continued her journey in the virtual classroom.

*Zoom platform at the very beginning was completely a new experience for all the teachers like me. At first, I struggled to schedule classes in Zoom. Meanwhile, students also struggled to join with the given password in Messenger (a social networking platform) In a loud tone she spoke, do you believe I was so pleased when I learned to share the link for the first time, I have never heard about the link system before.*

Ms. Critical shared her story. Ms. Critical is teaching in Zoom (a digital platform used for teaching purposes), and her happiness in learning to share links in place of Zoom ID reveals her level of digital practice. It shows she was never aware of such platforms earlier. Thus, Ms. Critical was in the phase to be literate herself.



She then was the learner of new literacy. The theory of behaviorism claims that learning takes place bit by bit. As per the theory, Ms. Critical continued her digital practice. Regarding her digital practice, she narrated:

*I used to surf text-related videos songs to teach grammar, and used to save on desktop, because I was not confident enough to save the file in any other locations. Gradually, I learned to save files in folders and share it in my class. I was not satisfied with these skills, later, I joined, a week-long webinar and learned to use Google doc, Quizzes.com ...and different authentic sites like English learning sites of the British Council and American, sites of the Curriculum Development Center.*

Ms. Critical's learning to search, saved the materials in a particular platform, and ability to share in the classroom was another step of digital learning. Her ability to choose suitable information from various sources, manage information, and be critical in using particular sites are all digital literacy practices (Bawden, 2001). Mr. Critical shared that used technology for teaching grammar, language aspects and skills. Ms. Critical employed app like quiz.com to teach vocabulary lesson. Sites she used British Council specially prepared for teaching English, which she used in language classroom. All her practices reveal how she evolved as a techno-friendly teacher.

Teaching in the virtual mode was a great challenge in the beginning. However, her continuous practice and enthusiastic nature helped her to improve her teaching in a virtual setting. *"I tried almost all the strategies and techniques that I learned in the workshop. Among them, I found padlet.com and meti.com largely useful to make the classes interactive even in the virtual mode."* Her narration highlights her level of consciousness. Ms. Critical's consciousness regarding learners' active participation in the virtual classroom was praiseworthy. She further learned varieties of activities to enhance learners' English language proficiency. Ms. Critical engaged her students to write a four-line poem in the Padlet link for interactive and collaborative learning. She also shared all the poems in the class by the end of the class and asked the students to read the poems created by them. Her activities were both engaging and motivating to language learners to enhance their creative writing skill and reading skills.

Ms. Critical's engagement was not limited to learning to teach in the digital mode but also for learning purposes as a scholar. Regarding her scholarly digital practice, she asserted;

*My university resumed the classes in virtual mode as the face-to-face mode was uncertain. That maximized my digital engagement. I engaged myself in the digital platform for searching and downloading books and journals, doing assignments, and reading books and journals available in digital form. My learning activities transformed into a digital mode from printed materials.*

Her story reveals that she engaged herself both as a teacher and student learner. Ms. Critical story articulated her progressive journey to a digitally literate teacher. Buchanan (2015) exemplifies teacher's self-guided engagement is an opportunity for the self-formation, teachers' self-initiation and engagement is the route of identity formation. Ms. Critical is a teacher who started digital practice from a small level, and is learning to schedule meetings and share links now can confidently use digital platforms for searching, storing, sharing evaluating, and receiving information. According to Bawden (2001), All the skills mentioned are digital literacy skills. Hence, Ms. Critical is considered a digitally literate teacher. Ms. Critical's digital engagement evolved in several stages. First, she learned to use digital tools, then, learned to use digital resources as a scholar unlearning printed and traditional materials.

Relatedly, Ms. Critical's narration assures that she invested her quality time in the digital environment to be familiar with the platform, she also invested her time in preparing slides and learning to use different sites. I used the term investment coined by Bonney Norton since I find it suitable. Norton used the term to relate how language learners' investment in language learning helps them acquire cultural capital. However, I have adopted the term to refer to language teachers' investment in digital engagement and the value they acquire in their professional space (Norton, 2010). Ms. Critical's investment in the digital environment probably helped her to acquire an identity of a techno-friendly teacher in the professional space which is a kind of acknowledgment she gained in her professional space.

Mr. Perfect on the other hand has a different story about his journey to digital practices. As stated earlier he was tech-savvy before the pandemic. Mr. Perfect was digitally literate as he stated, *"I used lots of time in the digital platform, I learned innovative ideas myself and tried it. I provide technological support to my friend in their paper writing and thesis writing."* Mr. Perfect's sharing implies that he was digitally literate and he was confident to provide technology-related support to his friends. He believes he still has a lot to learn. He expressed, *"I heard about video*

*conferencing apps. But used it for the first time to hold meetings with my colleagues during the pandemic. I learned to maximize my engagement in the digital platform.*” Mr. Perfect's narration prioritized the essence of learning digital skills. His stories are the evidence of learning process that is a never-ending. When people join a profession, they are identified as a certain kind of personality what we call identity here. However, over time individual's identity weakens and demands new knowledge and update. Gnawali (2008) argues that teachers' learning, practices, and all preparation for professional development help them to cope with the challenges they face and the new responsibilities they get in the professional space. Gnawali's claim encourages teachers to keep themselves ready for possible responsibility and challenges in the future. Having learned about the significance of new learnings and practices Mr. Perfect kept himself engaged with the digital platform. One of the important learnings for him was meeting with professionals like him. *“My meeting with the professional during the sessions helped me to grow professionally. Moreover, the immediate situation has provided me ample opportunity to enroll in the Massive Online Course [MOOC]”* Thus, Mr. Perfect's digital literacy practice was not limited to facilitating colleagues, it guided him to the wider space in the digital world.

Professional sharing for Mr. Perfect became a boon to share and solve professional issues. A professional group what Gee calls an affinity group (group of people with common interests Gee (2000) in his identity study is one of the best ways to identity formation. The group discussion encouraged him to enroll in the MOOC Course. MOOCs turn out to be one of the sources of professional growth and digital identity construction. Therefore, the affinity group that is considered as one of the components of identity construction in Gee's identity as an analytic lens of research in Education functioned as the milestone to form an identity as a teacher who engages in online courses (digital platforms) for professional growth. A study conducted on teachers' digital identity revealed that enrollment in online courses develops teachers' interaction and awareness of the digital environment and resources providing ample opportunity to contribute to the online learning process and construct digital identity (Engeness, 2021). The study is quite inspiring to the teacher who wants to digitalize their teaching in meaningful teaching. Teaching is not sharing knowledge; it is sharing experience.

Mr. Perfect was a blogger. He states, *“I loved to share my professional stories, my learning, personal reflection bitterness in my blog.”* Blogging is another aspect of

his digital practice that he is using to share himself with a large audience. Gee (2000) defines blogging as a digital literacy practice that develops competence and deep understanding. Mr. Perfect's identification as a blogger in the digital platform as Gee stated established his critical understanding in his professional era.

Sharing ideas and experiences on digital practice and engagement for the teaching and learning process during the pandemic and after the pandemic situation was a noteworthy part of shaping an identity in the professional space. Teachers' digital engagement and knowledge are expected to transfer to the classroom so that it would facilitate the learner bringing variety. However, observing students' backgrounds closely displayed the dark side of virtual teaching and integrating technology for teaching and learning mainly in the remote area of Kavre District. However, teachers' attempt to continue the teaching process was admirable.

Ms. Multitasker shared the bitter but true reality of her online teaching in the remote village where children from poor economic status study.

*The concept of online teaching was a great idea during school closure. However, we could not conduct classes due to a lack of devices and internet access for students. Majority of the parents didn't have a smartphone. Thus, although we had created a Google account for our students, we were failing to connect them with the school. So, the school family decided to reach their house with some printed activities to engage the learners.*

The aforementioned accounts reveal that teachers from their side did their best to connect the students in the digital platform. Teachers' engagement in making students Google ID demonstrates Ms. Multitasker's digital literacy skills. Creating a Google ID demands so many steps to go with. Ms. Multitasker's digital engagement for searching and creating activities having printed form incorporates many digital skills. Regarding the activities she stated, *"I downloaded some pictures and instructed them to describe it with a sample description. Similarly, for the juniors, I prepared a collection of pictures related to household material and stuff used in school and asked them to name them."*

Ms. Multitasker's digital engagement in picture collection, sample writing, and preparing a variety of materials depicts she was trying to bring variety in language teaching shows her confidence and ability to handle different activities such as searching pictures, downloading, saving in particular destinations, and sample writing in the digital environment. MS. Multitasker in this context seems to use

different materials freely in her language class. Previous researchers who studied identity construction revealed that teachers love to be updated and employ multimodal materials to ensure learners' competency and assimilate them in an internationally standardized language learning process freely, which the teachers believe helps them to construct professional identity (Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014). Although the study focused on the prospective teacher, its finding supports Ms. Multitasker's practices in different settings as the path of identity construction is similar since all the teachers work to achieve a common goal in the professional space irrespective of geographical region and ethnic group.

Ms. Multitasker did not limit her digital literacy to teaching purposes, *"a few years back, I spent plenty of my leisure time on the digital platform. I read books, and journals, did my assignments, and mailed it to my teacher."* Ms. Multitasker believes that teaching is a profession that demands a quick update on the part of the teachers as they have to cope with students having diverse backgrounds, interests, and problems. Thus, she joined a higher degree in distance mode. *"I completed my master's in 2068 10 years ago. Therefore, I decided to update myself to fit in the changed curriculum."* Curriculum experts strongly advocate that the curriculum needs to be reviewed in five years and changed in 10 years. In the same manner, teacher in my opinion needs to update to cope with new challenges. Ms. Multitasker was talking about the rapid growth of science and technology and its impact on the teaching and learning process.

Connectedly, teachers' discourse these days moves around motivation, and patience of students. Students before 10 years and now are completely changed. We, teachers, need to be tactful enough to grab the attention of digital natives (students after the 20<sup>th</sup> century are named as digital generation due to their deep interest and engagement with the digital environment). *"The degree I am pursuing now is largely helpful for me to cope with new challenges: I am trying to equip myself with digital knowledge and ideas to motivate today's learner."* In the light of aforementioned information, she was conscious of professional development and the significance of being updated in the teaching profession.

On top of all, Ms. Multitasker was also found appearing on a digital platform with English classes on the behalf of Centre for Human Resource and Development (CHERD). All her engagements in the digital environment, progressive thinking, and act reveal she is leading herself to a new identity in the professional space. Presenting herself as a teacher in the digital platform through video is a part of identity

expansion. According to Norton (2013), teachers are provided a new opportunity and platform to shape their identity expanding the use of technology for professional development in the globalized world. As stated by Norton all the participants are trying their best to use digital technology both for teaching and learning purposes and change their conventional way of teaching. Rai (2022) explored teachers' strategies to cope pandemic that revealed, English language teachers updated themselves with ICT skills in English language teaching to cope with the immediate challenges. All the participants in the study were updated themselves with digital knowledge and skills with self-initiation.

Mr. Conversant's digital literacy practice was quite different in the sense, that other participants largely focused their practice on language teaching purposes in the language classroom whereas his literacy skill is valued as an expert. He engaged himself in enhancing the digital skills of teachers across the country. His role as facilitator contributed to his identity as an expert. Mr. Conversant's institutional role as a facilitator as a facilitator was beneficial, *"I learned to facilitate and learn from my participants' experience"*. here his D-identity, is one of the identity components of Gee (2000-2001), according to him D-identity is constructed based on the roles and responsibilities given to an individual and the individual's alignment to perform the particular role. *"I know I was not an expert to facilitate teachers. However, my new role forced me to learn more. So, I explored the ideas on which I am not sure having contact with friends and familiar digital experts."* Mr. Conversant's concentration on his role and commitment to exploring the ideas and readiness to facilitate teachers were the practices that paved the way for the identity formation of a digitally literate teacher. his digital practice on the other hand helped him to construct a new identity in the professional world.

Connectedly, we can link the equivalent story of D-identity construction. Mr. Perfect helped the government by providing expert services to the teachers. Like Mr. Conversant Mr. Perfect also constructed D-identity through his ability to use digital tools and information for the teaching and learning process.

### **Digital Practice in New Normal**

Teaching before the pandemic was less techno-based and technology-integrated. The pandemic forced educators to use technology for teaching and learning purposes in virtual mode. Teaching during the pandemic was not limited to a platform or an alternative classroom. The pandemic opened several possibilities in

language teaching and learning. Language teachers explored innovative and creative ways to integrate technology into language teaching. Teachers created a new identity what Giddens (1991) calls self-identity. Self-identity according to Giddens, is something that is created and sustained. In the light of Giddens's definition of identity, the identity of the digital literate teachers, their knowledge and skills acquired to teach in digital platform demands continuation when teaching goes on face-to-face mode. The term new normal is used in the sense that language teaching in the post-COVID situation predicts a pedagogical shift (something different than the teaching before the pandemic). Thus, the discussion under this theme evolves around teachers' digital integration to develop new pedagogy and to continue their identity as stated by Giddens (1991) identities are constructed continuously for language teaching and learning in post-COVID situations (new-normal).

Technology integration in education is highly demanded to cope with the genuine demand of the generation born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to bring the concept in the implementation both Tribhuvan University and its affiliated universities offered ICT courses in B.Ed. and M.Ed. in preservice teachers' courses (MOE, 2013). Moreover, Kathmandu University, a reputed university in my knowledge on the other hand has been running its educational program in virtual mode during and after the pandemic. On top of all, technology integration is kept in high priority by the first ICT policy. All the aspects of education will be taught by integrating ICT (MOE, 2013). Observing the scenario concerned with policy reveals discourse of ICT integration is much older than the Covid pandemic that led education to the integration by hook or crook. The concept of ICT integration was fertile by corona outbreak, we must be thankful for the unforeseen circumstances that led us to the shift in teaching mode. Discussion within this theme evolves around teachers' digital integration practices and perception of the new normal.

Mr. Conversant Shared that he could not bring a notable change in teaching and learning by integrating technology. However, his perspectives on teaching were largely changed. *“Nowadays, I do not enter the class carrying the course book. I use downloaded books available on the smart board. It is solving the problems of those students who forget books.”* It reveals that Mr. Conversant shifted his teaching from printed materials to digital material. Moreover, Mr. Conversant has been using digital device to read the material aloud using the option 'loud reading'. *‘I sometimes use YouTube videos; I played it for five minutes and ask my students to share their*

*understanding mainly to teach speaking skill. However, this practice I believe integrates listening and critical thinking skills.*” Mr. Conversant who was digitally sound during the 60s unlikely to change his teaching pedagogy in the new normal. His digital practices were very limited in the context where classes were equipped with all the tools and he was digitally literate enough to integrate and create a robust identity during the pandemic playing the role of facilitator among his colleagues and teachers across the country. A notable point here is Mr. Conversant is a school leader and he contributed a lot to equip the school with all digital technology. He is still working to make his smart school. In light of the information Mr. Conversant’s identity that was shaped during the pandemic was continued as an institutional leader. He has been keeping himself engaged in digital platforms to receive mail, send mail, download materials, and visit different sites. However, his identity as an English teacher remained almost the same.

Regarding technology integration in language teaching, Mr. Conversant was positive. However he admits, he can’t integrate it fully due to a lack of preparation and time limitations. *“Digitalizing language classroom would surely bring positive impact in English language teaching, but it demands teachers’ preparation before entering class. Similarly, teaching English with digital integration is time-consuming.”* Mr. Conversant's information reveals that teachers are less likely to prepare their lessons at home. Teachers’ concentration on finishing the course rather than on students learning and their achievement. It’s not only Mr. Conversant, other teachers teaching in the same intuitions are not using technology in the new normal. Mr. Conversant's response to teaching in the new normal I found is quite surprising: *Now, in the new normal, our school is equipped with smart boards and projectors. We have 3 smart boards and 9 projectors, and almost all the teachers have managed laptops. However, very few teachers use these devices. They are back to conventional lecture methods and textbook teaching.*

This sharing highlights that government schools are highly resourceful in terms of devices. Each classroom containing a device supports digital integration in teaching and learning. The school was supportive of shifting their teaching practice in the new normal. Surprisingly, the majority of teachers stopped using technology. It is revealing that in the new normal teachers' workplace is changed getting more equipped with new devices. However, its implementational part was weak. Other



teachers along with Mr. Conversant was reluctant to use the devices rather they seem to go back to the route before the pandemic, textbook with sage on the method.

Another participant Mr. Perfect shared appealing information in his digital engagement in the new normal.

*Digital knowledge and engagement in the new normal are a means to fill the professional gap. Nowadays, I am writing in a blog. I developed the blog as my writing space where I have been sharing my experiences, feelings, and small innovative practices I tried in my class. Recently, I wrote an article on 'curriculum le dekauna nasakeko bato'. Such sharing connects us to the professional network and even the concern authority. People like me shared their understanding of the issues. Such informal sharing in the digital platform is helping me to be clear on doubts related to policy.*

Both Mr. Perfect and Mr. Conversant created the identity of facilitator and digitally literate teacher. However, Mr. Conversant minimized his digital practice when teaching went on face-to-face mode. Conversely, Mr. Perfect is widening his digital engagement as a blog writer, and using his blog as a space to post professional experiences and innovative practices reveals his active engagement in the digital platform. Moreover, another pertinent aspect of his engagement is being critical to the policies, and questioning the authority through digital means seems to be an entirely professional and healthy practice to sort out the issues. His sharing according to him is a question for the authority and warning and information for his mutual friends who visit and read his post. Mr. Perfect's engagement is not only the continuation of the identity he constructed during the pandemic, it's the process of creating identity through mutual participation in a diverse community (Wenger,1998). A research study conducted earlier exposed that teachers can use multiple communities for their professional development (Nguyen, 2017). Mr. Perfect has been engaging in a blog. Blog for him is the writing platform where writing enthusiast reads and comments. They form a community of bloggers. The blog for him is a community where he created an identity. Burns and Richard (2009) explained that a teacher's identity can be created in different settings through different enactments. Thus, his blog sharing with his mutual friends (professionals with similar interests) is one of the prominent engagements in a community different than a classroom.

Furthermore, Mr. Perfect shares the link to his blog post and asks them to read the materials and give their opinion or do some productive language learning

activities based on the text. *“Beauty of the practice is that students read the text written in English with interest when they find the text written by their teacher [...] My writing often puts my students as the main characters. They read it time and again as it is about them and their classroom”*. Wow, aspects of his practice were innovative and creative ways of teaching reading skill in English language teaching. Mr. Perfect’s awareness to engage the learner in the digital platform providing link of the post was worthy for two reasons, Firstly, to encourage the learner to use digital platforms like blog.com, and vlog.com for language learning purposes. Secondly, using reconstructed local knowledge as stated by Canagarajah, (2002). Canagarajah (2002) defines local knowledge is the knowledge developed by professionals based on their everyday social practice and professional experience, and that is not legitimized by an authentic body. This highlights another significant aspect that is of providing the text where learners are the main characters, where learner find their story and emotions, is the key source that motivates learners in the language learning process.

Connectedly, Mr. Perfect in the new normal never enters the class without his laptop. He believes teaching with digital integration reduces teachers talking time and increases learners’ engagement. *“Every day I enter the class with some digital materials, and I design the materials myself (video lessons, poem recitation in my voice, grammar quizzes, vocabulary quizzes). If time does not support me, I manage to use materials given in the digital platform.”* His narration implies that he has is equating technology with creativity. Mr. Perfect was engaged in technology and his engagement in reading materials production was a drastic pedagogical shift in the new normal as he did not use technology in his language classroom for learning purposes.

Mr. Perfect’s digital engagement was not limited here. Before the pandemic, he was just an English teacher. During the pandemic he was a digital literature teacher and a facilitator, now in the new normal he has continued his digital engagement and evolving in the professional space. He recounts his practice:

*Last month I was called to train teachers by the training center in Dhulikhel. I was there to train them on how to integrate technology into English language classroom. During the session, I didn’t share any theory. Instead, I shared with them what I had been doing in the classroom. I did share my blog and posts. I found that the teachers were fascinated.*

Mr. Perfect’s modernized performance sure to transform this identity. Lava and Wenger (1991) argue that an individual transforms their identity when they

accomplish a new task and develop a different understanding. In light of the argument, Mr. Perfect has been performing many new tasks such as creating his videos, developing quizzes, and vocabulary games seem to be the new tasks he performed in his professional space. Additionally, he was found to be engaging in different activities, writing in a blog, using his self-written text for teaching purposes, and sharing his practices in the training sessions his transformative practices that he performed all the tasks digital platform. Mr. Perfect's daily digital practice in his professional space indicates that he was paving the way to construct new identity. Wenger (1998) defines an identity is not what other thinks about a person or what you think about you, it is day to and lived construct that happens through one's practice. Wenger's definition strongly supports that Mr. Perfect's digital literacy practice in the new normal was flooring a robust way to identity construction.

Additionally, Mr. Perfect maintained a strong bond with his students. Few months back, I was scrolling my cell phone and found it was Mr. Perfect's birthday. I wished him a happy birthday. In the meantime, I saw something striking: So many posts from his students. 'Happy birthday to my role model', Happy birthday sir, you are best among the best.' I could not stop myself from asking him about his craze among his students in the next meeting for my research purpose. He replied with a big contented smile *'Probably I was friendly to them. I loved to share about my family, hobbies, interests, likes and dislikes. We often had informal talks in the classroom. I believe, that having interpersonal relations with the students is the best pedagogy. This is what I feel is my signature pedagogy.'* His story reveals he maintained a strong rapport among students. A study conducted in a Chinese setting reported that maintaining interpersonal relations between teachers and students is a part of pedagogy that creates 'image-text' among students (Morgan, 2005). Interestingly, Mr. Perfect's interaction and strong relationship were his engagement. Meanwhile, Mr. Perfect's strategy what Wenger termed alignment and engagement, the interesting dimensions of belongingness that construct identity (Wenger, 1998, p.175). Hence, the signature style constructed a strong identity of a positive teacher. Positive teachers' trait I read recently in an essay 'College Teachers' written by R.L.S. Malky and Mary K Ruether, state positive teachers possess the following traits; interested in students along with the subject, they learn their names. Mr. Perfect's trait reveals that he gained the status of a positive teacher.

My next participant Ms. Critical views digital integration is crucial in education. She further adds digital integration in language teaching provides broader learning opportunities and possibilities. Ms. Critical's new normal seems to be more critical as she stated, *"When I heard discourse about ChatGPT, I became so critical; does it question the existence of the teacher? I explored a lot to know how it works. I explored how ChatGPT helps the learner to do the assignments?"* Ms. Critical' being critical to this AI program depicts her strong connection to digital devices and information as a professional. She was serious about her profession and positioning as a teacher. Regarding ChatGPT, using it, and reading about its pros and cons she realized that teaching by human teachers connects the learner with her emotion. Moreover, teaching doesn't only mean to teach content. Teaching meant to make a man out of a boy, I mean a perfect human, that is not possible by a machine. Ms. Critical's prior imagination about ChatGPT changed when she actively engaged in exploring its advantages and disadvantages. Her enthusiasm and engagement transformed her perspectives, which would not remain to her, as per her nature she shared it rightly to the students. Her informative and interesting sharing developed the image of a digitally sound teacher among the students. She replied with relief, *"ChatGPT is an advanced AI tool, However, it's a machine that I believe can't change a human teacher."* Finally, she changed her perspective as well.

Ms. Critical encouraged her learners to use digital devices and different sites for language learning. She didn't only keep herself engaged, she encouraged her learners to make a presentation and present in the class. *"I am quite confident the digital generation is smart enough to use technology for their learning. I managed to make a few groups for presentations on different topics in the text. Ma'am, do you believe they are amazing presenters in the digital platform?"*

Her story reveals that as a digitally literate teacher, she realized the significance of digital integration for language learning.

*I scheduled students' weekly presentation. Students explored the ideas on a given topic and presented them using multimodal slides in the school hall. I was speechless number of times observing my students' presentations. I hope I could conduct all my classes in the same manner.*

Ms. Critical sharing reveals teaching language through group presentation employing digital means helps learners to learn several skills at the same time, listening, speaking, reading, writing, working in a team, preparing slides, and

exploring ideas on the internet. Ms. Critical's teaching practices reveal that she was making her learners ready for 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges. Joshi (2017) substantiates the importance of integrating ICT into education. Joshi in his policy review articles states ICT integration in education broadens our learning process making learning more creative, learners' friendly, and encouraging for self-initiated learning.

Besides, Ms. Critical was assimilating herself into the digital world for teaching purposes and learning purposes as well. According to her, she has been using her cell phone as the best device to solve her immediate problems in the classroom. *"Due to lack of projector and smartboards, I cannot plan my teaching in an audio-visual room. I managed to use my cell phone and a blue-tooth speaker to play audio poem recitation, stress and pronunciation."* Unlike other participants' workplaces Mr. Critical school seems to be less resourced (digital resources) However, Ms. Perfect was managing her teaching-learning plan with digital integration using her devices. The workplace plays a crucial role in teachers' identity construction...here Ms. Critical's story reveals that even if she is ready to teach integrating digital tools her workplace is not digitally friendly. Although she was facing problems, she was finding ways to digitalize herself by using her own devices.

Ms. Multitasker shared her interesting stories of her digital integration and digital literacy practice in her professional space.

*Nowadays, I make my students reading in grades seven- ten visit and download the CEHRD sites. I often share the link in advance and give some assignments to do by watching the English video lessons. I instruct them to do the exercises given in the textbook in the messenger group. The next day, we discuss the same text and topic. The practice is making my work easy and making learner autonomous in their learning.*

Her story shed light on her digital practice in the transformed mode of the new normal, which is quite similar to the blended mode of teaching. Sharing the link of the material in advance with necessary instruction is a blended practice that is largely popular these days. blended learning is the process of providing two learning environments, physical and online termed synchronous and asynchronous respectively. Blended learning is the process of mixing settings, styles, and strategies to ensure 'optimal' opportunities and devices for learning (Marsh, 2012). The definition highlights different learning in different settings beyond the classroom setting. King (2016) argues that the blended mode If utilized systematically is largely

beneficial to responding the learners with diverse learning styles, making the learning process interactive, and developing learners' confidence through self-initiated learning. The learner uses both the environment's classroom and digital environment to support their learning. He further adds a well-planned blended mode provides ample opportunity to support their learning effectively and enjoy learning their pace. Moreover, Ms. Multitasker is teaching reading text quite differently. According to her, she commences her reading text from her home.

*I often read the lesson at home. If there is a poem, I recite the poem and share it with the group in advance. As usual, I instruct them to read the read the text with me time and again. My practice I feel is giving good results. It saves me time to read long texts at home. On top of all, my students showed their full interest in the new practice.*

Ms. Multitasker's teaching practice reveals that there was an absolute shift in teaching pedagogy. Her digital engagement for making video lessons on behalf of CEHRD was an advanced digital practice. The video lesson according to her facilitates learners to in their pace. Even the shy-natured and poor students get a chance to learn a language and complete the assignments as per their learning ability. Her engagement in the digital environment projects her new identity in the professional space. Furthermore, she also created another identity among the students doing diverse practice in language teaching. Her engagement in making videos for reading text is mirrored as a diverse practice in the professional space in the locality where this study was conducted. Thus, participants in this study implemented digital literacy skills in multiple ways. Teachers' multimodal literacy practices such as using PowerPoint presentations, self-created audio and video materials, blog posts, songs, and games certainly help learners push their learning experiences. Research conducted earlier confirmed that teachers' digital literacy enhanced learners' learning experiences providing them with fun learning (Pratolo & Solikhati, 2020). Moreover, the study revealed that integrating technology in language learning constructs an effective language learning process.

The above discussion highlighted that teachers' identity is never fixed, it is getting fluctuated and negotiated as per the demand and context. In this chapter, I discussed the process of identity construction. The process started from the beginning of the career. Gradually, teachers moved on to assimilating themselves with the immediate situation. Thus, teachers' identity is found to be contextual. Teachers in

this study constructed their identities in different phases. They were found to be less concerned about using digital tools for teaching teaching-learning process. An adverse situation dragged them out of their comfort zone. When they were out of their comfort zone, they happened to realize the importance of ICT integration and largely assimilated them to the digital world to digitalize their pedagogy. During the process, teachers created an identity of innovative digitally friendly teachers.

Therefore, teachers' engagement in the new normal was stating that teachers were learning by doing. The teachers who started their careers with chalk and duster changed into advanced technology. The shift I found is the product of their imagination, engagement, and alignment discussed earlier. The aforementioned aspects according to Wenger (1998) are the source of identity formation. Therefore, this study claims teachers shape and reshape their identity in the course of the professional journey which is never stable.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I presented my participants' narration, how they started their professional career and how they survived with the changing scenario. I presented five different themes to bring the stories of participants. I started my argument by discussing participants' route of the professional journey from the participants' professional journey and discoursed how they evolved in the professional space learning digital literacy skills which was invited by the coronavirus-related pandemic and continued to address the demand for 21<sup>st</sup>-century education. The discussion in this chapter focuses on teachers' professional journey relating to the use and uses of digital tools and resources in English language classroom before, during, and after the pandemic. Through this chapter, I attempt to show how teachers entered the profession, how they managed the turning point, and how they evolved in the profession; learning, unlearning, and relearning in the digitally integrated new normal. Remarkably, throughout the journey these teacher participants constructed and reconstructed their identity through their engagement in the digital tools and resources.

## CHAPTER V

### TEACHERS' IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS

The discussion in chapter four presents teachers' journey of professional identity construction. Analysis of the participants' lived stories reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic introduced the use and integration of technology in language teaching. English language teachers who learned digital literacy skills to conduct virtual teaching during the pandemic for the first time and comprehended the importance of digital integration in English language teaching. Participants of my study also updated with digital literacy skills from different mentors, they unlearned their traditional practices and learned to integrate technology and digitally available resources for teaching and learning. Digital integration transformed teachers' day-to-day teaching strategy along with their identity in the professional space. Chapter four presented how teachers initiated the journey of identity construction; Chapter five presents a detailed discussion of teachers' digital engagement and identity construction process. Further, this chapter answers the second research question, "How do English language teachers construct their identity through digital engagement?"

Opening discourse in teaching English in the 21st century is not limited to teaching textbooks using lecture methods. Possibly, we overlook the learners who live in two different communities; live community and virtual community. Learners today enjoy innovative techno-based activities as they are born in the digital era. We have been experiencing our kids wrapped up with devices. Learners in general observation are found enjoying digitally integrated language classrooms. Casual talk with my students and my personal experience as a teacher made me realize that learners are super fond of the digital world to the bookish world.

Corona's outburst pushed the whole world to the virtual world and obliged teachers to get engaged and updated with the digital world. The challenges made teachers learn and use devices and techno-based information for teaching and learning. The practice, to some extent, addressed the learner's interest. On the same, Ms. Critical narrated:



*I learned to use digital platforms during the pandemic. I continued it even after the classes went physical mode. I made my classes multimodal. I presented the lessons bringing ready-made materials from YouTube. Sometimes, I shared a Google link and made all the students write on the page as they do on the whiteboard. Students find it new and interesting.*

Ms. Critical's narration reveals that although she was not aware of digital platforms for teaching before the pandemic, she educated herself during the pandemic and kept engaging, and integrating technology for language learning purposes even after the classes went into physical mode. Her practice motivated learners as they loved to engage with devices instead of listening to the teacher and doing textbook-oriented activities. She imparted her lesson through videos that broke monotonous textbook-oriented learning. She engaged her learners with the virtual writing platform where a number of students can write together. Through this practice, students were both engaged and developed awareness of the new technology. According to Alwehaibi (2015), YouTube videos can be used as instructional tools in ELT classes to enhance learners' overall language learning. Video presentation as a classroom activity appears to be a crucial aspect of her digital practice in language learning and teaching space to develop skills and aspects of language. Moreover, Ms. Critical revealed that encouraged her learners to use digital devices to do their assignments. She conducted teaching-learning activities incorporating digital devices and platforms and even encouraged learners to engage. Her engagement with digital space was quite fruitful that enabled her introduce interactive links like Google documents.

With a slight smile, Ms. Critical consistently responded that her school principal exemplified her as a digital-friendly teacher. Hence, the institution head valued Ms. Critical's digital integration in her teaching. She was identified as a digital-friendly teacher among her colleagues. A systematic review study on identity construction narratives restated that teachers' identity is heavily influenced by their practice (Neupane & Bhatt, 2023; Neupane et al., 2022). Therefore, her practices carved a new identity of a digital-friendly teacher. Another teacher Multitasker asserted that:

*My passion for teaching sprouted right from childhood. Although joining the profession was the product of passion, success in the profession I believe, is the digital literacy skills that connected me to the professional world and*

*exposed the doors to opportunities. Undoubtedly, digital engagement was the key that led me to great success and satisfaction in my professional career.*

Ms. Multitasker's assertion revealed that she used to imagine herself as a teacher. Her imagination and passion directed her to the teaching profession. Her childhood imagination led her to the teaching profession and it became a passion. Imagination according to Wenger (1998), is one of the important components of identification. Her self-image about the future guided her engagements. Similarly, her strong passion for the profession encouraged her to work hard and achieve success keeping herself updated with digital space.

Ms. Multitasker highlights that her imagination worked as the process of creating reality in the social context. Neupane (2023) recently studied teachers' journey of identity construction and revealed that although teachers are in adverse situations due to intuitional policy their imagined identity as English teachers forces them to use learner-centered strategies adopting ICT tools in the beginning phase. Ms. Multitasker admits most of teachers limited their digital practice to virtual teaching as the institution is less supportive of digital integration. However, Ms. Multitasker, a committed teacher didn't stop her practice. She continued her digital practice even in her face to face classroom since she was guided by her imagined identity, as affirmed by Neupane's study. Wenger (1998) substantiates the idea with the argument, that we generate ideas and choose alternatives to fulfill our imagination. Teachers in both arguments choose creative alternatives to generate new ideas. Ms. Multitasker's passionate act and success in her professional career became a product of her imagination. Her imagination encouraged her to use digital platforms creatively and became a source of constructing the identity of an innovative teacher.

The other two participants were familiar with the digital world and had been working as an expert before the pandemic. These people are working as resource persons among a large group of people. They revealed that digital expertise became a great source for their institutions and others. Mr. Conversant expressed:

*I was in the position of vice-principal in a community school. During the pandemic, I facilitated all my colleagues and other teachers in our municipality to teach online. With an exciting tone he revealed that school was the first to start online classes in our municipality. I facilitated teachers across the country. I further maximized my engagement aligning it to fulfill my dream, converting my school into a smart municipality school*

Mr. Conversant's narration reveals that his ability to coordinate and contribute to a large number of people across the nation became a source of his identification. His engagement built his personal and institutional reputation. His effort to convert his school into a smart school empowered him to claim the meaning of his digital literacy and contribution. He said, *"I worked day and night in the digital platform to convert the school into the first smart community school in the district."* His assertion reveals his engagement and alignment are valued and created an impactful meaning in his workplace. Tsui (2007) substantiates this with a similar argument; teacher's engagement and practice develop competence and gain legitimacy. When teachers' practice and competence are legitimized, they gain power and they are valued or given some meaning in the professional world as stated by Wenger, 'Not everyone can create meaning as it is economy of money' (p.197). Not everyone can create meaning in the work they do; however, his work was valued as a great achievement by the community as well as the school family which is no doubt a stout identity in this professional space.

The historical change, converting the school to smart school, created his institutional identity. The identity of the institution, the first smart community school in a particular district, became his identity. Thus teachers' digital literacy is a key factor in constructing and reconstructing their value and meaning in the workplace which eventually carves teacher identity (Meihami & Esfandiari, 2021). Mr. Perfect shared a similar experience:

*I was not an expert but I was a bit more aware of the digital world. I used my literacy skills to help my colleagues handle devices and use platforms to have video conferences. Meanwhile, during the pandemic, I got an opportunity to work as a digital supporter at an international conference. I created the opportunity and that sharpened me over time.*

Mr. Perfect's anecdote describes that his digital literacy created opportunities in his professional space. He narrated that he played an agentic role in introducing innovative practices in the institutions. He felt that he was identified due to his sound knowledge in the digital era. He reiterates that his digital literacy was valued by the NELTA team, invited him to be a technological supporter during an international conference. His digital knowledge connected him with the digital world and the connection created meaning out of his engagement in associating himself with a larger community. Meaning according to Wenger (1898), is created, not existed. Thus, Mr.

Perfect's experience of working as a digital support created the identity of a digital expert in the broader space.

### **Pedagogical Engagement**

The pedagogical engagement in teaching and learning means all the activities that teachers and students perform during language learning including strategies adopted to evaluate students learning achievement. Language teachers are expected to plan pedagogy based on learners' interests, and availability of the resources. It is believed a well-planned pedagogy helps the teachers to achieve the goal of teaching and learning activities. Pedagogy in the 21st century is impacted by the rapid growth of technology. English language teaching is a global act, as it is a global language. English language teaching is undoubtedly influenced by technology, because technology integration in language learning pedagogy is the best alternative for teachers who have both a changed and growth mindset. Previous studies on ICT integration revealed that the use of ICT improves teachers' quality of professional work which eventually improves learners' achievement (Haffah & Sulisty, 2020). The study strongly suggests that teachers use ICT tools to sustain their identity in the professional space threatening them with the possibility of replacement by the development of technology. The study findings of Hafifah and Sulisty confirm that maximum use of ICT makes teachers skilled.

English language teaching pedagogy in Nepal before the pandemic was largely traditional. The rapid growth of technology impacts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century education Teachers used to perform the role of saints; knowledge transformer where learners passively listen to the teacher, repeat, and memorize the information. The process is believed to offer very little or no space for learner's creativity and engagement. Unpredictably, teachers during the pandemic experienced the effectiveness of digital integration in language learning. They learned to employ technology in language teaching pedagogy during the pandemic. Teachers' impactful experience encouraged them to continue the practice when teaching and learning was in physical mode. Ms. Multitasker, one of the research participants recounted:

*My students were motivated to learn English but they struggled to read the text given in their textbook. It was time-consuming to read and ask the learner to follow during the 45 minutes class. Thus, I prepared audio reading of the text is presented in the classroom using cell-phone and handy speaker. After playing the audio, I asked my learner read the text. Moreover, I have been*

*sharing the audio in the messenger so learners can revisit and practice reading at their pace. This activity I found is largely impactful in my language class.*

Ms. Multitasker's story reveals that her engagement in preparing a reading lesson in three different stages, planning, acting, and post-class engagement was quite promising to design a class that engages learners actively in the language teaching in a classroom setting and beyond the classroom as well. Ms. Multitasker's self-engagement in the digital platform to prepare audio material for her learner was transformational practice that contextualized language learning. Ms. Multitasker could bring authentic audio to facilitate her learners in reading text. However, she was aware of learners' levels, requirements, and interests. Ms. Multitasker used her localized pedagogy, she contextualized her teaching to meet the level and interest of her learners. Kumaravadivelu (2003) used the term post method for contextual practice. Post-method pedagogy according to Kumaravadivelu, is a strategy of teaching that addresses learners' interest, institutional, and social conditions. Ms. Multitasker used her method (post method). Her localized pedagogical practice supported her in constructing the identity of an agentic language teacher.

Contextualizing curriculum is a hot topic of discourse in academia these days. A webinar conducted by Kathmandu University on 15th July 2023 focused on curriculum contextualization in Nepal. The session was facilitated by the dean of Kathmandu University School of Education. During the session, on his empirical research he focused on the possibilities and status of curriculum and material design based on his empirical research. The session concluded that language teachers in Nepal have a large possibility to design curriculum and develop materials, and bring a pedagogical shift in teaching and learning. The session itself was a paradigm shift in Nepal.

Teaching professionals these days are largely engaged in similar type of discourse on online platforms. Mr. Perfect shared a similar experience of being agentic through his digital engagement. According to him, he has been using his blog post in his language classroom. He designed reading comprehension activities and encouraged learners to do the activities by reading the blog post written by himself. *"I shared my blog post in the classroom designing various language learning activities, for instance, read the post and answer the questions, read the post and give your*

*opinion orally. I let my students discuss the problems and the possible solutions to the problems stated in the blog post.”*

Mr. Perfect’s blog post demonstrated an identical flavor to the audio material prepared by Ms. Multitasker. Both teachers in this context gained the identity of the agentic teacher. Mr. Perfect’s blog post was the outcome of his digital engagement which was more professional than a pedagogical engagement in the initial phase. However, when he shared the post in his language classroom and used it as localized teaching content and his engagement as a blog writer, it eventually connected to the pedagogical engagement.

Aligning Multitasker’s video creation and Mr. Perfect using self-created material for teaching and learning purposes was a creative and innovative practice, probably done for the first time in the professional space in the locality where I am working and conducting this research. These noble participants created identity through their imagination. Imagination according to Wenger (1998), is the process of generating innovative ideas that shape their engagements. Wenger views teachers’ imagination as shaping the route of their engagement and achievement at the end. Wenger in his book *Communities of Practice* brings an example of two individuals who are crafting on the same type of stone with identical tools. However, the craft they created at last was surprisingly different. The difference according to Wenger is the product of their imagination (see Wenger, 1998). I connected the anecdote to shed light on the digital practice of two teachers who employed two different strategies in their language classroom, which was rarely practiced in education.

Connectedly, Mr. Perfect and Ms. Multitasker’s autonomous practice of language teaching possibly motivated the learners for two reasons; the first was the localized contents prepared by teachers, and the second was digitally integrated activities. Hence, in the light of Wenger’s social theory of identification, teachers innovative practice created the identity of innovative and agentic teachers who introduced new pedagogy in the professional space.

Ms. Critical, another participant, expressed a different story of pedagogical engagement. Ms. Critical believes group work and collaborative work foster language learning. The teacher-guided by this belief often encourages learners to engage in different projects.

*I often inspired my students to work in groups giving project work on different themes. Although choosing the right project and the right route was time-*

*consuming, I loved to explore projects from the internet, plan project work, and invigorate my learner to explore independently. I believed learners get a chance to learn autonomously using techno-based resources if they get the right project and the right instruction.*

Ms. Critical's story of designing the right project and the right way to use the project as language learning pedagogy was engaging both for teacher in the preparation and the learner in the acting phase. Ms. Critical shared that she converted 10<sup>th</sup> graders' reading content into project work.

*'The content in the text was thematic so I made eight groups, five students in each group, and assigned them topic as follows.'*

**Table 1**

*Group-wise project work*

<i>Group A</i>	<i>Group B</i>	<i>Group C</i>	<i>Group D</i>	<i>Group E</i>
<i>Current affairs</i>	<i>Science and experiments</i>	<i>Food and festivals</i>	<i>Games and sports</i>	<i>Hobbies and interest</i>

Ms. Critical further added, that I repented myself for lecturing for a long time. Although I am techno-savvy and planned a few projects, I learned a lot from the presentation. Students brought amazing facts and ideas that I had never heard. Their presentation was beyond my expectations. *"I apprehended the importance of project work as the best pedagogy to engage the learner and take responsibility for their learning. I decided to use at least a project work in each class every academic year"*.

Ms. Critical's navigating the internet to get suitable language learning activity in the beginning phase was digital integration practice for language learning pedagogy. Furthermore, Ms. Critical awareness of collaborative learning and the inclusion of technology for self-learning and learners' projects is a transformation that she has brought to language learning. Moreover, using a project as an activity encouraged the learner to construct the knowledge themselves. Ms. Critical's engagement in the digital environment in the preparatory phase and her mutual engagement with the learners during the language learning process was the identity construction process. A study conducted by Irani in 2021 substantiates the idea; his study conducted on pre-service teachers highlighted that teachers' pedagogical engagement with systematic activities assists teachers in constructing their identities.

Connectedly digital activities designed for pedagogical purposes provided them to develop multiple language skills and 21<sup>st</sup>-century language at the same time. 21<sup>st</sup>-century language skills mean creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

All three participants focused on digitally integrated language pedagogy design and implementation. Mr. Conversant who was digitally informed and tried digital integration around 2005 and facilitated teachers to teach in the virtual mode and converted his school to a digitally smart school will be highly expected to integrate technology in the language classroom.

*I did a lot to convert the school into a digitally smart school. Now, we have an excess of e-library, and developed a system to see students' achievement online but our teaching pedagogy is still not much digitally integrated. I mean I was personally was not satisfied with how I was doing in my classroom. My teaching is still rarely digitally integrated.*

Mr. Conversant's digital engagement for pedagogical shift is weak whereas digital engagement as an administrator is always strong. His role as an administrator possibly, Possibly, prevented him from integrating technology into language teaching as it demands conscious preparation. He revealed that *"Nowadays, our accountant is on leave, which is making me do all the admin work. I keep myself engaged in my laptop almost the whole day."* Mr. Conversant's story was a live example that reveals that when a teacher is assigned a diverse role that overshadows the chief role. The language teacher's main role might be to teach language. However, contextual and intuitional obligations compelled him to engage in other work. Nevertheless, Mr. Conversant's digital literacy and engagement was helping him to maintain strong fame in the professional space.

Realizing the significance of technology integration, schools in Nepal are trying to equip schools and classrooms with resources. According to the participants working in public schools, the local government is prioritizing making the schools digitally resourceful, as a result, their classes are equipped with digital resources. However, the implementation part is not satisfactory. It doesn't mean they are not making an effort to utilize materials for teaching and learning purposes. As an ELT professional, I often show interest in professional talk with the teacher teaching in government schools. Two months back, I met one of my friends working in a government school in a remote area of our district. My intention was not to get



information about digital integration in his school but our casual discourse led us to the direction. As digital integration is a common discourse among the professionals like us. Through the causal discussion, I realized teachers are more conscious and concerned about digital integration in the teaching and learning process. The school where my friend is teaching is resourceful. According to him they managed download links of different sites in the common smart board. Such as E-Pustaka Laya, learn English for teens in British council's site, teachers guide, curriculum. I found the practice amazing in the context where all the teachers are not equally competent. Mutual engagement according to Wenger (1998) is helping them to integrate digital platforms. All the members in the particular context are participating and mutually engaged. According to Wenger, our engagement and experience is the prove that we are in the digital world, which ensures our identity.

### **Digital Engagement: An Essence in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Learning**

The evolutionary development of science and technology has extended its use to every aspect of human life. The educational sector is not an exception. According to Byfield et al. (2016), in the changing scenario, educators must create a learning environment that ensures learners' digital enactment and prepares the learners to contribute to global learning communication. Byfield et.al, further add the identity of the 21st-century educator is connected with technology. The researchers truly stated that the reality of today's learners is not limited to a small town and a country, they have to compete with global citizens and digital integration seems to be pertinent. The education sector these days is prioritizing and integrating technology for teaching and learning purposes to enhance learners' performance. The curriculum of Nepal rightly addresses, the gravity and essence of utilizing digital resources in the educational space.

The government of Nepal listed 8 competencies to be a teacher in Nepal. Among them, digital competency is the one mentioned in the list. Moreover, the Secondary Education Curriculum (2021) clearly states learning through information communication and technology is one of the principles of language facilitation. Furthermore, the curriculum also encourages both learners and educators to make use of digital tools to have access to huge resources available online.

Regarding the issue of the essence of digital literacy teachers' and participants of this research shared almost similar opinions. Ms. Critical shared;

*Digital integration is crucial in language learning. Digital integration in English language classes has more possibilities. Teachers can use vast resources available online to make the classroom lively. This week I taught a topic about strange cultures around the world. I collected short videos of all the cultures and presented them in the classroom. I didn't speak more. I assigned some tasks to do based on the video. My oral assessment by the end of the class made me realize that my students learned language and culture through this audio-video material presentation.*

Ms. Critical's video presentation enabled the learners to learn both culture and language in a fun way. Ms. Critical was attentive to the material selection. The video she presented in English was an exposure for English language learners. The video helped them to develop listening comprehension. Moreover, her assessment made her listen the material repetitively. Additionally, integrating audio-video materials in the language classroom reduced the teachers' talking time and provided authentic teaching materials. Ms. Critical further adds, '*Students nowadays are digitally smart. They seek expertise from us.*' As she stated students born in this digital age are very smart. Her narration sheds light on the pertinence of digital literacy for the teachers who have to cope with the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning. Learners are digital users right from childhood. Therefore, teachers who teach the smart generation need to be smarter than them. Regarding the essence of digital integration in language classrooms, the Secondary school curriculum 2021 highlights the use of ICT tools and online resources to get authentic materials. The curriculum encourages both teachers and students to maximize the use of media and technology to ensure better learning. Teachers' survival in the digital era is supported by digital literacy, digital engagement, and integration. Mr. Conversant with long experience in the teaching profession both as a teacher and training facilitator stated;

*To address the issue and essence of digital integration, our teacher's curriculum must inform and literate to be digitally literate to integrate technology into their pedagogy before they enter the profession. It should be emphasized during the pre-service teacher's course and teaching practice. Moreover, digital literacy tests should be prioritized in selecting teachers.*

His narration pinpoints issues of digital literacy and integration that can be solved by changing the policy level rather than the implementational level. We teachers are the implementational part of the policy. However, the effort of the

implementation body is the heart of the teaching and learning process. Policy according to him, matters to solve the issue right from the route. Concerning the issue of digital literacy Mr. Conversant as an experienced teacher advised the concerned authority to add the policy related to digital literacy in the Teachers Service Commission exam. Nevertheless, the authority is less concerned. His is revealing that isteachers from their levels are quite convinced regarding the significance of digital literacy on the teachers and digital integration in language teaching, however, the authority seems to be sluggish to bring and employ policy.

Ms. Multitasker stated:

*We have been teaching learners from diverse backgrounds. I found digitally designed materials are quite helpful in addressing learners' level of understanding. Nowadays use of self-created materials in my language classroom. I do share the materials with related assignments in the messenger group, so that even the absent students, and slow learner visits the material time and again and learn.*

Ms. Multitasker's story is representative and story reveals the reality of Nepali schools where teachers are compelled to teach students with different interests, abilities, and backgrounds. Ms. Multitasker was concerned about the students who need different treatment and pace of learning. Digital integration according to her can help them to learn in their own pace. They have to facilitate the learners from diverse backgrounds. According to her most students studying in the school are from economically low backgrounds. They come to the school if they have no work on the construction site. Readers might wonder how digital materials help them if they are economically weak. Interestingly, despite their low economic condition, the majority of the parents possess a smartphone, that enables the enthusiastic learner to visit the materials shared by the teacher whenever they are free. Digitally prepared materials save teacher time as they can use the same materials multiple time and different classes of the contents are similar. Most of the teacher participants have almost shared the same opinion about the multiple uses of digital materials. A study conducted by Saud (2023) stated that teachers even in the remote district of Nepal are quite positive about the adoption of ICT in English language teaching, the study revealed ICT integration increases the possibilities of the language learning process.

Mr. Perfect stated: 'I often navigate and prepare materials during vacations and weekends. I have been teaching English from grades 9-10. So, teaching content and

exam pattern is almost the same. In this regard, material prepared for grade 9 can be useful for grade 12, if I designed slightly different activities.’ Language teaching has more possibilities for digital integration. Moreover, using the same materials multiple times saves teachers time and effort which helps teachers to manage time for their well-being. According to Mr. Perfect digital platforms are a vast source of knowledge where teachers like us have to dive and explore innovative ideas to integrate in the language pedagogy to improve learners’ achievement and nurture teachers professionally. Those teachers who realize the essence of digital integration can survive in the profession with satisfaction and dignity. Teachers’ identity according to Wenger (1998) is the product of their imagination, engagement, and alignment. Therefore, to craft a dignified identity, teachers’ participants seem imagine themselves as a crucial part of the digital world and change their practice aligning it with the digital world.

### **Meaning Negotiation as the Source of Identity Formation**

Teaching professionals perform different task in the work place as per their roles and positions. They do talk about their progress, success and failure. All the discourse we make about our activities, engagements and practice is meaning negotiation (Wenger (1998). Wenger further confirms that meaning negotiation is one of the processes of identity formation. He defines meaning negotiation as the degree of our ability to contribute and shape the meaning. Wenger (1998) further claims that participation and reification are fundamental for meaning negotiation. Participation for him is our contribution and it shapes our ability. Reification is projecting ourselves to the world through our diverse practice.

Digital literacy is considered one of the components out of 8 components of being a teacher according to the National Educational Policy (2019). Teachers’ innovative practices and contributions hold the potential to transform self and community. Regarding the use of digital technology, Mr. Conversant narrated:

*I started my digital practice in 2005. I prepared my teaching materials on slide form. Later I encouraged my friends to do the same. Besides, I often bring topic-related YouTube videos. Using YouTube videos motivated learners as most of the learners now are fond of learning through digital means rather than listening to the teacher.*

Mr. Conversant’s narration revealed that he was digitally aware two decades ago. Besides, he was concerned with students’ needs and interest in the changing scenario. Therefore, he also encouraged his colleagues to use technology. His

intention of using technology was to motivate the learner to go a little beyond the textbook which means transforming existing practice. Although he used available resources in the digital platform, he found his students were fond of it as they got something better than the teacher's lecture.

Furthermore, Mr. Conversant is identified as a digitally updated teacher as he stated he was the first to introduce PowerPoint presentation using projector in the ELT classroom that motivated learners to language learning. Laudari (2014) states that motivation increases the success rate in language learning. In this respect, digital integration in language learning motivates learners by providing stimulus (innovativeness) to begin the task and continue till the end (Joshi, 2017). Thus, his identity of a digital expert was deeply rooted in his practice and participation. His reificative participation (innovative participation) contributed to shaping meaning as these two components are considered as fundamental for meaning negotiation (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, the negotiation of meaning became a source of digital user's identity formation. Mr. Conversant further stated, *"Both, in-service and aspiring teachers must be digitally literate to survive in teaching as students don't trust the teacher who is not informed digitally."* Mr. Conversant created a history of digital practice in his professional space probably being the first high school teacher to introduce digital use in language teaching classroom. Through his long teaching experience, he stated that digital literacy was essential in the teaching profession. Wenger's idea of sharing the history of learning as a component of engagement His experience can be substantiate his experience-based ideas. Therefore, teachers' engagement is one of the best ways to project ourselves to the world what we call popularity or identification in a common language.

Ms. Critical highlighted how her digital literacy positively impacted her teaching and learning, *"I often visited various educational sites of the British Council, American State, quizzes.com, and YouTube to learn new ideas. I designed similar activities so that I could bring a variety to my teaching and help students to achieve a good result."* Mr. Conversant and Ms. Critical's narration reveals that today's techno-friendly learners enjoy work where they can engage themselves with digital space. Thus, teachers who integrated technology in their ELT created a learning opportunity for each learner. Learning opportunities allowed the learner to engage such as asking to visit the site given and do the activities given or making the learner play grammar and vocabulary games visiting quiz.com).

In the existing scenario, learners possess outstanding knowledge in digital space. Guiding the learner to learn through the use of their expertise can be the best solution. Moreover, encouraging learners to learn using digital expertise provides a strong message to those parents who often complain that their children are wrapped with the gadgets. Thus, the crucial point here is: are the teachers' literate enough to instruct techno friendly generation? In this setting, if the teachers do not develop digital competency they will be named as an outdated teacher. Teachers' survival becomes a big question. The study rightly stated that digital literacy is "A survival skill in the digital era" (Eshet-Alkalai, 2010, p. 102). Ms. Multitasker recounts the similar experiences:

*I tried to learn whenever I encountered a problem, I first visited Google, and YouTube to solve the problem, and sometimes my kids helped me to sort out the problems. When I was in the class even my students helped. I never mind learning new ideas from students. I believe learning is everywhere. I do convince the fact to the students so that they would not misinterpret it.*

Ms. Multitasker has a different story about how she created her identity. She engaged herself in the learning process, she used media to learn. She felt free to learn new ideas from students. She made her teaching and learning participative and created a different image among the learners. She made her teaching collaborative. A study conducted in an Indonesian setting documented that teachers' and learners' digital literacy enhances collaborative learning; learner-to-learner to learner and learner-students (Mudra, 2020). Besides, Ms. Multitasker's belief that learning is a lifelong process is thoughtful. She doesn't treat learners as tabula rasa (a blank sheet of paper as stated by behaviorists) but behaves the way they are equipped with technological knowledge. Thus, her ideology and traits created her D- identity as charismatic which is how people talk about her when he/she is not present (Gee, 2000).

Teachers' stories and experiences reveal that their digital literacy enhanced their ability to integrate digital space during the teaching and learning. These teachers uniquely contributed to their community as stated by Wenger (1998), and shaped meaning in their professional space. Therefore, the study measured all the activities relating to the two components of identity formation and negotiation of meaning.

### **Created Opportunities and Identification in Professional Space**

Grabbing new opportunities in the professional space is the common goal of all professionals. Everyone loves to reach a new position. However, opportunity

doesn't come to us, we have to create. Ms. Multitasker recounts her story nostalgic feeling:

*Develop such skills so that opportunity knocks you. It was a common statement I heard from my mother who was hard working and always supported me in fulfill my dream of being similar to my favorite teacher. Being Inspired by my mother's words, I continued my journey as I had imagined. However, I confidently say, I am a better teacher than I have imagined myself to be.*

The narration above reveals that people's imagination guides their activities and engagement. Her image guides Ms. Multitasker's engagement and dedication to fulfilling her dreams. Ms. Multitaskers' joining the profession is the outcome of her imagination, hard work, and passion for the profession. Although her dream of being a teacher was fulfilled when she was appointed as a permanent secondary-level English teacher, she didn't stop her journey. The school closure due to the pandemic, closed the school and opened another door with so many possibilities in teachers' lives. According to her, the outbreak introduced her to a new teaching platform. In the meantime, she unlocked so many possibilities and opportunities in her life. The pandemic, according to her, provided her an opportunity to be a learner. Engagement as a learner in digital space familiarized her with a vast ocean of knowledge and resources.

*After becoming a little aware of the digital platform, I started joining webinars conducted by NELTA, other organizations, and our municipality. At first, with my little knowledge, I joined professional groups through webinars and got more informed about the digital space and its possibilities for language teaching and learners.*

Ms. Multitasker's narration reveals that connecting with ELT professionals worldwide was a great opportunity for her to get connected with a digital world. Later, she made her opportunity as a ladder. She said continuous engagement in the digital environment linked her with some people working in a training center. Due to the link, she was offered to facilitate a training session:

*I felt empowered when I was offered to facilitate training sessions. I was inquired whether I could manage digital preparation or not. Possibly, my digital literacy was prioritized at that moment. There were so many English language teacher who were more experienced than me and conferred as*

*expert English teachers. However, I became the choice due to my competence in the digital world.*

Her anecdote of getting an offer to facilitate teachers in the training period revealed that her digital literacy in preparing digital presentations to facilitate sessions was a key to the rare opportunity that novice teachers like her get. She still remembers one of the officials of the training center official asking her, “*Madam, can you run a training session preparing slides?*” It was the moment she felt empowered.

Mr. Perfect on the other hand, revealed that he felt so blessed when he attended the session of Stephen Krashen in a webinar. The opportunity to meet such a figure is largely a matter of pride for him. “*I felt the pandemic opened a new dimension. I was quite sure it opens the door of so many opportunities that professional like has never imagined.*” Mr. Perfect further adds...I would be something different as a teacher if I didn’t follow the dimension introduced by the pandemic. Mr. Perfect’s competence before the pandemic allowed him an opportunity to be a facilitator during the pandemic. He gained trainer status among his friends and in the professional space. Thus, his active engagement as a facilitator is a new identity he gained. According to Wenger (1998), individuals’ interactions and relationships with a professional community in the key source of identity formation. Mr. Perfect’s identity as a facilitator has gained powerful status. “*I am these days known to almost all the newly recruited teachers and in-service teachers in my municipality as the municipality invites me to facilitate teachers of the municipality on digital integration*”.

Mr. Perfect and Ms. Multitasker, both participants were found assertive about their digital literacy skills which was a milestone for creating an identity of facilitator in the professional space Both of the participants shared that so many teachers were veterans in subject matter and were not offered, and the facilitator and the opportunity knocked on their door due to their digital competence. Their experience of opportunity creation shows a shift in professional spaces due to digital use and integration. Teachers are valued due to their innovative skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Adopting ICT in language teaching class also addresses students and demand of 21-century education (Saud, 2023).

Mr. Perfect counts his connection with the teaching professional and productive discussion in the digital environment as an opportunity to fill the professional gap.



*I often shared my day-to-day experiences and dissatisfaction on social media and sometimes in my Blog posts. Professionals like me read and give me constructive suggestions. Some people made me a phone call and some of the professionals offered to meet to discuss further similar issues as they also were facing similar issues. Moreover, digital media encourages a reader to write continuously.*

Mr. Perfect created the identity of a writer. He also shared that he was inspired by the readers and their responses. His story highlights the significance of sharing professional issues on social media and its positive impact on professional life. According to Mr. Perfect sharing in social media was not always impactful, he too faced harsh comments, which disappointed him. However, Mr. Perfect engagement in social media was guided by his positive ideology, *“Digital media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be the best platform to share good practice among professionals with similar interests.”* Mr. Perfect never felt down with any comments.

Connectedly, presenting the following anecdote of identity construction and highlighting its existence, I believe would make the reader much clearer how engagement in social media creates opportunities for identity construction in the professional space and how we get connected with professionals whom we have never met physically.

On 12th July 2023, M.Phil. batchmates met in the university’s library coincidentally. Our mentor offered us tea. He introduced us to Dean sir. He nodded and enquired about our workplace. In the meantime, he exposed a new identity of one of my friends. He exclaimed with surprise, *“You, the headteacher share powerful opinions against the educational policy of the local government!”* He patted him and revealed that he reads his posts regularly and comments. My friend with an empowered expression, shared, *“I also read your post.”* (B. Luitel, personal communication July 12, 2023). As a witness, I realized influence of social media in connecting professionals. The anecdote reveals that his active engagement and powerful sharing in social sites are the source of his identity construction. He was familiar even among those whom he never met physically.

Both of my participants’ engagement in social media according to Wenger (1998) is proof that they are in the professional world (p.151). Moreover, their mutual engagement in the community of practice creates their value of being a scholar and a professional (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, teachers’ engagement created an opportunity

to be identified among the academics through their writing. Identity according to Wenger is also the process of learning and becoming in the community of practice.

Ms. Critical engagement created an absolute identity of an updated teacher due to her pedagogical practice. Besides, her digital literacy and engagement positively impacted her in her academic life as a scholar. According to her, the pandemic introduced a digital environment as an alternative to physical mode. The shift became an opportunity for her to complete her academic degree. *“I must say the shift education invited by the pandemic created an opportunity to complete my degree in the virtual mode I would not have completed my degree. If classes had not gone on virtual mode,.”* Another participant Ms. Multitasker shares a similar story about her new degree. *“I would not finish my degree if it was in face-to-face mode. When semesters were running, I conceived my second baby. Although I had extreme trouble, managed to complete my assignments studying in my free time.”* The story of both teachers reveals that virtual mode and teachers’ digital literacy skills to engage in the digital environment, provided them opportunity to get higher degrees. The higher they achieved professional space. Besides, the higher degrees they open new opportunities and change their pedagogy. Higher degree transforms teachers’ identities (Barkhuizen, 2020). Hence, pursuing higher degree is a part of professional development that ultimately helps to shape teachers’ identity.

### **I am Transformed**

Forty years back a teacher used to enter the class with pieces of chalk, and duster, made up of pieces of waste clothes, and ordered the students to open page no... of the book. *“Me an English teacher used to ask the students to read the lines after me. Used to explain the lessons and to write answers on the chalkboard.”* Mr. Conversant hinted at his identity as a teacher few years ago. He added teaching after COVID [...] a teacher enters the classroom with a marker, opens a smartboard/smart TV already managed in the class and opens a pdf version of the book, commands the audio reader to read, students look at the screen, and listens. Students were asked to read the text and guess the meaning. Teachers by the end of the classroom assign their students to record their reading in vocaroo.com (Vocaroo.com is a recording tool) and upload it in the messenger group.

An interesting anecdote shared by Mr. Conversant in his teaching now and then was completely different. He transformed his pedagogy where he engaged the learner with digital tools in the classroom. His assignment also encouraged his

learners to get engaged in digital tools and work in a digital environment. Mr.

Conversant affirmed:

*Students born in this digital era love to engage in digital platforms. Honestly, if I asked my students to read the lesson, they would surely not read. The task that I have assigned is to read and record their voice. Everyone in the class does the task. In the next class we play their audio and praise. The activities I planned for making my learner read. I feel is working for me in my context. I feel satisfied, when I hear the shy students reading the text.*

Students born after 2000 are conferred digital natives (Prensky, 2001). They are fond of working on the digital platform. Mr. Conversant is creative and innovative enough in making audio readers read the text. Moreover, his recording activities are outstanding in the sense, that even the shy students can learn from the recorded voice shared in the group. All his pedagogical engagement and his imagination that led him to creatively integrate digital tools is identity formation process. Wenger (1998) states engagement, imagination, and alignment are the three sources of identity formation. Most importantly Mr. Conversant designed language learning activities that were aligned to the demand of 21<sup>st</sup>-century language teaching for digital natives who loved being wrapped in the digital environment. Conversant's practice, engagement and alignment are the product of his innovative imagination. Therefore, as stated 'imagination can make a big difference in our potentiality and identity (Wenger,1998. p.173). Mr. Conversant's transformed identity is observable and certainly productive in a language classroom. Additionally, as an administrator, his effort to convert the school to digitally smart, is another aspect that carved a strong identity in the professional space even after his retirement. Educational budget 2023/24 stated that 40% of the curriculum will be taught using technology. To implement the plan government has planned to manage at least one smart school in each Municipality. Mr.Conversant's effort is aligned with the government's policy.

Mr. Perfect another participant in my study also realized that he was transformed as a teaching professional. A few years back his engagement was quite traditional, a teacher with chalk and duster. Mr. Perfect is thankful to the pandemic outbreak on behalf of all the teachers who transformed teaching pedagogy by implementing digital literacy skills. Although he was digitally informed before the pandemic, the institution lacked digital resources. There was no projector. There was a desktop computer to perform administrative work. The unprecedented scenario

compelled local and federal governments to manage resources in the school. Now, schools are resourceful enough to digitalize teaching practices.

*As a teacher these days, I feel entirely changed. I have been doing my best to initiate my class with something that arouses my student's interest. Short video clips, TED Talks, vocabulary guessing games, audio reading, poem recitation, and videos related to current issues. I prepare my lesson on my laptop. Preparing the lesson if I find any suitable materials, I instantly share it in students' group with clear instructions. I feel good thinking, I am always connected with my students.*

Mr. Perfect's narration reveals that he has been employing resources available in the digital environment. He believes online resource like 'TED Talk' not only provides English language exposure to the language learner it also develops critical thinking skills for the learners. It also develops critical thinking skills for the learners. Besides, Mr. Perfect's sharing also reveals teachers are using messengers' group created during the pandemic for online teaching purposes. Continuation and sharing information and reading materials not only help the learner, but also creates strong bonding between students, teachers and even parents. As discussed earlier he is converting himself into a blog writer and using some blog text as reading content in his language classroom. Moreover, he has created a strong identity of a facilitator, who shares his own teaching experiences in the training sessions.

*I believe in learning through experience sharing. Our lived experience as teacher is a great source of knowledge. I have faith in the teachers around me who are full of experience. So, I share my practice and encourage them to share their lived experience.*

Whatever I do in my professional space is connected with digital skills, aligning the skill creatively in the context is changing my presence in the professional space. Mr. Perfect's mutual engagement with the learner, his colleagues, and the professional community is the source of his identity construction (Wenger, 1998). Mr. Perfect feels so satisfied when his college acknowledges him for his innovative and friendly way of facilitating teachers. "True, I felt satisfied with such remarks, but whatever I have been doing is a part of my role as a facilitator. Whatever I do, I enjoy." Mr. Perfect's perfection in his role and responsibility matches the idea shared by Kafle (2021) in his transformative research study. Kafle believes teaching is only the profession where a person serves the society for a long time, and teachers

therefore get a chance to inspire so many people. Mr. Perfect's anecdotes indicate he has inspired both teachers and students.

Connectedly, Ms. Critical also shared the experience of her transformation as both a teaching professional and her personal life due to her digital literacy and practices.

*As a teacher, I was quite transformative. Before the pandemic teaching was used to be integrated with portable tools like mobile and CDs. As per my experience, I experienced learners want variety.... she smiles... "We don't like to eat the same curry for lunch and dinner. How can we believe our learners like similar activities every day?" Realizing the fact, my pre-teaching preparation didn't limit me from being familiar with the activities given in the text. I navigated digital sources so that I could present variety in language teaching activities in my class. Honestly, I sometimes could not manage time for notebook correction due to my engagement in the digital space. [In a satisfied tone] ... any way I am learning to use digital resources. So, with my learning, I have been helping my learners to learn better.*

Her narration assures that she has transformed her professional engagement and digitalized her preparation, and teaching practices. Her narration reveals that she loves bringing variety to her activities. These days digital resources certainly assisted her in planning diverse teaching activities, and assessment plans for her teaching practice. Ms. Critical as narrated earlier encouraged her students to work in groups and make presentations on different themes. On top of all, she is employing blended teaching model. Therefore, Ms. Critical's digital integration in her English language learning only transformed her, but her engagement as a source of identification transferred her, students as a community of practice due to her encouragement, her students to use digital resources for the project work. Throughout the process of becoming a digitalized teacher, her continuous engagement changed her teaching practice and students' practice as English language learners.

Ms. Multitasker made her multiple tasks possible through her digital literacy skills. Multitasker, as stated earlier established herself as an English language teacher through her innovative practices. She revealed that when she used the idea of reading in her voice and sharing the recording among the students through the messenger group or in the classroom was not expected to be fruitful. However, she was overwhelmed when her students were found both excited and satisfied with the idea.

*My students are smart enough to pass comments. They shared that the activities, I had designed helped them. Student compliments energized me to explore more to present the content using a variety of methods in the digital platform. I always imagine myself the way I used to imagine my teacher to do.... [Being nostalgic] she shared that I sometimes imagine myself wearing students' hats and preparing my activities.*

Ms. Critical here is referring that the audio recordings that she presented as language learning, positively impacted in language learning process. Her students are demanding similar types of activities with strong gratitude. Therefore, Audio video presentation turned out to be impactful not only for normal students, it was found largely impactful for hearing impaired children. Adhikari (2020) studied language learning practices of hearing-impaired children. Her ethnographic research study revealed that video presentation helped them to understand the concept in a better way. Adhikari concluded that technology integration gives a lively experience that motivates the learner, in the meantime, it minimizes teachers talking time (Adhikari, 2020). The study highlighted the significance of digital integration in language learning to make learning more productive. Therefore, all four participants in this study narrated that they are using new teaching trends day-by-day. The change is largely related to digital integration and transformative engagement, the use of creative imagination, and alignment. All the sources of identification proposed by Wenger (1998) that are put into practice certainly have been changing their teaching trend and their identification in their professional space.

### **Adversities Faced by Teachers in Changed Context**

Apart from the opportunities to construct identities through digital literacy, the challenges teachers face to integrate digital tools and resources were the pertinent issue in this study. Those teachers who limited themselves to the chalk and duster were compelled to teach on the online platform. I experienced how the whip of virtual teaching created mental trauma among the teachers who were limited to textbook teaching. My research participants although faced the adverse situations, appear to be successful in carving new identities in the profession. Some are passionate teachers whereas others are digitally literate earlier. Some remained in the profession due to passion whereas others survived due to their prior knowledge. They might face a number of hardships, however, sustained their identity as a teacher facing adverse situations, they might have faced challenges in the course of learning and integration

of ICT skills in language learning in the time being. Therefore, this study I believe, cannot get completed without discussing the challenges encountered by the participants.

English language teachers understood the essence of digitalizing their language classes. They worked hard to integrate digital tools and resources in English language classes in a meaningful way despite so many challenges. Ms. Critical shared that a project named 'Digital Divide' has handed over about 600 tabs and a few laptops to the school to hand over to both students and teachers. Moreover, the project offered training to the teachers, students, and even the parents, to integrate digital tools and resources in the curriculum in the best possible way. She affirmed that this training has changed her perspective on digital use and integration in the curriculum. However, her school administration did not work with any concrete plan to distribute the tabs to the students and use it for learning purposes. Devices were stored in a cupboard for more than a year. *"I personally requested the school principal to distribute the laptop and make a schedule for at least two digitally integrated classes. But his rude answer melted all my enthusiasm."* Her narration reveals that although her school is resourceful enough to digitalize teaching and learning practice, the school admin is less concerned and unplanned to use the available resources. Mr. Critical sounds to be more passionate about using tools and resources for blended learning and project-based learning. Despite all the constraints she has been digitalizing her language classroom with her effort. Interestingly, although individual students from 6 to 10 are provided tablets, neither the administration nor other teachers exhibited concern about using it for maximum benefit in the learning process and achievements. The working environment according to her was less supportive. Ms. Critical continued, *"I am a professional, so I ignored all the facts and did my work. School admin didn't acknowledge but students were happy and motivated."* Her narration reveals that her school authority is not encouraging and supportive to the teacher who performs innovatively. Fullan (2007) argues that institutional development is possible when the teachers working in the intuition are encouraged and praised for their achievements although it is small. Conversely, the institution where she has been working neither praises nor supports, it keeps everyone in the same basket; teachers teaching conventionally and teachers adopting innovative teaching modalities of teaching. Hence, although teachers are digitally informed and ready to digitalize their pedagogy, they are discouraged from implement their skills.

Teachers' working environment in her case was a barrier in the identity construction. A previous study conducted on identity construction also revealed a similar kind of finding, the finding reveals that workplace authority did not provide them enough support to work as per their plan which impacted teachers' professional identity construction (Zare-ee & Ghasedi, 2014). Available literature and the participants' narration both explained the institutional support is one of the major issues in identity construction.

Mr. Perfect, on the other hand, revealed that using PowerPoint slides and YouTube videos does not digitalize the class. Integrating ICT in the language class should ensure learners' contribution and participation in the language learning process. He further added that if we presented any materials, it must follow an assessment plan which is an integral aspect of the teaching and learning process. He shared his disappointment:

*Although I have been presenting digitally prepared materials, online resources, and other self-prepared materials my, teaching method is still teacher-centered. I am not able to design interactive materials and activities. Just presenting materials available without any concrete cannot be claimed as a digitalized classroom.*

Ms. Perfect's diverse understanding about digital integration and digitalization is a prominent issue to discuss in the discourse we have been making on digital literacy and digital integration. This area would be a possible area to research in the future. Mr. Perfect strongly claimed with strong emotion, *"My digital knowledge and limited use of tools and resources are not helping the learner to be creative."* Mr. Perfect awareness of students' creativity is a great challenge that teachers have been facing in digitally integrated and non-integrated classes. Digital integration in the language learning process is believed to be foster the learning process. However, Mr. Perfect's experience reveals that digital integration brought variety and arouses learners' interest in the materials that the teacher presented in the class. However, it didn't not address learners' differences, interest in their learning pace, contextual and performance-based learning.

Ms. Multitasker found being challenged by the student's passive and unenthusiastic traits. She stated:

*We have digital resources at school. Mostly I have been using the resources to show a few YouTube videos and self-created materials. However, the learner's*



*active participation in the language learning process is less or nil. Moreover, students reading in our school belong to poor economic backgrounds so a majority of the students don't have internet access and devices for extended learning activities. Therefore, digitalization is limited to bringing variety to the language classroom. Digitalization in the language learning process cannot be extended to an autonomous learning process due to the learner's economic background.*

Previous studies conducted in Indonesia documented similar challenges, the study revealed that teachers are challenged to employ their digital literacy due to a lack of infrastructure, students' lack of interest, the digital divide, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of time to prepare materials (Pratolo & Solikhati, 2020). Challenges faced in the Indonesian context are similar concerning students. However, schools in Nepal are equipped with infrastructure according to the participants in this study mostly after the pandemic. Teachers therefore faced several challenges such as lack of digital literacy at the very beginning, lack of internet access at workplace, students background for extended digital activities, unsupportive authority. Notably, integrating digital literacy skills in the classroom does not ensure students creative participation, therefore, using digital tools and resources in English language classrooms ensuring students' active and meaningful participation is a great challenge for both teachers and policy makers.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I depicted how my research participants shaped their identity using their digital literacy skills. I presented all the information collected in a thematic form. This chapter is focused on how teachers' digital engagement carves their identity in the professional space. In this chapter, I also discussed the essence of digital literacy in the teaching profession. Apart from this I also discussed the challenges faced by teachers face in their profession to employ their digital literacy practice in their workplace.

## CHAPTER VI

### TRANSFORMATIONS, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND REFLECTION

In the previous two chapters, I presented English language teachers' narration of their professional journey along with their lived experience of digital integration. After presenting teachers' past teaching experience in general and the experience of the pandemic that brought a pedagogical shift in teaching, I present how teachers manage to integrate digital tools and resources along with its essence and challenges they face in their professional space.

This chapter presents my research journey as a whole. In this section, I present major conclusion based on my two research questions. My special attention was teachers' professional identity construction process based on their day-to-day changed practices and engagements in the different scenario. I start this chapter with the transformative dimension of my study. This study provides enough evidence of transformation in teaching and learning process. This chapter presents, conclusion of my study along with the implications of the study findings, followed by my personal reflection that I experienced in my professional space as an English language teacher, and my academic responsibilities as a scholar.

#### **Transformative Dimension of my Study**

All the participants' anecdotes of their teaching journey were equally transformative as leveled by Frenk et al. (2010) "informative, formative, and transformative" (p.1952). Informative means "acquiring knowledge and skills" (p.1952), formative level denotes "develop professionalism through socialization" (p.1952), and transformative level means developing "leadership attribute" (p.1952).

All four participants in the initial phase were provided with the knowledge and skills to survive in a situation when teaching was not possible in physical setting. This study explores how teachers evolved from conventional teaching practice to digitally integrated teaching that eventually transformed teachers' professional practice, workplace, and identity as teachers. I believe this study has a connection with the transformative praxis because I saw transformations in terms of perception about teaching, teaching pedagogy, and transformation of teacher's identity. Identity transformation process as I experienced as a researcher took place in three levels as stated by Frank et al.

Teachers in the initial phase acquired knowledge about digital literacy. My participants' stories revealed that Covid pandemic brought turning point in the life of teaching professionals. Turning point became a milestone for transformation due to new learning platform, webinars and digital trainings. To survive in the transitional phase teachers learned digital integration skill from so many mentors: such as colleagues, friends, family members, known and unknown facilitators they met during virtual classes, and participants in the training sessions. Teachers equipped themselves with information and knowledge they gathered from diverse sources. Despite learning digital integration skills, they unlearned the practices they have been practicing for ages and learned to learn how to use digital platforms as a classroom? How do digital resources facilitate language learning? In the first level of transformation, my participants transformed their identity into a teacher having the potential to learn and use 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill; digital literacy skill.

Mr. Perfect turned into a well-informed teacher about the curriculum from a strict teacher who just imparted knowledge in a silent class. A digital-friendly teacher assisting colleagues and friends, a teacher facilitator to initiate online teaching during the pandemic, a digital expert to support webinars, and an agentic teacher creating teaching materials himself. For instance, Mr. Perfect used his blog post which was very close to the student's life for language teaching text. He used his post while facilitating teachers' training sessions, sharing self-written contextual text was found heavily impactful. Mr. Perfect I believe is a person with full potential to bring transformation not only in his day-to-day pedagogical practice but also the system of his workplace and around. This study is evidence of how Mr. Perfect changed his identity through his digital literacy skills in a larger professional space. This study mainly focuses on transformation in an individual; however, teaching takes place in a society, in this regard, his pedagogical shift transformed his identity.

Ms. Multitasker went so far from her imagined identity. She imagined being a teacher when she was a child, but didn't limit her identity, she was known as a successful teacher due to her fast promotion to the second-class teacher. She was offered to facilitate teachers by one of the official confirming if she is confident enough to present ideas in digital form. This offer is the result of digital literacy skill. With this her identity turned into a facilitator. Ms. Multitasker transformed her pedagogy by preparing materials in digital platform. Her read and record sessions were quite impressive. Ms. Multitasker's journey from a social teacher to an English

language teacher and video material developer for on the behalf of CHERD is certainly a transformation in her profession.

Mr. Conversant, another participant and his effort to transform his school to a smart school is another example of all-embracing transformation. His digital literacy skill during the pandemic turned him into a facilitator. He facilitated hundreds of teachers. As a school leader his contribution to change school into a digitally smart school intuitional transformation.

Ms. Critical, was not very aware of digital integration at the beginning. However, her transformative nature can be sensed in her assertion, "*We don't have the same curry for lunch and breakfast how learners learn with activities every day.*" Her continuous engagement in the navigation to get suitable digital resources and presenting a variety of materials changed her pedagogy. With this, she transformed both her practice and identity. She carved the identity of a smart teacher of smart students born in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Most importantly, my continuous engagements with my participants transformed my perspective about teaching. I learnt various ways of digital integration. Each time when I heard my participants, I tried their strategies in my classroom. I maximized the use of technology in my classroom. I used online available materials for teaching language skills and aspects in my classroom.

This study, I assure is evidence of transformation in teaching pedagogy, transformation is the workplace, and teaching pedagogy. The education policy of Nepal in the present time is moving in the direction of transforming teaching strategy, digital integration. In this scenario, this study I believe provides knowledge and practical example of integration and transformation.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the overall study discussion, and insights I developed, I reached the following conclusions in general. Teachers' professional identity construction is a continuous process. The teaching profession is a long journey, where an individual constructs and reconstructs multiple identities. The process goes on until we retire from the profession. Identity shaped at a time, doesn't work throughout the professional life.

I initiated this study to explore, how English language teachers narrate their professional journey through the adoption of digital technology. The participants in this study, in the initial phase, were identified as English teachers, as they taught

English. Mr. Perfect gradually formed the identity of a strict teacher applying his prior belief about teaching. His early career was guided by an ideology; good teachers are those who transmit knowledge in the silent class, Mr. Perfect was not exceptional. Most of the participants in the study shared the similar stories regarding their guiding ideology as an early career professional. However, English language teachers encountered diverse issues and misperceptions in the route of identity construction. Nevertheless, teachers continued their journey.

Teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I comprehended is appealing to digital integration. Participants' stories revealed that ICT integration was one of the pertinent agenda of the educational policy of the government. Teachers were provided training as a part of implementation. However, the agenda and training were limited to paper and training halls. Teachers did not integrate technology in the English language classroom although they were trained, and it was government's policy. Notably, the Corona outbreak became a turning point that obliged teachers to use digital platforms. The obligation created by the pandemic brought a shift in teaching in terms of technology integration. The immediate situation forced teachers to use the virtual world as a classroom. According to the participants, teachers the initial phase struggled to use digital platform and resources due to a lack of knowledge. Gradually, they learnt. They engaged themselves in the digital platform both for learning and teaching purpose and learned to use within a short time. It was not easy for the teachers to learn the new skills because they have to unlearn their previous pedagogy and learn new pedagogy which was full of challenges. They proved themselves as an enthusiastic learner. They learn from so many mentors without hesitation whom they always acknowledge. This study therefore found teachers' identities are impacted by the changes that happens around us.

Interestingly, the majority of the participants of the study did not imagine their career as a teacher however, their continuous engagement, created passion in the profession. Teachers engaged themselves as a learner to align their knowledge and pedagogy to fit in the teaching context where learners were digitally sound and loved to learn through digital integration. During the process, teachers formed and reformed their identity in the professional space. Teachers imagination aligns their engagement, therefore, these three components are significant components of identity formation.

Teachers were found emerging optimistic about digital literacy skills and its significance teachers and students. Participants are found aware of the government

policy related to ICT. In this study, two of the participants were digitally literate before the Pandemic. Teachers' prior digital literacy became a boon in the situation when people were almost lost in the digital world. They people helped to literate teachers around the nation. It signifies that the teaching profession is a community work where learning materializes from one another. Teachers helping other to become literate and learn new digital integration skills in the immediate situation was a good practice in a community of teachers, as stated by Wenger (1998) in his community of practice without any membership. Mr. Critical in the study revealed that she learned digital skills from Cop around her learners, her colleague, and daughter. Apart from these, teachers created a community in the online forum. The forum's engagement and discussion helped them to fill the gap in their profession. Therefore, teachers were found to maximize the use of digital tools for professional growth, connecting in different social sites such as Facebook, messengers, and professional organizations like NELTA, and Blog .com to engage with the writing community. Teachers were making use of digital platforms to share their positive responses with their colleagues, and the sharing as a result, familiarized them with the large community of professionals. Language teachers have been using social sites to broaden their professional knowledge and share ideas.

In my second research question, I was keen to explore how English language teachers construct identity through digital literacy. As per my concern, I found teachers' innovative use of technology for language teaching and learning helped them shape their identity. Although the participants were informed about the significance of digital integration in language teaching, they did not prioritize it. However, situation after the pandemic changed the whole scenario. Teachers transformed in terms of digital use and integration in their pedagogy. They engaged themselves in the digital environment, navigated resources, and used it effectively in the classroom. Interestingly, teachers used their imagination creatively, they became content developers and used self-created local materials. For instance, Mr. Perfect made use of his blog post for teaching purposes; Ms. Multitasker used her recorded materials to bring variety to the language classroom. In this way teaching and learning perspectives and pedagogy are changed due to teachers' digital literacy. They found another version of themselves in the present time.

The participant teachers' continuous interaction with the digital platform trained them to use digital materials innovatively and creatively. The stories of my

participants stories exhibited that the innovative use of digital tools and resources in language teaching and learning has brought a shift in teaching. However, participants critical observation created a great issue in digital integration. One of the participants of my study shared his dissatisfaction on his own practices. He said, “*The digital integration that we have been practicing is not keeping learners’ participation at the mid-point. Although it is motivating learners providing variety of activities, we are still unable to prepare enough materials that ensures learners active participation in the learning process.*” Therefore, this study leaves space for the further researcher to explore the possible way, how to use digital literacy skills effectively ensuring creativity and meaningful participation of the learners? Moreover, digital integration is a major component of present educational policy, therefore just inclusion doesn’t make sense. Although this study provides ways to integration, it leaves a challenge for the further study.

The thought-provoking finding is that when the teachers equipped themselves with digital skills and knowledge, they found their scope in the professional space in various roles compared to teachers. Participant teachers shared those numerous opportunities knocked on their door. They were offered to be facilitators, and material developers in the resource center. Their digital literacy skill helped them be identified in the larger community of teachers as a teacher facilitator. The identity of a facilitator, helped them to gain respect and recognition in the professional community.

However, maintaining the status of a digitally literate teacher is another challenge. Although teachers are digitally informed, they can integrate technology into language teaching classrooms, some constraints prevented them from continuing the practice. First, workplace-related issues, workplace, and school authorities are not supporting teachers to integrate technology. Teachers who work proactively using digital tools and resources are not appreciated. Those who work innovatively and traditionally are treated equally. Teachers are discouraged from continuing the practice.

This study I believe meets the purpose of the study as it presented lived stories of English language teachers ups and downs in professional journey along with their pedagogical shift caused by unavoidable circumstance (The Covid Pandemic). The study I believe met the purpose of bringing the lived reality of English language teachers route of professional journey along with their prior understanding and use of digital literacy. Moreover, this study also brought how teachers commenced a

paradigm shift in teaching. English language teachers' identity is framed based on various components; culture, society, their roles, career guidance, prior knowledge. However, this study presented English language teachers' identity formation through digital literacy and digital integration in teaching and learning process. This study found English language teachers were progressive in nature. Their self-initiated learning helped them to construct the identity; digitally smart teacher, teacher's educator, knowledge creator, a successful teacher, a techno-friendly teacher. Therefore, this study I believe is successful enough to explore teachers' identity construction not in term of change in perspective but bringing change in day-to-day English language teaching activities. This study leaves lots of space for the researcher. This study explored how teachers can construct identity through digital literacy, a researcher further can explore what can be the way of innovative digital integration?

### **Implications**

From the findings and conclusions, I believe the following would be the implications of my research study. Digital literacy skill is given priority in 21<sup>st</sup>-century education. To develop 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills to educate digital natives, teachers who teach them demand to be smarter than the learners. Teacher participants in this study are literate with digital skills and have been using technology in their language classroom to some extent. The findings of this study help the policymakers to estimate how teachers can integrate digital tools to teach the curriculum provided by the government. Moreover, language educators who are intensely interested in being digitally smart teachers can get practical insight from this study. Language teachers teaching in pre-primary to university level get practical idea for digital integration in English language classroom. Language teachers arouse the interest of the learner if they integrate digital tools and resources making themselves informed with tools and resources. School administration and administrators who is responsible for managing resources will hopefully get practical insight from this study. This study also provides ideas for the policymakers delivering realities of teachers, students and educational institutions in Nepal.

Additionally, this study delivers some locally generated strategies and methods by the research participants to address language teachers' needs and interests. The strategies can be applied to training designers, facilitators, and language teachers in real classrooms. Furthermore, this study found teachers were reluctant to



technology available in their workplace although the workplace is filled with digital devices after the Pandemic. I strongly suggest that all the language teachers integrate technology in language classrooms. I encourage language teachers to be optimistic about their future because they get unlimited resources on the internet, just engage themselves in the digital platform showing little enthusiasm for professional growth. Professional growth is the ultimate goal of all the discourse we have made throughout this study.

### **My Reflections**

Last, but not least, I am in the stage of writing my reflective summary of my journey during my M.Phil. and dissertation which I found more stressful than three-semester assignments. This section involves my inner emotions, an insight I developed during the journey, and professional growth due to innovative learning from my participants and literature. To be honest, I was willing to add my personal experience to the study, However, I could not bring my experience as I have chosen the interpretivist paradigm rather than constructivism. Therefore, I have been using this platform to unpack my personal experiences.

I did my master's degree 13 years ago. I was always willing to do an MA as I was an M.Ed. However, due to various constraints, I could not do it. During 2000, I reflected on myself and realized I needed to get updated. I was willing to do an MA, but some of my well-wishers suggested me go with a higher degree. I was convinced. I decided to join Kathmandu University although my husband was showed me restrictions related to my baby, who was just one and a half years old then. I didn't stop myself. I filled up the form and attended the entrance exam. The university published the list. During the time the university was running the classes in online mode in block mode. My doubt, is it possible to study M.Phil. online mode and block mode? I called one of the professors from Kathmandu University. He convinced me that block mode is always best for professionals like us. However, I dropped the idea of admission that year. The following year, I went through the same process and got admitted. Luckily, one of the professors coordinated classes in the Dhulikhel cohort. We, a group of six students became a part of KUSOED named. 'Dhulikhel Cohort'.

Teaching and learning at Kathmandu University, I realized is completely different. I was inspired by how the university prepares each semester's curriculum for each semester. The curriculum development process is participatory. They have provided space for the learner to add some portion of the curriculum. Moreover, I

found the continuous assessment system, was praise praiseworthy. As a learner I found myself engaging throughout the session except few sessions. M.Phil. for me was a key to professional development rather than just a degree. During the semester, discussions with the professors made me realize a change in my perspective as a teacher. The session was not limited to the curriculum provided. I still remember a few classes we spent discussing the issues we faced in our workplace. Hence, the teaching-learning process in this university is more experience sharing than experience transforming.

It was during the third semester; that I did my proposal defense. I was quite interested in the issue related to teachers' identity. Let me share why I am interested in teachers' identity. Before the pandemic, almost all the classes were traditional, I used to carry only recorder materials for the listening-speaking class. The pandemic for me became a boon to transform me as a professional. The digital literacy I gained during the pandemic to address the situation guided me in a new direction. During the pandemic, I engaged myself with the digital world for a long time. I navigated lots of professional ideas. Then, I used the ideas in my profession. I found my students are more attentive than before. I continued the practice when the classes went on face-to-face mode. Therefore, reflecting on myself before and after the pandemic as an English teacher was largely changed. I believe I am changed, not in terms of belief, I am changed in terms of my practice in the professional space. In light of my reflection, I thought teachers' identity concerning the use of digital should be studied. In my research proposal, I entitled, 'Teachers' identity and digital literacy'. However, I could not go with it. Dr. Wagle encouraged me to go with digital materiality, but I could not convince the team of professors during my proposal defense. Therefore, my mentor suggested me to go with the term digital literacy.

The journey during the dissertation process was a hard nut to crack. Honestly, so many times, I thought I couldn't get a certificate since I was too busy to manage my time for dissertation writing. I planned to leave classes in the college, but didn't do so thinking this platform is the place where I can practice the skill of academic writing. I continued morning classes, school in the day, and reading in the evening. I managed to meet with my participants after 4 o'clock. I tried my best to meet them physically because I was willing their emotional state during the conversation. However, I could not manage physical meetings each time, then I managed meetings

in Google Meet. Relatedly, the digital literacy skills of my participants helped me to gather information through email, responses in Messenger and virtual meetings.

Insights, I developed from my participants and the literature review in during the dissertation is priceless. The participants, I selected were all well-experienced and digitally literate. Digging through their professional journey, I realized, they are well identified in their workplace. However, identification created due to their innovative practice using digital literacy skills I found is outstanding.

Honestly speaking, If I have not joined M.Phil. I would not have realized that I am not competent enough as an English language teacher. Joining the degree being a part of Kathmandu University which was always my dream university. My hometown is about two and a half kilometers away from the University. I used to see the university, but I had never imagined myself being a part of it, thinking it was for high-class people. Now, my perception of the university also changed, even middle-class students can afford to join the university if they genuinely want to join for learning purposes. This is one of the episodes of my life. Apart from my dream, I updated myself reflecting on my pedagogy and perspectives. I used to think with a master's degree I was competent enough to be an English teacher. Now, I insist, I will never be perfect, the more I learn, I will find a new way of learning. I realized teaching is not only teaching, it's just a part. Teaching involves, researching, writing, learning, and trying innovative ideas.

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## APPENDIXES

### Interview Guideline Questions

1. Could you please share the history, how you joined the profession?
2. How did you teach English language in the early days of your career?
3. How do you see covid pandemic for teaching professionals like you?
4. How have you connected yourself with the digital world? Who supported you to be literate with the digital world and how?
5. How have you been applying your digital literacy skill for professional development in your professional life? What are the activities you plan in your ELT classroom?
6. How does your digital literacy empower you in the professional space? Or share a moment when you feel privileged.
7. Do you think you have created a new space in your professional life due to your digital literacy and noble practice?
8. How do you perceive the essence of digital literacy for the teacher in the present scenario? 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher

### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION AND CODING

Ms. Multitasker

#### **1. Could you please share the history, how you joined the profession?**

I am Mrs. K.C. I have been in the profession for more than 15 years. Teaching for me was a game when I was small. According to my mom I used to play teacher-teacher with my friends when I was about 5/6 years old. I still remember playing the role of my favorite teacher and used to get angry if I was not given the role. I used to make my friends do what my teachers did at school. I loved to do caricature of my teachers. After passing SLC, dilemma which area to choose. However, I instantly decided to read the subject that makes me teacher. I think I was born for teaching. It is passion for me than a profession. I have been in the profession for more than. I joined the profession from a private school. When I was in private school, I taught social study as well. Anyway, I love to say I am an English teacher. I am proud to be a

teacher. (What made you feel proud? (With smile. In a confident tone) I think students' response and their achievement is the main criteria to evaluate a teacher. Nowadays, students' final achievement is being improved. Besides, I have heard positive comments from my students. Some of the extrovert students come to me and share they really like the way I teach English. Moreover, my engagement is not limited to classroom teaching. I do involve in training facilitator and a subject expert.

## 2. Mr. Conversant

I am Mr. Pandey. Born in remote village of Kavre district. I did my schooling from the school of my village. My school was not resourceful. Teaching and learning used to be textbook oriented. It was all lecture in Nepali. I had given SLC in 2039. During my SLC I read education. There used to be teaching practice in grade nine.

Regarding my teaching career, I started teaching from 2038 including my teaching practice in grade nine. Then, I joined teaching when I was free after I.sc. I was forced to attend exam of teacher service commission. Its result was published in 2048 and I was selected. I was not thinking to continue teaching profession but when I got successful to be permanent teacher, everyone forced me to continue the profession. I was thinking to do some business. If I was not in the profession, I would be a businessperson. My continuous success in the profession made me continue. I got permanent as secondary teacher in 2060, promoted to second class in 2069 and now I am first class secondary level teacher. I am happy to get success in my teaching career. I feel I am a history in teaching profession as I served almost 40 years in the profession.

## 3. Ms. Critical

### Schooling and childhood.....

I am Mrs. Joshi. I am in this profession for more than 20 years. I started my teaching career from a private school. I worked there for two years. I learnt a lot about teaching. Actually, I am from management faculty. I was back on a paper during my bachelor. The break led me to teaching. My family were in banking sector who encouraged me to join banking profession. But when I join the profession, I realized I enjoy the profession. I myself explore English language is my strength so joined the profession, (being thoughtful) I explored this is the profession which I enjoy. I was interested in English as I used to listen English music and used to use English

dictionary. I was not from education background. Thus, when I joined the profession, I started giving English major papers..... Later, my professional passion pushed me to Kathmandu University as a student of M.Ed. I recently completed M.Ed. I am proud thinking it's never late to begin!

#### 4.HARI

I am Mr. K.C.I was born in such a background where all the youth used to join British army. My family expected me to do the same or go to foreign. But I was not interested. When I entered Kathmandu I started teaching in a private school. I was an English teacher in grade 9 and 10. The school had a slogan "English speaking zone."

The school admin wanted me to be a vice-principal. Unwillingly, I did it. The short-term teaching and the position provided me an ample opportunity to learn teaching and leadership. I worked there for two years. Then, I got selected by teacher service commission as permanent secondary level English teacher. Then I was appointed in a school located at a remote village of Kavre district. I have been working in this school for five years as headteacher. I have been teaching English from grade 9 to 12 now. I am in the profession for seven years.

## **2.How did you teach English language in the early days of your career? Do you use the same teaching methods now? Why or why not?**

### 1.Ms. Multitasker

She spoke with thoughtful expression) Regarding teaching method, during my early career it was different. The change is natural and demanding. We have to tune ourselves with time. However, in the initial phase of the career, I was largely teacher center. used to find my smartness occupying whole class and speaking a lot (Laugh with conformation question, don't you?). (I nodded with smile.) Giving good lecture was my method. But lots of changes has taken place in the present days. learnt to use variety of method from my pre-service teacher's course. Besides, I got chance to attend several trainings that informed me about innovative methods and approach. I am much conscious about **students' engagement**. Now, my way of teaching is completely change. I consciously design student centered activities based upon given curriculum. Now, I used student center method, focus project-based activities that engage the learner.

### 2.SANTOSH



(Looking at the ceiling. ..he spoke) Teaching in the early career was conventional, I mean lecture based. Teaching during the early career was knowledge sharing. I was quite good in knowledge sharing. I was a teacher in my village. I was not much aware about the use of ICT when I was in the village (Kanpur, one of the remote villages of Kavre district) But I didn't remain there for a long time. I shifted to Banepa in 2060. Then I joined M.Phil. in Tribhuban University. Teacher and scholar at the same time energize me to work in innovatively. I started teaching through PowerPoint presentation from 2064. (How did you learn to prepare power point and digital integration at that time?). As a school leader we were the first to use PowerPoint in teaching in whole district in +2 level. I myself facilitated and encouraged all the colleagues to use PowerPoint presentation giving some incentives. (Incentives means?) We paid extra allowance, Rs,1000 to all those who shared PowerPoint me the initiation somehow compelled the teacher to be digital friendly. At the beginning they took it as a burden. But in the long run they realized such preparation helps even in the year to come. Students are fond of noble practices in the school as it was rare or almost nil in other schools.

Teaching during pandemic was completely virtual. We were successful enough to bring almost 75 students in the digital platform. However, when we go on physical mode, we could not continue the digital practice. But I have been sharing the useful materials and links to the students in the group in messenger created during pandemic. Some of the students are taking full advantage from the materials shared in the group. Nowadays I am sharing pdf version and sharing the materials prepared myself.

### 3.Ms. Critical

Teaching in early career was largely conventional. I taught the way I was taught by my teacher. But I tried something now, I at least used to bring recorded materials. I used to use recorded materials. There was audiovisual room where I used to take my students time and again. I used to make my classroom engaging bringing printed papers. The school has audio visual room where I used to take my students for learning. We used to use television to show videos. There was no wifi. so, I used to use cassette and CDS that I got as a gift. I was always interested to bring variety. I used to use CDS which was gifted to me.

### 4. Mr.Perfect

Teaching in our time was completely book based rote learning. When I joined the profession, I used to think I have to show my talent with fluent speaking skill ignoring

learner's interest. I didn't use to use technology for teaching. In the earlier phase I have no knowledge of curriculum and knowledge of teaching techniques. Though when I reflect, I did good. But When I realized curriculum is crucial. I learnt curriculum intensely. Now, my teaching is more curriculum focused and more engaging