

SOCIOCULTURAL BACKGROUNDS OF GIRLS' SCHOOL STUDENTS  
INFLUENCING THEIR PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH: A NARRATIVE  
INQUIRY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Kiyoko Tsukahara* for the degree of *Master of Education in English Language Teaching* presented on *18 May 2025*, entitled *Sociocultural Background of Girls' School Students Influencing Their Performance in English: A Narrative Inquiry*.

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The aim of this research is to explore the influence of socio-cultural background on English language learning among students at a girls' secondary school in Dolakha district, Nepal. Having grown up in a monolingual, monocultural society, I have developed a keen interest in the differences and challenges that arise in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society such as Nepal. This research aims to identify the socio-cultural factors that students from culturally diverse backgrounds face in English language learning. Previous research has focused on the inequality of women's education and the diversity of languages as factors that create disparities, and there have been many studies on the importance of education using one's native language. However, this research focuses on students attending an all-girls school in an environment that does not specifically adopt native language education as a school policy. I conducted this research with the awareness that by advancing research from this perspective, new insights into English education could be gained.

In this study, I adopted a narrative inquiry approach and conducted semi-structured interviews with English teachers at a girls' secondary school in the Dolakha district. Through these interviews, I explored in detail the teaching practices of the teachers and the ways in which they responded to the socio-cultural challenges faced by their students. In particular, I focused on how students from various ethnic backgrounds learn English and how these factors influence this learning. In addition to the interviews with the teachers, I also analyzed the ethnic and linguistic

backgrounds as well as the English performance of students in each grade. Based on this data, I conducted a comprehensive examination of the ways in which ethnic, linguistic, and family backgrounds affect students' English abilities.

The results of the study showed that ethnic background does not have a significant impact on English learning. Instead, factors such as the family's educational environment, support system, and regional conditions were found to have a greater impact on learning outcomes. The teachers emphasized that respecting and supporting the diverse backgrounds of students is the key to improving learning outcomes. In addition, the study showed that support from the family and cooperation between the school and the local community are essential for motivating students and increasing their desire to learn.

This study provides valuable insights into the intersection of sociocultural context and language education. It reveals how teachers respond to the realities of their students and adjust their teaching practices accordingly. It also shows that English performance is closely related not only to the efforts of schools and teachers but also to how much children's education is observed and practically supported by parents at home. This emphasizes the need for policies that strengthen cooperation between schools and families. It is proposed that such policies are essential to support better the diverse needs of Nepalese girls' secondary schools, including the need to provide special educational opportunities for children in geographically disadvantaged situations.

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18 May 2025

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## शोध सार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि कियोको त्सुकाहाराको शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक " किशोरी विद्यालयका छात्राहरूको अंग्रेजीमा उनीहरूको प्रदर्शनलाई प्रभाव पार्ने सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमि: एक संकथन" ४ जेठ २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

.....  
प्रा. लक्ष्मण ज्ञवाली, पीएचडी  
शोध निर्देशक  
निर्देशक

.....  
सुरेन्द्र प्रसाद भट्ट  
शोध

यस अनुसन्धानको उद्देश्य नेपालको दोलखा जिल्लाको एक छात्रा माध्यमिक विद्यालयका विद्यार्थीहरूमा अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमिको प्रभावको अध्ययन गर्नु हो। एक एकभाषिक, एकसांस्कृतिक समाजमा हुर्किएकोले, मैले नेपालजस्तो बहु-जातीय, बहु-सांस्कृतिक समाजमा उत्पन्न हुने भिन्नता र चुनौतीहरूप्रति गहिरो चासो राखेको छु। यो अनुसन्धानले विविध सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमिबाट आएका विद्यार्थीहरूले अंग्रेजी भाषा सिक्दा भोग्ने सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक कारकहरू पहिचान गर्ने लक्ष्य राखेको छ। अघिल्ला अनुसन्धानहरूले महिलाहरूको शिक्षामा असमानता र भाषिक विविधतालाई असमानता सिर्जना गर्ने कारकको रूपमा हेरेका छन्, र मातृभाषामा शिक्षा प्रदान गर्नुपर्ने कुरामा धेरै अध्ययनहरू भएका छन्। तर, यो अनुसन्धानले मातृभाषा शिक्षा विद्यालय नीतिको रूपमा अपनाइ नभएको परिवेशमा रहेको छात्रा विद्यालयमा अध्ययन गर्ने विद्यार्थीहरूलाई केन्द्रमा राखेको छ। म यस दृष्टिकोणबाट अनुसन्धान गर्दा अंग्रेजी शिक्षामा नयाँ दृष्टिकोण प्राप्त हुन सक्ने आशा राखी अनुसन्धानमा संलग्न भएँ।

यस अध्ययनमा मैले वर्णनात्मक अनुसन्धान (narrative inquiry) पद्धति अपनाएँ र दोलखा जिल्लाको एक छात्रा माध्यमिक विद्यालयमा कार्यरत अंग्रेजी शिक्षकहरूसँग अर्ध-संरचित अन्तर्वार्ता (semi-structured interviews) गरें। यी अन्तर्वार्तामार्फत मैले शिक्षकहरूको शिक्षण अभ्यास र विद्यार्थीहरूले भोग्ने सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक चुनौतीहरूप्रति उनीहरूले कसरी प्रतिक्रिया जनाउँछन् भन्ने कुरा विस्तारमा अध्ययन गरें। विशेषतः, विभिन्न जातीय पृष्ठभूमिका विद्यार्थीहरूले कसरी अंग्रेजी भाषा सिक्छन् र ती पृष्ठभूमिहरूले सिकाइमा कस्तो असर पार्दछ भन्ने कुरामा ध्यान केन्द्रित गरियो। शिक्षकहरूसँगको अन्तर्वार्तासँगै, मैले प्रत्येक कक्षाका विद्यार्थीहरूको जातीय र भाषिक पृष्ठभूमि तथा अंग्रेजी भाषाको प्रदर्शनको पनि विश्लेषण गरें। यी तथ्याङ्कहरूका आधारमा मैले जातीय, भाषिक र पारिवारिक पृष्ठभूमिले विद्यार्थीहरूको अंग्रेजी क्षमतामा कस्तो असर पार्दछ भन्ने कुरामा समग्र परीक्षण गरें।

अध्ययनको नतिजाबाट विद्यार्थीको जातीय पृष्ठभूमिले अंग्रेजी सिकाइमा विशेष प्रभाव पार्दैन। बरु, पारिवारिक शैक्षिक वातावरण, सहयोग प्रणाली तथा क्षेत्रीय अवस्थाहरूले सिकाइ परिणाममा बढी प्रभाव पार्ने देखियो। शिक्षकहरूले विविध पृष्ठभूमिका विद्यार्थीहरूलाई सम्मान गर्नु र समर्थन गर्नु नै सिकाइ परिणाम सुधार गर्ने प्रमुख उपाय हो भन्नेमा जोड दिए। साथै, अध्ययनले देखायो कि पारिवारिक समर्थन तथा विद्यालय र स्थानीय समुदायबीचको सहकार्य विद्यार्थीलाई प्रेरित गर्न र सिक्न चाहना बढाउन अत्यावश्यक हुन्छ।

यस अध्ययनले सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक सन्दर्भ र भाषा शिक्षाबीचको सम्बन्धमा महत्वपूर्ण ज्ञान प्रदान गर्दछ। यसले शिक्षकहरूले विद्यार्थीहरूको यथार्थतालाई कसरी बुझ्छन् र तदनुसार आफ्नो शिक्षण पद्धति समायोजन गर्छन् भन्ने कुरालाई प्रस्ट पारेको छ। साथै, अंग्रेजी प्रदर्शन केवल विद्यालय र शिक्षकहरूको प्रयाससँग मात्र नभई अभिभावकले घरमै शिक्षाको निगरानी र व्यवहारिक समर्थन कति गर्छन् भन्ने कुरासँग पनि गहिरो सम्बन्ध भएको देखाउँछ। यसले विद्यालय र परिवारबीचको सहकार्य बलियो बनाउने नीति आवश्यक भएको कुरामा जोड दिन्छ। यस्तो नीति नेपालका छात्रा माध्यमिक विद्यालयहरूको विविध आवश्यकताहरू, विशेषतः भौगोलिक रूपमा पिछडिएका क्षेत्रका बालबालिकालाई विशेष शैक्षिक अवसरहरू प्रदान गर्नुपर्ने आवश्यकतालाई सघाउन अत्यावश्यक रहेको प्रस्ताव गरिएको छ।

४ जेठ २०८२

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कियोको त्सुकाहारा

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation entitled *Sociocultural Background of Girls School Students Influencing Their Performance in English: A Narrative Inquiry*, presented by *Kiyoko Tsukahara* on 18 May 2025.

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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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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18 May 2025

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all my friends in Nepal.

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This dissertation represents the culmination of my two-year master's program and also serves as an opportunity that has opened a new door in my career as an educator. Living in Nepal as a foreigner and conducting this research, especially in Charikot, Dolakha, has been an unforgettable experience that deepened my understanding and affection for Nepal. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Laxman Gnawali, and Lecturer Surendra Bhatt. Beyond the scope of Nepali education, you have taught me what education truly means. Your guidance on conducting field research and writing, from the fundamentals to advanced stages, has been invaluable, and your encouragement has been deeply appreciated.

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A special thank you goes to the principal, teachers, and students of the girls' schools in Dolakha. Without your cooperation, this dissertation would not have been possible. I wish you all continued happiness and prosperity in the future. I remain committed to bridging between Japan and Nepal through language education. This dissertation contains all my gratitude and respect.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DOE	Department of Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELP	English language proficiency
ELT	English Language Teaching
ITM	Indigenous/Tribal/Minority
LAHURNIP	Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples
MLE	Multilingual Education
SES	Socioeconomic Status
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Nepal has a diverse range of languages and cultures, and English language learning has become an important part of this diversity. However, the impact of their socio-cultural background on English language learning among schoolgirls may be significant. The Purpose of this study is to examine critically the influence of the sociocultural background of the students on their performance and the measures taken by teachers to enhance their English learning. About the diversity of socio-culture in Nepal, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal (2011), the 2011 census reported that there are 126 different castes/ethnic groups, and 123 languages are spoken as the main native language. This study was conducted in a girls' secondary school located in Charikot, Dolakha district of Nepal. There are many different ethnic groups living in the rural mountain area, Dolakha district, where the Thami, Sherpa, Tamang, and Newar ethnic groups live, which is an ideal research site.

On the other hand, in my home country, Japan, the most widely used language is Japanese, and the national language taught in school is also Japanese. For many of its citizens, English is taught as a foreign language in educational institutions. But they almost never use it in their daily lives. In contrast, living in Nepal, a country of multiple ethnicities and languages, I was interested in the educational situation in which people learn Nepali as a secondary language while studying English as a foreign language. I focused on girls' schools in particular because I myself studied English at a women's university and have experienced the advantages of learning in a same gender learning environment. In this research, I will critically examine how the socio-cultural backgrounds of the students, although belonging to the same gender category, affect their English language performance and the measures taken by the teachers to enhance students' English language learning.

The results of this study will provide valuable insights for teachers and education policymakers involved in English language education. Moreover, understanding the socio-cultural background of female students is essential in supporting their English language learning, making this study a useful contribution to this effort.

### **Importance of Mother Tongue Education and Second Language Acquisition**

Community schools mainly use Nepali as the language of instruction. However, this is not to prevent students from learning English successfully. Cummins (2001a) explains that the cognitive skills students develop in the first language can support and strengthen their ability to acquire a second language. In other words, the higher the cognitive and linguistic competence in the native language, the more effectively it will affect second language acquisition. The relationship between the mother tongue and the second language was described as “interdependent”.

*Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language. When parents and other caregivers (e.g., grandparents) are able to spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well-prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally. Children’s knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue they have learned at home to the school language. (p17).*

Applying Cummings' theory to the educational context of Nepal, introducing mother tongue-based education during the initial years of schooling plays a crucial role in facilitating the transfer of language skills to the subsequent acquisition of secondary language (Nepali) and tertiary language (English). (Rai,2023). In other words, the emphasis on teaching in the mother tongue, even in community schools, can be said to be an advantage for teaching English.

### **Rationale of the Research**

English plays a crucial role in Nepal due to globalization, labor migration, and its use in higher education and employment opportunities. As such, understanding how different groups of students learn English is essential for equitable educational development. Prior research (Yadava, 2015) has highlighted issues unique to multilingual societies, including family problems in remote areas and the gap between government language policies and classroom realities. It is therefore important to examine the current status of English language proficiency among female students in Nepal, and how it relates to their socio-cultural background. Various factors influence a child's language development, not only in Nepal but also globally. These include the educational level of parents, expectations toward their children, literacy practices at

home and in the community, and the dominant language environment (Bialystok, 2001).

However, while previous research has explored gender inequality and the urban–rural divide in education, little attention has been paid to English education within girls' schools themselves. This presents a population and contextual gap. Furthermore, no prior study has focused on how the socio-cultural backgrounds of minority girls in a rural girls' school, specifically in Dolakha, affect their English language learning. This reflects both a geographical and empirical gap. Therefore, this study aims to contribute new insights by focusing on a rural girls' school in Dolakha where students from minority ethnic backgrounds study English in a multilingual and socially complex environment. The findings will offer valuable guidance for teachers and educational policymakers, helping them to support female students more effectively by understanding the socio-cultural factors that shape their English learning.

### **Problem Statement**

In Nepal, does mother tongue mean Nepali? According to Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) (2014) data, Nepali is the language spoken by 44.64% of the population. The majority of the population (59%) consists of monolingual individuals, while 41% of the population can speak at least one additional language (CBS, 2014, as cited in Rai, 2018, p. 4). Therefore, there are many students in community schools for whom Nepali is their second language. As mentioned earlier, ethnic diversity can be seen in mountainous areas such as Dolakha. About English education in rural community schools, it is reported that socio-cultural background affects language proficiency and that many students drop out of school (United Nations, 2011).

Pokharel (2022) noted that the diversity of socio-cultural backgrounds becomes a barrier to language teaching and English language learning at school in rural areas, Nepal. In a country with such ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, students prefer to communicate in their own mother tongue at home, in their own communities, and even at school. Nepali is their second language, and English is their third foreign language. In this situation, English is "the bugaboo for them". This raises the problem of how to help them overcome such a sense of dislike of English and whether it should be a challenge or an opportunity for English teachers (Pokharel, 2022).

In addition, the study by Yadav et al. (2021) shows that the times have changed further, and the coronal pandemic that began in 2020 is likely to lead to the temporary closure of schools in Nepal and an increasing number of families moving abroad or to the capital in search of work due to economic hardship. Due to these factors, it is worthwhile to explore how the current sociocultural background affects students' performance in English. The target of this research is girls' schools. Increased and fluid access to the outside world has increased educational opportunities for women in Nepal. (Yadav, 2015). Supporting girls' education is vital to shaping the future of society. Through this study, I aim to contribute to the ongoing efforts to expand learning opportunities for young women. Reviewing earlier research, it becomes clear that scholars have often pointed out challenges unique to multilingual communities, including the social and family difficulties faced in remote areas, and the persistent gap between national language policies and actual practices in schools.

To research what is the current status of English language proficiency of female students in Nepal and how it relates to their social context, what factors influence girls' English language learning and academic performance in the socio-cultural context of Nepal, and to critically examine the measures taken by teachers to enhance their learning, these explorations will contribute to development female students' English education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

To critically examine the influence of the sociocultural background of the students on their performance and the measures taken by teachers to enhance their learning.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does the sociocultural background of students influence their performance?
2. What initiatives do teachers take to improve the performance of students?

### **Delimitation of the Study**

In this study, I focused exclusively on girls' secondary schools in the Dolakha district, Nepal. The scope of this research was geographically limited to the Himalayan region, which is characterized by unique cultural practices and traditions specific to the communities residing in this area. The ethnic groups included in this study—such as the Thami, Sherpa, Tamang, and Newar—provided a rich but

localized perspective on the socio-cultural influences on English language learning. Linguistically, the study was also restricted to students whose mother tongues are unique to these ethnic groups. As such, the socio-cultural and linguistic background of these communities naturally defined the boundaries of my investigation. By focusing on this specific region and its ethnic and linguistic characteristics, I examined how these factors influenced students' English proficiency. This delimitation ensured a detailed exploration of the impact of socio-cultural elements in English language teaching (ELT) within a localized but diverse context. However, it also means that the findings may not be broadly generalizable to other regions or ethnic groups in Nepal. Instead, they provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities present in Dolakha's socio-cultural and linguistic landscape.

I focused on the academic performance of students in the grades taught by the three English teachers who participated in the research. The scope of the investigation was thus limited to these specific grades rather than encompassing all grades within the school. Additionally, the study included data from students who, for various reasons, were unable to complete their exams or had dropped out during the academic year. By incorporating these students, I aimed to present a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and realities faced by learners in the given context. This decision also reflects the broader socio-cultural and economic conditions that can influence student performance, particularly in rural areas like the Dolakha district. This delimitation highlights the specific focus of the study on a subset of students, allowing for a detailed analysis of the relationship between socio-cultural factors and academic outcomes within a well-defined scope.

This study does not involve an extensive comparison with co-educational schools or boys' schools but focuses solely on how the single-gender environment influences English language learning for girls. Furthermore, many of the families have relocated from rural mountainous areas, and it is recognized that cultural and economic constraints specific to girls, such as household responsibilities and limited educational resources, may impact their participation and performance in learning. However, the findings of this study are not intended to be generalized to socio-cultural contexts beyond the Dolakha district.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduces the research focus on the sociocultural backgrounds of female students and their influence on English performance in the Dolakha district

schools. It highlights the rationale for focusing on girls' schools and the significance of understanding family and cultural dynamics in English education. The chapter also sets the research objectives, questions, and delimitations, emphasizing the need to investigate the roles of teachers in mitigating challenges posed by diverse sociocultural factors.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter deals with the complex interplay between Nepal's language policies and English education within its diverse socio-cultural context. It begins by examining the language policies of the Nepalese government, highlighting the constitutional and legislative provisions that support mother-tongue education and the increasing demand for English due to factors such as labor migration and technological advancements. The review then explores the effectiveness of Multilingual Education (MLE) programs, discussing United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) research and the impact of education in native languages on students' academic performance and motivation. Following this, the chapter considers the socio-cultural influences on English proficiency, emphasizing how family background and economic status contribute to disparities in English skills. It also examines teaching practices in Nepal's multicultural classrooms and the role of teachers in enhancing students' English proficiency. Finally, the chapter addresses the gap between previous research and my own study.

#### **Language Policy by the Nepalese Government**

As mentioned, Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation. To find out what kind of educational policy the government has in such a diverse nation, I would like to first mention the language policy. Yadav (2015) noted that the multilingual approach in school education and Nepal's policies are deeply related; the Education Act's Seventh Amendment (2001) includes provisions that support the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in primary level education (p. 1). Subsequently, the Interim Constitution of Nepal was issued in 2007, and in accordance with the regulations outlined in Article 17.1 of P1, the right to receive primary education in their mother tongue is granted to each community. Later, in 2007, the Nepalese Interim Constitution was issued, which stipulates in Article 17.1 that every community has the right to receive primary education in their mother tongue, as explicitly stated by the law. However, the demand for English has significantly increased in recent years due to factors such as the growth in labor migration, reliance on tourism, societal transformations, and enhanced accessibility to communication technology, according to the analysis. Therefore, there has been an exodus from

public community schools to private schools that teach in English and in 2012, there was a government announcement that community schools can opt for MOI (Yadav, 2015).

Moreover, considering the publication of this study in 2015, it is likely that the impact of the earthquake and English language education in the severely affected and vulnerable regions will increase. The research also suggests that there will be a greater demand for English, which could potentially undermine already fragile traditional lifestyles. The girls' school that was the subject of this research is also located in the Dolakha district, one of the areas hardest hit by the Nepal earthquake in April 2015. The school building was damaged by the actual earthquake, and a new school building has been rebuilt in the last 1-2 years, so the natural disaster is expected to cause further changes in language education (Yadav, 2015). In short, it is possible that multilingual education in rural community schools is becoming increasingly difficult due to government policies, difficulties in their implementation, earthquakes, educational diversions due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, and economic recession. Even though there is an exodus of students from community schools to private schools and many students going to Kathmandu schools for better education, it cannot be said that community schools, which educate students in Nepali except English, are at a disadvantageous position for English education.

### **Review of Previous Research**

UNESCO's research in Kathmandu (2011) discusses how community schools that teach in Nepali are not at a disadvantage in teaching English. In this study, the importance, effectiveness, and impact of MLE (Multi-Lingual Education) are researched. The primary objective of the study was to investigate and examine the actualities of the Multilingual Education (MLE) program. It was implemented in seven different areas. The MLE initiative was initiated by the Department of Education (DoE) in collaboration with the Government of Finland, providing technical support since its launch in 2007. The research presented various instances illustrating the impact of MT-MLE on students' educational experiences. According to the Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP), their mission is to advocate, safeguard, and uphold the human rights and basic liberties of indigenous societies residing in Nepal. For example, in the region of Dang, where a significant number of Tharu students attend a particular school, educators discovered that these students faced considerable difficulties in their

learning process, leading to high dropout rates. However, when MLT was administered in their language, Tharu said, "The students have demonstrated remarkable progress, and attendance has shot up." In other words, they are not good at studying due to language problems and even quit school because they are not comfortable using Nepali or English (p. 12). The following is a description of a justification for implementing mother-tongue-based Multilingual Education (MLE) (p. 13).

If teaching is in a language that the Indigenous/Tribal/Minority (ITM) child does not know (e.g., Nepali), the child sits in the classroom for the first 2-3 years without understanding much of the teaching. S/he may repeat mechanically what the teacher says, without understanding, without developing their capacity to think with the help of language, and without learning almost anything about the subjects that she is taught. This is why many ITM children leave school early, not having learned much Nepali, not having learned properly how to read and write, not having developed their mother tongue, and almost without any school knowledge. If the child is taught in their mother tongue, they are able to understand the lessons, grasp the subjects, and develop cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in their native language. This approach greatly increases the likelihood of the child becoming a thoughtful and knowledgeable individual, with the ability to continue their education effectively (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981)

It is worth highlighting at this point that MLE not only improves students' academic performance, but also their ability to think and other factors that contribute to human nature. This point is also reflected in the opinions of the students' parents. The opinions and attitudes of the students' parents are important because they are part of the socio-cultural context. Parents' views are also addressed in the research literature. Parents agree that MLE has benefited their children significantly, that it has made learning easier in MT, and that children are more motivated to go to school than before. They reported that they show the intention for their children to be educated in English as well as in their native language. This report shows that educating students in their native language improves their motivation and performance and helps them communicate better with their teachers (p. 25), meaning that being a community school is not necessarily a disadvantage for English education.

### **Sociocultural Background and Students' English Performance**

While it is understood that community schools are not necessarily at a disadvantage in terms of English education, does early exposure to English in community schools lead to an improvement in English proficiency?

In Japan, disparities in English proficiency have been categorized into differences in language ability and differences in opportunities for English education, particularly at the elementary school level. However, discussions on disparities related to English often lack consideration of social backgrounds, in contrast to studies on educational inequalities. It has been noted that there is insufficient recognition of how disparities in English proficiency and educational opportunities are influenced by the family and social environments of students (Terasawa, n.d.).

Terasawa's research shows that family and social environments have a strong impact on learners' English proficiency. For example, students whose parents have completed higher education, especially those with higher degrees, tend to perform better in English. Similar things appear among students whose fathers work in professional positions. Economic background is also an important factor. Children from wealthier families often have better English skills, likely because they have access to more educational help and resources. Terasawa also pointed out that students growing up in urban areas generally achieve higher English proficiency than those from rural areas.

In his cross-national study of 30 regions in Asia, Terasawa (2024) explored the relationship between English language proficiency (ELP) and socioeconomic status (SES) by analyzing the Asia Barometer surveys from the mid-2000s. His findings highlight clear gaps in English ability depending on occupation type, with children from high-income families gaining better educational opportunities and showing higher English proficiency. While Terasawa also found that gender and birth year influence English performances, their effects are smaller compared to socioeconomic factors. Gender differences might reflect social values, while younger generations tend to benefit from expanded English education and globalization.

Building on Terasawa's work, it is important to look more closely at how family environments affect English learning among students in Nepal, especially when considering gender. Although Terasawa's data suggests that gender alone has only a modest effect (Terasawa, 2024), many studies have explored how social roles

and values create real differences in educational outcomes between male and female students.

Acharya's 2014 study, for instance, examined the higher education goals for 319 tenth-grade students. Many of the girls' students expressed uncertainty about how far they could realistically pursue their academic goals, even when they had clear dreams and ambitions. Despite being able to identify their desired fields of study and degrees, they remained doubtful about the level of education they could ultimately attain. Factors influencing their educational decisions included: 1) SLC scores, 2) family economic resources, 3) parental and family preferences, and 4) post-marriage circumstances. Nonetheless, their desired fields of study ranged from medical assisting and nursing to education, medicine, engineering, hotel management, and science. Ultimately, their decisions regarding higher education were heavily influenced by family expectations and economic conditions (Acharya, 2014).

Although the study did not directly address English proficiency, it is implied that educational opportunities are contingent upon family circumstances. Similarly, male students also reported that SLC scores and family economic status significantly impacted their academic and career choices. For example, some males considered pursuing the humanities due to lower costs, while others aspired to study sciences for better job prospects. Both genders anticipated being married with children by age 30. In Nepal, the average marriage age is notably low, and sociocultural norms typically expect individuals to marry and have children by their mid-20s. (p 65). This study revealed that the educational paths of female students in Nepal are significantly influenced by sociocultural factors, particularly those related to their family background.

### **Teachers' Practices to help students for learning English**

In English education as a foreign language (EFL), how teachers teach has a big effect on how students learn and what they can achieve. In Nepal, where people have different cultures, languages, and backgrounds, it is essential to think about whether direct or indirect ways work better for helping students improve English performance. Teachers can try to find different ways of teaching to help students learn English better. In this literature review, I will look at the different ways teachers in Nepal are using to improve students' English, by reading recent studies and ideas from researchers, to find good methods and techniques that enable us to help students develop their English further. This review will give useful ideas for teaching practices

that can support students in learning English in the unique context of focusing on girls' education in a multi-ethnic, multilingual environment, particularly in remote areas.

According to Rai's research (2023), several issues arise in EFL classrooms due to the diversity of students. Teachers in community schools faced challenges such as difficulties in ensuring that all students comprehend the material at the same pace, decreased student motivation, student dissatisfaction, and confusion. The diverse backgrounds of students in the classroom posed challenges in ensuring that everyone could understand the material uniformly and complete tasks in effective ways. Furthermore, the absence of tasks that were contextually relevant to the students' experiences added another difficulty. To overcome these challenges, teachers employed some strategies aimed at addressing these obstacles in their English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. For example, teachers made an effort to treat all students fairly, offering encouragement and support, while also incorporating interactive activities such as discussions and role-playing to foster better communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills. Rai's study underscores the success of these approaches in managing the socio-cultural diversity present in the classroom. When students' differences and individual contributions are recognized and valued, their motivation tends to increase. These research findings suggest that classroom diversity can be valued, offering students the opportunity to learn from each other by sharing their unique cultural perspectives, learning styles, and skills.

### **The Teacher's Role in Unleashing the Potential of Students' English Performance**

In the context of EFL education in Nepal, the impact of teaching practices is focused on students' learning experiences and outcomes. In the multiethnic, multilingual, and remote areas of Nepal, particularly focusing on girls' education, it is essential to understand whether direct or indirect methods are more effective in enhancing students' English proficiency. Teachers need to explore and understand various instructional strategies to effectively support language acquisition. This literature review will examine how the unique characteristics of these environments have influenced English language teaching practices and how teachers' knowledge is reflected in their approaches. By reviewing prior studies, this research will not only examine deeply but also lead to deeper insights and reflections, offering an

exploration of effective practices for enhancing students' English language learning journey.

In a multilingual society like Nepal, how might the students' mother tongue affect English as a foreign language, especially in community schools?

Cummins' Shared Common Underlying Language Proficiency Model proposes the possibility for teachers to improve their students' English performance skills by leveraging their language proficiency. In his research, Cummins emphasizes the importance of bilingual children utilizing their native language in their education (Cummins, 2001b). He also states that interdependence between languages is important in the academic progress of bilingual children (Cummins, 1979). It is believed that students are able to utilize common ground, which may positively impact their English language learning and performance. Teachers in Nepal who are engaged in English language education need to consider the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of their students. Recognizing how these factors influence their learning and performance, teachers can adapt their teaching strategies accordingly. Reflecting on their practices and evaluating their teaching methods is essential for continuous improvement. As Schön (1995) highlights, teachers not only impart knowledge but also act as mentors, guiding students through the process of applying what they learn in real-world contexts. They play an important role in bringing the knowledge-action approach to educational settings by supporting students in their learning process and guiding them to develop the necessary skills and knowledge. They are required to reflect on their own practice and pursue sustained learning to acquire new knowledge and skills. Teachers then learn about their own teaching and reflect on their own actions in the field. In this research, it will be possible to know how the socio-cultural background of English teachers affects their students' EFL, and to know teachers' reflections.

In Nepal, research on English education in girls' schools has not been extensively studied, especially when considering how it functions within the country's culturally and linguistically diverse context. Most research has focused on broader gender issues in male-dominated societies, but fewer studies have looked at the specific challenges and methods of English education in girls' schools. Since girls' schools are still relatively rare in Nepal, understanding how these schools address gender-related educational obstacles and how the local environment affects students' English learning is crucial. This study will examine how the unique setting of girls'

schools in Dolakha, Nepal, with their socio-culturally diverse student populations, shapes English education and contributes to the students' learning experiences.

### **Research Gap**

While there is some research on the sociocultural factors influencing English language acquisition, very few studies have examined the unique situation of girls' schools in rural areas like Dolakha. In Nepal, girls' schools are relatively rare, and this lack of research becomes especially noticeable when I consider the distinctive challenges faced by girls' schools in remote districts such as Dolakha.

There has been almost no exploration into how English education is organized in the multicultural and multilingual context there, where many ethnic groups coexist with their languages and cultures. The study of the only girls' school located in Charikot, Dolakha, could offer valuable insights and help fill this gap. Previous studies have generally focused on the impact of socioeconomic background and family support on students' educational outcomes. However, few have looked specifically at how the learning environment in rural girls' schools affects female students' English learning experiences.

While Acharya's study (2014) touches on the aspirations and educational awareness of female students, it does not thoroughly investigate how English education is influenced by cultural and regional factors, particularly in areas like Dolakha. Research on multilingual education in Nepal has mainly focused on Kathmandu and other urban centers, with limited attention to rural regions where resources and exposure to English are much more limited. Thus, I need to investigate how cultural, social, and economic factors in Dolakha affect English education in girls' schools, which is the main purpose of this study.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, it was examined how Nepal's multilingual education policies influence students' English learning and also considered the role of mother tongue education and how factors such as family background and gender contribute to differences in learning outcomes. To deepen my understanding, several theoretical frameworks, including Cummins' interdependence hypothesis and the concept of culturally responsive teaching, were referred to. Through this examination, I aimed to explore the challenges and possibilities surrounding English education in Nepal, with a particular focus on rural areas like Dolakha.

## CHAPTER: III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the methodology applied in this research study, including the research design, data collection method, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

The present study is grounded in a qualitative narrative inquiry framework, chosen for its capacity to illuminate the nuanced, lived realities of individuals within specific sociocultural contexts. While the merits of mixed methods research in educational studies, particularly its potential for integrating breadth and depth, are well understood and appreciated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), the nature of this research required a more interpretive and experience-centered approach. A small portion of quantitative data concerning students' English performance by ethnic background was incorporated, not as a principal method of analysis, but rather as a contextual complement to the narrative accounts. Ultimately, the study seeks to understand how English teachers in a rural girls' school in Dolakha, Nepal, perceive and navigate the diverse backgrounds their students bring to the classroom.

As Imafuku (2020) explains, qualitative research seeks to explore what is happening, how, and why, within specific social contexts. Rather than generalizing from large datasets, it emphasizes thick descriptions of individual experiences, interpreted in light of existing literature, and aims to offer transferable insights for readers in similar contexts. This entails careful attention not only to actions or observable outcomes, but also to internal dimensions such as participants' thoughts, emotions, values, identities, and social relations—all interpreted through the lens of context. In designing this study, interviews were conducted with English teachers at the only girls' secondary school in the district, with the aim of understanding how they interpret their students' English performance and what strategies they employ to support minority learners. To support this methodological direction, Atkinson's (2006) life story interview approach was particularly instructive. His view of personal narrative as a rich and reflective source of meaning resonates with the goals of this study, which sought to hear and interpret the lived experiences of teachers in a holistic, respectful manner.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were English teachers from girls' secondary schools in Dolkha district. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose participants who are experienced English teachers for female students in this specific socio-cultural context. The sample size was decided based on the data saturation principle (Creswell, 2013), where the information and insights are no longer obtained from additional interviews.

### **Data Collection**

The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the selected English teachers. The interviews were conducted in person or through online platforms, depending on the availability and preference of the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Data collection began with a visit to the girls' school in Charikot, Dolakha. During a meeting with the principal, I explained the research purpose and objectives. The principal provided detailed information regarding the number of English teachers, their professional backgrounds, and the specific challenges associated with teaching in Dolakha's rural context. From the second visit onwards, I was given an overview of the school, including its history, facilities, and environment. After that, I was able to meet the English teachers in person and conduct interviews with them. The interviews were conducted during their break times, and I was also given additional time after school hours. The process went smoothly, and communication with the teachers was effective and pleasant. I am grateful that the data collection process was carried out in such an ideal and cooperative manner.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data collected from teacher interviews, I adopted a thematic analysis approach informed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which offers a clear six-phase process for identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data. This approach was used alongside principles of narrative inquiry to preserve the integrity of participants' lived experiences.

### **Familiarization with the Data**

Each audio-recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. I read through the transcripts multiple times to become immersed in the content and identify significant events, reflections, and patterns related to teaching, student engagement, and sociocultural influences.

### **Generating initial Codes**

Using open coding, I assigned labels to meaningful segments of text. These initial codes captured ideas such as “fear of English,” “family support,” and “interactive teaching methods.”

### **Searching for Themes**

Codes were compared across transcripts to group similar ideas and identify preliminary themes. For example, “family support and academic performance” and “language anxiety and classroom strategies” emerged as key themes.

### **Reviewing Themes**

I refined these themes by reviewing them in relation to both individual narratives and the entire dataset. Axial coding (Bailey, 2008) was employed to organize codes into broader thematic categories.

### **Defining and Naming Themes**

Themes were named and clearly defined based on their relevance to the research questions. For instance, “Sociocultural barriers to learning” captured a range of issues from household responsibilities to economic hardship.

A small set of quantitative data on English scores by ethnic group was also included to offer contextual support, but was not statistically analyzed. Instead, it was interpreted alongside teacher narratives to understand how family background and sociocultural realities shape English performance in a rural, multiethnic girls’ school in Nepal.

### **Quality Standards**

The quality of this research was ensured through several important steps. Credibility was maintained by asking participants to review their interview transcripts and the preliminary findings to confirm their accuracy. The findings were also verified by comparing different sources of information, such as teacher interviews and student performance data. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the participants, their cultural backgrounds, and the schools, so readers can judge if the findings apply to similar situations. To ensure dependability, all steps of the research process, like data collection and analysis, were carefully recorded. A clear method, such as coding and organizing themes, was used to analyze the data. Confirmability was achieved by keeping records of decisions made during the research and reflecting on the researcher’s role to reduce personal bias. Ethical guidelines, such as getting participants' consent, protecting their privacy, and keeping

their information anonymous, were strictly followed. These steps helped make the findings reliable and accurate.

### **Ethical Issues**

Throughout my research, ethical considerations were a top priority, especially considering the sensitive context of studying girls' education in rural Nepal. I made sure to obtain informed consent from all participants, clearly explaining the purpose of the study and the measures in place to protect their privacy. To maintain participant confidentiality, all real names were replaced with pseudonyms, and any identifying details were omitted from the transcripts and written findings. This ensured anonymity and upheld ethical standards throughout the research process. These steps were taken to safeguard the teachers' and students' identities and maintain trust within the community, particularly in a rural setting.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the research methodology was explained. The study used a narrative inquiry approach to explore the impact of socio-cultural backgrounds on English performance at a girls' secondary school in Charikot, Dolakha. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with English teachers, along with an analysis of student performance data. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns related to teaching methods, the extent of teacher involvement, students' family backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, their performance to learn independently, and other socio-cultural influences. Throughout my research, credibility and ethical standards were maintained to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. This approach helped to gain a deeper understanding of how the socio-cultural context in rural Nepal affects their English education.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the results of interviews with three English teachers and a detailed analysis of female students' English performance. The purpose of this study is to determine how socio-cultural backgrounds influence students' English performance and to understand what measures teachers take to improve learning. Through these interviews and performance analyses, the importance of socio-cultural factors in English language teaching will be explored in depth.

The influence of socio-cultural background on English language learning ranges from the educational environment to family support and community values. These factors are believed to have a direct impact on students' motivation, confidence, and attitudes toward learning. For example, in the educational environment, school resources, educational policies, and teachers' teaching methods have a significant impact on students' learning outcomes. In terms of family support, the home environment, the level of parental education, and the degree of family support for learning have a direct impact on student achievement. In addition, community values are also important, examining the importance of English in the community and the impact of cultural values and linguistic diversity on students' English language learning.

In particular, cross-cultural comparisons of language education policies are an important means of developing intercultural understanding in education. In a multilingual country like Nepal, the way language education policies affect cultural diversity and language acquisition is an interesting topic. In addition to Nepali, the official language, many regional languages are spoken in Nepal. Therefore, education policy focuses on the protection and promotion of these languages. English is an important language for connecting with people around the world. At the same time, Nepal's language education policy respects local languages while also giving enough attention to English education.

These findings also resonate with Cummins' (2001a) Interdependence Hypothesis, which posits that proficiency in a student's first language can support and transfer to the acquisition of a second language. In the context of this study, several teachers observed that students with stronger literacy foundations in their mother

tongue or those who received more support at home tended to perform better in English. This suggests that the development of academic skills in the first language, as Cummins emphasized, provides a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning English, particularly in multilingual and socioeconomically diverse settings such as Dolakha. For instance, teachers noted that students from families where parents were more engaged in educational activities, or where Nepali or local languages were used in literate ways at home, appeared to transfer those skills and confidence into their English learning. This supports Cummins' claim that the two language systems are interdependent rather than separate, especially in the context of formal academic tasks.

### **Learning Environment**

Learning environment is a significant part in making students' English language proficiency. Creating an engaging and supportive classroom atmosphere is essential for effective language acquisition, as highlighted by the teachers interviewed in this study. Specific sources can assist students in gaining practical experience, and student interest is often stimulated by showing pictorial examples, introducing real-world problems, and assigning hands-on activities. There is little difference regarding teaching value whether the stimulus included in a course comes from research activity, professional practice, or community service. The key elements are that the item be current, topical, and real-world. In my exploration of the teacher-student relationship, I have come to understand that a proper balance of authority and approachability is crucial in mitigating students' fear of English as a third language. During the interviews, Sunir, who was one of the English teachers at the girls' school in Dolakha, spoke about how he approaches student mistakes. He told me that he tries not to correct students immediately when they make errors in their English, because he feels that doing so might discourage them from speaking. Instead, he prefers to give students space to express their thoughts freely, believing that using the language actively is more important at that stage. From my observation and what Sunir shared, I realized that building supportive relationships between teachers and students plays an important role in their academic growth and confidence.

This idea is also consistent with previous research, which highlights the significance of strong teacher-student connections for both learning and social development (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). For example, Sunir mentioned that he tries to maintain eye contact with his students and answer their questions thoughtfully, even if

he sometimes needs to postpone giving a full answer. They seem to help strengthen active communication in the classroom. In addition, collecting students' written reactions and thoughts throughout the term can shape the course direction as it evolves, ensuring that the learning environment remains responsive to student needs (American Society for Engineering Education & IEEE Education Society, 2000). He utilizes various methods such as pair work, whole-class discussions, speech contests, and interviews, where one student takes on the role of a teacher and the other acts as a student, to create a supportive and interactive learning environment. When I interviewed the teachers, they shared some ways they try to help students feel more comfortable with English. For example, Ramesh said that using pair work, group discussions, and role-playing activities really helps students get more involved in the class. He thinks that when students work together like this, they slowly get better at speaking. It's not always easy, but he feels it makes a difference. I also learned that simple things, like giving students with missing parts to fill in during class, can keep them focused better. Instead of trying to write down, students can listen more. This method also makes the class feel more interactive, not just one-way teaching. From what I heard and saw, these small changes seem to help a lot. Actually, earlier studies say that teaching in a more interactive way can improve how students learn (Hattie, 2009), so it matches what the teachers are trying. At the same time, teachers in Dolakha know that for many students, English is not their first or even second language.

As Pokharel (2022) explains, Tamang students use their own language at home and Nepali sometimes at school, but English feels difficult and scary for them. Sunir said that because of this, he tries some ways to make English less frightening. He encourages free writing, speaks to them simply in English, and uses pictures and sounds to help them understand. Little by little, students have become less afraid of English, and Sunir said this made him happy as a teacher. He also told me,

*Teaching is not just telling them what to do. It's more about listening to their problems and trying to teach in a way that helps them. If they trust you, it's easier for them to learn, just like how they trust someone in their family.*

Ramesh, who has degrees in English and Sociology, shared another story. He remembered one time a student was very nervous to speak English in a group work. By using small group talks and games, Ramesh said the student finally managed to say a few words, and that moment showed him how important it is to be patient. "At

*first, she was nervous, avoiding eye contact and speaking in Nepali,” he shared. “But through repeated exposure to interactive activities and peer discussions, she gradually gained confidence.” He further emphasized, “Language learning and acquisition in this school is a continuous process”.*

Ramesh told me that creating an English-speaking environment in the classroom is important. He tries to make students more active by using different kinds of activities, like talking in pairs or small groups. His idea is that if students use English more during classes, they will slowly get better at speaking. He also said that he gives students chances to listen to English by showing them videos. Instead of teaching only grammar rules, he wants students to learn English in a natural way, by seeing and hearing real examples. *“When possible,” he added, “we provide direct experiences, which offer images and real meaning, along with proper pronunciation.”*

In this multicultural and diverse school environment, where English is the third language for most students, Nishant, a dedicated mid-career English teacher, is keenly aware of his role within the educational institution. Nishant told me about the special situation of this girls’ school. He said that many students come from faraway villages like Dhulikhel and Simipani. *“Their real homes are in the countryside,”* he explained, *“but they have come here because they want a better future through education”.* In his classes, Nishant tries different ways to make learning better. Because girls’ students come from many places and backgrounds, he uses technology a lot to help his teaching. He said, *“I’m still a young teacher, and I want to make a positive difference. I often start my lessons with examples, and after that, I explain the rules or the structure”.*

Nishant also mentioned that he uses media like Facebook, email, and especially YouTube to help students outside the classroom. *“I like using things like YouTube and smart boards so my students can learn English in a way that connects to real life — not just from a textbook. If someone misses a class, they can check the AVR board to find and review what they missed.”* From what he shared, it was clear that giving them chances to hear and use English as much as possible is important. Activities like speech contests, interviews, and classroom talks help them practice naturally. Nishant said using videos and smart boards also makes lessons more interesting and helps students learn better. Hearing real English, not just textbook language, is important for helping students get more confident (Goh & Burns, 2012).

### **The Role of Teachers in Enhancing English Proficiency: Addressing Sociocultural Influences on Student Performance**

Research indicates that socio-cultural diversity also has a significant impact on English teachers in Nepal. These teachers are not only educators in the classroom but also play broader societal roles. They are recognized as community leaders and interpreters and are proficient in technology. Furthermore, they are seen as facilitators of critical thinking and engage with students in a friendly and empathetic manner. Their roles and responsibilities, shaped by socio-cultural factors, influence their teaching performance and identity. (Khatri, 2018). The identity of English teachers in Dolakha girls' schools reflects the broader social and cultural influences seen in other contexts. These teachers emphasize the link between students' diversity and their English performance. Ramesh, who uses direct methods, games, and discussions to enhance speaking skills, highlights that:

*I focus on active participation and dedication. By engaging in activities like games and discussions, students build confidence and gradually overcome hesitation. This leads to improved performance in both speaking and listening, as they become more comfortable and fluent in English.*

In other words, he feels that eliminating hesitation produces good results and states the following:

*At first, the students tend to hesitate when dealing with teachers and seniors, but with sufficient exposure to English, they gradually overcome that hesitation. As a result, the students become friendlier towards the teachers, and their performance improves. Although they may not be perfect, they are able to speak English without hesitation, leading to progress in both speaking and listening skills.*

When it comes to their English skills, most of my students excel in speaking and writing. You might wonder why. Well, it's mainly because of the social and cultural environment they grow up in. They don't often get chances to speak English at home, and that lack of practice is what holds them back in those skills. It's a social and cultural thing, you see—they just don't get exposed to it enough in their daily lives. "A strong foundation in the mother tongue positively influences the acquisition of a second language. Introducing mother tongue-based education during the initial years of schooling facilitates the transfer of language skills to English" (Cummins, 2001b). Studies show that a supportive learning environment that considers students'

linguistic and cultural backgrounds can enhance their language learning outcomes. Krashen (1985) mentioned how important it is for students to get input they can understand, and also that they need to feel relaxed when learning a new language. In classrooms where students come from many different language and cultural backgrounds, it's important to make them feel included and respected.

If students feel that their own languages and cultures are valued, it can help them do better in learning English too (García, 2009). Teachers can also use cooperative learning to help students feel more connected. For example, working together in small groups, helping each other, and talking face-to-face can make the classroom a friendly and enjoyable place. According to the 30th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference (2000), important parts of good cooperative learning include teamwork, trust, sharing ideas directly, and learning how to work in small groups.

### **Family Background**

In Nepal, family background significantly influences students' academic performance. However, according to Khatri (2022), "Due to the parents' economic problems, all girls have difficulties in being educated. But some parents send boys regularly to school, but not girls, due to the gender biased mentality. In order to provide good education to girls, improvement needs to be made in all aspects, particularly in learning English. This is evident from the insights provided by three experienced English teachers, Sunir, Nishant, and Ramesh. Their observations align with existing research on the socioeconomic and cultural factors affecting education in Nepal. Furthermore, girls face additional barriers that exacerbate the challenges posed by family background. This analysis integrates perspectives from teachers and relevant literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of these issues.

### **Sunir's Perspective**

When I talked with Sunir, he shared that there are big differences in girls' students' backgrounds, especially in terms of money and education. He said that many of the students come from families where parents work in construction or have other jobs, and the income is low. Some parents also didn't have the chance to go to school themselves. Because of that, Sunir said, their children often go to public schools, which sometimes don't have as many resources or support systems as boarding schools that wealthier families choose.

Sunir states:

*Many parents are involved in construction work and are often not educated. Children from economically stable families attend boarding schools, but those who cannot afford it go to public schools. This economic disparity creates significant challenges in their educational journey.*

These narratives reflect the core of Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis (2001), suggesting that the development of literacy in the home language provides cognitive and academic advantages that facilitate the acquisition of English. In homes where parents engage with literacy practices—even if not in English—students seem better equipped to transfer those skills into academic contexts. Sunir also highlights the direct impact of parents' economic conditions on their children's learning environment. He observes that “economic hardship can have a significant impact on a child's education, as parents may struggle to provide materials like notebooks, stationery, and even basic supplies.” This observation aligns with the findings of Acharya (2014), who emphasizes that family income and the education levels of parents are key factors influencing the educational success of children in Nepal. Families with higher socioeconomic status have the means to access learning environments, which leads to improved academic outcomes for their children. Additionally, Khan (2014) points out that financial limitations tend to influence girls more severely, as families often prioritize the education of their sons. This gender bias further restricts educational opportunities for girls, exacerbating the challenges created by economic disparities.

From his perspective, he noticed that children from middle-class Bahun and Chettri families, who were curious and eager to learn, generally achieved high academic results. It seemed that they had plenty of time to study at home. However, he also observed that students from the Thami community, who make up 60% of the school, were also achieving good grades along with their siblings. The parents of these Thami students appeared to be very conscious of their children's education. This led him to believe that there is a connection between economic conditions, parental awareness of education, and educational outcomes. Khatri (2022) states that girls' education in Nepal is still affected by gender-based discrimination, with one of the primary reasons being that girls do not have enough time to study at home. He points out that “therefore, they do not get enough time to study at home. As a result, female literacy is lower than male literacy” (p. 43)

### **Nishant's Perspective**

When I spoke with Nishant, he mentioned how parents' involvement at home really makes a difference in their academic performance. He shared his own experience, saying, *"I always check my children's homework and how they are doing in school. It shows in their good results. From his point of view, students whose parents pay attention to their education tend to do better."* Listening to him made me realize how important family background is. Nishant pointed out that many students who perform well often come from families where parents are educated and can afford to take time to help with homework. He said,

*Students who are doing really well in English class — it's not because of their ethnicity. It doesn't matter which community they come from. What really matters is their family background. In my opinion, the kids who do well are the ones whose parents give them time at home.*

Furthermore, he explained that because many parents are busy working outside the home, girls are often expected to help with household chores or even work in other families' homes to support their families' expenses. As a result, it becomes difficult for parents to spend time helping their children with their studies or checking their homework. This connects with what Khan (2014) found too—economic pressure and gender roles often make it difficult for girls to stay in school and do well. This lack of support at home makes it harder for girls to concentrate on their homework and affects their academic progress.

He mentioned that it can be even harder when mothers are illiterate or when parents don't speak English at all. This reminded me of something in a UNESCO report (2013), which said that parents' education levels have a big effect on how well their children do in school. Acharya (2014) also supports this report, showing that parents who are educated usually get more involved in their children's learning and help create a better study environment at home. Nishant also talked about how girls face extra challenges.

He said that because of traditional expectations, girls sometimes have to do a lot of housework or even help earn money, which makes it harder for them to focus on studying.

### **Ramesh's Perspective**

Ramesh underscores the importance of parental interest and support in children's education. He mentions that moving from one piece of land to another and

not having a stable place to live can also have an impact. Some students' parents work in construction or similar jobs, constantly moving from place to place. Consequently, the children are required to transfer schools frequently, which sometimes leads them to drop out of school altogether. According to Neupane (2017), the number of months a family can survive solely on the produce from its own land (land sufficiency, i.e., the family owns land and relies on its produce to make a living) has a positive impact on students' academic achievement, and such students tend to do better in school. Children whose parents are frequently transferred from one school to another tend to change schools repeatedly, which is believed to have a negative impact on academic stability.

Khan (2014) adds that the lack of female role models and limited community support for girls' education further exacerbate these challenges. Without visible role models and mentors, girls may lack the motivation and encouragement needed to pursue higher education and achieve their full potential. The family background of students in Nepal plays a pivotal role in their academic success, particularly in learning English. The perspectives of teachers Sunir, Nishant, and Ramesh underscore the importance of socioeconomic status, parental education, and involvement in shaping educational outcomes.

Interestingly, three English teachers offered distinct perspectives on the factors that most significantly influence English education. Sunir observed that the notion of students from a specific ethnicity consistently performing better in English is not supported by the data. He noted that while students from the Tamang community often excel, this is largely because 60% of the students belong to the Tamang ethnic group. It is not accurate to claim that one ethnicity uniformly outperforms others. Sunir recalled specific students, pointing out that Brahmin and Chhetri students, who come from middle-class families, often have ample time to study at home due to their curiosity and dedication. When I listened to Sunir's narrative, he talked about two sisters from the Tamang community. They are doing very well in school. He believed that their good performance was not because of their ethnicity, but because their parents value education highly and give support at home. From his point of view, economic situation, parents' education level, and family support give much more importance than ethnicity when it comes to learning English. Ramesh also shared a similar opinion. He agreed that while ethnicity can sometimes influence learning, the bigger impact comes from the family environment, if parents are involved and

whether they can support their children's studies. Nishant expressed a slightly different view. He said that the diversity inside the classroom, with students from many different ethnic groups and family backgrounds, plays an important part in how students experience English learning and the learning process.

In his view, multi-diversity matters the most, followed by family background and ethnicity. He described how students come from Tamang, Newar, and other communities, each with their own traditions and religions, but manage to live and study together peacefully and cooperatively. Even so, he agreed that students' family situations have a stronger effect on their English performance than their ethnic roots. He recalled,

*One of the students is from the Thami community, and her younger sister is also a good student. Their parents seemed to really care about education. So yeah, I think what really matters is their economic situation plus their level of education.*

After hearing their views, I also came to think that family support at home makes a big difference. Students whose parents make time for them and help with their studies usually do better, while those who grow up in more critical or unsupportive environments often struggle more with schoolwork. So, from both my interviews and my observations, it seems clear that family background plays a bigger role than ethnic background in shaping students' academic outcomes. This impression fits with what I found in earlier research. Reports like the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2013) and studies by Acharya (2014) show that parents' education and involvement are key factors in children's success at school. Girls, in particular, face extra challenges, as Khan (2014) points out. Because of traditional gender roles and economic pressure, many girls are expected to do housework or even earn money, which limits their time and focus on studying. Fixing these problems means not just helping individual students but also making bigger changes—like building better school facilities, fighting against gender stereotypes, and giving families and communities more ways to support education.

### **Ethnic Background and English Performance**

In my research at a girls' school in Charikot, Dolakha, I simply couldn't overlook their diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds during the course of this research. To understand this better, I spoke with three English teachers,

Sunir, Nishant, and Ramesh, who each had different but insightful experiences with their students. Their observations helped me see how students' cultural roots and family situations connect to their performance in English.

### **Sunir's Perspective**

Sunir told me about the variety of social and cultural backgrounds among the students, pointing out how these differences show up in the way students' study and respond to classroom activities. He mentioned that students from more urban areas tend to have better access to learning resources and support from home, while those from more remote or rural villages often have fewer opportunities. He also said that different communities place different perspectives on education. For example, in some families, education is seen as a path to success, while people in traditional ways of life and local work may take priority over school learning.

### **Nishant's Perspective**

Nishant talked about how the ethnic diversity in the school brings both challenges and possibilities. He mentioned "students from communities like Tamang and Thami sometimes think and learn in ways shaped by their own cultures." These influences, according to him, can make it harder for some students to adapt to formal education, especially when they have to learn Nepali first before they can start learning English. According to him, each community has different ideas about what education is for, and that can affect how motivated students feel.

### **Ramesh's Perspective**

From Ramesh's perspective, students' ethnic backgrounds are a part of how they approach learning English. He had observed that the values within each cultural group seem to shape how children think about school and what kind of academic performance they achieve. In communities where education is important and where families try to support their children, students often do better. However, in other cases, school may not be a big concern in daily life, and that can make it harder for students to stay motivated or perform well. Through his teaching experience in classrooms with many different cultures, Ramesh has come to notice how varied parents' involvement can be. Some families follow their children's education closely, while others are less likely to do so because they don't care, but often due to work, tradition, or different priorities. These kinds of differences in home environments seem to influence how students feel about learning and how far they go in their studies.

The ideas created by Ramesh, Sunir, and Nishant helped me understand that there isn't one simple reason why students succeed or struggle with English. Their comments reminded me of what Khadka (2010) also wrote—that people from different communities in Nepal see education in different ways. For some, it's a way to build a better future. For others, traditional work and ways of life may come first. Gautam (2013) also pointed out that students from some ethnic groups do very well in English, while others face challenges, especially if they don't speak Nepali at home or have to juggle multiple languages. Thinking about all this, I feel that schools and policy, especially makers in Nepal, need to look more closely at where students come from, not just in terms of location, but in terms of culture and language too. If education can meet students where they are and take their backgrounds seriously, I believe more children will have a fair chance to grow in school.

### **English Performance Data by Ethnicity**

The diversity I encountered in the classroom made it clear that educational performance cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which students grow up. In this region, sociocultural factors are believed to significantly influence educational outcomes, particularly in language learning. Public girls' schools are rare in Nepal, and this school is the only secondary school for girls in Dolakha District. In a country where gender-based disparities in education are a major concern, this school was established in 1984 as a community school with the mission to support illiterate women. At the time of the research, the school had 349 students enrolled. According to the school's demographic breakdown, the student population was divided as follows: 114 from indigenous groups (Tamang, Thami, Newar, Magar), 102 from marginalized communities, 103 from other ethnic groups, 22 Dalits, and 5 students with disabilities.

For this study, I collected English performance data from students in Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 at the girls' school in Charikot. To keep the sampling balanced and manageable, I selected students whose school registration numbers were odd. The data was drawn from their annual exam scores, and I calculated the average scores for each group. Additionally, students who did not take the test due to reasons such as relocation, dropping out, or other circumstances were included in the average calculation. This decision was made because, in rural areas, students often cannot continue their education due to their parents' jobs, and their inability to stay in one

place for schooling is considered part of the broader sociocultural context. A score of zero was recorded and reflected in the data.

#### **Grade 4 Results**

When reviewing the Grade 4 results, I noticed that Chetri students had the highest average score (64). This was noticeably higher than the averages for Tamang (42.2) and Thami (36.5) students. Even though the difference is clear in numbers, it's difficult to say whether ethnicity alone explains these results, as other factors may be involved. Notably, two Tamang students were unable to take the exam for various reasons and were given a score of zero, which was included in the average. Despite making up only 23% of the total student population, Chetri students achieved much higher English scores compared to other ethnic groups. On the other hand, Tamang students, who represent 62% of the student body, scored lower than Chetri students. However, it is important to note that this average includes the two students with zero scores, so the lower score should be viewed in relative terms. Thami students also showed similarly low performance.

#### **Grade 5 Results**

In Grade 5, Tamang students achieved the highest average score (49.3), outperforming other ethnic groups. The scores for Newari (42), Chetri (41), and Thami (40) were almost the same, with no significant differences observed. In the data sample for this grade, one Newari student and one Chetri student did not take the test for various reasons. In this class, it is notable that Tamang students, who make up 42% of the total population, performed relatively well in English. Meanwhile, the scores for Newari and Thami students, though smaller in number, were not significantly different from the other groups, indicating a generally balanced distribution of performance across the class.

#### **Grade 6 Results**

In Grade 6, Sherpa students achieved a notably high score of 86, although this can be attributed to the fact that there was only one Sherpa student in the sample. Following this, Chetri students scored an average of 59.67, Tamang 57.83, and Thami 52.2, with Darit students showing a moderate performance of 46. On the other hand, Newari students received a score of 0, as they did not take the exam. While the single Sherpa student demonstrated exceptional results in English, the other ethnic groups generally performed at an average level.

### **Grade 7 Results**

The Grade 7 data showed a similar pattern. Chetri students again recorded the highest average score (57.57), suggesting a consistent trend.

Sherpa students also did fairly well, with an average of 51. On the other hand, Thami (36) and Tamang (40) students had lower scores. Bramin and Newar students had averages around 43, which was close to the class average and did not show a major gap compared to others. It is worth noting that while differences appear, these numbers may reflect broader conditions such as home support, how much they are exposed to English, or attendance, rather than ethnicity alone. Chetri students made up 50% of the total population in this class, which likely had a significant influence on the overall score distribution. Notably, there were no students in this sample who missed the test.

### **Grade 9 Results**

In Grade 9, the ethnic distribution was as follows: Chetri made up 42% of the students, Thami 33%, Newar 13%, Magar 4%, and Tamang 8%. The average English scores for these groups were Chetri 50.78, Thami 33.88, Newar 25, Magar 36, and Tamang 20. It is important to note that one student from each of the Newar, Tamang, and Thami groups did not take the test. In one of the classes, a large number of students from various ethnic groups were observed. Although Chetri students made up a bigger part of the class, they also had the highest average score. Thami and Magar students performed at a mid-level, while Newar and Tamang students had lower averages.

In a few cases, I had to include data from absent students during part of the academic year, which may have affected the results, especially for groups with small sample sizes.

### **Analysis of Ethnic Background and English Performance: Data and Teacher Perspectives**

During this study, it was found that the connection between students' ethnic backgrounds and their English performance is not straightforward.

The data from the girls' school in Charikot showed noticeable differences across ethnic groups, but when I spoke with teachers, they didn't see ethnicity itself as the main cause. Instead, they talked more about how family environment, support at home, and daily language use shape learning.

This section looks at why the data and teachers' perspectives may not fully match and what to learn from those differences.

### **Data on Ethnic Performance and Teacher Perspectives**

The results from the Dolakha school pointed to some clear differences in English scores among ethnic groups; for example, Chetri students often scored higher than others. But when I spoke with teachers like Sunir, Nishant, and Ramesh, they didn't think that ethnicity itself was the main reason.

Sunir noted that students living in Charikot usually have more access to resources and help at home, which could explain part of the performance gap. Nishant and Ramesh also talked about the role of family values and parental involvement. They felt that students from families where education is highly valued, regardless of ethnicity, tend to do better in school.

### **Addressing the Gap Between Data and Teacher Perspectives**

#### **Ethnic Background and Educational Resources**

The data suggest that ethnic groups with better geographical access to educational resources, such as the Chetri, perform better academically. Teachers' perspectives align with this observation, as they note that stable residency in the area, often influenced by parental occupations, contributes to better academic performance. Ethnic background may be associated with performance variability, but it may not be a direct cause. Instead, the stability of schooling linked to parental occupation plays a significant role.

#### **Family Environment and Parental Involvement**

Teachers emphasize that family environment, particularly parental support and involvement, is crucial for academic success. According to Nishant and Ramesh, communities that actively engage in education and place a high value on it tend to see better student outcomes. The data showing performance differences among ethnic groups may also reflect variations in parental support and educational stability. Families facing economic hardships and relocating frequently may struggle to provide consistent support for their children's education, impacting their performance.

#### **Sociocultural Background and Student Mobility**

The data collection included students who missed exams due to relocation or other reasons, highlighting the broader sociocultural context. This approach reflects how educational continuity is affected by mobility, which aligns with teachers' observations. Any disruption in schooling, regardless of ethnic background, can

influence English performance. Teachers' views on the importance of a stable educational environment support this understanding.

The analysis reveals that while data suggests ethnic background influences English performance, teachers' perspectives point to family environment and support as more critical factors. The gap between the data and teachers' views suggests that ethnic background may indirectly affect performance through cultural values and support systems. Moreover, family environment, parental involvement, and educational stability play a significant role in shaping academic success. Addressing these factors is essential for creating an equitable educational environment that supports all students, regardless of their ethnic background.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter examines the impact of family background, ethnicity, and socio-cultural factors on English performance in a girls' school in Dolakha, Nepal. The three English teachers, Nishant, Ramesh, and Sunir, emphasize that parental support and socioeconomic status are key to students' academic success, more so than ethnicity. Teachers noted that urban students or those with educated parents tend to perform better. Data from the school showed ethnic disparities in performance, but socio-cultural factors like family mobility also played a role. The chapter concludes that family background and socio-cultural factors are crucial in shaping students' English performance.

## CHAPTER V

### MY RESEARCH JOURNEY, SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I reflect on my overall research journey, discussing the findings, conclusions, and the broader implications of this study.

#### **My Research Journey**

The initial spark for my interest in girls' education stems from my own academic background, having earned a bachelor's degree from a women's university in Japan, renowned as a pioneer in women's education. Established in 1901, this university was founded on the belief that women should first be educated as individuals, a principle I had the privilege of internalizing during my four years of study. Historically, education in Japan was predominantly considered the domain of men, but it was the efforts of pioneers in women's education that paved the way for the progress we see today.

While living in Nepal, I grew increasingly concerned about the challenges faced by girls in accessing education. Many were burdened with household chores and agricultural work, and even those who managed to attend school often had to drop out due to early marriage. This led me to develop a deep interest in a girls' school located in Charikot, a region 100 kilometers from Kathmandu, nestled in the Himalayas. When it came time to choose a research topic for my master's thesis, this school naturally stood out as my focus. Investigating the relationship between ethnic diversity and English education in this region, known for its rich multiethnic and multilingual culture, has broadened my perspective and will undoubtedly enhance my career as a Japanese language teacher.

Moreover, upon returning to Japan, I foresee that this research will be invaluable in supporting Nepalese girls residing in Japan, especially in terms of providing language assistance. As the Japanese government promotes initiatives toward creating a more inclusive society, this research will allow me to approach Japanese language education from a broader perspective. Since August 2023, I have visited the school multiple times, gathering data through a series of observations and interviews. What I found was far more complex than I initially expected. The school serves girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds, many of whom come from rural areas

with challenging living conditions that make focusing on education, let alone learning English, extremely difficult. Although I had a clear research theme, collecting literature for the review posed some challenges, as there are limited studies specifically addressing the context of Nepalese girls' schools. While many sources discuss the overall delays in girls' education and the dire situations they face, the school I studied presented a unique case. Upon speaking with the principal and English teachers, I realized that this school, founded approximately 40 years ago to address female illiteracy, was somewhat different from the institutions described in previous studies. The school's mission aligns closely with the founding principles of my alma mater: to educate girls as individuals, empowering them to be fully engaged in society. Witnessing the commitment of the staff and the resilience of the students has reinforced my belief that education is about recognizing and supporting those in vulnerable positions. This realization, extending beyond just English education, has been the greatest gift of my research journey.

### **Summary of the Findings**

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through interviews and observations, I have reached the following conclusions in relation to the research questions.

#### **How Does the Sociocultural Background of Students Influence Their Performance?**

The analysis of the data revealed an interesting gap between the teachers' perspectives and the actual performance outcomes of the students. Although the data indicates that English proficiency varies among different ethnic groups, the English teachers do not view these factors as major barriers affecting English performance. From the narrative inquiry with the teachers, the following insights emerged: Sunir observed that the idea of students from a specific ethnicity consistently outperforming others in English is not supported by the data. While students from the Tamang community often excel, this is largely because Tamang students make up 60% of the student body. Thus, it is not accurate to attribute high performance to ethnicity alone. Sunir noted that Brahmin and Chhetri students from middle-class families often perform well due to their ample time for study, which is driven by curiosity and dedication. He also mentioned a pair of Tamang sisters who excel academically due to their parents' strong emphasis on education. This led Sunir to conclude that factors such as economic status, educational background, and parental

involvement play a more significant role in English education than ethnicity. Ramesh shared a similar view, agreeing that while ethnicity is a factor, family background is the primary influence on English performance. Nishant provided a slightly different perspective, emphasizing that classroom diversity, encompassing various ethnicities and family backgrounds, plays a crucial role in shaping English education. According to Nishant, the most significant factor is this diversity, followed by family background and ethnicity. He explained that students come from diverse communities—such as Tamang and Newar—each with distinct cultural and religious backgrounds. Despite these differences, they coexist harmoniously. However, Nishant pointed out that the high achievement in English among students is more related to their family background than their ethnic community. He believes that students with supportive parents who provide time and encouragement at home tend to achieve better results. Conversely, those who face criticism or lack support may struggle. The impact of the family environment on English performance is thus a crucial factor. This finding was surprising to me, as I had initially expected that ethnic background and language differences would be the most significant factors influencing English education. As discussed in the data analysis, while there were differences in English performance based on ethnicity, it became evident that these differences are also significantly influenced by the geographical conditions of the ethnic groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that rather than focusing support on specific ethnic groups, it would be more effective for schools to understand the home situations of students and provide appropriate support.

### **What Initiatives Do Teachers Take to Improve the Performance of Students?**

Teachers have a deep understanding of the broad social and cultural contexts in which their students are placed. They compensate for the lack of support that some students may receive from home by building strong relationships with them. As Nishant points out, student-centered classes and creative, interactive, and enjoyable lessons make use of the unique sense of camaraderie and close relationships typical of girls' schools to promote communication in English. Sunir, for example, provides tuition to students with poor English performance and pays attention to seating arrangements, focusing on alleviating students' anxiety about speaking English. These efforts to foster a friendly relationship between teachers and students help bridge differences in students' abilities and make language learning enjoyable even for those who find it challenging. This approach compensates for the disadvantages faced by

many students due to familial issues. Observing the classes, it was very impressive to see how engaged and enthusiastic the students were. The teachers' understanding of student diversity is crucial, but their recognition that ethnic or linguistic differences should not be viewed as barriers is also noteworthy. This perspective aligns with the principal's observation that the overall English performance in the SEE exams for 10th-grade students is gradually improving. The principal believes that this improvement is a result of the school's inclusive and supportive environment. The initiatives taken by the teachers address diverse learning needs and contribute to the steady improvement of students' overall English performance.

### **Conclusion of the Study**

The study concludes that family environment, particularly parental involvement and support at home, plays the most significant role in students' English performance. Students who receive encouragement, resources, and time from their parents tend to excel in English, while those lacking such support often struggle. Therefore, schools need to understand students' home environments and offer appropriate support tailored to their individual needs. The key to improving performance lies not only in the school's educational efforts but also in fostering a strong partnership between the home and the school.

Additionally, the initiatives taken by teachers are crucial in bridging the performance gaps caused by disparities in family background. By fostering student-centered, interactive, and inclusive learning environments, teachers are able to compensate for the disadvantages faced by students due to their home circumstances. Strong teacher-student relationships help students, even those with minimal support from home, to engage in language learning with confidence and enthusiasm. In girls' schools in particular, the sense of camaraderie among students and close-knit relationships serve as a foundation for promoting English communication in a supportive and positive setting. As noted by the principal, the steady improvement in overall English performance in the SEE exams among 10th-grade students aligns with these conclusions. This progress is attributed to the inclusive and supportive environment fostered by the school, as well as the proactive efforts made by teachers to address the diverse learning needs of their students.

In summary, this study emphasizes the importance of understanding students' sociocultural and family backgrounds in designing and implementing effective English education programs. The stability of the family environment and the degree

of parental involvement are critical factors in students' success. Schools must adopt a comprehensive approach that considers these factors, rather than focusing solely on ethnic or linguistic differences. Moreover, the proactive initiatives taken by teachers to accommodate diverse student needs have proven to be essential in improving English performance.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how English education can be tailored to meet the needs of students from various backgrounds, highlighting that family stability and parental support are key determinants of success, rather than ethnicity or language alone. These findings align with Cummins' (2001a) Interdependence Hypothesis, which asserts that cognitive and academic skills acquired in the first language can positively transfer to the second language. In the case of Dolakha's multilingual context, teachers observed that students from homes where literacy practices—regardless of language—were present, tended to perform better in English. This suggests that the development of L1 literacy provides a foundation for acquiring academic language skills in English, reinforcing the importance of supporting students' home language environments. While the students' home languages are not English but rather their respective mother tongues, what emerged clearly from the teachers' narratives is that the type of support provided at home matters more than the specific language used. In other words, it is not the language spoken at home, but the presence of encouragement, structure, and educational value that significantly influences students' English performance. The findings suggest that with adequate support from both family and school, students can make meaningful progress in English, regardless of their linguistic background. This aligns with Cummins' (2001a) theory, which posits that cognitive and academic abilities developed in the first language can positively transfer to second language acquisition.

### **Implications of the study**

**Collaboration with Families:** Schools should develop programs that actively involve parents in their children's education by emphasizing the importance of home support for academic success. Workshops and information sessions can be offered to highlight how parents can contribute to their child's learning. By fostering stronger school-family collaboration, students can receive the necessary support not only in the classroom but also at home.

**Addressing Unstable Home Environments:** For students from unstable home environments, schools can collaborate with community organizations and social welfare services to provide mentoring, counseling, and economic support when necessary. Additionally, arrangements can be made for parents to regularly observe classes, and the frequency of parent-teacher-student conferences can be increased to ensure continuous dialogue and support. Furthermore, as part of the school's original mission to empower mothers, especially those who are illiterate, the school could organize workshops aimed at teaching mothers how to motivate their children to engage in independent learning. This initiative aligns with the school's goal to support mothers in actively contributing to their children's education.

**Adjusting Support Systems:** The findings suggest that schools should prioritize understanding students' home environments and the support systems available to them from their families. A key implication for educational policy is the need for targeted interventions that take family circumstances into account, such as after-school tutoring and counseling services, especially for students who lack stable home environments.

One potential approach is outsourcing external support to reduce the burden on teachers. By arranging for small-group online English lessons at home, schools can collaborate with external providers. This would allow for a better understanding of each student's background and meet their individual needs more effectively.

It is profoundly important for parents to understand not only their children's academic progress but also their emotional rhythms. When parents take the initiative—or when teachers reach out—to share what happens during the long hours spent at school, it becomes more than just communication. For young girls, who may one day become mothers themselves, this becomes a living example of what it means to be involved, to care, and to lead with empathy. These moments of connection do more than support current learning; they plant the seeds of future parenting and leadership. In this way, nurturing a child's education today becomes a quiet, powerful statement to the next generation about responsibility, resilience, and the value of human connection. It may be valuable things beyond the English education.

### **Areas for Future Research**

In future research, I might explore several ideas focused on supporting children from diverse backgrounds to become self-directed learners rather than relying on their parents or schools. Through the insights gained from this research, I

began to see more clearly how, in multilingual and multicultural contexts like Dolakha, children can grow into self-directed learners. Furthermore, when teachers shift from being mere transmitters of knowledge to becoming partners in the learning process, students are encouraged to take ownership of their own learning. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) emphasizes this evolving view of the teacher's role—not just as a deliverer of knowledge, but as a mediator, guide, and co-learner who supports students in constructing meaning and developing autonomy (Council of Europe, 2020). In this sense, teachers are not expected to always provide answers, but to scaffold learning, ask meaningful questions, and co-create learning experiences alongside their students. In contexts like rural Nepal, this relational and collaborative model of teaching is not only relevant but essential. It fosters a learning environment where both teachers and students grow together through mutual trust, reflection, and dialogue. Looking forward, future research in this field should investigate how such teacher roles can be cultivated and sustained—especially in under-resourced, culturally diverse settings. The extent to which we can empower teachers to embrace this expanded role may ultimately shape the future of inclusive, equitable, and transformative education.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix 1: Interview Questions**

#### Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. Could you share about your English classroom? No of students? Where do they come from?
3. What about their family background?
4. How do you teach English? What are some of the areas you focus on?
5. How do you teach with your own goal as a teacher?
6. How do they participate in the classroom process?
7. What do you think of their performance? What are they good at?
8. Which of the four English skills do your students excel in and which require more effort?
9. Why do think that is the situation? What are the reasons for the differences in students' English proficiency?
10. Do you think ethnic background makes a difference in their English performance?
11. Do you think the native languages of high-achieving students have anything to do with it?
12. Please also tell us about the students who did not perform well.

## Appendix 2: Statistics

### 1. Table Format:

This table will summarize the ethnic breakdown and average English scores for each grade.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Grade 4</b>	Chetri	64	Highest score, significantly higher than others
	Tamang	42.2	Includes two students with zero scores
	Thami	36.5	-
<b>Grade 5</b>	Tamang	49.3	Highest score in the class
	Chetri	41	-
	Newari	42	-
	Thami	40	-
<b>Grade 6</b>	Sherpa	86	Only one Sherpa student
	Chetri	59.67	-
	Tamang	57.83	-
	Thami	52.2	-
	Darit	46	-
	Newari	0	Did not take the exam
<b>Grade 7</b>	Chetri	57.57	Highest score, significant influence from class population
	Sherpa	51	-
	Thami	36	-
	Tamang	40	-
	Bramin/Newar	43 each	Close to average
<b>Grade 9</b>	Chetri	50.78	Highest score

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Average Score</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	Thami	33.88	-
	Newar	25	Did not take the exam (1 student)
	Magar	36	-
	Tamang	20	Did not take the exam (1 student)