

**Strategies Employed by Nepalese EFL Students to Overcome English Speaking
Anxiety**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Education
in Partial Fulfilment for the Master of Education in English**

**Submitted by
Sushila Bhattarai**

**Faculty of Education
Tribhuvan University
Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal
2025**

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that this research is my original work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor has it been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma at any university or other institute of higher learning.

Date: 11 November, 2025

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Sushila Bhattarai

Recommendation for Acceptance

This is to certify that **Miss. Sushila Bhattarai** has completed his M.Ed. thesis entitled Strategies Employed by Nepalese EFL students to overcome English speaking anxiety under my guidance and supervision.

I recommend her thesis for the acceptance.

Date: 12 November, 2025

.....
Mr. Resham Acharya (Supervisor)
Teaching Assistant
Department of English Education
Faculty of Education
Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur
Kathmandu, Nepal

Recommendation for Evaluation

This thesis has been recommended for the evaluation from the following
Research Guidance Committee.

Signature

Prof. Kamal Kumar Poudel , PhD

Head

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

.....

Chairperson

Dr. Hari Maya Sharma

Teaching Assistant

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

.....

Member

Mr. Resham Acharya

Teaching Assistant

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

.....

Member

Date: 19 November, 2025

Evaluation and Approval

This thesis has been evaluated and approved by the following **Research Evaluation and Approval Committee**.

Signature

Prof. Kamal Kumar Poudel , PhD

Head

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

.....

Chairperson

Dr. Lok Raj Regmi

Reader

Department of English Education

Mahendra Ratna Campus

Tahachal, Kathmandu

.....

Expert

Mr. Resham Acharya

Teaching Assistant

Department of English Education

Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur

.....

Member

Date: 26 November, 2025

Dedication

This research is wholeheartedly dedicated to my family, teachers, and friends. Your endless support, encouragement, and constant belief in me have been the foundation of this achievement. To my family, thank you for your unconditional love and for creating an environment where I could thrive. To my teachers, thank you for your invaluable guidance and for nurturing my curiosity. To my friends, thank you for your companionship and motivation. Your collective encouragement has not only guided me through this academic endeavor but has also played a crucial role in shaping my character and making me who I am today.

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Sushila Bhattarai

Abstract

The study, entitled *Strategies Employed by Nepalese EFL Students to Overcome English Speaking Anxiety*, was conducted to explore the English-speaking anxiety of Nepalese EFL students and specific strategies they utilized to manage their English-speaking anxiety. Employing a qualitative approach and phenomenological research design, the research utilized in-depth interviews with four purposively sampled students from Central Department of English Education, Tribhuvan University to gather first hand data for the study. Recorded data were analysed through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that Nepalese EFL students experience significant English-speaking anxiety, primarily due to limited exposure to English and they fear to try because they have fear of making mistakes and negatives judgment from peers and teachers. The analysis of the data revealed that the students actively combat this anxiety through various techniques, including self-talk or self-directed practice, various relaxation techniques, and consistent preparation and rehearsal. Additionally, they improve their vocabulary and fluency by listening to English podcasts or interviews and feel confident in a supportive environment.

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the Introduction of the study including background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance, delimitations, and operational definitions. The second chapter presents a comprehensive overview of relevant theoretical and empirical literature and their implication for the study, along with a conceptual framework. The third chapter deals with the methods and procedures of the study including research design, sample and sampling strategy, research tools, sources of data, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the data, while the final chapter summarizes the key findings, presents the conclusion, and offers suggestions for policy, practice, and future research.

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Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESA	English Speaking Anxiety
FLA	Foreign Language Anxiety
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
FLSA	Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Chapter I

Introduction

This chapter deals with the introduction of the study entitled **Strategies Employed by Nepalese EFL Students to Overcome English Speaking Anxiety**.

This section includes background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, and operational definition of the key terms.

Background of the Study

In the context of World Englishes, as described in Kachru's (1985) concentric circles model, Nepal is situated within the Expanding Circle, where English is learned and used as a foreign language. Despite English being a compulsory subject from the primary school level, a pervasive issue exists among Nepali learners, a significant number of students' experience English speaking anxiety. This phenomenon, which often manifests as a reluctance to speak in front of peers and instructors, acts as a considerable barrier to communicative competence. With my Personal observations, both as a learner and an English language educator, reveal that this speaking anxiety can be a persistent challenge that extends throughout a learner's academic career and even into their professional life. Consequently, this research was undertaken to systematically investigate and identify effective pedagogical strategies aimed at mitigating or overcoming this form of speaking anxiety among students.

Anxiety is an emotional state characterized by feelings of tension, worry, and physiological arousal (e.g., increased heart rate, sweating) in response to perceived threats or stressors (American Psychological Association, 2023). According to Spielberger (2010), this state comprises three interrelated components: cognitive (intrusive thoughts, catastrophizing), emotional (fear, unease), and somatic (increased heart rate, muscle tension). Speaking Anxiety refers to the specific apprehension and fear that learners experience when required to speak in a second or foreign language. This phenomenon is characterized by physiological symptoms (e.g., increased heart rate, sweating), cognitive symptoms (e.g., mental blocks, negative self-talk), and behavioral symptoms (e.g., avoidance of speaking situations) (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Speaking anxiety, also refers as public speaking anxiety or

glossophobia, which is a common psychological condition characterized by intense fear or nervousness when speaking in front of an audience. This anxiety can occur in various settings, including formal presentations, classroom discussions, business meetings, or even casual social interactions. It is often classified as a subtype of social anxiety disorder when the fear significantly impairs a person's ability to communicate effectively (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The symptoms of speaking anxiety can be categorized into physiological, cognitive, and behavioral responses. Physiologically, speakers may experience an increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, dry mouth, or nausea due to the body's fight-or-flight response (McCroskey, 2009). Cognitively, individuals often engage in negative self-talk, excessive worry about being judged, and irrational fears of humiliation or failure (Bodie, 2010). Behaviorally, speaking anxiety may lead to avoidance of speaking opportunities, rushed speech, verbal fillers (e.g., "um," "like"), and difficulty in maintaining eye contact (Daly et al., 1997). These reactions can create a cycle of anxiety, where past negative experiences reinforce future fears.

English speaking anxiety is characterized as an excessive feeling of apprehension experienced by students while speaking in English. It is frequently observed in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, where it significantly hinders students' active participation in discussions and speaking activities. This fear of speaking in English in front of classmates or other audiences can develop into a critical problem that hampers learners' ability to communicate effectively both inside and outside the classroom. The impact of anxiety on the learning process and outcomes, particularly on students' speaking performance, is substantial. It can manifest as mental barriers that prevent fluent speech, leading to reduced participation, avoidance behaviors, and difficulties in cognitive processing. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle where students' anxiety leads to reduced engagement and poorer performance, which then reinforces their anxiety, thereby hindering further language acquisition. Even highly advanced EFL learners may experience anxiety in specific speaking situations, indicating its pervasive nature regardless of proficiency level. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), conceptualizes foreign language anxiety as a situation specific phenomenon, distinct from general anxiety, given the unique

demands on self-concept and self-expression inherent in language study. This distinction underscores that the challenges faced by students are not merely general nervousness but are deeply intertwined with the act of speaking a foreign language (English language). Hence, this study aimed to explore the English-speaking anxiety of Nepalese EFL learners and what strategies they employed to reduce their English-speaking anxiety.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the mandated inclusion of English language education in the national curriculum of Nepal from primary to higher secondary levels, many Nepalese learners continuing struggle with English-speaking anxiety, significantly hindering their oral proficiency development. Although the curriculum formally aims for the balanced acquisition of the four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, actual pedagogical practice in the classroom often diverges from this goal. Instruction frequently focuses on rote memorization and structural accuracy, neglecting the emphasis on communicative competence required for authentic, real-world English interactions. This gap between instructional objectives and learning outcomes suggests systemic shortcomings in addressing the affective barriers to language acquisition.

For Nepalese learners, anxiety is a pervasive obstacle to achieving fluency, even after their long journey of learning English language. This issue stems from traditional teaching methods that favor accuracy over fluency, a lack of opportunities for genuine speaking practice, and a cultural emphasis on avoiding errors. Furthermore, this anxiety is exacerbated by Nepal's high-stakes, examination-driven education system, which predominantly rewards written assessment proficiency while assigning less value to practical oral skills. While existing research has successfully identified the primary causes of foreign language anxiety both globally (Woodrow, 2006; Liu & Jackson, 2008) and in the Nepalese context (Bhandari, 2019; Adhikari, 2021), one area remains largely underexplored: the coping strategies students develop to manage their emotional distress. Although anecdotal evidence suggests learners employ various personal techniques to mitigate their anxiety, these methods are not systematically documented or analyzed in the literature.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by shifting the focus from the problem's origins to the student-led solutions. Specifically, this research will investigate and document the concrete strategies that Nepalese students utilize to effectively manage their English-speaking anxiety and improve their performance.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- a. To explore the English-speaking anxiety of Nepalese EFL students and strategies they used to overcome their English-speaking anxiety.
- b. To suggest some pedagogical implications for the students, teachers and stakeholders, that support students to reduce their English-speaking anxiety.

Research Questions

Based on above mentioned objectives, this study addressed the following research questions:

- a. What types of anxiety do Nepalese EFL students experience when speaking English?
- b. What strategies do Nepalese EFL students use to reduce their English-speaking anxiety?

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value as it offers insights derived directly from English language learners who have experienced and subsequently overcome English-speaking anxiety. These insights can serve as a valuable resource for other EFL students currently struggling with similar challenges, as well as for EFL teachers seeking effective strategies to support anxious learners in their classrooms. Furthermore, the findings of this study are relevant to broader educational stakeholders, including educationists, curriculum designers, and policymakers. By highlighting the prevalence and impact of speaking anxiety, this research encourages a greater emphasis on reducing such anxiety through enhanced speaking activities in curricula and the creation of more supportive, anxiety-free learning environments.

Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited by its specific scope and methodological boundaries, as it was conducted exclusively within Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, and focused solely on master's level students. The research was specifically centered on the phenomenon of English-speaking anxiety and the strategies employed to overcome it. To explore this, primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with a purposively selected sample of four participants.

Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

This section provides operational definitions of the key terms used in this study, contextualizing them within the specific scope of this research.

Speaking Anxiety. In this study, speaking anxiety refers to the state of nervousness and fear a student feels when they have to speak in front of others. This is an internal state that is observable through behaviors such as becoming hopeless, nervous, or forgetting everything while speaking. For example, a student may be experiencing speaking anxiety if they are unable to express their feelings or ideas orally during a classroom presentation.

Strategies. In this study, strategies are the techniques or ideas that students employ to reduce their speaking anxiety. These can be mental or behavioral techniques. An example of a strategy is a student making a mock presentation with their peers before presenting in front of the class.

Overcome. In this study, to overcome speaking anxiety refers to the process of reducing speaking anxiety by employing various strategies. For example, a student has overcome their fear of speaking in front of others.

English Speaking Anxiety. In this study, English speaking anxiety refers to the feeling of nervousness and fear a student experiences while speaking in English. This is specifically focused on the difficulty a person feels when speaking in the English language.

Chapter II

Review of the Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

This chapter consists of the review of the related theoretical literature, empirical literature review, implications of the review for the study and conceptual framework of the study.

Review of Theoretical Literature

The review of the theoretical literature is a crucial task for the researcher to acquire theoretical knowledge about the related topic. The review of different theories based on my research area are presented as follows:

Introduction to Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is widely recognized as a pivotal component of effective communication, enabling individuals to express themselves, share information, and interact with others. The intricate nature of speaking skill has been extensively explored by prominent researchers in the field of language education. Brown (2001), a leading figure in applied linguistics, conceptualizes speaking as “an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information.” This definition underscores the reciprocal nature of spoken communication, where speakers not only deliver messages but also respond to and interpret feedback from their audience. Another significant contributor, Nunan (1991), emphasizes the dual importance of both accuracy and fluency in spoken language. He asserts that proficient speakers must be able to produce grammatically correct utterances while simultaneously communicating smoothly and naturally, without undue hesitation or effort.

For a speaker to be truly effective, several core components must be mastered. A solid foundation in grammar and vocabulary is paramount, as famously articulated by Wilkins (1972), who stated that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed.” This highlights that while grammar provides the structure, vocabulary provides the content of the message. Beyond word and sentence choice, pronunciation is crucial for intelligibility. Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin (1996) have meticulously detailed the elements of effective

pronunciation, including the correct articulation of individual sounds (segmentals) and the appropriate use of stress, rhythm, and intonation (suprasegmentals), all of which ensure the message is clearly understood. Fluency, defined by Thornbury (2005) as “the ability to speak at a normal rate and with a reasonable number of pauses, which do not disrupt the flow of communication,” is another vital component, enabling smooth and natural delivery. Lastly, discourse management, which involves organizing thoughts into coherent messages and effectively managing turn taking in conversation, and strategic competence, as identified by Canale & Swain (1980), which allows speakers to employ communication strategies to overcome difficulties or enhance their message, complete the picture of a skilled speaker.

The acquisition of speaking skill is a progressive journey, often explained through influential theories of language learning. Anderson’s (1983) ACT-R theory of skill acquisition offers a foundational framework, positing that learners transition from declarative knowledge - their conscious understanding of language rules to procedural knowledge, which is the automatic and often unconscious application of these rules in real-time speech. This shift is clear as learners evolve from hesitant, rule-focused utterances to more fluent and spontaneous communication. Complementing this cognitive perspective, Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory emphasizes the profound impact of social interaction on language development. From this viewpoint, speaking skills are significantly refined through collaborative communicative exchanges with more proficient speakers. This highlights the inherently social and interactive nature of language acquisition, where learning is co-constructed within a supportive environment.

Challenges in Speaking Skills

Speaking skill, particularly in a second or foreign language context, presents a complex array of challenges for learners. These difficulties can be systematically categorized into linguistic factors and psychological/affective factors.

Linguistics Factors. Language learners face several significant linguistic challenges that hinder effective communication. A limited vocabulary often leads to hesitant and repetitive speech, characterized by generic terms rather than precise expressions (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2008). This is compounded by grammatical

inaccuracy, where learners struggle to apply correct structures, verb tenses, and word order in real-time, compromising both the intelligibility and naturalness of their speech. Pronunciation difficulties are also a major barrier, extending beyond individual sounds to include prosodic features like intonation, stress, and rhythm. Poor pronunciation significantly impedes overall intelligibility, leading to miscommunication and reduced confidence (Gilakjani, 2012; Samawiyah & Saifuddin, 2016). Furthermore, a lack of fluency and excessive hesitation, marked by frequent pauses, disrupts the natural flow of communication due to difficulties in rapid language retrieval (Thornbury, 2005). Mother tongue interference often results in errors or unnatural phrasing, as native language patterns are transferred to the target language, learners may struggle with insufficient content generation and an inability to structure discourse logically under communicative pressure.

Psychological and Affective Factors. Beyond linguistic challenges, psychological and affective factors significantly impact speaking ability. Speaking anxiety, stemming from the fear of negative evaluation or embarrassment, is a major impediment, often causing learners to hesitate or remain silent (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Sanako, n.d.). This is closely tied to broader communication apprehension (McCroskey, 2001).

A general lack of confidence and shyness further deters oral engagement, potentially arising from past negative experiences or perceived inadequacy. Low motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, reduces willingness to practice, hindering skill development. Inhibition, a psychological barrier, prevents free expression due to self-consciousness or vulnerability when operating in a less proficient language. Classroom dynamics can also present challenges, with unequal participation opportunities limiting crucial practice for less assertive learners. A fundamental issue is the insufficient practice opportunities themselves, as speaking demands consistent application for fluency (Sanako, n.d.). Furthermore, undue pressure for native-like proficiency, particularly regarding accent, can increase anxiety and divert focus from the more critical goal of intelligibility.

Concept of Anxiety

Anxiety is precisely defined as an affective state characterized by apprehension and somatic manifestations of tension, wherein an individual anticipates impending danger, catastrophe, or misfortune (American Psychological Association; Barlow, 2002). This anticipatory cognitive component often elicits a sympathetic nervous system response, resulting in physiological indicators such as increased muscle tension, tachypnea, and accelerated heart rate. At its core, anxiety frequently involves the anticipation of a future threat or danger, often accompanied by feelings of apprehension or a sense of dread akin to fear (Barlow, 2002). Anxiety in learning a foreign language, often termed as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which is very common emotional barrier that many EFL learners face while learning or speaking in second or foreign language. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), define language anxiety as a “feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language context, including speaking, listening, and learning” (p. 284).

Anxiety in Speaking in English

The American Psychological Association (APA) succinctly defines public-speaking anxiety as “fear of giving a speech or presentation in public because of the expectation of being negatively evaluated or humiliated by others” (APA Dictionary of Psychology). This definition underscores a core element of this anxiety: the pervasive fear of being judged, criticized, or shamed by an audience, which drives much of the associated distress. English speaking anxiety (ESA) is broadly understood as a specific emotional state of apprehension concerning a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to language learning in a foreign language classroom. It is linguistically expressed as “the feeling of tension and apprehension particularly associated with second language texts, including speaking”. This excessive anxiety manifests when students are required to speak English.

A particularly well-researched and understood manifestation of this phenomenon is Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA). Pioneering work by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) identified FLSA as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning

arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.” Their model breaks FLSA down into three key components. First, Communication Apprehension refers to a broader, generalized fear of communicating, which becomes intensely amplified when individuals are compelled to use a language in which they are not fully proficient. Second, the Fear of Negative Evaluation centers on the intense apprehension about being unfavorably judged by others, especially instructors or peers, regarding one’s linguistic performance. Third, Test Anxiety specifically relates to the worry and discomfort associated with performing poorly in formal language assessments, particularly oral examinations. Further extending this understanding, researchers like MacIntyre (1996) have elaborated on FLSA as an “anxiety and unfavorable emotional response that come with learning and using a second language.” This anxiety is not merely psychological; it frequently manifests through tangible physical symptoms such as shaking, sweating, a dry mouth, and a rapid heartbeat. Cognitively, individuals may experience a mind going blank, difficulty recalling words, or engage in self-defeating negative self-talk, as can be understood through the cognitive models of anxiety proposed by Beck, Emery, & Greenberg (1985), which explain how biased thinking perpetuates these performance-related fears.

Cognitive-affective models provide valuable insights into the relationship between emotional factors and language learning processes. One of the most influential theories in this domain is Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that anxiety functions as a psychological barrier that impedes learners’ ability to effectively absorb and process linguistic input. This hypothesis suggests that when learners experience heightened anxiety, their “affective filter” rises, consequently hindering language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Building upon this foundation, MacIntyre (1995) presents a more nuanced understanding of the anxiety-performance relationship. Contrary to the common assumption that anxiety solely results from poor language performance, his research demonstrates that anxiety can actually precede and subsequently worsen language learning difficulties. This bidirectional relationship creates a potentially vicious cycle where anxiety both stems from and contributes to learning challenges. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014) have investigated how individual personality traits, particularly perfectionism and introversion, interact with and potentially intensify language learning anxiety. Their

research highlights the importance of considering learner individuality when examining anxiety in educational contexts.

Strategies to Overcome English Speaking Anxiety

English speaking anxiety is a pervasive challenge for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, significantly hindering their ability to communicate effectively despite their linguistic knowledge. This anxiety frequently stems from various factors, including a deep seated fear of negative evaluation, a pervasive lack of self-confidence, a limited vocabulary that hinders spontaneous expression, and an overall unfamiliarity with the demands of speaking tasks (Herwanto, 2013; Khairunisa et al., 2023). Understanding these root causes is the first step toward developing effective strategies to mitigate and ultimately overcome this anxiety. Some of the strategies that are recommended by various researchers are:

Preparation. One of the most effective strategies to combat English speaking anxiety is thorough preparation. This involves:

Rehearsing Material. Actively rehearsing the material one intends to speak about helps build confidence and reduces the apprehension of forgetting key words or ideas during delivery (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004; Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020).

Vocabulary and Grammar Review. Consistent review of relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures can significantly alleviate anxiety related to linguistic competence (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020).

Anticipating Challenges. To minimize anxiety, anticipate potential difficulties or questions and prepare thoughtful responses in advance, enhancing a speaker's control and readiness (British Council, n.d.; Hasani & Ismaili, 2022).

Positive Self-Talk and Mindset. Beyond preparation, cultivating a positive mindset and engaging in positive self-talk are crucial for building confidence. This involves:

Challenging Negative Thoughts. Actively replacing thoughts like "I'm not good enough" with affirmations such as "I can do this" or "I am improving every day" can significantly boost self-confidence (EduSynch, 2024; Fluentize, 2024).

Focusing on Communication, Not Perfection. Prioritizing clear communication over achieving perfect grammar or pronunciation reduces immense pressure and fosters a more relaxed approach to speaking (EduSynch, 2024; TOEFL Test Prep, 2025).

Embracing Mistakes as Learning Opportunities. Recognizing that errors are a natural and necessary part of language acquisition helps desensitize the fear of making them (British Council, n.d.; EduSynch, 2024; Fluentize, 2024).

Relaxation Techniques. Managing the physical manifestations of anxiety through relaxation techniques can also profoundly improve speaking performance. This includes:

Deep Breathing Exercises. Simple yet powerful practices like deep breathing exercises, such as the 4-7-8 method, can calm the nervous system and alleviate physical tension (Martiningsih et al., 2024; Fluentize, 2024).

Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Tensing and then releasing different muscle groups can help release stored tension and promote a sense of calm (Martiningsih et al., 2024).

Gradual Exposure and Practice. Gradual exposure and consistent practice, built upon the principle of systematic desensitization, are highly effective in overcoming speaking anxiety. This involves:

Starting Small. Learners should begin with low-pressure speaking situations, such as practicing alone through shadowing or self-recording, or engaging with trusted friends and family, or in small group discussions (EduSynch, 2024; TOEFL Test Prep, 2025).

Role-Playing and Simulations. Engaging in role-plays that simulate real-life scenarios (e.g., ordering food, job interviews) provides structured practice in a safe environment (Gardner, 2025).

Regular Practice. Consistent, even brief, daily practice builds muscle memory and familiarity with the language (EduSynch, 2024; TOEFL Test Prep, 2025).

Seeking Authentic Exposure. Engaging with authentic English through movies, TV shows, podcasts, and interacting with native speakers or advanced learners can improve fluency and build confidence (Quvanch et al., 2024; FastInfo Class, 2023).

Supportive Learning Environment. The creation of a supportive learning environment is paramount in fostering a comfortable atmosphere for language learners. This includes:

Teacher's Role. Educators play a critical role in establishing open and safe classrooms where students feel empowered to express themselves without fear of judgment. This includes providing constructive positive feedback, tolerating mistakes, using humor, and cultivating a positive and relaxed attitude (Young, 1991).

Peer Seeking/Cooperative Learning. Collaborating with peers in group work, pair work, and language exchange programs offers invaluable low-pressure practice opportunities and mutual support (Hyseni & Lundberg, n.d.; Khairunisa et al., 2023; Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004).

Normalizing Mistakes. Both teachers and peers should continually emphasize that making mistakes is a normal and essential component of language learning, not a sign of inadequacy (Gardner, 2025).

Focusing on the Message, Not Just the Language. Finally, shifting one's focus from the intricacies of the language to the content of the message can significantly reduce anxiety. This involves:

Content-Based Approach. When speakers are genuinely interested in the topic at hand, they are more likely to concentrate on effectively conveying their ideas rather than solely on their linguistic performance (TOEFL Test Prep, 2025).

Simple Sentences. Initially using simpler sentence structures can help maintain fluency and reduce the cognitive load, allowing for a more natural flow of communication (TOEFL Test Prep, 2025).

By implementing a combination of these multi-faceted strategies, English language learners can progressively diminish their speaking anxiety, cultivate greater confidence, and ultimately achieve enhanced fluency and communicative competence.

Review of Empirical Studies

The empirical literature review section systematically examines prior investigations conducted by other researchers and institutions. The objective of this review is to provide context and support for the current study, with specific relevant studies outlined below.

Liu and Jackson (2008) examined Chinese EFL learners' communication anxiety in their study "An Exploration of Chinese EFL Learners' Unwillingness to Communicate and Foreign Language Anxiety." Conducted at Beijing Normal University with 547 undergraduates, the mixed-methods research combined FLCAS surveys and classroom observations. Results showed 68% of anxious students avoided speaking despite adequate skills, revealing a strong negative correlation ($r = -0.72$) between anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Anxious students also scored 20% lower on oral proficiency tests than their peers, demonstrating anxiety's significant impact on performance regardless of actual ability. The study's robust methodology and large sample size provide valuable insights into psychological barriers in language learning.

Shrestha (2012) conducted a study titled "Hesitation of Learners in Speaking English in the EFL Classroom" in Lalitpur district, Nepal, focusing on Grade 10 students and their English teachers. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach with purposive sampling, the researcher engaged six secondary-level teachers and students, employing interviews and observations to explore factors causing speaking hesitation in EFL classrooms. Findings revealed that students' reluctance stemmed from insufficient English exposure, overuse of mother tongue, lack of communicative activities, teacher-centered methods, exam-oriented teaching, and poor emphasis on pronunciation and speaking skills. The study recommended strategies such as dedicated speaking practice, interactive activities (e.g., role-plays, group discussions), multimedia resources, student-centered approaches, and formative assessments to reduce hesitation and enhance communicative competence.

Mayangta's (2013) study "Students' Speaking Anxiety in an EFL Classroom" examined language anxiety among 32 Indonesian junior high school students using Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS scale and qualitative questionnaires. Findings revealed

a spectrum of anxiety levels: 43.8% mild, 21.9% moderate, 9.4% severe, with 25% reporting no anxiety. Key anxiety sources included fear of negative evaluation, perfectionist learning beliefs, teacher student dynamics, spontaneous speaking tasks, and self-perceived language deficiencies. Students primarily employed positive self-talk (most common), preparation, relaxation techniques, and acceptance as coping mechanisms. The research highlights how speaking anxiety significantly impedes EFL learning outcomes and underscores the need for pedagogical interventions to create psychologically safer language classrooms while calling for further investigation into effective anxiety-reduction strategies in second language acquisition contexts.

The study “English Language Speaking Anxiety among Community College Learners: How can it be overcome?” by Tati, Paul, and Golingi (2016) provides a comprehensive examination of the psychological and linguistic challenges faced by non-native English speakers in Malaysian community colleges. Conducted across institutions in Sabah and Kedah, the research employed qualitative interviews and discourse analysis to explore the roots of speaking anxiety. Key findings revealed that learners primarily struggled with limited vocabulary and intense fear of being negatively evaluated by peers and instructors. Interestingly, many participants adopted imitation techniques, replicating native speakers’ speech patterns from media as a coping mechanism. The study strongly emphasizes educators’ pivotal role in creating supportive learning environments, suggesting that teacher encouragement and anxiety-aware pedagogical approaches can significantly reduce students’ speaking apprehension.

Waliyanti’s (2018) qualitative study, titled “English Department Students’ Learning Strategies to Overcome Speaking Anxiety,” conducted at the English Education Department, Faculty of Language and Art, State University of Surabaya, aimed to explore the methods students employ to mitigate their apprehension in speaking English. The research involved 43 fourth-semester English department students, utilizing questionnaires and interviews as primary data collection instruments. The findings illuminated that speaking anxiety among these students stemmed from a multifaceted array of causes, including inadequate preparation, a pervasive fear of committing errors, general social anxiety, a notable lack of self-

confidence, and a pronounced concern over how their performance would be perceived by others. In response to these challenges, students were observed to adopt a variety of learning strategies. These strategies encompassed thorough preparation, active engagement in social interaction to practice speaking, cultivating positive thinking patterns, employing relaxation techniques, and utilizing various memory aids to recall vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Bhandari (2019), in his study “Foreign Language Anxiety Among Nepalese Learners”, conducted a comprehensive investigation of English language anxiety manifestations among university students in Kathmandu. The research surveyed 312 undergraduate students from five different colleges across Nepal’s capital city using quantitative questionnaires to assess anxiety levels and their specific causes. Findings revealed that a significant 76% of participants experienced moderate-to-high levels of speaking anxiety, with grammatical accuracy concerns (82%) being more prevalent than social fears of negative evaluation (68%). The study particularly highlighted how Nepal’s exam-oriented education system contributes to language anxiety, with 89% of anxious students directly attributing their apprehension to testing pressures and performance evaluation. These results provide important insights into the unique cultural and educational factors shaping foreign language anxiety in the Nepalese context, demonstrating how assessment systems can significantly impact learners’ psychological experiences. The large sample size and focus on higher education students make this study particularly valuable for understanding anxiety patterns among young adult learners in Nepal.

Pabro-Maquidato’s (2021) study titled “The experience of English-speaking anxiety and coping strategies: A transcendental phenomenological study,” investigated speaking anxiety and coping strategies among second language learners of English. The study involved 55 students from a Philippine state university, with the top five most anxious students participating in semi-structured interviews using a transcendental phenomenological approach. Findings revealed that learners experienced emotional tensions, physiological symptoms, and mental difficulties when speaking English, with anxiety stemming particularly from fear of negative evaluation or losing face. The study also identified coping strategies employed by students, including reading English books, consulting dictionaries, writing down their

thoughts beforehand, and becoming more receptive to teachers' corrections and feedback. These strategies helped students overcome shyness and better organize their English-speaking attempts.

Adhikari (2021), in his study titled "English Language Anxiety in Rural Nepalese Classrooms" published in the *Journal of NELTA*, conducted a comparative investigation of English-speaking anxiety between rural and urban school environments in Nepal. The research, which took place across multiple schools in both rural and urban areas of Nepal, employed a mixed-methods approach involving 150 secondary-level students. Through surveys and interviews, Adhikari examined the differential experiences of language anxiety between these two settings. The study revealed significant disparities, with rural students demonstrating markedly higher levels of English-speaking anxiety compared to their urban counterparts. Two primary factors emerged from the findings: first, rural students had substantially fewer opportunities for English speaking practice due to limited classroom interactions and extracurricular activities; second, the predominantly teacher-centric instructional methods in rural classrooms exacerbated students' apprehension. These results highlight how educational context and pedagogical approaches significantly influence language anxiety levels among Nepalese students. The study contributes valuable insights to the discourse on EFL education in developing countries, particularly regarding the challenges faced by rural learners.

Suparlan's (2021) study in "Factors contributing students' speaking anxiety" identified ten factors causing speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL learners at MTs. Darul Ishlah Ireng Laok. Using mixed methods, key findings included fear of mistakes, teacher criticism, lack of confidence, peer comparison, and limited vocabulary. While echoing Nepalese EFL research on performance anxiety, this study emphasized classroom-specific triggers over socio-cultural factors. The research highlights how pedagogical environments uniquely contribute to language anxiety, offering insights for educators to create supportive speaking practices. These findings complement broader EFL research while demonstrating context-dependent variations in speaking anxiety manifestations across different learning environments.

Aryal (2022) conducted a study entitled, "Anxiety of Tamang Speaking Students in Learning English Speaking Skill in Nepalese Context," to investigate the

anxieties of Tamang students learning English from Rasuwa district. The research used a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, with five secondary-level Tamang students selected through non-random purposive sampling. Data was collected via in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that students' anxiety stemmed from multiple factors, including lack of proper practice, L1 interference, parental unawareness, hesitation with non-native speakers, limited vocabulary, frustration with copying native accents, and a non-English-speaking school environment. These results highlight the need for supportive and tailored educational strategies to mitigate language learning anxiety among Tamang students.

Karki (2024) conducted a study titled "Self-coping Strategies for Mitigating Speaking Anxiety among Secondary Level Students" in Guinn district, exploring the strategies students use to manage speaking anxiety and the causes behind it. The research involved forty secondary-level students selected through random sampling. Data were collected via a questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions and analyzed descriptively using thematic interpretation and statistical tools like tables. The results indicated that common coping strategies included seeking help from peers and teachers, positive self-talk, relaxation techniques, distraction methods, and practicing English outside class. Key causes of anxiety were limited English exposure, low language proficiency, fear of judgment, and infrequent speaking activities.

This study's theoretical foundation is built upon a review of existing literature concerning English speaking anxiety in both the Nepalese and international contexts where English is spoken as a second or foreign language. The review included works by Liu and Jackson (2008), Shrestha (2012), Mayangta (2013), Tati, Paul, and Golingi (2016), Waliyanti (2018), Bhandari (2019), Pabro-Maquidato (2021), Suparlan (2021), Adhikari (2021), Aryal (2022), and Karki (2024). These studies provided a comprehensive background, highlighting the various factors contributing to language anxiety and offering valuable insights that inform the current research design and analysis. The findings from this body of work served as a crucial reference point, establishing the prevalence and nature of English speaking anxiety and thus justifying the need for further investigation into this phenomenon.

Numerous studies have investigated speaking anxiety, but many are limited in scope, focusing predominantly on its causes and nature rather than practical solutions. Addressing this gap, this qualitative research explores strategies to mitigate English speaking anxiety. The study collected rich, in-depth data through interviews with Nepalese EFL students, gathering their lived experiences to identify effective coping mechanisms. The findings offer a valuable resource for students who struggle with speaking anxiety, providing a direct, experience-based perspective on how to manage and reduce it. This research successfully identified several strategies and can serve as a foundational reference for future studies, enriching the academic discourse on a critical issue in language education. By shifting the focus from simply identifying the problem to exploring its solutions, this study provides a meaningful contribution to both academic and practical fields, offering guidance for educators and learners alike.

Implications of Review for the Study

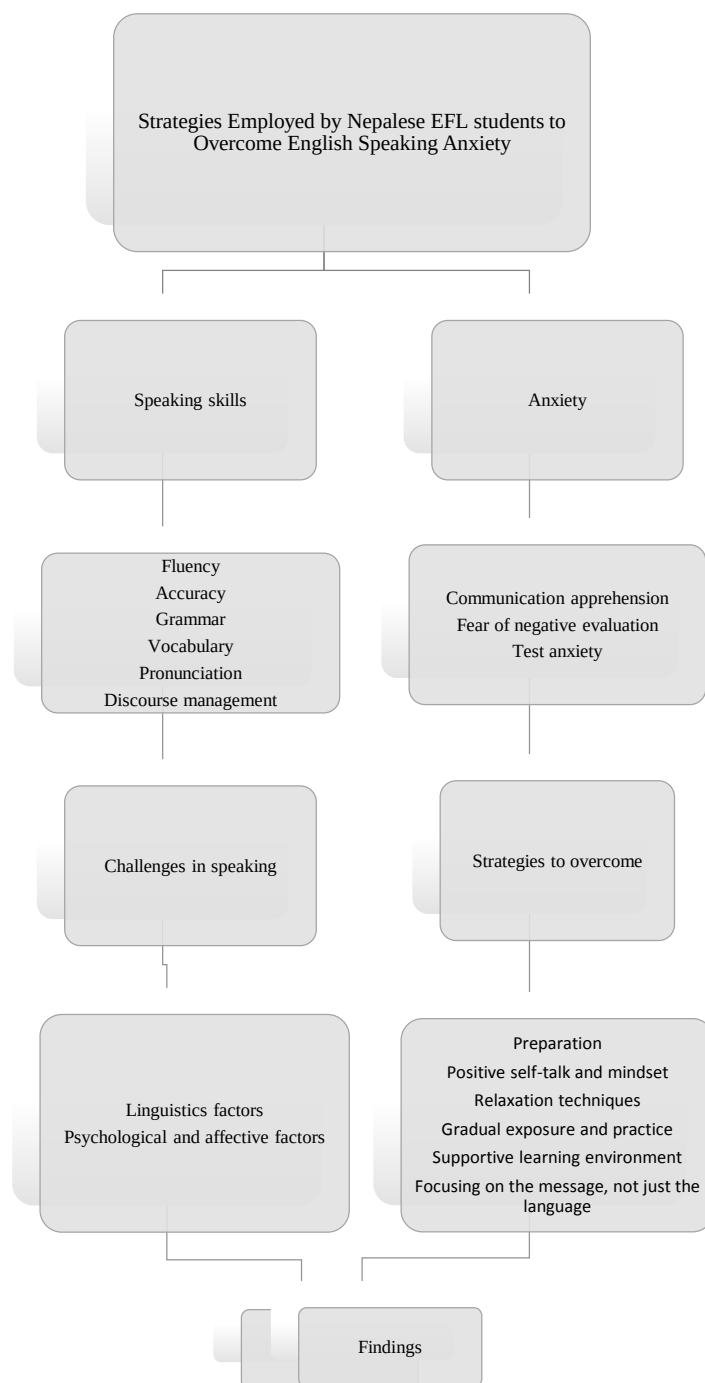
The comprehensive review of both theoretical and empirical literature provided significant insights and foundational knowledge concerning speaking anxiety and effective strategies for its reduction among Nepalese EFL students. This systematic process focused on examining and critically evaluating prior research to identify existing contributions and establish robust, relevant information pertinent to the current investigation. Diverse scholarly resources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journals, and specialized articles, were meticulously consulted. This extensive review was instrumental in deepening conceptual understanding, providing greater clarity to the research problem, and ultimately guiding the development of a robust conceptual framework for the study and crucially, refining the study's methodological approach. The synthesis of these findings comprehensively informed the research direction.

Building on these theoretical and empirical foundations, the current study implements several key approaches. First, it adapts the FLCAS of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) to measure ESA levels among Nepalese students, accounting for local educational contexts. Second, it investigates gender and regional differences in ESA prevalence, following up on Shrestha's (2019) findings about higher anxiety among female students, and Adhikari's (2021) documentation of rural-urban disparities. Third, the study explores how classroom practices like error correction

and assessment methods contribute to ESA, drawing on insights from Suparlan (2021) and Mayangta (2013) regarding pedagogical influences. Finally, informed by Pabro-Maquidato (2021), Waliyanti (2018) and Karki (2024), this study will also consider students' self-coping strategies to manage their speaking anxiety.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

A conceptual framework serves as the foundational structure or “roadmap” for a research study. It accurately outlines the interrelationships among various key variables and constructs pertinent to the investigation. It is a researcher's synthesis of existing literature, theories, and personal insights that provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. The conceptual framework of this study is diagrammatically presented below in the following ways:



To accomplish this study, I have pre-determined some concepts through the all theoretical literature I have done such as Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and others. Likewise, a qualitative method has been followed where lived experiences and stories of EFL students were collected via in-depth interview. After that data transcription and thematization process have been done to carry out findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter III

Methods and Procedures of the Study

This chapter deals with the methods and procedures that have been employed throughout this study. This section includes research design and method of the study, sources of Data, population, sample and sampling procedure, tools for Data collection, data collection procedure, data analysis and interpretation, and Ethical considerations.

Design and Method of the Study

To achieve the objectives of this study, I employed a qualitative research methodology guided by a phenomenological design to investigate participants lived experiences. As articulated by Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology provides an appropriate methodological framework for studies seeking to understand the essence of human experiences from the participants' own perspectives. The approach particularly valuable for this research as it emphasized first-person narratives while employing epoché (bracketing) to minimize researcher preconceptions (Moustakas, 1994). Data collection involve in-depth interviews designed to elicit rich descriptions of participants' experiences, complemented by reflective journaling to capture nuanced aspects of their lived reality. Thematic analysis has been conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework to identify essential patterns and meanings within the collected narratives. This methodological approach aligns with the study's objectives by prioritizing depth of understanding over generalization, while providing systematic procedures for examining subjective experiences with academic rigor.

Sources of Data

This study had utilized both primary and secondary data to ensure a comprehensive investigation of the research problem.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants. The selection criteria focused on students who had previously

experienced anxiety related to speaking or giving presentation in English. From this group, participants were chosen based on their progress in overcoming their anxiety, either fully or partially, during their master's degree program. This approach allowed for the collection of rich, firsthand accounts of their lived experiences and the strategies they employed to mitigate their English-speaking anxiety.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were gathered through a rigorous review of existing scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, authoritative books, and previously published thesis and dissertations relevant to the research topic.

Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The target population for this study were master level EFL students from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. I selected four University students who had fully or partially reduced their English-speaking anxiety to explore their English-speaking anxiety and strategies they used to overcome it. The participants, who were my own classmates, were selected through the purposive sampling strategy. I was, therefore, somehow familiar with their journey of English-speaking and their anxiety about speaking in English. So, I chose only those who were struggling with English speaking anxiety in their earlier phase and gradually reduced their anxiety with time.

Tools for Data Collection

To accomplish this study, in-depth interview or informal talking under phenomenology research design was followed to collect primary data. The participants entertained to share their stories and journey rather than to write so, the stories were recorded in mobile phone following their consent. I prepared the interview guidelines containing open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives about participants lived experiences.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to collect primary data, I followed the various stepwise procedures:

Research Setting Selection. Tribhuvan University was selected as the research area for data collection.

Institutional Permission. Formal written permission was obtained from department administrators, outlining the study's objectives and ethical considerations.

Participant Selection. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on information-rich cases that meet the objective of my study, and willing to share detailed experiences.

Rapport Building. Prior to formal interviews, the researcher established rapport through preliminary meetings, explaining the study's purpose.

Informed Consent Procedure. A verbal and written consent was obtained from participants before interview.

Interview Logistics. Interviews were conducted in quiet university spaces during non-instructional hours.

Interview Protocol. In-depth interview with interview guidelines containing open-ended questions were utilized.

Data Recording. All interview sessions were audio-recorded using a smartphone after taking consent from each participants.

Data Analysis Strategy

To achieve the study's objectives, a thematic analysis was conducted on the transcribed interview data, using the framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved a careful review of the transcripts to identify common patterns and recurring ideas. These were systematically coded and then organized into categories, which were subsequently refined into overarching themes. This rigorous approach ensured the analysis directly addressed the research objectives and questions, moving from detailed data segments to broader, more meaningful interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Considerations refer to the moral principles and guidelines that ensure research is conducted responsibly, protecting participants' rights, dignity, and well-being including informed consent, confidentiality, avoiding harm, transparency, etc. While conducting this research, I adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection and dignity of all participants. First, I obtained informed consent from both participants and schools, clearly explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. I ensured confidentiality by using pseudonyms and securely storing all data, with access limited only to the research team. When conducting interviews, I created a comfortable environment where participants felt safe to share their experiences, being particularly mindful of potential emotional distress when discussing sensitive topics. I maintained transparency about my role as a researcher while avoiding any power imbalances that might influence participants' responses. All audio recordings and transcripts were anonymized and stored on password-protected devices, with plans for secure destruction after the research completion period. Throughout the study, I remained reflexive about my own positionality and potential biases, documenting these reflections to maintain research integrity. Finally, I ensured the research findings will be reported truthfully, without misrepresentation of participants' voices or experiences.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from interviews. The central objective of this study was to identify the strategies utilized by Nepalese EFL students to mitigate English-speaking anxiety. The analysis is structured to align with the research objectives and the specific items designed to address them. A detailed breakdown of the data, an interpretation of the findings, and a summary of the key results are presented thematically in the following sections.

Background of the Participants

The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews with four master's level students from Department of English Education at Tribhuvan University. All participants either had a history of, or were currently experiencing, English speaking anxiety.

The participants' backgrounds are as follows (all names are pseudonyms to protect their privacy).

Jyoti: She is a 28-year-old female participant enrolled in a master's program in English education at Tribhuvan University. She is originally from Syangja, her mother tongue is Nepali. She has a mixed educational background, having attended a private school for her basic education before transitioning to a community school for her further studies. This mixed educational history offers a unique perspective for the study. She is from an upper-middle-class family. Both of her parents are literate; her father was a cook in India, and her mother is a housewife.

Mandip: He is a 27-year-old male, a master's-level student in English education at Tribhuvan University. He is originally from Rukum, and his mother tongue is Nepali. He comes from an upper-middle-class family where both of his parents are literate, who are farmers. His formal education was completed at a community school, which provides a unique perspective for the study, as it contrasts with the experiences of students from different educational backgrounds. He is from an upper-middle-class family with His educational background is high dominant in community, having only 2-3 years in private school at early education.

Swastika: She is a 27-year-old female participant enrolled in a master's program in English education at Tribhuvan University. She is originally from Butwal, her mother tongue is Nepali. She is from an upper-middle-class family whose parents, both engaged in agriculture. Her parents had a basic level of education. Her educational history is diverse, with her basic level schooling at community school and secondary education at private school in Assam, India. She then came to Nepal and continued her higher education in Butwal. This mixed educational background provides a unique perspective for the study.

Suraj: He is a 27-year-old male participant enrolled in a master's program in English education at Tribhuvan University. He is originally from Darchula. He is a multilingual individual whose mother tongue is Doteli, and he is also proficient in both Nepali and English. His educational background is exclusively from community schools, providing a distinct perspective for the study. He comes from a middle-class family where his parents, who are farmers, are literate despite not having received formal schooling.

Analysis of the Data and Interpretation of the Results

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the research data. The findings are discussed thematically, with the direct extracts from participant responses to validate and contextualize the interpretations.

Fear of Making Mistakes

The fear of making mistakes is a common and powerful emotion for many English language learners. Instead of seeing mistakes as a natural part of the learning process, students often view them as personal failures. This can create a cycle of anxiety and avoidance, where learners become so focused on getting everything “right” that they hesitate to speak in front of others. Such anxiety creates a major barrier to language acquisition, hindering their confidence and preventing them from gaining fluency. This challenge is found in Nepalese EFL students while learning and speaking English language. For example, Mandip expressed:

Mostly we think of grammar rather than meaning. That's why initially I had the fear of making mistakes, rather than sharing my ideas and feelings I had

that fear. And yeah, I was quite anxious, quite afraid of making mistakes and all these things make me hard to speak in English in front of others.

Mandip shared that he had the fear of making mistakes while speaking in English, which make him more conscious and anxious about how to speak more than what to speak and sharing his ideas and thoughts. Similarly, Jyoti said:

I practice at home, but I am still afraid when I have to speak English because I am worried about my grammar and my pronunciation. I don't have pronunciation like natives, and it's difficult for me to speak fluently. The main fear is to make mistakes, probably because English is a foreign language for us and we haven't had enough practice.

Jyoti also reported feeling afraid to speak in English, citing an excessive focus on grammar and pronunciation as the primary source of her anxiety. This sentiment triangulates with Suraj, who described a parallel anxiety regarding grammatical and pronunciation errors. As he shared:

I'm afraid I might say something wrong, you know. Like, the pronunciation might be wrong, or the sentence structure might not be right when I speak. I keep thinking about these things when will I say the wrong sentence? It makes it difficult to even complete a sentence, so I just end up leaving it and starting a new one.

The interview data from Mandip, Jyoti, and Suraj reveals that students' fear of making mistakes in spoken English is fundamentally rooted in a perceived lack of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary. This intense preoccupation with correctness leads to communication apprehension, where the anxiety of potential errors prevents them from speaking freely. As Mandip states, his fear of making mistakes overshadows his desire to share his ideas and feelings. Similarly, Suraj's overthinking about wrong sentences makes it difficult for him to even complete a thought, illustrating how this anxiety can disrupt fluency and coherence. Jyoti's concern about not having pronunciation like natives also highlights this focus on perfection over communication. These experiences collectively illustrate Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), a common psychological barrier in language learning (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

This preoccupation with correctness can also cause a psychological barrier, known as the affective filter (Krashen, 1982), which hinders a student's willingness to practice speaking. This emotional filter blocks language input and prevents learners from engaging in the practice necessary to improve, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of fear and stagnation. The analysis aligns with established linguistic theories that connect speaking anxiety to specific knowledge gaps. A limited vocabulary often leads to hesitant and repetitive speech, characterized by a reliance on generic terms rather than precise, nuanced expressions (Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2008). This is compounded by a struggle with grammatical inaccuracy, where learners find it difficult to apply correct sentence structures, verb tenses, and word order in real-time. Such difficulties compromise the intelligibility and naturalness of their speech, further fueling their anxiety.

Fear of Negative Judgement

The fear of negative judgment is a significant barrier for students speaking English as a foreign language and don't have enough practice and exposure, leading to heightened self-consciousness and reluctance to communicate. As a result, even students with strong academic skills may avoid speaking to protect themselves from perceived criticism, hindering their oral language development. This type of anxiety and consciousness is seen in Nepalese EFL students. For instance, Jyoti said:

I think that if I made a mistake while speaking, my friends might say something, or they might laugh at me. I get this feeling like, 'Oh, they are laughing at me,' when I go down what would they say to me. These kinds of feelings make me hard to speak in English in front of people.

Here, Jyoti expressed that she feels that her friends would make fun of her, if she made any mistakes while speaking in English in front of them or others. Likewise, Swastika expressed:

Yes, I had a fear that I might make a mistake while speaking English, that my grammar might be wrong, and others might give me a negative comment. So, for me the biggest fear is getting negative comments, While I was studying my bachelor's or even in master's degree.

Swastika also had similar types of sharing that she always had the fear of getting negative comments from friends, teachers, and others if she made any mistakes while speaking in English. Similarly, Suraj also had the fear of being judged by others but now he had reduced his fear. As he said:

Initially, I was very afraid of what people would say if I made a mistake, and what my teacher would think. But with continued practice, that fear gradually faded. My friends would tease me, but I started to ignore them and only take the constructive feedback. Nowadays, I don't really worry about what others think, though I used to.

The interview data reveals that the fear of making mistakes in spoken English is not merely an internal struggle with linguistic knowledge but is significantly compounded by the anticipation of negative social evaluation. The statements from Jyoti, Swastika, and Suraj highlight a core psychological barrier in language learning. Their fear isn't just about making mistakes; it's about the social consequence, the fear of being judged, laughed at, or receiving negative comments. This external pressure transforms the act of speaking from a communicative exchange into a potential source of embarrassment, leading to a profound sense of self-consciousness. This apprehension aligns directly with foreign language anxiety (FLA), particularly the fear of negative evaluation, a key component identified by Horwitz et al. (1986).

This phenomenon directly correlates with the research of MacIntyre and Gardner (1989), who identified that speaking anxiety, stemming from a fear of negative evaluation, is a major impediment that causes learners to hesitate or remain silent. The experience of Jyoti and Swastika perfectly illustrate this, showing how the fear of embarrassment can lead to communicative avoidance. As a result, the learning environment, which should be a supportive space, transforms into a source of stress. However, Suraj's experience offers a powerful counterpoint, demonstrating that this fear can be overcome through consistent practice and a change in mindset. His journey from being afraid of judgment to being able to ignore negative feedback and focus on constructive comments highlights the importance of building resilience in language learning. Ultimately, these findings underscore that emotional factors are critical to address in the classroom, as they can significantly hinder the progression toward communicative fluency.

Self-directed Practice

Self-directed practice like self-talk and mirror-based reflection is a valuable strategy for enhancing English speaking skills and concurrently mitigating English-speaking anxiety. These methods allow learners to practice in a low-stakes environment, engaging in simulated communicative contexts to monitor their delivery, including non-verbal cues and overall attitude. This self-directed approach helps build confidence and provides a sense of control, which can be crucial for learners struggling with anxiety. As Jyoti expressed:

Sometimes I even record myself, and if I have a lot of time, I practice in front of a mirror so that I can improve myself by seeing. That's how I get to know how I speak when I look at myself, and it helps me do even better but when there is less time, I normally read the content and practice.

The statement of Jyoti revealed that she improved her speaking through self-directed practice such as recording herself and speaking by looking herself in mirror which help her to improve her skill. Likewise, Suraj said:

Mostly, I practice alone because if I practice with friends, they make fun of me. But yes, a couple of times, I had recorded my presentations in mobile to practice and listen, which was so bad (haha). Sometimes, I also practice by looking in the mirror and try to speak with different facial expressions.

Suraj shared similar expressions to Jyoti that he also does self-practice like he records himself in mobile phone and listen himself. He also used mirror to try speaking with different expressions. But Mandip has different experience about practicing which does not match with above two expressions. As he expressed:

Actually, I don't practice more I just practice my topic once then I deliver. If I have good understanding of what I have to speak about then I can speak on it without practice. Some of my friends record themselves or practice in front of a mirror, but I have never tried that. I just prefer to have a good understanding of what I am speaking about.

The interview data indicates that students strategically employ self-directed practice to mitigate English-speaking anxiety. As evidenced by Jyoti and Suraj, methods like practicing in front of a mirror and self-recording are critical for establishing a low-stakes, private environment. This strategy aligns with metacognitive strategies, which are essential for learners to self-regulate and monitor their own progress, thereby reducing the fear of making mistakes and public judgment (Oxford, 1990). As Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) suggest, this deliberate private preparation helps students build the confidence necessary for public performance.

This analysis also aligns with a key pedagogical principle: learners should begin with low-pressure speaking situations, such as practicing alone through shadowing or self-recording (EduSynch, 2024; UQ, 2023). The strategies employed by Jyoti and Suraj, practicing alone or recording their presentations directly reflect this approach. By creating a controlled environment, these learners can gain a sense of control over their performance before facing the potential pressures of public speaking. In contrast, Mandip's reliance solely on content mastery without physical rehearsal highlights an alternative, knowledge-based approach to preparedness. This demonstrates the diverse strategies individuals use to manage speaking anxiety. This finding aligns with MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991) research, which emphasizes the importance of reducing the fear of negative peer evaluation. Such practice facilitates self-monitoring, a key metacognitive strategy that allows learners to autonomously by observing their own performances, including facial expressions and non-verbal communication.

Preparation and Rehearsal

Preparation and rehearsal are widely recognized as highly effective strategies for enhancing confidence and reducing anxiety during oral communication. Engaging in deliberate preparation, such as outlining key points or structuring discourse, allows learners to organize their thoughts and content. This systematic approach, combined with consistent rehearsal either independently or with peers directly contributes to a speaker's sense of self-efficacy. Similar type of practice and preparation is seen among Nepalese EFL students. For instance, Mandip shared:

The first thing is definitely to read up things related to my topic, like figuring out what to say in the introduction. After that, I look at the main keywords for my subject. Then, I search for their synonyms and rehearse speaking by using those alternative words as well. This helps me avoid repeating the same words and makes my vocabulary richer when I'm speaking.

Mandip shared that he typically engages in structured planning of his content. To enhance his vocabulary and minimize lexical repetition, he actively seeks out synonymous terms. Likewise, Jyoti also shared similar strategy, which involves documenting key points and rehearsing them. As she expressed:

First, I start by really understanding the content on which I am going to talk about. Once I have a solid grasp of what I want to say, I practice by speaking it out loud. I also write down the key points to help me remember and stay on track. This process of learning the material, writing down notes, and then practicing it out loud is my main method of preparation.

Based on the interview data, the study claim that deliberate preparation and practice are core strategies students use to manage English-speaking anxiety. This approach goes beyond simple rehearsal; it is a systematic process that directly addresses their fear of making mistakes. The interview data indicates that students use a mix of linguistic and cognitive strategies to enhance their English speaking and manage anxiety. Mandip's method of identifying keywords and their synonyms is a direct approach to improving lexical richness. This strategy aligns with research on vocabulary acquisition, as a broad vocabulary is crucial for avoiding repetition and boosting fluency (Nation, 2013). By preparing a wider range of words, he reduces the cognitive load during his speech, which allows him to speak more naturally and confidently.

Jyoti's practice of writing down key points serves as a cognitive scaffolding tool, helping her organize her thoughts and maintain coherence. Her method of speaking aloud reinforces the material, making it more accessible during the actual presentation. This proactive approach helps students transform the act of speaking from a spontaneous, anxiety-provoking event into a controlled, well-rehearsed performance. By outlining key points, clarifying content, and rehearsing vocabulary,

students actively build self-efficacy, which is central to Bandura's (1997) work. This sense of control and preparedness directly reduces anxiety by replacing feelings of uncertainty with a feeling of being capable of successfully performing the task. By doing so, students establish a foundation of competence and mastery that allows them to shift their focus from the fear of making mistakes to the goal of effective communication. Therefore, students who thoroughly prepare and practice build a foundation of competence and mastery, which empowers them to feel more confident and less anxious when speaking English in front of others.

Use of Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques are a valuable strategy for students to manage the physiological and cognitive symptoms associated with English speaking anxiety. Learners often experience heightened physical arousal, such as an increased heart rate and flushing, as well as cognitive impairment, including memory blanks, during moments of stress. The application of relaxation techniques can help individuals regain control and calm their nervous system, directly mitigating these symptoms. Various relaxation techniques are used by Nepalese EFL students to overcome English speaking anxiety. Such as Swastika shared:

I engage in deep breathing exercises, which I found quite helpful for me. Taking about three deep breaths right before I speak seems to calm my nerves a bit. Before I even begin talking, I make a conscious effort to become completely cool and calm. I remind myself, "My job is to speak, and I am capable of doing it." With that thought in mind, I begin my speech.

Swastika shared that she used to do breathing exercise before speaking to calm herself with positive thought in her mind. Likewise, Suraj also shared that he used to do physical exercises like pushups and wear good clothes to build his confident. As he expressed:

I do pushups. Doing pushups makes my blood circulation faster, and that automatically boosts my confidence. When I go in front of audience, I will go with a purpose, making sure to wear good clothes that day and walk with a lot of energy. That makes me feel confident, and I don't feel as much fear.

In contrast Mandip said that specifically he does not do any relaxation exercises rather he focuses on content and his body language. He sometimes does meditation just to feel calm and confident for the whole day. As he shared:

Generally, I don't have any specific physical techniques, but for me. I just practice the content and focus on body language like how should it stand or walk, my hand gestures etc. but I have not tried any relaxation techniques right before Speaking but yes, I do meditation at morning it helps me to be calm and confident for the whole day.

The interview data reveals that students employ a variety of relaxation techniques to manage English-speaking anxiety, demonstrating a proactive and holistic approach that integrates both psychological and physical strategies. Swastika's use of deep breathing and conscious self-calming aligns with established anxiety management techniques, as it helps her regain control and calm her nervous system. Similarly, Suraj's strategy of doing pushups to increase blood circulation and boost confidence showcases a practical understanding of the mind-body connection, as he actively transforms nervous energy into a sense of power and control. His focus on external factors, such as wearing good clothes and adopting confident body language, further reflects a conscious effort to alter his psychological state through physical presentation.

This holistic approach is consistent with the work of theorists like Edmund Jacobson, who developed Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). Jacobson's fundamental theory is that by consciously tensing and then relaxing different muscle groups, an individual can learn to recognize and release physical tension, which in turn reduces mental anxiety. Suraj's physical exertion and Swastika's controlled breathing directly apply this principle by consciously manipulating their physiological state to achieve a sense of calm. In contrast, Mandip's approach focuses on cognitive and behavioral preparation, with a daily meditation routine serving as a long-term strategy for building a calm and confident demeanor. This underscores that managing anxiety is not just about immediate, pre-speech techniques but is an ongoing process of self-regulation. All three students, however, demonstrate a key principle of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), believing they can influence their own emotional and psychological state through deliberate action to achieve a successful outcome.

Their diverse methods collectively highlight that effective anxiety management is a personalized and multi-faceted process that integrates both mental and physical strategies.

Chapter V

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter outlines the research findings that emerged from the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. These findings serve as the foundation for the conclusions of the study, from which a set of practical recommendations have been developed. These outlined recommendations are designed to be applicable and effective across various contexts.

Findings

The study primarily intended to explore the strategies used by Nepalese EFL students to overcome their English speaking anxiety. After the analysis of the collected data, the study has come up with some major findings. The study found that students' speaking anxiety is primarily driven by:

Fear of Making Mistakes

The primary finding is that students' English speaking anxiety is fundamentally rooted in a perceived lack of linguistic knowledge, especially in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The interviewees consistently expressed a preoccupation with the correctness of their speech over the actual meaning they are trying to convey. For example, Suraj's admission that he keeps thinking about sentence structure and grammar and finds it difficult to even complete a sentence, perfectly illustrates how this focus on form can disrupt fluency. This intense self-consciousness is a sign of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which can lead to a psychological barrier known as the affective filter (Krashen, 1982). This filter essentially blocks learners from taking in and producing language, creating a harmful cycle where their fear of making mistakes prevents them from getting the practice they need to improve.

Fear of Negative Judgment

This finding expands on the previous one by showing that the fear of making mistakes is often inseparable from the fear of negative social evaluation. Jyoti and Swastika's statements reveal that their anxiety is not just an internal struggle, it is a

fear of being judged, laughed at, or criticized by peers and teachers. This external pressure transforms the act of speaking from a communicative exchange into a potential source of embarrassment, leading to a profound sense of self-consciousness. This aligns with the fear of negative evaluation component of FLA (Horwitz et al., 1986) and is a major reason why many learners hesitate or remain silent (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). The anxiety manifests physiologically, causing symptoms like increased heart rate and a flushed face, and psychologically as cognitive impairment that can lead to forgetting prepared material. These fears are often attributed to limited language exposure and insufficient practice.

To combat these fears, students employ a combination of proactive strategies:

Self-directed Practice

Students strategically employ self-directed practice as a core method to mitigate anxiety. The use of mirrors and self-recording, as described by Jyoti and Suraj, creates a low-stakes, private environment that removes the fear of negative judgment from peers. This method is a key metacognitive strategy because it enables learners to autonomously monitor and refine their own performance, including non-verbal cues (Oxford, 1990). This deliberate, private preparation helps them build the confidence necessary for public performance (Horwitz et al., 1986). It serves as a vital tool for gaining a sense of control over their speaking before facing the pressures of a real-world audience.

Preparation and Rehearsal

Deliberate preparation and rehearsal are essential strategies for building competence and reducing anxiety. The systematic approaches used by Mandip and Jyoti, which include outlining key points and practicing vocabulary, directly address their fear of making mistakes. This proactive process builds self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), replacing feelings of uncertainty with a sense of capability. For example, Mandip focus on identifying synonyms improves his lexical richness and Jyoti practice of writing and speaking aloud helps her organize her thoughts. These methods transform the act of speaking from a spontaneous, anxiety-provoking event into a controlled, well-rehearsed performance, allowing them to focus on effective communication.

Use of Relaxation Techniques

Finally, the findings highlight that students use a range of relaxation techniques to manage the physiological and cognitive symptoms of anxiety. Swastika's deep breathing and Suraj's pushups and focus on confident body language illustrate a practical understanding of the mind-body connection. These methods align with principles from theorists like Edmund Jacobson, who linked physical relaxation to a reduction in mental stress. Mandip's use of meditation as a long-term strategy further shows that managing anxiety is a continuous process. These diverse methods demonstrate a key principle of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), where individuals believe they can influence their own emotional state through deliberate action to achieve a successful outcome.

Additionally, the study highlights that students listen English podcasts and interviews to expand their vocabulary and improve fluency in English. They also expressed that positive feedback from both peers and teachers is a crucial external factor that significantly boosts their confidence and helps to mitigate their anxiety over time. Findings from the study indicate a strong correlation between positive feedback and increased student confidence, as well as a reduction in English speaking anxiety. The research shows that when students receive affirming comments from peers, teachers, and audience members, they experience a significant boost in their self-assurance. This positive reinforcement appears to be a crucial element in creating a supportive learning environment that helps mitigate the stress and nervousness associated with English speaking.

Conclusions

The study aimed to identify the strategies used by Nepalese EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to overcome their English-speaking anxiety. The analysis of data from interviews with four master's level students from Tribhuvan University's Department of English Education revealed that speaking anxiety is a multifaceted issue. A primary source of this anxiety is the fear of making mistakes and the fear of negative judgment from peers and teachers, which stems from a perceived lack of grammatical knowledge and vocabulary. This fear can create a psychological barrier, often referred to as an "affective filter," that makes students reluctant to practice

speaking and hinders their oral development. The anxiety manifests as both physiological symptoms, such as an increased heart rate and a flushed face, and cognitive issues like memory blanks.

To counter this, students actively employ a variety of strategies. One key approach is self-directed practice, such as speaking in front of a mirror. This method provides a low-stakes, private environment where learners can engage in self-monitoring of their pronunciation, fluency, and non-verbal cues. This ability to self-evaluate and correct mistakes in a controlled setting helps build a sense of self-efficacy and preparedness, which is crucial for those sensitive to criticism. Similarly, thorough preparation and rehearsal are core strategies for managing anxiety. Students systematically prepare their content by creating outlines, reviewing vocabulary, and practicing with peers, which replaces feelings of uncertainty with a sense of control. Furthermore, the study found that students also utilize Relaxation techniques to manage the physical and mental symptoms of anxiety. Students reported using strategies such as deep breathing exercises, self-motivation, meditation, and even physical exertion to calm their minds and regain control of their nervous system. This proactive use of relaxation serves as a way to prevent the “cognitive shutdown” and memory blanks often associated with speaking anxiety.

In addition, the study also found that students expand their vocabulary and improve their fluency by listening to English podcasts, interviews and relevant contents. They also expressed that positive feedback or response from peers and teachers help them feel more confident while speaking in English. In conclusion, the findings suggest that English-speaking anxiety among Nepalese EFL students is a multifaceted issue driven by fear and a lack of exposure to the language in practice. However, students actively employ a combination of self-directed practice, meticulous preparation, and relaxation techniques to gain a sense of control, boost their confidence, and ultimately overcome their anxiety.

Recommendations

In the basis of the research findings and conclusions, some recommendations have been made to be applicable in the following levels:

Policy Related

This study includes the following points to be applicable to the policy makers.

- The study highlights a gap between English language policy and its implementation, as reading and writing are often prioritized over speaking skills. So, it is recommended that policymakers and curriculum developers review and revise the English curriculum to ensure a balanced focus on all language skills.
- The Ministry of Education in Nepal should collaborate with English language experts to develop reliable strategies for teaching speaking that reduce students' anxiety towards English speaking.
- The Ministry of Education should also conduct national or provisional-level training for teachers on effective English-speaking instruction and techniques to manage students' speaking anxiety.

Practice Related

Simply drafting policies and plans is not sufficient for effective program implementation; proper execution in the real world is also necessary. So, based on the research findings and conclusions, the following practice-related recommendations are proposed to ensure effective program implementation:

- The analysis of participants' responses and experiences showed a lack of proper practice and exposure to English. So, the schools and teachers should address this issue by motivating students and providing more opportunities for them to speak English.
- To highlight the importance of oral communication, there should be an increase in both English speaking tests or activities in classroom.
- A reward system should be implemented for students who speak English daily to encourage consistent engagement.
- Teachers and school administrators should work to create a supportive English-speaking environment throughout the school.

Further Research Related

English speaking anxiety is a growing concern in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), attracting the attention of researchers, teachers, and practitioners alike. This study, which focused on Nepalese EFL students and their strategies for overcoming their English speaking anxiety, has highlighted several promising areas for future research. Based on the findings and limitations of this study, here are some key areas for further exploration:

- Researchers can extend this study beyond Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu to explore speaking anxiety among students in other universities or different regions of Nepal.
- A study could examine the gap between official educational policies on speaking activities and how these policies are actually implemented in classrooms.
- Future research could explore the specific roles and strategies that teachers use to help reduce English speaking anxiety among their students.
- Research could be conducted to compare how English speaking anxiety hamper other language skills or overall language learning.
- A longitudinal study could track a group of students over time to observe how their speaking anxiety evolves throughout their language learning journey.

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Appendix
Consent Form

This study, conducted by **Sushila Bhattarai** from Central Department of Education aims to explore “**Strategies Employed by Nepalese EFL students to overcome English speaking anxiety.**” Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. All your responses and data will be kept strictly confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed. You may skip any questions that make you uncomfortable during the interview. Your valuable insights will contribute to understanding and addressing English speaking anxiety among Nepalese EFL students. By proceeding, you confirm your understanding and willingness to participate.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix
Interview guidelines for Master Level Students

Dear respondents,

This in-depth interview guideline has been prepared to complete a research work entitled **Strategies Employed by Nepalese EFL Students to Overcome English Speaking Anxiety**. It consists open ended items. Please read each instruction carefully and response. The results of this in-depth interview will be used only for research purposes, so please give your honest answers. I value your response and thank you in advance for your time and support.

Researcher
Sushila Bhattarai
Department of English Education
T.U., Kirtipur, Kathmandu
Email: sushilabhattacharai1998@gmail.com

Interview guidelines

- Introduction and context building
- Could you describe the context of your initial exposure to the English language? Was this exposure primarily in a formal educational setting, or did it occur informally somewhere else?
- How would you describe your overall relationship with the English language? Do you enjoy using it, or does it feel more like a necessity?
- Many people find that using a second or foreign language comes with unique challenges. For you, what were some of the most enjoyable and challenging aspects of using English?
- Can you share your personal experiences with English speaking anxiety. Where and when do you typically find yourself feeling this anxiety the most?
- When you feel anxious about speaking English, what happens to you physically? What sensations do you notice in your body?
- What thoughts or feelings tend to go through your mind when you're experiencing anxiety about speaking English?
- What is the biggest fear or concern you have when you think about speaking English? How does that fear impact your willingness to use the language?
- How do you think this anxiety impacts your ability to actually communicate and express your ideas effectively? Does it hold you back from participating fully?
- How do you think your anxiety about speaking English has impacted your personal or professional life? Can you give an example?
- When you encounter situations that trigger your English-speaking anxiety, what are some of the things you consciously do or think to try and manage or reduce that feeling?
- Could you elaborate on any specific ways you prepare yourself before you have to speak English, especially in a potentially anxiety-provoking situation?
- What kinds of physical or relaxation techniques, if any, do you use to calm yourself down before or during English speaking?

- Of all the strategies you've tried, which one or two have proven to be the most effective for you? Could you share a specific instance where one of these strategies truly made a difference?
- What advice would you give to someone else who is just starting to deal with this same type of anxiety?

Appendix

Interview Transcript

Q: So, we all studied English as a compulsory subject from our primary school years. Can you describe your early journey with learning English? Where did you first encounter it, and was it mostly in school or somewhere else?

R: Well, talking about my primary years, my dad was actually good at English. He taught me a few things, like the names of the twelve months and some short phrases. But when it comes to school, I didn't get much exposure because I came from a community school.

Q: A government school?

R: Yes, exactly. A government or community school. At that time, we didn't have a sense of the importance of English. The teachers, who were also from community schools, didn't have much exposure or knowledge of English either. That's why whenever we were studying, we were actually taught English in Nepali. It wasn't until my bachelor's degree when I was a major student in Nepali that I started to truly understand the importance of English.

Q: I see. How would you describe your overall relationship with the language today? Is it something you genuinely enjoy, or does it feel more like a necessity for your studies and career?

R: It's a bit of both. English is a dominant language, and everyone loves to speak it because it's considered a sign of prestige and reputation in our society. People who speak English are often considered more knowledgeable. But for me, it was also a necessity, especially when I was majoring in English in my bachelor's degree.

Q: Many people find that using a second language comes with unique challenges. For you, what were some of the most challenging aspects of using English, and how did that translate into feelings of anxiety?

R: The most challenging part was the fear of making grammatical mistakes. Mostly we think of grammar rather than meaning. That's why initially I had the fear of making mistakes, rather than sharing my ideas and feelings I had that fear. And yeah,

I was quite anxious, quite afraid of making mistakes and all these things make me hard to speak in English in front of others.

Q: Can you share an experience where you felt this anxiety the most?

R: The very first time I spoke English was during my bachelor's level teaching practice. I was defending my report in front of my supervisors, and I was quite anxious. My mind just went blank. It was like I was wordless; no words would come to my mind.

Q: And how do you think that anxiety impacts your ability to communicate effectively? Does it hold you back from participating fully?

R: Yes, absolutely. It makes you hesitant. A lot of people, even in our master's class, feel anxious and extremely cautious. They constantly think about grammar rules instead of just sharing their ideas. This anxiety makes it difficult to participate and express yourself fully.

Q: That sounds tough. Has this anxiety impacted your personal or professional life in any significant way?

R: Well, it's a bit of a challenge. I always felt a little blank and wordless when speaking. But at the same time, I was incredibly curious to learn because I was an English major. So, the anxiety drove me to work harder and find ways to overcome it. My whole journey has been about becoming a better speaker, which has helped me professionally.

Q: When you encounter situations that trigger your English-speaking anxiety, what are some of the things you consciously do to manage or reduce that feeling?

R: The first thing I do when I get on stage is I don't care who is sitting in front of me. I just go to another "zone". Another technique is I try to become conversational and interact with my audience instead of just delivering a scripted speech. I find that a conversational tone helps everyone understand better than a robotic or mechanical presentation.

Q: Could you elaborate on any specific ways you prepare yourself before you have to speak, especially in a high-stakes situation like a presentation?

R: Actually, I don't practice more I just practice my topic once then I deliver. If I have good understanding of what I have to speak about then I can speak on it without practice. Some of my friends record themselves or practice in front of a mirror, but I have never tried that. I just prefer to have a good understanding of what I am speaking about. And specially for presentation, if the topic is familiar, I just prepare some slides and go for it. If it's not, I would go through some AI tools to get ideas. After that, I'd make my own ideas by paraphrasing them. Then, I would structure my presentation by thinking about what I should present first, second, and so on.

Q: What about physical or relaxation techniques? Do you use any of those to calm yourself down?

R: Generally, I don't have any specific physical techniques, but for me. I just practice the content and focus on body language like how should it stand or walk, my hand gestures etc. but I have not tried any relaxation techniques right before Speaking but yes, I do meditation at morning it helps me to be calm and confident for the whole day.

Q: Can you mention few strategies, which one or two have been the most effective for you?

R: The first thing is definitely to read up things related to my topic, like figuring out what to say in the introduction. After that, I look at the main keywords for my subject. Then, I search for their synonyms and rehearse speaking by using those alternative words as well. This helps me avoid repeating the same words and makes my vocabulary richer when I'm speaking. Another effective strategy is to read grammar books and at the same time, listen to conversations. I have become a huge listener of podcasts now. I listen them all the time.

Q: That's great advice. Finally, what would you say to someone who is just starting to deal with this same type of anxiety? What advice would you give them?

R: I think everything matters: grammar, pronunciation, and so on. But the most important thing is to create an environment where the language is spoken. We learn our first language by being surrounded by it, so we should do the same for English. Instead of just focusing on the rules, we should “play” with the language. Teachers should also be proficient and friendly, able to tolerate mistakes, because mistakes are a foundation for learning anything. They should speak the language in the classroom and not make students overly cautious.

Q: Okay, thank you so much for your time.

R: Thank you.