

**Educational Journey of a Female English Language Teacher from
Dalit Family of a Remote Village in Mugu District**

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

**Submitted By
Sangita B.K.**

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

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Declaration

I, hereby, declare that to the best of my knowledge this thesis is original; no part of it was earlier submitted for the candidature of research degree to any university.

Date: 5th August, 2025

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This is to certify that **Ms. Sangita B.K** has completed his M.Ed. thesis entitled **Educational Journey of a Female English Language Teacher from Dalit Family of a Remote Village in Mugu District** under my guidance and supervision.

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Dedication

*Dedicated to
my beloved Parents and Respected Teachers who always inspire me in my life.*

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Abstract

This study entitled **Educational Journey of a Female English Language Teacher from Dalit Family of a Remote Village in Mugu District** explored the lived experiences of a Dalit woman from a mountainous, under-resourced rural background in Nepal, navigating personal and academic challenges as an English language learner. Employing auto-ethnography as a research design, the study narrates critical reflection on the journey of learning and teaching English, focusing personal and professional transformation grounded on transformative and socio-cultural learning theories. I, as the sole participant, analyzed data through reflective narratives adopting thematic approach. The findings of the study reveal that despite poverty, discrimination, and limited resources, my motivation, inspired by family, teachers, and inner resilience, facilitated my transformation into an English teacher from the learner. The study also shows that the academic grades and rural contexts do not hinder transformative learning and underscores the role of self-reflection in shaping professional identity and empowering others.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter consists of introduction, 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 key terms. The review of theoretical and empirical literature, implication of the study and conceptual framework are included in second chapter. The methods and procedures of the study incorporate research design, study population, sampling procedure, data collection tools, study area, data collection procedure, analysis and interpretation are in third one. Result, summary and discussion, are presented in chapter four. At last, findings, conclusions and recommendations are included in chapter five.

Sangita B.K.

September, 2025

Abbreviations

DGSP	Dalit Girls Scholarship Programme
UMN	United Mission to Nepal
NDDF	National Dalit Development Foundation
L2	Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
I.ED	Intermediate in Education
B.ED	Bachelor's in Education
M.Ed.	Master's in Education
T.U	Tribhuvan University
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
ICT	Information Communication Technology
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organization
CINTLA	Critical Intersectional Narrative Theory of Language Acquisition

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Chapter I

Introduction

This section of the introduction includes the study's background, challenges, aims, significance, delimitations, and operational definitions of the research's important terminology.

Background of Study

Mugu district, located in the Karnali Province of Nepal, is one of the most remote and underdeveloped regions of the country. The district is characterized by rugged terrain, limited transportation facilities, and insufficient access to health, education, and communication services. The Human Development Index (HDI) of Karnali Province remains the lowest among all provinces in Nepal, reflecting structural marginalization (UNDP, 2020). Despite government and non-governmental efforts to improve access, Mugu continues to face challenges in literacy and quality education, particularly in rural villages far from district headquarters (CBS, 2021).

Within Mugu district, many villages remain isolated, where communities rely primarily on subsistence agriculture, seasonal migration, and traditional occupations. In such areas, schools often lack adequate infrastructure, trained teachers, and educational materials (MOE, 2016). These rural households, particularly Dalit families, face systemic exclusion and caste-based discrimination, resulting in limited opportunities for upward mobility (Cameron, 2007). The distance of schools from home, harsh geographical conditions, and economic hardship contribute to high dropout rates among children, especially girls (UNICEF, 2019).

Dalit families in Mugu represent some of the most vulnerable groups due to their entrenched socio-economic deprivation. Most Dalit households are landless or own very little cultivable land, forcing them to depend on daily wage labor and traditional caste-based occupations (Bishwakarma, 2019). Poverty, coupled with discriminatory practices, has historically excluded Dalits from quality education and dignified employment opportunities (Gurung, 2015). For Dalit girls, the barriers are even steeper, as they must negotiate both caste and gender-based inequalities, often being expected to assist in household chores and sibling care rather than attend school (ADB, 2020).

In this context, the educational journey of a Dalit girl in Mugu is not merely about learning but about resilience and defiance against systemic barriers. Struggling

to access even primary schooling, many Dalit girls face ridicule from peers, biased treatment from teachers, and pressure from their families to abandon studies for domestic or wage work (Koirala, 2016). Overcoming such challenges requires extraordinary determination, as continuation into secondary education often demands relocation, financial investment, and supportive networks that are rarely available to Dalit households (Bhattachan, 2018). Yet, some determined individuals push through these hurdles, demonstrating the transformative power of education in breaking cycles of poverty and marginalization.

The case of a Dalit girl from a remote village in Mugu, who eventually becomes an English language teacher, symbolizes both personal perseverance and the gradual shifts in Nepali society. Attaining higher education, particularly in English, represents an important achievement, as English proficiency is often associated with professional advancement and social recognition (Graddol, 2006). Her story not only reflects individual aspiration but also highlights the possibilities of education to challenge caste-based inequalities and inspire future generations of Dalit girls to pursue academic and professional dreams (Subedi, 2019). This study thus situates her educational journey as a microcosm of broader struggles and triumphs in the pursuit of equity and empowerment in rural Nepal.

Statement of the Problem

The process of learning English as a second language is a lifelong journey influenced by cognitive, social, and cultural factors. English has become the dominant global language in Education, business and communication (Crystal, 2003), making proficiency essential for academic and professional success. However, language learning is not a linear process; it involves various challenges, such as linguistics and adapting to different methods (Dornyei, 2005). For non-native speakers, particularly those from under-resourced and marginalized backgrounds, mastering English from elementary to advanced academic levels involves navigating significant obstacles, including limited access to qualified teachers, modern resources, and language-rich environments, alongside socio-cultural barriers such as poverty, discrimination, and gender biases.

English is the dominant language of international communication, education, business and research. Proficiency in English is often associated with academic success, career, opportunities, and social mobility. As a result, many non-native speakers engage in structured English language learning from an early age,

progressing through various educational levels with different learning environments, teaching methodologies, and personal motivations shaping their experiences.

I was born in Supakot, Mugu, and a very remote area of Nepal till now. It is in the hilly region of Karnali province. I was born in so called Dalit family in 1996. I am from a very poor family background. I faced economic hardship, caste-based discrimination, and societal norms that prioritized early marriage for girls over education. Despite these challenges, my early exposure to English through familial encouragement, particularly from an informally literate father, and supportive teachers sparked a sustained interest in the language. I experienced various circumstances relating to my family, school and community throughout my educational journey. The journey was shaped by a combination of traditional teaching methods such as rote memorization and grammar-translation and transformative moments of interactive learning, alongside persistent socio-cultural and economic constraints. Like other villages, my parents did farm and household chores. I spent my early childhood with my parents and went to a nearby school. I would help my mother in any way I could. I helped my mother cut the grass and brought it with her. My parents were not educated according to modern definition of education. In this inquiry, my personal experiences studying English at various stages have been attempted to be explored. I had a variety of challenges as an English language learner.

During the first period of my childhood English lessons, I was not very happy. English is a boring subject; my English teacher's behavior was not very good, and I adapted to it from a young age. So, at the time, I felt that English was a complicated subject. But after a while, my thoughts changed. I know that English is necessary not only to solve the problems of this content, but also to obtain increased rights and opportunities in the future. Children's behavior and mindset are profoundly shaped by the cultural norms and values of the society they grow up in, influencing their belief systems and worldviews until they develop their own virtues (Shrestha, 2020). My educational journey, deeply rooted in my early experiences in a Dalit family in Supakot, Mugu, Nepal, reflects how family, community, and cultural heritage laid the foundation for my learning and personal growth.

This study addresses the gap in research on lifelong English language learning by exploring the socio-cultural barriers faced by a Dalit girl from a remote Nepalese village. Using an auto-ethnographic approach, it examines how poverty, caste discrimination, familial pressures, and limited resources hindered my journey to

becoming an English teacher, while highlighting the role of resilience and self-learning strategies in overcoming these challenges. By focusing on personal narratives and socio-cultural factors like language anxiety and cultural identity, this research aims to enrich second language acquisition studies and inspire transformative professionals in under-resourced communities. Now I wonder how those social-cultural forces tried to hold me back from developing myself into English language learner. So, I selected this issue as my research problem.

Research objectives

The purposes of the study were as follows:

- a. To explore my painful and gainful lived experiences and practices concerning personal and academic struggles as an English language learner.
- b. To investigate my journey from a mountainous Dalit girl who suffers from poverty, deprivation and discrimination in learning my English language to becoming a graduate student with personal transformation.

Research Questions

In this study, I have attempted to explore the following questions.

- a. How my personal experiences have as an English language learner, from elementary to master's level, influenced my academic and personal transformation?
- b. What insights can be drawn from my lived experiences to enhance English language learning for learners facing socio-economic and cultural challenges?
- c. How have socio-cultural contexts, including poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, shaped my development as an English language learner and educator?

Significance of the Study

This study can help teachers understand long-term language learning struggles and successes, leading to more effective teaching strategies. It provides relatable experiences and motivation for students navigating their own English learning journeys. Learning the English language and becoming an English language professional is a widely discussed phenomenon. It was why I developed my interest in studying English language. Despite my interest and my family's support, I was discouraged by senior college students from choosing English as my major subject. However, I have been able to make a distinct way out with my English language through hard work by the time I arrived at this stage. Thus, my journey from a village

girl with less quality results to a transforming English language practitioner inspired me to explore how my socio-cultural forces help me to grow into master level students. I have tried to give meaning to the pains and gains I experienced during my academic journey. I grew up academically in a very rural, underdeveloped, hilly and under-resourced environment.

I believed my experience would be signifier to other students, especially to those who come from and to come from rural and under resourced environment like mine, I believe my life stories give a new relation that people can succeed through struggle. Thus, the documentation of stories of learning and unlearning of my becoming graduate level students will be a milestone for transforming the learning practices at students from similar background to mine. This study helps to change the perception of society that not only high achiever but also average or low achievers at school can become English teacher if they get a congenial learning environment in their further studies and ultimately help to contribute to the ELT community. This study also leaves a path for further research on different issues of knowing being and becoming English language learning. By capturing the personal, academic, and emotional dimensions of learning over time, this study will contribute to a more holistic understanding of English language learning, making it valuable for researchers, educators, policymakers, learners, and the cognitive dimensions of learning English.

This auto-ethnographic study explores my journey of learning English as a second language from a marginalized, rural background in Mugu, Nepal, addressing the gap in longitudinal, narrative-based research on second language acquisition. It examines how socio-cultural barriers, poverty, caste discrimination, gender biases, and limited educational resources interacted with personal resilience, familial support, and external aid to shape my path from a struggling learner to a transformative educator. The study underscores the transformative potential of English education for social mobility, informs equitable teaching practices, and inspires students from under-resourced backgrounds, demonstrating that perseverance in a supportive environment can lead to success. It contributes to academic discourse and practical efforts to address educational disparities, providing insights for educators, policymakers, and the ELT community while paving the way for further research on marginalized learners' experiences.

Delimitations of the Study

My personal opinions and experiences from my educational, social, cultural, and economic learning journey are the only foundation for this study. I make no claims that my feelings and perceptions are not shared by all students because this study is grounded in subjectivism and interpretivism. There is no objective reality or quantitative data analysis process in this study because it is restricted to my personal life experiences and biography. I delimited this research onto exploring my own painful and gainful experiences as a student and a teacher of the English language during the process of being transformed from a village Dalit girl learning English in an under-resourced environment to becoming a facilitator of English language education in educational institution. Similarly, I demarcated this study to explore my epiphanies, which have influenced my transformation as a successful professional teacher.

The study is delimited to the socio-cultural and educational context of rural Nepal, specifically Mugu, a remote and under-resourced region, with some reference to urban Kathmandu for higher education. This focus ensures a detailed examination of challenges and facilitators specific to these settings, rather than generalizing to other regions or countries. The research covers my educational journey from childhood to the completion of their master's degree, providing a longitudinal perspective. It does not include experiences beyond this period or current teaching practices unless directly tied to reflections on past learning. It employs specific data collection tools personal reflection, memory mapping, narratives/vignettes, and informal conversations excluding quantitative methods or large-scale surveys to maintain a focus on subjective, narrative-driven insights. The research specifically explores English language acquisition and its impact on my personal and professional development as an educator. It does not address other subjects or broader educational experiences unless they directly relate to English learning.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

To make the study easier to understand, the key terms used throughout have been defined. The following precise definitions were provided for the terms listed below.

Auto-ethnography: A qualitative research approach that blends ethnography and autobiography, in which the researcher critically examines their own experiences in a particular educational, social, or cultural setting in order to

produce insights about more general phenomena (Chang, 2008). The self-narrative of their English language learning experience in rural Nepal is described in this study as auto-ethnography, which is examined to identify sociocultural and educational influences.

Socio-Cultural Factors: Social and cultural elements, such as poverty, caste-based discrimination, gender biases, family dynamics, and community norms, that influence an individual's learning experiences and outcomes (Vygotsky, 1978). Here, these factors are explored as barriers and facilitators in the English learning in rural Nepal.

Marginalized Communities: Group's that experience social, economic, cultural exclusion due to factors like poverty, caste, gender, geographic isolation, limiting their access to resources and opportunities. In this study, this term refers to the Dalit community in Mugu, Nepal, facing systemic disadvantages.

Dalits: These communities are the most disadvantaged in terms of socioeconomic status, education, politics, and religion, and they are also the least able to live with social justice and human dignity due to the horrors of caste-based discrimination and untouchability. They are regarded as members of the occupational caste and untouchables. Blacksmiths, known as Kamis, and tailors, known as Damais, are considered Dalits in the study area.

Resilience: The capacity to adapt and persevere in the face of adversity, such as socio-economic challenges or discrimination, to achieve personal goals (Masten, 2001). Here, it describes the ability to overcome barriers to become an English educator.

Transformative Learning: Transformative learning is defined as learning that causes a learner to undergo more profound change than other types of learning, particularly learning experiences that mold the learner and result in a paradigm shift or major impact that influences the learner's subsequent experiences.

Chapter II

Review of the Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

This chapter includes a thorough review of the research and its implications. The theoretical and empirical literature on auto-ethnography in English language learning, as well as information on earlier research projects, are included in this chapter. In addition, there are a lot of books and articles on rapport building that are theoretical in nature. Additionally, it aids in identifying research gaps in specific studies. A review of related theoretical and empirical literature, as well as the implications of the review for the study and conceptual framework, will be included in this section of the research.

Review of the Related Theoretical Literature

This theoretical literature review consists of English language learning in Nepal, Learning English in less-resourced, areas Ethnic minority and English language learning, the critical intersectional narrative theory of language acquisition (CINTLA), Transformative learning theory, Socio-cultural theory. These theories identify gaps in previous research and investigate the relationship between personal narrative and larger social and educational contexts.

English Language Learning in Nepal

The English language holds a significant position in Nepal's education system, functioning as both a subject of study and a medium of instruction in many academic institutions. English has become an important part of Nepal's education system and is widely seen as a language of global opportunity. Since its formal introduction in the mid-19th century during the Rana regime, English has gradually gained prominence as a compulsory subject in most schools across the country (Giri, 2010). Today, it is taught from the early grades in both government and private schools and is often the medium of instruction in private institutions. English is not only valued for academic purposes but also for accessing higher education, employment, and international migration, making it a highly sought-after skill.

However, the English language learning experience in Nepal is highly unequal, particularly between students in urban, private schools and those in rural, government schools. Learners in private schools typically have access to well-trained teachers, English-speaking environments, and modern classroom resources. In contrast, students in under-resourced public schools face numerous obstacles, such as

unqualified teachers, outdated textbooks, large class sizes, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom (Kirkpatrick, 2010). These disparities reflect broader social and economic inequalities, reinforcing the gap between the rich and poor in Nepal's education system.

One of the key issues is the mismatch between language policy and actual classroom practice. While the national curriculum promotes communicative approaches and English fluency, in practice, teaching often relies on rote memorization and the grammar-translation method, especially in rural schools. Many teachers, particularly in remote areas, lack sufficient training and confidence in using English for communication (Giri, 2010). As a result, students are often unable to use English effectively in real-life situations, even after years of instruction. Additionally, Nepal's multilingual society adds another layer of complexity. Many children come to school with local languages as their mother tongue, and English often becomes their third language after their native language and Nepali. This creates cognitive and emotional challenges for learners, especially when their home languages are not supported in the classroom (Enever, 2011). Despite these challenges, the demand for English continues to grow, driven by globalization and the desire for better opportunities. There is an increasing need for context-sensitive teaching methods that take into account the local realities of learners, especially in underdeveloped and rural settings (Canagarajah, 2005). The teaching and learning of English in Nepal has historically been shaped by socio-political, economic, and cultural influences. English is a subject of high prestige, considered a gateway to higher education, jobs, and global communication (Poudel, 2016). However, English language education has long been centralized around urban and private institutions, creating disparity in quality and access. From a theoretical perspective, Phillipson's (1992) concept of "linguistic imperialism" helps contextualize the role of English in Nepal. The dominance of English can marginalize local languages and cultures, while also reinforcing social hierarchies. Furthermore, the theory of "language ideology" (Irvine & Gal, 2000) is relevant here, suggesting that English is often ideologically constructed as superior, rational, or economically valuable in Nepali society.

The teaching and learning of the English language in Nepal has a long and complex history, shaped by socio-political, educational, and economic factors. Introduced formally during the Rana regime with the establishment of Durbar High School in 1854, English gradually became a prominent subject in the school

curriculum and later gained widespread importance as a language of prestige, opportunity, and upward mobility (Giri, 2010). Today, English is not only taught as a compulsory subject from the early grades in most schools but is also used as the medium of instruction, especially in private and urban-based institutions. Despite its widespread presence, English language learning in Nepal is highly unequal. There exists a stark contrast between the experiences of students in urban private schools and those in rural government schools. Students in private institutions are often taught in English from kindergarten, have access to modern teaching aids, qualified teachers, and an English-speaking environment both inside and outside the classroom. In contrast, students in many government and rural schools face numerous challenges, including a lack of trained English teachers, poor infrastructure, minimal exposure to English beyond the classroom, and outdated textbooks (Phyak, 2011; Shrestha, 2008).

Another critical issue in Nepal's English language education is the mismatch between language policy and classroom reality. While national policies advocate for English language competence and communicative competence in learners, in practice, many English classes are dominated by rote memorization, grammar translation methods, and exam-oriented teaching (Giri, 2010). Teachers often lack adequate training in modern pedagogical methods and are themselves not proficient enough in communicative English, especially in remote areas.

Moreover, Nepal's socio-linguistic diversity complicates English education. With over 130 local languages spoken across the country, many students enter school with mother tongues that are neither Nepali nor English. English thus becomes a third language for many learners, leading to additional cognitive and emotional challenges. In multilingual classrooms, where students' first languages are not used or valued, English learning can become alienating and demotivating (Enever, 2011).

In recent years, globalization, digital access, and labor migration have increased the demand for English proficiency. English is viewed as a gateway to employment, higher education, and international mobility. As a result, even rural families are increasingly sending their children to private schools or English-medium institutions despite financial hardship. However, this trend has also reinforced social inequalities, as access to quality English education is closely linked to economic status (Giri, 2015). Despite these challenges, several scholars advocate for more context-sensitive and learner-centered approaches in English language teaching (ELT) in Nepal. There is growing recognition of the need to train teachers effectively, utilize

students' local languages as resources in the classroom, and shift from traditional, test-focused teaching to communicative and participatory methods (Richards, 2001). Furthermore, the use of auto-ethnography, narrative inquiry, and qualitative methods in language research is beginning to shed light on individual learners' experiences, identities, and coping strategies especially those from under-resourced and marginalized communities.

In this context, this research, which explores the personal journey of learning English from elementary to master's level through auto-ethnography, becomes particularly relevant. It highlights how learners from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds experience English education over time, and how systemic inequalities, teacher practices, and personal motivation intersect to shape language learning outcomes.

Learning English in Less-Resourced Areas

Mugu district is one of the most remote regions of Nepal exemplifies the “structural inequalities” that affect language learning opportunities. The “socio-cultural theory” of Vygotsky (1978) is especially relevant, as it emphasizes that learning is mediated by tools and social interactions. In less-resourced contexts, lack of qualified teachers, textbooks, digital infrastructure, and supportive environments hinder meaningful interaction and scaffolding

Critical pedagogy, as proposed by Freire (1970), argues for education that is rooted in learners' realities. In less-resourced areas like Karnali Province, the traditional English curriculum often disregards students' cultural knowledge, native language, and daily needs, thereby alienating them and reducing their motivation.

The concept of “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) can also be applied. This approach values the knowledge students bring from their homes and communities an essential counterpoint to deficit perspectives which view rural learners as “lacking.”

English language learning in underdeveloped regions of Nepal presents unique challenges. Many schools in rural areas suffer from poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and minimal exposure to English outside school. Teachers are frequently undertrained and lack the confidence to use English communicatively (Giri, 2010). Students, especially from marginalized communities, may speak local mother tongues at home, making English their third language after their native language and Nepali.

This multilingual burden, combined with limited resources, contributes to low proficiency levels and a lack of confidence among learners (Enever, 2011).

Furthermore, economic disparities mean that while wealthier families can afford to send their children to English-medium private schools, many others rely on public schools where English instruction is often substandard. This situation has led to a widening educational inequality, where English proficiency becomes a marker of social and economic privilege (Giri, 2015).

Ethnic Minority and English Language Learning

Belonging to an ethnic minority adds further layers of complexity to English language learning in Nepal. Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual nation, yet educational practices often center on dominant caste and language groups (Yadava, 2007). The theory of “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989) helps examine how ethnicity, caste, class, and geography interact to produce unique barriers.

Moreover, Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of “linguistic capital” is essential. English, as a high-valued form of capital, is more accessible to students from dominant ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. For marginalized students, English education can be a double-edged sword: offering potential mobility but also reinforcing exclusion when access is unequal.

My auto-ethnographic lens adds depth by applying “narrative identity” theory (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), showing how individuals construct their learner identities in response to social expectations, discrimination, and personal struggle. With the aid of some theories as literature, I employed a few theories as my theoretical referents. I have made an effort to explain my stories clearly.

As a female Dalit student from Nepal’s remote Karnali province, my journey to learn English as a second language reflects a complex interplay of systemic barriers and personal resilience. Nepal’s multiethnic and multilingual landscape, with over 120 languages and diverse ethnic groups (Yadava, 2007), presents unique challenges for marginalized learners like me. Drawing on my auto-ethnography, I propose a Critical Intersectional Narrative Theory of Language Acquisition (CINTLA), which integrates intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), and narrative identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) to analyze second language acquisition for ethnic minority students. CINTLA posits that language learning is shaped by intersecting social identities (caste, gender, and geography), access to linguistic capital, and the construction of learner identities through personal and societal

narratives. This auto-ethnography applies CINTLA to my experiences, examining six key factors—socio-economic barriers, cultural and linguistic diversity, educational inequities, geographical challenges, discrimination and social expectations, and motivation and access to opportunities—to illuminate the challenges faced by Dalit girls in Nepal and advocate for inclusive educational reforms.

The Critical Intersectional Narrative Theory of Language Acquisition (CINTLA)

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex process shaped by socio-cultural, economic, and political factors, particularly for marginalized learners in multilingual contexts like Nepal. As a female Dalit student from the remote Karnali province, my journey to learn English reflects the interplay of systemic barriers and personal resilience. Nepal's multiethnic and multilingual landscape, with over 120 languages and diverse ethnic groups (Yadava, 2007), presents unique challenges for learners from marginalized communities. This auto-ethnography proposes the Critical Intersectional Narrative Theory of Language Acquisition (CINTLA), a framework that integrates intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), and narrative identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) to analyze SLA among ethnic minority students. By applying CINTLA to my experiences, this study examines how intersecting identities (caste, gender, and geography), access to linguistic capital, and narrative construction shape English learning for Dalit girls in Nepal. The analysis focuses on six key factors—socio-economic barriers, cultural and linguistic diversity, educational inequities, geographical challenges, discrimination and social expectations, and motivation and access to opportunities to advocate for inclusive educational reforms.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, as conceptualized by Crenshaw (1989), posits that social identities such as race, gender, and class intersect to create unique experiences of privilege or oppression. In SLA, intersectionality highlights how caste, gender, and geography shape access to educational resources and opportunities (Collins & Bilge, 2020). For ethnic minority students in Nepal, these intersections amplify barriers, such as limited access to quality education or societal discrimination, which hinder language acquisition (Bhattachan et al., 2009).

Linguistic Capital

Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital frames language as a form of cultural capital that confers social and economic advantages. In Nepal, English is a

prestigious language associated with upward mobility and global opportunities (Sah, 2020). However, access to this capital is stratified by social hierarchies, marginalizing groups like Dalits who face systemic exclusion from educational and social systems (Pherali, 2012).

Narrative Identity

Narrative identity theory (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) suggests that learners construct their identities through personal and societal narratives, which influence their engagement with and motivation for learning. For marginalized learners, these narratives often reflect experiences of exclusion but can also embody resilience and agency when navigating systemic barriers (Norton, 2013). CINTLA posits that these narratives are central to understanding how learners negotiate their identities in SLA.

CINTLA synthesizes these frameworks to argue that SLA is not solely a cognitive process but a socio-cultural one, shaped by intersecting identities, access to linguistic capital, and narrative constructions. By emphasizing learner agency, CINTLA highlights how marginalized individuals transform challenges into opportunities through support systems (e.g., scholarships, mentors) and personal determination. This framework provides a cohesive lens to analyze the interplay of structural barriers and individual resilience, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of SLA in marginalized contexts.

Auto-ethnographic Application of CINTLA

This auto-ethnography applies CINTLA to my experiences as a female Dalit student from Karnali, illuminating the systemic and personal factors that shaped my English learning. Auto-ethnography, as a method, allows for a reflexive exploration of personal experiences within broader socio-cultural contexts (Ellis et al., 2011). The following sections analyze six key factors, each linked to CINTLA's theoretical pillars, to provide a coherent narrative of my journey and advocate for systemic reforms.

Socio-Economic Barriers

Growing up in a low-income Dalit family in Karnali, I faced significant socio-economic barriers to accessing quality English education. Private schools, equipped with trained teachers and modern resources, were financially inaccessible, forcing me to attend a public school with outdated textbooks and untrained teachers (Pherali, 2012). My parents' encouragement was crucial, but financial constraints limited my exposure to English beyond rote memorization.

CINTLA's linguistic capital lens (Bourdieu, 1991) reveals that English, as a high-value resource, was largely inaccessible due to my socio-economic status. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) underscores how my Dalit identity and economic hardship compounded these barriers, as urban, high-caste peers had greater access to immersive English environments (Shields & Rapple, 2008). The Dalit Girls Scholarship Programme (DGSP) by the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) provided critical support, enabling me to pass my School Leaving Certificate (SLC) in 2010. However, this support could not fully bridge systemic inequities. My narrative identity as a resilient learner emerged as I leveraged the scholarship to pursue education, framing my journey as one of perseverance despite economic constraints (Sfard & Prusak, 2005).

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Nepal's linguistic diversity, with over 120 languages (Yadava, 2007), posed significant challenges to my English learning. At home, I spoke a Dalit dialect, rich in cultural significance but absent from the school curriculum. The dominance of Nepali and English in education marginalized my mother tongue, making English feel alien and inaccessible (Pennycook, 1994). Memorization-based teaching methods enabled exam success but hindered fluency development.

Through CINTLA, intersectionality highlights how my Dalit identity and linguistic marginalization intersected, creating disconnect between my home language and the school's Nepali-English system (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) underscores that English was prioritized over my dialect, devaluing my cultural heritage. My narrative identity was shaped by this tension, as I initially internalized English as a marker of social worth, which both motivated and burdened my learning (Norton, 2013). Over time, I reframed my identity as a bridge between my Dalit roots and English proficiency, aspiring to use language to empower my community.

Educational Inequities

Nepal's education system often caters to dominant caste groups, such as Brahmins and Chhetris, perpetuating inequities (Shields & Rapple, 2008). English textbooks, filled with urban, high-caste narratives, felt irrelevant to my rural Dalit experience. Rote learning methods prioritized exam performance over communicative competence, alienating me from English.

CINTLA's linguistic capital lens illustrates how educational systems reproduce inequality by privileging dominant cultural norms (Bourdieu, 1991). Intersectionality reveals how my caste, gender, and class exacerbated this exclusion (Crenshaw, 1989). Without access to private tutoring, I relied on supportive teachers like Jayaprakash Malla, who recognized my potential. My narrative identity as a determined learner emerged through their encouragement, as I sought to prove my worth despite an alienating curriculum (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). CINTLA highlights how such agency can mitigate systemic inequities, though structural reforms are essential for broader impact.

Geographical Challenges

Karnali's remote geography limited my access to qualified English teachers and resources like computers or media (Pherali, 2012). Unlike urban centers like Kathmandu, where English exposure was abundant, my rural school offered minimal opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. CINTLA's intersectionality lens shows how geography compounded my Dalit identity and socio-economic status, creating multiple barriers (Collins & Bilge, 2020). Linguistic capital was scarce in Karnali's isolated context (Bourdieu, 1991). My relocation to Kathmandu for my M.Ed. and a UMN internship marked a turning point, exposing me to English-speaking environments. My narrative identity as an adaptive learner grew through this transition (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), but CINTLA underscores that such opportunities are rare for rural Dalit students, emphasizing the need for equitable resource distribution.

Discrimination and Social Expectations

As a Dalit girl, I faced stereotypes that Dalits are "less capable" and that girls should prioritize domestic roles over education. Peers and some teachers questioned my academic potential, creating psychological barriers to English learning. These experiences positioned English as a privilege reserved for higher castes.

CINTLA's narrative identity lens (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) explains how these encounters shaped my learner identity. Initially, I resisted English, perceiving it as a symbol of elite culture. However, my father's encouragement and the DGSP scholarship helped me reframe my identity as one of defiance and resilience. Intersectionality highlights how my Dalit identity, gender, and rural background compounded discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). CINTLA emphasizes that narratives of resistance and agency are critical for marginalized learners to persist in SLA.

Motivation and Access to Opportunities

English represented a pathway to social mobility, offering access to higher education and employment opportunities. As a Dalit girl, I viewed English as a means to escape poverty and challenge caste-based exclusion. However, systemic barriers, such as limited scholarships and discriminatory practices, tempered this aspiration (Bhattachan et al., 2009). The DGSP and supportive teachers were pivotal, but structural inequities persisted.

CINTLA frames English as linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), a gatekeeper to opportunities yet inaccessible to marginalized groups. Intersectionality reveals how my caste, gender, and rural background limited access (Crenshaw, 1989). My narrative identity as an aspiring English teacher was shaped by transformative experiences, such as creating a handwritten newspaper during my B.Ed. and teaching in Kathmandu during my M.Ed. (Norton, 2013). CINTLA highlights how such moments of agency transform barriers into motivation, but systemic change is needed to ensure equitable opportunities.

Discussion and Implications

CINTLA provides a robust framework for understanding SLA among marginalized learners, offering a cohesive analysis of how systemic barriers and personal agency interact. My auto-ethnography illustrates how socio-economic constraints, linguistic marginalization, educational inequities, geographical isolation, and discrimination shaped my English learning, while scholarships, supportive teachers, and personal resilience enabled me to construct an empowering narrative identity. This aligns with prior research on marginalized learners, which emphasizes the role of agency in navigating structural barriers (Norton, 2013; Pherali, 2012).

The implications of CINTLA are twofold. First, it calls for inclusive educational policies, such as bilingual curricula that value minority languages; culturally responsive teaching that reflects diverse identities, and equitable resource distribution to rural areas (Cummins, 2000). Second, it advocates for further research using CINTLA to explore SLA among other marginalized groups, employing auto-ethnographies or mixed-methods approaches to capture diverse narratives and inform transformative practices (Ellis et al., 2011).

CINTLA offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing SLA among ethnic minority students, integrating intersectionality, linguistic capital, and narrative identity to highlight the interplay of systemic barriers and individual agency. My

auto-ethnography as a female Dalit student from Karnali demonstrates how caste, gender, and geography intersect to shape English learning, while resilience and support systems foster empowerment. By advocating for inclusive reforms, CINTLA seeks to ensure that Dalit girls and other marginalized learners can access English as linguistic capital, paving the way for equitable educational opportunities.

Transformative Learning Theory

Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory, introduced in the 1980s and 1990s, describes a profound type of learning that leads to significant personal change, reshaping a learner's perspective and influencing their future experiences. This theory emphasizes three core components: experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse. Life experiences serve as the foundation for transformative learning, providing the context for growth. Critical reflection, a hallmark of adult learning, involves questioning deeply held assumptions, while rational discourse acts as a catalyst for transformation through open, equal dialogue. In the classroom, educators facilitate this process by fostering an environment where learners critically examine assumptions and collaborate respectfully, creating norms of civility and peer support. This approach positions learners as active participants in constructing knowledge about themselves and their social world, with transformative learning extending beyond skill acquisition to influence identity and worldview.

In the context of the auto-ethnography, the author applies Mezirow's theory to their English language learning journey, illustrating how it transcended mere linguistic skill development to become a series of transformative experiences. Early encounters, such as a childhood correction of pronunciation, sparked disorienting dilemmas that prompted critical self-reflection and shifted the author's perception of language as both communication and identity. In high school, facing ridicule for their accent led to deeper questioning of societal language standards, influenced by exposure to World Englishes literature. These moments of cognitive and emotional tension align with Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation, highlighting how language mastery involves navigating discomfort and personal growth. The auto-ethnography underscores that advanced language acquisition is intertwined with identity formation, requiring courage to embrace transformative challenges, ultimately shaping the author as a scholar and global citizen.

The transition to higher education represented perhaps the most profound phase of transformation. Immersed in academic discourse communities, I faced what

felt like learning an entirely new language one with its own rules, values, and power structures. The feedback on my first university paper, bleeding red ink about "argumentation" and "critical analysis," initiated a crisis of confidence that ultimately led to significant growth. Through sustained engagement with professors and peers, what began as alien academic conventions gradually became internalized ways of thinking. Mezirow's concept of meaning perspective is particularly relevant here—my entire approach to knowledge construction evolved as I moved from viewing English as a subject to be studied to recognizing it as a tool for knowledge creation and scholarly participation.

At the master's level, transformation became less about dramatic ruptures and more about refining and integrating previous learning. However, the process remained fundamentally social and reflective. Supervisory feedback sessions became spaces for what Mezirow terms dialogic discourse, where challenging conversations about my writing pushed me to higher levels of conceptual understanding. Perhaps most significantly, I began to transform my relationship with English from one of deficit (focusing on what I lacked compared to native speakers) to one of ownership recognizing my multilingual identity as an asset rather than a limitation. This shift in self-concept represents the holistic, identity-level change that distinguishes transformative learning from simple skill acquisition.

Viewing my English learning journey through the lens of transformative learning theory reveals it as far more than cumulative skill development. Each educational stage brought disorienting dilemmas that disrupted my equilibrium, moments of critical reflection that challenged my assumptions, and ultimately perspective transformations that altered how I viewed myself in relation to language and learning. This auto-ethnographic approach highlights how language acquisition at advanced levels is inseparable from personal growth and identity formation. My story suggests that truly mastering another language requires not just practice but the courage to endure and learn from the discomfort of transformation—a process that continues to shape me as scholar, communicator, and global citizen.

Socio-cultural Theory

Learning is an interaction that "unfolds during the dialogic activity collaboratively constructed by learner and tutor" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 367). This theory claims that the process of learning, i. e., thinking and problem-solving, is

essentially social due to the linguistically mediated interaction between learners and other members of society.

Vygotsky (1978) categorizes thinking and problem-solving tasks into three categories: some can be performed independently by the child; some cannot be performed at all (yet), and between these two extremes are tasks that the child can perform with help from others. He has called the dynamic process in which the child and adult collaborate in constructing a mutual activity frame "the zone of proximal development (ZPD)" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84) for learning the third kind of task. Hence the individual develops their language and rational thought with assistance from and in collaboration with more experienced members of society.

According to Vygotsky (1962), the development of the mind proceeds from society to the individual domain. Language is first used to guide the private speech of the child as well as for social interaction leading to its internalization and then becoming the structure of the child's thinking. Thus, thought patterns are the products of social activities (Vygotsky, 1978). He treats learning as an active cognitive process leading to increasing levels of capabilities from and in collaboration with more experienced members of society. While becoming a foreign language learner, I participated in national and international conferences, seminar of ELT.

According to Vygotsky (1962), the development of the mind proceeds from society to the individual domain. Language is first used to guide the private speech of the child as well as for social interaction leading to its internalization and then becoming the structure of the child's thinking. Thus, thought patterns are the products of social activities (Vygotsky, 1978). He treats learning as an active cognitive process leading to increasing levels of capabilities.

Supporting Vygotsky's view, Rumelhart (1980) opines that modern cognitive psychologists have also described this process as constructing new concepts based on existing knowledge in schemata and frameworks. The learner's experiences influence the processing and transformation of further information through the selection, hypothesis-formation, analysis, decision-making, interpretation, and synthesis strategies. The learner can go beyond the information given (Bruner, 1973). Thus, the main implication of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory in instructional design is the call for an active learning situation and a learner-centered approach where learners can act upon their environment self-directed. He further asserts that learning must occur in a dialogic situation since knowledge is constructed when the novice and the

experienced teachers interact in the ZPD. Therefore, I also employed Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach to constructivism as a theoretical referent to my experiences.

From my earliest encounters with English in elementary school to the sophisticated demands of graduate-level academic discourse, my journey of language learning has never been a solitary endeavor. Rather, it has been fundamentally shaped by the people, tools, and cultural contexts surrounding me a living testament to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. This framework, which posits that cognitive development emerges through social interaction and cultural mediation, provides a powerful lens through which to examine my auto-ethnographic narrative. Each stage of my English education reveals how deeply language acquisition is intertwined with the social world, from the flashcards held by my kindergarten teacher to the rigorous peer reviews of my master's thesis.

My initiation into English began not with abstract grammar rules, but through tangible, culturally embedded tools. I vividly recall the brightly colored flashcards my teacher used, each one a portal to a new word: "A" for apple, its crimson sheen imprinted beside the looping letter. These images were more than mere aids; they were my first mediators, bridging the gap between my native language and this new symbolic system. The alphabet song, too, became a rhythmic scaffold, its melody structuring my memory in ways that rote repetition never could. Even the classroom's physical space mediated my learning the labeled objects ("door," "clock," "desk") transforming my environment into a living dictionary.

Social interaction was equally pivotal. When I stumbled over the pronunciation of "butterfly," my teacher's patient articulation her lips exaggeratedly forming each syllable became my model. I mimicked not just her sounds but her gestures, internalizing the physicality of speech. Group activities, like circle-time storytelling, forced me to negotiate meaning with peers, our collective struggle to string sentences together revealing language as a shared endeavor. Looking back, I see how these interactions were my first encounters with Vygotsky's "more knowledgeable other," guiding me through what I could not yet grasp alone.

As my education progressed, the cultural dimensions of language grew more complex and more fraught. Grammar worksheets and standardized tests framed English as a rigid system of rules, with deviations punished by red ink. The message was clear: mastery meant conformity. I recall the shame of being corrected for saying "she doesn't" instead of "she does not," a moment that exposed how language policed

social belonging. Yet, even these constraints became mediators. The textbook diagrams of verb tenses, though dry, gave me a scaffold to navigate the chaos of irregular verbs.

Collaborative projects, meanwhile, revealed language as a dynamic, living practice. Debating literature in class, I learned that fluency was not just about accuracy but persuasion—how to wield words to sway others. My peers' feedback ("You sound too formal!") pushed me to code-switch between academic and casual registers, a skill no textbook could teach. These interactions were my Zone of Proximal Development in action: my classmates' critiques and the teacher's probing questions ("What's your evidence?") stretched my abilities beyond what I could achieve alone.

By graduate school, the social origins of my learning had become invisible threads woven into my cognition. Drafting essays, I'd hear echoes of past professors: "Too wordy," "Cite this claim." Their voices, once external, now guided my private self-talk a hallmark of Vygotsky's theory. Peer review sessions were no longer just exercises but vital mediations, each comment a cultural tool reshaping my thinking. When a seminar professor challenged my interpretation of a text, the intellectual friction forced me to refine my ideas, embodying the collaborative construction of knowledge. Digital tools, too, mediated my growth. Grammarly's suggestions did not just correct my grammar; they trained me to anticipate academic conventions. Online forums exposed me to global Englishes, challenging my assumption that "native-like" proficiency was the goal. In this phase, language was no longer just a subject but an identity means of claiming space in scholarly communities.

This auto-ethnography, framed by Vygotsky's lens, reveals English learning as a tapestry of cultural tools, social exchanges, and incremental self-transformations. From the flashcards of childhood to the seminar rooms of graduate school, each stage underscores how language is not merely acquired but enacted within a web of relationships and power structures. My story, while personal, reflects universal truths about learning: that it is collective, mediated, and deeply human. In tracing these threads, I invite readers to see their own journeys a new narrative not of isolated effort, but of interconnected growth.

Review of Empirical Literature

To achieve the intended goals, every study is founded on earlier research in the same field. At the national and international levels, numerous studies on auto-

ethnography, personal experiences, and narratives in language learning have been conducted. They are also related to my research in some way. It is necessary for a researcher to gain a great deal of knowledge from earlier research in order to prepare for future studies. Additionally, this study will draw from earlier research in this area. This section reviews some of the earlier studies that have been conducted in the field of personal narratives in learning.

Yazan (2019) conducted research on "An auto-ethnography of Language Teacher Educator: Wrestling with Ideologies and Identity Positions". The main aim of this auto-ethnographic research is to narrate and analyze the important episodes his life's history, learning and teaching English in his home country and preparing teachers to work with emergent bilinguals in the United States. He has used language ideologies as a conceptual lens in his narrative to interpret his experiences negotiating identities as language user, teacher and teacher educator. He hoped that this auto-ethnographic analysis will contribute to the conceptualization of the complex processes of teacher educator identity construction and resonate with other teacher educator who preserves bi/multilingual teachers.

Likewise, Nycyk (2021) conducted a research entitled "But How Am I Doing? Auto-ethnographic Reflections of a Beginning English Language Teacher. The primary aim of study was to reflect on the author's personal experiences as a novice English Language Teaching (ELT) teacher, providing an introspective exploration of professional growth and challenges. The research employed an auto-ethnographic approach, utilizing constructed vignettes to narrate significant moments of crisis and resolution in the author's teaching journey. These vignettes served as a tool to vividly illustrate personal and professional experiences. The study highlighted specific instances of challenges faced by the beginning teacher, such as self-doubt and classroom management issues, and how these were resolved through reflection, adaptation, and professional development. This research concluded that auto-ethnography is a valuable method for ELT practitioners. It facilitates deep self-reflection, fosters professional growth, and provides insights into the emotional and practical dimensions of teaching, which can benefit both new and experienced educators. The study underscores the importance of reflective practices in teacher development, suggesting that auto-ethnography can serve as a powerful tool for educators to critically analyze their experiences and improve their teaching practices.

In the same way, Bhandari (2022) conducted research on ‘Becoming an English language teacher in Nepal: An auto-ethnographic journey aimed to explore and examine the journey of learning and teaching English as his lived experienced. For this he used auto ethnography as a research methodology and writing narratives as a method of inquiry under a multi-paradigm research under design space. He has employed interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodernism as his research paradigm. The findings show that examination grades and rural under-resourced contexts do not impede students from becoming transforming teachers. It is also found that the synthesis of his experience empowering himself helped to explore and transform his value, beliefs and practices of becoming a teacher.

Similarly, Dhimi (2022) Conducted research entitled “Becoming an autonomous learner in Nepalese EFL context: An auto-ethnographic study. This auto-ethnographic study aims to explore the own perceptions on learner autonomy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context of Nepal. He collected the data from his own experiences of learning English at master’s level education in campus for KMC. He used auto-ethnographic research design for qualitative research. The findings of the study reveal that close academic connection with the professions and universities is essential for becoming an auto route learner in learning EFL in the researched context.

Similarly, Pokharel, (2022) conducted research entitled “Exploring English teacher’s journey of change and identity construction: An auto-ethnographic inquiry. The aim of the study was to examine critically in association with culture and society that brings the transformation in her identity and her participant’s identity on English teachers. It aims at exploring the live events and stories often change and shifting identities that led to their identity as English teacher. She used auto-ethnography as a method of study.

Likewise, Halter (2023) conducted research entitled "Through the looking glass: An Auto ethnography". This auto-ethnography studying her experiences as a female high school principal in south. It is qualitative research that analyzes personal experiences to understand a particular culture. Through analysis, she used feminist theory and metaphors to understand the school and community and the presence of southerly culture in this school's context. Through research, she found glass metaphors describing women in leadership roles and their obstacles. She also found that many feminist leadership theories that use glass metaphors that applied to her

research are theories around professional dress for women, role incongruence theory in gendered organizations such as education and theories describing southern culture centered on the importance of loyalty and storytelling. This research shares stories of lived experiences to make sense of the world and add to current research, she found story telling is part of the southern culture that manifests in the school her late. She hoped more leaders will learn from her shared experiences.

Likewise, Lepcha (2024) conducted research on “Creation of Pygmalion’s: An Evocative auto-ethnography English language learning journey. The main objective of this inquiry is to tell as a researcher participant his own lived experience as a Lepcha speaker. He used auto-ethnography as a research design. He adopted the multi-paradigmatic research approach to understand the multi-faceted learning technique. This research found that envisions English language learning and teaching without side-lining the local contexts and language of the people.

This research is different from others research that it adopts an auto-ethnographic methodology to explore the personal journey of learning English from elementary to masters level with an under-resourced and underdeveloped educational and economic context. Unlike conventional research, which often focuses on well-supported urban institutions or generalized learner populations, this research provides a first-hand account of the challenges, struggles, and strategies experienced by a learner navigating the language learning process with limited access to qualified teachers, learning materials, technological support, and language-rich environment. The study spans a significant time frame and captures not only the academic progression but also the emotional, psychological, and socio-cultural dimensions of language learning areas often neglected in traditional linguistics or pedagogical studies. By documenting a personal yet representative experience, this research offers valuable insights into the resilience, motivation, and adaptive strategies of learners in marginalized settings. Its findings can contribute to more context-aware language education policies and help educators understand the realities faced by learners in similar underdeveloped regions.

Implications of Review for the Study

The main purpose of the review of literature was to enhance the present level of personal understanding of the related concepts and practices covering level of my painful and gainful journey from elementary to master's level. Wiersma (1995) observed (cited from Dahal, 2013) that it establishes the need for the research and

indicates that the writer is knowledgeable about the area. It presents me for various ideas and option of the various renowned scholars on their journey in English Language learning and teaching. It actually gives direction and way to walk to write auto ethnography from the review of related literature, I found the knowledge of different quality standards, hints of the way to move the destination.

The reviewed literature underscores the importance of personal narratives in understanding the complex interplay of identity, culture, and socio-cultural factors in language learning. For instance, Yazan (2019) emphasizes the role of language ideologies in shaping teacher identity, which aligns with the current study's aim to explore how socio-cultural forces influence the development as an English language learner and educator. Similarly, Bhandari (2022) and Pokharel (2022) highlight how personal experiences in under-resourced contexts can lead to transformative professional identities, suggesting that the current study's focus on resilience and self-learning strategies in a similar context can contribute to theories of identity construction in ELT. Additionally, Halter (2023) and Lepcha (2024) demonstrate the value of using cultural lenses (e.g., feminist theory, local linguistic contexts) to interpret personal experiences, supporting the inclusion of sociocultural dimensions in the proposed study. These studies collectively suggest that the current research can extend theoretical frameworks by integrating interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodernism to analyze the multifaceted nature of language learning in marginalized settings.

The reviewed studies consistently employ auto-ethnography as a qualitative research methodology, which validates its suitability for the proposed study. Nycyk (2021) and Dhami (2022) use auto-ethnographic reflections to capture moments of crisis, resolution, and learner autonomy, providing a methodological blueprint for documenting my lived experiences across educational stages. Bhandari (2022) and Lepcha (2024) adopt multi-paradigmatic approaches, combining interpretivism, criticalism, and postmodernism, which offer a flexible framework for the current study to explore the emotional, psychological, and socio-cultural dimensions of language learning. The use of narrative inquiry and vignettes, as seen in Yazan (2019) and Nycyk (2021), further supports the proposed study's method of constructing personal narratives to analyze challenges and breakthroughs. These methodological insights suggest that the current study can effectively use auto-ethnography to provide a rich, first-person perspective, while its focus on a longitudinal journey from

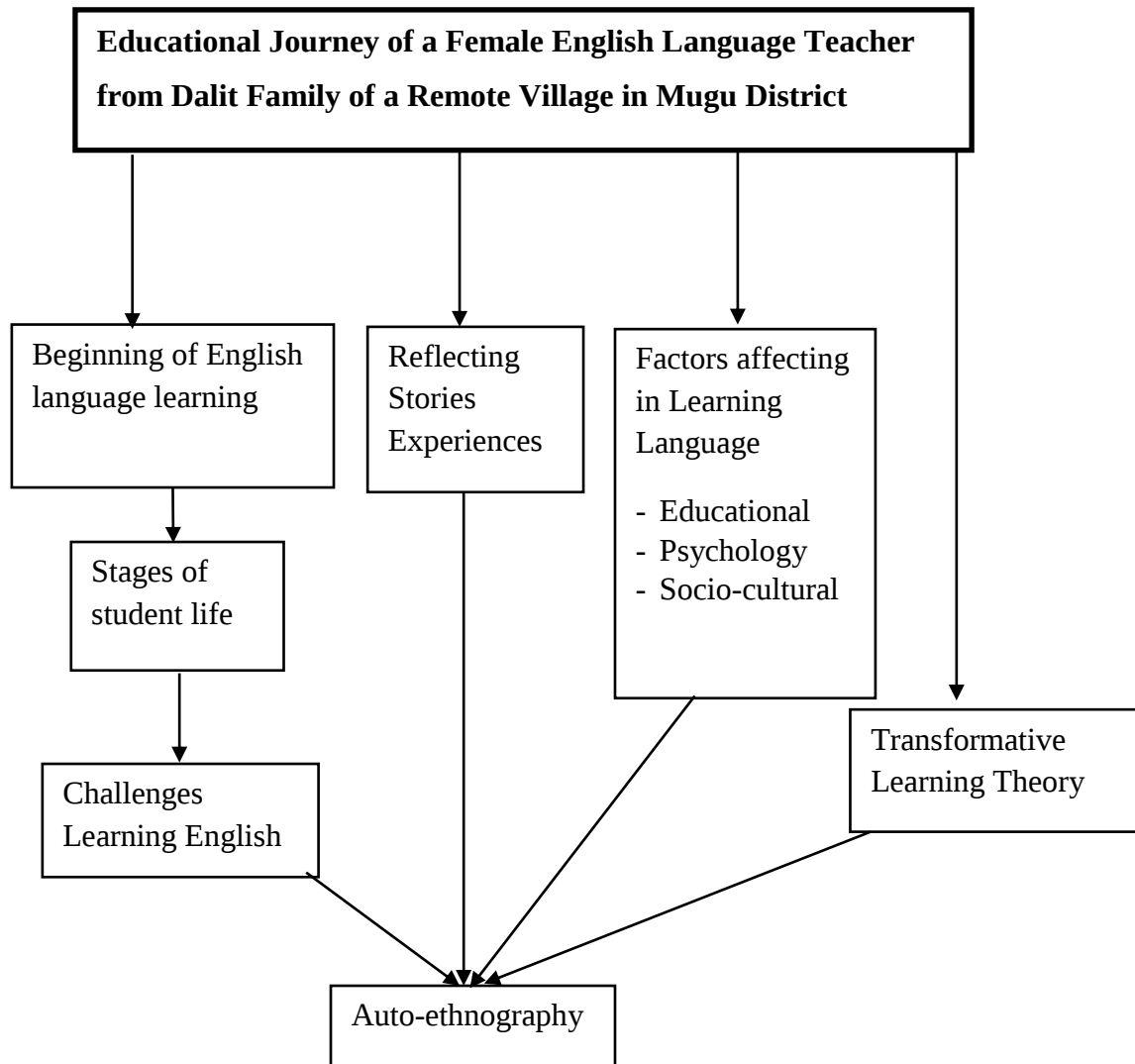
elementary to master's level education in an under-resourced context adds a unique dimension to existing methodologies.

The reviewed studies highlight practical implications for ELT, particularly in understanding and supporting learners and educators in diverse contexts. Dhimi (2022) emphasizes the importance of academic connections with institutions to foster learner autonomy, which suggests that the current study could identify practical strategies for learners in under-resourced settings to access educational support. Halter (2023) and Lepcha (2024) underscore the role of storytelling and local cultural contexts in education, suggesting that the proposed study's narratives could inspire context-aware pedagogical practices that value local languages and cultures. By documenting strategies to overcome barriers such as limited access to qualified teachers, materials, and technology, the current study can contribute practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to support language learners in marginalized regions.

Unlike the reviewed studies, which often focus on specific educational stages or generalized contexts, the proposed study uniquely spans a longitudinal journey from elementary to advanced academic levels in an under-resourced rural setting. This extended timeframe and focus on a marginalized context address a gap in the literature, as noted in the problem statement. The study's emphasis on emotional, psychological, and socio-cultural dimensions complements the findings of Yazan (2019), Nycyk (2021), and others, while its auto-ethnographic approach aligns with their methodologies. By providing a first-hand account of resilience and adaptive strategies, the study can contribute to context-aware language education policies and inspire educators to better understand and support learners in similar underdeveloped regions. Moreover, I got good ideas to decide on the research design, motivation, objectives, tools, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, etc. To say it in a single sentence, they helped me in all aspects of the study.

Conceptual Framework

The framework serves as the basis for the entire research process and allows readers to visualize the study's overall concepts. I have reviewed various documents related to the research and literature review. For the purpose of finishing my research, I have created the conceptual framework below.



Chapter III

Methods and Procedures of the Study

This chapter discusses the methodology used to conduct this investigation. It includes the study's design and methodology, population, sample and sampling strategy, data sources, data collection instruments, data collection processes, data analysis processes, and ethical considerations. In order to achieve the goals of my research, the following approaches were used.

Research Design

The research design for this study is auto-ethnography which is categorized as a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research approach is one which often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivism, post positivism, pragmatism or advocacy/ participatory perspectives or a combination of these (Cresswell, 2003 as cited from Anthonys, 2009). It is an auto ethnography that enters my own lived experience as a learner in terms of creating gap between theory and application in English learning process. Auto ethnography is a research design of my inquiry. Auto ethnography is a combination of three words- auto, ethno' and 'graphy' 'which signify the textual representation on one's personal experience in his/her cultural contents (Luitel, 2009, cited from Dahal, 2013). Auto ethnography is a form of autobiographical personal narrative that explores the writer's experiences of life. According to Natechel (2010) "Auto ethnography is a form of method of research that involves self-observation and reflective investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing". I used an auto-ethnographic approach that focuses on my experiences as an English learner as a framework to address my research questions. My beliefs that will determine the true significance of my lived experiences can be critically reconstructed through the use of auto-ethnography. The goal of my auto-ethnographic research design is to examine my own childhood learning experiences. It will enable me to better comprehend how I might investigate my culture, which has always shaped my views on the degree of positive or negative relationships I have with teachers when learning English in the classroom. I have made an effort to learn as much as I can about myself. It is my responsibility to look into my various life stages and reasons for learning English. Also, this auto-ethnographic research is a great tool for honing my own work.

Auto-ethnography as a Method of Inquiry

The research method is essential to choose to make the methodological ground. I have decided to conduct my research using auto-ethnography. In the beginning, it started with my personal stories layered in a sequence to make meaning out of my experiences. So, my method of inquiry is auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography simply means autobiographical writing. It is a written document of somebody's own life and experience. Auto-ethnography consists of the unique life experiences of an individual in an autobiographical writing style which is also qualitative research and is related to the social and cultural aspects of that individual (Custer, 2014). It means it is more than an autobiography as it is research-based writing. To state simply, it is research on one's own life experiences. Mendez (2013) stated that there are no such rules for writing auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography assisted me to construct my reality as a researcher through my own experiences of the past with the construction of my belief in the present. Auto-ethnography thus dealt with the meaning- making of my past experiences.

Auto-ethnography is not only descriptive storytelling but also combines the cultural analysis and interpretation of the narrative details that follow the anthropological and social scientific inquiry approach (Chang, 2008). It is the method where the research is carried out based on the stories as data and storing as the method. The researchers report the data by presenting them with a narrative inquiry. Auto-ethnography combines the characteristics of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). While writing auto-ethnography, the practitioners of auto-ethnography not only write their past experiences but also bring others' narratives along with theirs. There are three types of reporting the research which would follow the view of narrative inquiry:

- An original narrated descriptive report that was privately constructed and included a self-account, a narrative or collection of narratives in story form that are produced dialogically.
- A storied account of an experience we get from interviews, written reports, observations and artifacts (Hoshmand, 2005 as cited in McIlveen 2008 p. 181).

As a method of inquiry, auto-ethnography can come up as the original narrated form where the descriptive report is constructed out of a privately built self-account. It

can also be written in a dialogically generated narrative form where the stories are recounted. It can also be a written account of an experience in the form of a story. Analytic reflexivity is expected to be presented in the form of writing, which we call the writing styles within auto-ethnography. They could be exhibited by the consciousness which has multiple layers and could be delivered through evocative methods (Struthers, 2012). Thus, auto-ethnography as a method is more evocative and convincing.

Wall (2008) stated that auto-ethnography typically starts with an individual's personal story. Auto-ethnography became a challenging research genre, enabling me, the researcher, to attest to all forms of auto-ethnography with some strength. For instance: I learned how to interpret my experience with the narratives that I generated as the materials to investigate. While writing this auto-ethnographic research, it evoked something in me, such as me in the dominant culture, my valiant attempt to fight with faith and family and to decide on my other personal stories. These experiences of mine in the form of auto-ethnography would give readers insight into my and worlds beyond.

Auto-ethnography has something important to offer, to share new and unique knowledge applicable in a broad context. Personal stories can coexist with auto ethnographic research. Normally, auto-ethnography consists of short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, fragmented and layered writings and reflections. According to Wall (2006), auto-ethnography is a more authentic use of resources as it consists of my voice and the self as an insider. It is wise to label the writing category to bring them under auto-ethnography. As we live in a time of great possibilities, writing based on personal experiences leads to a great research inquiry, especially for understanding auto-ethnography.

When we come to the definition of ethnographic research, it is derived from the discipline of social and cultural anthropology, which requires a significant amount of time from the side in the research field (Myers, 1999). A researcher needs to spend most of the time in the research field so that s/he can get maximum out of the engagement in the research field. The more time is spent there, the more one can view the participants' world, and it helps the researcher to make meaning of the ongoing practices in the field. The significant attributes of the ethnographic research include the first-hand cultural encounters that are specific, regular and continuous participation as well as contact with participants, understanding the meaning of that

encounter, making a record of the same where the participants' experiences should not be reduced, and the presentation of discourse is with thick description (Mullick et al., 2013). Regular contact with participants and the continuous engagement of the researcher in the field allows for a thick description of what is seen, heard and experienced in the research field. Sangasubana (2011) proclaimed that when the attachment and empathy grow for a research site along with the growth in rapport and trust with participants, the ethnographer is more a participant than just an observer. Observation is just the way to view the participants' world, but being in the research field with participants and getting that experience of being in that world is itself meaningful. Ethnography notes what happens in the research field and records their subjective reactions to observation (Tin, 2014). The researcher gives their subjective response to any events in the field of what s/he saw and what s/he felt, giving an ethnographic sense to the research. In auto-ethnography, a subjective response is much richer. The history of auto-ethnography provides more transparency as to why this method has been chosen.

Auto-ethnography came into existence when ethnographers considered their observations. The researchers first thought of understanding the 'self' to understand 'others.' Now, coming to the meaning of auto-ethnography, it has a deeper meaning. The personal experiences ("auto") that embed the cultural beliefs and practices ("ethno") that get described and interpreted ("graphy") build up as auto/ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). Researchers take the help of autobiography, combining it with the doctrine of ethnography and conducting research (Ellis et al., 2011). History has shown that auto/ethnography provides a unique opportunity to learn through personal to general, which means that through the exploration of personal experiences, one can learn about general aspects, including social, cultural and political (Douglas & Careless, 2013). When we talk about auto-ethnography, it is research that is entirely on the way of writing, and it is not free from the manipulation of words and meanings. Auto-ethnography is highly inclined to researchers' subjectivity, emotionality and influence in the research and denies assuming the absence of those entities that matter for the actual meaning of auto-ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). As subjective research, researchers bring up the emotional aspects of their life experiences and give the aesthetic quality to it, ultimately creating meaning to what the researchers bring as stories, poems, narratives or dialogues. The history of auto-ethnography affirms it as a distinct research method since it comprises the holistic aspects of researchers'

subjectivity by incorporating their stories and experiences. Auto-ethnography is, thus, the evolvment of a subjective exploration with prior precedence to discover the hidden aspects within the researchers' own stories and experiences.

Population, Sample and Sampling Strategy

The cultural, educational, and social circumstances that influence the experience of learning English as a second or foreign language at different educational levels, such as elementary, secondary, undergraduate, and master's, comprise the population for this auto-ethnographic study. The primary sample for this study is I, with my personal experiences serving as the central data source. These experiences span my journey of learning English from elementary school through to my Master's level education, capturing the evolving challenges, strategies, and milestones encountered at each stage.

The sampling strategy employed in this auto-ethnography is purposive, reflexive, and iterative. Purposive sampling is used to deliberately select experiences, memories, and artifacts (e.g., journals, assignments, or reflections) that most vividly and meaningfully illustrate my language-learning journey. The reflexive nature of the strategy involves ongoing self-examination to ensure that the selected experiences authentically represent my narrative while connecting to broader cultural, educational, and social themes. The iterative process allows for continuous refinement of the data selection, enabling the inclusion of additional experiences or insights as they emerge during the research process. This approach ensures that the study remains deeply personal yet resonates with wider contexts of English language learning.

Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data sources were employed for the acquisition of the necessary information. This investigation is characterized as auto-ethnography, indicating that I served as the principal data source; thus, it may constitute a suitable methodology for examining my personal practices, while secondary sources were utilized in the development of the theoretical framework of the study.

Primary Sources of Data

In conducting this research, I utilized auto-ethnography, which placed me at the center as the primary data source, making it an apt method for investigating my own practices. The data collection techniques inherent to auto-ethnography guided me to delve into my narratives, personal stories, diaries, reflections, and a variety of

historical images. I immersed myself in a thorough reflection on the significance of my past, present, and potential future experiences.

Secondary Sources of Data

In this research, I relied on secondary data sources, which included various literatures that encouraged me to select the auto-ethnography paradigm. As a result, my own emotions and experiences with learning English became the primary data source for this study.

Tools for Data Collection

My thesis "Educational Journey of a Female English Language Teacher from Dalit Family of a Remote Village in Mugu District", the main tool of data collection was different from those in traditional research because auto-ethnography is a qualitative, self-reflective, and narrative-based research method. In auto-ethnography, I am both the researcher and the participant, so these tools helped me recall, reflect on, analyze, and document my lived experiences. I used following tools for data collection:

- Personal Reflections (Primary Tool)
- Memory Mapping / Timeline Construction
- Personal Narratives / Vignettes
- Informal Conversations / Dialogues (Optional Supporting Tool)

Data Analysis Procedures

A thematic analysis is conducted to identify recurring patterns, emotions, and transformative experiences related to English language learning. The findings are linked to existing theories in second language acquisition, motivation, and cultural adaptation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics governs all research. Human activities run in everyday life are alarmed with ethics. As a human, there are certain things that we do not want to reveal in front of other people. A researcher, therefore, needs to follow ethical guidelines which we call ethics. Auto-ethnography is mostly at risk to the well-being of the researcher and therefore, the research must give priority to the informed consent of the insiders of the story (Griffin & Griffin, 2019). Ethical consideration guides researchers to be aware of human rights concerning the values they have in their society. My research focuses on my personal journey and experiences in learning English. This study connects my

individual experiences with cultural contexts and my personal beliefs. As an auto-ethnography, the ethical considerations of my study are not about objectivity. I do not assert that my experiences and beliefs are universal among all learners, nor do I claim they represent objective truths. The study is entirely subjective, as interpretations are drawn from my viewpoint, yet I remain mindful of context. I have referenced the literature that informed my studies. In the research field, a researcher needs to act ethically. While getting data out of my experiences, I have ensured the informed consent of other people in the stories I bring and their anonymity. I, as a researcher, kept the ethical standards as this is about people's rights. This is how I ensured before and after my research.

Obtaining informed consent from individuals whose experiences are included in the study is critical. As noted by Griffin and Griffin (2019), auto-ethnography risks the well-being of the researcher and others, making consent a priority. In this study, I ensured that all individuals referenced in my narratives provided informed consent, fully understanding the purpose and scope of the research. To protect the privacy of individuals involved, I maintained anonymity by using pseudonyms or omitting identifying details. This safeguards the rights and privacy of those whose stories intersect with mine. My study is explicitly subjective, rooted in my personal experiences and beliefs about learning English. I acknowledge that my experiences are not universal and do not represent objective realities. By clearly stating this, I avoid overgeneralization and maintain transparency about the interpretive nature of the research. While my study is subjective, it remains grounded in the cultural and social context of my experiences. I have ensured that interpretations are tied to the specific contexts in which they occurred, avoiding misrepresentation. The ethical framework of this study draws on prior research emphasizing the importance of ethics in auto-ethnography. Griffin and Griffin (2019) highlight the need for informed consent due to the personal and relational nature of auto-ethnographic narratives. Additionally, Ellis et al. (2011) underscore the importance of relational ethics in auto-ethnography, advocating for ongoing dialogue with participants to ensure their comfort and consent. Adams et al. (2015) further emphasize transparency in acknowledging the subjective nature of auto-ethnographic accounts, which I have incorporated by clearly stating the subjective lens of my study. These works collectively inform my approach to balancing personal storytelling with ethical responsibility.

In conducting this auto-ethnographic study on my English learning journey, I adhered to ethical guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of all involved. By prioritizing informed consent, anonymity, transparency, and contextual integrity, I ensured that the research respects both my personal narrative and the individuals whose stories intersect with mine. This ethical framework aligns with established literature and upholds the principles of responsible research.

Chapter IV

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This chapter contains the analysis of my lived "Educational Journey of a Female English Language Teacher from Dalit Family of a Remote Village in Mugu District." The information found in this section was obtained from my own stories. A crucial component of this research involves the analysis and interpretation of the data. I have organized the data thematically, using various headings and subheadings. The themes for the personal interviews were developed in accordance with the research questions.

Early Childhood: Learning Through Family and Community

I was born in a Dalit family in Supakot Mugu in Nepal, and in 1996, I started my schooling at the age of four. I experienced various circumstances relating to my family, school, and community throughout my educational journey. I spent my early childhood with my parents in the village and went to a nearby school. Like other villagers, my parents did farming and household chores. I often walked around my mother and gradually learnt to help her with those chores. This enabled me to work in pairs and groups during my studies and with colleagues during teaching. I would help my mother in any way I could. I helped my mother collect the grass she cut and brought with her a little of it to feed our cattle. I remember that I felt happier helping her in the field or with household chores than doing my studies in those initial days of schooling. Whenever our neighbors observed me assisting her, they would frequently comment, "*Tapaike nanile ta khubai sukh delin jasto chha ta, didi. Chhori manche bhaye pachhi ghar ko kaam sikna parchha.*" [*Sister, your daughter seems to make you very happy. As a daughter, she should learn to do household chores.*] These experiences fostered a deep respect for all types of work and taught me the value of collaboration, which later translated into my ability to work effectively in pairs and groups during my studies and teaching career.

Though my parents lacked formal education by modern standards, they were my first teachers. Their storytelling and involvement in daily tasks inspired me, sparking curiosity and creativity. They took a keen interest in my school day, asking about my activities with genuine curiosity. Research suggests that fairy tales help students learn language in a non-threatening way (Kholmurodova, 2021), and I now recognize how patiently my parents shared those stories, even when my attention

wavered. These interactions, rooted in dialogue, shaped my ability to foster mutual respect in educational and social settings, aligning with the idea that learning occurs within a social context (Sehlaoui, 2008).

My formal education began in 2000 at age four when my parents enrolled me in Shree Nepal Rastriya Primary School in Karkibada, Mugu, on a Friday in the second week of April. The school was a 40–45-minute walk from home, and my father carried me to and fro because no school was closer. On my first day, when the head teacher asked me to recite the Nepali alphabet (Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha), I proudly sang the English ABCD instead, earning a smile. My father crafted a small wooden board (Kathkopati) with a rope for easy carrying and a Nigala's (Bamboo) pen, tools I used to practice writing Nepali letters like Ka, Kha, Ga and Gha with clay, both at school and home. As the school was far from our village, my father accompanied me, ensuring I could focus on learning. However, my exposure to English remained limited to the alphabet until grade four, when formal English lessons began. My father, noticing the weight of my schoolbag, accompanied me daily to school, often carrying me. This support, combined with the encouragement of a well-connected community, helped me internalize social, cultural, and educational values.

My parents' encouragement was pivotal. My father was always the first to buy books and stationery when I advanced in school, while my mother, even amidst kitchen work, urged me to study, often saying,

"Chhori, ramrari padhnu parchha hai, tyas pachhi dherai buddhi aauchha ani jaagir khaye pachhi jivan sahaj hunchha."

[Dear daughter, you need to study well so that you will gain wisdom, and after getting a job, your life will be comfortable in the future.]

These words, often referencing teachers and respected community members, motivated me to strive for success.

Old stories played a significant role in my educational journey, aligning with Kinloch's (2019) view that stories are vital in literacy teaching and teacher education. Listening to folktales from my parents and teachers expanded my knowledge, enhancing my creativity and logical reasoning. I often questioned the stories: *Were they real? How did the characters succeed? Could I emulate their success?* These narratives helped me make sense of life's complexities, fostering logical reasoning and shaping my approach to learning and teaching English.

In school, opportunities to share personal experiences about family and community, especially when a teacher was absent, nurtured my inner talents and supported my cognitive well-being. These activities instilled a sense of cooperation, collaboration, and healthy competition, which became evident in my teaching practices and participation in social and academic activities, such as helping others and engaging in writing, speaking, and teaching.

The interplay of my family's support, cultural heritage, and early educational experiences shaped my worldview approach to learning. Memories of these moments continue to inform, guide, and inspire me (Pillemer, 2003). The values of hard work, respect for all occupations, and the power of storytelling, instilled through my parents and community, remain the cornerstone of my educational journey and my ability to connect with others in meaningful ways.

Preparing to Learn English

My name is Sangita B.K. daughter of Sher Singh Kami and Nandarupa Kami in Chhayanathara-5, Supakot, Mugu, a remote village in the hilly region of Karnali Province, Nepal. Growing up in a mountainous district plagued by poverty, illiteracy, and deep-rooted superstitions like untouchability, I faced a society that often valued sons over daughters and believed early marriage preserved a girl's dignity. Despite these challenges, my parents' encouragement sparked my interest in education from an early age.

My earliest memories of learning English are vivid: reciting the alphabet (ABCD) with my father while he milked cows in our shed. He shared that he learned the English alphabet later in life, making his efforts to teach me even more meaningful. My father was literate only in Nepali (knowing the 12 Khari) and Basic English letters speak A, B, C, but he did not write, while my mother was illiterate according to modern standards. Agriculture was our family's primary occupation, supplemented by my father's daily wage labour. No matter how much farming my parents did at home, we did not have enough food for more than six months, and my father had to work as a laborer to eat the rest. My mother had also gone to work at someone else's house all day to earn a meal, and in the evening, she would bring about one kilo (two Manas) of rice or flour, and we would have to eat that food. During the holidays, I also went to work, usually on Saturdays, I used to go to carry stones, muds, sand and it helped us to get my stationaries (copy, pen and pencils) goods.

Despite his hard work, our large family struggled financially, unable to fulfill many of our needs.

In 2060 B.S. (2003–2004), I entered grade four, studying five subjects: Nepali, English, Mathematics, Meroserephero, and Mero Desh. We studied only three subjects until we were in grade three, so I was excited that I was going to learn five subjects, including English, from grade four. At the same time, I was nervous that I could not cover all five subjects! In the first period, a new teacher entered the class with a few sticks of white chalk, a bamboo cane, and a book ready to introduce English letters. Here, I would like to present my first-day experience of learning English in my formal class in grade four. She said to us,

“Keta keti ho, Mero name Chetana Shahi Malla ho. Ma timi harulai Angreji padau chhu. Aaja, ma timiharulai Angrejika akshyarharu sikauchhu. Aa-aafno kalam ra kapi liyera tayaar houhaita.”

[Hello children! My name is Chetana shahi Malla. I will teach you English. Today, I am going to teach you some English letters. Please be ready with your pencil and paper. First, let me write them on the blackboard, okay.]
Students responding to her, "Hunchha Ma'am" [Okay, teacher], we started copying the letters. We chanted them after her until almost everyone in the class could write and recite them independently. In English and other subjects, we experienced a similar pedagogy that emphasized translation, memorization, recitation, and writing was used throughout my school education.

My English language learning journey began with writing and memorizing the alphabet, then the class, teachers read the lessons in English and translated the texts into Nepali. During the class, we remained silent, and later by hook and crook; we had to memorize them if we wanted to escape punishment. However, I remember my teachers would praise us when we became successful in recalling the answers. Hence, memorizing the teacher given answers and reciting them in class was supposed to be the best learning. On Fridays, I often participated in extracurricular activities, frequently securing first, second, or third place and winning rewards like pens, pencils, and notebooks, which supported my studies. My English teacher, Chetana Shahi Malla, was skilled, but I did not fully grasp the importance of English then and still passed grade four successfully.

In 2061 B.S. (2004–2005), my father provided a school uniform, bag, and stationery, and I passed grade five at the same school. My father hardly managed all the stationary materials for study.

In Baisakh 2062 B.S. (April–May 2005), since my primary school only offered classes up to grade five, I have to change another school then, I enrolled in Shree Mahakali Higher Secondary School in Shreenagar (Gamgadhi), Mugu, for grade six. The school was a one and half ours walk from home. There was an English teacher Muktinath Shrestha. My father accompanied me to Gamgadhi Bazar with my mark sheet and certificates, arranging all necessary materials. However, the increased educational expenses strained our finances. To cover these costs, my father went to India in 2062 B.S. (2005–2006). That same year, in Ashoj (September–October), the Dalit Girls Scholarship Programme (DGSP), supported by the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) in cooperation with the National Dalit Development Foundation (NDDF) Mugu, was introduced at my school. As one of only six Dalit girls in classes six to ten, I received essential educational materials, including uniforms, dresses, shoes, and socks, enabling me to complete grade six with ease.

Later that year, my father invited my mother and younger brother to join him in India, leaving me, my elder sister, and my younger sister in the care of my elder brother and sister-in-law. Living with them was challenging; my brother, who often drank and was abusive, believed girls shouldn't pursue higher education, as they would eventually marry and join another household. He prioritized teaching us household chores over studies. Despite this, I remained determined, managing morning chores, caring for my nephew and niece, and attending school regularly. The scholarship support was crucial in continuing my education. So, in 2063 B.S. (2006–2007), I passed grade seven.

In Baisakh 2064 B.S. (April–May 2007), I joined grade eight at the same school. My English teacher, Jayaprakash Malla, used the direct method, but I struggled to understand the language. Speaking Nepali in class led to punishment, underscoring the importance of learning English. At that time, my mother and younger brother had returned from India. Despite the unsupportive home environment, I completed my homework in the classroom and attended school regularly, driven by my determination to overcome the challenges and pursue my education.

Learning English at School: Memorization Commitment

Inspired by my parents' encouragement and the praise and recognition I received from my teachers in grade three, I was enthusiastic about studying five subjects, including English, when I entered grade four. The new academic session began in mid-April 2003, and I vividly recall the first period of my grade four classes. A new teacher entered our classroom, holding an English book in one hand and a bamboo cane in the other, marking the start of a new phase in my learning journey. Here, I would like to share how my first English class was: (teacher student conversation)

We (students): Standing from our seats, "Good morning, Madam"

Teacher: "Good morning. Sit down. Sit down! You are now in class four. And you have to study English so hard because it is a complex subject. Do you know ABCD?" Everyone was silent, but I stood with some fear and tried to recite the letters. Although I could recite them well, I felt nervous and missed some letters. After she asked me, the teacher herself wrote all the English letters on the blackboard and asked us to follow, Drills the chants after her.

We followed her:

Teacher: A

Students: A

Teacher: A for Apple

Students: A for Apple

Teacher: B...

I repeated: A, B, C, D, A for Apple, B for Ball, C for Cat, and D for Dog...along with my classmates repeatedly.

I enjoyed chanting those letters in class because I had already memorized them at home. Although I was a little nervous at the beginning of the class, I did well. Sometimes, I felt disinterested when the teacher repeated the exact drilling of the ABCD every day. Given our professional history of teaching 'language', it is not surprising that most of the teachers focused on their pedagogical content knowledge of grammar (Johnson, 2009, p. 22). However, after a week, she said to the class, "Children, now, Sangita reads the letters one by one from the blackboard, and you will all follow her." My happiness had no boundaries. My teacher trusted me and called me to her place (in front of the class) to conduct drills.

At the beginning of every English class, the teacher wrote the alphabet, and I conducted drills for the whole class. However, (Koondhar et al., 2018) drilling and repetition, i. e. audio-lingual teaching method, put extra pressure on the learner. My first experience of learning to write English began by copying the CAPITAL LETTERS first and then small letters of the English alphabet until I learnt them. Although Lightbown & Spada (2013) claim that learners spend hours participating in conversations, listening to others' conversations, being read to, and watching television, mere writing and memorization were emphasized in our classes.

After almost everyone had learnt to write these letters, the teacher gave us a list of questions and answers to learn by heart. Here, I would like to portray a list of questions and answers so far I remember after meeting my retired English teacher now, with their equivalent to Nepali translation provided by our teacher for us to remember: Teacher student conversation is as follows:

Teacher: *What is your name? [timro namke ho?]*

Student: *My name is ... [mero nam ...ho]*

Teacher: *How old are you? [timi kati barsako bhayau?]*

Student: *I am... years old? [ma....barsako bhaya.]*

Teacher: *What is your father's name? [timro buwako namke ho?]*

Student: *My father's name is.... [mero buwako namho]*

Teacher: *What is your mother's name? [timro aamaa konamke ho?]*

Student: *My mother's name is.... [mero aamaako namho]*

Teacher: *What is your school's name? [timro skulko namke ho?]*

Student: *My school's name is.... [mero skulko nam.....ho]*

So far, I realize now that our teacher considerably emphasized the role of grammar explanation (Mitchell & Martin, 1997) and translation of the texts to the students. Like our English mantra, each of us had to memorize the pages of teacher given questions and answers to pass the examination. The imitation, repetition and memorization of those sets of questions and answers enhanced my rehearsal of the English language in those initial days (Ding, 2006). However, Bista (2011) claims only committing to memory does not help students learn the English language as expected. The teacher tested us using the same questions even in the final examinations. I cannot claim that I understood the lessons taught; I remember I could memorize and recall the answers when my teacher asked in class.

Enthusiastic English Educator

I was keen to learn English became evident when I reached eighth grade. This interest grew more concrete on the first day with a new teacher. During the third period, following Nepali and Mathematics, a tall teacher entered our classroom carrying two dictionaries: Ajanta's English-Nepali Dictionary and the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary. After exchanging warm greetings, he introduced himself as Jayaprakash Malla from Mugu, noting it was his first day at our school. With expressive gestures and body language, he began speaking in English. His captivating way of speaking left me mesmerized. Though, I could not fully grasp his accent, his gestures clearly conveyed the benefits of using dictionaries to learn English. As he spoke, I found myself reflecting on his words. As he continuously went on speaking, I wondered about the following:

What a talented English teacher! Perhaps everyone speaks like Jayaprakash Sir. Perhaps my father wants me to be like him, so he inspires me to study English well. I wish I could be like him.

Suddenly he stopped speaking and wrote questions on the board like: *What is your name? How old are you? Where do you live?* Then he asked everyone to write the answers to these questions. Since I had memorized the answers to these questions before in the previous classes, I wrote them confidently. He asked us to introduce ourselves. First, the teacher modeled an introduction: *Hello, my name is Jayaprakash (JP) Malla. I am 30 years old. I am from Mugu.* One by one, each student introduced themselves. Perhaps I was thinking somewhere else, so I could not concentrate on how my friends introduced themselves.

However, I remembered what the teacher had said in his introduction, and then there was my turn.

"Namaste, My name is Sangita. I am 30 years old. I read in class eight." Everyone laughed at me, but I was not aware of my own words until the teacher, with a smile, said, *"Sangita, are you 30 years old? I blushed. But the teacher said, "Do not worry. Can you write your introduction on the board?"* I wrote- *"My name is Sangita B.K. I am 12 years old. I am studying in grade eight."* The teacher smiled and said, *"Very good! Now, introduce yourself again"*. Then, I introduced myself saying *"Namaste, my name is Sangita B.K. I am from Karkibada. I study in grade eight. I love English subject."*

From that moment, my passion for learning English intensified. Inspired by Jayaprakash Sir, I resolved to master the language with the same enthusiasm he displayed. Jayaprakash Sir recommended we purchase *English Grammar* by Choodamani Gautam. The conversation between mother and daughter as follow;

Daughter: "Mom, I have to buy a grammar book today. The teacher has asked us to buy one."

Mother: "You should have told me before. I could have brought it when I went to the market yesterday."

Daughter: "The teacher said it today. How could I have said it yesterday? I need grammar at any cost; otherwise, sir will scold me."

Mother: "Now I do not have money. So, wait until Saturday."

My mother bought the book for me and studied it diligently, which deepened my interest in English. Eventually, I took and passed a district-level examination.

However, my challenging home environment often left me without food, leading me to question whether I could survive or continue my studies. At school, my friends kindly shared their tiffin, which became my only meal of the day, yet I still spent most days feeling hungry. Sometimes, I visited my maternal uncle's house, where I could sense food was more readily available. Each morning, I went to the jungle before heading to school. Sometimes, I lived in the forest without food and friends at night and climbed on the tree. Because when I went home, my elder brother would come with a "Khukuri", he said, I kill you. When there was a lot of disturbance in my home, I did not have good environment to study at home. Nobody at my school was aware of that situation. The school was located quite a distance from my village. Additionally, due to the numerous villages around, I was unable to share my issue with anyone. That time many villagers advised me "You should stop going to school, work at home, and there will be peace in your house. Your brother also loves you." It is inauspicious for a daughter to study. It is not good. It is possible to plow with an ox, but it is not possible to plow with a cow. But at that time, my thought was how to study or how to die. At home, my family and other people used to say, "Who has become greater by reading Dumuni (a very derogatory term in the Dalit community)?" You cannot do anything by reading. I did not listening their negative voiced. But that time, I

did not consider these things as weaknesses but as sources of strength for studies. Despite these hardships, I successfully passed ninth grade.

In the year 2066 (April, 2009), I reached in grade 10, but the atmosphere at the home remained unchanged. Soon after, my maternal uncle asked my father back home, and my father also returned from India. To create a harmonious environment where s could live together, my father invited people from all over the village. Even my brother stayed with us for a short time, but his attitude toward me did not change. Meanwhile, my brother started to drink alcohol and he also strayed to beat my father too. My father told me that I had no chance of passing the SLC exam. His worse stirred something in me, filling me with determination to prove him wrong. I decided to work hard and pass the SLC exam, not just for myself but to earn my family's respect. My main motivation was scholarship. Despite our financial struggles, the organization would provide all the necessary educational materials.

During that time, my elder brother became increasingly violent, frequently attacking and beating my family members. Eventually, the villagers intervened and arranged for him to live separately. With only one month left before the SLC board exam, they also arranged a peaceful environment for me at home so I could focus on my preparation. All of my friends took tuition classes but I did not get chance to take tuition class due to my financial condition. That time my father said, daughter you cannot pass your SLC because you are not well prepared. So, you cannot pass this exam. Anyway, I did not listen to other things. I studied at my home and had work hard to succeed despite challenges I faced.

Throughout my journey, I received a lot of encouragement. Thank you so much Sir / madam for your hard work and support. With this encouragement, a Dalit girl passed the SLC exam. However, many of my friends who took the exam would fail. Even though, I come from Dalit community, I was determined to succeed. No one in my family had studied beyond class ten. I was first child of my parents who passed the SLC exam. I had no guidance ahead of me. There was no one to show me right path, and I had no mentor. Despite this, I had support of my teachers.

I wanted to study nursing course, but circumstances were difficult. In my community, people believed that only girls should pursue nursing. I had heard about this for long time. During the three months leading us to SLC exam result, I would go to jungle to graze goats. The school I studied at was a model school in the Mugu

district, many of its students appeared for the SLC exam. I too passed securing 52.38% and placing in the second division.

There was a huge applause from both the teacher and the students. I felt competent in learning the English language. I loved the way the teacher encouraged me. He was passionate. He used only English throughout the class. I understood less from his speaking, but I felt empowered. Although that passionate teacher taught me only in grade eight, he became my favourite teacher. The way I was learning to respond to simple conversations in his class encouraged me to stand in the class, and even today, I feel the same. Only meaningful learning can have a lasting effect on the life of the learners (Neupane, 2007).

Besides encouraging students at school, JP Sir inspired. Highlighting the importance of students' besides encouraging students at school, JP Sir inspired. Teachers help bridge specific cultural barriers, give an account of their students' academic progress, and use parental help to build educational success. My father also had home from India then. Now, I understand that JP Sir was teaching us using the communicative approach to teaching English. Loumbourdi (2018) claims that communicative language teacher brings most of the inspiration and the material from the real world.

The teacher then showed more interest in me. Perhaps the teacher used only English inside and outside our classes because he was not habituated to speaking Nepali. Whatever the reason was, he was a potential source of guidance and mentorship instead of being distant and judgmental in my school life (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2014). I started feeling more attached to him and with an increased interest in learning English. I attended all of his classes even when I was sick and completed most of the tasks without feeling any hesitation in asking for his help. This helped me build a reasonable nexus with English and positively impacted my learning.

Changing Wind: Shifting Sand

It was Thursday in the second week of April 2008 when I began grade nine. I was excited to be a secondary-level student. It was 10:15 am we had just entered our classroom after the assembly. Jayaprakash Malla Sir came to our class. After we greeted him, he greeted us back with a smile. He said,

"Students, you will appear in the SLC examinations next year. So, you have to prepare for both classes nine and ten courses. SLC is called an iron gate. If

you cannot get good marks in English, you will not get admission to good programs. So, only the bright students will be successful in the future."

As he was continuously speaking about what we had to do or how to study, I was missing Jayaprakash Sir, who often said English was not a complicated subject, and anyone could learn it. Of course, I was excited to continue my secondary-level education. My secondary-level classes began with writing and memorizing the grammar rules. Our classes consisted of listening to the teacher translate English texts into Nepali equivalent, copying answers from the teacher's dictation, doing exercises from the textbooks and memorizing grammar rules and answers given by our teacher. After I bought the book 'Higher Level English Grammar, Composition and Punctuation' written by Choodamani Gautam, I turned almost all the pages in about a week. The grammar rules with examples were of genuine interest to me. Similarly, the paragraphs and compositions written in simple English attracted my attention. I was so interested in the book.

"I memorized the rules of active and passive voice, reported speech, articles, tag questions, synonyms, antonyms, etc., with curiosity when I was in grades nine and ten. Simultaneously, I read the Nepali equivalent of those rules and grammar to ensure that I could understand. My interest in that grammar book helped me complete the grammar exercises at school, and because of this, the English teacher often praised me in his class. Although I could not understand most of the texts, I memorized the answers provided by my teacher and often proved to be a studies student in the class. This helped me win a "grammar rule race" organized by my school at the beginning of grade ten.

It was in the second week of August 2009; there was a notice from the school administration informing secondary-level students to participate in the 'Grammar Rule Race' on the following Friday. When our English teacher motivated the whole class, I decided to participate. Accordingly, I continued memorizing the reported speech rules, articles, voices, tenses, etc. It was an exciting moment when I stood second in the competition."

The above data indicates the context of using an additional grammar book along with the textbooks indicates that my teachers tried their best to enhance their students' English learning in spite of limited resources and pedagogical skills they had then. Teaching grammar helps in second language learning by developing students' linguistic competence as part of communicative competence (Zhongganggao, 2001).

Since most classes constituted more writing than reading and speaking at my school level education, I felt speaking more challenging than other skills. Using the mother tongue in the target language class significantly interferes with speaking spontaneously (Denizer, 2017). Hence, it was because of the exposure to heavy use of my mother tongue, grammar rules, and memorization that made me less competent in speaking than in writing.

In addition to memorizing grammar rules and exercises from the textbooks, I wrote and remembered some words and their meanings from Ajanta's English-Nepali dictionary. On his every visit to the family, he would go to school and talk to my teachers about my studies. He would sit with me in the evening and ask me to read some pages from the dictionary. Mudzielwana (2014) states parents should meet their child's teachers, talk to them, and improvise or create time to assist their children in improving their studies. Now I understand that my parents were conscious of my education even though they could not get any formal education, and I feel they might have realized the importance of education.

The above text indicates that teaching English at my school in the early 2000s was regarded as teaching a subject, not a language. According to Sahan and Sahan (2021), school administration focused their attention on the students' board examinations. My daily routine in the English class consists of copying sets of questions and answers, paragraphs, letters, and essays along with grammar rules from the blackboard and memorizing them. However, Lightbown and Spada (2013) state, "[t]he imitation and rote memorization that characterizes audio-lingual approaches to language teaching is not effective if learners do not also use the sentences and phrases they are practicing in meaningful interaction" (p.202).

Now I realize that my school teachers did their best to educate us from whatever the way they were taught and trained to handle the classes with limited resources- encouraging memorization, repetition, and punishment. "Proficiency (however it is defined) in the target language is part of the knowledge base of teaching a language" (Graves, 2009. P. 120). The inability to produce the teachers' answers would result in severe punishments. There were various occasions I was punished for failing to recite the rules and actual examples of grammar provided by my teacher. Teachers who lack confidence in pedagogy or their content knowledge tend to emphasize memorization rather than creativity or imagination, believing that rote learning provides a strong foundation for students learning (Beghetto, 2009).

Similarly, Sahan and Sahan (2021) explore school administrators do not understand their importance of EFL or approaches to language teaching, so they focus their teaching learning activities on standardized exam-focused activities. The nearer the SLC examinations, the more time I had to stay at school to memorize things for the examinations. My teachers and parents were glad I could recite most of the textbook study materials. Culture, policy, and implicit assumptions about pedagogical practices influence students' creativity (Kettler, 2018). Hence, again during my secondary level studies in grades nine and ten, I had to learn through memorization of textbook exercises to prepare for the examinations. Participation in language activities, like in grade eight, was again reduced to prepare for the SLC examinations. The reason is that my home environment was not good. Returning to my memory of the past in grade ten, I now understood that finding a good English teacher was a real challenge for schools in my rural area.

Teachers' shortage is significant and growing (Gracia & Wiess, 2019). They further claim that the lack of qualified, trained and experienced teachers is even more serious in rural and poor schools. However, my teachers provided me with a ray of hope through their selfless responses to help me pass the examinations and set my foundation in English (Gnawali, 2018). This led to my success in the SLC examinations. It was a Saturday afternoon in the first week of 3 June 2010. It was the time for the rice and millet plantation. Although it was drizzling, mother and two other neighbouring aunts in our field. There were sometimes discussions about children and jokes and laughter in the field.

Meanwhile, Basanta Buda Uncle, a Sub-overseer in my village, came there and said to my mother, "Bhauju, badhai chha tapailai, Sangita SLC pass bhae!" [Sister-in-law, Congratulations! Sangita passed the SLC examination]. At that time, I went to the forest to graze goats. I did not know that my SLC results were good. My family knew because I had gone to the forest to graze the goats. Then my family, very happy, who did not have phones at that time informed someone and asked me to come home. When I heard that I had passed, I could not believe it; then I started crying, happy and scared, because after hearing what others said and seeing the condition of my home, I was not expecting to pass. I leaped up and down with immense happiness, laughing, and got home without my slippers. Didi Junapura just left the saplings in the field and said, "Lau nani badhai chha! Ani Nandarupa didi [to my mother]"

Aja ta khasi katnu parchahai! [Congratulations nani. And sister, we will have mutton today!]. I was thrilled but could not say anything. My mother left all the plants as they were and thanked Basanta uncle for bringing that good news. She hugged me, "Mero chhori, hamro naak rakhidiyau aja." [My dear daughter, you have saved our prestige]. I could read the ocean of happiness on my mother's face. My mother said, "Kati khushi lagyo mero chhorile SLC pass gari. [How happy I am now! My daughter passed SLC]. I looked up the results on Bashanta Uncle's mobile phone and, doubting what I saw, the next day headed to Nepal Telecom at the market to verify them. While I was listening to my results, disbelief washed over me since I could not see my mark sheet. At that time, all villagers congratulated me. Regardless, I was filled with excitement.

I now recognize that teacher-centered approaches, which required me to memorize textbook exercises and engage in a few structured activities, were instrumental in my success in school examinations (SSDP, 2016). My exposure to English language learning was confined to copying, memorizing, reciting, and reproducing limited study materials—such as question-answer sets, words and their meanings, paragraphs, and essays from textbooks until I passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations in 2010. I realize now that translation, parroting, and memorization built my language competence and provided a foundation for my higher education. However, as Robinson (2011) notes, the reliance on translation methods and the rote learning culture in schools can stifle students' creativity.

Thus, except in some cases in the previous classes, I completed SLC examinations through memorization and rote learning in 2010. I spent most of my study hours memorizing grammar rules such as tenses, voice, reported speech, paragraphs, essays, letters, etc., provided by my teachers. I always enjoyed attending school because my teachers often praised my memorization skills. The teaching of discrete language skills allowed me to focus more intensive learning writing (Gautam, 2019) and grammar than listening, speaking, and reading. At this stage, I understood that passing examinations by learning by heart was not enough for language development. Rote learning leaves no place in developing students' critical or creative thinking skills (Ahmed, 2010). Now I have realized that despite giving less focus on enhancing students' meaning-making process through interaction and communication, memorization and rote learning helped me develop my linguistic competence.

Mitchell and Martin (1997) shared a similar finding that teachers adopt the highly structured and controlled quality of observed lessons to sustain students' motivation and confidence.

Journey with the English Language: Motivation Matters

Getting an SLC degree was a matter of pride in my village, and I was one of those few girls' candidates who passed the SLC examination in 2010. Most people would send their boys' jobs in India and girls got marriage after completing grade ten. There were a few conscious and financially-able parents/guardians who would send their children to college in the cities like as Surkhet, Kathmandu, Nepalgunj, and I was none of them who got such an opportunity to pursue higher studies.

Since my school days, I have been interested in pursuing higher education in English because of my communities and family regular negative inspiration and encouragement. But my father always suggested that I study English to live an improved social and economic life. Pandey (2021) shares a similar experience that "Education has an enormous effect in our lives; it does not only empower us financially also helps us by providing emotional, cultural, and social support". Accordingly, as soon as: I passed the SLC examination, many questions were playing in my mind, like what to do next, where to go, what to study. I asked my father, but he did not speak with me. That time, I went to my school to get a mark sheet and certificate. At that time, Lokendra Bahadur Malla, Indra Kumari Ranabhat Madam were at school. They asked me. Which is your favourite subject? I gave the answer about geography. Lokendra Sir said this subject is not at our school. He said English and Nepali subjects are at our school for Study. I decided to study English at Shree Mahakali Higher Secondary School to become a successful person. Despite my strong interest in choosing English as a major subject at college, one of my school teachers said, *"Sangita, students who pass SLC from government schools of the village with low marks in English cannot study difficult subjects like English, you know."*

Believing that English is the most challenging subject, also shares that English is not an easy subject because the students' achievement seems low at every study level compared to other subjects. Now, I realize that my teacher might not have wanted me to quit or fail the course because of the difficulty of the course. Students' high dropout is a stumbling block for the nation (Roy & Sharma, (2019), and lower academic achievement in school predicts students' drop out of University. My teacher

tried to convince me to choose English as my major at college, my heart was compelling me to opt for English.

I joined I. Ed. with English Education at Shree Mahakali Higher Secondary School, Gamgadhi, Mugu; however, two other senior students created fear about the difficulty in studying English at college and persuaded me not to choose it. One of the teachers helped me fill in the form, and the other advised me, saying,

"Baini, English is really challenging at college. You are from a community school, and most students from these schools fail in English. So, you'd better get admission in Nepali." Meanwhile, another added, "Baini, I have not been able to pass the first-year English examination."

Again, the senior students' utterances reminded me of my school teacher's advice to take other subjects rather than English if I wanted to get the degree. I started taking English classes regularly and decided to pursue English education. The teacher and his classroom strategies revived my interest in studying and pursuing a university degree in major English. Here, I present a snapshot of my first-day experience in the major English class:

In a classroom of nearly thirty students, I sat nervously on the second-to-last bench. The English teacher, a tall, plain-looking man in his early forties with a confident voice, introduced himself as Mahesh Kumar Malla, expressing his desire for every student to succeed in their exams. He instructed us to briefly share our names and hometowns, moving from the first desk to the last in an orderly fashion. As we spoke, Mr. Malla listened intently, occasionally offering short remarks like "Yes," "Thank you," "Wonderful!" or "I love that place." Before I could fully recall my own introduction, the final student had finished. Taking a deep breath, he asked us to remain silent and announced, "Now, let's see if I can recall each of your names." The room fell completely quiet. He proceeded to name nearly every student, gazing at each face from the first bench to the last in a rhythmic pattern, missing only three or four names. The class erupted in enthusiastic applause, amazed by his near-perfect memory. He noted that the names he recalled were proper nouns. Captivated by Mr. Malla's engaging teaching style, I felt inspired and decided to pursue English studies, confident that it would pave the way for a successful career.

I felt a sense of relief when I encountered a teacher who inspired his students to learn English. His words during the first class of my Intermediate in Education

(I.Ed.) reignited my passion for the language. I began attending his classes diligently, engaging with him outside of class, and seeking his advice on passing exams. He encouraged me to take notes, record meanings of unfamiliar words, and practice writing repeatedly to improve my English proficiency. During our interactions, he consistently asked about my daily writing, urging me to memorize and write down what was taught in class to prepare for a career in teaching or other significant roles. Research indicates that students often prioritize English over other subjects, such as Nepali, for career development at the university level (Sherpa, 2022). I made it a habit to write and memorize at least a few new words from the English textbook daily, enabling me to confidently answer questions in class. This consistent engagement with tasks extended to other subjects, fostering familiarity with other teachers.

Over time, my efforts earned recognition from both teachers and classmates, boosting my confidence in pursuing an English degree. Inspired by my teacher's accent, I began to aspire to become an English teacher after completing my I. Ed. In 2012, after my exams, I visited private schools and local organizations in search for jobs. Within a week, I secured a job at a cooperative institution. Instruction was challenging, but becoming an accountant filled me with pride, earning the approval of my family. I was not satisfied with this job, because different my study field. At that time, I was waiting for twelve class results. Finally, I had passed I. Ed.

English as My Major Subject: Preparing for My Career

In this section, I explore my experiences of English language learning in college life, especially at college, from intermediate to master's levels, which shaped my identity as a learner and teacher.

Passing the SLC examinations was taken as a matter of pride not only for the students but for the parents and the school in my village then. English was taken as the most difficult subject at school and SLC was regarded as the Iron Gate in any student's life. It was perhaps the reason why our English teachers in both grades nine and ten made us memorize and recite most of the study materials from the very beginning of academic session. Questions in SLC are designed to test students' memorization (Dawadi, 2018). I had no option except to follow the teacher's words,

"timiharule purai ghokenau bhane keta ho, jaaulaa India bhada majhna!"

[Boys, if you do not mug up everything, you will go to wash dishes in India].

And to the girls, "Ani, Ketiharu, yadi timiharle pariksha pass garenu bhane, jaaula poika ghara!"

[And girls, if you do not pass the examinations, you will get to your groom's home].

The frequent repetition and memorization of the texts would compel us to prepare for the written examinations rather than learning language at school. “The curriculum meant textbooks, and pedagogy usually meant lecture” (Sharma, 2018, p. x). The teaching-learning solely concentrated on textbook exercises. I feel those utterances of my English teacher echoing in my ear when I visit the school even today. The pass rate in SLC for public schools was much lower in comparison to that of private schools. I was one of the thirty-nine students who passed the examinations of the 2010 batch from my school among 110 students, and I was satisfied with what I had achieved. Passing the examinations was my dream then, and I had achieved it. It was Saturday morning in the first week of 3 July, 2010. On the way to his home, my father went on saying to me:

Krishna Prasad Murali Sharma Dev Bahadur MallaSir and Indra Kumari Ranabhat Madam will give you good ideas for your education. What to study? I was very interested in taking English as my major subject at college; I could not express my desire before him because the teacher created a fear of English at the beginning of the conversation. As we reached Ex-Principal Sir's home, we greeted one another. He said to my father." Krishna Prasad Murari Sharma: "Your interest is good, but English is a complex subject for you. He counseled my father for my study.

Reflecting on the text, I initially felt critical of the school's lack of effective career counseling for students pursuing higher education. However, I later realized that evolving trends in teaching methods have made a significant impact. While course content and teaching materials are often cited as major factors discouraging students from choosing English as a major in Pakistan (Ali & Pathan, 2017), my own experience suggests a different perspective.

*Father's inspiration for duties Mother's motivation for responsibilities
The respect my English teachers received in the village which I witnessed live
My desire to be like them was still alive by studying English in college to
strive for a happy life through skills and knowledge.*

My parents, my pre-primary level head teacher, my English teacher in eighth grade and head teacher of school inspired me to learn English to uplift my family's social and financial status, social recognition, and self-dependence. I still remember

my mother saying, "*Chhori maanchhe bhayasi, dherai padher paisa pani kamaune, ijyyat pani kamauna parchha.*"

["Being a daughter, you should get higher education degrees for both money and social prestige"].

Malgwi et al. (2008) also claim men were considerably more influenced by job opportunities and the level of compensation in the field while choosing subjects for their higher studies. I was not worried about the marks and percentage in my SLC results, but I was determined to take English as my major subject at college. Student interest, attitude and impression, related exposure, and the nature of subject specialization influence their choice of subject at a higher level (Tsikati, 2019).

After passing the SLC exam in 2067, I faced a new challenge: securing financial support for further studies. With no resources from home, I relied on the hope of continued assistance from the United Mission to Nepal (UMN), though its continuation was uncertain. On the advice of my neighbouring uncle, Birkha Bahadur Sarki, my father and I visited the UMN office in Gamgadhi, where they provided limited financial support for my staff nurse entrance exam. We then traveled to Surkhet to complete the application process, but unfortunately, I was not selected for the program.

Disheartened, I was further discouraged by my father's words: "There's no need to check the results. We cannot afford your education anyway." His statement left me feeling uncertain about my future. However, Krishna Murari Prasad Sharma, Ex-principal of Mahakali Higher Secondary School and an acquaintance of my father, offered reassurance. He said, "Do not worry, I will take care of it," and encouraged me to pursue English as my major subject, emphasizing its importance for my future growth. Additionally, Lokendra Bahadur Malla informed me that I had been awarded a scholarship from the SLC board for grades 11 and 12. With the support of USAID Nepal, facilitated by Govinda Rokaya, and continued assistance from UMN's partner Gramin Samudayik Sanstha (GSS), I enrolled in grade 11 in 2067. During my higher secondary education, I also acquired computer skills and worked part-time at a cooperative organization while maintaining my studies. Ultimately, I successfully completed grades 11 and 12, marking a significant milestone in my educational journey.

My First Class: Raised Rays of Hope

Meanwhile, someone, perhaps a college employee, patched a notice on the board stating our classrooms. No sooner had we (about thirty students) entered the class than a tall young teacher with the book "Practical English Grammar Exercises 1" in his hand entered our class:

Good morning students! You look so good. My name is Mahesh Kumar Malla, and I will teach you Major English. At first, I thought it was not my class, so I needed to go out. But again, I thought, "Let me take this class today! And I will go to my class tomorrow."

"Dear students, if you study this English book, you will pass the exam and prepare for other difficult texts in the second year. This grammar book is the base for your English and good jobs in the teaching field." Then he wrote five rules of the 'articles: a, an, the' with examples on the blackboard. "And, dear Students, now read them. Let me see who first recites all these rules with examples."

He looked, sounded and behaved like Jayaprakash Sir, my English teacher in grade eight. I liked how he spoke, wrote and moved back and forth in the classroom. As I had practiced memorizing even longer texts in grade ten, I mugged up these rules and examples of articles.

Like the other two students who were asked to recite the rules before me, I recited all the rules and examples in my turn. The teacher seemed content: "Great! The three of you did very well. This year, I got really good students like you in my class. I'm sure you will get very good marks in Major English. "The first major English class ended with the teacher's compliments on the class. As the teacher was going out of the classroom, I followed him, and with hesitation: "Sir, I'm also a major English student.

Analyzing the text, the rays of my hope for learning English increased after getting admission to major English subject. Perhaps this thread of hope led me to the encouraging major English class from the first day of my college life. The new learning environment, positive feelings towards the new teacher, and my desire to learn English intrinsically re-motivated me (Jung, 2011) towards being a regular student in major English class since the first class of my college life. Therefore, I worked hard in reading, practicing and memorizing the rules of other lessons like tenses, conditionals, infinitives, gerunds, active and passive voices and reported

speech from the textbook. Although teachers made us memorize texts for examinations in all other subjects in but first and second years of my intermediate education, they encouraged us to better education in their respective subjects. Harmer (2007) also shares students feel more comfortable in teacher-student interactions if teachers establish a positive rapport with them. Because the same motivating teacher taught me the course "*Teaching Approaches, Methods and Techniques*" in the second year, my passion for being an English teacher got more intense. I knew English's significant value for my career (Jung, 2011), so I worked hard to recite all the textbook materials. I continued the almost same level of hard work till I passed my intermediate level in English education.

There were courses like English Structure, Speech and Oral, Reading and Writing, and Methods of Teaching English. I passed those courses by memorizing the lecture notes, class notes, guidebooks and guess papers; Now, I feel that memorization strongly impacted my English language competence rather than communication skills. I cannot remember any classroom interaction except the teachers asking students to recite what they had been assigned during those two years. Our English teacher Mahesh Kumar Malla although he did not conduct class and encouraged me to work hard.

Repetition and rote learning are the most engaging, proficient and helpful language learning activities that involve language learners in the authentic and communicative use of language (Cook, 1994). Coming to this stage, I realized that I was given the necessary study materials for memorization, which led me to succeed in the pen-and-paper-based examinations. Reflecting back on my school days, I came to understand that my teachers supported me to the best of their and knowledge and pedagogical skills even in the under-resourced environment (Gnawali, 2018).

Teachers use lectures and tutorials in conventional face-to-face undergraduate courses as dominant forms of instruction (Nyamapfene, 2010). Even at my intermediate level, I was exposed to more lectures, dictations and memorizations of those dictated study notes than classroom discussions. This helped me pass the examinations so that I got opportunities to enhance further my academic as well as pedagogical skills in higher studies. Nasrollahi-Mouziraji and Nasrollahi- Mouziraji (2015) share similar findings regarding memorization that it is a helpful approach in the early stage of language learning. Still, it is inadequate for learning a complex phenomenon like language. Perhaps it was why I felt incompetent in spoken English,

which I realized during my visit to India and Kathmandu after completing my intermediate education.

Bachelor Level: A Turning Point

In 2070 BS (2013 AD), I enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program at Rara Campus in Naura, Mugu and pursued my Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) while working simultaneously. Health challenges, including meningitis breathing difficulties during my bachelor's studies and left me physically weak, impacting my ability to attend classes and focus during my Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in English. The five-year period from 2070 to 2075 BS was a transformative phase for my academic career. As my classes were scheduled in the morning, I balanced my studies with my work for three years until I completed my bachelor's degree. Similar to my intermediate-level studies, my bachelor's coursework was often focused on obtaining certifications and degrees. However, subjects like Teaching Methods in English and English for Mass Communication stood out, as they provided practical opportunities to engage with the language, significantly enhancing my English proficiency compared to other subjects.

My passion for learning English intensified as I juggled college studies with work eight to ten hours daily office. During my B.Ed., I was introduced to concepts like student-centered teaching, motivation, reinforcement, and student engagement. According to Kassem (2018), student-centered teaching enhances knowledge absorption and development. While most of my classes relied on lecture notes, guidebooks, self-study, and memorization, certain activities left a lasting impact on my English language learning journey. One memorable session was in my English for Mass Communication class during the second week of January 2014, conducted by my teacher in my second year of B.Ed. studies, which profoundly influenced my approach to language learning.

The teacher entered the class with a bundle of newspapers. We greeted him, and so did he. He said, "Today, you will learn how we prepare a newspaper." Then he displayed some English newspapers, namely 'The Rising Nepal' and 'The Kathmandu Post, and distributed these papers to us. When we looked at those newspapers' photographs, he had written the essential components of newspapers: the headline, lead, body, news section, advertisements, feature news, readers' letters to the editor, etc. After the teacher introduced each term with its meaning from the blackboard, we located those components on the

newspapers we had got from him. Finally, the teacher assigned us to prepare a handwritten four-page English newspaper within a week.

Delving deep into my memory, I remember it was the first project my teacher had assigned me as a part of my practical examination. On the same evening, I bought a large paper sheet and other necessary stationeries for my project in English. Although I felt difficult to start the project initially, I met my teacher every day to get help in every step of writing. Finally, within the deadline, I prepared a four-page coloured handwritten newspaper on Saturday, February, 20, 2015. Although I had to spend many hours reading and writing and consulting my teacher and friends for improvement, I did not feel exhausted. Instead, I enjoyed doing all these. When I presented the newspaper and shared how I prepared it for my class on Sunday, my teacher praised me for my hard work. Patting my shoulder, he said, "Well done, Sangita, you've done the best task!"

The task of preparing a handwritten newspaper was a great achievement for me. Although I did not understand the exact meaning of the news items I had copied from other newspapers, I felt I learned much about grammar and sentence structure. After my teacher returned the newspaper, I showed it to each of my friends. Their compliments would be, "Wow! How did you make it?"

It was about 7:30 pm in the first week of February. I went home to see my parents and especially to show my tasks to them. They were keeping themselves warm near the fire in the oven. As soon as I showed my newspaper to them, my father took it in his hands and looked at it, although he would not understand English. With happiness on his face, he said to my mother, "Dekheu ta, kati ramro English patrika tayar garechha chhorile?"

Jayaprakash Sir, Sushil Kumar Bham Sir jastai English bolnasakyo bhane ta hamro chhori le pani kairamro jaagir khanchha!"

["Did you see what a beautiful newspaper our daughter has prepared?" If she learns to speak English like Jayaprakash, Sushil, she will get a hi-paying job like him]. My happiness had no boundaries when my father compared me to Jayaprakash Sir, who taught English. However, I knew I had to work harder to succeed.

During my bachelor's degree, I noticed significant improvement in my English language skills. Echoing Robinson et al. (2016), while my classes were not entirely student-centered, some teachers encouraged us to act as co-creators in the classroom, fostering a sense of ownership over our learning. Engaging in group activities, such as producing newspapers, brochures, and leaflets as assignments, and participating in role-plays and simulations, boosted my confidence in using English. Authentic materials bring real-world contexts into the classroom, greatly enhancing the ESL learning experience (Kelly, 2002). I now recognize that my teachers used these materials to connect us with our cultural context, deepening our understanding and interest in the subject. My participation in these activities significantly improved my linguistic and communicative competence in English.

Language tasks and projects formed the cornerstone of my English learning during my bachelor's degree. According to Chagas and Pedro (2020), students enhance their communication skills in higher education through presenting the outcomes of their tasks and projects. My active involvement in these activities made me feel more proficient in English compared to earlier classes, where teachers simply provided answers. Kassem (2018) notes that student engagement in active thinking and participation during language activities leads to more effective learning than teacher-centered instruction, where students remain passive recipients of knowledge. As a result, I gradually experienced notable improvements in my English communication skills.

So, between 2016 and 2017, with support from the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) despite my father's rejection, I moved to Kathmandu for a one-year internship with UMN. After completing the internship, I faced a dilemma: whether to return to my village or seek further opportunities in Kathmandu. Nevertheless, I completed my B.Ed. in 2075 BS (2018 AD) from Rara Campus in Mugu.

Master's in English Education

After completing my Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), I saw limited opportunities in my village and decided to stay in Kathmandu, where I began working at a cooperative. In 2075 BS (2018 AD), I took the M.Ed. entrance exam and was successfully selected. I enrolled in the Master of Education (M.Ed.) program, which operated on a semester system. However, balancing regular class attendance with my job proved challenging due to the program's structure. To manage my expenses, I contacted my scholarship sponsor (*Kirsti Kirjavaines*), a generous supporter from

Finland, who provided additional financial assistance. With her support, I successfully completed my M.Ed., fulfilling my long-standing dream of becoming an English teacher. Now, I am fully dedicated to my teaching profession, actively engaging in my role with passion and commitment.

During my bachelor's third-year class, one of my English teachers and compulsory subject teacher Lal Keshar Rokaya advised, "To improve your English, you must leave your hometown and embrace new challenges." This advice resonated deeply with my aspirations. When I came to Kathmandu, my father had put many obstacles in my way, and he had said that my daughter should not go to the city for study. If you go to the city, you will be ruined. I did not listen to that thing, but I came to study against my father's advice. While studying at the university, I often did not go home because if I went home, I would not be allowed to come back, that's why I did not go. My parents could not have supported my higher education; I had been financially independent since starting my bachelor's degree, covering college fees and stationery myself. My primary concern was whether I could secure a job in Kathmandu, given my limited English proficiency. Coming from a rural village where pursuing a master's degree in Kathmandu was considered a matter of social prestige, I broke barriers as the first Dalit girl from my community to enroll in an M.Ed. in English Education at the Central Department of English Education, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur Kathmandu, in 2019. My English skills improved significantly during my time in Kathmandu.

My master's journey was not without significant challenges, primarily due to financial difficulties and family responsibilities. As the sole supporter of my younger brother, I had to manage his expenses alongside my college fees, which placed a considerable burden on my resources. Despite these hardships, the semester system at TU, a prestigious institution in Nepal, proved beneficial. The requirement to attend classes daily helped me build confidence and significantly improved my fluency in English, as it encouraged consistent engagement and practice. These experiences, while demanding, shaped my resilience and determination to succeed academically. So, the best part of my father is his discourage that gave me even more energy to study, and I am very happy today.

My journey as a Dalit girl from a rural village in Nepal to becoming the first in my community to pursue a Master's in English Education at Tribhuvan University is a powerful testament to resilience, determination, and the transformative impact of education. Facing significant barriers, financial constraints, limited English proficiency, and the societal weight of being a trailblazer from a marginalized community, I navigated a challenging path with remarkable perseverance.

The advice from my teachers to leave my hometown and embrace new challenges became a guiding principle, pushing me to relocate to Kathmandu and confront the uncertainties of securing a job while pursuing higher education. Financial independence since my bachelor's degree, coupled with my family responsibility, underscores the immense personal sacrifices I made to achieve my dream of becoming an English teacher. The support from UNM's DGSP scholarship Finnish sponsor (Kirsti Kirjavainens' team) was pivotal, alleviating financial burdens and enabling me to focus on my studies, highlighting the critical role of external support in overcoming systemic barriers faced by marginalized individuals.

The semester-based M.Ed. program at Tribhuvan University, though demanding due to its rigorous structure, played a crucial role in shaping my academic and personal growth. Balancing a job at a cooperative with regular class attendance was challenging, so I left my cooperative job. Arriving in Kathmandu and registering at a university for my master's program presented a significant challenge, as my entire educational background, including my undergraduate studies, took place in Mugu, leaving me unfamiliar with a city university. My parents used to say that you had to get employment after graduating from SLC. Even if you study, you shouldn't attend college, and you shouldn't study more than that. It was their belief, you could study at home and you do not go to college. Due to my interest and the wise counsel of my teachers, Positive changes and energy for my studies resulted from everything my family mentioned. Until, I have continued my study. I am the first Dalit girl from the Mugu district to enroll in the university's master's program. Initially, I found it quite uncomfortable, but the teachers' outstanding way of interacting made the experience enjoyable and manageable. Yet daily, my respected colleges' teachers encouraged me, so that fostered confidence and significantly enhanced my English fluency, breaking through initial limitations in language proficiency. My reliance on lecture notes, textbooks, and past exam questions to pass semester exams reflects a strategic approach to overcoming resource constraints, while the prestige of studying at TU as

a Dalit woman carried profound social significance. My journey not only challenged societal norms but also redefined possibilities for others in my community, demonstrating how education, resilience, and targeted support can empower marginalized individuals to transcend systemic barriers and achieve their aspirations with passion and commitment. Now, all of my life's challenges have been turned into positive energy, and I am currently employed as a teacher.

My experiences in the finance sector but I am an English Language student. However, I continued my studies in English. Now, I am progressing toward a transformative teaching journey. Reflecting on my path, I marvel at how someone from a remote village, one study background and another working area, educated through translation and rote learning, and initially discouraged from majoring in English, became an inspiring teacher in an urban setting.

Recognizing the financial, emotional, cultural, and social effects of education on my life (Pandey, 2021), I chose to examine my path as an English language teacher through this study. My "painful and gainful lived experiences" (Luitel & Dahal, 2021, p. 1) with family, community, and education have significantly influenced my educational and professional identity. Initially motivated to learn about others, I came to understand the importance of critically reflecting on my own experiences within wider cultural contexts. Consequently, this study focuses on my evolution as both an English language learner and educator, emphasizing my journey toward becoming a transformative teacher. In the subsequent sections, I elaborate on how these experiences have heightened my awareness of English language learning and teaching.

My Learning of the English Language: Reflecting on the Journey

This theme explores my lived experiences and practices on how I began learning English as a student at my primary level and continued to secondary and tertiary levels, setting my foundation for becoming a transformative English teacher. These stages of my academic life, which occurred in an under-resourced environment (Gnawali, 2018), were not very rewarding. Yet, I believe they all might have been the foundation of my professional life as I kept on successfully transforming the obstacles into opportunities. While exploring my academic growth, I present examples to prove how my simple rural life experiences shaped my interest in learning English. Such incidents have become meaningful milestones of my present career as a transformed educator of English language education. Throughout the chapter, I have woven my

English language learning trajectory through dialogues, monologues, pictures, and poems.

The analysis and interpretation of results focus on the my personal narratives, reflections, and informal conversations to uncover themes related to their English language learning journey from elementary to master's level in rural Nepal. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by the conceptual framework, which integrates socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The findings are interpreted to address the research questions, highlighting the interplay of socio-cultural barriers, facilitators, pedagogical shifts, and personal transformation. Below is a detailed analysis and interpretation of the results, organized through key themes.

These results reveal that my English language learning journey was shaped by economic, socio-cultural barriers, facilitated by motivation and resilience, and transformed by pedagogical shifts and reflective practice. These findings address the research questions; study the challenges, and transformative processes that enabled me to become a reflective educator. The study offers actionable insights for improving English education in marginalized communities, emphasizing equitable resources, inclusive pedagogies, and supportive networks. This analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of my journey, grounded in theoretical and empirical frameworks, with clear implications for educational practice and future research.

Chapter V

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter consist major findings of the study, conclusion and recommendation drawn after analyzing and interpreting of the data. Similarly, I have concluded with my reflections which include the challenges, conflict, dilemmas encounter while preparing the overall study.

Findings of the Study

On the basis of analysis and interpretation of the collected data, I summarized the study and drew the following findings of the study.

Early Childhood: Learning Through Family and Community

My early exposure to English was significantly shaped by my parents' encouragement, despite their limited literacy and financial constraints in Nepal's remote Karnali province, Mugu. My father's efforts to teach me the alphabet and provide educational materials, coupled with my mother's pride in my achievements, created a supportive home environment that fostered an initial interest in English and sustained my educational aspirations. It indicates that parental support is critical in overcoming socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and gender biases favoring sons, which are prevalent in rural Nepal.

Influence of Teachers and External Support

Teachers, particularly the head teacher in primary school and Jayaprakash Malla in grade eight, played a pivotal role in boosting my confidence and motivation to learn English through praise and interactive teaching methods. The scholarship scheme for the Dalit girls was also crucial financial support which alleviated my family hardships and enabled me to continue my educational journey. This information indicates that supportive teachers and targeted financial assistance were decisive factors in sustaining and motivating the educational journey of a Dalit girl.

Challenges of Traditional Pedagogical Methods

My early English education relied heavily on memorization, repetition, and translation through the grammar-translation method, which facilitated in my exam success but limited my communicative competence, particularly in speaking. This traditional approach, prevalent in rural Nepalese schools, constrained holistic language development. This information shows that teaching methods also affect students' learning attitude.

Socio-Cultural Barriers and Resilience

I faced significant societal obstacles, including caste-based discrimination (untouchability), gender biases, and pressure from an unsupportive elder brother advocating early marriage. These challenges compounded by domestic responsibilities, posed barriers to my education. However, my resilience and determination transformed these obstacles into opportunities for personal and academic growth. This information indicates that deep-rooted caste and gender discrimination, along with family and domestic pressures, create substantial barriers to education. It also shows that resilience and determination enable the transformation of the hardships into stepping stones for personal and academic growth.

Shift to Student-Centered Learning and Professional Transformation

During my Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), student-centered activities, such as creating a handwritten newspaper in the English for Mass Communication class, marked a shift from rote-based learning to more interactive and practical approaches, enhancing my linguistic and communicative skills. My experiences in Kathmandu during my Master of Education (M.Ed.) and internship with UMN broadened my perspective, reinforcing commitment to becoming an English teacher and fulfilling my childhood aspiration. This information indicates that practical, student-centered learning experiences significantly enhanced linguistic and communicative competence beyond rote methods. It also shows that higher education and internship opportunities expanded perspectives and strengthened commitment to a lifelong teaching career.

This experience shows the importance of holistic education that integrates intellectual, social, and creative aspects, enabling me to transition from a rote learner to a transformative educator. These themes collectively illustrate the interplay of personal, social, and educational factors in my transformative journey, offering insights for educators, policymakers, and learners in similar contexts.

So, these above themes collectively address the research questions by highlighting the socio-cultural barriers (poverty, caste, gender biases), facilitators (motivation, scholarships, teacher support), pedagogical shifts (from rote learning to communicative approaches), and transformative processes (resilience, reflection) that shaped my journey. The findings suggest actionable insights for improving English education in marginalized communities, including equitable resource allocation, inclusive pedagogies, and robust support networks. My story underscores the

transformative power of education in overcoming systemic barriers, offering a model for resilience and reflective practice in educational contexts.

Conclusions

The study highlights my transformative journey from an English language learner to a professional educator, emphasizing the pivotal roles of parents support, teacher encouragement, and personal determination in overcoming socio-cultural and economic barriers, and an unsupportive home environment due to my elder brother's behavior. Early exposure to English through my father and inspirational teachers, such as Jayaprakash Malla, ignited a passion for learning despite the limitations of a rote-based, memorization-heavy educational system prevalent in under-resourced rural Nepalese schools. While traditional teaching methods, including grammar-translation and recitation, provided foundational knowledge, they constrained the development of communicative competence. The transition to higher education introduced more interactive, student-centered approaches, such as newspaper projects during my B.Ed., which significantly enhanced practical language use and proficiency, underscoring the importance of innovative pedagogical practices in language acquisition.

Systemic barriers, including poverty, gender biases, and health challenges, caste-based discrimination, including derogatory remarks (e.g., "Dumuni") and beliefs that girls should not pursue higher education, posed persistent obstacles throughout my educational journey, particularly as a Dalit girl in rural Nepal. Despite these challenges, intrinsic motivation, bolstered by scholarships and supportive figures, enabled me to progress from primary education to a master's degree and ultimately establish a career as an English teacher. The study reveals that the conventional exam-focused system, which prioritized written skills over oral proficiency, limited holistic language development. However, my resilience and strategic use of available resources, such as reading English newspapers and teaching in schools, facilitated professional growth. This narrative illustrates how personal agency, combined with external support, can transform socio-economic challenges into opportunities for educational and professional success.

The findings advocate for systemic educational reforms to address inequities in resource distribution and pedagogical practices, particularly for marginalized learners. The study underscores the need for student-centered teaching approaches that prioritize communicative competence over rote memorization to foster both

linguistic and personal growth. Additionally, it highlights the critical role of supportive networks families, teachers, and scholarships in empowering learners from under-resourced backgrounds. By sharing this journey, it aims to inspire other educators and learners particularly in third-world contexts, to pursue transformative educational paths. The study calls for broader reforms to create equitable learning environments, ensuring that all students, regardless of socio-economic or cultural constraints, can realize their full potential through education.

Thus, it can be concluded that an auto-ethnographic study illustrates the profound transformative potential of English language education in overcoming socio-economic and cultural marginalization for Dalit women in rural Nepal. Despite entrenched barriers like poverty, caste discrimination, and traditional rote-based teaching, my resilience, supported by family, teachers, and scholarships, enabled my evolution from a struggling learner to a dedicated English educator. The narrative emphasizes the need for equitable policies, inclusive pedagogies, and resource allocation to foster communicative competence and social mobility. By documenting this journey, the study inspires educators and policymakers to prioritize student-centered approaches, ultimately promoting educational equity and empowering future generations from similar backgrounds.

Recommendations

On the basis of above-mentioned findings and conclusion, the following recommendations have been proposed. The recommendations have been categorized into the different three different categories.

Policy related

- On the basis of findings and conclusion, following recommendation can be proposed at policy level: Policymakers should increase funding for rural education, with a particular focus on enhancing English language programs to improve access and quality.
- Scholarship schemes should be expanded to support marginalized students, such as Dalit girls, ensuring equitable access to higher education opportunities.
- Some provisions are presented in our constitution and other acts but implementation level is poor, so implementation level should be made strong, no one gets chance to rust out form the area of law.

- Policymakers conduct teacher training for making them know how to present themselves in front of the learners and how to deal with the students who came from different backgrounds and interests in the classroom.
- Teacher training programs should be reformed to prioritize communicative language teaching (CLT) over traditional rote memorization methods to foster effective language acquisition.
- Policymakers and curriculum designers are concerned with more practical content where the students can practice more.

Practice Related

The following points can be the practice related recommendations:

- Educational institutions should adopt interactive pedagogies, such as project-based learning and group discussions, to enhance students' language skills and engagement.
- Teachers should incorporate real-world materials, such as newspapers and role-plays, into lessons to make learning more engaging and relevant for students.
- The teacher should be friendly and co-operative with the students and should not irritate the mistake of the learner.
- There is better to provide the use of information communication technology-based materials in the teaching and learning process.
- Teachers should be up-to-date with the dynamic content and should focus on practical teaching rather than theoretical.
- Existed laws and provisions should be implemented properly.
- It is recommended to implement the reward system and different scholarship programs for the best students in class.

Further Research

This study also could not cover all the areas of research. There might have some limitation as well. While doing this thesis, I encountered with several topics and ideas. However, I have pointed out some related areas for the further study. So, I recommended following further research related recommendations:

- Researchers should investigate the long-term impacts of scholarship programs on the educational outcomes of Dalit girls in Nepal to assess their effectiveness and inform policy.
- This Study should explore effective transitional strategies that support rural students moving to urban higher education institutions, addressing barriers and opportunities.
- This research should examine the integration of technology in English language learning within resource-limited rural settings to identify scalable, effective solutions.
- This research is qualitative in nature. So, further research can be carried out taking quantitatively data.
- The new research can be focused on role of EFL teacher to motivate in English language learning.
- This research will provide a valuable secondary source for the researchers.

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Appendices

Appendix I

A conversation on Beginning of English Language Learning

The following is a transcript of an interview conducted in a classroom in a rural public school in Karnali, Nepal, on the third Tuesday of April 2003. The interview captures a dialogue between the English teacher, Chetana Shahi Malla, and an eight-year-old student (representing the class) during the introduction of English as a new subject in grade four.

Teacher: Hello, children! My name is Chetana Shahi Malla, and I will be your English teacher this year. Are you all excited to learn English?

Student: Yes, mam! I am excited, but also a little nervous. We only had three subjects until grade three, and now we have five. I hope I can keep up with English.

Teacher: Do not worry, you will do fine. English is a fun subject! Today, we are going to start with the English alphabet. Let's make it simple. Do you know any English letters already?

Student: Yes, mam. My father taught me at home. He used to sing, "A for Apple, B for Ball, C for Cat." I can recite some of them!

Teacher: That's wonderful! You are already ahead. Let's build on that. Everyone, take out your pencils and notebooks. I am going to write the first few letters on the blackboard and I want you to copy them carefully. Ready?

Student: Hunchha, mam! (Okay, mam!)

Teacher: Good, good. Now, let's chant these letters together. Repeat after me: A, B, C, D... *[Teacher points to the blackboard with her bamboo cane.]*

Students: A, B, C, D... *[Students chant in unison.]*

Teacher: Excellent! Now, I will say each letter in English, and then I'll tell you what it means in Nepali. For example, "A" is for "Apple," which is "Syaau" in Nepali. Write that down, and let's practice saying it.

Student: *[Scribbles in notebook.]* Teacher, will we learn to speak English words, too?

Teacher: Yes, of course! But first, you need to learn the letters and words by heart. If you memorize them well, you'll do great in exams. Let's try another: "B" is for "Ball," which is "Bal" in Nepali. Follow me.

Students: B – Ball – Bal!

Teacher: Very good! Keep practicing like this, and you will all be able to write and recite the alphabet on your own soon. If you memorize well, I'll praise you in front of the class. But if you forget, you might need a little reminder from my cane, okay? *[Smiles, holding up the bamboo cane playfully.]*

Student: Yes, teacher, I'll practice hard at home.

Teacher: That's the spirit! Let's move to the next letter: "C" is for "Cat," which is "Biral" in Nepali. Copy it down and say it with me.

Students: C – Cat – Biral!

Teacher: Wonderful, children! Keep copying and chanting. By the end of this month, I want everyone to recite the whole alphabet without looking at the board. If you do well, I'll tell everyone what smart students you are.

Student: *[Smiles, feeling motivated.]*

Teacher: Alright, let's do a few more letters before the bell. D is for "Dog," which is "Kukur" in Nepali. Keep going, and don't be shy to ask questions if you're stuck.

Student: *[Continues copying and chanting.]*

Teacher: Great work today, everyone! Practice these at home, and tomorrow we will learn more words. English is your key to a bright future, so study hard!

Student: Thank you, teacher! *[Packs notebook, feeling excited and determined.]*

Appendix II

Artifacts of English Language Learning Experience

This appendix includes descriptions of photographs and past data that support the auto-ethnographic narrative of my English language learning experience in a rural public school in Karnali, Nepal, starting in April 2004. These artifacts provide visual and documentary evidence of the classroom environment, learning materials, and academic outcomes referenced in the narrative (e.g., the interview with Chetana Shahi Malla). Each item is described with its relevance to the story and connections to scholarly insights on rote learning and translation methods.

My academic certificates from SLC to Bachelor degree

GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER OF EXAMINATIONS

Serial No. 60001400106

प्रवेशिका परीक्षा
School Leaving Certificate Examination
प्रमाण-पत्र
Certificate

This is to certify that SANGITA B.K. a student of MAHA KALI DA VI SRINAGAR School Roll No. 2066 BS (2010 AD) has duly passed the School Leaving Certificate Examination held in the year 2066 BS (2010 AD) in the SECOND division. According to the record of this office, his/her date of birth is 2052/09/27 BS (11-Jan-1996 AD).

Symbol No. 9400120 H
Date of issue: 16 JAN. 2011
Checked by: hr
Sanothimi, Bhaktapur
Controller

SHREE MAHA KALI HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Shreenagar Mugu (Gamgadhi)
2023

S.No. 1075 Date: 2067-04-17
Symbol/Roll No. 0500120 H
Registration No. X

TRANSFER/CHARACTER CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mister/Miss Sangita B.K. son/daughter of Mrs. Sher Singh Kami a resident of Karkibada village development Committee Ward No. 7 (Seven) is a regular student of this school. He/She was admitted this school on 2062 B.S. He/She is studying in class/passed S.L.C. examination held in 2066 B.S. and was placed in the Second division. His/Her date of birth according to the school record is 2052-09-27 B.S. During the stay in this school his/her character was Good and I know nothing against his/her character. I wish him/her success in life.

Written by: Dilendra Malla
Head Master

SHREE MAHA KALI HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL
Shreenagar Mugu (Gamgadhi)
2023

TRANSFER AND CHARACTER CERTIFICATE

S.No. 424 Date: 2069-06-15
Symbol/Roll No. 26500063
Registration No. 686501080

This is to certify that Mister/Miss SANGITA B.K. son/daughter of SHER SINGH KAMI a resident of KARKIBADA village development Committee Ward No. 7 MUUV is a regular student of this school. He/She was admitted this school on 2067 B.S. He/She is studying in class/passed (10+2) examination held in 2069 B.S. and was placed in the SECOND division. His/Her date of birth according to the school record is 2052-09-27 B.S. During the stay in this school his/her character was GOOD and I know nothing against his/her character. I wish him/her success in life.

Written by: Dilendra Malla
Head Master

Rara Campus
Gamgadhi, Mugu
Estd. 2064

CHARACTER/TRANSFER CERTIFICATE

Reg. No. 9-2-672-2-2012 Date: 2075-11-15

This is certify that Mr/Mrs/Ms. Sangita B.K. son/daughter of Mr/Mrs. Shersing Kami was a bonafide student of this Campus. He/She studied in this Campus from 2013 AD to 2017 AD and passed class Bachelor in PASS division.

He/She has good moral character during his/her stay in this Campus. We wish him/her every success in future. His / Her date of birth is 2052-09-27

Written: Dilendra Malla
Checked/By: Dilendra Malla
Campus Chief
Sushil Kumar Bham

Some Photographs of my educational journey are as below:



Some Photographs of my educational journey are as below:





My story on international media

Alakastinen kummityttö ei saa viisumia Suomeen

TURISTIVIISUMI Tampereen Harjun seurakunta olisi maksanut opintojaan edistyneen kummitytön vierailun kaikki kulut.

Tampereen Harjun seurakunta lähetti maalis-kuussa kutsut Suomessa. Lähetyssotien nepalilaiselle kummityttöille **Mandira Awalle** ja opintojaan hyödyntäneelle **Sangita BK:lle**. Harjun seurakunta olisi kustantanut heille kahden viikon matkan Suomeen toukokuussa. Aiotuksi oli esitellä kummityttöjen vaikutuksia suomalaisille sekä mahdollistaa **Sangita** -tyttöille hänen tukijoi-

den tapaaminen. Naiset olisivat osallistuneet lähetyssotien, vierailleet kouluissa ja nuortekeskusteluvoimien jäseniä. Suomen Nepalin suurlihetystö kuitenkin myönsi viisumin vain Mandiralle ja epäsi sen Sangitalle. Lähetyssotien päätöksensä köyhän, nuoren, naimattoman naisen mahdollisesti alkovan jättä Schengen alueelle paperittomaksi viisumin umpeuduttua. Harjun seurakunnan lähetyssotien **Jouni Heiskasen** mukaan viisumin epäsuorasti-



Opintojaan hyödyntänyt Lähetyssotien kummityttö **Sangita BK** on asunut Suomessa **Esjoonissa**. **SAANGITA BK / LHM**

lut olivat absurdeja. Häntä innoitti myös, miten väin lähetyssotien **Suomen kirkon** tai Lähetyssotien. Meillä oli naisille tarkka matkessumme. **Mandira** ja **Sangita** olivat yksin Suomeen vierailun jälkeen, kun hänellä on kottimassaan opintojen loppusuralla ja tällä hetkellä myös työpäikkä sekä syvä kutsutus auttaa alueensa ihmisiä. Heiskasen ihmettelö. Nepalissa naisella on myös perhe, mutta Suomessa tai Euroopassa hänellä ei ole ketään **ruokaa**.



I have a life

My name is Sangita BK and I am 20 years old. My life today is exciting and I feel blessed every moment as I manage to get on the bus to get to work. I am currently a part of LHM's Education Team in Kathmandu as an intern for a year. To be working as an intern with LHM is the best thing that could have happened to a girl like me who comes from a very remote village in Nepal.

My parents worked very little from farming and struggled to send me to school. During the off season for farming, my father used to go to India to work a little and then the family where I was in grade six, a LHM partner came to our school to select and conduct screening tests for Dalit girls. So this is how I was very lucky to be selected for the scholarship. The school materials and school uniforms that I received really encouraged and helped me to attend the school regularly. I did well in my studies and managed to score good marks in my exams. When I finished school, people in the neighborhood asked my parents what plans I had for further studies. I had a desire to continue my education but I wasn't sure if I would continue to receive the scholarship. Around that time, I was asked to go to the LHM center office in Bhabu by the staff of Gagan's Secondary School (GSS). There, I was given the biggest news - confirmation of my school and my living host family in Nepal.

LHM and its partner GSS has truly turned my dreams into a reality and have made my family proud of me. As I spend a year with LHM, I feel at ease to learn and grow as much as possible in my knowledge and skills.

Thank you LHM for giving me this life!

LHM Education Team, LHM Nepal, Bhabu, Nepal, says: "The one really helping to help Sangita in our team. The story of her life is really an inspiration for us to continue to touch and transform the lives of the students of LHM like her. We are now sending her to Russia for several months to understand and contribute in the projects that we run in the communities. This will be an excellent first-hand experience for her."

Appendix-III

My Short Biography

My name is Sangita B.K. I was born in 1996 in Supakot, a remote village in Mugu District, Karnali Province, Nepal, into a Dalit family facing poverty and social discrimination. Growing up in farming household with uneducated parents, I helped with chores like cutting grass and grazing goats while attending a local primary school. My father's efforts to teach me the English alphabet, despite limited resources, sparked my early interest in learning.

From 2001 to 2010, I studied in primary school, where traditional teaching methods focused on memorization and grammar. Teachers like Jayaprakash Malla encouraged me with interactive activities, boosting my confidence. Despite facing gender biases and caste-based discrimination, I received vital support from the Dalit Girls Scholarship Programme (DGSP) by the United Mission to Nepal (UMN). In 2010, I passed my School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exams, a proud moment for my family and village.

Between 2010 and 2012, I pursued an Intermediate in Education (I.Ed.) with a major in English at Shree Mahakali Higher Secondary School in Gamgadhi, Mugu. Though some seniors warned me about the difficulty of studying English, my teacher Mahesh Kumar Malla's engaging methods inspired me to focus on grammar and writing. I passed my exams while working part-time at a cooperative to support myself.

In 2013, I enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) at Rara Campus, Naura, Mugu. Despite health challenges like meningitis and breathing difficulties, I balanced studies with work. Student-centered projects, such as creating a handwritten newspaper for my English for Mass Communication class, improved my language skills. From 2016 to 2017, I completed a one-year internship with UMN in Kathmandu, moving there against my family's advice to gain urban exposure and enhance my English proficiency.

In 2019, I began my Master of Education (M.Ed.) in English Education at Tribhuvan University's Central Department of English Education in Kirtipur,

Kathmandu, becoming the first Dalit girl from my village to do so. With financial support from Finnish sponsor Kirsti Kirjavainens' teams and scholarships; I overcame financial struggles and family responsibilities. The rigorous semester system and daily classes helped me improve my communication skills. In 2025, I completed my M.Ed., submitting a thesis about my educational journey. Today, I am an English language teacher, embodying resilience and the transformative power of education.