

CHAPTER- ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study "Teachers' Perceptions on the Use of Groupwork Technique" is a survey research which deals with the teachers' viewpoint towards the use of groupwork technique in the English language classroom. This section consists of the general background, review of related literature, objective and significance of the study.

1.1. General Background

English, being an international language, has inevitably been important in Nepal. The aim of English language teaching in Nepal is to enable the learners to interact with others fluently and correctly. Teaching English means teaching different levels, skills and aspects of the English language. English Language Teaching (ELT) has crossed many developments to reach this day. To give a comprehensible picture of theoretical foundation of language teaching and learning is a challenging task in language pedagogy i.e. it is a tough task to bridge gaps between theory and practice. For Brown (1994), "there are no instant recipes. No quick and easy method is guaranteed to provide success. Every learner is unique. Every teacher is unique. And every learner-teacher relationship is unique." (p.15)

The traditional concept of teaching varies from modern one. Traditionally, teachers were taken as the sources of knowledge and the students as a creature having an empty mind, where the teachers could fill in things whatever they wanted to put. Traditional methods of teaching did not include communicative activities in the classroom. Pupils do not get a chance to interact with each other. Still there is the influence of teacher-centered techniques such as lecture, illustration and explanation in teaching learning process. Different investigations were done to make classes learner-centered. Unfortunately, the

concerned institutes or people do not follow learner-centered techniques in actual teaching. Teachers are not using simulation, dramatization, discovery, individual work; groupwork and role play techniques while teaching English.

However, in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) over the last few decades a gradual but significant shift has taken place, resulting in less emphasis on teachers and great stress on learners and learning. Teaching is not considered as the task of imposing one's ideas upon the students rather teaching should be able to nurture students' potentialities. Teachers should adopt effective strategies to create an appropriate environment for students to learn. Teachers should be a facilitator and mediator for students' learning. Teaching is an art and teachers as an artist. As the educationalist Cunningham says that the teacher should be able to mould his/ her material (student) according to his / her ideas (i.e. objective) in his / her studio (i. e. classroom). Whether students are interested to learning or not is determined by the strategies that teachers have been adopting. Therefore, I attempted to explore the teachers' perceptions on the use of groupwork technique in English language classroom.

1.1.1 ELT Techniques: A Preview

In the history of ELT, there are different approaches, methods and techniques which deal with issue of language teaching by referring to general principles and theories concerning how languages are learnt, how knowledge of language is represented and organized, or how language itself is structured. Defining approach, method and techniques, Anthony (1963) says:

An approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught,

and the order in which the content will be presented; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2007, p. 19).

This definition suggests that an approach is concerned with general principles of learning. It also deals with linguistic theories and language learning process. Method, on the other hand, is concerned with how theories of language learning are put into practices.

Techniques refer to the classroom procedures/ activities that we implement to carry out certain teaching task effectively. For Anthony (1963) "a technique is implementation which actually takes place in a classroom. It is trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Technique must be consistent with method and harmony with an approach as well" (p.63). Thus, a technique is actually applied in the classroom; so it is also called implementational. The appropriate selection of technique is determined on the basis of the subject matter, teachers' individual artistry, composition of the class, availability of the teaching materials and so on.

Although there are various techniques being practised in the field of language teaching, broadly they are of two types: teacher-centered such as demonstration, explanation and illustration, etc. and learner-centered techniques such as pairwork, groupwork, role play, dramatization, strip story, discovery techniques etc.

The learner-centered techniques tend to view language learning as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge. Learner-centered techniques came into existence as a reaction against cognivists' model of teaching and a cognate of communicative language teaching (CLT). In this regard, Nunan (1999) says:

The relative inflexibility of centralized curricula and a change in educational thinking which paid more attention to the learner and led the school based curriculum development movement. The newly developed curricula were more focused on catering the needs of the learners and the learner centered movement in ESL/EFL ultimately led the birth of learner-centered teaching techniques (p.21).

As it is already mentioned that learner-centered technique has come into existence in reaction to teacher-centered teaching techniques. There are various techniques like project work, role play, dramatization, simulation, discovery, strip story, pairwork, individualwork, songs and rhymes, language games, self-evaluation, communicative exercises, context body movement etc. for learner-centered techniques.

However, groupwork technique is the focus of the study. Thus, a discussion has been made on groupwork technique in the following sections.

1.1.2 Groupwork: A Learner-Centered Technique

Groupwork is a form of cooperative learning. It aims to cater for individual differences, develop students' knowledge, generic skills e.g. communication skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills, and attitudes. In this connection, Al-Sheedi (2009) asserts:

Groupwork does not mean that students sit side by side at the same table to talk with each other. It does not mean assigning a report to a group of students where one student does all the work

and the other just put their names on it .It is more than being physically near other students (as cited in Borg 2009, p.140).

Groupwork is a learning activity which involves a small group of learners working together. The group may work on a single task, or on a different part of longer task. Task for group members are often selected by the members of the group. Ur (1996) says in groupwork “students work in a small group on task that entails interaction: conveying information, for example, or group decision making. The teacher walks around listening, intervenes little if at all.” Defining groupwork technique, Landsberger (1996) argues:

The philosophy of working in groups involves shared and/ or learned values, resources, and ways of doing things. However, even group, and individual, will only be as effective as they are willing to embrace and/ or respect differences within the group (p.3).

In a large class, the teacher can not keep contact with each student individually because of time limitation provided for a class period. In a class of 50 or more students they have no sufficient time to communicate one by one with the teachers. Each student in a class of 50 heads will get less than single minute to talk with the teacher in a period of 45 minutes or so. One of the techniques to solve this problem is groupwork in which the students work in a group. The main aim of this technique is to equip the students to interact with others at ease and conversing reasonably fluently. This technique can achieve its goal by engaging students in interaction allowing them to produce good noise i.e. noise for learning.

Pair work is also one of the techniques for solving the problems of large class. But in pairwork also the teacher cannot go with each pair to monitor and to give feedback. Though it increases the amount of students practice, it creates

the problem of incorrectness. Therefore, dividing students into groups can be the best technique of teaching language in a large crowded class. In this regard, Harmer (1991) argues:

In some ways groupwork is more dynamic than pair work: there are more people to react with and against in a group and, therefore, there is a greater possibility of discussion. There is a greater chance that at least one member of the group will be able to solve a problem when it arises, and working in a groups is potentially more relaxing than working in pairs, for the latter puts a greater demand on the student's ability to co-operate closely with only one other person. It is also true to say that groupwork tasks can often be more exciting and dynamic than some pair work tasks (pp. 245-246).

Supporting Harmer's view, McDonough and Shaw (1999) assert:

Groupwork in particular is potentially dynamic, in that there are a number of different people to react to share ideas with and soon: exchange of information is sometimes is more 'natural' in the similar scale interaction. The extent to which this is so, however, clearly depends closely on nature of the task set (p.203).

Having the students to work in a group encourages discussion among the students. Speaking in front of the whole class can be scary and combined with the tension of speaking to the teacher; the situation can be downright terrifying to students. Breaking them up into group not only builds social skills useful in the professional environment for which they are training, but it is also one of the three most important ways to make a positive difference in learning. Davies

(1982) says “groupwork allows learners to develop fluency in the use of language features that they have already learned” (as cited in Sharma and Phyak, 2006.p. 123).

Grouping students does not mean permanent division of the class into groups or section division. It indicates dividing the whole class into groups in a particular period of teaching and even only for a particular activity. Some of the teachers like to divide the class into maximum groups so that the number of students in each group would be minimum. Some others want to divide into minimum groups so that the teacher can give maximum time for each group. Of course, the size of the group depends upon the activity or task, however, three to six students in each group is considered better. Regarding the size of group, Harmer (1991) says:

Group size is also slightly problematic: in general it is probably safe to say that groups of more than seven students can be unmanageable since the amount of students participation obviously falls and the organization of the groups itself may start to disintegrate (p.246).

In performing groupwork activities, students will be teaching and learning in the group at the same time, which is simply impossible in a lockstep learning where the teacher acts as a controller. So that the group should be so small that each number of group must have frequent opportunities to act like a teacher as well. That is to say one must have maximum opportunities of taking part in the exchange of command question and answer. Thus, in conclusion, the group should not be so small and so big. The number of students in each group varies according to the variation on the total number of students in a class. But generally three to six students in a group are considered preferable.

Another problem in grouping students is the selection of group members. Some teachers use the technique of sociogram (in which students are asked to write down the name of the students in the class they would most like to have with them if they were stranded on a desert island).

In groupwork, the teacher, as a controller or a manager, is the most important person. His\her role is similar to traffic controller and responsible for the following task:

- Planning the activity
- Organizing it
- Starting the activity
- Monitoring the activity
- Timing the activity
- Making conclusion

During groupwork activities the teacher stays generally at the front of the class. Whenever the leader secretaries report to the teacher's table with assignments or with queries, than corrections are made on the spot and new instruction issued to the leader. Regarding the participation of teachers in groupwork, Cross (1991) says:

The teacher is the manager of the activity and must plan it, start it, organize it, monitor it, time it and conclude it. During groupwork activities the teacher stays mainly at the front of the class, perhaps making a rapid check on a group or two to see that all is well. The leader-secretaries report to the teachers table with assignments or with queries. Corrections are made on the sports and any new instructions issued to the leader (p.54).

The above quotation suggests that, in groupwork, the teachers should motivate the pupils directly in right track of discussion. The teachers should remain active, being sensitive to the atmosphere and pace of the groups. They should also note down persistent errors for remedial teaching. Moreover, according to Cross (1991), the teachers are active in marking, remaining sensitive to the atmosphere and pace of the groups and noting persistent errors for remedial teaching.

1.1.3 Types of Groupwork

Groupwork activities can be classified looking at the distribution of the information needed to do the activity. Nation (1989) has classified the types of groupwork under the four headings which are briefly discussed below.

- a. The combining arrangement:** The combining arrangement is the ideal arrangement for groupwork because it ensures interest and participation. The essential feature of a combining arrangement is that each learner has unique and essential information. This means that each learner has a different piece of information that all the others need to complete the task.
- b. The co-operating arrangement:** It is the most common kind of groupwork. In this type of arrangement all learners have equal access to the same material or information and co-operate to do the task.
- c. The superior-inferior arrangement:** This superior inferior arrangement in groupwork is paralleled to traditional class room teaching. The essential feature of the arrangement is that one or more learners have all the information that the others in the group need.
- d. The individual arrangement:** In this type of arrangement each learner has the same information but must perform individually with a part of that information.

The groupwork types, their sitting arrangements and types of activities can be summarized in the following table:

Table No. 1
Types of groupwork

	Combining	Cooperating	Superior-Inferior	Individual
Distribution of information	Each learner has unique essential information	All learners have equal access to the same information and to each other's view of it	One or more learners have information that the other do not have	All learners have the same information but use a different part
Seating Arrangement	Learners sit at an equal distance from each other, facing each other	Learners sit beside each other facing the information	The knowers face the seekers	The learners face each other
Social Relationship	Equality, mutual dependency	Equality	Inequality, the knowers are in a superior position	Equality, but with focus on individual performance
Most suitable learning goals	Negotiation of input, Mastering content, Fluency	New language items, Fluency	New language items, Mastering content	Fluency, New language items
Most suitable tasks	Completion, Ordering, Providing directions, Matching, Classifying, Distinguishing	Ranking, Ordering, Choosing, Finding, Implications, Causes, Uses, Solving problems, Producing materials	Data gathering, Completion, Providing directions	Solving problems, Completion
A typical example	A strip story	A ranking exercise	An interview	A chain story or role play

Source: Nation, 1989(cited in Kral, 1994, p.162)

1.1.4 Merits and Demerits of Groupwork

For McDonough and Shaw (1999), We must be clear that any discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of particular method is relative. There can be no pros and cons, and we say again that what is appropriate in one context may not be appropriate in other context. By the same token, groupwork is one of the important techniques to develop communicative aspect of language in students. For Al-Sheedi (2009),”In many aspect of life we are required to work with others, so it is important that student learn how to cooperate with other students on task. There are sound educational reasons for using groupwork in the classroom” (as cited in Borg 2009.p.141).Of course, it provides an opportunity for students to refine their understanding through discussion. However, on the light of above discussion in previous section we can conclude some of the merits and demerits of groupwork technique as follows:

i. Merits of groupwork

Groupwork can be a very suitable in the context of Nepal where it is very difficult for a teacher to make personal contact in the class due to limitation of time provided for a class period. It can be perfectly used in teaching all language skills and encourage students to be more involved and to concentrate on the task.

Another benefit of using group techniques is that various tasks can be assigned to the students. For Cross (1991), “group activities tend to be freer and more interactive than pair work. Several types of activity are collaborative and easy to use, even by comparatively” (p. 56). Moreover, he has listed some of the tasks that can be used in group viz.

-) games
-) question construction
-) guided practice
-) role play

-) guess ahead
-) speculative questions
-) discussions
-) essays
-) dictation etc.

Supporting Cross's view, McDonough and Shaw (1999) say:

Different task can be assigned to different groups or pairs. This may lead to a cohesive whole-class environment if this task can be fitted together, perhaps in a final discussion. Alternatively, a teacher working with a mixed proficiency group may have the flexibility to allocate activities according to the learners' level (p.203).

Groupwork promotes learners' autonomy by allowing students to make their own decision in the group without being told what to do by the teacher. Long and Porter (1985) argues "Groupwork can promote a positive atmosphere or affective climate" (as cited in McDonough and Shaw, 1999.p. 203). In the same line, Ur (1996) claims "It fosters learners' responsibility and independence, can improve motivation, and contribute to a feeling cooperation and warmth in the classes". Of course, while performing tasks in group the learners get chance to share experiences.

Since the students feel less anxiety when they are working with their friends privately, weak and shy students learn more as they can talk or speak with their friends. In this connection, Davies (1982, as cited in Sharma and Phyak, 2006.p. 123) argues that "Groupwork allows learners to develop fluency in the use of language features that they have already learned."

ii. Demerits of groupwork

The groupwork technique undoubtedly is a highly effective technique, however, there are also some weaknesses. Cross (1991) sees the problem in classroom management. In this regard, he says, “Desks cannot be moved in many classrooms. The only way to make group in these circumstances is to ask alternative rows to turn and face those in the desk behind”. McDonough and Shaw (1999) also support Cross’s view when they argue:

There are several possible institutional objections to rearranging the classroom and to an increased communicative environment. Furniture, for example, may be impossible to move around or may encourage static interaction patterns (such as students sitting in rows on long benches fixed to the floor). Sometimes, too, school authorities or other colleagues may react negatively to what they perceive to be the increased noise levels that come from an active class (pp.204-205).

Another problem, according to Harmer (1991), of using groupwork is that “students may over-use their mother tongue or native languages” (p.247). In this connection, McDonough and Shaw assert:

Some monolingual classes readily use their mother tongue instead of the target language, particularly where discussion is animated and even more so when the teacher shares the same L1. It is not surprising that interacting in English in these circumstances may initially be perceived as artificial (p.205).

Obviously, groupwork in a large class will be noisier i.e. the teachers have less control over what students are doing in group than in a normal class. Not all students enjoy it since they would prefer to be the focus of the teachers' attention rather than working with their peers.

1.2 Review of Related Literature

Groupwork is one of the most important techniques used in communicative language teaching. A number of research scholars have carried out several studies in the field of effectiveness of various methods, teaching techniques and teaching materials. Likewise, many books and articles have been written in the field of English language teaching methodology. Some major articles and studies that enhanced this research work have been reviewed as follows:

Cooper and Associates (1990) in their studies "Dealing with Students and Faculty Concern about Groupwork" have clearly mentioned systematic suggestion of some specific questions for teachers. In a question "If I do groupwork, I won't be able to cover as much material during the semester as I do when I lecture", they argue:

Yes, adding groupwork may mean covering fewer topics. But research shows that students who work in groups increased ability to solve problems and evidence greater understanding of the material. Some instructors assign additional homework or readings or distribute lecture notes to compensate for less material 'covered' in class (p.2).

In the same manner, to the question "I paid my tuition to learn from a professor, not to have to work with my classmates, who don't know as much." They suggest:

Let students know at the beginning of the term that your class will be using some groups techniques. Students who are strongly antagonistic can drop your class and select another. Inform students about the research studies on effectiveness of collaborative learning and describe the role of it will play in your course. Invite students to try it before dealing whether to drop the class... (pp. 3-4).

Regmi (2004) carried out an experimental research on "The Effectiveness of Groupwork Technique in Teaching English Tenses". The aim of the study was to find out the effectiveness of groupwork technique in teaching English tenses. I used pre-test and post-test for primary data collection by dividing the students into two groups i.e. experimental and controlled groups. It was found that the students who were taught by using groupwork progressed relatively better than the students who were taught using explanation. In the same way, Bhandari (2005) carried out a practical research entitled "The effectiveness of work techniques in teaching communicative functions of English". The objective of the study was to compare the effectiveness of the two techniques: pair work and groupwork in teaching communicative function of English. Study concluded that the pair work technique was found relatively more effective than groupwork technique for teaching communicative function of English in general.

Likewise, Oli (2005) conducted a research work entitled "Effectiveness of Task-based Technique for teaching Simple Present Tense". The objective of study was to find out the effectiveness of task based techniques in teaching simple present tense. I used pre-test and post-test for primary data collection by dividing the students into two groups i.e. experimental and controlled groups. It was found that task-based technique is more effective than grammar translation method in teaching simple present tense.

Al-Sheedi (2009) carried out a survey research entitled “Teachers’ Beliefs about Using Groupwork in Basic Education”. The aim of the study was to investigate Basic Education teachers’ views about using groupwork to promote the learning of English. In his study, he had randomly selected 48 schools of Batinah North region of Oman. The major tools of data collection in his study were questionnaires. The result of his study represents the positive views of Basic Education teachers about groupwork.

In the same way, Giri (2010) carried out a survey research on "Perception of Teachers and Students on Lecture Technique". The aim of the study was to find out the perceptions of learners and teachers on the use of lecture technique in teaching English at higher secondary level. The area of his study was Nawalparasi district and the populations of his study were 10 teachers and 50 students teaching and learning at higher secondary level. Questionnaire was the major tool for data collection in his study. He has concluded that “although different teachers perceive lecture technique differently, what is commonly found that it is technique to conduct in the classroom and to complete the course with in an academic year easily.”

Although the studies mentioned above show that groupwork technique is effective in teaching English in Nepal. However, as discussed above, there are many challenges like large classroom, and lack of teacher training to implement groupwork effectively. Moreover, teachers’ role is always important for effective implementation of groupwork in the classroom. In this regard, it is worth exploring the perceptions or viewpoint of teachers’ on the use of groupwork. But there is negligible focus on this area of the study. Thus, this study is new for the Department of English education.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- I. To explore teachers' perceptions on the use of groupwork technique at secondary level.
- II. To list some pedagogical implications on the basis of findings.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Since this study was conducted aiming to explore the teachers' perceptions on the use of groupwork technique, it will provide information about organizing and conducting the groupwork technique in English language classroom.

Therefore, this study is expected to be significant to all those who are directly and indirectly involved in language teaching learning activity in general, and more particularly to the teachers, students, syllabus designers, educationalist, textbook writers ,material producers, guardians, supervisors as well as other interested readers. I hope that the findings and recommendations will provide significant support to be made in order to improve teaching methodology in language teaching and learning. Moreover, this research will be significant for the prospective researchers, who want to undertake further researches in the field of ELT methodology.

CHAPTER-TWO

METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted during the study. I adopted the following methodology to fulfill the set objectives of the study.

2.1 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary sources of data have been used for this study.

2.1.1 Primary Sources

The English language teachers teaching at secondary level in Palpa district were the primary sources of data for this study. The data from them were collected using set of questionnaire.

2.1.2 Secondary Sources

The secondary sources of data were collected from different books related to ELT methodology and techniques, journals, previous theses, dictionaries, articles and other books as well as internet websites related to the topic. Some of them were Harmer (1991), Cross (1992), Ur (1996), McDonough and Shaw (1999) and Borg (2009).

2.2 Population of the Study

Secondary level English language teachers of Palpa district were the population of this study.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

The sample size of the study was forty English language teachers teaching at secondary level in Palpa district. The selection of the study area was done purposively while the schools and the population as a sample were done on the basis of simple random sampling procedure.

2.4 Tools for Data Collection

Questionnaire was the major research tool for data collection. Three sets of questionnaires (see Appendix: I) were used to collect the required data from the teachers teaching at secondary level. The questions in the all sets of questionnaire were related to their perceptions and attitudes on the use of groupwork technique. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included in questionnaires.

Close-ended questions were mostly used in my study than that of open-ended questions. Questionnaires of closed-ended were designed in set 'A' and set 'B' while open-ended questions were designed in set 'C'. In set 'A' of the questionnaire, there were ten statements and they were asked to express their degree of agreement on each on 5-point scale viz. strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree. Closed-ended questions in set 'B' were of multiple choice types. Distracters were comparative or similar of equally important in each question. Open-ended questions in set 'C' of the questionnaire were asked to take the subjective responses from the participants.

2.5 Process of Data Collection

The following steps were adopted to collect data:

- a. At first, I visited the selected schools and talked to the concerned authority explaining them the purposes and processes of research. I asked them to grant permission to consult their English language teachers.
- b. After getting permission from the authority, I built rapport with the concerned teachers explaining them about the purpose of my study.
- c. Then, I requested them to help by responding to the questionnaire.
- d. Finally, I collected the distributed questionnaire and thanked the teachers and authority.

2.6. Limitations of the Study

All studies have limitations because all the people, places and areas in a field can not be included in a small scale research like this. This research also has some limitations which were as follows:

- i. The study was limited to the selected forty English language teachers.
- ii. The data was collected using questionnaire as a tool.
- iii. The questionnaires were limited to groupwork technique and teachers' perceptions on it.
- iv. The perceptions in this study represented only secondary level teachers' perceptions.
- v. The study was based on teachers' perceptions from Palpa district.

CHAPTER-THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with detail analysis of data from primary sources. The data have been analyzed under the following seven broad headings using appropriate statistical tools, tables, and figures:

-) Teachers Beliefs
-) Frequency of Using Groupwork
-) Application of Groupwork
-) Skills and Aspects Best Handled
-) Effectiveness of Groupwork
-) Merits and Demerits of Groupwork

3.1 Teachers' Beliefs

In set 'A' of the questionnaire, the participants were given ten statements and they were asked to express their degree of agreement on each on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Table No. 2 summarizes the responses to these statements; the original five-point scale viz. strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree has been collapsed into three: agree (made up of strongly agree and agree), uncertain, and disagree (made up of disagree and strongly disagree), where acronym NR represents the number of respondents and the symbol % indicates the per cent to these statements.

Table No. 2**Teachers' beliefs' about groupwork**

S.N.	Statements	Respondents' degree of agreement					
		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree	
		NR	%	NR	%	NR	%
1	Groupwork is an appropriate technique to teach English at secondary level.	32	80	2	5	6	15
2	Groupwork gives pupils more opportunities to speak English in the class.	28	70	2	5	10	25
3	Smaller groups are more affective.	34	85	6	15	0	0
4	The course book we use encourages us to use groupwork.	34	85	0	0	6	15
5	Pupils who work in groups are more satisfied with their classes.	26	65	8	20	6	15
6	Groupwork increases pupils' achievements.	32	80	6	15	2	5
7	Teachers of other subjects use groupwork in their lesson.	30	75	8	20	2	5
8	Groupwork is an appropriate technique in crowded class.	30	75	4	10	6	15
9	Pupils who work in groups learn more than those who work individually.	36	90	0	0	4	10
10	Groupwork is an effective technique for dealing with mixed abilities students.	28	70	4	10	8	20

The above table shows that the statements 9, 3 and 4 received the highest level of agreement. Over 90 per cent of the participants agreed that “pupils who work in a groupwork learn more than pupils who work individually” while 85 per cent of the total participants agreed that, “smaller groups are more effective” and “the course book we use encourage us to use groupwork”. Likewise, statements 1 and 6 got the second highest level of agreement i.e. 80 per cent of the total participant agreed that “groupwork is an effective technique to teach English at secondary level” as well as “groupwork increases pupils achievements”. In addition, majority of the participants (75%) showed their positive beliefs on statements 7 and 8.

In terms of disagreement, the statement that stands out is numbers 2 over 25 per cent of the total participants disagreed that “groupwork gives pupil more opportunities to speak English in the class”. Likewise, statement 10 (i.e. groupwork is an effective technique for dealing with mixed abilities students) received the second highest level of disagreement while a nearly similar per cent (i.e. 15 % of total participants) showed their disagreement on the statements 1, 4, 5 and 8.

On the statements 5 and 7, over 20 per cent of the total respondents were uncertain i.e. they were uncertain about that “pupils who work in groups are more satisfied with their classes” and “teachers of other subjects use groupwork in their lesson”. In addition, 15% of them said that they are unsure whether the small groups are more affective or not. Likewise, similar per cent of participants expressed their uncertainty on the statement “groupwork increase pupils’ achievements”.

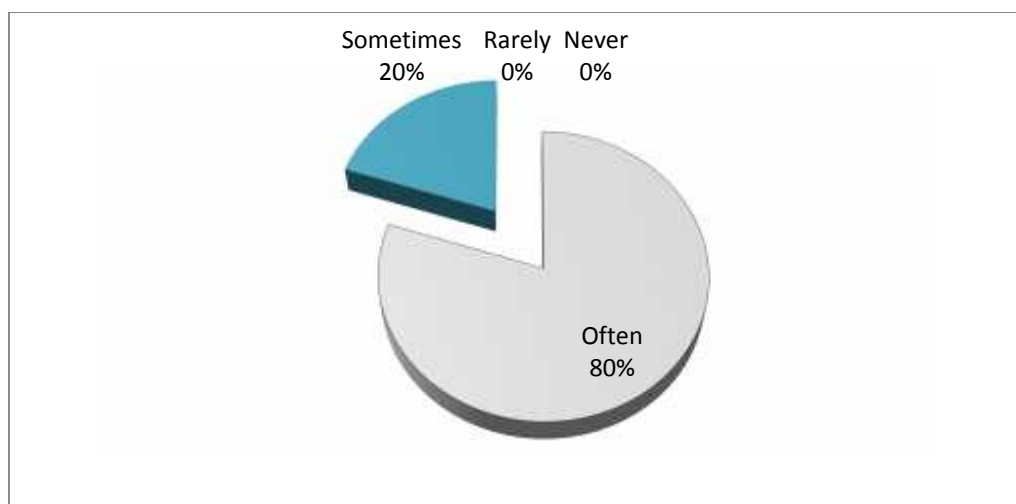
On the basis of this discussion, we can say that most of the participants have shown their positive perceptions on the use of groupwork technique.

3.2 Frequency of Using Groupwork

To look at the extent to which the teachers repeat groupwork technique during their classes, in question 1 of the set 'B', they were asked to response the question "How frequently do you use groupwork in your teaching?" There were four possible answers: often, sometimes, rarely, and never. The responses obtained from them are presented below.

Figure No. 1

Frequency of using groupwork



The above figure shows that 80 per cent of the total respondents said that they used groupwork sometimes in their classroom. The remainder 20 per cent responded that they used it often; no one responded rarely or never to this question. In line with the beliefs expressed by teachers, all reported that they use groupwork at least sometimes. With this, we can conclude that frequency of the use of groupwork in English language teaching at secondary level is appropriate.

3.3 Application of Groupwork

Respondents were given three types of groupwork, 'tick the one they use'. These three types were, (a) formal: Students work together for a period of time till the task finishes; (b) informal: temporary form of groupwork that can be organized at any time of the lesson and (c) study team: long-term groupwork lasting until the end of the semester.

The responses obtained from have been presented in the following table.

Table No. 3
Application of groupwork

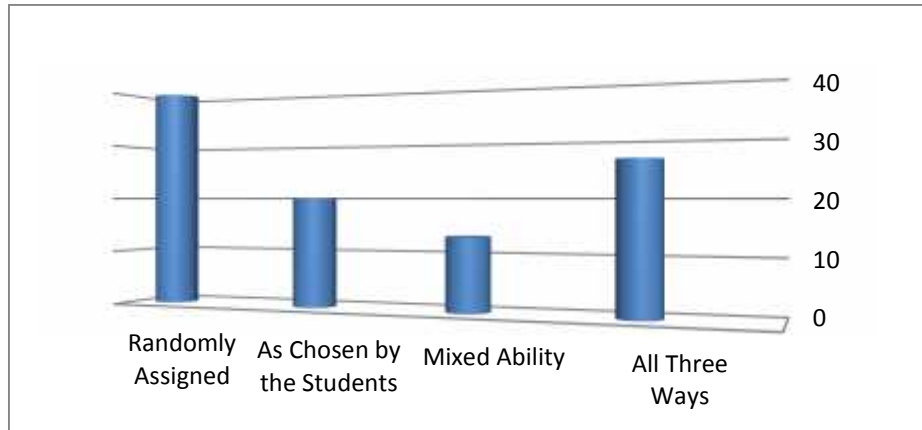
Types	No.of Respondents	%
Formal	16	40
Informal	24	60
Study Teams	0	0
Total	20	100

The above table shows that 40 per cent of the total respondents used formal type of groupwork. The remainder 60 per cent of them responded that they used informal type of groupwork; no one responded that they used study teams. On the ground of obtained data, what we can infer that most of the teachers use both formal and informal types of groupwork in their classes at secondary level.

The respondents were also asked about the ways they prefer to form groups. They were given three options viz. let students choose their own groups, randomly assign students to groups or form mixed ability groups. The responses obtained from the participants have been presented in the following figure:

Figure No. 2

Ways of forming groups



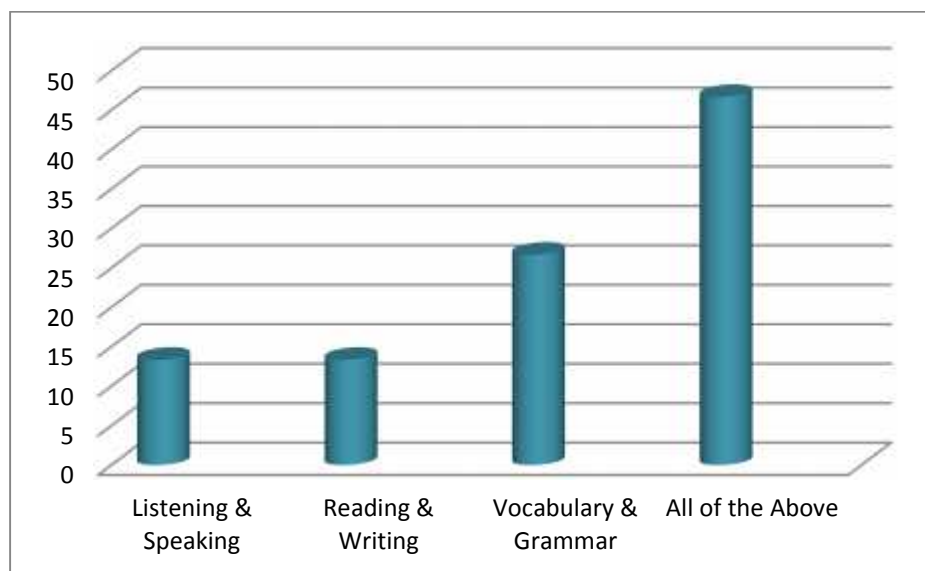
Over 25 per cent of the total respondents said that they use all three stages for forming groups while 40 per cent replied that they randomly assign students to form groups. Likewise, 20 per cent said that they let their students to choose their own group and remaining 15 per cent said that they use mixed ability groupings. On the basis of obtained data, we come to the conclusion that very few teachers have been using mixed ability groupings which is not supposed to be the best since the groupwork is an effective technique for dealing with mixed abilities students.

3.4 Skills and Aspects Best Handled

To find out the preference of teachers to teach language skills and aspects by using groupwork technique, in question 4 of the set 'B', they were asked to respond to the question "Which of these skills and aspects can be best handled by using groupwork?" The responses obtained from them have been presented in the following figure.

Figure No. 3

Skills and aspects best handled by using groupwork



The above figure shows that 45 per cent of the total respondents believed that all sorts of language skills and aspects can be best handled by using groupwork while 25 per cent of the total respondents believe that vocabulary and grammar can be best taught by using groupwork. Out of remaining 30 per cent, half of the teachers believed that listening and speaking and other half believed that reading and writing can be best handled by using groupwork technique. On the basis of obtained data, we come to the conclusion that all sorts of language skills and aspects can be taught by using groupwork technique.

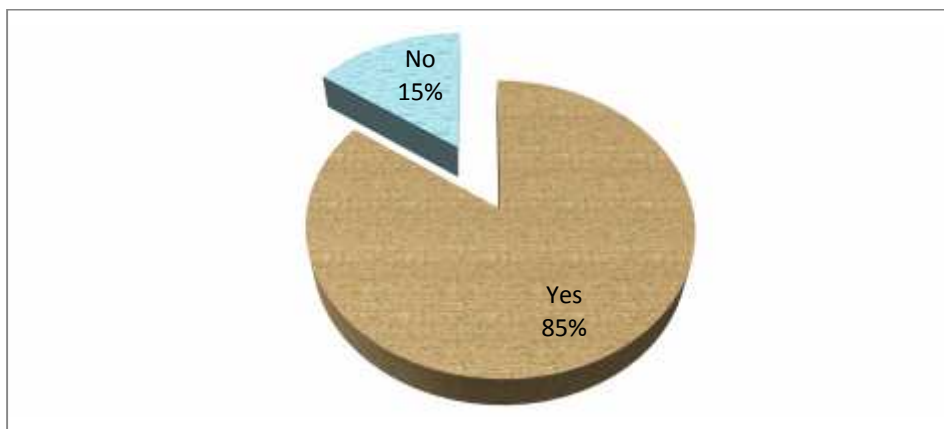
3.5 Effectiveness of Groupwork Technique

The respondents were provided an opportunity to put their views about the effectiveness and suitability of groupwork technique to teach English at secondary level. In addition, they were also provided with a chance to clarify their views for both positive and negative responses. To find out whether the teachers think groupwork technique suitable for secondary level or not, they

were asked to response the question “Do you think groupwork is a suitable and an effective technique for this level?” The responses obtained have been presented in the following figure:

Figure No. 4

Suitability of groupwork



Eighty five per cent of the total respondents think that it is an effective and a suitable technique for this level. The respondents who were in the favor of groupwork technique were asked the question “How can you say the technique effective and suitable for this level?” to clarify the reason. The responses obtained from them have been listed (repeated responses are not mentioned) below:

- Students of this level who work in groups are satisfied with their classes.
- Students who work in groups learn more than those who learn individually.
- It provides students more opportunity to speak English in the class.
- Students feel less anxiety when they are working with their friends by using this technique.
- Weak and shy students learn more as they are allowed to talk and speak with their friends.
- The level of understanding of the students at this level with lecture and demonstrations techniques is not very high.

- The technique is suitable as it is an alternative way to make personal contact in crowded classes like ours.
- The exercises like providing direction, matching, classifying, solving problems, completion and the contents like language functions, and guided writing etc. which we find in the textbook of grade 9 or 10 require either groupwork or a pair work technique to be practiced.
- It is a learner-centered technique and the learner to be communicatively competent should be given an opportunity to learning by doing, thus, this technique is suitable.
- The students of this level are responsible to learn by themselves.
- It can be perfectly used in teaching all language skills.

On the basis of these responses, we can argue that groupwork technique is an appropriate technique at this level to conduct activities like providing direction, matching, classifying, solving problems, completion and teach language functions, guided writing then using other teacher-centered techniques like lecture, and demonstrations etc. as the level of understanding of the students of the student at this level is not supposed to be high. Moreover, it is also appropriate since the students of this level who work in group are satisfied with their classes. It is also useful to deal with crowded classes where it is very difficult for a teacher to make personal contact in the class.

The respondents who did not agree with the effective use of groupwork technique to teach English at secondary level were provided an opportunity to give the alternative technique(s) to teach in crowded language classroom instead of groupwork technique. To obtain the suggestion for appropriate techniques from them, they were asked to response to the question “What will be the alternative technique(s) to teach in crowded language classroom instead of groupwork technique?” The responses obtained from them have been listed below:

- Lecture
- Pair work
- Question-answer method
- Demonstration

The above responses were provided only by six respondents out of the forty respondents (i.e. 15 % of the total respondents). Their responses make us clear that the teachers have theoretical knowledge of techniques but they are poor to deal with specific problems because groupwork techniques may not always be fit to teach all types of contents and skills in all classroom situation, by all teachers, for different sizes of courses and all the time.

3.6 Merits and Demerits of Groupwork

Question 2 in set ‘C’ of the questionnaire requested the respondents to mention the important advantages of a groupwork technique. On the basis of their perception on the use of groupwork technique, they have mentioned the following advantages of it to teach English at secondary level:

- It helps to motivate the students.
- Students do not feel shy and hesitation.
- It is very suitable in the context of Nepal.
- It develops cooperation and improves interpersonal skills.
- It encourages students to use language with each other.
- It can be perfectly used in teaching all language skills.
- It helps to share experience and makes students active.
- The technique is very useful in communicative language teaching.
- It helps students to be active.
- It trains the students to use English in the context.

[Note: repeated responses are not mentioned above]

As per the perception of teachers, the above mentioned points are the major advantages of groupwork technique. On the ground of obtained data, we can

say that groupwork technique is an important technique which should be used at this level as per the demand of classroom situation, topic, course to be completed and interest and understanding level of the learners. But teachers had also shared some disadvantages of groupwork technique. The responses obtained from them have been listed below:

- There may be too much noise and indiscipline
- Students may use their mother tongue in large amount.
- There is a problem of classroom management.
- Teachers may lose control.
- There is the biggest problem in selecting group members.
- Students may do work badly or not at all.
- With it, the course gets incomplete in time.

[Note: repeated responses are not mentioned above]

On the basis of above mentioned responses given by the respondents, we can claim that even though the groupwork technique undoubtedly a highly effective technique, there are also some weakness of it as other techniques in teaching English at this level.

CHAPTER- FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of analysis and interpretation of the information obtained, the following findings have been drawn. The findings are followed by the recommendations for pedagogical implications.

4.1 Findings

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- i. Overall, teachers have very positive perceptions about using groupwork and they use groupwork at least sometimes.
- ii. Teachers are encouraged to use groupwork not only in English but also in all subjects. In addition, the book used for teaching English at secondary level is designed to promote groupwork.
- iii. Most of the teachers said that they are using formal and informal grouping system using variety of strategies (random, as chosen by learners, and mixed ability); no one said they used study teams.
- iv. All sorts of language skills and aspects can be taught using groupwork; however, vocabulary and grammar can be best handled by using it in comparison with that of language skills.
- v. The teachers perceive groupwork as an appropriate technique for secondary level. According to the number of teachers, it is an appropriate and important technique because the exercise like providing direction, matching, classifying, solving problems etc. require either groupwork or a pair work technique to be practiced. Moreover, it is found that it is an appropriate technique to deal with crowded class where it is very difficult for a teacher to make personal contact in the class.
- vi. It is found that some teachers have good theoretical knowledge of techniques but due to the lack of skills, practical knowledge and

passive habit, they do not practise and be prepare for conducting groupwork in the classroom.

- vii. Though the majority of the respondents perceive groupwork as a highly effective technique, they also have internalized some shortcomings of it.

4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the pedagogical implications on the basis of findings obtained through the analysis and interpretation of the data.

- i. As the result of this study indicates teachers' positive views about groupwork, it should be given emphasis as the other techniques taught at secondary level.
- ii. Practical aspects of groupwork should be emphasized by producing systematic principles and procedures to teach a particular skill, and aspect of language.
- iii. More studies regarding this technique is necessary and its implementation is required to make it more effective as this is the era of communicative and integrative language teaching.
- iv. Teachers should be trained as to how to use groupwork effectively.
- v. This study is entirely based on teachers' perceptions. For a better understanding of how teachers implement groupwork further observations of teachers' actual classroom is needed.
- vi. Since research was limited only to a district. It cannot be claimed that the findings of this research are applicable everywhere. Further researchers can carry out this type of research including more samples in different parts of the country.
- vii. The pressure of students' number is high in government- aided schools of Nepal. In such a context, teachers should implement the technique as it is an appropriate way to deal with for a teacher to make personal contact in a class.

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APPENDIX: I
(Questionnaire)

Dear Sir/ Madam,

This questionnaire is a research tool for gathering information for my research entitled **“Teachers’ Perceptions on Group work Technique”** under the supervision of **Mr. Prem Bahadur Phyak**, Teaching Assistant, Department of English Education, T.U., Kirtipur. The correct information provided by you will be of great help for completing my research. This information provided by you will be kept highly confidential and used only for research purpose. I would appreciate your honest opinions and assure you that your responses will be completely anonymous.

Name:	Qualification:
Address:	Experience:
School:	

1. Please, put ONE tick for each statement to give your opinion.
‘SET-A’

S N.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Group work is an appropriate technique to teach English at secondary level.					
2	Group work gives pupils more opportunities to speak English in the class.					
3	Smaller groups are more affective.					
4	The course book we use encourages us to use group work.					
5	Pupils who work in groups are more					

	satisfied with their classes.					
6	Group work increases pupils' achievements.					
7	Teachers of other subjects use group work in their lesson.					
8	Group work is an appropriate technique in crowded class.					
9	Pupils who work in groups learn more than those who work individually.					
10	Group work is an effective technique for dealing with mixed abilities students.					

'SET: B'

1. How frequently do you use in your teaching. Tick One:

- a) Often [] b) Sometimes []
c) Rarely [] d) Never []

If you can choose RARELY or NEVER go through the following question.

) You said that you RARELY or NEVER use group work. WHY? Tick those that are true for you.

- a) I don't believe that group work is an important tool in teaching.[]
b) I don't have any ideas about how to apply group work. []
c) Group work is too difficult for my pupils. []
d) Group work takes too much time in class.[]
e) If other, please specify.

.....

2. Which of these types of group work do you use? Tick one that you use.
- a) Informal (temporary form of group work. Can be organized at any time during a lesson) []
 - b) Formal (students work together for a period of time until the task is finished) []
 - c) Study team (long-term group work, lasting till the end of the Semester) []
 - d) All three types. []

3. Which of these ways do you usually use to form the groups? Tick the one that applies.
- a) Let students choose their own groups.
 - b) Randomly assign students to groups,
 - c) Form mixed-ability groups (groups that have different levels of students)
 - d) Others please specify.
-

4. Which of these skills can be best handed by using group work. Tick all that apply.
- a) Listening and Speaking []
 - b) Reading Writing
 - c) Vocabulary and Grammar []
 - d) All of the above []
 - e) If Other, Specify

'SET: C'

1. Do you think 'group work' is an effective and a suitable technique for this level?

Yes []

No []

) If 'Yes' how can you say the technique is effective and suitable for this level?

.....
.....
.....

) If 'No', what will be the alternative techniques to teach in crowded language classroom instead of group work technique?

.....
.....
.....

2. Mention the important merits of group work technique.

.....
.....
.....

3. What can be the demerits of group work technique?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your assistance!

Jyoti Aryal

Department of English Education

Email: littlestar_priety@yahoo.com

Ph: 9847100449

APPENDIX: II

List of Schools Surveyed

Government Schools		Private Schools	
S.N.	Name of School	S.N.	Name of School
1	Janata H. S.S., Tansen	1	Aananda Nikatan Bidhayashram, Rampur
2	Padma Public H.S.S., Tansen	2	Bethel Boarding S.S., Tansen
3	Sen H.S.S., Tansen	3	Bhupu Sainik Risisng S., Rampur
4	Mahendrabodhi H.S.S., Tansen	4	Bhairav Memorial English S., Haethok
5	Devbani Shanskrit S.S., Tansen	5	Bijaypur Bhu.Pu. S. Rampur
6	Mohan Kanya H.S.S, Tansen	6	Chirag Academy,Devinagar
7	Laxmi H.S.S., Bandipokhara	7	Kaligandaki Boarding S., Barangdi
8	Bishnu H.S.S., Pokhara Thoak	8	Palpa Aawasia S. S., Tansen
9	Bhairav Janata H.S.S., Bartung	9	Prashanti Children Academy, Tansen
10	Sarswati H.S.S., Khasuli	10	Purna Jyoti Boarding S., Hungi

11	Shree Bhawani H.S.S., Kushum Khola	11	Rampr Boarding S. S., Rampur
12	Narayan H.S.S., Thimure	12	River Valley S.S., Madhanpokhara
13	Shree Kalika S.S. Mujhuhg	13	Sagarmatha Community S., Aryabhanjang
14	Shree Bhairav NawaDeep H.S.S., Chahara	14	St.Capitanio S., Tansen
15	Raina Devi S.S., Bhawas Pokhari	15	Sun Rise Boarding S., Dumre
16	Damkada H.S.S., Madanpokhara	16	Wisdom Boarding S., Tansen
17	Amrit Public S.S., Agarkhola	17	New Horizon H.S.S., Tansen
18	Sauvagya H.S.S., Chidipani		
19	Shree Kalika S.S., Batase		
20	Shree Pravat S.S., Palung		
21	Dovan S.S., Dovan		
22	Satyawati S.S., Baldengdi		
23	Tribhuvan H.S.S., Argali		