



Secondary Level English Teachers' Practices and Challenges of ICT Use in English Language Classroom: A Phenomenological Study

Jyoti Pandey¹, Tikaram Poudel²

¹Secondary Level Teacher, Bhimsengola Secondary School, Kathmandu

²Assistant Professor, Kathmandu University, Nepal

Corresponding Author's Email: jyotimphilpandey43@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the transformative impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in ELT classrooms. ICT opens the door for effective learning, and makes students engage in discussions with peers and educators in diversified classrooms. Teachers can vary their teaching activities changing their teaching style from teacher-centered to learner-centered through multimedia resources in classrooms. This paper is based on phenomenological methodology. This study has explored the perceptions of the use of ICT in ELT by four secondary-level English teachers from the Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. The study's findings reveal the importance of using particular ICT tools that have great effectiveness for both teachers and students in ELT classrooms. Hence, this study emphasizes the integration of some ICT tools (like Mobile, Smart TV, Laptop and Projector, Speaker, and Smart Board) enhance the students' quality learning in the ELT classroom. Finally, this study indicates ICT can make the students active and interactive to accelerate their learning capability. To lessen the challenges of ICT implementation in a classroom, there is a need for consideration of other aspects of ICT integration regarding strategic planning and policy-making from MoE.

Keywords: ICT integration, Teaching and Learning Process, ELT, Perception

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Introduction

Technology has been increasingly used in language teaching and learning. The internet facilitates learners with access to information. Moreover, portable devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones provide learners with opportunities to learn ubiquitously. Ubiquitous learning or U-learning is about using digital content, physical surroundings, and mobile devices, to enable ‘anywhere, anytime, and anyway learning (Cardenas-Robledo & Pena-Ayala, 2018). Digital platforms, such as blogs and social media, can provide learners with virtual spaces to express and share their ideas and information more easily. This develops the capacity not only to access resources but also for learners to interact with each other (Selwyn, 2017).

The popularity of the internet and portable computerized devices can bring about a substantial alteration in language pedagogy, as raised in phenomena such as m-learning (mobile learning), u-learning (Ubiquitous learning), distance learning, and blended learning. Nepal is promoting the use of Information and Communication Technology to achieve the broader goals of education. The government of Nepal developed several policies like National IT Policy (2010,2015), the School Sector Development Plan SSDP (2016-2023), the School Sector Reform Plan SSRP (2009-2015), the 10th Plan (2002-2007), and implemented with the provision that focuses on ICT use in education. Information Communication Technology Policy (IT Policy 2000) was the first policy initiative aimed at positioning IT as a tool for development and growth. For the effective implementation of SSRP (2009-2015), the government has committed to support school computer programs and provide computer training to teachers. Similarly, the three-year plan (2011-2013) aims to support schools to use ICT in education to increase access to quality education in rural areas, the digital divide will be reduced, and ICT will be integrated into all aspects of education. After that, the Ministry of Education launched the Master Plan (2013-2017) that ensures extensive use of ICT in the education sector and contributes to access to and quality of education for all. Four major components were focused on Master Plan Policy like ICT

infrastructure including internet connectivity human resources, content development, and system enhancement.

The School Sector Development Plan (2016- 2023) of Nepal is the latest national educational policy that aims to improve classrooms with the appropriate use of ICT based on the needs and context of each school. This policy focuses on access to learning materials and supporting professional development packages and guidelines to ensure adequate capacity for incorporating these into the curriculum (Dhital, 2018). The goal of SSDP is to contribute to socioeconomic development and reduce disparities in the country through the continuous and inclusive development of its human resources capacity by facilitating all citizens with opportunities to become functionally literate, and numerate, and to develop the basic life skills and knowledge required to enjoy a productive life, taking into account the diversity of context and needs and regarding to the forthcoming federalization of the country (MoE, 2016).

The implementation of the Information and Communication Technology in Education Master Plan (MoE 2013) has increased access to computers and the Internet in schools, which allows students the scale the use of ICT in school education. The SSDP (2016-2023) aims to put more focus on ensuring access to and the quality and relevance of secondary education. This policy has good results related to ICT-enabled teaching-learning in science, math, and English Due to the availability of different devices, teaching and learning in ELT classrooms is more flexible. The use of ICT tools makes the students learn collaboratively in an ELT classroom. ICT can make valuable contributions to the development of various aspects of education and learning by improving the quality of learning, enhancing teaching quality, expanding access to resources, and improving the management system (Haddad & Draxler, 2005). In the context of Nepal, many schools are using different devices for English Language Teaching to make productive and exciting classrooms. Technology has great access for all social groups in a classroom as it makes students creative, productive, and innovative. In this modern era, teaching and learning have been drastically changed with the use

of ICT tools. Master Plan (2013-1017) SSRP (2009-2015) and SSDP 2016-2023) have the provision to focus on ICT but lack infrastructure, teacher training, funds, and insufficient resources, and the learning outcomes of the students are not satisfactory. Bhandari, (2024) has done research in 'English teachers' perceptions and practices of integrating ICT in English'. Similarly, Rana and Rana (2020) have completed the study on ICT integration in teaching and learning activities in higher education: A case study of Nepal's teacher education. A systematic literature review focusing on ICT integration classroom. However, I did not find particular tools like Mobile, Laptop, Smartboard, Smart TV, and other tools for teaching purposes in the ELT classroom. Therefore, this study focused on applying different technologies in English language teaching to update teachers with the recent innovations to create a learner-centered atmosphere. The integration of ICT tools can facilitate two-way communication between teachers and students in English language teaching classrooms.

The present study aims to explore the teacher's perceptions of the use of ICT in ELT. This study also investigates some possible solutions to challenges faced by the teachers in ELT classrooms while using ICT tools with the help of the following research questions:

1. How do teachers use ICT tools in ELT?
2. What challenges do they face using ICT tools in English language Teaching?

Literature Review

In a research paper, a researcher needs to use the literature as a foundation and as support for new contributions to the article. A literature review seeks to describe, summarize, evaluate, clarify, and integrate the content of primary reports (Cooper, 1988). A literature review brings the reader up-to-date with current literature on a topic and gathers information about a particular subject from many sources.

Use of ICT in ELT

Information Communication Technology creates interactive and collaborative classrooms to assimilate concepts more quickly during learning activities. The use of

ICTs make teaching and learning more effective, interesting, lively, motivating and successful (Paudel, 2021). It typically includes learning interactively with online support, and the use of technology-based tools between the teachers and students. ICT are helpful for the students for collecting learning resources, making interactions and collaborations, increasing exposure to English, and developing their learning autonomy (Paudel, 2022).

Bhandari (2024) claimed that ICT devices and skills support students in their cognitive engagement with authentic information regularly making teaching more effective, realistic, remarkable, and sustainable. ICT improves education by offering chances for personalized learning via its dynamic and interactive content. New technologies are very flexible, interactive, and a bounteous platform that provides learners with whole new different experiences in the English language classroom. The usage of ICT influences both the quantity and quality of learning and teaching activities. ICT has the potential to particularly enhance both learning and teaching by providing content that is dynamic, interactive, and fascinating.

Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015) proved that students learn more effectively with the use of ICT as lessons designed are more engaging and interesting. Accordingly, the participants agreed that integrating ICT can foster students' learning. Henceforth, it is clear that ICT improves tutoring of the English Language in contexts like Nepal where English is the medium of instruction. In English Language Teaching, teachers have started integrating information and communication technologies as a tool to accomplish better language learning amongst the students.

However, teachers engage students in dynamic presentations using various tools to learn in a classroom in the sense that technologies have been an integral part of ELT. The recent (National Education Plan) is the School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023) emphasizes improving the use of ICT in schools to replace traditional pedagogies with modern strategies by teachers but it also states the lack of funding for the project (MoE, 2016). Therefore, community schools of Nepal face some major issues implementing ICT tools due to some poor ICT infrastructure, high cost of ICT

tools, lack of skilled teachers, lack of adequate funding, and inadequacy of curriculum content. Similarly, the integration of ICT in secondary education has brought a significant change particularly, in ELT (Talukder & Saba, 2016). Digital technologies are made available in the classrooms for successful technology-enhanced language learning in the use of ICT.

ICT as a Pedagogical Practice

Technology-based teaching and learning are more effective in comparison to the traditional classroom (Sumitra et al., 2021). Teachers are changing their pedagogical roles in using ICT to transform the teaching and learning process which are potential catalysts for the 21st century for transforming the teaching and learning process (Drent & Meelissen, 2007). ICT as a pedagogical tool enhances the student's study skills, knowledge, and ideas. ICT as a pedagogical tool has changed the way of thinking of teachers and encouraged students to engage in teamwork. In the context of Nepal, ICT as a pedagogical tool is used in Urban areas. Most of the community schools are equipped with ICT tools. The teachers use some ICT as a pedagogical tool in a classroom to enhance scaffolding learning. Teachers develop their professional growth and competence in using ICT as a pedagogical tool. The teacher's role is changing from traditional roles to becoming a facilitator, guide, coach, mentor, and so on in a classroom. The proper use of ICT tools makes teaching and learning easier and more comfortable (Bhandari, 2020).

This study is conducted through 'Transformative Learning Theory', developed by Jack Mezirow in the late 1970s. Transformative learning often leads to a deep change in the thoughts, feelings, perspectives, convictions, or behaviors of a person. This theory has focused on how teachers transform their teaching strategy using ICT in ELT classrooms. Transformative learning is in this way reconfigured so that it has both an individual and social dimension (Fleming, 2014).

Methods and Procedures

In this study, we adopted a phenomenological research method to explore the perceptions of secondary-level teachers on the use of ICT in ELT. Creswell (2007) noted, “A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their shared experiences of a concept or a phenomenon”. Phenomenological research design is especially useful for topics in which the researcher needs to go deep into the participant’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a specific, controlled situation. Phenomenology focuses on the description of the shared experiences of the research participants (Creswell, 2013).

We possessively selected four teachers as participants from different schools and colleges. Two participants were from community schools in Kathmandu Valley who were secondary level English teachers, the other was from a community school in Lalitpur and another was from a college in Pultalisadak, Kathmandu. The teachers as participants have been teaching for many years. I contacted them for data collection through the mobile. I met them at their convenient time. They discussed my paper. The participants are using ICT tools in their ELT classes. My participants became ready to help to complete my study. After getting consent from them, I arranged the time for data collection. I collected the data through face-to-face interviews to get detailed information from the participants. I also made some notes during interviews that helped me to capture the participants' attitudes and views. I used my mobile phone to record the participants' views. However, the teachers were too busy with their work. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. I also sent some questions to participants by mail and got detailed solutions from them.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Data analysis techniques are used to gain useful insights from data sets, which can then be used to make operational decisions or guide future research. A rigorous process was followed to ensure a systematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data analysis is a method or process in which one systematically applies techniques to describe, draw conclusions from, or

evaluate data. Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed a six-phase guideline for analyzing the data. First, as a researcher, I transcribed the data, and read and re-read it carefully. Then, I wrote down initial ideas. Second, I generated initial codes for the entire data set and selected data relevant to the codes. Next, I thoroughly looked for themes by finding common patterns in codes. Then, I reviewed, defined, and named themes, and finally, conducted a final analysis and wrote the report.

The selected sources were thoroughly reviewed, and relevant data points, key findings, and insightful quotes related to the perceptions of secondary-level teachers on the use of ICT in ELT. This data extraction process was carried out meticulously and organized to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the information obtained from the secondary sources. This study has used alphanumeric symbols like T1, T2, T3, and T4.....for the reliability of the study.

Results and Discussion

This section reveals the information on ICT-Based teaching in an English Language Teaching classroom that was collected through interviews. The result of the study has been described in two sections: Different types of ICT used in ELT for different purposes and challenges of using ICT in ELT.

ICT Tools Used in ELT

Technology provides instant accessibility to information in the classroom. Mobile phones, Lap Top, Smart T. V., Speaker, and Smart Board are omnipresent elements of teachers for teaching purposes in a classroom. Technological devices have created meaningful learning for students to meet their unique needs in a classroom. Bruntha et al. (2024) state that ICT tools in education make it easier for teachers to use the best strategies to bring out the best in their students.

Mobile

Mobile technology has introduced a new flow of educational tools that can make content more accessible to students. Students' motivation increases when mobile

technology is incorporated into the learning process, leading to greater participation, and subsequently, better and faster acquisition and retention of information/concepts and skills. The interviews with the teacher scrutinized his experience of using ICT tools for making students motivated towards learning in a classroom. Brown (2018) in his dissertation, addressed that mobile learning techniques and tools were useful in teaching and learning approaches, effective in formulating classroom instruction strategies, useful for professional learning, influential over time constraints when acquiring knowledge at any time and place, and facilitating teacher-student communication.

In a query regarding the experience of how teachers used Mobile in ELT classrooms one of the participants, T1 said, *“There are different tools available in a classroom. Among them, he uses Mobile phones, especially for teaching pronunciation, grammar items, and spelling of difficult words. Mobile phones help him search for the meaning of difficult words during teaching activities. He stated that a mobile phone is a portable device that is used for getting immediate response when he has not carried a laptop.”* He generally uses a Mobile phone in the classroom. He clearly states that different apps can be downloaded in Mobile, and make the students engage in continuous learning in a classroom. Particularly, his views show that Mobile phones can avoid distractions for students. With the help of Mobile phones, teachers used this tool during COVID-19 time, and since then it has been used as quick and easy access to get vast information in learning in ELT. Similarly, another participant T3 claimed, *“He has been using Mobile phone since 2015. He uses this device for listening to stories and connecting speakers. Students learn how to write stories, and he makes them engage in writing stories in the classroom. He also writes the ideas of story writing on the whiteboard as there were not any tools in his school except mobile phones.”*

Both teachers have focused on the use of Mobile Phones as these devices are very useful for getting information in a short time. Their experiences revealed that small devices can also play a great role in ELT classrooms to manage time and make

students flexible in knowledge gaining. Mezirow's learning theory (1970) influences how students are taught in endless capacities, including classrooms, self-improvement, and so much more. Thus, both teachers have transferred their traditional pedagogy to modern strategies way of teaching using a Mobile as a simple device in a classroom.

Smart TV

The use of smart TV in the classroom can enhance student learning by providing news, information, entertainment, and knowledge on time. By using smart TVs, students can watch movies, listen to music, or work with digital media using the best teaching resources (Pradipta & Mustafa, 2020). TV assists teachers in delivering learning materials in a more interactive and fun way for students. Among the teacher's participants, the T2 participant stated *"He has been using smart T.V. in a classroom daily. He claimed that students can learn in a short time. The teacher feels freedom avoiding lectures and dictating in a classroom. The classroom became interactive. Watching T. V. makes classroom teaching enjoyable for the students. The class will be student-centered and more creative. So, he said that using T.V. in an ELT classroom is a compulsory one."*

His comment provides a clear understanding that he often uses smart TV in his classroom. However, he uses other tools in the ELT classroom to provide real-life examples. Smart TV motivates students to learn new knowledge in an exciting environment. He claims that the students learn language functions, and vocabulary, and improve in reading skills too.

Likewise, another participant T3 said *"She has been teaching in a large classroom. So, she uses a smart T.V. in a classroom for entertainment when students feel bored or irritated. She continued her statements, and claimed that smart T. V. is not generally used as this device was available in T. V. hall in the previous days but, smart T. V. has been shifted to class 9."*

From the experience shared by the participants of this study, it can be summarized that smart TV can make students visualize the whole stories or the text

related to their subject matter in an ELT classroom. Teachers feel very comfortable when they show some videos to students and learn simultaneously. Grain et al. (2020) claim Smart TVs can connect to the internet to choose the shows we want to see and save shows to make students more interactive in a classroom. According to the participants' views, it is clear that students can exchange their ideas, and adopt new environments in a classroom. Some videos and stories relevant to their culture can make the transformative itself.

Laptop and Projector

A laptop is a portable device that can be easily carried around. Laptops are a quick and easy way to store information, data, and multimedia content, and upload and download information from the web. With the help of laptops, teachers can enhance their knowledge and skills anytime, and anywhere in their professional lives. Laptop note-taking applications can tremendously enhance learners' ability and offload their cognitive pressure (Shi, Y. and Yu, Z. 2024).

Regarding this context, participant T4 said, *“She has used a laptop in ELT since 2074. She always carries her laptop. She makes some slides related to the contents and shows them on the whiteboard connected through a projector. She generally teaches job application letters, congratulation letters, condolence letters, and so on.”* She cannot teach without a laptop in her ELT classroom. Her argument indicates that each teacher should carry a laptop for goal-oriented and meaningful teaching in a classroom. The teachers feel easy and relaxed when they use a smart laptop displaying videos, pictures, and audio through a projector that creates better learning outcomes in the classroom.

Similarly, T3 said *“She uses a laptop for showing slides relevant to contents. She teaches menus, and recipe writing in a classroom. She claimed that students can learn the names of different ingredients. Students can write recipes and menu writing at the same time.”* Her expression shows that the laptop can be a great tool for writing notes for the students' high-quality productivity. Most students have laptops at their homes, and they can easily send emails to the teachers for quick instant feedback at the same time.

Another participant T1 stated that *“Making slides is an easy task for teaching purposes in a classroom. He said that he has been using his laptop to show pictures, snipping the pages, doing exercises, and so on. He hides some slides so that students can also think about coming up with the slides in a classroom. When he has to make a presentation, he makes slides and shows in the classroom.”* He mentions that he has been using a laptop since he joined the teaching profession. He did not have ideas on how to create a mail ID at that time before fifteen years ago. He got help from the students who were working in Cyber. When he learned how to send mail, type texts, and download documents, he began to teach with the help of a laptop. The projector was available when he started to use the laptop in the classroom. But later on, he gradually made the ELT classroom interesting.

During the discussion, T2 mentioned *“Using a laptop in a classroom, teaching is very easy. He stated that he has to make some materials and download them on a pen drive. So, he should be very conscious and concentrate on preparing slides for teaching in a classroom. The class will be both teacher-centered and student-centered in a classroom.”* This infers that the teachers can teach easily in a classroom as a laptop is a lighter and smaller device than usual. The majority of the participants in their interviews expressed that teachers should have their own ICT tools for developing self-learning in the integration of technology in ELT classrooms.

Speaker

Speakers in the classroom are very essential for effecting teaching and student engagement in a classroom. The teachers can communicate and deliver the message through speakers that enable the students to listen to a sound as an outcome. During getting information from the participants, T2 said *“He can handle the large class using speakers in ELT. He claimed that students can easily listen to his voice through speakers in a classroom. In an ELT classroom, there will be no irritation and gap in listening voices of the teachers among students during teaching. He stated that the teacher should not cry too much in the classroom. Moreover, he claimed that the speaker*

has made my classroom learning environment inclusive and more conductive.” He mentions that the students can receive a message at once in a classroom. There is good communication between teachers and students. The students do not get disturbances while listening through speakers in a classroom.

Another participant T3 reported that *“She uses speakers to make students active and conscious for learning in ELT. Large classroom needs a loud voice for clear understanding”*. The vocal strain placed on teachers has been found to reduce when sound-amplification systems are used in the classroom, (Ellis, 2014).

Both teachers frequently use speakers in their classrooms so that all students can receive a message at once. According to their views on the speaker, they emphasized amplifying the teacher’s voice and ensuring audibility is very necessary for clear communication in a language classroom. Thus, Transformative Learning (TL) focuses on planning a course of action in which the teachers have a strategy for seeing new perspectives, talking to new students, and more. Therefore, the speaker can access the teachers’ views, and make the classroom more transformative.

Smartboard

The smartboard helps teachers create dynamic lessons in which students can work and manipulate things on the screen like activities, assessments, videos, and digital tools. This tool is a kind of interactive whiteboard. Students can write on the screen, and work together in collaborative groups in an exciting way in an ELT classroom. Two participants, T3 and T4 reported that *“They use smart boards in alternate bases. The class is very interesting and fun. Both teachers teach the students how to learn art and craft drawing through smart boards. T4 stated that she searches relevant topics on Google, YouTube, and Chrome, and makes the students engage in group work.”*

The smartboard was first produced in 1991 by Smart Technologies Corporation, Shenton and Pagett (2007) believe that the teachers organize and manage their teaching using smart boards in the classroom. Both participant’s experience teaching through

smart boards showed that smart boards can be used for multimodal learning in an interactive learning environment. The teachers as well as students love to interact with the information found on the internet and build a bond of relationship among them.

Challenges

Zaheer et al. (2021) believe that teachers have difficulties gaining access to ICT resources; as a result, they demonstrate a lack of interest, are reluctant, and lack sufficient confidence in the use of advanced ICT devices and technologies. The major challenges faced by teachers in the context of Nepal included poor internet coverage, inadequate support by the school management, insufficient training on ICT provided, and very short time to learn ICT skills during content teaching in a classroom. Several studies have shown that teachers lack knowledge of technology. Therefore, teachers should be aware of modern technology's pitfalls if they want to adopt them in pedagogy. The development of new technologies and the decision to integrate them into teaching and learning lives in an ELT classroom has not made a successful route for teachers. However, ICT tools have made teaching and learning activities meaningful. One of the participants T1 *stated that mobile phones are portable, and this device is very helpful in ELT. But calls and texts continuously appear on mobile as a result the teacher's concentration is diverted.*

Another participant shared his experience of teaching and stated *'The teachers feel that the speaker cannot approach a loud voice to each student so they speak loudly, and students become irritated during the whole class period.*

Following up on the interview, Participants T2 and T3 said *that preparing for a presentation in a classroom needs much time. They claimed that making slides to show in the classroom is a one-sided task only. Students just listen to or watch the teacher's activities. They do not show any response. The class became teacher-centered.*

Similarly, T1 and T3 claimed that *students' demands are different from each other. The classroom is diverse in the context of Nepal. They said that they play videos on smart boards or smart TVs according to content but students' interest is different. Therefore, the classroom is very noisy due to their high demand. Sometimes, teachers should pause the videos or show pictures, and images for a short time. T4 said that the*

password of the smart board frequently changes. Sometimes, the teachers should finish the chapter within the expected time. Both the teachers and students became disturbed and irritated. Communication between skilled people and teachers is lacking during fixing passwords in smart boards.

This suggests that some of the challenges that the teachers face is a disturbance of running class through smartboard, laptop, projector, and mobile due to poor network, power cuts, large classes, and unavailability of sufficient materials. Each participant also focused on the school's financial problems. They shared that they have not attended any professional ICT training so far in their teaching journey. Modern technologies have been changing day by day, and teachers should make the students compete in the global market. Therefore, the challenges can be minimized through doing additional research on ICT-based teaching and learning at local as well as national levels. Overall, according to Mishra (2020), both the teacher and student believed that ICT friendly learning environment creates more collaborative, supportive behavioral practices in classrooms.

Conclusion

This study has identified the main challenges faced by the teachers using ICT in a classroom, including poor internet connection, lack of ICT-based training, technical support from colleagues and school management, and so on. This study also reveals that when the teachers have positive perceptions of ICT integration classrooms, it would ultimately promote and enhance the use of ICT in schools as well as in ELT classrooms. Teachers use different ICT tools for different purposes in the classroom. Their views on ICT-based teaching summarized on the integration of ICT in ELT, can make students constructive, creative, and critical thinking. The teaching is directly influenced by the teacher's curiosity to use ICT in the classroom. The study indicated that with positive perceptions of using ICT in a classroom, teachers can make their classrooms effective.

According to participant's views in the results, the teachers should be provided with more ICT training to be confident in using ICT in a classroom. It is strongly

recommended that teachers should ensure that adequate infrastructure, rich network connection, and frequent training on ICT should be provided by school management. ICT tools have changed the way of teaching in the classroom. However, concerned authorities, MoE, Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), should provide ICT pedagogical training to overcome the challenges while teaching through ICT tools in a classroom. Moreover, it is recommended after getting results in this study, existing available tools should be checked and updated so that they can run smoothly. English teachers should get the chance to create a collaborative team for engagement in learning ICT-based skills, and genuine connections in a real world context.

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