

Unpacking Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Writing at the Undergraduate (Bachelor) Level in Nepal

Jagadish Paudel

Abstract

Teachers' experiences prove that second language writing (L2 writing) is a challenging task. Embracing a phenomenological approach to research, this study unpacks teachers' lived experiences of teaching English as a second language (ESL) writing at the undergraduate (bachelor) level in Nepal. Specifically, it explores how teachers teach writing, what kind of assignments they assign to their students, what they feel comfortable and uncomfortable with teaching writing, what they want to improve in their teaching, and what their students struggle with in carrying out their assignments. For collecting data, I used a written open-ended questionnaire as a research tool and I analyzed the resulting data thematically. The study reveals that, out of nine teachers, only four strove to embrace a process approach to writing. The findings show that, as reported by the teachers, students most often react negatively to writing assignments and struggle in their writing. The teachers assign several long and short assignments, and, by their responses, it can be understood that all intended to improve their teaching, ranging from coherence and cohesion to contextualizing their teaching.

Keywords: *Teaching writing, teachers' experiences, undergraduate (Bachelor) level, ESL, Nepal*

Introduction

Though English is taught as a compulsory subject in Nepal from primary education to the undergraduate level, English teachers consider teaching writing in English challenging, and students approach writing as a "scary task" (Paudel & Joshi, 2017). In their study, Lee and Pandey (2019) state that there is no specific L2 writing course at Nepali educational institutions. In most college-level courses, I knew from my teaching experience at the college level for over a decade that writing exercises are embedded in compulsory English courses without providing proper guidelines and approaches to teaching writing.

The present article aims to clearly delineate teachers' lived experiences of teaching English-language writing at the bachelor level in Nepal. Particularly, in this study, I strive to seek answers to the questions: What strategies do Nepali writing teachers embrace in teaching written composition in English at the undergraduate level? What would they like to improve in their pedagogy? On which topics and aspects do they feel prepared and unprepared to teach? and What kinds of assignments do they assign and how do their students respond to writing assignments?

To this end, first, I discuss some disciplinary literature from home and abroad. Through this, I find research gaps and discuss the theoretical aspect of teaching writing. Then, I explain the methodology part of the research. After this, I present the data (results) of the study, and based on the results, I discuss the findings and derive implications.

For this research, I embraced the phenomenological approach to data collection, which attempts to obtain insightful descriptions of the way. People experience, without taxonomizing, categorizing, and complicating the experience (van Manen, 2016). So, the phenomenological approach neither offers theory nor controls the world, instead, it offers a more plausible world, giving more direct contact with the world (van Manen, 2016). In this article, I neither offer a particular theory nor do I control the participant teachers writing experience, rather I try to gain some insightful descriptions of the teachers based on their direct experience in teaching writing at the undergraduate level in Nepal.

Literature Review

In this section, first, I discuss some empirical studies that are conducted on writing in Nepal, and then, I present some writing literature that deals with teaching writing broadly. In this study, I use the two phrases: English as Second Language (ESL) and Second Language Writing (L2) to refer to the same—teaching writing in English in non-English speaking countries.

Very few studies have been executed in the context of Nepal regarding teaching writing. One of the recently carried out studies on writing is “The Potential of Blogs as Discussion Forums for Developing Collaborative Writing Skills in Higher Education” by Ojha and Acharya (2020). The study explores how using blogs as a platform supports collaboration for the development of students’ writing skills and promotes teamwork and collegiality in higher education in Nepal; it also discusses some potential challenges of using blogs as a learning platform. Another latest study on writing that of Nepal is, “Improving academic writing skills of English language teacher trainees through ICT” by Poudel and Gnawali (2020). The purpose of this action research was to explore how online teaching and learning arrangements can be of assistance in developing writing skills collaboratively. It showed that an ICT-based academic writing activity helped trainees to advance their academic writing skills through writing and peer editing. Karki (2019), in his study, “Writing instruction in secondary schools: Unraveling practices and challenges” discusses the practices and challenges of teaching writing to secondary level students in Sunsari, Nepal: Large class size, low proficient learners, pressure on course completion, lack of practical training for teachers, and insufficient resources including ICT facility in the classroom context. I believe that this study is useful to know the school level problem of teaching writing and to see whether the same problems exist at the bachelor level or not. Sapkota (2012) executed action research on, “Developing students’ writing skills through peer and teacher correction: An action research” and the study was focused on the development of writing skills through peer and teacher correction techniques. The study showed that both techniques were productive in teaching writing through action research as a whole.

Lee and Pandey (2019) carried out qualitative research with the aim of reporting primary, secondary, and post-secondary level English teacher preparation and continued development, class successes and challenges, and resources and support system. Their study indicated that the practice of top-down professional development and other logistics constraints such as classroom space and students’ varied linguistics abilities hindered motivated teachers’ professional development in L2 writing. The study also showed that the teachers teaching writing did not write themselves. In their study, Lee and Pandey appeal for more local collaboration between teachers and trainers to make their professional development

more productive. The available literature from Nepal reveals that there is still a dearth of research on English teachers' classroom experiences regarding teaching writing. Hence, there is a dire need of executing research for unpacking teachers' experience teaching writing at the bachelor level in Nepal. Now, I intend to discuss literature that deals with teaching writing broadly, including both theoretical and empirical studies that are outside Nepal.

Writing needs a rigorous process regardless of whether students are L1 (first language) or L2 (second language); "even in one's native language, learning to write is something like learning a second language... No one is a 'native speaker' of writing. For the most part, everyone learns to write at school" (Leki, 1992, p. 10). Writing is learned through a number of back-and-forth learning processes, and it takes considerable time to become a fluent writer whether one is learning one's own mother language or a different language of instruction. Silva (1993) asserts that "both L1 and L2 writers employ a recursive composing process, involving planning, writing, and revising, to develop their ideas and find the appropriate rhetorical and linguistic means to express them" (p. 657). As pointed out by Silva, all writers go through a number of processes and procedures for articulating their ideas more coherently and cohesively.

Wahleithner (2018) states that in order to teach writing, complex knowledge is required. Therefore, a writing teacher needs to know more than how to write well. In this regard, Hillocks (1991) presents three combined elements. First, it requires general knowledge of the teaching writing process—for example, the knowledge of approaches to prewriting, preparing a draft and revising the draft. Second, teaching writing requires genre-specific knowledge, for instance, the process that we follow to write an editorial differs from the process we use to write a research report. Last, the knowledge of understanding of developing the content of a particular text. The content needed for one genre differs from another, for instance, developing content for a business letter differs from developing an argument for a persuasive essay.

Along with various knowledge, a writing teacher should know instructional strategies for teaching writing. There exist some strategies and approaches for teaching English-language writing. In recent generations, writing pedagogy in English has explored everything from a mainly product-oriented approach to a rigid and mechanical process approach (follows writing processes, e.g. brainstorming, preparing the draft, revising, editing, and producing final draft), to a genre approach (follows writing conventions of a particular genre, e.g. writing official letter following the format of it and using the language needed to the official letter writing), and ultimately to a post-process approach (the process which follows with interaction with others after the completion of writing, for example, discussion about their writing with writing center consultant about their writing draft).

Silva (1990) argues that a process approach is needed in order to create "a positive, encouraging, and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through their composing processes. The teacher's role is redefined as a coach to help and provide strategies in different stages of writing" (p.15). Cheung (2016) argues that teachers must understand the recursive nature of the writing process as well as know what constitutes "good" writing. He further argues that writing competence encompasses, along with linguistic knowledge and skills (word choices, sentence variations, punctuation choices, and other linguistic tools for cohesion and coherence), the techniques of structuring and developing arguments at the micro and macro levels, and characteristics of thinking processes that are essential to good writing. Genre approaches to writing came into composition pedagogy and gained popularity with the influence of the "social turn" (Trimbur, 1994, p. 109). The writing was recognized as an activity to be carried out quite differently for different purposes in different social contexts, largely determined by writer-reader relations (Halliday, 1994; Hyland, 2003).

However, whatever model of writing pedagogy may be applied in the classroom, assignments play a vital role in students' writing development. They have an even greater role in consolidating L2 writers' writing. A plethora of researches show that engaging English language learners in additional writing practice are beneficial to advance their composition skills as well as their fluency in English. Horbacauskiene and Kasperaviciene (2016) write that "writing assignments are significant in teaching, testing and developing students' competencies in a non-native language (p.130). Writing assignments are useful tools for teachers since they unite language, content, and context (Hyland, 2013). Indeed, composition assignments unify students' language skills, the content they learn, and the context in which they learn.

Horbacauskiene and Kasperaviciene (2016) carried out a study with the aim of investigating to what extent writing assignments assist university undergraduates of various study programs in developing the ability to use foreign language professionally. In comparison to students from the technical field, the study noted that students majoring in human and social sciences tended to show more positive attitudes towards writing assignments. Arshavskaya (2015) argues that L2 composition instructors have long been concerned with providing extra language exercise opportunities for L2 writers. She states that the creative writing assignment is helpful for improving students' writing ability as it intensifies students' eagerness for writing skills development and supports students' creativity. In her study, with the aim of involving less motivated students, she employed a series of creative writing assignments in an L2 writing course, and the study revealed that all the participating students found the assignment both pleasurable and valuable for progressing their writing ability.

In their study, Graves, Hyland and Samuels (2010) analyzed syllabi from one university college to determine the types and frequency of assignments and how these assignments vary by program and level. Their study showed that the most common type of assignment was the term or research paper, though task labels were highly variable. The term paper included reading the summary, book review, sight poem, literature review, dissertation, description, opinion piece, and analysis.

Teachers are required to teach various types of writing assignments. Sometimes teachers might feel unprepared to teach a particular language item. Vasquez and Pilgrim (2018) note that teachers may feel unprepared to teach due to a lack of professional development on the subject at hand. When teachers feel better prepared, they are obviously "more confident and successful" in teaching their students (Shreve, 2005). Examining why teachers feel unprepared to teach, Shreve (2005) states that teachers may feel difficulty teaching due to "not being able to communicate with students and parents, lack of appropriate materials, and a lack of accurate information about exactly what academic content their students already know and what they need to learn"(n.p.). Conversely, students perceive difficulty in learning writing for any number of reasons.

Methodology

I undertook a qualitative research study adopting a phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of an individual (van Manen, 1997)—the participant-teachers who are involved with the issue that is being investigated. Through the approach, I tried to search for a deeper and fuller meaning of the experience of the participants (van Manen, 1997) "in their own terms — to provide a description of [their experiences] as it is experienced by [them]" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 96).

This study was executed with Institutional Review Board's approval from a US University in

the U.S. The participant-teachers were selected purposively from two public universities of Nepal who have been teaching English to Education and Humanities streams for more than a decade at the bachelor level. The teachers teach courses ranging from compulsory English courses to major courses in English. The courses have embedded writing exercises for students. I chose the sample population based on my judgment and the purpose of the research (Babbie, 1995; Schwandt, 1997; Greig & Taylor, 1999), seeking the population who “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (Kruger, 1988, p. 150).

In order to collect data, I prepared a written open-ended questionnaire (see appendix) seeking teachers’ teaching writing experiences at the undergraduate level in Nepal and then sent them to the teachers through an online platform—Questionpro. Before commencing the actual study, I did a pilot study, sending the questionnaire to three potential participants. I then improved, making the questionnaire more comprehensive and relevant, and again sent them to the participants. After obtaining the data, participants were pseudo-named in order to anonymize data and maintain the confidentiality of participants’ responses.

To analyze the obtained data, I used In vivo coding, also known as “Literal coding” and “Verbatim coding” (Saldana, 2009). The root meaning of In vivo is “in that which is alive,” and a code denotes the actual words, phrases that are used by the participants--“the terms used by [respondents] themselves” (Strauss, 1987, p. 33). In this study, I directly quote some participants’ words and phrases in order to honor and preserve their voices (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009). I coded the data multiple times to manage, filter, highlight, and focus the salient features of the data for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping the meaning, and/or building theory (Saldana, 2009).

Results

This section presents results derived from the open-ended questionnaire distributed to the participants. Altogether, I have grouped the data into four parts.

Strategies Embraced by Teachers in Teaching a Writing Lesson

Analysis of the data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire discloses that out of nine teachers, only four of them (Harish, Dipika, Sushil, and Dil Bahadur) consciously embraced writing processes in their writing lessons. Dil Bahadur recently taught a five-paragraph essay, following the process approach (planning, drafting, revising, and preparing the final draft). Harish recently taught a lesson on “Paraphrasing” in his academic writing class. He responded that he first defined paraphrasing, and then followed stepwise procedures for teaching the topic: First, giving a reading passage to the students, he asked them to read the passage several times; second, he made the students note down the key ideas from the text; third, he asked them to prepare a paraphrase without looking at the original text; and fourth, he asked the students to compare their paraphrased text with the original text; and lastly, he made them cite the original text in the paraphrased version. Further, Harish responded, “few of his students were able to produce a well-phrased version of the text, but some of the students could not produce well-paraphrased version text.” After that, he suggested the students consult with their peers and get help from them on the parts where they were confused. Similarly, Dipika answered that she taught proposal writing, following step-by-step procedures. First, she taught key components of proposal writing, and then presented components of proposal writing with examples, and displayed some model proposals. She stated that though students were enthusiastic about the topic, they seemed a bit confused because they did not have any background knowledge on proposal writing. Likewise, Sushil taught a “Summary Writing”

lesson, and he described his recent writing lesson as follows:

I gave a short introduction to the topic 'summary writing' with lesson objectives and clarified why summary writing is important. Then, I presented a short biography of a famous [person of Nepal]. I asked my students to read two or three times or more and mark the main ideas in the text. They prepared all but only the important and relevant points. Students had an open discussion on the marked ideas in groups for a better understanding of the text. After having a short discussion in the group, they prepared a rough draft in their own words. They exchanged their drafts with each other to check what is missing in their draft. I helped them to find some similar words, to maintain lexical and grammatical coherence and cohesion. At last, they prepared their final version of the summary. And a member from each group presented the summary and received feedback.

Sushil's response shows that he followed writing process procedures in teaching summary writing, and engaged the students in group work.

The remaining five teachers, Umesh, Suresh, Hark Bahadur, Rima, and Dayaram did not follow the process approach in teaching writing. The data showed that Suresh followed the lecture technique, and Hark Bahadur, Umesh, Rima, and Dayaram just assigned writing assignments, but they did not teach how to do the task.

Teachers' Improvement Areas in Writing Pedagogy

As per the teachers' responses, they intend to improve their writing pedagogy in different areas. One of the teachers (Rima) responded that she would like to focus on exploratory research-based writing tasks. That is, she intended to explore students' interests and problems and wants to direct her teaching to address the students' concerns. Three of the teachers (Umesh, Dayaram, and Sushil) wanted to improve their teaching on sentence construction, cohesion, coherence, unity in writing, the syntactic and semantic arrangement of the writing, mechanics, and selection of formal and academic vocabulary. Among the three, Dayaram also wished to improve his teaching on the descriptive, narrative, argumentative, persuasive essay, and at the same time, he wanted to learn to teach the three parts of an essay: the beginning, the middle (body) and the end (conclusion). Dipika intended to improve her pedagogy in enhancing joint productive activity and contextualizing teaching writing. Like Dipika, Dil Bahadur also wanted to make his teaching writing contextual. Similarly, he wanted to improve his teaching writing in large classrooms and mixed ability classroom, engaging students in writing in the classroom.

Regarding his teaching improvement plan, Harish answered, "the areas of writing that I want to develop personally are writing reports of the field visit, journal writing, and reflective writing." For teaching enhancement, Hark Bahadur responded that he is frequently haunted by teaching writing, particularly teaching the students to write a concise message/writing in a comprehensible language with a strong argument and proper organization. So, he wished to improve his teaching in helping students to write concisely and in comprehensible ways.

Teachers' Preparedness and Unpreparedness in Teaching Writing

There are varied responses from the teachers regarding their preparedness and unpreparedness to teach writing. Rima responded that she feels confident and prepared to teach "mid/while -writing

activities,” i.e., writing steps used while actually composing and writing text. While Dil Bahadur stated that he feels most prepared in teaching pre-writing and post-writing activities as in carrying out these activities he does not need to think about dealing with mixed ability students. Further, he mentioned that he feels more confident when he teaches an academic writing course since he has a long experience of teaching the course. Sushil stated that he feels most comfortable in teaching “preparing a CV,” as students most often come from lower grades with some sort of knowledge in preparing a CV; he mentioned that students already know the parts and format of a CV and the language used in CV writing. Harish answered that he feels at ease teaching the last stage of the writing process, i.e. post-writing, as he feels it does not demand much work on his part. For Hark Bahadur, teaching grammar and letter writing are easier and light since he believes they require no rigorous teaching plan in comparison to teaching other aspects of writing.

Unlike Rima, for Harish teaching pre-writing and mid-writing activities need much preparation. He finds difficulty in teaching these activities because he believes he should first draw the students’ attention towards teaching, and then should exemplify writing “for making understand the writing he is teaching.” Umesh feels unprepared for teaching post-writing activities, teaching letter-writing, and essays. Dil Bahadur stated that he feels difficulty in while-teaching activities due to the heterogeneous group of students in his classes. Harish writes that he feels difficulty in teaching paragraph development, coherence, and cohesion, and teaching writing with supporting details and arguments. Sushil feels unprepared in teaching to write references, following the in-text citations rule, and teaching the idea of plagiarism, because the students did not have any prior knowledge regarding these concepts. In his words, “They are completely unknown to in text-citation, referencing, APA and MLA format.” For Hark Bahadur, teaching the idea of maintaining proper organization with a composite style was problematic, as he does not have any idea of how to teach the topic effectively and appropriately.

Varied Assignments, Students Reaction, and Struggles

In Nepal, as teachers typically teach a range of English courses (compulsory courses to various major courses), they necessarily assign widely varied assignments. Teachers sometimes design assignments themselves, and sometimes they select assignments from exercises in a prescribed textbook. Explaining the kinds of assignments, he gives to his students, Hark Bahadur writes:

i) Reviewing book/film, case study, story writing, biography writing, writing reflection, describing information in figure and table, report writing, application writing (as prescribed in the course), etc. [are assigned as] long assignments. (ii) [S]ingle paragraph writing on a particular topic, guided writing (short story, a news story), short answer, writing advertisement of any products (as with the sample given in the coursebook), making a sentence with the help of words or phrases given [in the textbook], grammatical exercises, ... abstract writing, summarizing story and poem, single-paragraph essays (as given in Cambridge Academic English, An integrated Skills Course for EAP).

The responses of the nine teachers showed that they commonly offered short assignments including précis, guided stories, short question-answers, personal responses, paraphrasing short texts, short letter writing, comprehensive questions, grammar exercises, preparation of instructions, and writing for advertising. For long assignments, the teachers assign descriptive, narrative, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect essay writing, long-answer questions, writing a CV, story writing, preparing research reports and field reports, journal writing, writing a reflection, paraphrasing long texts, summary writing, preparing prospectus and brochure, biography writing, etc.

Four teachers responded that their students react negatively to writing assignments due to lack of interest, fear of making grammatical errors, and not having skill in maintaining coherence, cohesion, and syntactical usage. Umesh wrote that in Nepal, higher education students have not often developed the habit of actually getting assignments done. Only some students faithfully do assignments. Similarly, Harish responds, “In the case of writing class the students who are really eager to learn something react positively and do the assigned task. But, few students who are least motivated towards study try to escape from the assignment and submit lately [i.e., late].” His point is that reacting positively and negatively largely depends on students’ motivation toward writing. Sushil stated that if students are familiar with the title of the assignment and its content, they are more eager to do assignments. However, if the students are not acquainted with the content of their assignments, they want to have teacher-prepared notes. Hark Bahadur responds that “almost 95% of students, so far I have found, fear with writing assignment who take(s) it negatively because they simply are away off obligatory writing environment [which I think must be improved] and even we teacher tend to be both lazy and negligent” in giving assignments and providing feedback.

Discussing students’ struggle in doing assignments, Rima and Umesh stated that their students struggle especially with analytical, critical, logical, reflective, and research-based assignments. Rima mentioned that students are simply not interested in doing long assignments. She blamed our educational system, which, she complained, has never given students the opportunity to be exploratory, analytical, or critical; rather, the system has fostered rote memorization. Harish and Sushil responded that their students feel difficulty in writing reports, since report writing is new for them, differing from the essay writing which they normally practice in their writing, and also because they lack knowledge of the technical aspects of report writing. Dipika responded that students feel difficulty in technical writing. She further stated that students struggle with writing academic papers, particularly identifying a research gap, writing references, citing properly following a particular style, and formulating research questions. Dayaram stated that his students struggle with writing argumentative and persuasive types of writing since they do not have the knowledge of how to express ideas logically and reasonably. Both Dayaram and Sushil indicated that students struggle with writing due to a lack of exposure to real-world examples of this type of writing. Similarly, Harish stated that his students from rural areas tend to be less resourceful, and they find themselves more dependent on teacher-provided materials and notes only. Sushil pointed out that his students feel trouble in expressing ideas due to a lack of confidence in their grammar and lack of vocabulary power. Hark Bahadur stated that his students struggle with writing essays. In his concluding remarks, Hark Bahadur argued that grammar should not be primarily focused while dealing with writing assignments in the preliminary phase, as it might possibly lead towards “linguistic phobia.”

Discussion and Implications

The teachers’ responses revealed that out of nine teachers, four of them (Harish, Dipika, and Sushil, Dil Bahadur; see results) followed a product-based approach to teaching writing. The five teachers did not embrace either the process approach and genre approach and seem to prefer a more scatter-shot, off-the-cuff pedagogy rather than any identifiable systematic approach. When teachers do not follow the process approach to teaching writing, they are likely to face difficulty in teaching writing. So, to better facilitate the writing class, the teachers should embrace some form of the process approach to writing. While focusing on the process approach, the teacher should also be aware of the genre of writing and when appropriate, follow a genre approach to writing assignments. As Cheung (2016) notes, besides helping students in idea generation, and teaching the rhetorical moves of the particular genres, teachers should understand and teach a number of specific strategies for fostering students’ writing competence:

Teachers also need to teach students a socio-cognitive approach to writing, which takes into consideration readers' expectations, socio-cultural contexts, and thinking processes involved in planning, organizing, and writing/revising their essays and assignments. Teachers need to make clear to the students that writing is a recursive, complex activity, that in order to move forward in composition we all need to read, re-read, and revise our writing. A good piece of writing has to go through multiple revisions. This applies not only to novice writers but to the most confident and experienced writers as well. Understanding this can help clarify a misconception that many students may have – that only non-proficient writers will need significant revisions to their work. (pp.17 -18)

There is no denying that L2 writing teachers should teach their students socio-cultural contexts as well, along with thinking processes and writing processes, and make them understand writing as a socially determined activity. Further, they should teach the students to go through multiple drafting processes and revision processes in order to find their own weaknesses and thus, correct their writing themselves and yield better writing.

The teachers' responses showed that they wanted to improve their teaching in different areas, including exploratory research-based writing tasks, the mechanical aspect of writing, grammatical correctness, coherence, and cohesion, teaching report writing, contextualizing the teaching of writing and teaching different types of essays. Similarly, the teachers felt unprepared to teach some lessons, for instance, teaching pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing activities, teaching about citation and plagiarism. The data showed (one of the participants mentioned; see results) that students are not taught about plagiarism at the school level. Through my own teaching experience at the college level for more than a decade, I also came to know that students are rarely taught anything about writing references, citations, and plagiarism before their college years, and thus, teaching these aspects of composition becomes a bit challenging in writing class. Thus, the teachers should prepare themselves in these areas, and their colleges should also provide professional development opportunities and resources that assist them to be prepared in the areas.

Discussing the difficulty of teaching academic writing to L2 students, Evans and Green (2007) argue that students may perceive all aspects of academic writing as a difficult task. They explored that L2 students perceive language-related components to be difficult rather than structure/content-related components of academic writing. Language-related difficulty refers to the difficulties of expressing ideas situationally, accurately and fluently and structure-related difficulties refer to mechanical aspects of writing such as sections/parts of writing, writing references/citations and others mechanics of writing. Evans's and Green's (2007) finding is corroborated by the results of Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) and Dalsky and Tajino (2007), in which students faced problems and difficulties in maintaining the coherence of writing (organizing) ideas and arguments, employing proper styles of writing, and articulating thoughts clearly in English. Marshall's (1991) study revealed that students may oftentimes have more difficulties with the structure of a paper than the strictly language-related components. Similarly, Kubota (1998) advocates that the greatest difficulties in teaching L2 writing may well be instigated by teachers' instructional emphasis on accuracy at the sentence level rather than on broader discourse organization.

To mitigate difficulties and unpreparedness for teaching L2 writing, teachers can embrace some strategies. Swenson (1996) suggests, "teachers who feel uncomfortable or unprepared to teach writing would benefit from workshops or by reading educational literature that emphasizes techniques and strategies on how to teach writing in the foreign language classroom" (p.2). She further argues that if a teacher is familiar with teaching writing through the process approach, both teacher and students may find writing as a rewarding experience, and thus, students can learn writing better and may enjoy writing tasks

that are assigned to them.

The teachers expressed that their students react negatively to writing assignments due to lack of interest, fear of making grammatical errors, and not having skill in maintaining coherence, cohesion, and syntactical usage. And also, they do not often have the habit of actually getting assignments done. So, from this, it can be inferred that teachers should be prepared to back up them to the areas and the aspects on which they feel difficulty in carrying out their assignments. In order to help in their writing, teachers can create a peer-support group, which provides them an opportunity for students to learn from each other. In peer review, students engage in the collaborative activity of “reading, critiquing and providing feedback on each other’s writing, both to secure immediate textual improvement and to develop, over time, stronger writing competence via mutual scaffolding” (Hu 2005a, pp. 321–322).

Writing assignments play a vital role in advancing students’ proficiency in writing. However, as above-stated, students do not enjoy and often struggle with writing assignments in general. But the assignments can be entertaining and engaging if students embrace a narrative style and rhetorical moves (Cheung, 2016) in their writing. Cheung further argues that when students are aware of purpose, audience, and context in their writing, they can better and more effectively use basic academic discourse skills including paraphrasing and direct quotation, lexical variety, passive voice (when to use the passive voice and when not to use it), thinking processes, and structuring and developing an argument, in their writing.

In Nepal, teaching writing is mostly guided by final-exam-driven, product-based writing assignments that encourage students to faithfully replicate what they have learned in the classroom (Belbase, 2012). Students face difficulty in writing when they do not know the rules of the “writing road” (Paudel, 2020) and the true dynamism of writing. Talking about the Nepali scenario of composition pedagogy, Sharma (2018) writes, “Teachers talk about students’ “poor writing” when students fail in exams i.e. if they don’t assume that the students would have written perfectly if they knew what to write but writing mediates and can make both the process and product of learning and assessment” (n.p.). Attuning with Sharma’s argument, I say that rather than talking about students’ bad writing and blaming them, it would be better to ask the right questions: “Did we teach them to follow correct writing procedures? Did we provide meaningful and specific feedback on their assignments? What did we do to lead them to become better writers?”

In this article, I discussed teachers’ lived experiences in teaching L2 writing at the bachelor level in Nepal. But, I did not examine how teachers actually teach in the classroom and I also did not seek to survey students’ views on how their teachers teach writing or how these students feel about writing assignments. Hence, future researchers need to observe teachers’ actual classroom teaching strategies and ask students for their views on writing assignments, what they feel necessary to execute the assignments, and what are their main difficulties in executing assignments.

The Author:

Jagadish Paudel is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition Studies at The University of Texas at El Paso. Professionally, he has a very strong and wide network across the world. His areas of interest include Social Justice Pedagogy, Multilingualism, Translingualism, Non-Western Rhetoric, and Public Discourse.

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Appendix (The following questions were sent to the participant-teachers via questionpro platform)

Please provide current information so that I can explore a real scenario of teaching writing at the Bachelor (undergraduate) level in Nepal. Your information will be kept confidential and anonymous. To keep your information confidential, I will store the data in coded form. On request, I will gladly share the final anonymized and compiled results of these questions with anyone who participates in the survey.

Questions about Your English Composition Pedagogy and Current Teaching Practices

- How long have you been teaching English at the Bachelor's level?
- Please state whether you teach at a public or private college, or at a university.
- Which undergraduate English courses do you typically teach (first year, second year, third year and fourth year courses respectively)?
- Please summarize in about 100-200 words your general approach to teaching English writing.
- Briefly describe (in about 100-200 words) an actual writing lesson or assignment that you have recently taught at the undergraduate level.
- List the various types of written assignments you most often assign to your undergraduate students during a given English course. Please indicate which are usually major (long) assignments, and which assignments take the form of a brief, daily writing practice, composition exercise, précis, summary or short personal response.
- What are the specific areas that you most want to improve in your own writing pedagogy? Please elaborate.
- What aspect of English writing (any particular subject, lesson or chapter, or specific pre-writing, mid-writing, or post writing activity, etc.) do you feel most prepared to teach, and which do you feel least prepared to teach? For each of these aspects, please also briefly explain why you feel this way.
- Please share your experiences, in general terms, as to whether your students usually react positively or negatively to writing assignments, and why.
- In your experience, which kinds of written assignments—or genres of writing—do your students struggle with most and why?
- If you have other concerns regarding your students' relationship to English-language writing and composition, please indicate these as well.