Editorial

Despite a difficult year for all of us, readers of the Journal of NELTA showed keen interest in the journal this year. We had a large number of submissions in all categories from many countries including the USA, China, Thailand, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Nearly 50% of the submissions did not proceed to the next stage of the editorial process because they were not prepared according to the recommended guidelines. This is a reminder to the authors how important it is to follow the manuscript preparation guidelines (please visit our website for the guidelines in all submission categories. Guidelines are also provided at the end of this Journal). Overall, our manuscript acceptance rate remains around 25 percent.

The articles of this volume broadly address four major themes of English language teaching: (a) perspectives on teaching online during the pandemic, (b) ELT, and EL teacher development (c) education, and academic writing, and (d) world Englishes. Starting from the last category, there is an ongoing conversation about what space world Englishes (WE) should be accorded in an educational system, whether and to what extent they should be included in the curricula and the classrooms, and whether WE have made its way to assessment and examinations particularly English language assessments. So far as the teaching and learning of English are concerned, *Shankar Dewan* argues that Nepali English (NE), which has emerged due to the influence of indigenous languages, nativization of English to local contexts, and exposure from the non-native teachers, has a potential for a place in the Nepalese education. He suggests that Nepali teachers of English favour NE as it is more intelligible and easier to teach and learn than the other varieties of English. *Laxmi Prasad Ojha* takes the debate further by critically examining how the existing assessment practices fail to represent the multilingual repertoires and actual language practices of the diverse range of test-takers around the world. Based on the documentary analysis of the issue, he highlights the progress, challenges and possibilities for the incorporation of more diverse models of language tests. *Bishnu Khadka* puts English language teaching (ELT) in Nepal in its historical context and argues that like many developing contexts of the region, ELT is set to grow further in Nepal.

The largest number of submissions, as expected, was around the issues ELT practitioners, students and institutions faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each of these articles, nonetheless, presents a different perspective on the issues. Based on a large-scale study with students and teachers, *Wenjung Wang,* for example, provides useful reflections on managing virtual/online teaching. He investigated teacher strategies employed in the three phases of pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching respectively, and has summarised strategies and key factors teachers need to know in order to manage technology-assisted English language teaching effectively. He suggests that online teaching is a compromise and a solution to a crisis that is completely out of the control of the teacher. He concludes that the application of technology has presented some problems, but the same technology helps overcome the problem. *Motikala Subba Dewan, Ahmed Bashir* and *David Tchaikovsky Teh Boon Ern's* transnational research adopts a Comparative Case Study (CCS) to explore the experiences of a cross-border ELT professional community and identify five key challenges of transitioning to online teaching during the pandemic which are (i) teaching and learning difficulties, (ii) unreliable and invalid assessments, (iii) infrastructural hurdles in home learning environment, (iv) student

displacement, and (v) compromised teacher wellbeing. They conclude that the concerned stakeholders need to remain vigilant and put a robust scheme to deal with such crises in the future. Similarly, *Prakash Rai* and *Uttam Singh Rai* present teachers' perspectives and the strategies they adopt to deal with the problems of teaching online. Prakash Rai, presenting some of the issues teachers face due to the sudden transition to online teaching, suggests that, despite technological inefficiency, social barriers, and psychological fear, teachers manage to apply technology effectively and productively because of their self-initiation, self-discovery, and cooperative approach.

Uttam Singh Rai's study conducted in an outlying area shows that teachers have had negative experiences such as technology-related anxiety and mental stress due to the lack of basic knowledge of ICT in English teachers. The constraints such as unstable electricity, low-speed internet issue, low rate of students' absence, and unavailability of ICT devices may have contributed to the negative experience. However, students and teachers manage to have some positive outcomes out of the difficult circumstances. In order to assist teachers in coping with stressful and difficult situations and in managing teaching and learning well, teachers need mentoring from those who are more knowledgeable and experienced. *Krishna Kumari Upadhyaya* article, which is based on a small-scale study, finds that mentorships help boost the confidence level and improve self-sufficiency. On a loosely related theme, *Md. Abdur Rouf* presents a case of novice teachers in Bangladesh. These teachers work in challenging circumstances with conflicting pre-service perceptions and in-service actualities. Such teachers require support and resources to play a proactive role during their induction. Looking into the future with teaching machines, *Janapha Thadphoothon* presents a perspective of artificial intelligence in ELT. He points out that English language teaching today is in the middle of a rapid and disruptive transformation and the teaching machine is driving this transformation. ELT practitioners, therefore, have to acquire additional (digital) skills and competencies, in addition to pedagogic skills, so as to be functional and thrive in this rapidly changing world.

Writing academically is a struggle for many of us ELT practitioners. *Jagdish Paudel* shares his experiences and struggles and offers some strategies for advancing academic writing skills. Similarly, intending to help novice writers, *Padam Chauhan* provides an overview of the fundamental concepts and process of academic writing. Both of these articles highlight key features of formal, academic writing and the strategies one can employ in order to enhance their academic paper writing abilities.

Our regular section of "Book/material Reviews," has one entry. The book review, which is contributed by *Pushpa Priya*, offers a review of a recently published book. We encourage readers of this Journal to write their own reviews of books and other appropriate materials and send their reviews to us.

With a view to informing readers about what is happening around the ELT world, the Journal has included a number of useful ELT-related blogs. They can benefit just by reading them or they can get involved in taking part in the conversations therein. With a similar objective, we have included news "From the ELT World," which contains information on regional and international conferences. Many of these organisations have sponsorships for emerging and early-career professionals. Interested NELTA members should contact the organisations directly.

We take this opportunity to thank all the authors for submitting their valuable work and for maintaining patience during the long review process. We thank our reviewers for taking time out of their busy schedules to review the submissions. Their hard work helps us improve the quality of the Journal. We thank Ms. Motikala Subba Dewan, president of NELTA, for her unfailing support.

Happy reading!