

EXPLORING SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM IN NEPAL: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This literature review delves into the dynamics of classroom participation among secondary level students' in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings within Nepal. Traditional teaching methods often foster passive learning, impeding both engagement and comprehension. Thus, this study aims to explore the factors and strategies for fostering active participation, crucial for academic performance and the development of social and extracurricular skills among secondary level students. Understanding the dearth of research in this area, the study investigates strategies to bolster classroom engagement, particularly emphasizing, Socio-cultural theory, motivational theory, critical pedagogy theory, peer interactions alongside explicit instruction. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology, employing library research methods as its primary approach. Qualitative analysis unravels the multifaceted nature of participation, advocating for inclusive and supportive classroom environments. It underscores the necessity for teachers to adapt their approaches to accommodate diverse student backgrounds, thereby fostering active engagement. The findings include collaborative learning experience, integration of language learning strategies, creating a supportive classroom environment and embracing a multidimensional approach in leaning process. By accentuating socio-cultural factors and classroom dynamics, this study enriches pedagogical practices and motivates English language learners to participate actively. In conclusion, the research contributes significantly to the understanding and enhancement of classroom participation dynamics in EFL settings, ultimately facilitating more effective and motivating language learning experiences for learners.

Key Words: *Secondary level students' Participation, Socio-cultural factors, Classroom Dynamics, English language*

Introduction

As an English language teacher, it's essential to create an environment where students feel comfortable and confident to participate in class discussions and activities. Active classroom participation played an important role in the success of education and students' personal development in the future (Tatar, 2005). Student participation, at the individual and systemic levels, is widely acknowledged to be beneficial to both students and schools in policy, practice, and research. According to Graham et al., (2018) many educational institutions are making efforts to actively participate in discussions surrounding concepts such as "student-centeredness," "personalized learning," "student voice," and other related themes. However, understanding the factors that influence students' participation is complex and multifaceted. In this article, the researcher delve into the dynamics of secondary level students' engagement in English language classrooms, examining both internal and external factors that impact their willingness to participate. According to Vandrick (2000), most teachers believe that participation is requiring students to speak in class, answer questions, make comments and join in discussion. Crone (1997) indicated that if students actively participate in a learning environment, they will have more opportunity to become critical thinkers and less passive. Cohen and Lotan (1997) found when students take responsibility for each other and encourage everyone to contribute equally to tasks by performing their respective roles, there is an increase in student success in terms of mathematical understanding, and Boaler (2008) found group roles helped promote relational equity within the mathematics classroom. Increasing students' proficiency in the English language requires students to be constantly exposed to adequate and appropriate English learning materials and activities. Encouraging them to engage in group activities actively, role-plays and report presentations may increase their English fluency. In this context, it is relevant to cite Chickering and Gamson (1987) who say:

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves" (p. 4).

According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, classroom interactions play a pivotal role in cognitive development, with participation serving as a vehicle for learning and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory underscores the significance of social interactions and collaborative learning environments in enhancing students' language acquisition. Furthermore, research suggests that various factors such as teacher-student rapport, classroom atmosphere, instructional strategies, and students' individual characteristics can significantly influence their participation

levels (Baker, 2019; Johnson, 2020). It is also effective to use Ewens' (2000) definition of discussion as "a diverse body of teaching techniques that emphasize participation, dialogue, and two-way communication" (p. 21).

Therefore, this study tries to explore the factors that affect students' participation and the strategies to involve them in the English classroom as teaching and learning is a two way communication process. If the learners get chance to take part in interaction by creating collaborative learning environment, they possibly learn better in their performance. Student-centered techniques will be helpful in enhancing communicative skills through participation and interaction.

Review of Literature

Classroom participation plays a crucial role in language learning, especially in communicative language teaching (CLT) contexts by making it interactive. In Nepal, where English is taught as a second language or even foreign language, understanding the dynamics of classroom interaction is essential. To improve students' English proficiency, consistent exposure to suitable learning materials and activities is essential. Encouraging group participation, role-plays, and report presentations can enhance English fluency. These activities involve reading, oral reporting, script writing, and attentive listening. When students enjoy their class activities, learning becomes more natural. In an ethnographic study, L. Morgenstern (1992) observed and interviewed four undergraduate students from a technological university. She found that regardless of the many opportunities for students to participate, only certain students seemed to take those opportunities. Only a small proportion of students, four to six students accounted for seventy to eighty percent of all student speech throughout the fifteen week semester. She discovered that some students never uttered a single word in class for the whole semester. The data from the interviews suggested that there were rules for students to follow during class participation: (1) do not ask stupid questions; (2) do not waste teacher's time; (3) do not waste class time; and (4) try to find the answers before asking the teacher. These unwritten rules may account for the students' reticence in the classroom. In the observed class, a dominant group of five to six students consistently seized the chance to speak, often overshadowing others. The research explores student perceptions of in-class speech and the ongoing debate about student participation in academic classrooms. There was a significant gap between student and teacher perceptions of the value of participation. The study suggests that instructors should explain the rationale behind student speech to bridge this gap. These literature reviews synthesize findings from various studies directly or indirectly related to secondary level students' participation in English language classrooms in Nepal.

Classroom participation of the students can be increased by involving the learners in interaction which can be either between teacher and students or among the students in the class. Brown (2000) defines, "Interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other" (p. 165). In the same line, Fassinger (1995) described student participation as any comments or questions that students offer or raise in class. According to Liu (2001), there are four forms of student involvement in the classroom, namely full integration, participation in the circumstances, marginal interaction, and silent observation. However, these patterns of participation are not static at all times and in every place (Liu, 2001). The importance of communicating in the language being learnt is emphasized in the instructional classroom activities that employ the communicative approach (Littlewood, 1981; Paulmony, et al., 2022; Aslam, et al., 2022). In the context of education, Langer says that student participation is crucial for effective learning outcomes (Langer, 2000).

In the contemporary landscape of education, fostering active participation among students is paramount for effective learning outcomes. This literature review shows the dynamics of student participation in English classrooms at the secondary level in Nepal. By synthesizing existing research, this review aims to elucidate the factors influencing students' engagement and suggest potential strategies for enhancing participation in this context.

Conceptual Framework

By exploring different influencing factors, educators can devise strategies to enhance student engagement and improve language learning outcomes in Nepalese classroom. For a theoretical conceptual framework for exploring secondary level students' participation in English classrooms in Nepal, it is drawn from several theoretical perspectives that shed light on the dynamics of classroom participation and language learning. Here's a potential framework:

1. Socio-Cultural Theory: Socio-cultural theory posits that learning is a social activity influenced by cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). In the Nepalese context, cultural factors such as collectivism and hierarchy might impact students' willingness to participate in the classroom (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for promoting active participation among students. The theoretical underpinnings of student participation in the classroom lay the groundwork for understanding its complexities. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasizes the significance of social interaction and collaborative learning in cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). This framework elucidates how peer interaction and teacher-student discourse contribute to students' construction of knowledge, thus influencing their

participation pattern. This theory, articulated in 1978 and later expanded upon by his colleagues, emphasizes the profound impact of social interaction and collaborative learning on cognitive development. Here's a detailed exploration of the various aspects of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory:

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD): Central to Vygotsky's theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance and support from a more knowledgeable other. The ZPD suggests that learning occurs most effectively when individuals engage in activities that are just beyond their current level of understanding but are within their potential to grasp with assistance.

Scaffolding: Scaffolding is the process through which a more knowledgeable individual (such as a teacher or peer) provides temporary support to help a learner bridge the gap between their current level of understanding and the desired learning outcome. By providing scaffolding, the learner is able to gradually internalize the knowledge or skill, eventually becoming capable of performing the task independently.

Social Interaction: Vygotsky posited that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development. He argued that learning is inherently social and occurs through interactions with others in a cultural context. Through social interactions, individuals engage in collaborative problem-solving, verbal dialogue, and negotiation of meaning, which promote the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Language Development: Language is a central tool in Vygotsky's theory, serving as both a means of communication and a cognitive tool for thinking and problem-solving. Vygotsky proposed that language plays a crucial role in mediating social interactions and facilitating the internalization of knowledge. Through language, individuals are able to express their thoughts, receive feedback, and co-construct meaning with others.

Cultural Tools: Vygotsky emphasized the importance of cultural tools, such as language, writing systems, and symbolic representations, in mediating cognitive processes. Cultural tools serve as external aids that individuals use to organize their thinking and solve problems. They are acquired through social interaction and become internalized as individuals develop.

Collaborative Learning: Collaborative learning, or learning in a social context where individuals work together to achieve common goals, is a key tenet of Vygotsky's theory. Through collaborative learning activities, such as group discussions,

cooperative projects, and peer tutoring, individuals are able to collectively construct knowledge, share perspectives, and learn from one another.

Cultural-Historical Context: Vygotsky emphasized the importance of considering the cultural and historical context in which learning takes place. He argued that cultural practices, beliefs, and values shape individuals' cognitive development. Cultural-historical factors influence the types of knowledge and skills that are valued within a society, as well as the ways in which learning is scaffolded and supported.

In short, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory posits that cognitive development is deeply intertwined with social interaction, cultural context, and collaborative learning experiences. By engaging in meaningful social interactions and leveraging cultural tools, individuals are able to co-construct knowledge, develop higher-order thinking skills, and reach their full potential within the Zone of Proximal Development.

2. Critical Pedagogy, as developed by Paulo Freire, plays a crucial role in promoting active participation among students in the classroom by empowering them to critically engage with their learning experiences and social realities. Through Freire's emphasis on dialogue, problem-posing education, and the development of critical consciousness, students are encouraged to question, analyze, and challenge existing power structures and inequalities. By fostering a classroom environment where students feel empowered to voice their perspectives and engage in meaningful dialogue, critical pedagogy cultivates a sense of agency and ownership over the learning process, ultimately enhancing student participation and engagement (Freire, 1970).

3. Motivation Theory: Motivation plays a significant role in determining students' engagement in the classroom (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In the Nepalese context, students' motivation to learn English may be influenced by various factors such as intrinsic interest, perceived utility, and extrinsic rewards (Gardner, 1985). Investigating the relationship between motivation and participation can provide insights into promoting a conducive learning environment.

4. Language Learning Strategies: Language learning strategies refer to the techniques and approaches students employ to acquire a second language (Oxford, 1990). Understanding the strategies used by Nepalese students in English language classrooms can shed light on their participation patterns. Factors such as language anxiety, self-efficacy, and proficiency levels may influence students' utilization of effective learning strategies (Horwitz, 2001).

5. Classroom Environment: The classroom environment encompasses various factors such as teacher-student interactions, instructional methods, and classroom

management techniques (Brophy & Good, 1986). In the Nepalese context, the teaching style, classroom resources, and peer dynamics may impact students' willingness to participate actively (Wei, 2007). Exploring the role of the classroom environment in fostering student participation is essential for designing effective teaching practices.

Thus, by integrating socio-cultural theory, motivation theory, critical pedagogy, language learning strategies, and considerations of the classroom environment, this conceptual framework provides a comprehensive lens for exploring secondary level students' participation in English language classrooms in Nepal. Through literature review research guided by this framework, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions to enhance student engagement and promote effective language learning outcomes.

Factors Influencing Students' Participation

Student participation can be influenced by a variety of factors, including:

Cultural and Societal Norms: Cultural values and societal expectations significantly shape educational practices (Hofstede, 1984). In Nepal, cultural attitudes towards authority and education may impact students' willingness to participate actively in the classroom (Giri, 2016).

Teacher Practices and Pedagogy: The teaching methods employed by educators play a pivotal role in fostering or inhibiting student participation (Brophy, 1986). Research suggests that teacher-centered approaches prevalent in Nepalese classrooms may hinder student involvement (Chitrakar, 2019).

Language Proficiency and Confidence: English language proficiency and confidence levels influence students' willingness to engage in English-speaking activities (Bandura, 1994). In the context of Nepal, where English is often a second language, students' self-efficacy in English may affect their participation (Bista, 2018).

Strategies for Enhancing Students' Participation

Interactive Teaching Methods: Implementing student-centered pedagogies, such as group discussions, peer teaching, and collaborative projects, can foster active participation (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). These methods encourage student engagement and facilitate language acquisition.

Culturally Relevant Practices: Integrating culturally relevant content and activities into the curriculum can enhance students' sense of belonging and motivation to participate (Gay, 2010). Incorporating Nepalese literature, folklore, and traditions into English lessons can make the content more relatable and engaging.

Building Language Confidence: Providing opportunities for students to practice English in a supportive environment can boost their confidence (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Activities such as role-plays, debates, and public speaking exercises enable students to develop their language skills while building self-assurance.

The objective of this literature review is to explore and analyze existing research pertaining to secondary level students' participation in English classrooms in Nepal. The study aims to identify factors influencing student engagement and to propose strategies for enhancing participation in this context.

Methods and Procedures

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology, employing library research methods as its primary approach. The research methodology entails gathering data from diverse scholarly sources, including books, research articles, and journals. By employing this methodological framework, the study aims to comprehensively explore the factors influencing secondary level students' participation in English language classrooms in Nepal. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of socio-cultural, motivational, and instructional factors shaping student engagement, drawing on theoretical perspectives such as socio-cultural theory, motivation theory, critical pedagogy and language learning strategies. Through the synthesis and analysis of existing literature, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of student participation in the Nepalese educational context, informing the development of effective teaching strategies and interventions to enhance language learning outcomes. The data analysis procedures for the described methodology entail several systematic steps aimed at synthesizing and analyzing the retrieved literature to gain insights into student participation in English classrooms at the secondary level in Nepal. The extracted data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes, patterns, and trends related to student participation in English classrooms in Nepal. Common factors influencing participation and effective strategies for promoting engagement were identified and categorized for discussion. The data were collected and analyzed by using the following strategies:

Firstly, relevant academic databases including ERIC, Research Gate, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and NepJOL (Nepal Journals Online) are systematically searched using a combination of keywords and Boolean operators. This search strategy ensures comprehensive coverage of scholarly articles, conference papers, and dissertations related to the research topic. Secondly, inclusion criteria are applied to select studies focusing specifically on student participation in English classrooms at the secondary level in Nepal, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative research as well as theoretical works. Exclusion criteria are also applied to exclude studies

not directly related to the research topic, such as those focusing solely on primary or tertiary education, non-peer-reviewed sources, and publications in languages other than English. Following the selection process, the titles and abstracts of the retrieved literature are screened to determine their relevance, and duplicate or irrelevant studies are excluded. The full texts of the selected articles are then carefully reviewed to assess their suitability for inclusion based on the research objectives and inclusion criteria. Relevant information regarding student participation, classroom dynamics, and contextual factors in Nepal is extracted for further analysis. Finally, data extraction involves systematically organizing key findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks employed in the selected studies for thematic analysis. Data related to factors influencing student participation and strategies for enhancing engagement are synthesized to inform the literature review, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of student participation in English classrooms at the secondary level in Nepal.

By employing a rigorous literature search strategy, systematic selection process, and thematic analysis, this study provides a comprehensive overview of secondary level students' participation in English classrooms in Nepal. The synthesized findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge and offer valuable insights for educators, teachers, teacher trainers, policymakers, and researchers interested in promoting active engagement and effective learning experiences in Nepalese educational contexts. The extracted data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes, patterns, and trends related to student participation in English classrooms in Nepal. Common factors influencing participation and effective strategies for promoting engagement were identified and categorized for discussion.

Results and Discussion

According to the findings of the present study, the following teaching strategies and suggestions should be proposed to improve secondary level students' classroom participation and learning outcomes.

Overview of Literature Search: The literature search yielded a comprehensive collection of scholarly articles, conference papers, and dissertations from various academic databases, including ERIC, Research Gate, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and NepJOL. A total of relevant studies were identified based on the inclusion criteria, covering a diverse range of topics related to students' participation in English classrooms at the secondary level in Nepal.

Themes and Trends: Thematic analysis of the retrieved literature revealed several key themes and trends related to student participation in English language

classrooms in Nepal. These themes include socio-cultural influences, motivational factors, language learning strategies, and classroom dynamics.

Socio-Cultural Influences: The literature underscores the significant impact of socio-cultural factors on student participation in English classrooms in Nepal. Studies highlight the influence of collectivism, hierarchy, and cultural norms on students' willingness to engage actively in classroom activities. For example, research suggests that cultural values emphasizing respect for authority and deference to teachers may sometimes inhibit students' willingness to participate actively in classroom interactions and discussions.

Motivational Factors: Motivation emerged as a critical determinant of student participation in English language classrooms. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors were found to influence students' engagement levels. For instance, studies indicate that students' intrinsic interest in learning English, perceived utility of the language, and extrinsic rewards such as grades and praise from teachers can significantly impact their participation.

Language Learning Strategies: The literature highlights the importance of language learning strategies in facilitating student participation in English classrooms. Studies suggest that students employ a variety of strategies to enhance their language learning experience, including communication strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. These strategies play a crucial role in overcoming language barriers and fostering active participation among students.

Classroom Dynamics: The classroom environment emerged as another significant factor influencing student participation in English language classrooms. Research indicates that teacher-student interactions, instructional methods, and classroom management techniques can either facilitate or hinder students' willingness to engage actively in classroom activities. For instance, student-centered approaches that promote collaborative learning and interactive teaching methods were found to enhance student participation.

Implications for Practice: The findings of this review have several implications for practice in the context of English language teaching in Nepal. Educators and policymakers need to be cognizant of the socio-cultural dynamics at play in the classroom and strive to create a supportive learning environment that values students' diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, efforts should be made to foster intrinsic motivation among students by designing engaging and relevant language learning activities. Additionally, teachers should be encouraged to employ a variety of language learning strategies and adopt student-centered pedagogies to promote active participation and enhance language learning outcomes.

To conclude, the results of this literature review shed light on the multifaceted nature of student participation in English language classrooms in Nepal. By identifying key themes and trends, this review provides valuable insights into the factors influencing student engagement and suggests implications for practice to enhance language learning outcomes. Thus, effective student participation in English classrooms in Nepal is influenced by a myriad of factors, including cultural norms, teacher practices, and language proficiency. By embracing student-centered pedagogies, integrating culturally relevant content, and nurturing students' language confidence, educators can create an inclusive learning environment conducive to active engagement and meaningful learning experiences. This study has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of secondary level students' participation in English language classrooms in Nepal. Through an in-depth exploration of socio-cultural influences, motivational factors, language learning strategies, and classroom dynamics, the researcher has identified key determinants shaping student engagement in the Nepalese educational context. The findings underscore the importance of considering cultural norms, intrinsic motivation, and effective teaching practices in promoting active participation among students. Educators and policymakers must recognize the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and strive to create inclusive learning environments that value their voices and experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of secondary level students' participation in English language classrooms in Nepal. Through an in-depth exploration of socio-cultural influences, motivational factors, language learning strategies, and classroom dynamics, the researcher has identified key determinants shaping student engagement in the Nepalese educational context. The findings underscore the importance of considering cultural norms, intrinsic motivation, and effective teaching practices in promoting active participation among students. Educators and policymakers must recognize the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and strive to create inclusive learning environments that value their voices and experiences. Moreover, efforts to enhance student engagement should prioritize the adoption of student-centered pedagogies, the promotion of language learning strategies, and the cultivation of a supportive classroom atmosphere. By addressing these factors, we can foster a more conducive learning environment and ultimately improve language learning outcomes for secondary level students in Nepal. Through collaborative efforts, we can work towards creating equitable educational opportunities and empowering students to become active participants in their own learning journey.

To be brief, this study has illuminated the complex dynamics surrounding secondary level students' participation in English language classrooms in Nepal. By delving into socio-cultural influences, motivational drivers, language learning strategies, and classroom dynamics, the researcher has identified crucial factors shaping student engagement within the Nepalese educational landscape. It is evident that a nuanced understanding of cultural norms, intrinsic motivation, and effective teaching methodologies is essential in fostering active participation among students.

Moving forward, educators and policymakers should consider implementing student-centered pedagogies that prioritize collaborative learning experiences and provide opportunities for students to voice their perspectives. Additionally, the integration of language learning strategies tailored to the Nepalese context can enhance students' language acquisition and participation levels. Moreover, creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and celebrates diverse linguistic backgrounds is paramount in nurturing students' confidence and willingness to engage actively. By embracing a multidimensional approach to understanding and enhancing student participation on the basis socio-cultural context, stakeholders can work collaboratively to create equitable learning environments that empower students to become active contributors to their own education. Through ongoing research and informed pedagogical practices, we can strive towards realizing the full potential of secondary level students in Nepal and nurturing a generation of proficient English language learners equipped for success in an increasingly globalized world.

Finally, further research is warranted to delve deeper into specific aspects of student participation in English language classrooms in Nepal. Future research should further explore these themes and investigate the efficacy of specific interventions aimed at enhancing student participation in English language classrooms. It could explore the impact of teacher training programs on promoting student engagement, investigate the role of technology in facilitating interactive learning experiences, and examine the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching practices in fostering inclusive classrooms. Moreover, longitudinal studies tracking students' participation patterns over time can provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of various interventions on language learning outcomes.

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