Speaking in English Language Classroom: Teachers' Strategies and Confronted Problems

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Abstract

Speaking components included in the English language curriculum or textbooks aim at developing communication abilities of the students. The effective practice of dealing with those components can enhance students' efficiency in communication. However, the existing practice of teaching speaking in public schools of Nepal, especially located in rural and low-resourced areas does not seem supportive for developing students' efficiency in communication abilities. In this connection, the present article aims to figure out the practice of teaching speaking in rural and low-resourced schools, use of the strategies in dealing with speaking components and the problems faced by the teachers. It has been developed out of the insights collected through case study research. The required information was accumulated through classroom observation. During the observation, it has been found that the speaking component in the class was dealt with the practice of whole class discussion, pair work, group work, individual work, picture description, loud reading and repetition drills, telling stories, oral games, problem-solving, and sharing experiences. The teacher faced the problems of student-student chatting in their mother language while engaging in group discussion, low participation, hesitation and unwillingness in taking part in the interaction, lack of enough and effective materials, difficulty to comprehend ideas expressed in English, and lack of the exposure in speaking in English. The findings make a call for innovative and technology enhanced activities for the practice of speaking. The study concludes that participatory action research is required for exploring the ways to address the problems in developing speaking efficiency.

Keywords: *Communicative abilities, speaking, speaking-components, practices, problems, innovation*

Introduction and Problematizing

Speaking plays an increasingly important role in a second or foreign language setting as a means of communication in daily life. Speaking in English is a set of performance skills in

which the users of English are expected to articulate their expressions in fluent, accurate, appropriate and clear ways so as to help others understand what they speak (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Speaking is particularly important for developing students' efficiency to handle communication in need. In this regard, Richards (2006) states that the mastery of speaking skill in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign language learners. The learners often evaluate their success in learning in terms of their spoken language proficiency (Hedge, 2008). Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues (Kayi, 2006).

Since the beginning of the communicative era, speaking has been treated as the ultimate goal of language learning and its proper development has become the focus of attention in second or foreign language classes. The components of speaking also occupy significant space in the curricula and syllabi of many second and foreign language teaching classes (Rose & Kasper, 2002). However, it is also a commonly recognized fact that achieving proficiency in foreign language speaking in classroom conditions is not an easy task (Harmer, 2008) because of a number of reasons. In this regard, Kayi (2006) argues that speaking is a complex skill. It demands linguistic expertise and context sensitivity. Speaking skill is built around the components of speaking (Burns, 2019). The basic components of speaking are concerned with comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency (Harris, 1974). The development of students' speaking ability can also be affected by teachers' linguistic expertise. Linguistic expertise concerns with language structure and language content whereas context sensitivity relates to one's ability to think and make a choice of appropriate expressions considering the participants, purpose and the place (Nunan, 2003, p.4). Teaching speaking can be affected by different factors, for example, size of the classroom, linguistic background of the students, available resources and physical facilities (Thornbury, 2007), supportive materials, teaching methods and techniques, exposure and opportunities for learning, linguistic intelligibility (Ur, 2013), poor comprehension, classroom atmosphere, and use of learners' first language.

Taking the strategies/activities of the teachers and the problems that they faced in teaching speaking, this study aimed to explore how speaking components have been dealt with in English language classrooms and what could be the problems faced by the teachers in their attempts of developing students' efficiency in English speaking. It is necessary to study teachers' practices of teaching speaking because it is one of the important skills for developing communicative language abilities which is the goal of English language teaching. The techniques and strategies/activities used by a teacher matters a lot in students' learning achievement. Similarly, some implications can be derived for the innovative strategies from the observation of the classes. In the same strength, teacher's choice and method of using

techniques and activities can be affected by the problems perplexing in the classroom which in turn, may impede students' learning efficiency. I believe that classroom practice determines the effectiveness of learning and good practice enhances effective learning achievement. In my own experience of learning to teach and teach to help students learn, I have confronted the problems like: low and uneven participation of students in interaction; their unwillingness to take turn to speak; their passive presence in the class; their perception of speaking itself a challenging task; their shyness, fear of making mistakes, no motives to talk; and attempting to speak in words and phrases and inability to answer in complete sentences. Similarly, I observed the problems in teachers' strategies too, for example, their strategy of teaching speaking simply by loud reading and drills, having interaction with some pre-packed questions, and the use of text book and picture as only materials. Besides these experiences, I thought that I would be able to dig out the more visible reality of dealing with speaking components and confronting problems from the observation of English language classes. Though a number of studies have already been undertaken in the area of teaching speaking, the observational case study focusing on both the practices and problems in the context of public schooling in Nepal is still lacking. The review of literature enabled me to point out such a gap. Thus, the attention has been given to the exploration of how speaking has been practised, what different techniques and activities have been followed in teaching speaking, what sorts of problems have been confronted to them in relation to the students and the classroom and what could be done to address the existing situation of teaching speaking throughout this study.

The Review of Literature

Teaching speaking has an important standing in global communication. Speaking is one of the basics which should importantly be mastered by English learners. Nunan (2003, p. 40) says that "speaking is the ability to express opinion, ideas, or thought orally; it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning in order to be understood by the people we are speaking with". In a classroom, speaking is emphasised for providing learner with the capabilities to understand the language and the ability to both write and speak (Davies & Pearse, 2000) whereas the goal is to provide learners with communicative competence and classroom activities that develop learners' ability to express themselves through speech (Richards, 2007). Communicative competence is the set of potential skills that enable learners to handle communication in different contexts following the rules of speaking and the rules of organisation (Hedge, 2008). However, developing communicative abilities of the students simply by classroom teaching is challenging because of the problems associated with teachers, students, materials and classroom (Burns, 2019).

Speaking skill has at least five basic components. According to Harris (1974, pp-95-97), the

five components of speaking skill are concerned with comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

a) Comprehension: Comprehension is the basic component of speaking as learners need basic comprehension of the message for oral communication. Comprehension certainly requires a subject to respond to speech as well as to initiate it. Effective comprehension of messages ensures success in speaking, so the teachers should use effective strategies for students' comprehension in speaking.

b) Grammar: Grammar component is needed to arrange sentences in the correct manner in conversation. The students' ability to manipulate structure and to distinguish appropriate grammatical form in appropriateness is essential for effective communication. The utility of grammar is also to learn the correct way to gain expertise in a language in oral and written form. In this sense, attention should be given to grammar.

c) Vocabulary: The appropriate diction is desirable used in speaking. Vocabulary is related to the choice of diction considering the context and purpose of talk. Without having a sufficient vocabulary, one cannot communicate effectively or express their ideas both in oral and written form. Having limited vocabulary is also a barrier that precludes learners from learning a language. So, teachers should expose the learners with a variety of lexicons for mastering vocabulary.

d) Pronunciation: The production of clearer language while speaking is sought for better communication. Pronunciation deals with the phonological process and principles that determine how sounds vary and pattern in a language. Good pronunciation is the beauty of language which is a must for intelligibility. In a course of teaching speaking, attention should be given to the features of pronunciation. In other words, teachers should encourage students to learn how the words in a particular language are produced clearly when people speak.

e) Fluency: Fluency in speaking is the aim of many language learners. Fluency is the capability of someone speaking fluently and accurately with little use of pauses and gap fillers. The learners having fluency can read, understand and respond in a language clearly and concisely while relating meaning and context. For the effective delivery of the students in speaking tasks, the teachers should help students develop the ability to read, speak, or write easily, smoothly and expressively.

However, developing the above components of speaking for the students is a challenging job because of linguistic, contextual and strategic factors. Stressing the challenges, Zhang (2009) argues that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. We can look for innovative practices for addressing the problems. Burns (2019) argues that the choice and use of communicative activities in the classroom helps teachers handle the difficulties (p.5). Similarly, Talley and Hui-ling (2014) observe that teaching speaking skill should endeavour to expose learners to authentic, practical settings for speaking English and encourage active

learner involvement in the interaction. Teachers' role is significant in catering the communicative needs of the students, creating opportunities for interaction, and using productive and functional activities (Gobert, 2006). They have to play a key role to motivate and involve the students in speaking activities if they really want to improve students' speaking abilities. Regarding the roles, Browne (2007, p.34) mentions that the teachers have a threefold role in developing the learner's oral language. At first, they need to plan opportunities for talk, provide models of different types of speaking and listening, and respond to and develop learner's contributions. Therefore, in order to encourage their students to speak, teachers must do something different than they usually do in teaching other skills. For example, teachers can create more enjoyable speaking classes by doing some activities such as role-play, discussion or some kinds of games to promote students' speaking ability (Phyak, 2006). It means, taking only one particular role and strictly following it might be unwise and impractical.

Talking about the activities for dealing with speaking components, Goh and Burns (2012) present a model for planning a holistic and sequenced series of speaking activities. The model aims to highlight a number of key concepts that teachers can draw on to guide their students. The concepts include: use a wide range of speech enabling skills; develop fluency in expression of meaning; use grammar flexibly to produce a wide range of utterances that can express meaning precisely; use appropriate vocabulary and accurate language forms relevant to their speaking needs; understand and use social and linguistic conventions of speech for various contexts; employ appropriate oral communication and discourse strategies; increase awareness of genre and genre structures; increase metacognitive awareness about L2 speaking; and manage and self-regulate their own speaking development (pp. 151-152). In the similar concern, Kayi (2006) has identified a set of activities including discussion, role play, simulation, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, story completion, reporting, picture narrating, finding out the differences, public talk, speaking race, and describing and comparing to promote speaking skills of the students. The activities suggested by Kayi are also similar with the techniques/activities as discussed by Harmer (2008). He suggests the use of acting from a script, communication games, discussion, prepared talk, questionnaire, and simulation and role play for teaching speaking. The techniques or activities discussed here aim at maximising interaction among language learners and developing their communication proficiency.

We come to find some techniques and activities for teaching speaking suggested in the principles of teaching. For example, Brown (2004) under 'Teaching by Principles," has discussed the basic principles for teaching speaking. They are: focusing on fluency and accuracy which considering the learning objective; preparing intrinsically techniques to motivate the students in learning; authenticating language use in an appropriate context;

Providing appropriate feedback and correction; capitalising on the natural link between speaking and listening; giving students opportunities to communicate in learning process as much as possible; and encouraging them to develop their speaking strategy and style. In this connection, the study of Millrood (2016) came up with some frequently used activities in the practice of teaching speaking in a foreign language classroom by the teachers. The results show that teachers used discussion, games, songs, display of the materials and discussion, ask students to repeat, asked to read dialogue, used role plays, made students get used to speaking and involved in role play, involved in games and problem-solving activities. While using a variety of activities, they mainly faced the problem because of students' lack of vocabulary, imperfect mastery of English grammar, and their nervousness in speaking in English.

Regarding the problems in teaching speaking, Ur (2013) presents that inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation and mother tongue use as the factors that cause difficulty in speaking. In the same concern, Brown and Yule (1999, as cited in Efrizal, 2012) state, "Speaking is depending on the complexity of the information to be communicated; however, the speaker sometimes finds it difficult to clarify what they want to say" (p.2). Likewise, Davies and Pearse (2008, p.39) have discussed three genuine situations behind creating problems in classroom speaking. They include speaking in front of a large group of people, pronunciation intelligibility and real time talk in the context of use as the situations that create difficulty in developing speaking abilities. In the same strength, Hess (2001, p.4) has discussed some students related problems such as, students' learning ability, attitude towards language, learning experience, age, gender, background, confidence, distractions and learning resources. In a study of challenges in teaching speaking to EFL learners, Yusuf (2016) pointed to the discomfort caused by the physical constraints, control problems in discipline-based aspects, lack of individual attentions, difficulty on evaluation, and problems of charging learning effectiveness as the major ones.

The problems or challenges are situated. They may be different from the context of teaching. The study of Adhikari (2010) examined the problems of teaching speaking in the context of Nepal and concludes with a gap between 'what is' and 'what it should be' as a challenge in teaching speaking. His findings indicate that situational constraints, attitudes to teaching speaking, lack of incorporation of fundamental components underlying speaking proficiency, and assessment system are major barriers in developing speaking abilities of the students by means of teaching. Similarly, the study of Makka (2018) enlists the problems as students' limited vocabulary, students' confidence, and students feeling bored as the problems in teaching speaking in the classroom.
The reviewed works indicate the use of a wide variety of activities in teaching speaking and some problems faced by the teachers while doing so. However, gaps have been identified related to the actual practice of teaching speaking and the pertinent problems in developing

communicative language abilities of the students by observing actual classroom episodes. Thus, the attempts have been made to bridge the gaps in the literature here in this study by analyzing the case of speaking classes of a public school.

Research Questions

This study raised the following questions as the core part of investigation:
- How do teachers of English in public schools in rural areas deal with the speaking components in their classroom?
- What different activities/strategies have they been using for involving students practice the speaking components? And,
- What are the problems faced by the teachers while dealing with speaking?

Research Methods and Context

Since the research has emphasised the particular practice of speaking components and the perplexing problems in doing so, a case study qualitative research design was followed for in-depth exploration (Merriam, 2009) of the strategies used and problems faced in speaking classes. In-depth investigation of a single case by a participant observer was adopted to dig out the depth, intensive and detailed examination of a case as well as its related contextual conditions (Yin, 2003). English language teachers of community schools of Gorkha district comprised the population whereas a secondary level school located in the rural area of Gorkha was selected as the research site. The sample of the study comprised an English language teacher and his twenty-four students of grade eight considering the design and purpose of the study. The selected teacher had been teaching for 8 years in the concerned school. The school, participant/s, and the classes for observation were selected by using a purposive non-random sampling strategy. The rationale behind the use of purposive sampling was the consideration of the purpose, ease, access and reciprocity to reach to the participant. Twelve different classes were observed and diary keeping was maintained to pool the required information for the study. All the activities applied for teaching speaking and the confronted problems were noted during the observation. Both the primary and secondary sources of data were utilised to arrive at the conclusion. The systematically collected data were analysed, quoted, and interpreted. By then, the meaning has been drawn with the interpretative analysis of elicited data (Creswell, 2009). Verbal consensus from the teacher was taken to prepare a report and have the publication in such form.

Results and Discussion

The reality of dealing with the speaking component in the classroom and the perplexing

problems while doing so have been discussed and further interpreted in line with the objectives here in this section.

Ways of dealing with speaking components in class

At the core of the study, I aimed to explore the classroom practice of dealing with speaking components in the classroom. So, I entered the class with the class teacher of grade eight and observed 12 classes. However, the observation only focused on the use of strategies/activities dealing with 'Have Your Say' (the section of a lesson in which students are involved in the oral interaction, question-answer and discussion or sharing). As it has been seen from the observation, the major speaking components and the strategies employed by the teacher included: whole class interaction, choral drill, conversation practice, having dialogue with friends, role playing, narrating the events, presentation, discussion, peer sharing, giving instruction, argumentations, describing pictures, giving short descriptions, making a plan and sharing, looking for the information and restating, and talking about the topics of everyday life. The purpose of the speaking aspect as specified in the curriculum was to develop communicative abilities of the students (Curriculum Development Centre, 2076). The negotiation was made with the teacher for the observation of episodes only related to the speaking tasks specified in the textbook. The following activities/strategies were noted as the most frequent ways of dealing with speaking components throughout the observation.

- *Whole group question-answer drill*

As the most common set of activities for the oral practice of the students, the teacher used warm-up activities like telling jokes, choosing pictures, brainstorming, guessing games, short stories, sharing experiences, question-answer, problem-solving, and debriefing the earlier lesson where the purpose was to hook their attention on learning contents. The teacher extended his greetings with the expressions: *Good morning, how are you? I think you are happy to learn, have you done your homework? How about your study?* Content revision of the earlier class at the beginning was observed as the mostly used activity in the class. When he entered the class, he just asked some common questions as warm up activities like, 'How are you?', 'Have you done your homework?', 'what did you study at your home?' and so on. The teacher rarely used other kinds of warm up activities, for example, predicting the topic, guessing games, brainstorming and so on. Here is a classroom vignette that supports the use of warm up activity in the classroom.
Classroom Vignette 1: 'Hello good guys, how are you? Are you feeling good? [Classroom vignette, April, 4th, 2022]

The teacher had interaction with the students by asking some questions like:

> Teacher: *'How are you all?'*
> Students: *'We are fine sir, and you'?*
> Teacher: *I am alright, have you done your homework?*
> Students: *Shouted loudly, 'Yes Sir'………*
> Teacher: *'Could you tell me which lesson did we learn yesterday?'*
> Student1: *'description of local festivals sir'.*
> Teacher: *'Could you tell the name of some festivals that you celebrate?*
> Students: *Dashain and Deepawali sir. [Classroom vignette, April, 4th, 2022]*

The above vignette shows the use of a whole group question-answer drill as a warm up activity. Such a practice was followed in most of the classes observed so far. The teacher also used Nepali language to get students comfortable and feel easy to tell them what they learnt the day before. Similarly, he started checking homework randomly. He had problems checking homework because of limited time. After some minutes, the teacher started a new topic and wrote it on the whiteboard. He taught the ways of expressing opinions and suggestions. Then, he asked them to share their opinion on the importance of festivals. The teachers also encouraged the students to give suggestions to others using the expressions written on the white board. Sometimes, he taught the lesson by using mother tongue to explain the ways to express opinions and provided feedback on students' responses.

Throughout the observation, the teacher always warmed up his students by using formulaic questions, pre-packed chunks and routine statements (Rose & Kasper, 2002). He usually followed the whole class question-answer drill to warm up his students. The question-answer patterns seem effective to elicit students' interest and engage them in interaction. Students were motivated, alerted, encouraged when different warm up activities were practiced in the class. This finding is similar to what Yang (1999, as cited in Zhichang, 2001) says as warm up activities cater the students' initiation to talk and create interactive learning environments.

● *Discussion of the tasks and questions from the exercise*

Another most frequent activity, so far observed, was having discussion upon the speaking tasks given in the book and questions from the exercise. The teacher involved students in peer interaction and small group discussion. Though he frequently used whole class discussion, equally he asked for peer interaction and small group conferences on the topics and questions from exercise. One of the problems faced by the teacher while using those activities was noted as the excessive noise from the students. The students were noisy in their discussion groups. One of the vignettes of the discussion was like this:
'Title of the discussion: Giving instructions.'

Teacher: 'Have you ever provided instructions to someone to do something?'
Student1: 'Yes Sir'
Student2: 'I told you how to boil eggs, sir.
Student 3: No sir.
Student 4: I read the instructions for cooking rice pudding.
Teacher: Good! Look at some ways of giving instructions on the board (he wrote three exponents of giving instruction)
Teacher: Now you two benches, look at your book and find out at least five expressions of giving instructions ok. [Classroom vignette, April, 7th, 2022]

Students were excited to speak when they found examples given on the board and worked in groups by turning the pages. They noted some expressions similar to the given ones and asked the teacher for checking. In other classes too, the teacher engaged them in peer work, group discussion and whole class interaction on different topics. He provided the topics: how to celebrate Dashain festival, importance of field visit, local culture, description of new places, and so on. However, most of the time, the teacher used the whole class discussion. The teacher kept encouraging them to be active and cooperative in the discussion. Teacher's encouraging strategy corresponds to the ideas of Ur (2013) as she suggests that a second or foreign language teacher should encourage the learners to speak in the target language. During the discussion, the teacher expanded student talking time and helped them foster their use of language, as opposed to only telling what they have to learn. Working in pair and group discussion on the different questions and situations was highly constructive to have student-student interactions which, in turn, enhanced their speaking efficiency, aspirations, motivation, self-esteem, positive attitudes to learning (Webb, 1982). The strategies or tasks exercised by the teacher, however are in contrast to the findings of the study by Burns (2019) who concluded that instructor guided pair and group interaction and students' engagement in creative activities like telling stories, describing lovely places with drawing, and sharing interesting events as students recollected via movie, documentary, recorded text can work better in developing communicative abilities.

● *Conversation, role play and the dialogues*

The teacher made use of conversation, role play and dialogue as the strategies for dealing with speaking components. He involved them in reading and articulating similar kinds of conversation given in the lesson. Similarly, the students were asked to play the roles of different individuals as required in the exercises of their book. During the observation, it was found that teachers assigned role play tasks to increase students' participation and to develop fluency in interaction. In the same manner, he encouraged and even intervened them to have a short dialogue on a particular topic by providing clues. Sometimes the

students copy the dialogue from text and sometimes they make their own. Teacher supported them with the verbal rewards to them for their good efforts, however he did not provide corrective feedback, in case of errors. The teacher tried his best to get involved, shared, and learnt from the different students. One of the classroom vignettes related to the use of conversation, role play and dialogue has been seen as:

Topic: 'Healthy habits and the pleasure of life'.

Teacher: What do you like most for your breakfast and lunch? Do you think your food habit is good?

Students: We take different food items available in the home and canteen, sir. It is good sir.

Teacher: Now, I ask you to play the role of a doctor and a patient and talk about food habit, ok. You see the sample talk given in your lesson. Umm, I ask it…ok, Rupesh and Shanta you come here.

Rupesh: Sir, what to say, I don't know what to say.

Teacher: You don't worry. Look at this (shows a dialogue given in the book). See what they are talking about. You act as a doctor and ask Shanta. Think, she is your patient.

Shanta, you come here. (Shanta stands up and goes in front). Ok, Shanta, see this dialogue. Rupesh you also look here. See what they are saying. You can repeat the same expressions if you feel difficulty articulating your own. (Teacher switches his talk and starts in Nepali, timi tehi vanana garho vaye tara cat as doctor and patient la. Doctor kasari bolchha thaha chha ni haina?

Students: Ok sir (speak slowly, as they were not excited for role play)

Teacher: Feel easy. (Ke garho chha ra, halla garne bhaye ta?)

Teacher: Now you have two minutes. Start now! You other, see how they do, I may ask you others too. (Students performed the task and teacher scaffolded with some expressions)

[Classroom Vignette, 11th April, 2022]

Above vignette is just an example of asking students to role play. Besides, teachers are involved to have controlled and free dialogues and conversations tasks based on the learning activities of their textbook. Compared to role play, students were enthusiastic to participate in dialogues and conversations. However, only a few students who were quite active in discussion participated in speaking tasks and performed well. Similarly, the teacher could not give priority for each student because of the time and number of students.

From the observation, I came to the conclusion that teachers preferred role play, dialogue and conversation as the ways to deal with speaking components. This finding corresponds with the finding of Fauziati (2017) which indicated that the majority of teachers preferred role play and conversation practice as the significant tasks to promote fluency of the students in the classroom interaction. From the observation, it can be suggested that the teacher should organise role play tasks with rehearsal activities in a planned way.

- *Individual Work*

Individual work was another strategy which was common in all observed classes. While implementing this strategy, the teacher provided some topics or tasks to the students and asked them to do it with the help of a textbook and other materials like picture and sentence cards. As I observed, individual tasks were effective to build up students' confidence and lead them to developing autonomy. The teacher was involved in independent writing on some topics like: festival, holiday, sports, and asked for a description of persons, places and the objects they could see in the pictures given in their textbook. Students produced their own work with the support of the teacher's ideas. Though the teacher assigned a variety of exercises for individual work, he did not encourage students in using library resources and self-access materials. One of the examples of individual work assigned to them was writing a short description of beautiful places of their locality and sharing them in the class. The teacher practised such task in this way:

Teacher	: *Dear students, are you getting me?*
Students	: *Yes sir.*
Teacher	: *I want to see your writing and sharing together. For this, I give you a task and you have to do it individually, is it ok?*
Students	: *Ok, sir (only a few responded)*
Teacher	: *You get 10 minutes' time. You write a short description of the beautiful places of your village and you have to share it after writing. You can see the description of a village given in the book and see the picture over there. [Classroom Vignette, 8th April, 2022]*

The teacher encouraged students with the expressions: G*o on! Keep writing! Do you want my support? Don't look at others' writing!* Some talented students of the class did their classwork quickly and shared but many of them did not complete within the time. The teacher repeated individual tasks in other lessons too. He gave some topics like: *describe the use of computers, share your experience of swimming, give short descriptions of your family,* and so on. Though all the students participated in individual work, only the active and brilliant students shared orally in front of the class. Many of them did not complete. The study of Makka (2018) also shows that in a large classroom only a few who possessed a good language background and motivated to work completed the task. The reason behind uneven participation and incomplete tasks might be the lack of confidence, time, learning materials, and fear of making mistakes. In this regard, Harmer (2008) and Ur (2013) mentioned that lack of metalanguage, materials and opportunities are some of the factors that promote low and uneven participation of the students in individual tasks.

● *Picture description, storytelling, games, and problem-solving tasks*

As like the strategies, the teacher quite often used picture description, storytelling, games and problem-solving tasks for the students' practice of speaking. Generally, students love to hear stories from the teacher in any of the classes, however asking students to share the story that they heard or that they like most is an effective strategy to motivate students to speak (Phyak, 2006). So far, I came to observe in the class, the teacher told some short stories to encourage students' talk in the class and explained the meaning of the lesson. He involved students in some speaking games, including show and tell, bingo, and running dictation. The teacher asked them to share their experience of 'Visiting a new place'. Some problem-solving tasks like giving opinion, observing the situation, bridging the missing information by analysing the text and arguing the debatable topic by reasoning were also observed in the classes. One of the vignettes of the classroom regarding the use of game was like this:

> Teacher: Ok, students. Now I want to involve you in a game? Do you like games?
> Student1: What kind of game sir? Sir, I like Ludo.
> Teacher: You stop! I say speaking games.
> Students: Yes, sir, we want to play games.
> Teacher: Good. It is a show and tell game. It is easy to play. Each of you must show one of the objects of the class and tell its use one by one, ok. You can repeat the object but say different uses. You start when I signal you. Students from the corner of the first bench of the right-hand side start at first, listen. Now start. [Classroom Vignette, 16th April, 2022]

Besides the game, the teacher frequently involved students in giving short descriptions of the pictures, sharing the stories and asking some logical questions. This finding corresponds to the conclusion of the study by (Millrood, 2016) which indicated that teachers used discussion, games, songs, display of the materials and discussion, ask students to repeat, ask to read dialogue, used role plays, made students get used to speak and involve in role play, involved in games and problem-solving activities. The students were excited with these activities as these could be useful for creativity, thinking power and building up confidence. I would like to link it up with the idea of Thornbury (2007) who argued that games, problem-solving and story-telling activities have power to get students expressive, engaged and thoughtful. Sometimes, the teacher orally described some situation and told them to write accordingly.

Problems confronted while dealing with speaking components in the class

The second objective of the study was to find out the problems confronted by the teacher while dealing with speaking components in the class. Overall, the teacher faced the

problem of engaging all the students in active interaction, encouraging them to talk in English, preventing them from chatting in their first language while working in group, designing interesting tasks to them, difficulty in maintaining discipline, satisfying all needs of students considering their capacities, organising efficient class activities due to the constraints of time and space, providing equal chances to participate and practice, and providing timely and effective feedback. The problems so far, I noted correspond to the problem pointed in the study of Adhikari (2010) who claimed lack of efficient class activities, lack of effective materials and students' preference of using mother language are some of the frequent ones among various problems of teaching speaking in the context of Nepal. Similarly, Ur (2013) and Hess (2001) state that the teachers run with the problems, such as: lack of time to provide equal chances to all the students because of the class size, lack of exposure in pronunciation and vocabulary aspects, lack of speaking atmosphere, and students' inhibition in English as a foreign language classroom. Though the teacher wanted to create an English environment in the classroom, he was not able to do so. He tried hard to engage all students in the activities like: warm up activities, group work, pair work, individual work, discussion and so on but his attempts were not very productive because of the problems discussed above. Mainly, the teacher encountered with the following problems:

- *Classwork and Homework Correction*

The teacher assigned homework and classwork on a regular basis in the classes I observed, however, he had the problem of time management for checking them up in the classroom though correction of homework and classwork is needed to provide corrective and constructive feedback to the students. The teacher randomly checked students' homework and classwork because of limited time and the number of students. Only active students used to show their homework for correction and the teacher provided them with some verbal rewards in the form of feedback like: Very good, Good to see, keep it up. You did it well! Well done!

- *Hesitation and Anxiety*

Though the teacher did his best to engage students in active speaking by means of his strategies, the students felt hesitant to speak in the class. They might have run with the anxiety problem of committing errors and mistakes and being laughed at by others. It equates to the idea of Thornbury (2007) who argued that speaking in a foreign language in front of the class is rated as one of the common phobias of the students because of anxiety and hesitation (p. 90). In the classes that I observed, the students felt hesitant to speak in English and the teacher was worried about involving students more in speaking activity.

Though the teacher made use of group discussion, role play, games, picture description, storytelling and so on, I noticed that a large number of students felt nervous and made them reluctant to take part. I guess they might have a fear of negative evaluation and fear of being criticised by their friends. Students' hesitation and anxiety had been observed as the problems for the teacher even in the study of Yusuf (2016).

- *Students' preparation for speaking in and outside the class*

Another problem has been observed as the students' imperfect preparation for speaking in and beyond the class. Many of the students responded simply with the words and phrases, though very few of them uttered complete sentences while giving oral descriptions and having conversation. They committed errors on pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence structure and the choice of expressions. It might be the effect of imperfect preparation. They had almost no interaction in the target language with the teacher beyond the classroom. This finding corresponds with the finding of Aleksandrezk (2011) which shows that students and teachers' preparedness for communication and extent of interaction in and outside the classroom have significant impact on the success of communication. The preparation for speech and writing matters a lot in developing communicative abilities of the students (Richards & Renandya, 2012). During the observation I also felt the problem in the teacher's preparation as he had no planning for implementing the strategies and designing activities to promote students' language efficiency.

- *Availability and use of teaching aids*

Teacher's limited access to teaching materials and the availability of additional resources in the school is one of the problems associated with teaching (Johnson, 1995). The resources like story books, picture books, videos, newspapers, documentary, audio tapes, and so on create ease in involving students in speaking activities. However, the teacher in the observed classes did not use any additional materials and resources besides textbook, pictures, word cards and his own mobile. However, he used a mobile only for checking the meaning of unfamiliar words. So, one of the problems the teacher faced was his own access to effective resources and materials, and their availability in the school. He did not make use of any digital materials though there is the discussion of digital technology and its integration in teaching. The study by Millrood (2016) also pointed to the state of availability and use of learning resources as one of the problems in teaching speaking to the foreign language teachers.

Along with the problems discussed above, the problem of students' intelligibility, fluency and language accuracy, insufficiency of comprehensible input and exposure to the students, management of productive and creative tasks, classroom atmosphere, student-student

interaction were also observed as the problems to the teacher related to teaching speaking components in the class.

Conclusion and Implication

The entire observation of the teacher's practice of dealing with the speaking components in the class enabled me to reflect on the use of strategies and/or activities for the practice of developing students' communication abilities and the perplexing problems while doing so. Whole class interaction, conversation practice, role playing, peer sharing, describing pictures, giving short descriptions, talking about the topics of the textbooks, discussion of the tasks and exercises, games and problem-solving activities, and storytelling were the most frequently used strategies and/or activities employed by the teachers. The status of strategies used in the class shows that the teacher was neither unknown for the innovative strategies nor dynamic in catering communicative activities considering the need, level and interest of the students in his class. The teacher is confronted with some problems, for example; engaging all the students in active interaction, encouraging them to talk in English, preventing them from chatting in their first language while working in group, providing timely and effective feedback, and access to and the availability of resources. The findings enabled me to conclude that still English language teachers in the context of teaching speaking in a remote area are guided by some conventional strategies like question-answer and whole class repetition drills. So, the problems that we could observe in many of the classes are more evolving and need to be addressed. The effectiveness of the investment for teaching and school support has not been visible. The question can be raised in relation to the practices and the problems discussed in the study.

The study shows the essence of using innovative strategies/activities and new technologies to enhance students' communication abilities by means of teaching speaking. The training policies should be made to offer practical and skill-based strategies by means of seminars, workshops and webinars. The teacher should be well prepared and he/she must create opportunities for interaction in and beyond the classroom. The results also make calls for applying speaking tests, use of more productive activities, manage the learning tasks and use of technology-based materials. Further studies can be conducted by using interviews and questionnaire tools following ethnographic design to explore the issue in more depth.

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