Basic Level English Teachers' Attitudes Towards Errors in Students' Writing in Kaski District

Pitambar Paudel, PhD ID[1]
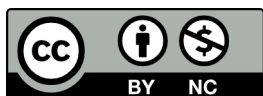**Srijana Devkota** ID[2]

[1]Asst. Professor, TU
Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5706-170X
pitambarp@pncampus.edu.np
www.prnc.tu .edu.np
Scopus Id: 58045495400

[2]M.Ed. in TU, Nepal
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3032-4455
devkotasrijana61@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the attitudes of basic level English teachers in Kaski district towards errors in students' writing essays, by exploring whether these errors are perceived as beneficial for learning or as obstacles to academic progress. For this survey research design, structured questionnaire was administered with 40 teachers to gather insights into their perspectives on errors across three main areas: the symbolic significance of errors, their perceived educational benefits, and concerns about potential drawbacks. Findings reveal that a significant majority of teachers (87.5%) view errors as symbols of success, emphasizing their role in the learning process. This perspective resonates with literature emphasizing error tolerance and student growth. Most teachers (80%) recognize errors as opportunities to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, while opinions vary regarding the enjoyment of errors (37.5%) and their role in fostering student responsibility (42.5%). Divergent views emerge regarding errors as hindrances to learning (22.5% agreeing), the necessity of error avoidance (50% agreeing), and the immediate correction of errors (22.5%

agreeing), reflecting cultural and pedagogical differences among educators. These findings underscore the complexity in teachers' perceptions of error management and highlight the need for balanced approaches that promote resilience and deeper engagement with learning content. The study concludes by advocating for supportive learning environments in which errors are viewed as valuable opportunities for growth rather than shortcomings. Such environments encourage skill development and foster critical thinking in English writing, ultimately contributing to a more holistic and effective approach to language education.

Introduction

Writing is the process of using symbols (letters of the alphabet, punctuation, and spaces) to communicate thoughts and ideas in a readable form. It is a complex, powerful, and formal process of communicating information. As a productive skill of language, writing is often regarded as a more formal means of communication, involving a mental process of thinking and organizing ideas logically, critically, and creatively in a meaningful manner (Selvai & Aziz, 2019). As a means of global communication, writing enables individuals to transmit their ideas and cultures across linguistic and geographical boundaries (Harmer, 2007; Hyland, 2015). When people cannot share their ideas verbally, writing provides an alternative method, offering a unique opportunity to explore, express, and exchange ideas (Nunan, 2003).

Globally, the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) has been a major area of focus in educational research, particularly concerning the development of students' writing skills. Writing in a second language is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills to master, requiring simultaneous control of multiple variables, including grammar, vocabulary, organization, and coherence (Nunan, 1998). Errors are an inevitable part of this learning process and are often viewed as important opportunities for learning rather than merely failures (Corder, 1991; Robinson, 2015). The present research highlights that teachers' attitudes towards students' errors play a crucial role in shaping their learning experiences. Positive reinforcement and constructive feedback have been shown to foster a supportive learning environment, thereby improving students' confidence and writing performance (Ferris, 2011; Lee, 2013). Conversely, punitive or overly corrective approaches may lead to increased anxiety, reduced motivation, and avoidance of

writing tasks (Truscott, 1996). Additionally, teachers' cultural and educational backgrounds significantly influence how they perceive and respond to students' errors (Leki, 2006).

In the South Asian context, including Nepal, English is primarily taught as a second language for academic purposes rather than for everyday communication. In Nepal, English is introduced early in the school curriculum, but students often struggle with writing due to limited exposure and practice. They face frequent challenges related to grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and overall coherence in writing. Despite the widespread emphasis on English education, there is a notable gap between students' expected and actual writing proficiency levels. Teachers' attitudes toward students' writing errors are pivotal in addressing this gap, as their feedback and support can either encourage or hinder students' writing development.

In many secondary schools in Nepal, approaches to addressing students' writing errors vary widely. Some teachers focus primarily on correcting errors through a punitive lens, often without providing adequate constructive feedback, which can increase students' fear of making mistakes and reduce their willingness to engage in writing tasks. On the other hand, some teachers recognize errors as natural and necessary steps in the learning process and thus adopt more supportive strategies that help students learn from their mistakes and improve over time. However, there is limited research exploring how teachers in Nepal perceive and respond to errors in students' English writing, particularly at the secondary school level. This gap in the literature highlights the need to understand Nepali teachers' attitudes towards writing errors and how these attitudes influence their teaching practices and students' learning outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the attitudes of Basic-level English teachers in Nepal towards students' errors in English writing. Specifically, it seeks to explore how these attitudes shape their feedback strategies and impact students' writing development. By addressing this issue, the study intends to contribute to the discourse on effective ESL teaching practices and support the creation of more positive and constructive learning environments in the Nepali context.

Review of Related Literature

Among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), writing is considered the fourth language skill. It is a secondary and productive skill of language. According to Harmer (2007), writing is a medium of human communication that involves representing language through physically inscribed,

mechanically transformed, and digitally represented symbols. It is a productive skill requiring careful handling to produce sensible words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and text. Writing is more formal, permanent, and accurate compared to other skills and remains for a long time (Brown, 2001). Writing systems are not naturally spoken human language but are means of rendering language into a form that can transcend time and space (Crystal, 2006). Writing requires various competencies such as linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse knowledge, as well as knowledge about language use, including grammar, spelling, structure, and vocabulary (Hyland, 2003). A good writer should possess knowledge of writing strategies and critical thinking (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Errors in Writing

English, an international language, has become a foreign or second language for non-native English speakers. English writing combines features in an English language composition that are characteristic of a particular writer, genre, organization, or profession (Hyland, 2003). English writing follows its own rules, regulations, structure, word meanings, and spelling. As noted by Hinkel (2004), English writing conventions are essential for clarity and coherence in written communication.

An error in writing is a mistake in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or word choice that makes a paper less-readable and more difficult to understand. Errors are common and provide opportunities for learning and improvement. According to Giri (2010), errors are incorrect forms of language that consistently occur in a learner's speech or writing. Similarly, George (1972) defines an error as "unwanted forms particularly those forms which course designers or teachers do not like" (as cited in Giri, 2010). Errors in writing indicate areas needing improvement and offer a chance for learning and growth. Ellis (1997) emphasizes that errors are a natural part of the language learning process and can serve as indicators of a learner's progress. Ferris (2011) also highlights that addressing errors through feedback is crucial for helping learners develop their writing skills. Errors should be viewed as opportunities for instruction and improvement rather than merely as flaws.

Non-native English writers often commit several common types of errors that significantly affect their writing quality and clarity. Grammatical errors are among the most prevalent, making it difficult for readers to understand the intended message; for example, subject-verb agreement errors such as "He go to

school" instead of "He goes to school" can cause confusion (Ellis, 1997). According to Ferris (2002), these grammatical errors are widespread among ESL students and require targeted instructional support. Spelling errors, often resulting from insufficient practice and reliance on phonetic spelling strategies, can greatly impact text readability; for instance, learners frequently confuse homophones like "their" and "there" (Hinkel, 2004). Another common issue is unclear pronoun reference, which can render sentences ambiguous, as in "John told Steve that he needed to improve," where it is unclear to whom "he" refers (Swan, 2005; Cowan, 2008). Wordiness characterized by the use of unnecessary filler words, further detracts from clarity and conciseness; for example, using "in the event that" instead of simply "if" makes writing unnecessarily verbose (Strunk & White, 2000). Punctuation mistakes can also drastically alter the meaning of sentences, as demonstrated by the classic example "Let's eat, Grandma!" versus "Let's eat Grandma!" emphasizing the critical importance of correct punctuation for meaning and readability (Truss, 2003). Numerous studies have examined these types of errors in English writing among non-native speakers. Maharjan (2009) investigated grammatical errors made by Nepali learners of English and found that Nepali English teacher evaluators were the most stringent, with non-native Nepali evaluators falling between Nepali and native English evaluators in strictness. Supporting these findings, Darus and Subramaniam (2009) identified grammatical errors as the most common issues in Malaysian students' academic writing, while Darus and Ching (2009) highlighted frequent problems with mechanics, tenses, prepositions, and subject-verb agreements among Chinese students. Al-Buainain (2010) further noted that errors involving verbs, noun modifiers, relative clauses, and articles are prevalent among learners. Similarly, Lasaten (2014) observed major issues related to verb tenses, sentence structure, punctuation, word choice, and prepositions in student writing. Manchishi et al. (2015) identified common academic writing problems including poor problem statements, methodology errors, and plagiarism, whereas Katiya et al. (2015) and Sermsook et al. (2017) both reported significant punctuation and syntactic errors. Focusing on the Nepali context, Sharma (2021) analyzed errors in English essays by Nepali students, identifying that most errors occurred at the sentence level due to intra-lingual transfer, while word-level errors often stemmed from mother tongue transfer and overgeneralization. Extending this research, Paudel (2022) highlighted persistent grammatical errors involving articles and prepositions, frequent syntactic errors such as run-ons and fragmentations, and common lexical-semantic errors

involving single lexical items. Moreover, punctuation was identified as the most frequent mechanical error, underscoring the need for improved academic writing skills among students.

Given the extensive documentation of errors in English writing among non-native speakers, particularly within Nepal, it is crucial to investigate teachers' attitudes towards these errors. Understanding teachers' perspectives is essential because their attitudes and approaches significantly influence how errors are addressed and corrected, which in turn affects students' learning and improvement. A research by Maharjan (2009) has shown that teacher evaluators, especially Nepali English teachers, can be particularly stringent. However, there remains a gap in understanding how these attitudes impact students' motivation and learning outcomes. By exploring teachers' attitudes, potential areas for professional development and support can be identified, leading to more effective teaching strategies that enhance the quality of English writing in Nepal. This, ultimately, can help students overcome common errors and develop stronger writing skills, creating a more supportive and effective learning environment that addresses the specific challenges faced by Nepali learners of English.

Research Method

The present study adopted a positivist research paradigm utilizing a descriptive survey design to investigate teachers' attitudes towards basic level students' errors in English writing. This design was selected to systematically capture and quantify teachers' perceptions, allowing for objective measurement and analysis of attitudes across a representative sample. The research was conducted in Kaski district, encompassing basic level schools as the research site. From the broader population of all English teachers in the district, a sample of 40 teachers was selected using random sampling techniques to ensure representativeness while considering practical constraints related to time, resources, and accessibility. These participants were chosen to provide diverse insights reflective of the varied educational contexts within the district.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising ten close-ended statements, designed on a three-point Likert scale to elicit specific attitudes towards student errors. Prior to data collection, necessary permissions were obtained from school administrators and head teachers, and informed consent was secured

from all participants to ensure ethical compliance. The researchers established rapport with the teachers, explained the study objectives clearly, and distributed the questionnaires, allowing approximately 15 minutes for completion. The collected responses were then systematically analyzed using descriptive statistics. Responses were categorized into three thematic areas: overall perceptions of errors, views on errors as opportunities for learning, and perspectives on errors as obstacles to learning. These categories facilitated comparative analysis and interpretation of findings. Throughout the process, strict ethical standards were maintained, including ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining participants' anonymity and confidentiality, and using the data exclusively for academic purposes. The study's rigorous design and ethical considerations aimed to provide valid, reliable, and contextually relevant insights into teachers' attitudes, ultimately contributing to the improvement of English language teaching practices in Nepal.

Results

In this study examining teachers' attitudes towards students' errors in English writing in basic level schools of Kaski district, data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items. The responses from 40 teachers were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and results were categorized into thematic areas to interpret overall trends in perception.

Overall Perceptions of Teachers towards Students' Errors in English Writing

Table 1 presents the findings related to teachers' general views on students' writing errors, illustrating whether they perceive these errors primarily as natural and constructive elements of the learning process or as barriers to language development and academic success.

Table 1

Overall Perception of Teachers' Towards Errors

No. of Teachers	Errors are symbols of success	Errors should be avoided
40	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 summarizes the overall perception of teachers towards errors in English writing among basic level students in Kaski district. Out of the 40 teachers surveyed, the majority, 35 teachers (87.5%), viewed errors as symbols of success.

This perspective suggests that these teachers perceive errors as integral to the learning process, where mistakes provide opportunities for growth and improvement in students' language skills. In contrast, a smaller proportion of teachers, 5 (12.5%), indicated that errors should be avoided. This minority viewpoint suggests a preference for minimizing errors in students' writing, possibly emphasizing accuracy and correctness as primary goals in language education. These contrasting perceptions highlight the diversity of attitudes among educators regarding the role of errors in fostering effective English language learning.

Embracing Mistakes: Errors as Stepping Stones to Stronger Writing

Errors have long been viewed not merely as obstacles but as essential elements of the language learning journey. In second language acquisition, making mistakes provides learners with critical opportunities to experiment, reflect, and ultimately internalize correct forms and structures. When teachers adopt a positive perspective towards errors, they can transform classrooms into supportive spaces that encourage risk-taking and creative expression. Recognizing errors as valuable learning tools rather than failures helps foster confidence and leads to long-term improvement in students' writing skills.

Table 2

Error Enhances Writing Skills of the Students

S.N.	Statements	Teachers' responses		
		Agree	**Neutral**	**Disagree**
1.	I enjoy students' errors in English writing.	15 (37.5%)	20 (50%)	5 (12.5%)
2.	Committing errors are the symbols of success.	35 (87.5%)	5 (12.5%)	-
3.	Errors help learners to become better problem solver and critical thinker.	32 (80%)	8 (20%)	-
4.	Errors provide better learning opportunity to the students.	28 (70%)	12 (30%)	-
5.	Errors develop responsibility and interdependence in learners.	17 (42.5%)	22 (55%)	1 (2.5%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 provides a detailed analysis of basic level English teachers' attitudes towards the role of errors in enhancing writing skills. The survey, which involved 40 teachers, explored their perspectives across five statements. Firstly, 15 teachers (37.5%) expressed enjoyment in students' errors in English writing, while 20 (50%) remained neutral, and 5 (12.5%) disagreed with this notion. Secondly, a significant majority of 35 teachers (87.5%) agreed that committing errors can symbolize success, contrasting with 5 (12.5%) who disagreed. Thirdly, 32 teachers (80%) recognized errors as beneficial for developing problem-solving and critical thinking skills, whereas 8 (20%) did not take a definitive stance. Fourthly, 28 teachers (70%) acknowledged errors as providing valuable learning opportunities, while 12 (30%) maintained a neutral position. Lastly, opinions varied on whether errors foster responsibility and interdependence among learners, with 17 teachers (42.5%) agreeing, 22 (55%) disagreeing, and 1 (2.5%) remaining neutral. These findings underscore a predominantly positive view among teachers regarding the educational benefits of errors in English writing, though perspectives varied on specific aspects such as enjoyment and fostering responsibility.

Errors as Red Flags: Barriers to Developing Writing Proficiency

While errors can be seen as natural stepping stones in language learning, some teachers perceive them primarily as negative indicators that hinder progress and reflect poorly on students' mastery of writing skills. This perspective views errors as signs of carelessness or lack of effort rather than as valuable learning opportunities. Teachers who hold this view may prioritize strict correction and accuracy over exploration and creativity, potentially fostering fear and reducing students' willingness to engage in writing tasks. Such an approach can create a high-stakes environment that emphasizes perfection, ultimately affecting students' motivation and confidence in developing their English writing proficiency. Table 3 presents teachers' perceptions in this phenomenon.

Table 3

Errors are Bad Symbol for Learning Writing Skills

S.N.	Statements	Teachers' responses		
		Agree	**Neutral**	**Disagree**
1.	Errors bring hindrance in learning writing.	9 (22.5%)	15(37.5%)	16 (40%)
2.	Error should be avoided in learning.	20(50%)	8 (20%)	12 (30%)
3	Errors are the cause of false/ incomplete learning.	18 (45%)	18 (45%)	4 (10%)
4.	Errors should be corrected immediately	9 (22.5%)	18 (45%)	13 (32.5%)
5.	Errors do not help learning properly.	2 (5%)	20 (50%)	18 (45%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 provides insights into basic level English teachers' perceptions regarding errors as negative symbols for learning writing skills. The survey involved 40 teachers, and their responses were analyzed across five statements. In response to the first statement; Errors bring hindrance in learning, 9 teachers (22.5%) agreed that errors hinder learning, 15 teachers (37.5%) remained neutral on this statement and16 teachers (40%) disagreed with the notion that errors are hindrances to learning. Similarly, responding the statement 2; Errors should be avoided in learning, 20 teachers (50%) agreed that errors should be avoided in learning, 8 teachers (20%) remained neutral and 12 teachers (30%) disagreed with the idea of avoiding errors in the learning process. Moreover, in response to the statement; Errors are the cause of false/incomplete learning, 18 teachers (45%) agreed that errors lead to false or incomplete learning, 18 teachers (45%) remained neutral and 4 teachers (10%) disagreed with this statement. Additionally, in response to the statement; Errors should be corrected immediately, the results demonstrated that 9 teachers (22.5%) agreed that errors should be corrected immediately, 18 teachers (45%) remained neutral and 13 teachers (32.5%) disagreed with the need for immediate error correction. Finally, responding the statement; Errors do not help learning properly, only 2 teachers (5%) agreed that errors do not contribute to proper learning while 20 teachers (50%) remained neutral and 18 teachers (45%) disagreed with the notion

that errors are not beneficial for learning. These findings reflect diverse perspectives among teachers regarding the impact of errors on learning. While a substantial number believe errors should be avoided and immediately corrected, a significant proportion are neutral or disagree, suggesting varying opinions on whether errors hinder or facilitate effective learning outcomes. This variability underscores the complexity of approaches towards error management in educational settings, highlighting the need for nuanced strategies that consider both the challenges and opportunities errors present in language learning.

Discussion

In examining the attitudes of basic level English teachers in Kaski district towards errors in student writing, significant insights and contrasts emerge from the study's findings. The research aimed to explore whether teachers perceive errors as beneficial for learning or as obstacles to academic progress. The results from Table 1 indicate that a majority of teachers (87.5%) view errors as symbols of success, suggesting a positive outlook where mistakes are seen as integral to the learning process. This finding aligns with previous literature (Maharjan, 2009; Sharma, 2021) that emphasizes errors as opportunities for students to enhance their language skills and critical thinking abilities. Table 2 provides further details, revealing that while most teachers acknowledge the potential benefits of errors, such as enhancing problem-solving skills (80%) and providing learning opportunities (70%), there are variations in attitudes towards enjoying errors (37.5%) and their role in fostering responsibility (42.5%). These results echo studies by Darus and Subramaniam (2009) and Al-Buainain (2010), which similarly found that errors can serve as constructive elements in learning environments, encouraging resilience and deeper engagement with academic content. Conversely, Table 3 highlights divergent views among teachers regarding errors as hindrances to learning (22.5% agreeing), the necessity of avoiding errors (50% agreeing), and the immediate correction of errors (22.5% agreeing). These findings contrast with the predominant positive views on error tolerance and learning benefits observed in Tables 1 and 2. This divergence underscores the complexity in educators' perceptions of error management, reflecting potential cultural and pedagogical differences in educational practices (Darus & Ching, 2009; Manchishi et al., 2015). Comparing these findings with literature from diverse contexts, such as studies in Malaysia (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009), China (Darus & Ching, 2009), and Thailand (Sermsook et al., 2017), reveals a common

theme: while errors are generally recognized as opportunities for learning and growth, the degree to which errors are tolerated or corrected immediately varies widely. This variability suggests that while error tolerance may foster creativity and resilience in students, a balanced approach is crucial to ensure errors do not impede learning progress or perpetuate misconceptions (Lasaten, 2014; Katiya et al., 2015). Overall, the findings from the study reveal a predominantly positive perception among basic level English teachers in Kaski district towards errors in student writing. A significant number of teachers expressed enjoyment in encountering students' errors, viewing them not as setbacks but as integral to the learning process. Moreover, a majority of teachers acknowledged errors as symbols of learning, highlighting their beliefs that mistakes are opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills. This perspective underscores a pedagogical approach that values resilience and growth through learning from errors. While most teachers emphasized the benefits of errors in language learning, some expressed concerns that errors could lead to false or incomplete learning, suggesting a nuanced view that weighs the educational benefits against potential drawbacks. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive environment where errors are seen as constructive elements in students' educational journey, promoting deeper engagement and skill development in English writing.

Conclusion and Implications

This study reveals that most teachers hold a predominantly positive outlook towards student writing errors, perceiving them as signs of progress and valuable opportunities for learning rather than as mere obstacles to academic achievement. From a personal perspective, this finding highlights the crucial role of teacher mindset in shaping the classroom environment and student outcomes. It has deepened my understanding of the importance of fostering resilience and critical thinking through an error-tolerant approach, emphasizing that mistakes can be powerful catalysts for growth rather than markers of failure.

The study contributes to the field by providing empirical evidence on English teachers' attitudes towards errors made by basic level students in Nepal, an area that has received limited attention. By illuminating how teachers perceive and manage errors, it offers new insights into pedagogical practices that can support more effective language learning. The findings resonate with the theoretical perspectives of communicative language teaching and error analysis theory, which view errors

as essential components of the learning process and critical data for informing instructional strategies (Corder, 2009).

Looking forward, this study has significant implications for classroom practice, teacher training, and policy development. By encouraging a shift towards more supportive and constructive error management, educators can create classroom cultures that promote exploration, risk-taking, and deeper language acquisition. Teacher training programs can integrate modules on positive error treatment, equipping teachers with strategies to provide balanced corrective feedback that builds confidence and competence. Moreover, curriculum developers and educational policymakers can incorporate error-friendly approaches into language education frameworks to ensure a more student-centered and inclusive learning environment. In terms of recommendations, it is suggested that the future studies expand on this work by incorporating larger, more diverse samples and employing qualitative methods, such as interviews or classroom observations, to capture richer and more nuanced understandings of teachers' beliefs and practices. Additionally, schools should offer continuous professional development focusing on effective error correction strategies and fostering growth mindsets among educators. Finally, policy initiatives could promote creating supportive classroom climates where errors are viewed not as failures but as essential learning opportunities. By adopting these approaches, educators can empower students to become more confident, autonomous, and proficient writers in English and beyond.

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