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Teaching and Learning Compulsory English at the Bachelor's Level in Nepal: An Exploration of Teachers' and Students' Experiences

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Abstract

The study explores teachers' and students' experiences of teaching and learning English along with the challenges they face and opportunities they envision. To explore participants' subjective experiences, a phenomenological design was adopted using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observation of 13 purposively selected participants, including three teachers and ten students from the Education and Management stream of Tribhuvan University. The collected data were translated and transcribed for thematic analysis, based on patterns and meanings in the data for descriptive analysis. The findings revealed theoretical and overloaded course content, foreign-context content, difficult vocabulary and exercises, lecture-based traditional instruction, lack of classroom interaction, noisy and overcrowded classrooms, lack of innovative technology and resources in teaching, low level of students' English proficiency, gap between school and university courses, and students' unwillingness to engage in classroom activities as challenges, despite opportunities, such as improving English language proficiency, further study, global communication, and professional skills enhancement. The study suggests renovating university compulsory English courses, pedagogy, support mechanisms, and teachers' and students' roles in teaching and learning. This study may

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provide insights to teachers, students, curriculum designers, policymakers, and further researchers to yield better output from their part to improve the course, the pedagogy, and learning practices.

Keywords: English language teaching in Nepal, exam-oriented teaching and learning, future career opportunities, large class size, mixed ability students

Introduction

The English language is being used in almost all the domains of knowledge. It has also been used as a medium of formal education. Its long history and global expansion from the roots of West Germanic dialect to its recent position have made it a universal lingua franca (Boberg, 2010). With the growing importance of English globally, the trend of learning English is also increasing gradually. In our English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, English is taught from grade one up to bachelor's level as a compulsory subject. It has been playing a significant role in the education system of Nepal in terms of the medium of teaching and learning, curricula, testing, and certification from school to university level (Khadka, 2024). However, the proficiency level of the students based on the exam results at different standardized tests seems unsatisfactory. There may be different reasons behind the

unsatisfactory English language learning outcomes of the students. However, the growing recognition of English has motivated learners to learn English over the last few decades (Almohammadi, 2023).

The growing demand for English as an international language (EIL) has increased the need for English language teaching and learning, teacher education, proper assessment, and policy for its development (Tan et al., 2020). As many countries of the world have been affected by the global spread of English, Asian countries have promoted English as an official language, a language of instruction, or a working language, developing different resources and materials for effective teaching and learning of English, along with the increase in teaching hours of English (Gil & Adamson, 2011). This highlights the importance given to the English language in the language policies of Asian nations.

People learn English thinking that they have easy access to a job after learning it. A study by Sharma (2021) revealed that many students at B.Ed. learn English to have a job, and their motives behind learning were to fulfill specific purposes. However, students face many challenges while learning English. The findings of a phenomenological study by Bhandari (2023) showed that students struggle with spelling, pronouncing words, using words appropriately, and discovering meaning. Similar to the challenges faced by students, teachers also faced some problems in ELT classes. The findings of the study by Bhandari and Bhandari (2024) reported mixed-ability classrooms, overloaded teachers, insufficient compensation of teachers, poor infrastructure, resource limitations, and lack of implementation of the education policy as major challenges. Despite the challenges, the students got motivated to learn English to gain career opportunities. A survey study by Chand (2026) revealed students' motivation for learning English for academic, professional, personal growth, academic development, and career enhancement.

Different factors are connected with the successful acquisition of the English language. Liando (2012) argues that family members, teachers, and individual roles help learners to become successful in learning English. Similarly, the findings of the qualitative Turkish study (Seda & Zahitjan, 2016) showed that parents' support and encouragement motivated learners to learn English. It also helped them learn English successfully. The findings of the study showed that supporting learners' beliefs in learning English and collaborative work with friends motivated students to learn English better. However, many factors influence the success or failure in learning English. The cognitive, affective, and social dimensions, along with curricular issues, teacher factors, learner factors, and situational factors, play a determining role in successful learning (Renandya, 2013). He further argued that when these factors are taken into consideration by teachers, school administrators, and other key stakeholders, the language proficiency and functional communicative skills of the learners can be enhanced. A study in an Arab context (Jdetawy, 2011) revealed that lack of target language exposure, overuse of the Arab language, unfavourable teaching and learning context, lack of learners' motivation, and the inappropriate English language curricula were responsible for low performance in English. The findings of a survey study (Getie, 2020) in Ethiopia showed that social factors such as peer group and learners' parents' attitude to learning English, factors related to English language teachers, teaching and learning environment, such as the classrooms, seating arrangement and the physical learning environment, teaching materials, and language learning process affect the learning of English as a foreign language.

A qualitative study carried out in Indonesia reported that learners needed improvement in fluency, accuracy, comprehension, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Arini & Wahyudin, 2022) to develop proficiency in English. A Chinese study (Qiu & Fang, 2022) also reported what native and local teachers focused on in their teaching. The study revealed that native English teachers focused on interactive classes, whereas local teachers focused on intercultural competence, and their instruction was more intelligible but rather teacher-dominated. Exposure to English among students, teaching-learning activities, students' level of confidence, learning motivation, and the college English learning environment may affect the learning achievement of the students. The findings of a correlation study (Gultom & Oktaviani, 2012) in Indonesia showed that self-esteem, correlated with good mental health, effective learning, and maintenance of the quality of life of the students, affected students' level of learning proficiency. Similarly, a quantitative study in the Chinese context reported that students' motivation has a positive role in learning a language, and it affects students' language performance greatly. Wu et al. (2022) suggested that teachers should understand students' affective factors so that

he/she can select effective teaching methods to enhance students' English learning. The teacher's behaviour and their relationship with students have a connection with how effectively students learn language and improve their English proficiency. In this regard, a survey study (Misbah et al., 2022) in Indonesia reported that teachers' cooperative behaviour and proximity to students affected students' learning motivation and language achievement, whereas controlling behaviour of the teachers in the classroom reduced students' language competency level.

It is evident from the studies reported above that several factors govern the unsatisfactory language proficiency and academic results of Bachelor's students. In our context, the result of English has affected the overall result of the bachelor's level. Consequently, it has made teaching English a matter of challenge for teachers, too. As English is taught as a compulsory subject in B.Ed. first year and BBS first and second years in the case of the annual system, the improvement of English subject results has become essential. However, very few studies in our context have explored the university students' and teachers' experience of teaching and learning the English language. In this regard, a field-based study exploring B.Ed. and BBS teachers' and students' experiences of teaching and learning English has been imperative. In the meantime, the study seeking answers to some research questions, such as: how are the teachers and students experiencing teaching and learning compulsory English at the Bachelor's level?, what problems and challenges do they encounter in teaching and learning compulsory English, along with the opportunities compulsory English offers for students' academic and professional development, seems quite relevant in the Nepalese context. In this context, this study was carried out to explore the problems, identify the opportunities, observe the strategies used by teachers and students in teaching and learning English at the Bachelor's level, and provide insights and suggestions for better teaching and learning English at the Bachelor's level. Students' and teachers' experiences may help reshape our course, content, and pedagogy to make them learner-friendly and engaging for improving students' English performance and exam results.

Literature Review

This section presents the review of the related empirical literature thematically.

Students' Personal and Familial Determinants for Learning the English Language

Many factors may play a role in effective learning of English. Many studies have shown that personal factors play a major role in learning the English language. The findings of a study (Getie, 2020) carried out in Ethiopia show that different personal factors, such as the desire to secure good jobs, pass the exam, and reside abroad with a good profession, encouraged learners to learn English, whereas mistakes made during learning English, frustration, insufficient time to practice English, and a poor English background demotivated learners from learning English. Moreover, a mixed-method study (Cheng & Lee, 2018) in Hong Kong revealed other factors such as regular guidance, peer support, and progress reports motivated students' persistence in the learning process. However, a correlational study (El-Omari, 2016) in Jordan reported family environment-related problems such as a private room for study, parents' English proficiency, opportunities for international travel, and a chance to practice English at home as contributing factors for better learning and greater achievement in English. Contrary to the findings of this study, a Vietnamese qualitative study (Tran, 2013) revealed that students' desire for a better future, better jobs, and better salaries were factors for learning the English language. These kinds of students' perceptions encouraged them to learn English better. Although these studies focus on what factors motivate learners to learn English, they could not explore both teachers' and students' experiences and the challenges they encounter while teaching and learning English.

Instructional Determinants for Learning the English Language

Teachers' teaching methods and techniques, use of materials, and perception of the English language in the classroom affect the students' learning of English and their achievement in the classroom. An Arabian study (Khasawneh, 2022) revealed that the use of teaching materials and tools by teachers, the use of the English language, and the importance given to it in the classroom are affecting factors of students' achievement in English. Moreover, the findings of a Vietnamese study (Nguyen et al., 2014) reported more comprehensive aspects, such as monotonous teaching time, lacking for communicative activities, grammar-focused teaching, inappropriate time management,

vague instructions, haphazard classroom organization, teachers' insufficient preparation for lessons, a lack of quality teaching, and limited use of teaching aids and technology as affecting factors for students' better learning. This study only focused on teachers' activities in the classroom. However, a Chinese study (Zhao & Yang, 2022) showed teacher's support, dedication, and passion, understanding students, and friendly behaviour towards them influence students' achievement and engagement in learning English.

A Vietnamese study (Tran, 2013) showed how teaching English to university students is limited to textbooks and teacher-centred activities. The findings showed that the unclear aim of teaching English at university, students' dependency on teachers and textbooks for learning, and exam-oriented teaching created demotivation for learning English. Similarly, the result of a study by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2006) in Nigeria revealed that the lack of frequent use of modern instructional technologies and a variety of teaching techniques by the English teachers in their English language lessons resulted in low engagement and language achievement of the learners. All these findings mainly focused on what motivated and demotivated students in learning English, whereas the overall experience of both teachers and students regarding teaching and learning English at the Bachelor's level in Nepal is yet to be explored.

Institutional Determinants Related to Learning English

The teaching-learning environment of the institution, the size of the classes, and the English environment may affect students' learning. The findings of the Vietnamese study by Tran (2013) reported that class size, exam-focused classes, culturally oriented and interactive language activities, and proper use of time and resources need to be considered properly, as these factors affect students' learning of English. However, a study by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2006) focused on the importance of the learning environment for effective learning of English. The findings revealed that students learning under a harsh learning environment, which is often rowdy, congested, and noisy, had their expected learning achievement hampered. Beyond the learning environment, a study by El-Omari (2016) reported comprehensive factors that affect students' learning achievement and processes. These factors cover attitudinal, social, socioeconomic, and extracurricular factors. Similarly, the findings of a study (Getie, 2020) also reported multiple factors belonging to different dimensions of teaching and learning of English, such as lack of a favourable learning environment, teachers' encouragement, equal focus on all skills (exam-oriented studying), good English models in the school and poor background English of the students as responsible factors for influencing the English learning of the students. These studies mainly focused on problems of teaching and learning English in other countries.

However, studies in Nepal exploring bachelor-level teachers' and students' subjective experiences of teaching and learning English have not yet been widely conducted. This study seeks to bridge that gap in the literature by exploring both teachers' and students' experiences of the Education and Management streams regarding the teaching and learning of Compulsory English at the Bachelor level.

Methodology

This study followed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the subjective experiences of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews, focus group discussions, and observations were employed to collect the data. The themes were generated based on the pattern of the data. The thematic data analysis procedure was followed using the idea of Braun and Clarke (2006). The collected data were analyzed descriptively.

Study Design

Phenomenological research design is concerned with the exploration of lived experiences of the people involved with the researched issue (Groenewald, 2004). The researcher's own presuppositions, beliefs, meanings, interpretations, or theoretical concepts should not enter the world of the informant or participant and influence their perception in a phenomenological study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Similarly, Husserl claims that the essence of a phenomenon could be understood through an investigation and description of one's experience while suspending suppositions (Husserl & Welton, 1999). As phenomenological study focuses on capturing a vivid and precise lived experience

of participants that can lead to understanding the essence of the phenomenon under study (Heotis, 2020), the participants' lived experiences of teaching and learning English were explored using a phenomenological research design in this study. So, this study followed a phenomenological research design as it aims to explore the bachelor-level students' and their teachers' lived subjective experiences of learning and teaching English, as well as the opportunities and challenges they have experienced while learning English.

Study Site and Participants

Ten Bachelor-level students from a campus under the management and Education streams of Tribhuvan University, and three teachers teaching in the respective streams, were selected purposively as the participants of the study. To make a representative sample, students from all years of Bachelor's level under both streams, representing different ethnic, geographic, and cultural diversity, including both genders, were selected as participants for this study. Teachers and students representing both the Education and Management streams participated in the study. Of them, three teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews, and ten students, representing five from each stream, were involved in the focus group discussions. The characteristics of the participants in this study are illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1

Demographic Description of Research Participants

Participant	Stream/ Discipline	Experience	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Group/ Role in Study
T1	Education	25 years	64	Male	Brahman	Teacher/ Interview and observation participant
T2	Education and Business Management	8 years	37	Female	Kirat	Teacher/ Interview and observation participant
T3	Business Management	7 years	38	Female	Chhetri	Teacher/ Interview and observation participant
SE1	Education	2 nd Year	18	Male	Gurung	Student / Focus group participant
SE2	Education	2 nd Year	19	Female	Brahmin	Student / Focus group participant
SE3	Education	2 nd Year	17	Male	Dalit	Student / Focus group participant
SE4	Education	2 nd Year	22	Female	Tharu	Student / Focus group participant
SE5	Education	2 nd Year	20	Male	Chhetri	Student / Focus group participant
SBM1	Business Management	3 rd Year	19	Female	Chhetri	Student / Focus group participant
SBM2	Business Management	3 rd Year	21	Male	Thakuri	Student / Focus group participant
SBM3	Business Management	3 rd Year	24	Female	Muslim	Student / Focus group participant
SBM4	Business Management	3 rd Year	22	Male	Kirat	Student / Focus group participant
SBM5	Business Management	3 rd Year	18	Female	Magar	Student / Focus group participant

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observation were used as data collection methods for this study. We had interviews with teachers and involved students in focus group discussions. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore the issue in great detail with the

participating teachers separately, using semi-structured interview guidelines (Appendix 1). At the negotiated time and location, the interviews were conducted in English and audio-recorded with their consent for transcription. Similarly, to explore the issue in depth from the students' perspectives, two focus group discussions using the guidelines (Appendix 2), representing five students from each of the two streams, were conducted. The discussions were planned and organized with the students. They used both English and Nepali in the discussions. Both discussions were audio-recorded with the consent of the students. Also, the teachers' classes were observed after they granted permission for in-depth data collection using the classroom observation guidelines (Appendix 3). Six classes, two classes each taught by a teacher, were observed to capture the trends and practices of classroom instruction, including classroom environment, the teacher's role, students' engagement, teaching-learning activities, assessment practices, teachers' feedback for improvement, and overall impression towards the class.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the interviews were transcribed, and the focus group discussion data were transcribed and translated into English. Then, all the transcriptions, including the classroom observations, were accurately finalized at first. After becoming familiar with the data through rigorous reading and rereading, the patterns in the data were noticed. Based on the patterns in the data, we coded it rigorously and generated themes. Coding and generating themes were iteratively continued until the final themes were developed. In this way, the data were analysed based on the generated themes descriptively using the idea of Braun and Clarke (2006). The core ideas obtained from the interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations were presented and used for deriving the findings without any fabrication or falsification.

Results

The discussion of students in groups, interviews with teachers, and observations revealed various problems and challenges of teaching and learning compulsory English. Teachers reported students' low proficiency level in English, the large class size, and mixed-ability students as great challenges in conducting teaching and learning activities. The nature of the course, insufficient exposure to the language for students, lack of self-study habits of the students, pressure to complete the course, lack of classroom interaction, lack of regular exams and feedback, classroom disturbance, and irregularity of the students are posing challenges to teachers in the English classroom. Similarly, the use of traditional methods, textbook-oriented teaching and learning activities, traditional classroom arrangement, lack of encouragement and feedback, the overcrowded university classroom, delay in course completion, and lack of practice in the classroom are some of the challenges expressed by the students in the focus group discussion. Large and noisy classes, lack of ICT-based infrastructure, use of textbook-focused lecture method, passive students, and lack of classroom interaction between teachers and students were noticed during classroom observation. The findings of the study, in great detail with the participants' comments, are presented below thematically. These themes were generated based on the pattern and regularity of the data.

Curriculum Related Challenges and Opportunities

Both students and teachers expressed that although they loved learning English, their current courses were not fulfilling their expectations of learning. Regarding this, a teacher who taught both B.Ed. and BBS (T2) remarked:

English courses of BBS are more contextual for the students who like to find their career in business and management disciplines than the English in B.Ed. for the future teachers. Additionally, BBS students study it both in the first and second year; each carries 100 marks. It is lacking in B.Ed. Second year. I have found BBS graduate students better in English communication than B.Ed. graduates, except English majors.

B.Ed. (T1): Students cannot develop confidence to use English with only one year of compulsory English. It can hardly help them cope with the tasks that they have to deal with in their future career.

B.Ed. (T3): Any teacher must be at least bilingual at the secondary level. English must be one of the languages a teacher can use at the secondary level, except Nepali, at least in our context. Additional languages are also welcome. Compulsory English in B.Ed first year has made it easier for students to practice academic vocabulary, grammar in context, and common readings... They study compulsory English and practice their field-related vocabulary and written communication, including letters, reports, advertisements, minutes and other business-related stuff.

Focus group discussion with students also revealed how B.Ed. and BBS courses have been challenging for students. Their comment reflected some problems of the courses. Regarding this, both BBS and B.Ed. students shared:

SBM1: School ma ta ke padhiecha khai kunni, kehi pani aaudaina ta angreji ta. Nepalima bhanda bujhe jasto lagchh, angrejima answer garna garo chh (English: I understand in Nepali, but when we try to speak and write in English, I get stuck. I surprise what I read at school before! It is difficult to speak and write in English).

SBM2: Malai pani testai ho, tara schoolma ali jane jasto lagthyo. Mihi net garna sakiena ki jasto lageko chh. First year ma bhanda second year ma ali sajilo bha thyo angreji bujhna. (English: I feel I was good at English at the school level. But now, I think I was quite poor. I felt a bit easier in the second year than in the first year)

SE1: mlai paatha padhana r bujana garo hunx. Teha dheri gara sabda haru chhan r grammar abhyas grn pni skidain. (English: I have difficulty in reading text and understanding it. There are many new vocabulary and grammar exercises. I find them difficult to solve)

The student's opinion revealed some gaps between the courses at the school level and the college level. These comments indicated the problems in the nature of the course and its difficulty level, and allocated time for the course. The students often find the university course more challenging and demand more labour from students. Students' expressions reflected some challenges related to the curriculum of bachelor-level English. They reported the course being beyond their level of understanding. As students, the teachers comment reflects the course being more theoretical in nature and not fulfilling the communicative needs of the students.

Pedagogical Challenges

The way teachers teach influences students' learning. Classroom teaching-learning activities and teaching-learning environment either facilitate or hamper students' learning. Students shared the problems related to the way of teaching and learning of English. Their responses indicated the problems with pedagogical practices in the classroom.

SE3: abhyas grne kashyaa ma pryapt samaye pni chhainl. Sikshyaka le matrai eklauti boler padhauhunchha. Hamilet hallale grada ramrosanga suna pni sundinau r korasa pani samayama sakidain. (English: I do not have enough time for practice in the classroom. Teachers only deliver lectures. We cannot even listen properly due to a crowded classroom. Our course also doesn't complete in time)

SBM2: angreji ma mihanet grn skienki jasto lagx. Tyopni prikshyaa kendrit padhai chha. (English: I feel I could not do hard labour in English. However, the teaching-learning activities are exam-centred)

SBM3: prikchhya bolnikuraako jaacha grna sakadin. Sabi samjera lekhane parasn auchhan. Hamilai sunai r bolaiko pni prsna sodhanu parchha r prikshya pni byabaraarik hunuparx. (English: Exam papers did not really test the communication skills of the English language. Questions were memory-based. We also need listening and speaking English in the business field, even more than reading and writing in the practical field. It is not reflected in the examination. It should be made practical)

SBM5: haamilai chhalphal garn man laagchha tr sirle bhasan grer padhaunuhunchha, haami sunchhaun, ekchhin t bujinchha pachhaxi sabi bhulinchha (English: We love discussion. But in class, teachers use the lecture method. We listen. Sometimes, we understand, but we can hardly recall it on our own).

Students' responses reflected how English classes were run in the context of Nepal. Students shared that teachers taught English using traditional methods without using teaching materials. It created monotony and boredom for the students while learning English. While observing the classes, students' sharing reflected this. There were a large number of students in the classroom, and teachers were delivering lectures from the front of the class. The students from the back benches were talking to themselves. The whole classroom seemed very passive and lifeless, not having any kind of interactive activities.

Professional Opportunities and Learning Facilities

Despite the challenges, both teachers and students shared how the compulsory English course offered some opportunities to the students. It helped students to have access to the English language, make students familiar with a variety of content, and become global citizens. Teachers identified their values. A teacher who taught both B.Ed. and BBS students (T2), for instance, shared:

English equips students with pedagogical language or language for persuasion, business communication, and wider contact with multilingual people. It allows them to access and share wider knowledge with a variety of business partners and clients. For potential teachers, it builds their knowledge and confidence to communicate beyond their local contexts. It also helps them to search better and gain international content knowledge. (T2 in interview)

Students also recognized the opportunity that English provided them through the course. Both B.Ed. and BBS students shared:

SE4: esle hamilai niji chhetra ma jagir khana pni sahayog grx r haamilai bibhinna suchna r gyan sikna pani sahayog garx. (English: It helps us to be teachers at private schools and sectors where English is required. The knowledge of English supports us in operating ICT tools and gives us access to different sources of information.)

SBM1: haamile nayaa gyan, saba da r garaamr sikkchhu. Hamile bibhinna bisayebastu marphat naya gyan sikkchhu. (English: We gain knowledge of new vocabulary and grammar. We also learn new content and know about the world through diversified texts)

SBM2: haile ramro inglish jane jaagir paun sakchhau. Esko gyanle bidesma jana r ramro jindgi bitaun sahayog garx. (English: If we learn English better, we can

gain a good job. Knowledge of English helps us to go to a foreign country where English is spoken and spend a better life)

SBM1: Fast yiarko campalsari inglis le hamilai graamr, sabda r naya pathaharu padhane abasr dinx. Bhuleka kura pni samjhana garai dinx. (English: The first-year compulsory course gave us knowledge about grammar, vocabulary, and new reading texts. We got opportunities to refresh and remind even the forgotten things)

SE4: Pachhi padhauna parda pani yo skill hamilai kam lagchha. Hamra major wishaya ra aru compulsory wishaya haru pani bujhna sajilo bhyo. Tya pani dherai English terms haru hunchhan. (English: The skills learnt in this subject are needed in the future. Different language skills we learn here also support us in learning other subjects too.)

SE1: Angrejile janepachhi aru sanga kura grn r jaagir paaun sajilo hunchha r pachhi adhyan ma sahayog grchha (English: English helps us connect with other people who speak English. It enhances the chance of getting a job in the private sector and supports further study)

SE5: Ajha Nepali bahek sabi wishayama final exam ma question ta angrejima nai sodhchha ni (English: Moreover, the questions in other subjects are also asked in English. English helps there, too. So, the knowledge of English is essential.)

The responses of the students revealed how knowledge of English facilitated them in getting jobs. The students expressed many benefits of learning English. The job opportunities, future studies, access to information, varied content and global communication are some opportunities that English offers. The observation data also showed that both students and teachers were very excited to teach and learn the English language. Students' responses also indicated that knowledge of English supported them in learning other subjects and understanding questions in exams. In classroom observation, many students were observed being serious about learning English. They seemed worried about improving their English.

Insights for Improvements

The findings of the study suggest clear directions for the improvement of the compulsory English course of B.Ed. and BBS. A teacher who taught both B.Ed. and BBS stated:

I suggest including compulsory English in B.Ed. Second year also. One year is not sufficient for them. First year, the theoretical part of the grammar, vocabulary, and reading and the second year, the practical part of them, including the writing practices of the academic texts.

A B.Ed. teacher remarked, "The number of students is more than 100 in the class. This is too much. The last benches cannot listen, nor can they see the board clearly. The crowded class becomes noisy without reason". The BBS teacher also echoed it,

Well-managed and small classes, better resources, and frequent training for us (teachers) would make teaching meaningful. Teaching English is different from teaching other subjects. It is a language subject, and it would be better learned in the way a second language is learned, even in this formal academic setting.

On the other hand, the students shared their opinions towards compulsory English and their experiences of learning English. They shared their motivation to learn English, but they found it unfamiliar in many cases, even when they tried learning carefully:

SBM4: hamile bibhinna pryogamatmak kiriyakalaap jasti, projekta r prijentesan baat ramrari sikna sakchhau. Prikshyale matra hudin. (English: We can learn

better by practical activities such as projects and presentations, not just the formal exams)

SBM1: haamilai arubisaye pani sikna r padhana sasayog pugchha. It also helps to learn other subjects, like ek tir dui sikar (English: learning English is killing two birds with one stone. While we learn other subjects in English medium, we also learn English)

SBM3: padhane kura hamro ehika bisayebastu hunu parchha bidesakaa matr hoin. (English: Reading materials should also be of our Nepali contexts rather than international only)

Their comments indicate students' dissatisfaction with the current content of the course and the activities teachers assign them. They preferred content from the context of Nepal along with content from an international context and project-based activities for learning English. Classroom observation also supported these insights. Overall, the students expressed their worries about how to improve their English. It was evident from the focus group discussion and classroom observation that there was a need for change in students' classroom activities, seating arrangement, teaching and learning materials, interaction, engagement and practice-based activities in the classroom.

Discussion

The study was carried out to explore bachelor-level teachers' and students' teaching and learning experiences, along with the opportunities and challenges they encounter while learning English. The findings of the study revealed that the students struggle in learning English due to a lack of existing vocabulary knowledge and confidence to cope with the course. This aligns with the findings by Bhandari (2023) that report vocabulary and different aspects connected with it, such as spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and contextual use, as the main barrier in learning English content. Additionally, findings of this study revealed more challenges such as the lack of a better English classroom environment, the theoretical nature of the course, teacher-centered teaching and learning activities, frequent use of mother tongue, lengthy course, course content from a foreign context, complex vocabulary and exercises, and lack of training for teachers. Similar to these findings, Chand (2021) reports teacher and teaching, course content, classroom environment, and poor schooling as factors creating challenges in teaching and learning the English language.

The findings of the study by Islam et al. (2022) in the context of Dhaka reported teachers' limited practical knowledge for applying inductive and communicative approaches to teaching grammar, and an overemphasis on the grammaticality of students' sentences as a cause of anxiety for learners learning English. Their findings focused only on the teaching of grammar and problems connected to it. But this study explored the use of traditional pedagogies and teacher-centered activities in teaching and learning English as dominant practices causing demotivation among learners in the English classroom. Lee (2022), in the context of South Korea, reported inadequate instructional time for teaching English as a challenge and also highlighted the need for a teacher evaluation and monitoring mechanism for effective English classes. Lee's findings focused on teachers' evaluation mechanisms. However, this study revealed only a lack of sufficient time, classroom disturbances, and pressure to complete the course in time as challenges in teaching and learning English. Getie (2020) and Andayani (2022) revealed a lack of a favourable learning environment and teachers' encouragement and motivation, a lack of teachers and infrastructure, exam-oriented classroom instruction, a lack of good English models in the school, weak English performance of the students, and negligence of learning English as factors creating challenges in teaching and learning English. The observation of the classes and students' sharing in this study reported a teacher-dominated classroom, a lack of innovative teaching, learning tools, and practice activities in English, conventional seating arrangement as pedagogical challenges.

However, unlike the findings of the study by Alpino et al. (2020) that reported different levels of English among the students as a support in classroom teaching, this study indicated large and noisy

classes as a great challenge in teaching and learning English. The result of the Malaysian study (Shalihah et al., 2022) revealed a lack of confidence in speaking English, a lack of time for preparation of the lesson and materials, and students' demotivation in engaging in classroom activities as the common problems faced by both teachers and students. This study also showed students' low confidence in English, a lack of proper instructional materials in teaching, use of traditional pedagogy, conventional seating arrangement, large classroom size, and lack of language practice activities and maximum content from a foreign context as common problems of teaching and learning of English shared by both teachers and students.

As there exist some challenges in teaching and learning English, there are also many opportunities and benefits of English learning. Similar to the findings of the study (Getie, 2020) carried out in Ethiopia, which showed different personal factors, such as the desire to secure good jobs, passing the exam, going and living abroad for a profession, as encouraging factors for learning English, this study also revealed that knowledge of English supports students in future study, access to a lot of information and getting a job in the market. The study carried out by Banafi (2025) and Amin and Bakar (2022) also revealed that the acquisition of different skills, helping to enter, adapt, and gain better jobs in the working market, and developing professional skills to work in a diverse cultural world are some benefits English offers to students. In addition, this study reported the chance of gaining new information, getting jobs in different sectors, and being a global citizen, along with their positive attitude towards learning English as main opportunities of learning English. Moreover, they perceived the value of English as a parameter of success in their lives and believed career success depends on effective learning of English at college.

Participants shared different possible ways of improving English. A quantitative study (Liaquat et al., 2025) in Pakistan prioritized the need to increase the feeling of self-esteem, teacher support, and peer support in teaching-learning activities and problem-solving tasks in the classroom. Their study only revealed that students' confidence and pedagogical issues needed to be improved. However, this study highlighted the conducive and supportive teaching and learning environment, project-based learning, encouragement, support, and feedback for effective teaching and learning of English. The findings of the study carried out by Chand (2021) suggested creating a favourable teaching-learning context, maximizing learner autonomy, changing teaching practices, revising courses, and conducting speaking activities time and again. Moreover, the students in this study shared that they preferred an active role in classroom activities, practical courses and activities, innovative teaching pedagogies and practices. Both teachers and students focused on teachers' support and guidance, and prompt feedback for increasing the learning of English, as reported by a Chinese study (Zhao & Yang, 2022) and a mixed-method study in Hong Kong (Cheng & Lee, 2018). Their study reported that teachers' support, guidance, and understanding of students, and reporting their progress, increased students' achievement and engagement in learning English. However, findings of this study indicated the need for a pedagogical shift, curriculum change, and reshaping the learning environment as major issues to be considered for improving teaching and learning of English.

Likewise, an Arabian study (Khasawneh, 2022) revealed that the use of teaching materials and tools, frequent use of the English language in the classroom, and the importance given to English in the classroom improve learning of English and students' achievements in English. The confidence level and self-efficacy are presented as a triggering factor for improving the English proficiency of the students by Gultom and Oktaviani (2012) in their study. These studies reported the use of materials, the medium of classroom instruction, and students' confidence as important factors influencing students' progress in English. However, this study revealed the need for project- and task-based activities in the classroom and the use of new technology for improving students' English. This also aligns with the study (Martinez, 2022), which focused on the use of project-based learning, curriculum-oriented teaching-learning, and the use of innovative teaching skills for improving students' English. The study by Famarzi Babadi et al. (2024) reported the need for change in comprehensive strategies related to resources, curriculum, and instruction for enhancing English language teaching. However, their study focused on three broad areas to be changed for improving English, without indicating specific reforms within those broad areas. On contrary to it, participants in this study indicated specific changes related to curriculum, instruction, and learning context. The participants focused on the need for reformation

in curriculum, course, teaching content, pedagogy, teaching-learning materials and tools, teachers and students' roles, and feedback system in learning for improving students' English.

Conclusion and Implications

English is being taught as a compulsory subject at the Bachelor's level. However, many students are found struggling to pass this subject. The findings of this study indicated low confidence and self-esteem as obstacles to learning English. This revealed that there is a need for motivation to the students for learning English. Different factors related to the institution of students, such as the teaching and learning environment, engagement in classroom activities, and infrastructure within the college and the classroom, have influenced the learning of English. Difficult courses, decontextualized content, and theory courses are curriculum-related challenges in the learning of English. Similarly, the use of teacher-centered pedagogy, lack of teaching-learning materials and tools, and lack of students' participation in activities have created demotivation in learners, causing obstacles in effective learning of English. Common challenges shared by both teachers and students involved the use of traditional lecture methods, theoretical courses having content from foreign contexts, lack of teaching-learning resources and tools, rare classroom interaction, noisy and overcrowded classrooms, and absence of innovative technology in classroom teaching. Moreover, teachers added the pressure of completing the course in time, the unsatisfactory level of students' English, the gap between school and university courses, students' negligence and unwillingness to engage actively in classroom activities as challenges.

The participants' responses depict that despite some curriculum, pedagogy, and learning environment-related challenges, English has opened several doors of opportunity for students. Better knowledge of English increases the possibility of gaining a job in the labour market and makes people familiar with the world's people and culture. Knowledge of English keeps opening all the doors of communication with the global community. Moreover, knowledge of English also facilitates learning of other subjects and further studies in an international context. English equips students with different professional skills and helps them to enter and get a good job in the competitive and diverse cultural world. Overall, the participants' sharing indicates that the success of an individual in different careers depends on how well the individual knows English.

Participants shared some measures for improving teaching and learning of English. They indicated changes in existing pedagogy, courses, infrastructure, and classroom environment. They focused on project- and task-based activities, and the support, feedback, and motivation from the side of teachers to improve their English. The teachers' concerns about large classes, different levels of the students, the gap between school and college learning ways and courses, and lack of well-managed infrastructure and materials by the college should be properly taken into consideration to improve teaching and learning of English. The findings indicated the need for collaborative initiatives for improving the university's compulsory courses, the instructional activities, institutional management, and students' active agency for better outcomes on the part of teachers and students.

This study reflected the picture of how English is being taught and learnt at the bachelor's level in Nepal. In the case of low English proficiency among students and unsatisfactory results in English, the findings of this study may help to improve students' English and their exam results by changing current pedagogical practices. Moreover, this study also explored some issues related to the current curriculum from both teachers' and students' perspectives. It provides some insights for curriculum developers, textbook writers, and language policy developers. As this study explored how English can be taught and learnt effectively by tackling the challenges, teachers, students, and even colleges may gain insight from this study and improve their practices. The study provides some insight for further researchers and leaves areas to be studied from a broad perspective, taking a more representative sample from different participants and institutions.

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Appendix 1: Semi-structured Interview Guidelines for teachers

Section A: Initiation/beginning

General intro/share the objectives/ensure confidentiality/seek informed consent for recording the interview

Section B: Experiences of Teaching Compulsory English

For B.Ed. Teacher

- How do you perceive students' preparedness when they enroll in B.Ed?
- What challenges do you face while teaching B.Ed students?
- Do you think one year of compulsory English is sufficient for B.Ed students? Please illustrate why.
- What opportunities does the compulsory English course provide to the B.Ed 1st year students?
- How do you evaluate the students' performance and progress in compulsory English?

For BBS teacher (compulsory English in 1st and 2nd year)

- How do you perceive the students' preparedness when they enter the first BBS year?
- What differences do you notice between teaching compulsory English in the first year and in the second year?
- How do you integrate compulsory English with business related contexts?
- What challenges do you face while sustaining students' interest across two years?
- What opportunities have you observed for BBS students through compulsory English in their career development?

For a teacher teaching both B.Ed. and BBS

- How do you compare the experiences of teaching compulsory English in B.Ed. and BBS?
- What similar and different challenges do the students face in the two streams?

- How do you adapt your teaching strategies when handling both streams?
- How do you evaluate the English language courses of B.Ed. and BBS concerning students' learning outcomes?
- What recommendations would you make to improve compulsory English teaching across both streams?

Section C: Classroom Practices and Pedagogy

- What methods and strategies do you use in teaching compulsory English?
- How do you handle large classes, diverse student backgrounds, and varying proficiency levels?
- What activities do you use to enhance students' learning, and how do you do them/
- How do you assess the students and motivate them to learn English?
- How do you incorporate Nepali cultural and contextual materials into compulsory English teaching?

Section D: Problems, Opportunities, and Challenges

- What major problems do the students face in learning compulsory English?
- What challenges do you face as a teacher concerning curriculum, resources, student motivation, and institutional support?
- What opportunities does the compulsory English course provide to the students?
- How do you think the compulsory English course should be developed and improved at the bachelor's level?
- What institutional and policy-level changes/revisions would you recommend?

Section E: Closing

- Anything you want to add?
- Close politely

Appendix 2: Students' FGD guidelines

Initiation.....

Section A: Background

Introduction ... How do you feel about the compulsory English in your programme?

Section B: Learning Experiences

For B.Ed.2nd Year Students

- Experience of learning English in 1st year
- Challenges in learning
- Is one year of compulsory English sufficient? Why/ why not?
- Think one more year of compulsory English is necessary?
- Opportunities for compulsory English are provided for the professional development of future teachers.

For BBS 3rd Year Students

- Experience of learning English in the first and second years
- What differences were there between first- and second-year Englishes?
- What challenges were faced
- How relevant was compulsory English for business studies and your career aspirations?
- Is it enough/more/ or should it be continued in the third year also?

Section C: Classroom practices and pedagogy

- What activities and methods were used by the teachers?
- Which activities helped them in learning English
- How effective/motivated were the assessments to improve their English learning
- Were the activities helpful to them?
- Their satisfaction

Section D: Problems, opportunities and challenges

- Major problems faced...

- Opportunities they got from learning compulsory English
- Challenges faced...
- Improvements they would like to suggest in the courses

Section E: Closing

- Anything they like to add
- Polite closing

Appendix 3: Classroom observation guidelines

Classroom environment

- Seating arrangement/ classroom setup
- Teaching materials and resources
- Student motivation and participation

Teacher's presentation/Role

- Teaching methods, activities used...
- Language use (English, Nepali)
- Strategies to engage and encourage students to participate
- Feedback and support for the students

Students' participation

- Level of participation
- Interaction with the teachers and students
- Demonstrated interest and motivation'
- Challenges observed

Teaching learning activities

- Activities conducted
- Use of examples, contextual or real-life uses
- Balance between theory and practices

Assessment practices and feedback

- In-class evaluation/questioning
- Motivation and feedback/washback
- Post-assessment tasks

Overall impression

- Strengths
- Problems
- Opportunities
- How would the problems be resolved

Thank You!