Paradigm Shift in Pedagogy: Traditional to Transformative Approaches

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Abstract

Traditional approaches to teaching have been gradually shifted with new approaches. Teacher and textbook-centred teaching strategies, methods and approaches are not equally beneficial in education to engage all learners actively in the learning process. This context reveals the need of shifting in our pedagogical practices. Transformative pedagogical approaches focus on personalized and students- centered strategies of teaching, which are alternative pedagogies to traditional ones. In this context, this paper examines the problems of using traditional pedagogical approaches and the need for transformative pedagogical approaches in education. Particularly, it examines the context of using traditional approaches and the limitations, the ubiquitous need for pedagogical shifting, and the relevance of transformative pedagogies for supporting students' learning. To explore the issue, we reviewed journal articles, conference papers, books, and book chapters. We derived the findings of the study as we interpreted how it is essential to intervene in traditional pedagogical approaches, since they could not provide equal opportunities and benefits of education to the diverse learners. Neither did they create a collaborative and creative learning platform. To address the diverse needs and interests of learners, traditional approaches need to be shifted with transformative approaches of teaching. As our education system is also not yielding fruitful result producing creative, skill-oriented and critical citizens. Although the relevance of transformative pedagogies has been realized, the foundational preparation and readiness for their implementations are awaited. Further studies need to explore how transformative pedagogies can be executed in our classrooms effectively.

Keywords: lternative pedagogical paradigm, critical approach, instructional paradigm, transformative pedagogical approach, traditional pedagogical approach

Introduction

Teacher-centred pedagogies focus on one way delivery model of teaching. Such pedagogies cannot meet the expectations of learners who require autonomy in learning in this era of technology-blended democratic learning. Pedagogical best practices play an important role in students' academic success, as such practices create an engaging and effective learning context (Suyo-Vega et al., 2024). Personalized learning experiences, tailoring of educational content to suit individual students' needs and preferences, use of collaborative methodologies and interactive platforms foster active participation and recall of content (Sharma et al., 2024). Nevertheless, traditional teacher and textbook-centred pedagogies cannot enhance personalized and reflective learning. The transformative methodologies, including active learning, experiential learning, flipped classrooms, project-based learning, and the integration of technology, revolutionize educational delivery and create a dynamic learning environment (Bakar, 2021). Against this backdrop, a pedagogical shift is needed for the day if we want to offer equal opportunities by creating an inclusive, equal, critical, and just academia.

Traditional pedagogies that include teacher-centred and lecture-directed approaches need to be replaced by transformative pedagogies that engage learners' cognitive, practical, and affective dimensions (Cappiali, 2023). Traditional pedagogical approaches do not favour the active engagement of the students in the learning process and rather focus on the behavioral impacts of the immediate context and the teacher's role on learners (Khalaf, 2018). Alternative pedagogies have emerged to explore new possibilities for traditional pedagogies. These new interpretative and transformative pedagogies, such as phenomenological, critical, feminist and postmodern pedagogies are alternative pedagogies to the existing teacher-centred pedagogies. These transformative pedagogies go against almost all the premises of traditional pedagogical approaches and are dedicated to discovering new possibilities for learning through dynamic learner engagement (Diekelmann, 1995). Consequently, critical and constructive pedagogies have emerged as a part of transformative pedagogy against traditional mainstream pedagogy and have also emphasized the importance of relating educational work to broader social activities (Woodin, 2007). These new pedagogical approaches focus on the learning context and prioritize the multidimensional aspects of students, such as social, cultural, political, and economic agency in learning.

Culturally sensitive pedagogies enhance the effective learning of the learners. A culturally relevant pedagogy ensures more learning opportunity to the students, and like other aspects of teaching, it is multifaceted and dynamic, on which teachers have contextual knowledge, sociocultural consciousness and show a holistic caring for students (Morrison et al., 2008). Alternative pedagogies help to address the needs and interests of today's diverse students. However, in our context, there is still the use of teacher-centred traditional approaches that have just provided educational opportunities and their benefits to a few privileged learners. This condition reflects the need for alternative pedagogical approaches. Although a lot of efforts are made to adapt students' learning needs, there seem clear mismatch between the pedagogic approach we follow to teach and how students want to learn (Falkner & Sheard, 2019).

In the meantime, traditional pedagogies focus on teacher-centred and text-centred teaching, where most of the classes are taught using a lecture mode, students are asked to memorize theoretical knowledge from the textbook and recite the course material for preparation of the examination (Wang, 2022). So, the existing pedagogical approaches have hardly ever produced citizens with critical judgment and the ability of conscious advocacy for equitable democratic learning. Rather, such pedagogies have prevented many learners from getting equal benefits of education. In the global context where the existing pedagogical approaches have not been effective in teaching and learning, there is a need of shift in pedagogical approaches. We envision a similar requirement of a shift in pedagogical approaches in the context of English language teaching in Nepal. However, there is less discussion and studies about the shift in pedagogical approaches in Nepal, where many people are still deprived of full-fledged opportunities of education and its benefits. So, this paper aims to explore how the shift in the pedagogical approaches has relevance in advocating and introducing new transformative EFL pedagogies in Nepal.

Method

This paper is prepared based on the review of secondary data and the library study (Rabinovich & Cheon, 2011). It also reflects the researchers' reflections and practical experiences of studying, teaching, and applying different pedagogical approaches. It also deals with how the shift in the pedagogical approaches has been realized in the Nepali EFL teaching context and examines their relevance in the classrooms consisting of multilingual and

creative learning of the students. For this purpose, we reviewed books, journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, and the usual practices around us to inform the findings of the study. We searched the literature from both the internet sources and the physical library (Ruggiano & Perry, 2017). We read and reviewed the articles, papers, chapters, books, and policy documents as the main source of data in this study and derived findings based on their analysis, interpretation and meaning-making (Gopaldas, 2016). Particularly, literature related to traditional pedagogies, shifts in traditional pedagogies and the relevance of transformative pedagogical approaches in the classroom consisting of multilingual and multicultural students was reviewed. The main findings are presented thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) based on the objectives and research questions of the study.

Results and Discussion

Different themes were developed based on research objectives and questions to generate the findings of the study from the data collected through the critical review of the literature on the grounds of the first-hand experiences of the researchers as teachers, teacher trainers, and critical pedagogues. Generated data from the study are discussed under the following themes:

Limitations of Traditional Pedagogies and Imperatives for Change

Teachers are one of the important dimensions of education. They engage in many practices, make decisions, and take several actions in their classes for teaching-learning purposes (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). They need to understand students' socio-cultural realities and design pedagogical activities accordingly to make teaching and learning significant and meaningful (Howard, 2003). But the traditional pedagogical approaches focused on chronicle education that keeps memorization and rote learning in centre, neglecting students' socio-cultural realities and creativity. In this regard, Cummins (2009) claims that traditional pedagogical approaches are transmission-oriented, which prepare students for test and these kinds of approaches ignore socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors that are responsible for the underachievement of students. Such pedagogies perceive students as passive receptors of knowledge rather than active participant of learning process. So, traditional pedagogies mainly focus on the banking model of education (Freire, 1996). Traditional pedagogies keep the teacher at the centre of teaching-learning activities. Such pedagogies focus on teacher and text-centred teaching (Wang, 2022). They are inferior to newer approaches, and that "cutting-edge strategies"

will invoke different and innovative pedagogies (Blewett, 2016). Use of traditional pedagogies decreases the students' population, as such pedagogies do not address the socio-technological demands of the students and their learning needs. So, both parents and students look for current approaches that address students' diverse learning needs (Ubety Cedeño et al., 2021).

Traditional learning methods that were dominant in the early 1970s saw a wide range of reforms in educational fields, from a teacher-centred to a student-centred and inquiry-based learning that increases learners' knowledge and skills (Khalaf & Mohammed Zin, 2018). When existing teachers and textbook-centred pedagogues could not provide equal opportunity for learning to all the students, there emerged the need for pedagogical shifting. However, the shifting process is rigorous as it has a connection with many interwoven factors related to the education system of the nation, such as social, political and economic context where the reforms are applied. This shifting process cannot be targeted at once and in isolation from other interwoven components within the education system. These interwoven components are the social, political and economic context in which the reforms are applied (Westbrook et al., 2013). The pedagogical approaches are not like one-size fits all (Kandel, 2019), and they need to be changed as the context requires to address the needs of a diverse student population. To teach in today's cultural context, teachers need to consider the context and critically analyze important issues, such as race, ethnicity, and culture, and also need to recognize how these important issues shape the learning experience for many students. Transformative pedagogy that includes the elements of constructivist and critical pedagogy develops a critical knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness and agency (Khedkar & Nair, 2016). For instance, result of an experimental study indicated that students performed better in a cooperative learning group than students in traditional pedagogy (Rasheed & Hussain, 2025).

The above literature indicates the limitations of the traditional pedagogical approaches. These approaches cannot address the diversified need of the students. Traditional pedagogies have ignored individual learning differences. They focus on the transmission model of education. So, there is a need for pedagogies which can respect individual learners' differences, provide them equal opportunity for learning, and make students critical learners in the EFL context of Nepal, where implicitly imposed traditional pedagogical approaches are still practised. Different

So, shifting of pedagogy in the Nepali EFL context has been essential in today's educational scenario.

Transformative Pedagogical Approaches

For many teachers, classroom activities are orderly activities taking place inside the classroom, detached from the outside world. However, the pedagogy of the oppressed, as a transformative pedagogy, views education as the practice of freedom and development of a critical mindset and the intervention in social problems and oppression (Fujino et al., 2018). Teachers become reflective practitioners and take ideas of different diverse teaching pedagogies and synthesize them in teaching and learning activities that are relevant in the context they find themselves with students (Yelland & Arvanitis, 2018). The concept of post-method pedagogy also focuses on context-sensitive language education based on a true understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularities (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). As the traditional pedagogies do not focus on different factors connected with learners' sociocultural and political context, transformative pedagogies have emerged as an important pedagogical approach to address the contextual factors of the learners and their learning needs. Transformative pedagogy addresses the diversified needs of the learners and develops the creative faculty of the learners. Ukpokodu (2009) considers that transformative pedagogy, as activist pedagogy consisting of constructivist and critical pedagogy, that develops a reflective knowledge base and a sense of critical consciousness, and respects multiple views. These transformative pedagogical approaches stand on a different philosophical base from traditional pedagogical approaches and aim to empower the learners for learning process respecting their socio-cultural context of learning. Brown (2004) claims that transformative pedagogies are based on the ideas that learners' cultural norms, belief and their experience shape their perception and learning.

Critical pedagogical approach as part of transformative pedagogy is rooted in the work of Paulo Freire, Xerox, McLaren and Bell Hooks. Different radical theories such as feminism, postmodernism, critical theory, poststructuralism and neo-Marxism constitute the premises of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2004a). Critical pedagogy expects changes in all aspects of traditional pedagogical approaches. Regarding this, Dehler et al. (2001) envision the changes in different dimensions of pedagogy, such as educational roles, curricular content, and classroom practices, to create a learning space. They argue that a conductive learning space is created when power in

the classroom decenters, and disciplinary borders become permeable. Additional classes in person for learning English out of school time (Gyawali & Kandel, 2025), use of the authentic materials to facilitate students' EFL learning (Bist & Kandel, 2025; Khadka & Kandel, 2026), and the use of smartphones (Raskoti & Kandel, 2025) can also encourage student autonomy and lead towards transformative pedagogy in our contexts.

The critical pedagogical approaches go far beyond the premises of traditional pedagogical approaches based on the transmission model of education. Correa (2011) argues that critical pedagogies go against the basic principle of traditional pedagogies that assumes the instructor as a 'knowledge giver' and the learner as a 'knowledge receiver. Critical pedagogies and constructivism perceive learners as active participants and instructors as facilitators in learning. McFarlane and Berg (2008) claim that critical pedagogical approaches make learners active, enhance learning ability and cultivate the skills needed for everyday life and work place. All the above literature indicates that transformative pedagogies have transformed the premises of traditional pedagogies, where teachers and textbook-oriented knowledge are focused, neglecting students' active role in the creation of knowledge. The literature also indicates that almost all the beliefs of traditional pedagogical approaches related to teachers and students' roles, process of gaining knowledge and learning activities and context are attacked by transformative pedagogies, envisioning a more democratic learning environment with an active role of the students in knowledge creation. To address the socio-cultural contexts of the learners and empower them for learning, transformative pedagogies are the best options. These pedagogies not only help the learners to gain knowledge but also contribute to the transformation of society and solve social problems. Transformative pedagogies, as the best alternative to traditional pedagogies, can provide equal learning opportunities to all students, respecting their multiple identities and learning ways. These pedagogies also make learners critical thinkers as well as change agents of society.

Relevance of Transformative Pedagogical Approaches in Nepali EFL Contexts

Critical pedagogical approaches refute almost all the concepts of traditional pedagogies related to school, learners, the learning process, and learning context. From the perspective of Critical pedagogists, schools are not places where only teaching and learning take place, but rather ideological and instructional sites having very little room for deconstructing the

established meaning and practices (Giroux, 2018). Traditional pedagogical approaches focus language learning as a cognitive activity, neglecting the fact that socio-cultural factors or conditions always influence cognitive activity, and such factors also shape our perception and understanding of the world (Canagarajah, 1999). As teachers, we have observed the teachers playing a dominant role in the teaching learning process and neglecting students' self -agency. It means the student's role is active in the learning process where critical pedagogies are applied. Teaching is also more than the transformation of knowledge and skills from teachers to learners. It is a moral and political act rather than simply a technical practice of imparting knowledge and skills to learners. As our traditional pedagogies are detached from our day-to-day life and are more authoritative. Giroux (2004a) states that critical pedagogy focuses on critical reflexivity, bridges the gap between learning and everyday life, redefines power and knowledge, fosters a democratic learning environment, and respects individual identities of the learners. He further argues that learning is a struggle for individual rights and social justice rather than gaining received knowledge through technical practice in the classroom.

In language teaching, critical pedagogical approaches help to connect the teaching and learning activities of the classroom with the outside real world and perceive language as an ideology, not just a system (Akbari, 2008). It indicates that language teaching is not only related to the acquisition of skills and knowledge, but also a process of forming identity (Oli & Kandel). However, mainstream language teaching approaches often reduce language learning to the instrumental acquisition of linguistic skills and competencies and neglect the impact of language on forming identities and maintaining social inequality (Kandel & Bist, 2025). Critical language pedagogy, which assumes language learning as having a political nature, challenges mainstream English language teaching models and tries to connect instruction with broader social and political debates (Essabari & Mhamed, 2025). As critical pedagogy offers radical principles, beliefs, and practices that contributed to transformative ideals of democratic schooling, such pedagogies can provide equal opportunities for learning and a respectful learning context in the classroom (Darder et al., 2023). The findings reveal that transformative pedagogies increase students' language proficiency, enhance critical thinking abilities, and develop greater confidence and capability in engaging with diverse cultural contexts. This study also reveals that there is a need for professional development and institutional support for effective implementation of transformative pedagogies (Aliyeva, 2024; Kandel, 2023). Enhancing the

inclusive and equitable learning environments, fostering essential skills in learners, empowering students and educators for educational transformation in the 21st century, a shift from conventional content-based instruction to learner-centred, inquiry-driven pedagogical approaches is a must (Thomas, 2023). Although transformative pedagogy includes a holistic approach that engages students' cognitive, practical, and affective dimensions in the learning process and empowers the voices of marginalized communities, transformative pedagogy has not yet received the attention it deserves, both in theory and practice (Cappiali, 2023).

The literature depicts that the implementation of transformative pedagogies in our education system, in general and especially in our EFL classroom practices seem to be quite relevant. As transformative pedagogies focus on experiential learning, contextual learning, problem-based learning, constructivism, outdoor education, indigenous education, democratic education, multicultural education, and community-based education (Gruenewald, 2003). The relevance of these pedagogical approaches has increased significantly. These pedagogical approaches prioritize democratic values, practices, and social relations (Giroux, 2004b). A truly critical pedagogy, as a part of transformative pedagogy, examines existing social relationships and promotes equal participation in the learning process (Smyth, 2011). As critical pedagogical approaches focus on education as a whole, not only a series of curricula, teacher-student interactions, and academic plans of study, it makes them more appealing (Hendrix et al., 2003). Critical pedagogical approaches, as an alternative to traditional pedagogies that cannot ensure equal learning opportunity of learning and underestimate learners' multiple sociocultural contexts and identities, focus on equal learning opportunities for all learners. Such pedagogies are more liberal and progressive. So, there relevancy has increased significantly.   Highlighting the importance of critical pedagogy, Safari and Pourhashemi (2012) claim critical pedagogy is an alternative approach to ELT that focuses on social action, educational change, and the betterment of society, and by enabling learners question, reflect, and act upon unfair, autocratic, oppressive institutions and social relations.

The above literature indicates that the implementation of critical pedagogy and constructivist pedagogy as part of transformative pedagogical approaches is relevant in Nepal. As traditional pedagogical approaches that keep teachers and textbook in centre, neglecting rich individual learning experiences of the students, the relevance of transformative pedagogies has

students in the learning process. In the context where many students are still being deprived of equal learning opportunities, the transformative pedagogies can play an effective role to enhance language proficiency, increase learners' confidence and create context-sensitive teaching and learning activities in the classroom. So, in Nepal, critical pedagogy and constructivist pedagogical approaches as part of transformative pedagogies create a democratic learning environment where all the individual ideas, opinions, identities and rich individual learning experiences are equally respected and promote reflective learning.

Conclusion

Pedagogical approaches have a connection with different aspects of the teaching and learning process, such as teachers, learners, classroom instruction and learning context. Teaching pedagogies are also intertwined with the social, cultural, economic, and political context of the nation. However, traditional pedagogical approaches cannot address these multiple dimensions of the learners and also exclude the learners from getting equal opportunity of learning in a democratic environment. Traditional pedagogical approaches, which only focus on the acquisition of data and facts from textbooks and are detached from everyday real-life activities of the learners, are criticized for being one-dimensional model of learning. As traditional pedagogies cannot include all the learners in mainstream education and neglect multiple learning experiences of them, the need of shift in the field of pedagogy is required to address the diversified needs of learners and promote experiential learning. The teacher and textbook-centered pedagogies that only develop the cognitive aspects of the students cannot fulfil the learning demands of the 21st century students. As the social, cultural, economic and political dimensions of the learner need to be fostered by pedagogies adopted in the nation, the desire for alternative pedagogies to that of traditional ones has significantly increased. To provide equal benefit of education to all, create learner-friendly and respectful learning environment, increase learning proficiency of the students and empower them in classroom activities, critical and constructivist pedagogies as a part of transformative pedagogical approaches can be very effective.

In Nepal, the present education system, which still prefers a traditional pedagogical approach seem to have been irrelevant as they only focus on learning and memorization of facts from the textbook. Such pedagogies are means of demotivation for many students and cannot

foster their multiple intelligences. Many facts we are observing since a few years back, such as the decreasing number of students in colleges, a huge number of unemployed graduates, and students without the skills needed for getting a job reveals the limitation of traditional pedagogies that cannot contribute to connecting learning with skills and produce creative citizens for the nation's development. Our traditional pedagogies are only focusing on the transmission or banking model of education, which has been outdated these days, as education is not a process of depositing knowledge from teachers and textbooks into students' mind rather it is a creative process of constructing knowledge through a dialogic process. Different transformative pedagogical approaches, such as critical and constructive pedagogies, seem relevant and the best alternative approaches as they refute almost all the claims made by traditional pedagogies related to teachers, learners, their roles, the learning process, and evaluation to bring educational reform. Transformative pedagogies not only liberate the students but also take into consideration their sociocultural and socioeconomic realities and value their individual identities in the teaching learning process. So, to address diverse student population needs and learning aspirations, the relevance of transformative pedagogies has been established.

Transformative pedagogy, as a holistic approach of education, includes phenomenological, critical, feminist and postmodern pedagogies. These pedagogies, as alternative pedagogies prioritize the transformation of both the individual and society through the means of education. Moreover, transformative pedagogical approaches enable learners to reflect and question unfair, undemocratic and oppressive institutional practices created by traditional pedagogical approaches to provide equal learning opportunities for all kinds of learners irrespective of their intellectual, social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. The relevance of transformative pedagogies and alternative pedagogy has increased as they believe education is wholistc process, not a series of curricula. Such a holistic process fosters experiential learning, contextual learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, outdoor education, indigenous education, democratic education, multicultural education, and community-based education. As transformative pedagogies give value to self-agency and individual opinions for the creation of meaning in the classes, individual learners feel that they are equally valued in the learning process and their experiences are equally valuable in the learning process. This situation empowers learners and increases their engagement in classroom activities. As the transformative pedagogies are more dynamic, democratic and progressive and

also engage both learners and teachers in a continuous dialogic process of meaning creation, the need and relevance of them in the EFL education system of Nepal has increased significantly. Although there is no question regarding the usefulness and the benefits the transformative pedagogies offer to all concerned stakeholders in the education field, such as teachers, learners, schools and parents, they are still in the very early phase of implementation, not yet practiced in classroom of Nepal fully, but waiting for the conscious and well-planned implementation.

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