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Teaching Speaking to EFL Students in the Multilingual Context of Nepal: A Classroom Action Research

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Abstract: In the realm of language skills, speaking holds a pivotal position, making it imperative for classroom instruction to place a strong emphasis on its development. Teaching English speaking skills to Nepali EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students poses a unique set of challenges owing to English's non-native status in Nepal. To tackle these challenges and enhance the speaking abilities of Nepali students, English teachers in Nepal must adopt innovative strategies due to the limited daily use of English in their environment. This classroom action research endeavors to enhance the English speaking proficiency of EFL students in Nepal through the implementation of various communicative activities. These activities include role play, impromptu speaking exercises, language games such as "who is telling the truth", video tapping, and discussions. The interventions were applied to a group of 60 undergraduate students at a university who were learning English as a foreign language. The data gathered from participant classroom observations and unstructured interviews underwent thematic analysis, resulting in the identification of six distinct themes. The results demonstrated a noteworthy improvement in students' English speaking skills, attributing this progress to the implementation of communicative activities. The findings underscore the effectiveness of communicative activities as interventions for enhancing the English speaking abilities of university-level EFL undergraduates. In light of these results, it is recommended that both students and teachers remain cognizant of the contextual and appropriate use of communicative activities as a means to further improve English speaking skills among EFL students.

Keywords: *Communicative activities, diversities, EFL context, English speaking skills.*

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Introduction

English language proficiency has become crucial for the globalised world due to the extensive spread of English as a global lingua franca. We cannot navigate through our daily lives in the modern world without the English language. English is a common language used in daily speech almost everywhere in the world for education, business, or personal purposes. Considering that English is the most widely used language in the world, its importance cannot be undervalued or ignored. English has become increasingly important in every field as a result of emerging technology. The status of the English language in the modern world is now discussed by practically everyone. Additionally, many major educational institutions provide a variety of courses that are taught in English to the students enrolled in their own institutions. Otherwise, students are unable to communicate at the level that a business or organisation would reasonably anticipate. English-speaking skills are crucial for global communication and personal and institutional growth and development. A person who cannot speak English is always deprived of world knowledge, global connection, updated technologies, and personal and professional development. A persuasive speaker can capture the audience's interest and keep it throughout the entirety of his or her speech. Speaking abilities are crucial for professional success and can also improve a person's personal life (Kaur & Aziz, 2020; Manoharan, 2008; Qureshi, 2023). Fluent and accurate speaking plays a pivotal role in fostering effective communication and breaking cultural, linguistic, and ethnic barriers by promoting collaboration, cooperation, and integration in today's world.

Any student who can speak English fluently will have more opportunities for future employment or educational opportunities, but it must be mastered not only in the classroom but also outside of it in real-world situations (Alsalihi, 2020; Imane, 2015). Speaking improves pronunciation and listening skills in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, as well as their language competency. Speaking with more confidence attracts more attention than speaking

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with less confidence in a classroom setting (Revathi Devi, 2022). Proficient speakers of English are autonomous learners who take responsibility for their own learning and seize every opportunity to practice both inside and outside of class (Dincer & Dariyemez, 2020). Alzamil (2021), from research in Saudi Arabia, concluded that university students had a positive attitude towards the importance of English-speaking skills to get global opportunities. English speaking is not only concerned with students' academic achievement but is also connected to the nation's and individual's economic development; that is, the development of a nation is closely related to its English language skills. The openness of a nation's population to information, which they gain through their initiative to find reliable news sources, knowledge that knows no bounds, and their propensity to discuss important subjects, can all affect a nation's culture (Muslimah et al., 2021). Learning English involves exposure to various aspects of English-speaking cultures. This exposure fosters cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and appreciation, helping to break down cultural barriers and promote global harmony. Strong English-speaking skills enhance an individual's personal and professional growth. It boosts confidence, expands networking possibilities, and increases employability in the global job market. This link has further effects, affecting the state of the economy and overall income. Data from the World Bank in 2017 show a correlation between a country's English ability and net income per capita (World Bank, 2017). The ability to speak English is associated with an individual's personal, economic, and professional development.

Despite these highs, there are many challenges to developing speaking skills in an EFL context where English is taught only for specific purposes. Students in EFL contexts may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. The lack of opportunities to practice English in real-life situations can hinder their progress in speaking fluently. In traditional EFL classrooms, there might not be enough emphasis on speaking practice. The focus might be more on grammar and written skills, leaving little room for interactive speaking activities. Speaking appears to be both the most crucial and challenging of the four language skills for English as a Second Language [ESL] and English as a Foreign Language ([EFL] (Ur, 1991). Speaking a foreign language has been considered the most challenging and complex of the four language skills (Abbassi, 2016; Nunan, 2004; Uso-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2006; Zhang, 2009). In EFL classrooms, there might not be enough emphasis on speaking practice. The focus might be more on grammar, reading, and writing skills, leaving little room for interactive speaking activities. Students may not show their eagerness to speak due to a lack of confidence in English and a fear of making mistakes. Similarly, they may be hesitant to speak in front of their peers or teachers due to the fear of embarrassment or criticism. Studies showed that interrelated factors like linguistic factors (e.g., vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar), psychological factors (e.g., anxiety, shyness, motivation, and fear of making mistakes), and environmental factors (e.g., teachers' feedback, peers' reactions or laughter, and speaking topics) all have an impact on how speaking skills develop (Abrar et al., 2018; Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Hughes & Reed, 2017; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). In addition to external factors like surroundings, teaching style, feedback, and family educational history, students' speaking abilities were also hindered by internal or personal issues like lack of vocabulary, nervousness, fear of making mistakes, extreme use of the mother tongue, and lack of confidence (Aba Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021; Alsalihi, 2020; Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Dansieh et al., 2021). According to a study conducted in Nepal, speaking deficiencies are caused by a combination of personal, social, environmental, and linguistic issues, as well as teacher and classroom culture, course content, excessive use of the mother tongue, and substandard schooling (Chand, 2021). However, a study conducted in Turkey reveals that social and educational factors rather than personal factors are the main causes of students' difficulties speaking English (Kara et al., 2017). These accounts imply that lack of English knowledge, due to low self-confidence in public, fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation, poor public speaking abilities, and shyness, makes speaking English in front of a group or a class a challenge in an EFL context.

Efforts have been made to improve the English-speaking skills of EFL students around the globe. Studies showed that employing student-created video activities on the YouTube and Facebook platforms helped students develop their own language learning processes and techniques (Sukrutit, 2023; Sun & Yang, 2015). Additionally, Anida and Patmasari's (2018) study of the students' video projects in their English-speaking class demonstrated how speaking English while being recorded on camera can help students identify their own strengths and faults and work to correct them. Similarly, Encalada and Sarmiento (2019), who required students to submit their video assignments on the Moodle platform, claimed that students could speak English more confidently by using self-recorded videos. Albogami and Algethami (2022) found WhatsApp to be an effective tool for developing students' motivation in the English language and improving their speaking skills. According to Arta (2019), a collaborative learning strategy improves English-speaking abilities while lowering language anxiety and boosting students' participation and confidence. Likewise, the English club helped Saudi students overcome their fear of the language and the traditional, dull routine of the classroom. It also enables them to practice speaking English with joy and encourages students' ability to think critically and persuade others (Elnadee & Abdala, 2019).

With an emphasis on reading and writing, universities in Nepal provide **more** English language courses in a variety of faculties and institutions (Paudel, 2022; Tribhuvan University, n.d.). Institutions such as Tribhuvan University, Sanskrit University, Far-western University, Mid-Western University, Purbanchal University, and Kathmandu University prioritize reading and writing in their curricula, despite the fact that speaking is important for global communication (Kathmandu University, 2018; Mid-West University, n.d.; Nepal Sanskrit University, n.d.; Purbanchal University, n.d.). Students' speaking and listening abilities are primarily overlooked, and their written competency is the primary means

of assessment. Students' capacity to interact productively in global environments is hampered by the focus placed on written communication abilities over vocal communication.

Similar to the contexts of the reviewed literature, English language classes are linguistically complex because different language speakers study in the same class. Since no specific research has been carried out to improve EFL students' English speaking skills in higher education in Nepal, it's necessary to use various techniques to enhance students' speaking skills to make them able to cope with the global challenges and grab the opportunities.

Linguistic and Ethnic Context of Nepal

Nepal is a multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious country. The National Population Census (NPC, 2021) records 142 ethnicities in Nepal, where Chetri has the largest population (i.e., 16.6%), Brahmin-Hill has the second largest (i.e., 12.8%), and the lowest population is of Nurang (only 36 people). NPC (2021) further shows that 124 native languages are spoken in the country, in which 44.86% of the population speaks Nepali, 11.05% Maithili, 6.24% Bhojpur, 5.86% Tharu, 4.88% Tamang, and only 23 people speak Kusunda as their mother tongue. The number of speakers of English as a native language is 13,23 (i.e., 0%). Additionally, the census shows that 48.08% of the total population does not have a second language, while 46.33% use Nepali as their second language. Similarly, 0.92% of them use Maithili, 0.70% use Hindi, 0.48% use Bhojpur, 0.35% use English, and only 23 people (i.e., 0.00%) use Mugali as their second language.

Though very few people (0%) speak English as their native language and only 0.35% use it as a second language, it is taught and learned mostly as a foreign language in Nepal. It is recommended as a compulsory subject from basic to advanced levels of education and, in some cases, used as a medium of classroom instruction. The recent task-based, content-language-integrated, self-directed learning, and project-based approaches aim to develop the students' communicative competence. The ability to speak accurately, fluently, and effectively is the key to ensuring communicative competence in English at school and in university education in Nepal. As an educator, instructor, and trainer, I have experienced that the students feel demotivated and hesitant to speak in English, which might be due to a lack of vocabulary, exposure to English, or appropriate teaching techniques. They put their heads down in fear if the teacher asked them a question and made them speak in English. I found diverse students in the classes, as some of them were accurate but lacked fluency and expression, and vice versa, the others were accurate, fluent, and expressive but unable to use supra-segmental features and appropriate use in the context. All these accounts persuaded me to use some communicative activities as interventions to improve the students' English speaking as classroom action research. I engaged the students in role play, telling the truth (a language game), impromptu speaking, group discussion, video recording, and discussion techniques for two months, participating myself in the activities with the students to stimulate them and make them free from fear of English speaking. I used Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) while engaging them in the activities and exposed them to the native speaker's speech too. After two months of rigorous practice and engagement, I observed, experienced, and evaluated their speaking ability by asking them, and from my perspective, I found they had made significant improvements in English speaking.

The students' motivation, the activity-based teaching, the teacher's co-work with the students, the use of ICTs, the classroom environment, and the selection of appropriate activities as per the students' level and interests are the factors that make the learning effective, efficient, and successful. My experiences as a teacher led me to the conclusion that an ESL or EFL student's total proficiency in the English language is determined by how effectively, accurately, fluently, and contextually they can speak the language. Unfortunately, students' speaking abilities are only slightly developed in Nepalese schools and universities. I was inspired to believe that students' English speaking could be improved by this success story. I learned while instructing speaking skills to students at a public college that the teachers gave them plenty of opportunities to relate syntax and lexis, semantics, and pragmatics while involving them in interactive activities.

By involving the students in a variety of learner-friendly communicative activities like role playing, impromptu speaking, who is telling the truth, group discussions, and technology integration, I hoped to make English language teaching in an EFL context effective, relaxed, fear-free, and appropriate in the upcoming classes. Working with the students makes teaching English more engaging, efficient, and appropriate. The research was conducted over a period of two months, involving a group of bachelor's-level EFL students from a public university in Nepal. The results indicate that interactive and student-centred approaches significantly enhance English-speaking proficiency and confidence in the EFL classroom.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was to improve EFL students' English-speaking skills in multilingual classrooms at university classes in Nepal. I believed that students' speaking abilities were highly influenced by their affective filters. Affective filters are the moods, emotions, experiences, and feelings of the students towards learning, the learning environment, and input. Krashen (1985) identified motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety as the major affective filters. Krashen further claimed that negative feelings like stress, anxiety, fear, and shyness make the learners' language learning difficult. Learners with high motivation, strong self-confidence, and measurable anxiety can get more input, which makes their learning more productive, effective, and successful (Wang, 2020; Xu, 2016). This implies that English teachers should

retain students' positive traits like self-confidence and self-assurance, stimulating them to reduce anxiety, stress, worry, fear, and shyness. For reducing negative filters, they need to be engaged in various activities like role playing, impromptu speaking, who is telling the truth, group discussions, and technology integration, and the teachers should work together with them. A teacher working together with them can identify their emotional variables, perceptions, perspectives, and difficulties and plan accordingly for improving their speaking skills. Thus, in this research, I believed that students' affective flirtations could be lessened to develop their English-speaking ability by exposing them to effective input in an interactive, peaceful, and learner-friendly environment.

Methodology

Design and Planning of the Study

The design used in this research was qualitative classroom action research (CAR). It is a systematic research to bring about change in classroom practices. CAR is research implemented to improve students' skills, achievement, and behaviour (Sunata, 2019). A question or questions about classroom experiences, problems, or challenges serve as the basis for classroom action research. It is a reflective process that aids teachers in exploring and analysing many facets of teaching and learning as well as taking action to modify and enhance their practices (Bangun, 2018). As in other types of action research, planning, action, observation, and reflection are the four phases of this method's single cycle for conducting classroom action research, and they are all carried out in an integrated spiral pattern. The end of each phase is dependent on the previous and following phases.

In phase 1, the problem was identified, the students were introduced to the activities they were going to be engaged with, and they were reminded of the language expression and vocabulary they needed to use to complete the tasks given in each activity. I participated as the instructor in this study and did some brainstorming. In phase 2, the students were divided into pairs and groups as per their interests and the nature of the activity. They started speaking through various communicative activities, including role playing, impromptu speaking, who is telling the truth, group discussions, and video recording and discussion. One activity was introduced in one class. When the cycle of the activities completes, they were recycled as per the content and the context. In phase 3, the students reported their activities and were given feedback on a form. They evaluated their learning and repeated some speaking activities using appropriate grammar and vocabulary.

The Participants

The participants for this study were bachelor's-level first-year students who were learning English as a foreign language for a specific purpose, basically to be able to communicate in English. The students were in a class at a public university in Nepal. There were 60 students in that class, and I instructed them in general English for one academic year. Among them, ten students purposively were selected for interview. When I experienced speaking problems with them, they were engaged in the activities with interventions for two months, from April to June 2023. The university, class, and students were purposefully selected because they were the EFL students, with whom I experienced teaching English speaking as a great challenge. The participants were from different linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds and had different mother tongues since the intact class was the sample size. Table 1 presents the participants' profiles.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Ethnicity		Religion		L1		L2		Gender		Age in year
Brahmin	5	Hindu	38	Nepali	42	Nepali	18	Male	Female	Ranges
Chhetri	6	Buddhist	14	Gurung	9	Hindi	2	7	52	
Gurung	14	Islam	2	Tamang	5	English	28			
Magar	10	Christian	11	Newar	1	Gurung	3			18- 25
Bishwakrama	13			Magar	2	Magar	5			
Tamang	9			Hindi	1	Tamang	4			
Muslim	2									
Others	1									

The Data and the Tools

The activities used in this study to improve students' English speaking skills were role play, impromptu speaking, who is telling the truth, group discussions, and video recording and discussion. When each activity was used in a cycle of one after another for about two months of teaching, the data was collected through participant observation and unstructured interview. As a participant observer, I observed classroom environments with an emphasis on teaching strategies, the success of interventions, student engagement, their reflection, classroom dynamics, and challenges. I meticulously recorded these elements in my notes to examine the contribution of different communicative activities to the development of speaking skills. Using communicative activities as interventions, participants' experiences and difficulties

in a multilingual classroom were the focus of unstructured interviews. Because each interview lasted between thirty to forty minutes, a flexible, conversational approach was possible, which produced rich qualitative data.

Since it was qualitative research, the textual data collected from observation and interviews were coded on the basis of the theme they revealed, then they were categorised in terms of their similarities, and finally again they were re-coded and thematized into six different themes and then analysed and interpreted textually from interpretivist perspectives. Thematic analysis was manually conducted. Themes were refined through repeated review, focusing on relevance to research questions. No qualitative data analysis software was used.

Research Ethics and Credibility

Research ethics have been strictly followed in this study. Anonymity has been maintained by using the pseudonyms of the participants. All the information cited from various sources has been given appropriate credit throughout the writing. Member checking was used to maintain credibility and not misinterpret the information, along with a thick description of the information. To ensure the reliability of the data, I used triangulation by cross-referencing data from observations and interviews. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted to validate the coding process, and themes were reviewed and refined multiple times to ensure consistency and accuracy in the analysis.

Communicative Activities Used in the Study

With the aim of improving EFL students' English-speaking skills in the multilingual context of Nepal, they were engaged in five different activities for two months. The communicative activities used as interventions in the study were role play, impromptu speaking, who is telling the truth, group discussions, and video recording and discussion.

Role Play

Role play is a dynamic educational technique where participants assume specific roles to simulate real-life situations. It encourages active learning by fostering communication, problem-solving, and empathy. In language teaching, role play enhances language acquisition by immersing learners in authentic contexts and promoting language use and cultural understanding. It's a valuable tool for skill development and experiential learning across various disciplines. In this research, students were engaged in playing different roles, engaging them in dialogue practice on ten different language functions in ten classes.

Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is spontaneous verbal expression without prior preparation. It challenges individuals to think quickly, organise thoughts, and communicate effectively on the spot. Valuable in improving communication skills, adaptability, and confidence, impromptu speaking simulates real-world scenarios and is often used in debates, public speaking, and group discussions. In this study, they were asked about eight different issues or topics for ad hoc speaking. However, the topic was related to their course, day-to-day activities, or current affairs happening in the world.

Who is Telling the Truth?

"Who is Telling the Truth?" is a language game fostering speaking skills. Participants take turns making statements—some true, some false—while others guess their honesty. It nurtures fluency, creativity, and critical thinking. Through interaction and deception, players enhance language use, verbal dexterity, and confidence in spontaneous communication. This activity was used in seven classes where the whole class was taken as a single group.

Group Discussion

Group discussion is a structured conversation among participants on a given topic. It cultivates speaking skills by encouraging sharing, listening, and debating viewpoints. It enhances articulation, persuasion, and collaboration, aiding in language fluency and effective communication. Group discussions also foster critical thinking and empathy through engaging interactions. This activity was mostly used in the classroom (25 classes), either embedded with other activities or alone.

Video Recording and Discussion

Video recording and discussion are effective methods for honing speaking skills. Participants record their speaking on a topic, review the recording, and discuss strengths and areas for improvement. This fosters self-awareness, language refinement, and confidence-building. It encourages constructive feedback, aiding in better communication and presentation abilities. In this activity, the students were asked to video record their speech on their mobile phones in off-class time and were asked to review the records in the classroom. Each record was discussed, and feedback was given to the students. Video recording and discussion were used in 10 classes.

Results

This section presents the outcomes of classroom action research on improving EFL students' English-speaking skills. The aim of this research was to explore the role of role play, impromptu speaking, who is telling the truth, group discussions, and video recording and discussion in improving EFL students' English speaking in the multilingual situation of Nepal using classroom action research as a part of qualitative inquiry with the tools of observations and interviews for data collection. The collected data were analysed into six different themes developed from the collected data: students' engagement and participation, students' confidence and motivation, peer interaction and collaboration, integration of technology, teaching activities and their influence on speaking proficiency development, and barriers to speaking skills development.

Students' Engagement and Participation

Active engagement and participation in activities significantly enhanced English-speaking skills. Initially, students were reluctant to speak English, preferring to participate when allowed to use Nepali. However, through the interventions, their participation and engagement increased. Prajita, a student, noted, "When you changed your teaching style and engaged us in various activities like video tapping, role play, and so on, and you worked sitting with us, we felt you as our friends, and the exposure you exposed us to increased our vocabulary. So, we began to take part in the activities." Classroom observations confirmed that participation in speaking-focused tasks encouraged authentic communication, mirroring real-life conversations. Prajwal mentioned, "Participating in group activities nurtures active listening and reduces our fear, turn-taking, and adapting speech to different audiences, fostering holistic communication competence, so we are intrinsically motivated towards speaking English."

Students' Confidence and Motivation

Students initially hesitated to speak and lacked confidence in their English skills, fearing mistakes. However, engaging in various activities increased their confidence and motivation. Kamala appreciated role play, discussion, and video tapping for reducing fear and providing a friendly environment. She shared, "Engagement in role play, discussion, and video tapping are the techniques I like most. They reduce our fear, give us open space in a friendly environment, and expose us to authentic and real-life language. So we improve our English speech. I personally thank my teacher for making us able to at least ask for a cup of tea in English." Chadani noted a significant change in her speaking skills over two months due to these new teaching methods. She expressed, "I was shy about speaking English because I do not have much knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, or even pronunciation. But video recording, role play, and discussion activities made me able to speak on the topic that our teacher gives in the classroom without any preparation. In this more than two-month period, new ways of teaching by our teacher have increased our motivation, confidence, and vocabulary in the English language. The language game that our teacher used in the classroom taught us to learn and speak English comfortably." Sarita expressed, "Role play helps me to communicate with my teacher and friends, while video tapping and comments from my teacher and friends encourage me to learn by doing it myself, that is, by watching how I speak and improving it next time. We are all happy with our teacher for engaging us in such activities and wish to continue the same style of teaching throughout the years." The activities fostered a supportive environment, reducing shyness and anxiety while boosting confidence and motivation.

Peer Interaction and Collaboration

Communicative activities significantly enhanced peer interaction and collaboration. Initially, students were not interested in group work or sharing ideas. Over time, they began to learn by sharing and helping each other. Ananda highlighted that role plays encouraged creative language use and empathy, stating, "Role plays encourage creative language use and empathy through varied roles, fostering camaraderie. Discussions amplify diverse viewpoints, enhancing participation and understanding. Peer feedback fuels growth, while collaborative problem-solving nurtures teamwork." Swastika enjoyed language games and video tapping for promoting relaxed language practice and collaborative learning. She added, "I love all the activities that our teacher uses in the classroom. However, I enjoyed language games and video tapping the most. Language games add fun, promoting relaxed language practice. Collaborative play nurtures healthy competition and shared learning. Video tapping encourages self-assessment and peer feedback, boosting speaking accuracy and confidence. As a result of these activities, I can communicate in English with my friends and teachers without any hesitation." Observations revealed that communicative activities facilitated experiential learning, making language acquisition engaging and practical. Collaborative activities fostered a vibrant English-speaking community, enhancing communication skills.

Integration of Technology

Integrating technology, particularly video recording and discussion, significantly enhanced students' participation and English-speaking skills. Initially, students were hesitant and uncomfortable, but their vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency improved with continued use. Jyoti shared, "Video tapping and the discussion that followed became great tools for improving our English speaking ability. Recording oneself speaking in English and reviewing it for self-assessment

made me very aware of my speech and helped me develop good confidence too." Another student noted, "the use of role play provided exposure to authentic language, and video tapping and discussion supported the development of our speech as we have experienced in the authentic resources." Observations revealed that technology fostered engagement, pronunciation awareness, vocabulary enrichment, and confidence. Sipara mentioned, "I shared my video recording not only inside the class but also out of the class among friends and teachers, and the constructive feedback enabled me to improve my English speaking skill." Technology integration provided a dynamic, flexible, and personalized approach to nurturing well-rounded speaking skills.

Influence of Communicative Activities on Speaking Proficiency

Communicative activities, including role plays, impromptu speeches, video tapping, discussions, and language games, significantly influenced speaking proficiency. Students actively participated in these activities, focusing on vocabulary and fluency rather than accuracy. They expressed, "*hami sanga word power. bhayo ra kharra bolna sakyo bhane ta grammar bhenaeko ta secondary kura ho. sarle sikaeka yi kriyakalapharu ekdam rammraa chhan hamile enjoy garera sikna sahayog garchhan. Yo video record garne ta kati ramailo hai*" [with us, if word power is strong and we can speak fluently, then grammar is a secondary thing. The activities used by the teacher are very good; they help us learn by enjoying ourselves. What fun the video recording activity is!]. Jaya mentioned, "With the engagement in activities like role play, discussion, video recording and commenting, speaking ad hoc, and various language games, we develop our vocabulary power and fluency more than grammar." Another student added, "Really, the activities in which our teacher engaged us are mind-blowing for developing our pronunciation, our confidence, and our communicative skills. Now, most of us speak in English without any hesitation." Pramila expressed, "We got opportunities to develop our listening skills along with our speaking skills with our involvement in these various activities. We listen very carefully to comprehend others' speech and respond accordingly." Ramesh stated, "The activities that our teacher is engaging us with are helpful to explore cultural nuances and communication styles." Classroom observations indicated that students were attentive and engaged, enhancing listening and speaking skills. The activities promoted cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication.

Barriers to Speaking Skills Development

Several barriers to English speaking were identified, including limited exposure to native speakers, fear of mistakes, and societal expectations. Cultural norms and unfamiliar contexts further hindered linguistic self-confidence. Students expressed difficulty in speaking English due to a lack of practice, unfamiliar vocabulary, and difficult pronunciation. Kamala noted, "I feel speaking English is difficult because I have read and listened to it a very few times." Prajita added, "We have no habit of practicing English on one side, and on the other side, our teachers do not engage us in speaking; instead, they explain the texts in Nepali. When we have no vocabulary and no idea how to speak English, we fear making mistakes and do not dare to speak it." Classroom observations revealed that students struggled with pronunciation and understanding unfamiliar contexts. They expressed, "If English is not our culture, not our language, and the text is all in English culture, then how could we understand them?" Sarita stated, "Our teachers' teaching style, our learning style, unfamiliar text, and difficult pronunciation are major problems with our poor English speaking." However, continuous engagement in communicative activities gradually increased their confidence and speaking skills. Jaya mentioned, "Though we are poor in English and do not have sufficient resources, the activities that our teacher is engaging us in really help us reduce anxiety and fear of speaking and increase our confidence and vocabulary. We have changed from the initial stage of this class to now. In the initial stage, we were not ready to take part in any of the speaking activities, but now we have competition to take part, and we are at least speaking for 1-2 minutes on any of the issues given."

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that communicative activities significantly improve EFL students' English-speaking skills by fostering active engagement, confidence, and peer collaboration. Initially, students were reluctant to speak English, preferring to use Nepali. However, the interventions increased their participation and engagement, as observed in Prajita's and Prajwal's experiences. These activities provided authentic contexts for communication, reducing fear and anxiety. This aligns with Sunata (2019), who found that active participation in language activities enhances speaking skills, and supports Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis, which posits that lower anxiety and higher motivation facilitate language acquisition.

Confidence and motivation were initially low due to a fear of mistakes. Activities like role play, discussion, and video recording gradually increased students' confidence and motivation. Students' engagement in communicative activities proves a milestone in developing their eagerness towards English speaking. This result corroborates Mahdi's (2020) findings, which noted that role-playing and discussions in a supportive environment significantly enhance students' confidence, motivation and speaking abilities.

Peer interaction and collaboration were significantly enhanced through communicative activities. Initially, students were not interested in group work or sharing ideas. However, activities like role plays and language games encouraged creative language use, empathy, and collaborative learning, facilitating experiential learning. Communicative activities and

students' active involvement on them build the foundation for learning by doing through experiencing. Similar findings were reported by Al Hosni (2014), emphasizing the role of group activities in promoting language learning through peer interaction and cooperation. Technology integration, particularly video recording and discussion, played a crucial role in enhancing participation and speaking skills. Students' vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency improved with continuous use. This finding is consistent with Hung and Huang (2015), which demonstrated that using video recordings for self-assessment and feedback significantly enhances speaking skills.

Barriers such as limited exposure to native speakers, fear of mistakes, and societal expectations were significant challenges. Cultural norms and unfamiliar contexts further hindered linguistic self-confidence. Continuous engagement in communicative activities gradually increased students' confidence and speaking skills, as evidenced by Jaya's and Kamala's experiences. The interventions helped reduce anxiety, echoing Alrabai's (2014) conclusions that continuous practice and supportive classroom environments mitigate language anxiety and promote better speaking performance. The students were very excited and inspired to speak English later on, using English even during informal times. Communicative activities empowered students by allowing them to assume diverse roles and fostering a secure environment for creative exploration. These activities also enhanced their confidence, building language proficiency through practical communication. Video-recorded sessions provided visual feedback, aiding self-assessment and highlighting progress areas. These techniques drive motivation by encouraging self-efficacy and commitment to persistent language development.

The findings corroborate research indicating that lack of vocabulary, confidence, fear of making mistakes, nervousness, and use of L1 are major barriers to EFL students' speaking skills (Aba Sha'ar & Boonsuk, 2021; Alsalihi, 2020; Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Dansieh et al., 2021). More confident learners have better speaking abilities than those with less confidence (Krashen, 1985; Revathi Devi, 2022; Wang, 2020; Xu, 2016). These dynamic strategies created immersive and empowering learning environments, nurturing both language proficiency and the drive to excel in English communication. Students expressed that impromptu speeches challenge them to think on their feet and nurture quick thinking and shared support. Engaged communicative activities facilitate experiential learning, making language acquisition engaging and practical. Collaboration draws upon each student's strengths, builds communication skills, and creates a vibrant English-speaking community.

These accounts imply that incorporating technology into English language learning transcends traditional methods, providing a dynamic, flexible, and personalized approach that nurtures well-rounded speaking skills within an interconnected global context. The findings align with research that technology in teaching speaking cultivates rapport, fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, confidence, and communication competence, aligning with communicative pedagogy and enabling skillful and confident self-expression (Sosas, 2021). Various studies underscore effective strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities. Video integration fosters confident participation and proficiency (Kondal & Prasad, 2020). Impromptu speech outperforms traditional methods (Munawarah, 2012). Language games enhance motivation and fluency (Savitri, 2013). Role play boosts self-confidence and enjoyment (Nikmah & Zam Zami, 2019). Discussions improve fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skills (Azizah, 2018). These findings highlight multifaceted approaches to empowering students' speaking skills, similar to the findings of this study.

The study shows that when students are familiar with the topic, context, and culture, they are more eager to speak. Continuous engagement in activities like role play, video recording, discussion, impromptu speech, and language games creates a supportive, nonjudgmental, and interactive learning environment, significantly increasing their confidence and English-speaking skills. The use of communicative activities in teaching English speaking results in significant improvements in students' speaking proficiency. Through these activities, students gain confidence, reduce their fear of making mistakes, and develop effective communication skills. Moreover, they enhance cultural awareness and adaptability, preparing students for practical language use in diverse contexts. Overall, communicative activities empower students to communicate confidently and authentically in English, supporting Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis that highly motivated learners with increased confidence learn more. Communicative activities provide them a comprehensible input which helps to lower down their anxiety and high up motivation and confidence, which become a boon for developing their English speaking skill.

Conclusion

In the context of Nepal's diverse linguistic environment within university education, this classroom action research offers valuable insights into the effective pedagogy of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills. Through a multifaceted approach encompassing role play, video tapping, language games, impromptu speaking, and discussions, this study navigates the complexities of English speaking in a multilingual setting. The findings underscore the importance of employing varied strategies to enhance different facets of speaking proficiency. Role play emerges as a powerful tool not only for boosting confidence but also for fostering creative expression and active participation. Video tapping serves as a means for self-assessment, empowering students to pinpoint areas for improvement and refine their speaking style. Language games are instrumental in creating an enjoyable learning experience while promoting vocabulary expansion and fluency. Impromptu speaking exercises stimulate quick thinking and linguistic agility, enhancing spontaneous expression. Furthermore, group discussions not only refine speaking skills but also cultivate

attentive listening, contributing to well-rounded communication competence. This study contributes to the advancement of EFL instruction by showcasing how a combination of diverse methodologies can comprehensively enhance English-speaking proficiency within a multilingual context. It equips educators with a robust toolkit to address the nuanced needs of students and enriches the discourse on language education strategies.

Recommendations

Conducted among the students of a single classroom at a university in Nepal, this study's implications extend to broader contexts and institutions, inviting comparative investigations utilising similar interventions. Longitudinal studies should be considered to assess the long-term impact of communicative activities on students' speaking skills and overall language proficiency. Comparative studies between different regions or educational settings in Nepal can provide insights into the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of communicative activities. Additionally, further research could explore the use of various technological tools and platforms in more depth to understand their specific contributions to language learning and how they can be optimized for different learning environments. Investigating the impact of teacher training programs focused on communicative teaching methods could provide valuable information on how to better equip educators to implement these strategies effectively. Moreover, more in-depth qualitative studies focusing on students' perspectives and experiences can shed light on the subjective aspects of language learning and identify additional factors that influence engagement and motivation.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample size and scope were limited, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or larger populations. The duration of the interventions was relatively short, and a longer period of study might provide more comprehensive data on the sustained effects of communicative activities on language proficiency. The absence of a control group makes it difficult to attribute the improvements solely to the interventions used, suggesting that future studies should include control groups to strengthen the validity of the conclusions. The study did not deeply explore the cultural factors that might influence students' attitudes towards English speaking, which could provide a more nuanced interpretation of the findings. Additionally, the researcher's dual role as both teacher and researcher could introduce bias, and future studies should consider involving independent observers or researchers to mitigate this potential bias.

Competing Interests

In line with the statement of Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), I hereby declare that I had no competing interests regarding any parties of this study. I agree to the publication policy of the journal in case any conflict arises due to language, content and style of my contribution.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Dialogues for Role Play

1. A conversation between two friends about asking for help.

Abhimanyu:- Good Evening. How are you?

Sajal:- Fine, How are you?

Abhimanyu:- Today, I could not go to school due to my headache.

Sajal:-How is your health?

Abhimanyu:- Fine, could you help me?

Sajal:-Yes, Please tell me.

Abhimanyu:- Could tell me about today's homework?

Sajal:-Yes, you can copy it in your notebook.

Abhimanyu:- If you don't mind , could you share today's class notes with me.

Sajal:-Sure, You can see.

Abhimanyu:- Would you like a cup of coffee or tea?

Sajal:-Thank you so much. I would like to have a cup of coffee.

2. A conversation between doctor and a patient

Patient:- Good Morning Dr. Gulati

Doctor: Good Morning Mr. Ranjan

Patient:- Sir, I have been suffering from fever since morning.

Doctor:- Do you have any other problems?

Patient:- Yes, I am also feeling headache and body pain.

Doctor:- Let me check your fever. It is 101 degree F. Don't worry. I am giving you medicine. Take your medicine thrice a day with hot water.

Patient:- Thank you doctor.

Doctor:- Kindly give your blood sample at counter no. 5 for checking possibility of Malaria.

Patient:- Thank you doctor. What should I eat doctor?

Doctor:- You should eat Chapati and Green Vegetables. You should also eat fresh fruit and milk regularly.

Patient:- Thank you doctor.

3. A conversation between customer and shopkeeper

Customer:- Good Morning uncle

Shopkeeper:- Good Morning. How can I help you?

Customer:- I want to purchase a new pair of shoes.

Shopkeeper:- Please tell me your shoes size.

Customer:- It is eight.

Shopkeeper:- Good. These are three best items.

Customer:- Uncle, could you show me brown shoes in pure leather?

Shopkeeper:- Of course, here it is brown one.

Customer: – What is price of this pair?

Shopkeeper: – It is 1250 Rs.

Customer: – Uncle, will you give me 10 percent discount on this item.

Shopkeeper: – Sorry. I sell all the items on a fixed price.

Customer: – Thank you so much uncle.

Shopkeeper: – It was my pleasure to meet you. Please visit my shop for quality product.

4. A conversation between son and father

Son:- Good Morning Papa

Father:- Good Morning, How are you ?

Son:- Fine

Father:- How is your performance in school?

Son:- It is good, I achieved good marks in class test.

Father:- Great, I know you are doing hard work.

Son:- Thank you so much. I want to share something with you.

Father:- Please tell me

Son:- My class teacher is planning for an academic tour to Varanasi. I want to go to Varanasi along with my friends. I have to submit 500 Rs. for the tour.

Father:- Could you tell me programme details i.e. day, date and duration?

Son:- We will go to Varanasi on Sunday, 9 July 2017. We will start our journey at 9.00am from school and return back at 7.00pm. You will receive me at 7.30pm from the school gate.

Father:- Good, you can go.

Son:- Thank you so much.

5. A conversation between two friends about doing exercise in the morning.

Shubhm:- Good Morning Shubhm.

Nilabh:- Good Morning Nilabh.

Shubhm:- Where are you going early in the morning?

Nilabh:- I am going to Gill Sports ground?

Shubhm:- What do you do there?

Nilabh:- I do several exercises i.e. running, jumping.

Shubhm:- Do you exercise under a sport trainer?

Nilabh:- Yes, I do exercise under a sport teacher?

Shubhm:- Why do you exercise early in the morning?

Nilabh:- I want to keep myself healthy.

Shubhm:- What is your exercise schedule?

Nilabh:- Usually, I start my exercise with warm up activity. I run 5 hundred meters in a day. My trainer guides me in doing several exercises.

Shubhm:- Is it beneficial for school children?

Nilabh:- Yes, it is beneficial. We feel ourselves energetic whole day. It keeps us healthy.

Shubhm:- Will you help me to do so?

Nilabh:- Yes, I will ask my trainer. In fact, we will enjoy doing exercise together.

Shubhm:- Thank you Nilabh for your support.

Nilabh:- Hope to see you in the ground.

6. A conversation between two person about asking time

Aditi:- Excuse me , what time is it.

Ayush:- It is seven forty-five.

Aditi:- Excuse me, could you tell me the time ?

Ayush:- It is sharp eight

Aditi:- What is the time , please?

Ayush:- It is quarter to four. (3.45)

Aditi:- Excuse me , what time is it.

Ayush:- It is quarter past seven.

Aditi:- Excuse me , what time is it.

Ayush:- It is 10a.m.

Aditi:- Excuse me, could you tell me the time ?

Ayush:- It is three o' clock.

Aditi:- Excuse me, could you tell me the time ?

Ayush:- It is half past five.

Aditi:- Excuse me, can you tell me the time ?

Ayush:- It is ten to five (4.50)

7. A conversation between two friends

Khushi:- Hi, Khayati

Khayati:- Hi

Khushi:- How are you?

Khayati:- I am fine.

Khushi:- How are you doing?

Khayati:- I am doing good. What about you?

Khushi:- Me too

Khayati:- Can we go to watch Bahubali?

Khushi:- Yes, I can go.

Khayati:- Can we go in the night show?

Khushi:- Yes, I will take permission from my parent. I will call you in the evening.

Khayati:- Sure, I will wait for your call.

Khushi:- How will we go to the mall ?

Khayati:- We will hire auto rickshaw.

Khushi:- Thank you

8. A conversation between two friends

Sadab:- Good afternoon

Ritu:- Good afternoon

Sadab:- So, where are you going now?

Ritu:- I am going to meet my friend Garima in Kolkata Market.

Sadab:- Oh, so nice, I have to buy a new school uniform.

Ritu:- Will you accompany me?

Sadab:- Yes, it will be great fun for me.

Ritu:- So, can we move now so that we can reach on time.

Sadab: Sure

9. A conversation between two friends

Salman:- Hi, Good evening

Ritik:- Good evening

Salman:- What a surprise! It is a pleasure to meet you.

Ritik:- How did you come to this place?

Salman:- I came to meet Mr. Rehman

Ritik:- Did you have any problems finding this place?

Salman:- Not at all, I visited this place thrice.

Ritik:- Would you to have a cup of tea?

Salman:- Sure, I will

10. A conversation between two friends

Varun:-Hi Alia

Alia:- Good morning Varun

Varun:- What are you doing here?

Alia:- I am searching a book shop here?

Varun:- You are at right place. There is Sharma book store.

Alia:- I want to buy a story book.

Varun:- Sharma book store is a complete book shop. You can find different types of books there i.e. story book, novel, textbook etc.

Alia:- Thank you so much for this kind information.

Alia:- Can you accompany to reach Sharma book store.

Varun:- It is my pleasure to accompany you. I am also going there to buy Cambridge English Grammar.

Alia:- So nice of you.

Appendix B*Topics Given for Impromptu Speaking*

- My Role model and Best friend
- Whole child education
- Position of Women in Nepal
- English language and its influence
- Role of discipline in students' personal and professional engagement
- Celebrity you would like to meet and why
- Three things everyone should do well
- Why do I buy too many things?
- If I were president, I would...
- My favorite book
- My last dream
- My worst job personal experience
- My favorite movie
- If I were invisible for a day
- An important lesson I learned after a mistake
- What is the best time for a kid to get a phone?
- Animals are stress relievers
- Online communication can never be as good as real-life friendship
- How to enjoy your weekends more?
- How to have a productive summer?
- If I were the president, I would...
- How to avoid getting grounded?
- If I could be a famous person, I would choose to be...?
- Things you can't learn at school or college
- Real learning does not occur in the classroom
- Pets are for the people who don't have children
- In which scenario, lying is a good idea?
- Violent games contribute to the youth violence
- Children should not watch television
- How to learn new skills?
- How to differentiate between colors?
- How to prepare your favorite meal?
- How to remember things?
- How to rent a house?
- How to be happy all the time?
- How to become a singer?
- How to not lose friends?
- My future career choice is...
- How can we prevent bullying?

Appendix C

Instruction for Language Game Who is Telling Truth?

Who's Telling the Truth? Have each student write three facts about themselves that nobody in the class knows on a piece of paper. Make sure each student includes their name on the top of the page. Collect the sheets of paper and bring three students to the front of the room. Read aloud one of the facts that is true for one of these three students.

All three claim that the fact is theirs, and the class then proceeds to question them in an attempt to determine who is telling the truth and who is lying. Each student is allowed to ask one question to one of the three students. After a round of questioning, the students guess who is telling the truth.