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Original Article

Freirean Strategies in Meaningful Learning: A Critical Pedagogy of Contextualized Classroom

Hota Raj Khanal*

Kapilvastu Multiple Campus, Kapilvastu Taulihawa, Nepal

Email: hotarajkhanal@kusoed.edu.np

Abstract

Employing a qualitative research method and Freire's critical pedagogy as the main lens, this study explores the techniques of using the contextual approach in the context of secondary-level public schools in Nepal. Critical pedagogy is seen as one of the burning theories to uplift marginalized learners for equity to enhance the quality of education in the field of English language teaching. Contextualized teaching is not a new approach where its usefulness is understood and practiced. And to a lack of training and the traditional teaching model still being dominant, this approach has yet to take traction in many school levels of English teaching in Nepal. Data are obtained from participants' in-depth interviews and written documents which were transcribed and analyzed for developing themes. Teachers who have been teaching for long years at the secondary level applying a contextual approach were purposefully selected as the participants for this study. Through the eyes of the participants, the natural world was seen and reached in the conclusion incorporating the practices and experiences. Based on the perspectives of participants and practices the collected data were interpreted and analyzed. Moreover, my own past experience as a student in a rural public school in Nepal also provides the initial drive for this study. Triangulation of data suggests that contextualizing English language teaching practices exists and exhibits in multiple ways, and they need to be foregrounded for the benefits they have for innovative teaching, organic learning, linking learning with real life and providing students with tools and opportunities to empower themselves as well as own learning.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy. Contextual classroom. Meaningful learning. Oppressed class.

*Corresponding Author.

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Introduction

In this paper, I have revisited the issue of what I felt was lacking in ELT (English Language Teaching) class as a student at that time. Thus, my experience as a student at the secondary level of ELT class has influenced my decision to take up this study. I felt that the use of local cultural context in ELT classrooms is a major issue that is lacking in real teaching-learning practices; and so far, it appears that there is not much research to find in connection with contextual approach in English language education from the lens of critical pedagogy. I realized it was a gap in the field of research. Therefore, as a researcher, my philosophical and pedagogical influence is the Freirean model of critical pedagogy and related pedagogical approaches that I see can be explained within the preview of contextualized approaches. Interviews with the secondary level teachers are the sole source of data collection. Data analysis and interpretation are based on the perspectives of participants. I have seen the reality through the eyes of participants and turned into findings. This study should be unique in the sense that it takes place on a unique research site and combines my own literacy auto-ethnography with the actual participants.

My story is by no means mine alone. When I was a student at secondary level at a secondary school in Western Nepal, my English teacher used to read the two/three sentences of the text and explain those sentences without the situational connection. This is not an isolated case and I do not intend to demean my teacher or blame the teacher alone: It is not about blaming; it is about reflecting. Translation of English to Nepali as a method dominated much of that era of teaching English in Nepal. The teacher would characteristically read the text and try to explain things, but all this happened without establishing a connection of the text to our context. The text itself did not have much to offer outside of its main focus on teaching grammar and rules. The role of students was to follow what the teacher commanded, which could be as reductive as copying from the board, rote learning, and translating. Dialogue, discussion and interaction did not get a space. I still recall being taught the lesson, “A Tanker Driver”, in the secondary level of English. This was a short story about a tanker driver, a character that seemed happy with his work. But unfortunately, when the story was taught, the character was never localized, never contextualized to students' knowledge and what the students knew was not connected with target knowledge. This is just an example of the typical way teaching was done. Not only the lesson and content but also the vocabulary was taught without context. The teacher would ask students to recite vocabulary and meanings that were themselves decontextualized—outside their usage in a sentence. Students never got a chance to link their content with the situation or context and all language learning would become rote learning. Real-world situations were not created. The aspects that would make active learning, such as the situation for dialogue, interaction, role-playing, and learning by doing were never given consideration.

Decontextualized teaching is just the opposite of contextualized teaching that employs, among other things, memorizing techniques, when learning a foreign language (Unaldi et. al., 2013). The process would be simple: Explain grammar rules, ask students to memorize the rules, and ask them to develop sentences from the rules. Decontextualized practice separates the content from the context neglecting the natural classroom activities and natural learning. In doing so either the teacher translates the text or analyzes the text but does not link the text with the real-life situation. In contrast, contextual learning creates a natural situation in class, enhancing meaningful learning. It emphasizes the need to localize learning, as suggested by Koirala (2020), for example. Koirala contends that in order for localization to work well, local levels of educational units have to be empowered to generate their local curriculum, making education meaningful from a foundation of contextualization.

Contextualized learning has been in practice in the Western world for a few decades. It has been a popular approach, especially in teaching the context of second language learning. According to Auer and Di Luzio (1992, P. 240), "Contextualization refers to meaningful language use for communicative purposes within a given situation or context. The rationale for this kind of approach is to demonstrate real-world language use, how language is used by speakers of that language, and to help learners construct language in their learning environments, depending on (1) their purpose and, (2) the needs of a given situational context". Contextualization is a "Diverse family of instructional strategies designed to link the learning skills and academic or occupational content more seamlessly by focusing teaching and learning squarely on concrete applications in a specific context that is of interest to the student" (Johnson, 2002, P. 96). What is known as a contextual approach in English language teaching (ELT) is a way of learning in which teachers present real-world situations as far as possible into the classroom and encourage students to connect their knowledge with its application in their real lives as members of the family and society. In this approach, students' learning becomes more natural as well as meaningful and oriented to problem-solving. Students are encouraged to observe the immediate situation, think critically and draw conclusions. When the existing knowledge is connected with new learning based on the practices, it is known as contextual learning (Kruppa et al., 2021). This helps them to learn in a natural setting that is free and without mental pressure.

The classrooms we teach consist of students from different socio-cultural and family backgrounds. This diversity means that teachers pay attention to students' diverse learning, cognitive, and emotional needs. However, the actual practice often seems to be blind to such consideration. A textbook under a particular level and particular class serves only one variety of exercises and situations at a time. It is the teacher who needs to take the responsibility of making the text meaningful to the different students.

It is within this context that this study explores the ways of contextualizing English language teaching can and should be utilized. Specifically, it presents multiple ways of designing contextual classrooms for ensuring qualitative teaching and learning. For my research, I selected participants from the Kapilvastu district teaching English at the secondary level for a long time. This study also explores contextualized ELT practices through the Freirean approach. To my knowledge, the studies conducted in Nepal on contextualization are scant and have not been discussed in English language teaching through the lens of the Freirean approach. I have selected the matter of contextualization for meaningful learning, one of the growing approaches of pedagogy that can cover students from marginalized communities. I was interested in seeing how contextualized practices work in ELT classes in public schools in Nepal.

Critical Pedagogy

In contextualization, learners participate, interact, think and link with the world and the knowledge emerges from these doings. As Freire (2005, p. 70) has suggested, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other." Learning takes place connecting the context with the natural world. Education is the connection between humans and the world, and the connection takes place when there is interaction, communication, and dialogue. Freire's critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005) critical approach to education highlights the importance of having learners engage actively in their learning process and find and develop their own opinion. According to him, critical thinking is possible through dialogue; interaction and communication are the sources of generating critical thinking. Learning is the interaction with the world and the world is the source of knowledge.

Another aspect of critical pedagogy vitalizes the need for students to remain active in their learning process, as opposed to the traditional “banking model” where students are passive recipients. Children are not the empty vessel or piggy bank where the coins are dropped one after another to fill up it. They need to interact and face the problem and find out the solution. Freire rejected the “banking model” of education and recommended a questioning and problem-solving approach. In critical pedagogy, the nature of the problem is defined in the classroom which re-sets the starting point for debate and encourages active participation which is a key element of teaching and learning. As McLaren (2020) observes, the impact of critical pedagogy in the field of education is by serving systematically and habitually and by contributing to the epistemological, ontological and axiological stances. In other words, it has changed teachers’ direction altogether from the traditional route in terms of how (epistemology and methods) we teach, what we teach and the philosophy behind these.

Decontextualized teaching disadvantages students from different backgrounds and learning needs when they think that teaching methods and materials are not related to their world and their realities. In such a situation, there may be injustice in teaching and learning, so teachers need to be aware of this situation. Contextual teaching can prove to be a more socially just approach, and when done well, it may lead to empowering students. Although teachers and schools are not always necessarily responsible for the direct form of injustices done to minorities, they can play an important role in the liberation of the oppressed groups by offering opportunities for the historically silenced groups to come out, to connect and to find a place in our education system. Critical pedagogy expands the contribution of schools into social activities – one that prompts educators and learners to work with communities in transformative projects that will result in challenging different forms of oppression in society (Valdez, 2020). School is a part of society that demands the participation of the school in social activities. Most teachers are aware of obvious ways to avoid oppressing anyone in school or organization, looking for unconscious assumptions and traditional practices that might have unintentionally had oppressive effects (Essays, UK, 2018). The teachers and educational institutions can play a role and they need to be more aware of the unconscious and unintentional biases that reflect on their work, how they teach, and whose interest they promote. Critical pedagogically informed contextualized teaching could be just one step to that goal.

Freirean Notion of Contextualization

Teacher-centered pedagogy does not emphasize the “learning by doing” principle. As Freire (2005, p. 71) contends, "A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students)." This teacher as teaching subject and the learner as object largely define the context in which my own literacy experience unfolded and still continues to be so to a large extent. Freire is clearly against narrating pedagogy and the banking model of pedagogy. He emphasizes liberation and freedom in education; equally, he further adds the dialogic model of teaching: Learners are not constructed in silence, but in word, in work, and in action-reflection (Freire, 2005).

Education suffers when the learners are taught only narrating; it is a disease, should we so say, that Freire indicates in the quote. Oppressors dehumanize (in the sense of not allowing their full potential as humans to learn on their own) others and violate their rights; they themselves also become dehumanized (Freire, 2005, p. 56). And this dehumanization is quite the opposite of education’s goal to humanize, to make people more aware of their rights, more aware of their position in society, and to exercise agency. This might sound like a bold statement, but one could also argue that to repeat the same old technique in which students do not become part of the learning process, their experiences do not get any attention in class

(decontextualization), is to deny them their agency, to exercise some kind of pedagogic violence against them. From that logic, it makes sense to take such teachers as oppressors and such pedagogy as oppressing pedagogy. This sort of pedagogy kills the creativity of the learners. This notion of pedagogy attempts to control originality and action, and leads children to adjust to the world, and finally reduce their creative power.

Voice of the Oppressed in Pedagogical Processes

Apple and Buras (2006, p. 367) contend that the issue is not whether "The subaltern speaks', but whether they are listened to". If all the students of a class can't truly participate, there won't be meaningful learning, the teacher does not listen to the voice of the minority; this doesn't create the situation of invention and re-invention, interaction, impatience, and continuing activities in the class. The mindset of teachers plays a vital role in judging the students keeping them in different groups and bringing social injustice into the classroom. A focus within the critical community(ies) on 'knowledge and voices from below' has at times bordered on what Whitty called 'romantic possibilitarianism' (Whitty, 1974). As Whitty says, the voices have to be uplifted by the teacher who needs to create an environment in the class in which all the students equally participate and learn together. Connecting meaningful context can be a useful and just English language teaching classroom.

Praxis in Contextual Learning

A class is a microcosmic representation of the society outside. A society has hierarchies; it is part and partial of the political system, power and privilege, and so on. According to Moynagh (2020), political development and ideology is one of the major issues and ethnicity is another issue to encounter in classrooms. Different ethnic groups and political development, directly and indirectly, affect teaching and learning activities. Different socio-cultural thoughts may take the same thing differently as a result it may bring some sorts of obstacles in classroom activities. Different economic backgrounds may compel one to think differently and do differently, so the economy is the next issue of contextualized classrooms. The mindset (culture) of teachers, especially if they are from a privileged class, neglects the minority group and the group may not get the chance in classroom activities as equal to the other. Minority groups are further oppressed.

Moving further with the discussion of how to contextualize learning and the learning by doing elements of contextualized class hinted earlier that allows for all students to be involved, the Chinese proverb "I listen, I forget, I see, I remember, and I do, I understand" might be instructive. One popular way to contextualize learning is what is called "situational", or "experiential" methods, such as field visits. In visiting fields, students can get the chance to study the topic through multiple angles; they get the holistic form in front of them in the natural setting; they perceive a complete picture of the object with their own eyes and are able to keep that picture in their memory and develop the mental image. It is more worthy than what the teacher can explain in class. Students "naturally" get the chance to communicate about the topic in between; they engage in the discussion, and they keep presenting their queries with friends, and teachers. Further, an informal environment and opportunities to interact help them to acquire knowledge with a deep understanding. In this context, environmental educators are aware of the importance of bringing real-world experiences to their teaching and students must integrate in-school environmental literacy with out-of-school natural world experiences (Wang & Carlson, 2011).

Another way contextualization can happen is by tapping into local stories. In local stories, learners get local characters, culture, norms and geography which become easy to

understand through interaction and critical questioning; they narrate the stories themselves and equally help to develop the language. Storytelling is always an integral part of how indigenous people live their culture, so we intended to cultivate cultural norms, create community as members of the Wabanaki Confederacy, and thus promote writing as a form of storytelling (Epstein, 2010). Our stories are the vantage points from which we perceive the world and the people in it (Smith, 1990).

Meaningful Learning

The classroom is not a place for silence; it is the place where students raise questions, interact among themselves and with teachers; dialogic practice is used, and students critically reflect on learning. Contextual learning joins the learners' experiences and links the target culture with the learners' culture. Before learning a new idea, there is the existence of the learners' own ideas; they have their own experiences and schema. When the new idea is associated with the schema of the learners, it will be easier to understand to the learners. When the children get the chance, they can present their own experiences and thoughts in the class from where the teacher can create a link between the new concept and the existing concept of children. Learning does not become meaningful when the students don't understand what the teacher teaches to them. When they do not understand they feel bored and become oppressed. To reiterate Freire, human beings are not built in silence, but in words, in work, and in action-reflection (Freire, 2005 p. 86). Without action and reflection, true knowledge doesn't take place. Words, work, action and reflection make meaningful learning. Learning new material or information by relating it to the learner's experience or existing knowledge base, as contrasted with the rote learning of material that has less relevance. Meaningful learning requires both that learners manifest a meaningful learning set (that is, a disposition to relate the new material to be learned, non-arbitrary and non-verbatim to their structure of knowledge) and that the material they learn is potentially meaningful to them, namely, relatable to their particular structures of knowledge on a non-arbitrary and non-verbatim basis (Ausubel, 1961 in Ausubel, 2020).

Research Methodology

To achieve my goal, as a researcher, I used qualitative research methodology which became helpful to overcome the nature of the phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explained that "Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods (p. 11)." To collect data, I selected three participants purposively from three different schools. I selected one female teacher to represent the voice of the female perspective; one male teacher to represent the public or government schools, and another male teacher who was from a community-based school which is neither private nor government school so that the data could cover a large area. Based on the data gained from the in-depth interview with the participants, this study revealed the reality of contextualized ELT practices in the schools of Nepal. The perceptions of the participants have been interpreted based on the collected fact through the lens of critical pedagogy. In order to find out the theme, those data were transcribed, sub-categorized, categorized and developed into concepts related to contextualization. The findings suggest different ways of teaching English, engaging and encouraging contextualization.

A few words for the data selection process and my relationship with participants, I selected the participants teaching English for more than five years and practicing contextualization. I visited my participants and developed a rapport with them. The development of the relationship with the participants helped me and my participants achieve a

level of comfort and trust. Through the prolonged engagement (Creswell, 2012), I as a researcher, established a sound relationship, constructed trustworthy and authentic accounts of the culture of the participant; developed a rich local understanding of the life-world experiences with the participant and observed the situation, asked questions informally and formally. Since the purpose is to generate the life-world stories of the research participants, depending on the context and the area of research the appropriate tool can be applied (Kafle, 2011). Data Analysis and Interpretation present everything systematically (Humphreys & Watson (2009). It includes the real voice of participants, the quoted voices shown being the evidence.

Discussion and Meaning Making

Based on my interview with my participants, I have developed the following themes. As I present them in what follows, I have also connected the themes gleaned from the field with relevant scholarship discussed in the brief review section above.

Situational Presentation

In my inquiry of classroom teaching, the teacher asks the students to see the textbook; they see only the topic but not the content. Students read out the topic and speculate about the topic. If there is a picture, they are asked to guess about the picture, what they see and understand, and they are asked to share something that they feel and realize. They realize something in their own way and share their feelings. The teacher facilitates if they feel difficulty in vocabulary and motivates students to speak and participate and share their ideas in the class. The teacher in the class neither criticizes nor comments but goes on encouraging so that the innovative ideas of the students get the floor to be out. Remaining around the topic, my participants as a teacher asked various questions: "*Have you ever gone out of your house and observed a garden or park? Have you ever noticed the blowing of chill air? Have you ever sat alone, described the shape of a beautiful plant, and speculated about yourself flying in the sky along with the clouds that fly in the sky? Are you akin to nature? How often do you take pleasure in natural beauty? Have you ever heard the sweet melody of a song? Do you enjoy it or you don't like it? Have you ever felt pleasure with the continuous running fountains?*" While teaching a poem of class ten entitled I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD these mentioned questions create a communicative classroom. These activities create an interactive discourse in the class; the unique discourse of the classroom helps to make the learners enthusiastic. Freire (2005) supports interaction models in the class and neglects narrating pedagogy and the banking model of pedagogy. He suggests managing liberation and freedom in education; equally, he further adds the dialogic model of teaching. They cope with new knowledge by interacting and creating the context, developing the schema in the class through contextualization which helps for strong perception.

Cultural Clarification

Cultural variation may create a shock among the students if the text taught in the class doesn't include the culture of the learners. If the learners do not understand the text, they are oppressed (Freire, 2005). A teacher needs to serve diverse texts to make them familiar with the cultural world. Instead of knowledge of culture and diverse world learners may impose wrong knowledge as a result they can develop a perception towards a certain community or society. Swami Vivekananda mentions that to comprehend a culture is to live it and to grow in it; without participating in it by living it is fairly difficult to appreciate a culture (Islam & Sirswal, 2015). My participants articulate that if they are going to teach a story written in a foreign

cultural context but not in the context of the learners, first they explain the culture from where it comes. Then they give the example from Nepalese culture and more specifically local culture if that's the need. Even a class is composed of several cultural backgrounds students. Their variation can be bought in the class which will be surprising for them. It impresses them; it takes them away from the banking model and they start to put several quarries in the class with the teacher; they raise their interesting experience-that's why the class becomes more lively and interactive.

"Though the cow is worshipped as a God in our culture, some countries use it as a special meat. In China, the snake is cooked and eaten as a dish but we can't do it because there is no such practice in our culture."

The teacher has to explain that human beings are distinct culturally; the culture forms their identity; the culture is designed after the long exercise of human beings. Participants claim that *"The Vaidic culture followed in Nepal as well as in India worship cows in the form of Goddess but there are several other countries where cows are used for the purpose of meat as if he-goat in Nepal. Such explanations of culture do not shock them; they will understand cultural variation"*. A snake is taken as a dish in China, but we can't do so because we don't have such culture and practice. My participants use such practices of orientation in the class before starting cultural variant text in front of the students. They feel that it leads to a safe landing for the students and a strong perception of cultural variation and practices around the world. Such orientation instead of bringing shock brings a new cultural learning; they can use it as global knowledge.

Linking Existing Knowledge with the World

Relating, experiencing, applying, cooperating, and transferring strategies in contextual teaching and learning approaches can help students improve their learning (Crawford, 2001). A teacher needs to activate students' prior knowledge sometimes in class. Students already possess some knowledge which plays as a backbone for the further enhancement of knowledge. For example, before teaching the story of class ten parents, the participants ask the students, *"How many of them have their Facebook account? Do they use their Facebook account or not? Do they know anything about Facebook? Have they ever shared their photos, feelings, experiences and so on social media? What sorts of people do they request to be friends on Facebook or accept as friends? How many of you have a laptop or mobile at home and do they also have access to the net or not? The matter they shared on Facebook all correct or some of them will be fake too? Do they show their Facebook activities with their parents? Are they scolded by their parents when they continuously and unnecessarily handle their technological gadgets at home or do the parents tolerate it?"* They share their experiences and develop an interactive situation in the class. The children come to school to be humanized and the narrating pedagogy makes them dehumanized (Freire, 2005). Linking the knowledge is against the narrating pedagogy in which all the students share their feelings without any hesitation. Then the teacher explains and relates to the short story and asks the class to find between their previous knowledge and the new knowledge. In relation, teachers link a new concept to something completely unknown to students (Satriani & et al., 2012). Caine & Caine (1993) called this reaction "felt meaning." Students seem to be connected and related.

Against the Banking Notion of Pedagogy

Teaching style varies based on the topic, situation, level and nature of the course. Not all the teachers use the same style every time and situation; even a teacher uses various styles under the same topic due to the variation in the class. Kumaravadivelu (1994) introduced the term “post-method approach” to language teaching and claims that principles such as “practicality,” “particularity,” and “possibility” are aligned with the central tenets of critical pedagogy. The teacher needs to think about the practical and possible pedagogy including the particular rather than narrating and banking pedagogy for effective learning. Effective teachers use a variety of styles, and they know how and when to choose the most appropriate one for the specific situation, and in essence, the three teaching styles boil down to this: direct, discuss and delegate (Thornton, 2013). The teachers need to instruct 'how to...' 'what to...' and 'when to do.' Interaction in the classroom promotes critical thinking and lively discussion will be helpful to answer challenging questions naturally without hesitation developing speaking and listening skills and cognitive knowledge. Under the delegate, teachers assign tasks to work independently; the assigned task is completed either by discussing in the group or individually, promoting learning through empowerment.

As mentioned above, my participants vary in style and avoid banking pedagogy in the classroom to enhance students' understanding. Participants say *"The passivity kills learners' creativity and empowering talent"* echoing Freire (2005). Interaction in the classroom is promoted through two-way communication: between student and student, teacher and student, students and teacher, and students' group and students' group. The experienced teacher in the classroom can manage interactive communication in several ways. Based on the topic, the teacher provides tasks to the students for discussion managing them turn by turn. The teacher raises several issues or questions concerned to the topic and monitors students' discussion and participation encouraging them without any comment. "The teacher listens patiently, organizing and supporting the class so that they rise up from anxiety. During their discussion, the teacher needs to be careful and has to lead the interaction towards the destination therefore the teacher finally links up the discussion with the theme of the text" according to participants.

Connecting Students' Learning

According to participants, *"Students commonly ask in the class with the teacher, why they are learning this and why they need to know this. These are the genuine questions listened to in the class where the students feel that they will get answers from their respected teacher and the teacher does not threaten in the name of asking questions"*. Developing a connection between home and school is a crucial way to make learning 'real life.' The school itself is a miniature form of society (Dewey, 1907). The texts are designed based on the concern of society remaining under society's cultural norms and values. Knowledge that harms society is not taught in class and is not incorporated into the school curriculum.

A sound mind lives in a sound body (Vivekananda). The textbook incorporates the knowledge of health and hygiene to teach healthy life by maintaining a healthy environment and healthy habits. There are several lessons in the textbooks of the school curriculum taught in the schools to be healthy and hygienic. *"Healthy life for human beings is courtly important which may save us from pandemic as if Covid-19 a teacher explains in the class"*. Teachers can ask several questions about neatness and sanitation maintained at their homes. How they dispose of the waste that comes from their house and how they maintain a balanced diet and healthy habits. They share their experiences, feelings and habits. The teacher suggests that them be healthy by connecting the school knowledge applied in their daily life. As a result, they feel their school is a part of their house which also teaches them to live happily and healthily.

Contextualization in English Language Classroom

Language cannot be acquired or learned through de-contextualized practice by referring to students' need for deeper experience in language learning rather than pure rote teaching (Harmer, 1991). Similarly, Kapur (2009) claims that language learning does not become meaningful and fruitful when it is presented in pieces keeping away from context rather than presenting in whole or with context. What the learners have already possessed is carried into the classroom either by asking questions or by launching the discussion in the classroom with the help of the teacher. Then the teacher makes the link between learners' past knowledge and the content they are going to learn. It means the teacher activates mental ideas or images of the learners at the beginning, what they already know out of school from home, community, and school. Classroom activities are designed on the basis of the local community norms, values and knowledge.

Participants explain "*Communities have their own norms, values, and cultures on the basis of those the communities move further. While teaching in the class, a teacher has to know those things of the communities; those things are the base of life. The teacher who knows those things can link the content with the local culture by comparing and contrasting*". When the reading text is compared with the local culture, learners link up reading content with their local culture; they find similarities and differences in either interaction or dialogic practices; it makes their understanding deeper and stronger.

Theoretical Reflection and Conclusion

As can be gleaned from what my participants have done and observed, it is fair to say that they have an awareness of contextual teaching. This is a good sign, especially given the somewhat pessimistic start of this essay located in the past and given the suggestion that we are still far behind when it comes to contextualizing learning, making it meaningful and connectable to our students. As teachers and scholars, we should continue to push to make our teaching reflective of our students, particularly those who are historically disenfranchised. Several NELTA publications have pointed out that we should adopt textbooks and content written in the context of Western and English culture to our own needs. And an emphasis on contextualizing in all the broad sense of critical pedagogy, it is my humble hope, can be a steppingstone. We can take some of these participant examples as exciting stories.

Participants have indicated that they place emphasis on making teaching transformative and their methods include some combination of the contextualization I have suggested in the literature review such as role play, simulation, dialogic practice, interaction, dramatization, and telling local stories. Moving ahead, report writing from field visits is a genre that we can orient our students to as a way to build knowledge and as a way to sensitize the sense that all communication is in some way about building a connection. It seems fair to say that participants of this research have designed contextually meaningful ways to learn in which the learners' participation is the primary base of learning.

Overall, the present study revealed that effective teachers contextualize their teaching in different ways named previously based on the choices they have and the students they serve. This study advocates for a contextual approach in the broad sense of the term. It stresses the need to put into practice interaction and dialogic approaches. The study also foregrounds the need to link students' experiences and resources to their learning processes, to adopt experiential learning methodologies. At the same time, it joins voices with others that we need to provide opportunities for teacher training, through conferences national and regional and local, as a way to both educate on and incentivize the good work that is already happening.

Training and learning never stops and with educational support and training, we can have more teachers valuing and respecting local needs, contextualizing education, and enriching educational, civic, and social goals at large.

ORCID

 Hota Raj Khanal <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8585-7676>

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