

Teaching Materials and Classroom Assessment in English Language Teaching: Teachers' Practices and Challenges

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Abstract

Teaching materials and classroom assessment are two interdependent components of effective English language teaching (ELT) but the implementation of these components in Nepalese classrooms is still shaped by traditional pedagogical practices and an examination-oriented system. In this context, the study explored English teachers' conceptual understanding and classroom use of teaching materials and examined the prevailing assessment practices and challenges affecting their implementation in Nepalese secondary ELT classrooms. The study employed a qualitative interpretive research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six purposively selected English language teachers at secondary level from schools in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that although teachers recognised the significance of authentic teaching materials, learner-centred pedagogy and formative assessment, their classroom practices were still restricted by textbook dependency, examination-oriented assessment culture, large class sizes, limited assessment literacy, inadequate technological and instructional resources, curriculum–assessment misalignment, institutional pressure for examination results and limited professional development opportunities. Teachers also displayed a high degree of professional agency by modifying the teaching materials and using formative assessment whenever the classroom situation allowed. The study suggests a reconsideration of teaching materials and assessment as an integral and complementary part of language pedagogy rather than as separate instructional processes. It contributes to the field of English language education by providing context-specific insights into teachers' practices and challenges, and offers pedagogical and policy recommendations for strengthening learner-centred instruction, assessment literacy and sustainable professional development in Nepalese ELT.

Keywords: Teaching Materials, Classroom Assessment, Assessment Literacy, Teacher Agency, Formative Assessment

1. Introduction

Teaching materials and assessment are widely recognized as two fundamental and interconnected components of effective language pedagogy. Teaching materials provide learners with opportunities to engage with language while assessment enables

teachers to monitor learning, provide feedback and make informed instructional decisions. Contemporary ELT scholarship increasingly emphasizes that materials and assessment should not be considered as separate components but as complementary processes that collectively promote communicative language learning and meaningful learning.

Tomlinson (2011, as cited in Pandey, 2026) takes an inclusive view of teaching materials and states that “materials refer to anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language” (p. 2). He further argues that good materials “should help learners to feel at ease [and] develop confidence” (Tomlinson, 2011, as cited in Pandey, 2026, p. 127). Similarly, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) emphasize that teaching materials serve as a significant medium of education and are considered as a universal element in EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching and learning. Several scholars have acknowledged the significance of teaching materials in the ELT context. In a similar vein, ELT materials refer to any linguistic, visual, auditory, print, or digital resources used by teachers and learners to facilitate language learning, provide language input, and create opportunities for practice (McGrath, 2013; Pandey, 2026; Richards, 2001; Tomlinson, 2011). Cunningsworth (1995) defines a textbook or the materials as a resource in achieving aims and objectives that have already been set in terms of learner needs.

In recent decades, ELT has experienced a significant pedagogical transformation worldwide. Traditional teacher-centred approaches that prioritize textbook dependency, memorization, and grammatical accuracy have gradually shifted toward communicative language teaching, learner-centred pedagogy, authentic materials, task-based approaches and continuous formative assessment. Nepal has undergone a rapid shift in English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy. Nepal has also adapted these pedagogical reforms through curriculum policies that emphasize interactive classroom practices, practical skills and formative assessment for the development of learners’ communicative competence in English.

From a Nepalese perspective, Pandey (2024b) offers important theoretical and practical insights on language teaching and assessment. Building on this perspective, Pandey (2024a, 2025b) maintains that language testing should go beyond traditional measurement and function as a tool for improving both teaching and learning. He emphasizes that effective assessment practices should be aligned with communicative competence, authenticity, and classroom realities. As Pandey (2024a) explains, “Communicative Language Testing Theory (CLTT), developed as a reaction to traditional testing methods, emphasizes the assessment of learners’ ability to use language in authentic communicative contexts” (p. 27). The integration of formative assessment into everyday classroom instruction provides timely feedback and promotes learner improvement. Pandey (2024b) added, “Assessments and tests serve various functions, including selection, screening, placement, prognosis, diagnosis, research, program evaluation, accountability and measuring accomplishment (p.19). Similarly, Bachman (2010) stated that the development and use of language tests involves an understanding the nature of communicative language use. Assessment serves multiple pedagogical purposes such as identifying learners’ strengths and weaknesses monitoring learning progress and providing constructive feedback that helps teachers improve instructional strategies. Assessment should not be viewed a separate activity from teaching and learning but an integral part of the instructional process. Brown and Abeywickrama (2018) viewed, “In educational practice, assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a wide range of methodological techniques” (p. 3). In this way, assessment becomes a supportive tool for learner development rather than simply an evaluative mechanism.

At the same time, recent scholarship highlights the changing nature of teaching material in ELT. Regarding the importance of material in English language teaching, Richards (2001) states,

Teaching materials are a key component in most language programs. Whether the teacher uses a textbook, institutionally-prepared materials, or his or her own materials, instructional materials generally serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. In the case of inexperienced teachers, materials may also serve as a form of teacher training – they provide ideas on how to plan and teach lessons. (p. 251)

Similarly, Tomlinson (2020) suggests that effective materials should expose learners to authentic language use, stimulate cognitive and emotional engagement and create opportunities for meaningful communication. Teachers therefore need to critically select, adapt and supplement materials in ways that respond to learners’ needs, interests and classroom realities. Pandey (2024b) further notes that assessment should function as a tool for learning enhancement rather than merely a means of grading students. His work highlights the importance of integrating teaching materials, classroom interaction and assessment to promote communicative competence and learner participation in ELT classrooms. When materials and assessment are aligned with learners’ needs and communicative goals, they contribute significantly to learner engagement, critical thinking, language development and lifelong learning.

Assessment is an integral part of English language teaching as it provides us with the information about the learner and assists in decision making of the instruction. Language assessment as a means to measure achievement and it should serve as a catalyst for improvement in teaching and learning. Therefore, it implies that the assessment should incorporate diagnostic, formative and achievement-oriented purposes in order to provide constructive feedback to both the teachers and the learners and improve the process of teaching and learning. Teaching materials can either facilitate learning or hinder its achievement. The materials should be relevant and should prompted their learning engagement. In this connection, Pandey (2026) argues,

“When learners perceive materials as relevant, interesting, authentic, and culturally resonant, their motivation rises; when content feels disconnected from their lives, engagement diminishes.” Contemporary ELT advocates for creating a classroom environment where language learning is contextualized and learners are provided with real-life communicative situations.

Learners could be more engaged by the use of well selected learning content, optimized peer collaboration, technology integration, a comfortable learning environment and prompt feedback. These pedagogical practices can encourage active skillful use of language and engaging meaningful learning experiences. The findings of many of the studies led to the conclusion that the teaching materials and assessment can be interdependent aspects of language pedagogy. In addition, Pandey (2024c) suggests that effective teaching materials make opportunities for meaningful communication and contextualized language use. Classroom questioning serves as a powerful instructional strategy and assessment tool that stimulates student participation and critical thinking. Learners' engagement can be enhanced through the integration of technology, students' collaboration, and providing timely feedback. Furthermore, authentic classroom interaction plays a vital role in developing learners' communicative competence.

Many researchers posit that the use of authentic texts and tasks facilitates motivation and bridges the gap between the classroom and the real world (Gilmore, 2007). Gilmore (2007) maintains that authentic texts and tasks have the potential to expand learners' pragmatic awareness and communicative ability for real world communication as well as raise learners' familiarity with the language they are more likely to use in communication beyond the classroom. Moreover, Gilmore (2007) asserts that authentic materials lead to increased intonation, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary and functional use.

Tomlinson (2020) suggests that teaching materials should expose learners to authentic language use, stimulate their cognitive and emotional engagement and create opportunities for meaningful communication. Effective materials, he argues, are those that not only reinforce and extend learners' understanding of linguistic features but also connect language learning with their experiences, interests and real-world contexts. Tomlinson emphasizes that teachers should have the flexibility to adapt and supplement the materials to suit the diverse needs of their learners and the intricacies of their classroom environments (Tomlinson, 2011, 2020). This perspective highlights the importance of flexibility, contextualization and learner centeredness in the selection and use of language teaching materials.

Language teaching materials and assessment occupy critical roles in successful English language teaching. Tomlinson (2020) posited that materials should not be limited to transmitting knowledge but should evoke learners' conscious response through interaction with meaningful input. Language teaching materials should engage learners cognitively and emotionally and address their needs, interests and behaviors (Tomlinson, 2020). Teachers should critically select, adapt and supplement the prescribed materials for the purpose of learners' engagement and communicative competence. As for assessment, it is no longer perceived as a mechanism for measuring learner achievement. Heaton (1988, p. 7), viewed, “A good test can be used as a valuable teaching device”. Assessment should not be separated from instruction rather it should be closely connected to learners' real life language use so that it provides meaningful and accurate information about their communicative competence in authentic situations. Hughes further noted “Positive washback is a crucial element of effective language assessment, as it influences not only what is tested but also how teaching and learning take place in the classroom. Well-designed assessments can encourage more effective teaching methodologies and improve the overall quality of language instruction (Hughes, 2010). A good test positively affects both the educational system and society as a whole.

These theoretical perspectives suggest that teaching materials and assessment play crucial role in language pedagogy. The above theoretical perspectives and research findings discussed suggest that while teaching materials create opportunities for learning and communication, assessment provides evidence of learning and guides pedagogical improvement.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

This study is shaped by Constructivist Learning Theory, Sociocultural Theory, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Assessment for Learning (AfL). These perspectives together give a framework for understanding teachers' use of teaching materials and assessment practices in English language teaching. The theories focus on learner engagement, meaningful interaction, authentic communication and assessment as a tool for learning.

Constructivist Learning Theory, associated with Jean Piaget, presumes that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with prior experiences instead of receiving information passively. In ELT, this perspective suggests that teaching materials should move beyond textbook dependency and provide opportunities for exploration, problem-solving, and active learner participation. The teacher's role is to facilitate learning and guide learners in constructing meaning (Piaget, 1972).

Sociocultural Theory, developed by Vygotsky (1978) highlights that learning takes place via social interaction and collaboration. Language development is shaped by interaction with teachers, peers, and cultural tools. This view emphasizes the significance of classroom interaction, collaborative learning, feedback, and scaffolding in fostering language development and learner engagement (Vygotsky, 1978).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims at developing learners' communicative competence through meaningful language use. Hymes (1972) states that the aim of language learning is to enable the learner to use language appropriately in

real-life situations. From this perspective, teaching materials should comprise authentic texts, interactive tasks, and communicative activities, while assessment should focus on the learners' ability to use language meaningfully rather than simply testing grammatical knowledge.

The study is further influenced by Assessment for Learning (AfL) as a crucial element of teaching and learning. When teachers provide ongoing feedback and adapt instruction based on learners' progress, formative assessment enhances learning (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Classroom questioning, peer assessment, self-assessment and reflective activities are among the practices that help learner autonomy and enhance classroom learning.

Together, these theoretical perspectives imply that teaching materials and assessment should be interrelated parts of language pedagogy. The use of authentic materials, learner-centered instruction, collaborative interaction and continuous formative assessment can promote communicative competence and create meaningful learning experiences in Nepalese ELT classrooms.

This study seeks to reconceptualize teaching materials and assessment in the ELT classroom. What makes this inquiry significant is that it seeks to make a contribution toward a current debate regarding the implementation of policy and practice in classrooms. Within this context, understanding teachers' practices and challenges related to teaching materials and assessment becomes essential for pedagogical improvement. The study, therefore, aims to: explore teachers' conceptual understanding and classroom use of teaching materials in ELT and examine prevailing assessment practices and identify key challenges in Nepalese ELT classrooms.

3. Methodology

The study employed a qualitative interpretive research design. With its emphasis on understanding the meanings, teachers attribute to their interactions with teaching materials and assessment. Qualitative inquiry was understood as investigating the experiences, beliefs and perceptions of the English language teachers themselves. Since the purpose of this study was to understand teachers' worldviews of their instructional practices and teaching experiences, the interpretive paradigm was established on the assumption that such practices were simultaneously social in nature. Pandey (2025a) views, "Qualitative research (QR) in applied linguistics seeks to comprehend and interpret language, language learning, or language use within specific contexts, as well as social phenomena in natural settings such as social and educational environments" (p. 114). The participants of this study included six English language teachers teaching at secondary level in Kathmandu valley who were selected based on their possession of substantial experience and active engagement in classroom instruction and assessment. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and they represented diverse educational settings including community, schools. The study employed interview guidelines as the primary instruments for data collection.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. We read and reread the interview transcripts, generated initial codes, and grouped similar codes into broader themes based on patterns in the data. The themes were formulated in relation to the research objectives and included: textbook dependency and adaptation of materials, washback of examination on classroom teaching, tension between communicative pedagogy and assessment systems, teacher agency and professional decision-making, and challenges in the implementation of formative assessment practices.

4. Results and Discussion

Thematic analysis of the interview data was carried out to investigate the perspectives of English language teachers on the use of teaching materials and assessment practices in Nepalese ELT classrooms. The analysis yielded several interwoven themes representing teachers' classroom experiences, pedagogical practices, and challenges faced in their endeavor to implement contemporary ELT approaches. The results are presented under each theme and discussed in relation to the relevant literature and the theoretical perspectives underpinning the study.

4.1. Moving Beyond Textbook Dependency

To examine participants' views on learning resources beyond textbooks, this section presents their perspectives on the use of textbooks and supplementary materials in English language classrooms. While acknowledging the necessity of textbooks for implementing curriculum, they thought that textbook content alone sometimes failed to address learners' interests, types of communicative purposes and local contexts. In this connection, T1 stated, *Students become more engaged when lessons incorporate real life examples and digital resources connected to their experiences*". In support of this perspective, T3 noted, *The use of newspaper articles, local stories and multimedia resources encourages greater student participation and interaction in the classroom*. Adding to this view, T5 highlighted, *Supplementary materials help teachers adapt lessons to the diverse proficiency levels and learning needs of students making instruction more relevant and effective*.

These views suggest that teachers value authentic materials as a means of promoting meaningful language use and enhancing learner motivation. While these views align with Tomlinson's (2020) argument that effective language learning materials should address learners' experiences and interests, their narratives also demonstrate that teachers are actively

interacting with the curriculum to interpret its content. Thus, it is primarily the interaction of curriculum approaches, classroom practices and assessment systems that determine their effectiveness in improving education at various levels.

4.2. of Examination Culture

The findings reveal that examination-oriented education continues to exert a strong influence on English language teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom interactions and assessments. Participants reported a desire to promote communicative competence, collaboration, critical thinking or learner centered instruction; a range of pressure was exerted on them to prepare students for the high stakes examinations. In this connection, T2 reported, *Even though we want students to communicate effectively, most of our teaching eventually focuses on preparing them for examinations.* Highlighting this dilemma, T4 added, *Students, parents and school administrators mainly expect good examination results so teachers feel obligated to teach according to examination requirements rather than communicative objectives.* Reinforcing this view, T6, *I know interactive activities help students learn better but when examinations approach, I spend more time practicing likely examination questions and model answers.*

Teachers suggested that assessment systems should incorporate a greater balance between formative and summative approaches to assessment. Similarly, Xu & Brown (2016) argue that high stakes examinations constrain the implementation of authentic assessment practices. In a similar vein, McKenna et al. (1995) and Spolsky (1998) study of examination driven systems found that their proliferation undermines a learner centered pedagogy in which teachers are granted implicit permission to challenge the curriculum, to teach their own values and to manipulate methods and materials.

4.3. Growing Use of Formative Assessment

The findings suggest that formative assessment has increasingly become a vital component of teachers' classroom practices. It is evident that most of the teachers employed a variety of formative assessment strategies, including classroom questioning, group discussions, peer assessment, self-assessment, presentations, project work and written reflection. Reflecting this practice, T5 said, *Through classroom discussion and peer feedback, I can identify students' difficulties immediately and adjust my teaching accordingly.* Building on this perspective, T3 stated, *Self-assessment activities help students reflect on their own learning and become more responsible for their progress.* Adding to this perspective, T1 stated, *Presentations and group work allow me to observe students' participation and understanding beyond written examinations.*

These results are consistent with the research of Zhang et al. (2024) which highlighted the positive impact of formative assessment on learner engagement, metacognition, self-regulation and academic achievement. Similarly, the study of Black and Wiliam (2021) indicated that continuous assessment and appropriate feedback to students significantly improved their learning experiences and academic performance.

4.4. Resource and Technological Constraints

Findings reveal that the lack of sufficient resources and technological support remain significant challenges in implementing effective English language teaching and assessment practices. Highlighting this concern, T6 stated, *We want to use digital tools and videos in our teaching, but the internet is often not reliable and we do not have proper multimedia facilities in the school.* Similarly, T4 explained, *Even when we plan interactive lessons using online materials, we cannot implement them effectively because of the lack of computers and technical support.* Further emphasizing this issue, T2 added, *Teaching would be more engaging if we had access to projectors and updated resources but most of the time we depend only on the textbook.*

These perspectives illustrate that resource constraints directly limit pedagogical choices and innovation in the classrooms. These findings are aligned with Kessler (2021) who emphasizes how infrastructural and institutional limitations impede technological integration in education, especially in under resourced contexts. From my perspective, these constraints illustrate a persistent structural challenge in Nepalese ELT classrooms where policy expectations for technology enhanced and interactive learning are not met with practical realities. Without addressing these infrastructural gaps, it is unlikely that efforts to modernize teaching practices and assessment systems will be significantly effective.

4.5. Teacher Agency and Professional Growth

The data revealed teacher agency as a central theme in understanding how English language teachers navigate the realities of their classrooms and continue their professional development. The teachers highlighted the importance of ongoing professional development activities like workshops, conferences, action research, peer collaboration and reflective practice. Highlighting the importance of professional development, T1 explained, *I often modify textbook activities to suit my students and professional development programs help me learn new strategies to make lessons more effective.* Supporting this observation, T3 noted, *Workshops and training sessions give me new ideas, especially for using student centered methods and improving classroom interaction.* Adding to this view, T5 added, *through reflective practice, I understand my strengths and weaknesses and I continuously try to improve my teaching approaches.*

These findings suggest the need for further expansion of sustained and context sensitive professional development opportunities in Nepal. These perspectives illuminate the fact that teachers are not simply relegated to 'passive implementers' of the curriculum but are actively engaged in reshaping their pedagogical practices in response to the context of their classroom realities and their aspirations. Priestley et al. (2019) posit that teacher agency emerges from the interaction of professional knowledge, contextual conditions and future oriented aspirations which I interpret as a process of intentional and ongoing

reflection. The sustained professional support and opportunities for reflective inquiry can foster more responsive and inquiring practices.

4.6. Challenges in Implementing Effective Classroom Assessment

The findings revealed that although teachers recognized the importance of learner-centred and formative assessment, they encountered a range of challenges that constrained its effective implementation. The interview data identified several interconnected factors, including examination-oriented practices, large class sizes, limited assessment literacy, curriculum–assessment misalignment, inadequate resources, institutional pressure, and insufficient professional development opportunities.

4.6.1. Examination-Oriented Assessment Culture

One of the dominant themes that emerged from the interview data was the pervasive influence of the examination-oriented assessment culture on English language teaching. Participants mentioned that the assessment practices in the classroom were heavily affected by the demands of the terminal and board examinations. While the teachers acknowledged the importance of formative assessment and communicative language teaching, they said that their primary responsibility was still to prepare students for examinations. Consequently, assessment practices were largely focused on helping students to achieve higher examination scores through written tests, model-answer practice and examination-oriented activities. Reflecting this assessment practice, T2 said: “However much we want to teach communicatively, students and parents expect good exam results. Last we have to focus on preparing the students for the examinations. Echoing this concern, T4 said: The main measure of our success as teachers is students’ examination scores. In practice it makes continuous assessment less important.

These stories point to teachers living in the tension between the enactment of learner-centred assessment practices and the expectations of an exam-driven education system. The dominance of high-stakes tests seems to limit the use of authentic assessment and ongoing formative assessment in routine classroom instruction. These results provide support for the claims of Xu and Brown (2016) that high-stakes testing often restricts teachers’ assessment decisions and constrains classroom instruction.

4.6.2. Large Class Size and Time Constraints

The results showed that large class sizes and limited instructional time were major obstacles to effective classroom assessment. Participants said they wanted to assess students continuously through classroom activities, discussions and individual feedback, but found it difficult to consistently implement these practices due to the large number of students and heavy teaching loads. Teachers indicated that continuous assessment became superficial as they could not monitor all learners’ progress or provide timely feedback. In this regard, T5 said, *It is almost impossible to evaluate each learner continuously and to give individual feedback with more than fifty students in one class.* Further highlighting this challenge, T1 also stated, *We have many lessons to finish in a limited time. Continuous assessment is desirable but practically difficult in large classes.*

The findings indicate that teachers’ assessment practices are strongly influenced by classroom realities. The combination of large enrolment and time constraints limits opportunities for observation, feedback and individualised assessment, thus reducing the effectiveness of formative assessment. Brown and Abeywickrama (2018) argue that assessment should be an ongoing process integrated into daily teaching, involving constant observation and prompt feedback. The present findings suggest that such practices become difficult when teachers have to manage large classes within restricted instructional time.

4.6.3. Limited Assessment Literacy

Another important theme that emerged from the interviews was teachers’ concern regarding their assessment literacy. Although participants demonstrated an awareness of formative assessment principles, several acknowledged that they required additional knowledge and practical training to design authentic assessment tasks, develop appropriate scoring criteria and use assessment information to improve instruction. Underscoring this issue, T3 stated, *Most teachers understand formative assessment theoretically, but we still need practical training on how to design meaningful classroom assessment activities.* Likewise, T6 explained, *sometimes, we assess students regularly, but we are not always confident that our assessment methods truly measure students’ communicative ability.*

These responses indicate that effective classroom assessment depends not only on teachers’ willingness but also on their professional competence. Limited assessment literacy may prevent teachers from implementing authentic assessment practices aligned with communicative language teaching. These findings support Xu and Brown (2016), who argue that teachers’ assessment literacy is fundamental to improving the quality and effectiveness of classroom assessment. Similarly, Brown and Abeywickrama (2018) emphasize that teachers require adequate assessment knowledge to make informed instructional decisions and provide meaningful feedback to learners.

4.6.4. Curriculum-Assessment Misalignment

The participants consistently identified a mismatch between curriculum expectations and existing assessment practices. They explained that while the national curriculum emphasizes communicative competence, learner participation and authentic language use, classroom examinations continue to focus primarily on grammar, writing and memorization. Consequently, teachers often found it difficult to align their classroom instruction with the intended curriculum. Reflecting this mismatch, T2 remarked, *The curriculum expects us to develop communication skills, but the examinations mainly test grammar and written*

answers. Echoing this concern, Teacher 4 reported, *Students are interested in learning what will appear in the examination rather than developing communicative skills.*

These findings demonstrate a noticeable gap between curriculum policy and assessment practice. Such misalignment encourages teachers to prioritize examination preparation rather than communicative learning activities. Brown and Abeywickrama (2018) argue that assessment should be aligned with instructional objectives to promote meaningful learning.

4.6.5. Lack of Resources and Technological Support

The interview data further revealed that inadequate instructional resources and technological facilities continue to constrain classroom assessment practices. Participants reported limited access to multimedia equipment, computers, internet connectivity and digital assessment tools, making it difficult to implement technology-supported assessment activities and interactive classroom tasks. Highlighting this constraint, T6 viewed, *We would like to use online quizzes and digital assessment tools, but reliable internet and multimedia facilities are not available in our school.* In a similar vein, T5 similarly stated, *Most of our assessment still depends on paper-based methods because technological resources are very limited.*

These findings indicate that infrastructural limitations continue to influence teachers' assessment decisions. Although educational policies encourage technology-enhanced learning and assessment, the absence of adequate facilities restricts their practical implementation. These findings are consistent with Kessler (2021), who argues that successful integration of technology in language education depends largely on institutional infrastructure and technological support. Without addressing these resource constraints, innovative assessment practices are unlikely to be fully realized in Nepalese ELT classrooms.

4.6.6. Institutional Pressure for Examination Results

The analysis also revealed that institutional expectations exert considerable influence on teachers' assessment practices. Participants reported experiencing pressure from school administrators, parents and the wider community to produce high examination results. Consequently, teachers frequently prioritized examination performance over formative assessment and communicative learning activities. Reflecting this pressure, T1 explained, *Parents and school management mainly judge our teaching through students' examination results, so we have little choice but to concentrate on examination preparation.* In a similar vein, T3 remarked, *Even when we want to use more classroom-based assessment, institutional expectations encourage us to focus on examination scores.*

These findings suggest that teachers' assessment practices are shaped not only by curriculum requirements but also by institutional accountability mechanisms. Such pressures reinforce examination-oriented teaching and reduce opportunities for innovative classroom assessment. Similar observations have been reported by Xu and Brown (2016), who argue that institutional accountability frequently influences teachers' assessment decisions and classroom priorities. The findings therefore indicate that meaningful assessment reform requires institutional support in addition to curricular change.

4.6.7. Need for Continuous Professional Development

The findings further revealed that teachers viewed continuous professional development as essential for improving assessment practices. Participants emphasized the importance of workshops, peer learning, mentoring and reflective practice in strengthening their understanding of contemporary assessment approaches and enhancing their classroom competence. In this regard, T5 explained, *Professional development programmes introduce us to new assessment strategies that can immediately improve our classroom practice.* Supporting this observation, T2 added, *Regular training on classroom assessment would help teachers move beyond traditional examination practices.*

These narratives indicate that teachers are willing to improve their assessment practices but require sustained professional support. Continuous professional development enables teachers to strengthen their assessment literacy, adopt innovative assessment strategies and respond effectively to changing curriculum expectations. Priestley et al. (2019) argue that teacher agency develops through ongoing professional learning and reflective practice. Likewise, Xu and Brown (2016) emphasize that continuous professional development plays a crucial role in improving teachers' classroom assessment competence. The findings therefore highlight the need for systematic and context-sensitive professional development programmes that support meaningful assessment reform in Nepalese ELT classrooms.

5. Conclusion

This study examined English language teachers' conceptual understanding and classroom use of teaching materials and prevailing assessment practices and the major challenges affecting their implementation in Nepalese secondary schools. Adopting a qualitative interpretive research design, the study collected data through semi-structured interviews with six purposively selected secondary-level English language teachers and analysed the data using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that teachers recognize teaching materials and classroom assessment as complementary and interconnected components of effective English language teaching. Although they valued authentic and supplementary materials, learner-centred pedagogy, formative assessment, and continuous professional learning, their classroom practices were constrained by textbook dependency, examination-oriented assessment culture, large class sizes, limited assessment literacy, curriculum–assessment misalignment, inadequate technological and instructional resources, institutional pressure for examination results,

and insufficient professional development opportunities. Nevertheless, teachers demonstrated considerable professional agency by adapting teaching materials, employing formative assessment strategies, and making context-sensitive pedagogical decisions whenever classroom conditions permitted. These findings underscore the complex interplay between curriculum policy, classroom realities, institutional contexts, and teachers' professional decision-making in shaping effective English language teaching and assessment. The study contributes to the growing body of ELT research by reconceptualizing teaching materials and classroom assessment as interconnected rather than separate dimensions of language pedagogy and by providing context-specific insights into teachers' practices and challenges in Nepalese secondary schools. The study therefore recommends strengthening teachers' assessment literacy through sustained professional development, aligning curriculum objectives with assessment systems, improving technological and instructional resources, and creating supportive institutional environments that promote learner-centred and communicative teaching practices.

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