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## Strategies for Teaching Poetry at Secondary Schools of Dang, Nepal

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# Strategies for Teaching Poetry at Secondary Schools of Dang, Nepal

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**Keywords:** poetry, strategies, reading aloud, paraphrasing.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The strategy for teaching poetry refers to the dynamics that the instructor employs to motivate learners to scrutinize a piece of verse through classroom dealings. However, teaching lyrics has become less motivating and more frustrating for teachers and learners. The poetry classroom no longer becomes lively and interactive, it is “like prison cells” (Pullman as cited in Tickle, 2005, p. 64). They have to convert this in a homely place. Why do teachers and learners feel so? The researcher seeks to answer this question through the field inquiry for which the objective is to identify the strategies adopted by English teachers to teach poetry in Dang, Nepal. The strategy is the art of

planning action to achieve a long-term goal. Wallerstein, I. (2007, p.99) defines strategy as “collective wisdom.” Everyone has the instinct of success for which he looks ahead and makes a unique choice. Making operational plan, deciding the appropriate techniques to implement in the class room, and activating the students in the class to make the lesson lively forms the main aspects of teaching technique. To accomplish the goal, the planner takes a general direction, which is distinct from that of others. It is not possible to foresee the future without a definite plan. The strategy is a well-thought-out plan applied in the teaching domain that aims at maximizing learning skills and minimizing the fear that generally besets students in approaching poetry. No existing literature brings in the issue of the strategic teaching of poetry. Teachers have a predefined mindset through which they instruct. To change the state of mind Kim & Mauborgne (2005, p.170) present their outlook, “Showing the worst reality to your superior can also shift their mindset fast.” This study attempts to close the gap existing between the formulation and implementation of the strategy. Teachers need to set priorities, focus resources, strengthen operations, and establish agreement around the intended outcome. This study surveys ten Schools of Dang, Nepal, to collect the primary information about the strategies adopted by secondary level English teachers to teach English verse. The sampled schools cover the 91 secondary schools of this district.

The government of Nepal introduced the current syllabus of English with the objective to enhance students' skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. Poetry is a unique form of composition with the subtle harmony of sound and meaning. The rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and assonance trigger readers' imagination. Teaching poetry is teaching for developing the reading ability of the students employing multiple techniques. Students attempt to interpret without understanding the literal meaning of the text. The reason, as Lazar (1993, p. 101) claims, is that “they may lack appropriate strategies for interpreting.” The presentation of day-to-day events creating emotional vibration demands readers' attention. Language teaching through verse is fascinating for the reason that it encompasses the linguistics and musical aspects along with message and meaning. Generally, students lack confidence in reading an unfamiliar piece of verse. They feel that there are not multiple ways of

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approaching the text. In frustration, they give up the attempt. The present study plans to develop methods for teachers to help their learners to approach poetry in multiple ways. When one technique fails, students can switch to another. The teachers employed only three strategies: reading aloud, paraphrasing, and drawing the theme. The findings support the classroom teachers, students, and planners to make verse teaching and learning effectively. I will shed light on methodology of data collection and discuss ten strategies of teaching poetry. Then I move to the analysis and interpretation of field data collected through the questionnaires and class observation.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The researcher formulated the questionnaires to explore "Strategies for Teaching Poetry at Secondary Schools of Dang, Nepal." The study aims at finding out what plans the English teachers employ to teach verse at Secondary Schools in Dang, Nepal. Inquiry of this article is quantitative inquiry-based on the questionnaire for English teachers and classroom observation by the researcher. Out of Ninety one secondary schools in Dang, the researcher selected ten schools that represent the total number of schools. The researcher visited the field and executed the aforementioned task to collect information. For the development of theory, he studied books related to the strategy. For the fact collection, he visited all these ten schools. This article encompasses quantitative as well as qualitative inquiry. The researcher selected ten Secondary Schools of Dang, Nepal using simple random sampling: Shree Birendra Secondary School, Hekuli, Shree Siddha Prithvi Janta Secondary School, Shrigaun, Shree Secondary School Madhapur, Shree Bhanu Secondary School Prasaduwa, Shree Birendra Secondary Viyudarsunpur, Shree Secondary School Balapur, Shree Mahendra Secondary Syuja, Shree Mahendra Secondary Shreebaari, Shree Sudha Secondary Jhelneteta, and Shree Saraswati Secondary School. To get information from the teachers, the researcher distributed questionnaires for teachers to complete. Immediately after that, he went to the class observation. The researcher used Lazar, G. (1993), Lennard, J. (2005), Glancy, R. (2002), Loughren, L. (2005), and Thornborrow, J. & Wareing, S. (1998) for secondary sources of information. The canvasser used a descriptive way to analyze the data. I will follow the ten strategies as theoretical framework for the study.

## III. STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING POETRY

Teachers debate about the appropriate strategies for teaching poetry. Teachers in Dang give importance to paraphrasing and finding out the theme. Glancy (2002, p.vi) values reading poetry "from its subject matter". For Loughran (2005, p.38) "Teacher preparation should be a testing ground for

experimenting." He means to say that the teachers have to have optimum endeavors before entering the class. He further states (2005, p.28) that "A successful school teacher may rightly carry a sense of a need to offer 'snapshots' from their practice and share teaching activities that work. "But reading verse through one strategy is not successful, and teachers have to use multiple ways of approaching a poem. Recitation, title speculation, paraphrasing, exploring theme identifying figures of speech, finding out the prosodic features, sound arrangement, and language analysis constitutes a compelling technique of reader-text engagement, and a sustained rapport with the text. Among all these strategies, he can apply whatever makes students easy to decipher. Consequently, this creates an alliance between the readers and the writing. The following are the mixed strategies developed by Lazar (1993), Loughran (2005), Jago et al. (2011), Williams (2003), Glancy (2002), and Lennard (2005) to teach poetry. Teachers can apply these techniques to make the class lively and productive.

### a) *Ask the students to read aloud the poem*

Poetry is for auditory effect. The combination of stressed and unstressed syllables contributes to the musicality of verse. Hence, it creates the acoustic effect. Second language learners have to be familiar with cadence and iilt, which inheres naturally in a poetic composition. Learners feel this phenomenon through recitation or loud reading. Lazar (1993, p .118) states the reasons for lurid reading thus: "The reading can also make limited use of movements, gesture, facial expressions and the changing qualities of the voice (variations in the speed of delivery, loudness or softness, stress, etc.)." What Lazer points out succinctly is that reading is an unfailing aid to student's comprehension. Concisely, poetry becomes effective when learners read aloud.

### b) *Invite students to guess the title of the poem*

The title encapsulates the content of the writing. It foretells the message or theme of the writing. Williams (2003, p.108) states that titles "stimulate student thinking about the topic." The fact speaks that the title is a vital component of a poem. Jago et al. (2011) indicates that "Title can be a due to larger issues in a poem." Some latitude to students at the very outset will be hugely beneficial in two significant ways: first, via brainstorming method, students give free rein to their imagination; its immediate cascading effect is that even an introvert or shy students involve into conversation. Second, speculation hones students' ability to hypothesize about the text and thereby enhancing their test skills.

### c) *Paraphrase the poem*

Paraphrase means to reaffirm a text in plain words. In other words, paraphrasing entails rendering

the original writing in a more simplified version without sacrificing its origin intention. Greene & Lidinsky (2015, p.152) assert that, "A paraphrasing is a restatement of all the information in a passage in your own words." Primarily, its purpose is to simplify the abstraction ladder and bring it down to students' level of understanding. For Thornborrow & Wareing (1998, p.142) paraphrasing "should be as close to the content of the original as possible." These critics suggest that there has to be a dynamic equivalent of the text in a paraphrase. If rewriting a poem is to render it anew, the question remains how to do the trick. The widely practiced technique is to employ synonyms, modification of the sentence structure, fracturing the information into separate sentences, and lettering the sentences other than the source sentences for paraphrasing.

d) *Comprehend the theme of the poem*

Essentially, the theme is an idea or point that controls the text. The poet can express it either overtly or in a hidden way. Understanding the theme is to fetch the primary argument of the text. The thematic analysis emphasizes pinpointing and examining the subject matter of a text, an underlying sense of a literary work. The theme contains the dominant idea presented by the author through characters, prosody, syntax, and pattern of the verse. Glancy (2002, p.vii) talks of the theme, "When we speak of a poem having a theme, we often referring to a poem that brings a particular human perspective to the subject matter." It is the idea of the text that binds various essential elements together. It gives readers a better understanding of society, social experiences, and emotions. However, the theme, as Lazar (1993, p .103) maintains, "Should somehow be made relevant with the students' personal experience." Here, Lazar means that the textual cosmology has to be compatible to that of readers' worldview. Jago et al. (p.85) point out those themes "are revealed through the piece's plot, character, setting, point of view, and symbol." The theme is the central thought that guides the text. The role of the teacher is to unravel the concept in the best possible way. The subject of a literary piece generally unpacks a universal belief system. Teachers have to encapsulate themes in a single word like love, hate, death, and so on and elaborate in the best possible way.

e) *Point out the figures of speech of the poem: simile, metaphor, imagery, symbol, personification*

Figures of speech present ideas in fresh way. To draw the attention of the readers, writers use figurative language. It conveys the message in a seemingly deceptive and circumlocutory manner. While dealing with this aspect of a poem, it is essentially crucial to ensure that students grasp the meaning as well as the cultural import of each of the figures of speech used. Lazar (1993, p.98) reminds, "Poetry draws creatively on a full range of archaisms and dialects, and

generates vivid new metaphors". He points out that students feel difficult to unravel the symbolic use of language. The teacher can resolve this issue by "group work and pair work" (106-107). Jago et al. (2011, p.22) present the concept that figurative language, "explains, or expands on an idea by comparing it to something else." The activity to identify figures of speech in group work in the class encourages students to address the problem together through collective effort.

f) *Evaluation to the form of the poem: lines, stanzas, punctuation marks*

Form refers to the outward visible layout of the poem. Lines, length, and the structure of a stanza and use of punctuation mark in the middle and end of the line-in short topography-are the constituents that subtly contribute to the overall meaning of composition. The structure of line and stanza helps to understand a poem. So, readers have to find out the meaning by counting the lines and the number of syllables that are there in the lines of the poem and then restructure the lines. Lazar (1993, p. 95) points out, "Making decisions about the correct order of the lines in the poem above involves far more than comprehension of meaning. It involves drawing on your knowledge and experience of the way poetry is structured." This quote implies that the structure of a poem is an unavoidable segment in its interpretation, and therefore, structure and meaning are opposite to each other. Thus, it follows that the punctuation mark either at the middle or at the end signifies importance in one way or the other.

g) *Evaluate the prosody of the poem: rhyme, rhythm, and meter*

Music in poetry is the sound formed by the display of stress to create the aural effect. Glancy (2002, p.153) says, "Music and poetry have always been closely linked." English verse has its music system. According to Scholes et al. (1991, p.551), "musical element in poetry is the hardest to talk about because it is nonverbal. Our responses to rhythm and pleasing combinations of sounds are, in a sense, too immediate, too fundamental to comprehend in words. Yet music is important in all poetry." Despite what Scholes et al. say, music is the least in the mind of a reader while analyzing poems because they find it tedious due to its technical intricacies. Rhyme, meter, form, poetic syntax, sound, and rhythm are the technical aspects to arrange music. Harmony creates the beauty of poetry; it supports the content of the verse. Rhyme is the parallel of sound in the stressed syllables of two or more words. The similarity is on the vowels of the stressed syllables, which must be preceded by different consonants to make the ideal rhyme. Ferguson et al. (1997 p.1xxix) traces the origin of rhyme, "Rhyme may have had its origin in primitive religious rites and magical spells." However, Morley (2007, p196) contends that "Rhyme emerges from listening to the music of language, as

line, meter, and form."Lennard (2005, p.189) values the linguistic aspect of rhyme, "Rhyme is another form of punctuation closely bound to lineation and layout, helping on the page and performance audibly to organize the relations of words." Morley (2007, p.194) points out, "Rhythm is made of beats, whether of a skin drum in a frog's throat or a hoof's thrum." Abrams & Harpham (2005, p.167) defines meter, "Meter is the recurrence, in regular units, of a prominent feature in the sequence of speech-sounds of a language." Studying melody means scrutinizing all the technical nuances of poem objectively and scientifically. It hints to see sound patterns, content, association, use of repetition, and cohesive sequence. This scientific side of the poem studies the principle and practice of meter, rhyme, rhythm, and stanza form.

#### h) *Sound arrangements of the poem*

Sound patterns as alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia fall within the criteria to analyze verse. The study of composition enables readers to analyze the craft of the poet. It is the responsibility of the teacher concerned to acquaint students with music along with the content of the. Alliteration and assonance are the musical components in English that contribute to the music of verse. The former refers to the repetition of consonant sounds or letters in two or more closely associated stressed syllables. Abrams & Harpman (2005,p.9) differentiate about these terms, "Alliteration is the repetition of speech sound in a sequence of nearby words" whereas the latter refers to the similarity in vowel sound in two or more syllables, "Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowels-especially in stressed syllables-in a sequence of nearby words." Thus alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia contribute to the music of a poem. Given the fact that music permeates every tiny component of a poem, it behooves teachers to familiarize learners to identify it and apply its various elements for a better and more joyful reading of poetry.

#### i) *Examine the language of the poem: diction, phrase, syntax, and punctuation marks*

Language is a vehicle for communication. The selection and combination of words have significant value. Words, phrases, and even the unique distortion of grammars carry meanings. Lazar (1993, p.99) states the reason for breaking the rules of traditional language, "Poetry frequently breaks the 'rules' of language, but by doing so it communicates with us in a fresh, original way". In comparison to prose, the verse gives joy by its syntactic deviation. Thornborrow & Wareing advocate to analyze (1998, p.46) the "layout, number of lines, length of lines regular meter, rhyme, and sound patterning." Hence, the choice of diction, phrase, and the grammar of the text need detail analysis to facilitate students' deeper understanding of the text. Students have to know that punctuation marks in the middle of the line are

caesura and the one at the end is end-stopped. They differentiate between the two and understand why the poets placed in a specific position. For example, teachers should be able to tell students that end-stopped means uniformity of thought and pause creates a rupture in the middle.

#### j) *Ask the students to create their poem and share with their classmates.*

Learners need the motivation to compose poems. Without it, they cannot internalize the value of the poem. Williams (2003, p.295) views that, "If students were performing a 'real' writing task, one arising in the natural contexts outside school, their writing would be directed by the social conventions of the stimulus." Teachers' intervention by selecting a familiar topic and few clues to the students is crucial here. Upon the completion of their writing, a few lines of positive feedback on the part of the teacher will boost up the confidence of the nascent student.

## IV. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

This analytical part consists of the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire-based data pooled from the English teachers of the secondary level schools of Dang, Nepal. The responses collected through were of close-ended responses. He set ten questions and asked to answer just after the classroom observation. The researcher changed the qualitative information into a percentage. He analyzed in the descriptive way of presentation. The following table shows the teacher's responses about the strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom.

Table 1: Questionnaires

S.N.	Questionnaires	Yes		No	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	Do you ask the students to read the poem aloud?	7	70	3	30
2	Do you ask the students to guess the title of the poem?	4	40	6	60
3	Do you paraphrase the poem?	10	100	0	0
4	Do you make your students familiar with the theme of the poem?	9	90	1	10
5	Do you ask your students to find out the figurative use of language like simile, metaphor, and personification in the poem?	4	40	6	60
6	Do you ask the students about the sensory organs that the words of the poem appeal to?	3	30	7	70
7	Do you tell your students about the lines, stanza, and different forms of poems?	2	20	8	80
8	Do you ask the students to find out the rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and assonance of the poem?	2	20	8	80
9	Do you ask the students to count the punctuation marks in the middle and end of the line?	0	0	10	100
10	Do you ask the students to write their own poem and share it with the friends?	0	0	10	100

(Field Observation, 2020)

The researcher asked the teachers to complete the questionnaire form, to the strategies of teaching poetry. Seventy percent of the teachers responded that they asked their students to read out the poem, whereas the thirty percent response was in the negative. Most of the teachers pointed out that they used this strategy. Concerning the speculation of the title, only forty percent of the teachers would employ this technique. Sixty percent of teachers overlooked this aspect. Paraphrasing was the most favorite method for all teachers. They adopted this strategy effectively. The theme-based teaching approach was most common for ninety percent of the teachers interviewed. Those were asking their students to find out the figures of speech comprised only forty percent. Thirty percent were in favor of asking students to identify sound-making words-the ones that would appeal to the auditory aspect. Twenty percent would prioritize form over other elements. In the same way, only twenty percent resorted to schooling the prosodic features. Teaching the importance of punctuation marks was the least in the mind of the teachers. The same is the case about motivating to write the poems and share them with friends.

Out of ten strategies, teachers regularly employed only three. The success and failure of teaching depend on the operation of the way instructors transmit the process. They do not apply others aspects like versification and sound patterning. Then students do not get benefit. As a result, learners lack exposure to the multiple ways of dealing with the text that would otherwise render understanding more comprehensive and enriching. The researcher found out that the selected schools invested 27.73 percent on average for

the professional development of teachers. Consequently, teachers do not learn new trends, and students lose motivation and confidence right from the beginning. Unwittingly, out of disillusionment, they develop a distaste for a novel piece, which is generally the source of information and knowledge. As readers have a deep-seated panic in going through the unseen piece of writing, they cannot insert new trends of thought into their interpretation. Hence, their analysis and interpretation contain no novelty and nuances.

## V. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF SECONDARY LEVEL CLASS OBSERVATION

This part consists of the analysis and interpretation of the data collected by the researcher through the class observation of the teachers. The researcher composed the response after class observation. Then he changed the qualitative information into a percentage. The following table shows the teacher's performance vis-à-vis the strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom.



Table 2: Class Observation

S.N.	Class Observation Check Lists	Yes		No	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	Does the teacher ask the students to read aloud the poem?	7	70	3	30
2	Does the teacher ask the students to guess the title of the poem?	3	30	7	70
3	Does the teacher paraphrase the poem in a few sentences?	9	90	1	10
4	Does the teacher make the students familiar with the theme of the poem?	7	70	3	30
5	Does the teacher ask the students to find out the figurative use of language like simile, metaphor, and personification in the poem?	3	30	7	70
6	Does the teacher ask the students to find out the sensory organs that the words of the poem appeal?	2	20	8	80
7	Does the teacher ask the students to identify the rhyme scheme of the poem?	1	10	9	90
8	Does the teacher ask the students to find out alliteration and assonance in the poem?	1	10	9	90
9	Does the teacher ask the questions individually to count the punctuation marks in the middle and end of line?	0	0	10	100
10	Does the teacher ask the students to write their own poem and share with friends?	0	0	10	100

(Secondary level class observation in January-February, 2020)

The researcher testified what different strategies the teachers practiced inside the classroom. Seventy percent of teachers asked the students to recite the poem, whereas thirty percent evaded this method. Most of the teachers used this strategy. Only thirty percent asked the students to guess the title of the text. Seventy percent of teachers did not ask the students to speculate the title of the verse. The percentage of teachers who paraphrased the poem stood at ninety. For seventy percent, telling the theme of the poem to students was the best choice to initiate them into the poem. Only thirty percent of teachers asked their students to find out figures of speech. Still less, twenty percent, told the students to recognize sound patterns creating words. Ten percent of teachers told their students to identify the form of the verse. In the same way, only ten percent of teachers conversed about the music of the poems. None of the teachers discussed the use and function of punctuation marks. Not even a single teacher motivated the learners to write the rhymes. Classroom interactions reveal teachers' emphasis on the theme and meaning of the poem. They do have the feeling that they end up using the same technique repeatedly. The main aim is only to find out the theme and meaning of the text. This perennial focus on the thematic dynamism has actually rendered poetic reading more frustrating and less fulfilling.

The classroom verification revealed that of the ten strategies, the most common and frequently adopted three activities included synopsis writing,

theme presentation, and recitation. As mentioned earlier, the success and failure of teaching depend on how well and to what extent teachers concerned execute all the ten strategies. Teachers have the feeling that teaching poetry means a line by line paraphrasing. Because the teachers are not aware of the importance of additional practices, they did not take them seriously. Had they been aware a few other strategies, they would have used. Indeed, some techniques like, the title speculation, are the best warming up and a compelling method that not only trickles curiosity among students but also makes the entire poetry reading a collective endeavor. For teachers, teaching means paraphrasing the lines of the poem. It is, therefore, imperative to revamp the current techniques of instruction and to adopt a holistic approach encompassing new trends of instruction. Teachers have miscalculated the value of their teaching and ways of teaching poetry. Refusing to acknowledge recent changes harms strategic response. The current practice has failed to make students learn through fun. Consequently, the instruction techniques are under question. Strategic announcements are short but memories of strategic failure are long. Therefore, teachers have to leap to strategic surprises. Premeditation is a hard choice but helps to bring better results.

## VI. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The project unearthed a new scenario about how the teachers of the designated schools of Dang

teach poetry to their students. This article informs the practice that teachers have conducted in Dang, Nepal. Even though Dang is at a much advantageous and privileged position in terms of transportation accessibility and academic accomplishment, teachers' performance level is less satisfactory. The observation testified that they only applied three strategies in their classroom. Their preferred method was paraphrasing. If the policy of the country is to make education professional and knowledge-based and students centric, the existing teaching practice, as indicated in Dang can never head in the direction of that professed national policy. Although teaching and learning are equally important, the trend in all the schools investigated tells a rather grim story. For various reasons, teachers are always either under pressure or in a hurry to finish the course. Due to such constraints, teaching betrayed the avowed objective of the curriculum. To address this phenomenon, the local level government has to chart out objective criteria to measure the level of learning. Therefore, the local government should take the initiative that yearly professional training for subjective teachers has to be the policy of the local government. Apart from this, newly appointed teachers need at least one month's professional development training related to the techniques of teaching in the class. The present phenomena of teaching have to offer a perspective for the future generation. Teachers have to plan and implement strategies systematically. What we have done so far is only the tip of the iceberg. Based on the knowledge and implement immediate modification is the demand of the time. We should not delay changing the existing strategy for the betterment of the coming generations.

The teachers of English poetry at Dang focused only on a few techniques in teaching verse. The researcher found out that they only resort to paraphrasing and finding meaning. Apart from this, the other strategy used is recitation. Based on the first-hand observation, the researcher charted out ten strategies that the teachers of target school can use to teach poetry effectively. Therefore, the conclusion has the premise that the teaching verse becomes enriching and highly gratifying if the teachers employ all the ten strategies that this researcher have pointed out. Without a leap in the mindset of the teachers, it is too difficult to modify. Articulation of personal experiences with the colleagues gives new insight. So teachers have to be communication with colleagues for primary improvements. Psychology of children as well has to move hand in hand the educational sociology of the nation. Otherwise, there is regular blame to the teachers that, in turn, demotivates them to be researchers. The schooling system has been oriented towards skill to accomplish the course for mechanical testing.

Freethinking of teachers during the class is beyond imagination. They are devoid of creativity and freethinking. The anonymous figure hits hammer on their head. Consequently, teaching becomes stereotypical.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

To orient teachers to use the strategies pointed out in this work, it is necessary to conduct subject-based professional training to encourage them to use these in the classroom. Apart from this, every year, the Municipality concerned should conduct subject-based refreshment training to keep them abreast of the emerging pedagogic trends. Newly appointed teachers need at least one-month of specialized training related to the strategies of instruction in the class to enable them to adopt a holistic approach of teaching. Temporary and contract-based teachers have low morale and feel a deep sense of professional insecurity. Such a dismal situation does not create any positive academic ambiance. This issue also needs an immediate solution. Overall, it is imperative to bring all the stakeholders on board, so that teaching in Dang becomes effective.

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