

# Developing Writing Skills through Reading Culture at Secondary level

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**Abstract-** This article is about the reading culture which helps learners to enhance writing skills in English at secondary level. Reading is a lifelong process that plays an integral role of beginner learners. This is a narrative inquiry research design in which I have selected 5 English teachers from five community schools from Kathmandu district through purposive non-random sampling procedure as sample for this study. Narrative inquiry has been used as a tool to collect the data from the respondents. Qualitative research approach has been adopted to analyze and interpret the data in this study. Main findings of this study are: reading culture helps in improving vocabulary, cultivating writing skills, using of the subordinate clauses correctly, using of mechanics, graphology properly, and developing critical and creative thinking skills particularly, through the reading of short stories during free time. Culturally associated traditional stories help them to extend their horizon of knowledge through the reading culture.

**Index Terms-** reading culture, life long process, narrative inquiry, cultivating, and culturally associated

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is the main source of internalizing facts, knowledge and information. It is known that the more students read the better they become at it. Eskey (1986) argues that reading can be developed by means of extensive and continual reading. Students can learn to read, and read better only by reading non-prescribed books extensively, such as short stories, poems, fairy tales, film stories etc. which can be finished in one single sitting. The reading materials should be monitored and censored by the mechanism of each public school to develop the culture of reading. The school administration should provide a mini library, book corner and box of books each class to promote reading habits of the students. The students can read any reading materials in leisure/spare period. Furthermore, the school can allocate an hour either before or after the school hour to create the atmosphere conducive to every student for reading. There would be virtuous and vicious circle groups in each class. The virtuous circle groups enjoy reading books as much as possible whereas vicious circle groups do not enjoy reading books due to the lack of accesses and sources. The virtuous circle groups outsmart the vicious circle groups in every aspect of reading. The vicious circle groups realize the difficulty to get good marks due to ignoring the reading. Reading is an interactive process consisting of inferring, knowing correct sounds and comprehension (Kamhi Catts, 2008).

Reading is a lifelong activity. It plays an integral role in education of individual, particularly in the life of children. In fact, it is an essential part of children which cannot be excluded from the early life of very young children. Reading is a basic life skill of them which is a cornerstone for success in school in their early lives. Without developing critical reading adequately, there is less opportunities of getting success in various walks of lives of children. Akindele (2012) argues that 'reading creates a good foundation and inspiration for the development and education of children. It awakens children's interests in books which help to cultivate a reading culture in them for a push to future an academic excellence. It nurtures human mind by rendering the information and insights of different subject matters and the world. Children require being proficient in reading for them to carry out their assigned task. Reading culture can promote a reading habit of the children to enhance their hidden potentialities. It boosts their power of thinking for new innovation and development of personal talents.

Children's psychological and cognitive development occur rapidly and incessantly in their puberty age so they need as much as motivating reading materials as they can. Massive reading input should be provided to the children to broaden their cognition. Young (1996, as cited in Akindele, 2012, p. 2) argues "research has shown half of a person's intelligence potential is developed by age four and early." Childhood interventions can have a lasting effect on intellectual capacity personality and social behavior. Cultivating reading culture should be initiated from birth of children and book can be considered as the third parent of a child (Akindele, 2012). If the books are thought to be the loving parents of children, the books will be essential elements of their life. Reading culture is based on the spirit of collaborative and cooperative learning. It is essential to know the world: both the real world and the fantasy world. Rosenberg (2002) adds that without the opportunity to read widely, what is taught in the classroom is not reinforced and the quality and performance of the benefit of education that are endangered. Reading culture accelerates the wide reading of the students in which they get an opportunity to bring quality on their academic learning performance. Without wide reading, students cannot develop skills of locating, selecting, organizing, manipulating, and analyzing, evaluating and processing information. Reading culture makes the students' self-motivated learners, automatization in learning; develop the self-reliant quality in learners. It is important to encourage a reading habit so that students grow up mentally to be able to fulfill their potentialities at every level. Krashen (1983) states that extensive

reading helps to develop a good writing style, and adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and become good spellers. The reading ability of the students will be enhanced if the teachers share their reading experiences with the students. The difficulty of reading in terms of language and content can be facilitated by the teachers if they continue the culture of reading (Comeyras & Mazile, 2011). There is very poor reading culture in the school of Nepal. Dlamini (2003) argues that main cause of poor reading culture is that students come from a non-reading culture both at home and at basic school. Marinho (2003, p. 8) states "problems of reading failures are unhealthy learning environment, excessive reliance on government, poor quality of educational input and unavailability of books reading widely and pleasure." Furthermore, there are some other causes of poor reading culture in school level, such as lack of electricity, poor reading materials and lack of motivation to the students by teachers and parents (Sisulu, 2004).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive reading is generally involves reading of large quantities of materials for enough understanding. The extensive reading programme is supplementary class library scheme attached to an English course in which students are provided encouragement and materials to read pleurably at their own levels as many books as they can without the pressure of testing and marking. Carrel and Carson (1997) argue that extensive reading is a rapid reading of large quantities and longer reading for general understanding with focus on meaning of what is being read rather than the language. In extensive reading, the learners are given the sufficient time to read pleurably as many books as they can without caring the contents and grammar. The job of teachers is to provide the motivation and monitoring whether the learners have read the maximum number of books. There should be freedom of choices of any time of books to read for their entertainment and pleasure. Literary merit and grammatical accuracy are not given any priority while reading novels and short stories. The students can read not for knowing contents but it is for entertainment and additional knowledge and that could be supplementary for their course. Thus, teachers encourage and motivate to their learners to read other books and provide opportunities to use library and reading corner.

The nature of extensive reading will vary with students' motivation and institutional resources in which students can read a large quantity of materials either short stories or novels, newspaper and magazine articles or other professional reading. The habit of reading refers to students' engagement on reading individually and independently. One of the fundamental conditions of the successful extensive reading is that students should understand the reading materials comfortably and delightfully. Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis emphasizes on the right comprehensible reading materials to promote L2 acquisition. The fluent readers are good writers because they can internalize a large amount of vocabulary items, various syntactic structures, and content knowledge through reading a number of books, magazines, articles etc. The students do not pick up all of the information what is available in the book; however, they subconsciously internalize vocabulary, spelling, grammatical patterns and meaning what they need.

Therefore, the subject matter of reading materials should be highly interesting and relevancies to the readers. The interests and background knowledge of the readers play a vital role to comprehend at a reasonable rate and keep on involving them in the reading materials.

Flower and Hayes (1980) assert that good writers have sufficient tacit knowledge conventional or formal features of reader-based prose that they can call on more options that can be used to organize and express their ideas. Krashen (1982) states that writing skill is not learned, but can be acquired through extensive reading in which focus of readers is on the content or message. He says that all the required grammatical structures and discourse and rules for writing can spontaneously be offered to the writers in adequate quantity. Writing competence can be developed through extensive reading whereas practice on writing helps to develop writing performance. Coady (1997) argues that extensive reading helps the beginners to develop new vocabulary items in English. The graded readers can be able to read the authentic materials independently.

Extensive reading provides the readers with required input for good writing. These inputs should be contextual meaning and comprehensive so as to enable them in their writing skills. The reading inputs should be relevant and interesting to their everyday activities. Furthermore, extensive reading helps the L1 and L2 learners in developing reading, writing, vocabulary and speaking skills. According to Rao (2008), principles of extensive reading are improvement of writing, developing vocabulary, grammatical structure, coherent, and cohesion.

## III. SHORT STORY

There are four forms of literature, such as poem, drama, fiction, and essay. The fiction consists of short story and novel. Short story is a fictional creative and narrative work of art which is written in prosaic form with reflection and criticism of human behaviors, social reflection and human ranging in length from about 500 words to 1500 words. Short story can be read in a single sitting with approximately less than half dozen of characters. There are two types of short stories, such as modern short stories and traditional short stories. According to Abrams (2000), there are six types of short stories under traditional short stories which are myths, legends, fables, parables, fairy tales and folk tales. Abrams argues that fairy tales are the sub-branches of folk tales which is a short narrative in prose of unknown authorship which has been transmitted orally from generation to generation. Abrams (2000, p.295) defines " a short story is a brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well." There is well organization of action, thought, and dialogue of its characters into the artful structure of a plot which is directed towards the effects on the readers.

Short fiction becomes very popular among the busy postmodern readers due to its striking contents narrated rhetorically. It is an artistic narration made up of tricky plan which differs from the long fiction/novel owing to its brevity, singleness of unity and simplicity. It has brevity in number of characters, dialogues, and selections of words. It contains very brief plot, setting, style, dialogue and character. There is unity of place, time and action in the short story. Simplicity is another special feature

of short story. Modern short story is very humorous, satirical, ironic, comic, and tragic reflects different aspects of human life and human society. Lazar (1993, p.14) argues that the main advantages of using short story in the language classroom for reading materials are as follows:

- It is very motivating.
- It is authentic materials.
- It has general educational value.
- It is found in many syllabuses.
- It helps students to understand another culture.
- It is a stimulus for language acquisition.
- It develops students' interpretative abilities.
- Students enjoy it and it is fun.
- It is highly valued and has a high status.
- It expands students' language awareness.
- It encourages students to talk about their opinions and feelings.

In facts, short story helps second language learners acquire English language interesting and lively. The learners can know the knowledge of social sciences, history, mythology, philosophy, culture, politics, and religion through the exposure of short stories like folk tales, fairy tales, Fables etc. Moreover, it helps the students develop critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills, and skills of argument,

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

This is a narrative inquiry research design in which I have selected 5 English teachers from Kathmandu district viz. Janasewa Secondary School, Mangal Secondary School, Shree Taudaha Rastriya Secondary School, Shree Neel Barahai Secondary School, and Jana Prabhat Secondary Schools through purposive non-random sampling procedure as sample for this study. Narrative inquiry was adopted as a tool to collect the data from the respondents. I have adopted qualitative research approach to analyze and interpret the data in this study. Instead of genuine names, I have given the pseudo ones to maintain the confidentiality of my study while collecting data from them. To share their experiences freely without any pressure and stress, I created conducive environment during the data collection. I have even ensured them that their information would not be misused and twisted for any other purposes beyond this study. I prepared the guideline questionnaire for employing narrative inquiry as tool to the teachers. I have transcribed the recorded interview into written text. To maintain the trustworthy and authenticity of the raw data member check was used (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

#### V. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Five English teachers from five schools were employed narrative inquiry as a tool to get data regarding their perceptions on the impact of reading culture in developing writing skills which are analyzed and interpreted descriptively. Reading of non-textual books, such as fairy tales fables, folk tales, parables etc. help the students to motivate towards reading. They are excited with the contents of the stories since the subject matter of short stories are

imaginative, tricky, humorous and laughter. The contents of traditional stories are full of pleasure and delightful.

#### VI. IMPROVE VOCABULARY THROUGH SHORT STORIES

Vocabulary is very essential aspect of second language learning. The learners were given a few numbers of the stories, such as Half the Reward, Birbal Betrays Himself, Birbal Denies Rumour, Birbal Indentifies the Thief, Birbal Outwits the Cheat, Birbal Returns Home, Birbal Shortens the Road, Birbal's Sweet Reply, Identify the Guest, Birbal's Daughter etc. which were selected from 100 Wise Tales of Akabar & Birbal. *One of the respondents T2 states that before starting reading of short stories, students cannot use appropriate vocabulary while speaking and writing. However, they began to use new vocabularies after a month of starting reading these short stories. When students were provided substantial number of books of Fairy Tales such as Hansel and Gretel, The Emperor's New Clothes, Little Red Riding Hood, Alice in Wonderland, The Pied Piper of Hamelin, Beauty and the Beast etc. they read them in their leisure time interestingly. He observed that some of the students began to come one hour earlier in school and started reading the aforementioned stories from fairy tales and folk tales. Some of the students used to read selected impressive and interesting stories from fairy tales and folk tales. They picked up some of the words from the stories and started using contextually with their friends. The learners even shared the vocabularies which they learnt from the stories and shared with their friends while playing. Coady (1997) argues that extensive reading helps the beginners to develop new vocabulary items in English. T3 argued that if they acquired more vocabularies they can communicate with each other even if they don't know the grammatical structures. They can use the vocabularies in similar situation like in the stories in their practical life. It can be inferred that learners can learn more vocabulary items from reading the traditional stories which are familiar to their culture. Krashen (1983) states that extensive reading helps them to develop a good writing style, and adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and become good spellers.*

#### VII. READING SHORT STORIES FOR PLEASURE

The young learners are guided by pleasure principle in their young age. They prefer reading of fantasy, magical, and ghost stories which are fascinating and humorous. *In this regard, T1 states that he has given them to read 100 Fascinating Tales of Aesop's Fables which have different fables, such as The Leopard and the Shepherds, The Ass and the Charger, The Old Man and Death, The Wolf and the Ass, The Fox and the Wolf etc. There are animated characters in fables which are very interesting and unreal and beyond the day to day life. The students were easily fascinated with these fables. Akindele (2012) argues that 'reading creates a good foundation and inspiration for the development and education of children. When the students were tired of doing ritual homework, and classwork, they can be excited and refreshed with these stories. Some of short stories are full of humor and laughter. They were really delighted with the subject matter and actions in the stores. They were very excited with the fables in which birds and animals are animated.*

### VIII. ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS THROUGH READING FAIRY TALES, FOLK TALES AND FABLES

One of the respondents T2 argues that the learners were extremely motivated to read Aesop's Fables, Fairy Tales, and folk tales. They subconsciously grasped some of the knowledge of mechanics, such as comma, semi-colon, colon, single inverted comma, double inverted comma, full stop, hyphen etc. The using of mechanics or punctuation is a part of writing skills. Krashen (1982) states that writing skill is not learned, but can be acquired through extensive reading in which focus of readers is on the content or message. In this regard, T4 argues that most of the learners developed the proper use of punctuation through the reading rather than teaching in the classroom. The learners used correct use of tense, articles, preposition, parts of speech in course of reading these traditional stories. The T3 argues that generally the learners easily acquire the use of mechanics, graphology through the reading of short stories particularly fable, fairy tales, folk tales during free time. In fact, the traditional short stories are motivating and curious to the teenage learners so they read such stories interestingly. Writing skill can be acquired through the extensive reading. According to Rao (2008), principles of extensive reading are the improvement of writing, developing vocabulary, grammatical structure, coherent, and cohesion.

### IX. DEVELOP CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Development of critical thinking is essential for the secondary level students to develop writing skills. When they read traditional stories, their faculty of imagination can be developed. Most of the content of fairy tales, folk tales, and fables are unreal and beyond the human society. One of respondents T5 strongly claims that students' abilities of arguments, logics, and imagination would be cultivated through reading of culturally embedded stories, such as Birbal the Wise, Birbal and Akbar's Ring, Birbal and the Thief, Birbal's, Ready Wit, Birbal and the Astrologer, Akbar's Meeting with Birbal, Flowers for Akbar, Akbar's Five Questions, Quick-Witted Birbal and so on. In this regard, T2 says that reading such culturally associated stories help them to extend their horizon of knowledge. The young learners can apply some of the abilities, witty techniques and intelligence applied by the main protagonists of the reader. Without wide reading, students cannot develop skills of locating, selecting, organizing, manipulating, and analyzing, evaluating and processing information (Rosenberg, 2002). Extensive reading culture helps the learners to extend their faculty of imagination. When learners read the different technique of solving the problems of the main protagonist in the story, they can apply these techniques in their daily lives as well. Intelligence of learners can be enhanced through the reading a large quantity of books beside their course books.

### X. INCREASE MOTIVATION THROUGH SHORT STORIES

Traditional short stories are unique and typical type of contents which fascinate the most of the young learners. Young learners enjoy reading the short stories since reading short stories

are very funny, motivating, and full of enjoyment (Lazar, 1993). One of the respondents T3 argues that students of his class are very motivating and enthusiastic to read such traditionally embedded stories. They even gave up playing when they got stories to read. They used to share the main contents of those short stories with their friends interestingly. Reading fairy tales increase the motivation of the students in learning foreign language.

### XI. FINDINGS

Main finding of this study are: reading culture helps in improving vocabulary, cultivating writing skills, using of the subordinate clauses correctly, using of mechanics and graphology properly, and developing critical and creative thinking skills particularly, through the reading of short stories during free time. Culturally associated traditional stories help them to extend their horizon of knowledge through the reading culture. Furthermore, students' faculty of imagination has been developed through extensive reading of fairy tales, folk tales and fables.

### XII. CONCLUSION

The vocabulary, grammar, and writing styles of the students would be developed through the reading of traditional short stories in their leisure period at school. Most of the culturally embedded contents of fairy tales, folk tales, and fables are unreal and beyond the human society so their cognition, metacognition along with language skills could be enhanced through such study. The students' abilities of arguments, logics, and imaginative would be increased through reading of culturally embedded folk tales. As a result, their writing skills would be developed.

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