RESEARCH ARTICLE

Use of Ethnic Stories to Enhance Writing Skill of ESL Learners at the Secondary Level: An Action Research

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Abstract: This participatory action research (PAR) study investigated the use of ethnic stories to enhance writing skills among secondary-level ESL learners in Nepal. The study was grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy, and it addressed gaps in traditional writing instruction, which usually depends on foreign stories disconnected from students' lived experiences. The study was conducted for eight weeks. Participants included 70 students and two teachers who participated in an intervention that integrated ethnic stories into writing tasks. The intervention focused on grammar, organization, coherence, and cohesion. Classroom observation, focus group discussion, and students' writing samples were the primary sources of data collection. Findings showed significant improvements in student engagement and writing proficiency when ethnic stories provided facilitation for structuring their ideas and developing cultural pride. Initial difficulties in formalising oral stories into written formats and teachers' need for additional training were identified as challenges for teaching writing using ethnic stories. The study focused on the application of ethnic stories in the ESL context, connecting with theories of liberatory education and ethnic studies. The study recommends institutional support for teacher training and expanding such interventions to other linguistic and cultural settings. This research contributes to global conversations on equitable pedagogy by demonstrating how centring students' identities in curricula can democratise learning and improve academic outcomes.

Keywords: ESL writing, ethnic stories, participatory action research, culturally responsive pedagogy

1 Introduction

English is taught as a core subject up to the secondary level in Nepal. Students in Nepal learn English from Pre-Primary to university level. The main purpose of teaching English in Nepal is to develop competency in language skills and aspects [1]. English teachers take teaching writing in the English language as a scary and challenging task [2]. Writing skills have been less emphasized into the classroom practice. Karki (2019) [3] mentions that there is a gap between the existing classroom practices and the policy of teaching writing in the English language teaching (ELT) classroom. The study disclosed that the majority of the English teachers focused on scoring good marks in the final examination by following the product approach of teaching writing. The obstacles such as large class sizes, pressure to complete the course in time, less proficient learners, and a lack of necessary instructional materials, appear in teaching writing and teachers' training for writing skills, although the teachers have wished to implement the collaborative writing process into class. These facts show that a teacher alone cannot do anything to improve the writing skills at the policy level in an ELT classroom, but a teacher can apply appropriate teaching techniques and resources to improve learners' writing skills in ELT classrooms. For example, storytelling is broadly used in the English as foreign language (EFL) teaching context; however, limited studies in Nepal have been conducted to explore the uses of ethnic stories to enhance writing skills. This study examines how culturally relevant stories affect learners' engagement and organization in writing tasks.

The present article has a clear objective: to study teachers' actions of using ethnic stories in the ELT classroom while teaching writing skills at the secondary level. Specifically, the authors have tried to answer the question, "How does the integration of ethnic stories affect ESL students' engagement and writing skills?" using participatory action research. To complete this action research, I discussed related literature published in Nepal and abroad, which help

us to find out the research gap and theoretical knowledge of teaching writing. Then, we used intervention for 20 days to discover the consequences appeared in teaching writing skills in a secondary class.

2   Review of Related Literature

Application of short stories as writing activities into ELT classroom provided a framework for this study. The idea of applying stories has been advocated by ELT scholars. Seo and Kim stated:

Seo and Kim explained literature as one of the useful sources of teaching language skills. Learning through literature in the twentieth century adds up to learners' moral values and society into learning language skills. It keeps the idea of social issues incorporating into the curriculum and syllabus of language learning. Literature will create scaffold for fortifying writing through maintaining coherent. The coherence delivers the meaning with effective and sensible way. The philosophy behind literature based instruction in English Language Teaching is unification of the Literature is an authentic and effective source of teaching language in EFL classrooms. Coherent and experts writing is exposed to the learners which will support them for better writing and facilitation on students' creative and critical writing skill. Seo & Kim (2020) [4] focus on the idea behind experiential and developing social awareness through real like exposure. In other words, literature facilitates learners by exposing real like content found in their society. Moreover, literature adds life in learning which motivates the learners with reflection for creative and critical writing (pp.119-139).

Curammeng et al. (2016) [5] discuss established academic institution has developed the ethnic studies as an innovative tools of literature that encourages learners' learning of language skills and action in the world. Moreover, such institutions provide service for learners to self-actualize and attain personal and academic goal by providing creative, purposeful and practical academic training for future social justice educators. In addition, Cabrera et al. (2013) [6] say ethnic studies affects students' learning positively by connecting them into their own society. Similarly, Curammeng et al. (2016) [5] realized that the use of folktale into ESL classroom expose important problem for students to understand which offered to create insight for deeper understanding about culture and a medium to create a counter narratives and possible application in learners' life. Camangian (2010) [7] explained that ethnic stories could create transformative idea to solve problem that will address learners' real life problems.

Ethnic stories may be used as a source of inspiration for learning English as second language in classroom. It can be used to bring social and cultural issues into the classroom which may expose the possible solutions in the learners' real life. Ethnic stories create learners' insights and develop critical thinking on social and cultural issues. In addition, ethnic stories motivate the learners towards learning. Teaching through literature may support improving writing abilities by exposing coherence and cohesion to the learners. Ethnic stories as a literary content in teaching second language brings learning platform of content, style, theme and organization of text. Ethnic stories can be argued as incomparably motivating and authentic source of writing.

2.1   Importance of Writing Skills in Education

Writing skills in this study refers to components such as grammar, organizations, vocabulary and coherence in written English which can be developed through writing based activities on ethnic stories. Oktaviana et al. (2022) [8] argued that culturally meaningful short stories in English classroom can be used to facilitate learners by exercise for example summarizing, reflection and retelling of the stories. The exercises can improve sentence structure, vocabulary, cohesion and coherence in writing. Academic writing is an essential for achievement in higher education in spite of the challenges and difficulties faced by the learners' during schooling [9]. Moreover, writing promotes ESL learners' ability of communication through exposing ideas, feelings and thoughts [10]. In addition, writing skills engage the learners into the meaningful communication with peers, friends, family, and teachers and so on [11]. Writing skill sets a strong base for effective language acquisition. Effective language acquisition consists of expression of thoughts, experiences and ideas delivered with clarity and coherent way [12]. Writing skill does not only consist of linguistics competency but also requires cognitive processing such as analytical skill and critical thinking so teaching of writing skill needs active engagement of learners in the whole process of structuring well-formed sentences and organizing the ideas in a logical way. Similarly, Jokhio et al. (2020) [13] view writing skill

as a gateway to improve cognitive competences which can enrich the learning experiences of language learners. Moreover, writing skill has a vital role of enhancing language proficiency for effective communication with the use of correct vocabulary, grammatical sentence structure and acceptable semantics.

2.2   Positive Impact of Ethnic Stories in Enhancing Writing Skill

Several studies have found the importance of culturally relevant stories to improve learners' writing skills in ESL contexts. For example, Haliem (2020) [14] found that short stories connected with cultural and personal aspects facilitate language development, motivation towards language learning and classroom engagement. In language learning. Moreover, Lomi et al. (2024) [15] highlighted that storytelling rooted in local culture supports to organize thoughts coherently by the use of accurate vocabulary and grammar structure. Similarly, Sadri and Alvindi (2025) [16] found that the link between cultural familiarity and linguistic practices enables the learners to minimize the gap between personal experiences and writing tasks. Integration of ethnic stories in English classroom develops learners' cultural identity and pride and builds up intrinsic motivation for writing. Ethnic studies has been started from the Third World Liberation Front Movement, self-determination, decolonization and anti –racism which have raised the issues of quality education in relating with experience of indigenous context of the learners [5]. The teaching of writing skills with the use of ethnic stories develops positive impact on the leaners as it consists of native cultural context and identity. Attia (2023) [17] argued that ethnic stories should be critically selected in ESL teaching so that they can offer rich information on individual differences and connected cultural backgrounds. He emphasized the high qualities of ethnic stories where the stories and illustration accurately reflect the culture and community consisting of original dialogues of majorities and minorities representations of the society. The representations enhance pride and cultural identity that inspire the learners to engage in writing tasks. The use of ethnic stories does not only expose learners to culture but also develops competencies of rhetoric, story-telling and narratives. Moreover, Sanczyk (2020) [18] advocated that the positive impact of ethnic stories in ESL classroom goes along with cultural and practical appreciation of writing proficiency with a wide range of characters, themes and setting which offers various prompts of writing exercises. Such stories make the ESL learners engage into the producing crafts of essays, narratives and composition skill. Similarly, Abduramanova and Rasulmetova (2020) [19] argued that the exposure of ethnic stories brings traditions and experimentation of real language use which expands vocabularies and syntax. Moreover, they believe that integration of ethnic stories is seen as a powerful pedagogical tool to enhance writing skill and cultural understanding of ESL learners.

The positive impact of using ethnic stories in teaching writing skills is marked in both practical writing proficiency and cultural enrichment. The inclusion of various narratives develops learners' connection to the resources, enhances cultural identity and pride. As a result, it inspires effective engagement in writing and encourage exploring different themes, characters and contexts. The use of ethnic stories promotes the clear understanding of elements of storytelling and reflection for writing as positive outcomes. In Nepali context, translating cultural narratives and ethnic stories are rich and diverse which can be beneficial for making English teaching more authentic and contextual.

2.3   Innovative Approaches to Teaching of Writing Skill

The ELT and ESL field has gone through the application of innovative approaches to teach writing skills. The innovative approaches are updated from the experiences of traditional teaching approaches. They are supposed to deal with needs of learners. As the world is growing up with the development of ICT, ESL classroom cannot be separated from the use of ICT in teaching. One innovative approach is the use of technology in teaching writing skills. Tze Pheng et al. (2021) [20] argued that technology is beneficial tool which can support the students to enhance writing skills easily. The study has explained the technology to present, monitor and provide interactive feedback through the use of various sorts of communication channels such as social media. Moreover, according to Iskandar (2020) [21] the integration of social media into the technology may inspire and motivate the learners in learning writing skills such as Facebook for producing creative comments on any posts. Similarly, Wil et al. (2019) [22] found that students have positively accepted and responded to the use of social media to improve writing skills. The study claimed that integration of social media has positive impact such as setting enjoyment and facilitation in the writing process. The technological development not only replaces limitations of traditional paper-pencil task but also enhances the digital literacy needed at contemporary learning society.

Moreover, genre-based writing instruction is the result of pedagogical shifts. Nordin (2017) [23] explained that genre-based approach is effective and dynamic method of teaching writing skill that offers learners a comprehensive understanding of various text, genres and capacitating an ability to work on various writing contexts with proficiency and confidence. Pham and Bui (2022) [24] added that genre-based approach emphasizes teaching writing through the exploration of diverse texts such as reports, essay and narratives. The study claimed that genre based approach develops learners' ability to effective communication in various formats of a written context. Genre-based approach enables the learners to adopt writing style according to different contexts. Furthermore, the emergence of integration of ethnic stories as a teaching learning strategy is new innovation in teaching writing skills. Sleeter and Zavala's (2020) [25] ethnic stories collected from various cultural backgrounds provide a rich platform of narratives that can capture the motivation of the learners. Teleky (2001) [26] has earlier stated the importance of ethnic stories in teaching learning activities by serving as prompts for reflective and creative writing exercises which allow the learners to explore native voices and diversities in their surroundings.

2.4   Barriers and Challenges in ESL Writing Instruction

Exploring various research reports has presented countless challenges and barriers which can impact the effectiveness of language learning. Saravanan et al. (2021) [27] claimed that multi linguistic background of learners is the major barriers for teaching writing skill. In such context, the teachers must discover strategies to work with heterogeneity in the ESL classrooms which adjust with flexibility to address needs of heterogeneous learners. Similarly, Seyoum et al. (2022) [28] argued that ESL teacher should create a common foundation for common understanding and needs that can be implemented to cater diversities to teach writing skills.

Another important barrier in teaching writing skill is cultural variation which can affect pattern, expectation and norms. Rashid et al. (2022) [29] claimed that learners may bring various cultural perspectives to the teaching of writing skill that affect the organization, arguments and even the conception required for effective writing. Exploring and Working with such diversity fosters inclusive instructional practices.

So, the integration of ethnic stories may minimize the distance between the learners and culture in which they are learning writing skill. The use of ethnic stories may acknowledge and address challenges and barriers existing in ESL classrooms.

3   Methodology: Design of the Intervention

Ethnic stories were used as instructional material because they are culturally familiar and engaged the learners in meaningful development of writing skills. According to sociocultural theory [30], ethnic stories function as mediating tools that connect language learning to learners' experience through creativity, comprehension and reflection. Moreover, use of writing of ethnic stories empowers the learners to see English is not as foreign imposition but as a medium to express own experiences and culture. Participatory action research (PAR) prioritizes the importance of ongoing experiences to work with the existing problem caused by harmful and unequal social context and for envisioning and applying best alternatives [31]. PAR involves the participation of those people who are experiencing problems and motivate to produce emancipatory social change by creating new knowledge. Moreover, Blair and Minkler (2009) [32] argued that PAR is highly based on the principles of democracy, justice and purposes to democratize knowledge production and to empower those people. PAR stresses on collective investigation and practices based experiences [33]. This PAR study was applied in the two community schools of Hetauda. Using the participatory action research process, community of actions and investigations and addresses queries and issues which are important for those who are involved in this research as co-researchers. This complete study was controlled by three PAR cycles. The first cycle was field visits and need assessments. The second cycle was collection of ethnic stories to be used for teaching writing and the third cycle is completely interventions of ethnic stories in teaching English for writing at the Secondary Level. The study was started from 2024 - April and completely connected to the third cycle. An intervention is connected to use of ethnic stories in teaching writing skill. In classes 8 and 9, we have initiated the use of ethnic stories in teaching writing as an action research in school of Hetauda. All the cycles of the study is closely linked with sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) [30] which explains that learning takes place through social interaction and cultural mediation. In the ESL context, writing about ethnic stories support as cultural artifacts to link language learning in meaning sociocultural context. The PAR cycle consists of collaborative activities such as field visits,

needs assessments, collection of ethnic stories, intervention of ethnic stories and reflections that engage the learners within the zone of proximal development. The learners' engagement gradually collects with scaffolding from teachers and peers. The PAR emphasizes on cycle of social interaction and meaning construction which connects with the sociocultural views that knowledge is constructed through social interactions in a dynamic and social process.

During the intervention stage, two English teachers have taught ethnic stories to eight and nine graders for three periods (one period is equal to forty-five minutes) per week to enhance writing skills in English. The teaching is related to developing the writing skills on organization of contents, language use, grammar and mechanics, coherence and cohesion. The teachers' role is to collect and present the ethnic stories and facilitate engaging the students actively in developing writing practice. The role of the students is to be meaningfully involved in practicing writing tasks in the classrooms.

In this PAR, 70 students, two English teachers and two authors participated which is mentioned in PAR (Table 1). Five focus group discussions were conducted among the groups of students as a part of PAR study. Teachers, Students and authors were participated in formal and informal talks, workshops, discussions and meetings. Moreover, all the participants were actively participated and engaged in teaching and learning of writing skills through the use of ethnic stories three days a week for eight weeks.

Table 1 Comparison of Previous Studies and the Present Study

Study	Context / Participants	Focus / Design	Findings	How the Present Study Differs
Han (2021)	Korean EFL high-school learners	Story-based writing tasks using culturally familiar materials	Improved writing motivation and creativity through narrative scaffolding	The current study employs ethnic Nepali stories and an action-research design focusing on classroom-based intervention
Nguyen (2022)	Vietnamese ESL college students	Folk-tale-based essay writing activities (quasi-experimental)	Enhanced textual coherence and organization in students' essays	Focuses on secondary-level learners using a narrative-inquiry approach to explore lived experiences
Rahman & Karim (2023)	Bangladeshi EFL undergraduates	Use of culturally contextual stories in writing pedagogy	Greater learner engagement and stronger cultural connection in writing tasks	Adds an explicit Nepali cultural-identity dimension within the ELT classroom
Present Study (2025)	Nepali secondary-level students	Ethnic stories integrated through guided writing (participatory action research)	Increased engagement, vocabulary, organization, and coherence in English writing	Extends culturally sustaining pedagogy to the Nepali ESL context, emphasizing ethnic narratives as a motivational medium

In this study, the authors facilitated the research participants through five group discussions to understand the importance of ethnic stories as a strong foundation for writing skill. The curriculum and syllabus of English were discussed in a group to apply the activities as suggested by the curriculum. Teaching and learning activities for writing were connected to organization of contents, language use, grammar and mechanism, coherence and cohesion. There were 70 research participants who actively participated in this participatory action research. Their demographic details regarding their class and gender is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Research Participants

Participants	Male	Female	Total
Grade 8	15	15	30
Grade 9	20	20	40
Teachers	1	1	2
Authors	2		2

As presented in Table 2 the participants comprised male and female from grades 8 and 9. This balanced gender and grade distribution supports to capture variations in writing proficiency of the students. To assess the students writing proficiency across grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence and cohesion a four-point writing proficiency was developed, which is presented in Table 3. Observation protocol [34] and focused group discussion was used to assess learners' engagement. As shown in Table 3, the rubric provides a structured framework for evaluating writing proficiency. This tool clearly identifies the strength and weakness of students writing proficiency.

Table 3   Four-point Writing Proficiency Rubric

| Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Grammar	Error-free or nearly error-free sentences with full control over grammatical structures	A few grammatical errors	Grammatical errors with obscure meaning	Grammatical errors that lack comprehension and show no control over simple structures
Vocabulary	Wide range; precise and clear use of vocabulary	Adequate range; occasional errors in word choice but generally clear meaning	Limited vocabulary; incorrect word forms that affect clarity	Very limited vocabulary and incorrect word choice
Organization	Well-organized sections; logical sequence and accurate transitions	Well-organized sections; logical sequence but weak transitions	Uneven organization; weak logical sequence; incomplete introduction or conclusion	Lacks clear organization; disconnected sequence
Cohesion and Coherence	Clearly expressed ideas; strong coherence and unity	Coherent ideas with few lapses	Insufficiently developed ideas; limited use of cohesive devices	Confusing, underdeveloped, unrelated ideas; lacks coherence

3.1   Participatory Procedure: Practice of action cycle

This study is based on the third cycle of PAR. The cycle consists of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The first phase "Planning" of this cycle had designed activities for intervention of ethnic stories. All the research participants were involved in a series of workshops, meetings and discussion organized in and outside the schools' area. In the second phase "Acting" of this cycle, the collected and constructed ethnic stories were applied in the ELT classrooms. During this stage, the teachers replaced the foreign stories with ethnic stories to connect them with writing skill in English and the students involved in writing tasks. For example, developing a narrative, writing a summary of the story. In the third phase "Observing", the authors observed the students writing and connecting it with writing skills on organization of contents, language use, grammar and mechanism, coherence and cohesion. In the fourth phase "Reflecting", teachers, students and authors discussed the effectiveness of the ethnic stories in developing writing skills and how the designed activities and information of ethnic stories support scaffolding to learn writing in English.

Before the research began, all participating teachers provided written consent, and parents gave permission for their children to take part. Students also gave their assent after the purpose and process of the study were explained in language they could understand. Participation was voluntary, and everyone was informed that they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. All collected data were kept strictly confidential and stored securely by the principal researcher. The study followed the ethical principles of respect, fairness, and care, as highlighted in discussions of NHRC's role in regulating health research in Nepal [35].

4   Action with data: Data Analysis

This study encompasses inputs, activities, mechanisms, and outputs. (Figure 1)
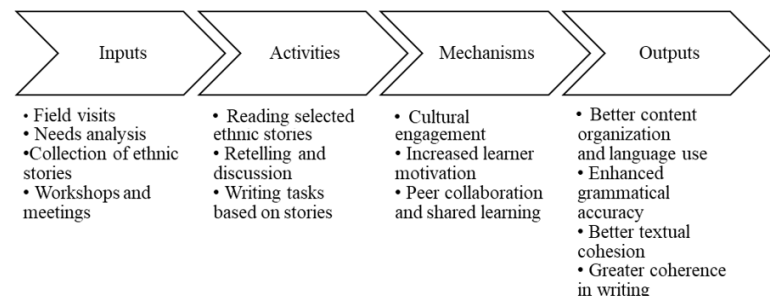
Figure 1   Ethnic Story-Based Language Education: Logical Model for Writing Improvement

4.1   Cycle 1: Field Visits and Needs Assessment

Field visits and assessments of the needs of both students and teachers in two community schools in Hetauda were the primary objectives of the initial cycle of PAR. This phase was

crucial for the establishment of the foundation for the subsequent research cycles. The objective of this cycle was to identify the deficiencies in the current English curriculum, particularly in the area of writing skills, and to investigate the potential of ethnic stories to address these deficiencies. Researchers collected observational data during field visits by attending school meetings, speaking informally with teachers, and visiting classrooms. The primary focus was on comprehending the obstacles that students faced in the development of writing skills, including difficulties with content organization, language usage and accuracy.

Moreover, teachers were interviewed to find out the difficulties they faced when trying to link students with foreign narratives that were different from their culture and daily lives. The discussions that ensued demonstrated a substantial disparity between the cultural contexts of the students and the materials that were present in the classroom. The need assessment revealed that a significant number of students were unable to develop the necessary writing skills due to a lack of interest and engagement with foreign stories. This realization resulted in the introduction of ethnic stories that were more pertinent to the students' cultural and social experiences. Surveys were implemented to further verify these discoveries, with an emphasis on the necessity of instructional materials that were not only academically advantageous but also culturally acceptable to the students. These discoveries served as the base for the development of interventions that used ethnic stories. As a result, the initial cycle showed a clear requirement for more culturally relevant teaching materials in English writing instruction, which served as the groundwork for the intervention in the subsequent phases of the research program.

4.2   Cycle 2: Collection of Ethnic Stories

During the second cycle of the PAR study, the primary objective was to collect and compile ethnic stories from the local community for use as educational resources in English writing classes. The underlying motivation for this cycle was that ethnic stories, which were deeply ingrained in the cultural context of the students, would be an effective method of involving them in writing assignments. During this phase, teachers and authors worked together to identify, collect, and prepare a diverse selection of ethnic stories that could be incorporated into the English curriculum. The process entailed collaborating with community elders, cultural leaders, and other local resources to guarantee that the stories selected were authentic, meaningful, and reflective of the students' cultural heritage.

We organized workshops and meetings to make the teachers familiar with these stories and offer training on how to effectively incorporate them into the classrooms. Teachers participated in the selection process to guarantee that the stories would not only connect with students but also satisfy the educational standards for teaching writing skills. We examined each stories for their potential to develop critical writing skills including coherence, grammar and organization. Teachers deliberated on how to present these stories in a manner that develop critical thinking and creativity in writing with the material.

The stories were organized and applied for different grades with necessary modifications as well as accommodate the students' age and skill level. For example, some narrative writing stories were employed to instruct eighth-grade students, while others were adapted to accommodate ninth-grade students' more sophisticated writing assignments, including summarization and analytical writing. During the intervention phase, this cycle was essential for the provision of culturally relevant content, which guaranteed that the materials were both educational and meaningful to the students.

4.3   Cycle 3: Intervention – Teaching Writing through Ethnic Stories

The intervention stage of the PAR study which involved the integration of the collected ethnic stories into the English writing, was the primary focus of the third cycle. Through content that was culturally significant and linked with students' background, this cycle tried to enhance their writing abilities. Two English teachers, in collaboration with the authors, implemented the intervention in eighth and ninth-grade classrooms over a period of eight weeks. Students participated in three 45-minute sessions each week that featured ethnic narratives. In these sessions, the teachers facilitated the utilization of these stories to instruct a variety of writing skills, such as content organization, language use, grammar, coherence, and cohesion.

In this third cycle, the intervention phase was carefully structured to correspond with the students' educational needs. The use of ethnic stories by teachers in place of foreign stories has fostered a deeper level of understanding among students in their writings. For example, students

were required to compose narrative essays regarding ethnic stories, compose summaries and evaluate the cultural significance of these contents. They helped the students in the writing process by providing guidance on the selection of appropriate language, the organization of their work and the application of grammatical rules.

Based on the observations during this cycle, students were more involved and motivated when they were writing about stories that were close to their own cultural experiences. The ethnic stories served as a foundation, encouraging students to more effectively organize their thoughts in their writing. In addition, the collaborative approach enhanced peer learning through discussions and sharing their viewpoints about the stories in the classrooms. Teachers experienced significant developments in students' writing skills especially in their skills to organize contents, apply grammar and writing mechanics. To conclude, this cycle illustrated that incorporating culturally related content such as ethnic stories, can improve the writing skills of students.

4.4   Focus Group Discussions and Participant Engagement

Five focus group discussions were conducted with students, teachers, and the authors to evaluate the effectiveness of ethnic stories in enhancing writing skills during the research process. The discussions were important for collecting qualitative data regarding participant experiences and the effect of the intervention. Each focus group session encouraged students to share reflection about learning experiences, developing insights into the influence of ethnic stories on engagement with the writing process. Focus groups were conducted following key milestones in the intervention phase to gather immediate insights into the teaching and learning process.

Students showed that the ethnic stories were engaging and improved the relatability and understanding of the writing tasks. Majority of the students indicated that engagement with familiar cultural themes supported for organizing and improving coherence in writing. Teachers and authors contributed to these discussions by offering insights regarding student progress. Students had increased involvement with writing tasks when they were able to link classroom contents to their personal experiences.

The focus group discussions examined the difficulties occurred during the intervention. At first, some students faced difficulties in converting ethnic stories into structured writing formats however, with practice, they demonstrated significant improvement. The collaborative nature of focus group discussions facilitated reflection among researchers, teachers, and students regarding the intervention's strengths and weaknesses. The reflections facilitated prompt adjustments to teaching strategies and ensured the effective integration of ethnic narratives to improve the development of students' writing skills. The focus groups highlighted the necessity of incorporating culturally relevant content into the curriculum to enhance student engagement and improve educational outcomes.

4.5   Reflection and Evaluation

The final phase of the study involved gathering of all participants—students, teachers, and authors—to assess the overall effectiveness of employing ethnic stories as a teaching tool for writing skills. Throughout this phase, the primary emphasis was on evaluation and reflection. The purpose of this phase was to critically assess the intervention's outcomes and to collect feedback on the most successful aspects and the areas that required improvement. Educators and the author engaged in a dialogue to determine the efficacy of ethnic narratives in the promotion of writing abilities. They exchanged their perspectives and experiences. The students clarified that the stories not only develop their interest in writing assignments but also encouraged their confidence in the production of well-organized texts.

The primary focus of the teachers' reflections was the intervention's impact on their teaching practices. They claimed that the utilization of ethnic stories offered a more engaging and meaningful learning context for the writing skill because students were able to connect the stories to their daily lives. This cultural relevance was the cause of the improvements being observed in writing and the increased student involvement. The intervention had successfully addressed the primary obstacles identified during the needs assessment stage, which included the students' difficulties with language use and content organization, as well as the limited availability of culturally relevant teaching materials. Furthermore, they supervised the entire instructional process and the students' progress.

Evaluations were important during the planning and implementation phases to evaluate the

workshops and discussions that took place. This phase aimed at providing recommendation for future research, participants proposed potential integrations of ethnic stories for the improvement of the curriculum. In general, the reflection phase demonstrated that the intervention was effective in improving writing skills by using ethnic stories in teaching writing skill. It also emphasized the needs of maintaining this approach in the future to ensure student engagement for better performance.

5 Findings

The results of the study were developed from the thematic analysis. Their insights focus on how to incorporate ethnic stories into English language teaching in Nepali contexts. The result are enhancements in student engagement and writing skills, as well as the significance of incorporating culturally relevant content into the curriculum.

5.1 Enhanced Student Involvement via Culturally Significant Resources

The study found significant student engagement when ethnic stories were integrated into the teaching of writing English. During the needs assessment phase, it was observed that students had no interest and engagement when presented with writing that incorporated unfamiliar narratives. The materials were not closely linked with their cultural and social contexts, which contributes to the students' lack of motivation. Following the introduction of ethnic stories during the intervention phase, there was a significant increase in participation and interest among learners in writing activities. This finding corresponds with Vygotsky (1978) [30] emphasizing learning as socially and culturally mediated interactions.

During focus group discussions, participants explained that they found ethnic stories were more related to their culture and had more pleasure in writing. The cultural backgrounds of these stories linked person with the writing tasks, enhancing motivation for active engagement in classroom activities. The teachers noticed high motivation and engagement of students in learning. The students had active participation in discussions and sharing experiences about the stories. The increased engagement developed a more interactive and supportive learning environment significantly enhancing the involvement in the writing process.

5.2 Improvement in Writing Skills

The second finding of this study was the significant improvement in students' writing skills. The students improved on language use, grammar, content organisation, coherence, and cohesion. During the intervention, students were regularly assigned tasks such as writing stories, essays, and summaries based on ethnic stories. The regular practice of using culturally relevant content helped students develop a deeper understanding of how to organise effective and meaningful writing. The finding of the study fortifies the idea of Oktaviana et al. (2022) [8] which claims that culturally meaningful stories are directly linked with learners' experiences and facilitates on language use, construction of the sentences and coherence in expression.

The writings collected throughout the intervention revealed smooth, slow, and consistent progress. In the beginning, many students struggled with organising their ideas and using correct grammatical rules. However, by the end of the eight-week intervention, there were improvements in the coherence, clarity, and grammatical accuracy in their writing. The use of ethnic stories sets up a scaffold for supporting and organising their thoughts and connecting writing with their real-life situation. This was especially experienced in writing, where students were able to draw on the structure of the ethnic stories to create well-organised and coherent pieces of writing. The improvement in writing skills has been measured through comparison of mean score between pre- test and post- test.

Table 4 displays the mean scores of grade 8 and grade 9 students in four components of writing proficiency; Grammar, vocabulary, Organization, cohesion and coherence before and after the intervention. In each component of writing skills during mean pre and after the ethnic stories applied in teaching writing, the result is increased by 2 point. For grade students the mean scored increased by 2 points with grammar improving from 3.5 to 5.5, vocabulary improving 5.0 to 7.0, organization improving from 4.8 to 6.8, cohesion and coherence improving from 4.2 to 6.2.A similar pattern was observed in grade 9 students too. The result indicates the progress of both class students after the use of ethnic stories in components of writing proficiency.

Teachers found that students were more confident and comfortable in their writing. The

Table 4 Comparison of Mean Score Between Pre-test and Post-test

Component	Mean score of Grade 8 (pre-test)	Mean score of Grade 8 (post-test)	Mean improvement	Mean score of Grade 9 (pre-test)	Mean score of Grade 9 (post-test)	Mean Improvement
Grammar	3.5	5 .5	2.0	5.5	7.5	2.0
Vocabulary	5.0	7.0	2.0	5.0	7.0	2.0
Organization	4.8	6.8	2.0	5.2	7.2	2.0
Cohesion and Coherence	4.2	6.2	2.0	4.8	6.8	2.0

intervention encouraged them to apply language rules and organisational strategies in a context. The developed confidence made the writing process less scary. This improvement in writing skills was confirmed through both qualitative observations and quantitative assessments using rubrics that evaluated content organisation, grammar, and overall coherence.

5.3   Positive Effects of Teacher Support and Cooperative Learning

The study showed the important role of teachers in promoting the use of ethnic stories to enhance writing proficiency. Teachers, who received training through workshops and participated in the planning and execution phases, were capable of functional instruction to students through the writing assignments. Their role in delivering ethnic stories and developing supportive context for students to express their ideas. The teachers' roles were important for the success of interventions.

Teachers showed that the intervention encouraged them to reevaluate their methodology for teaching writing. The use of cultural materials not only rendered their lessons more captivating but also improved their capacity to engage with students. The collaborative approach of the PAR process facilitated continuous reflection and adjustment of pedagogical strategies, ensuring that the intervention meets student needs. Moreover, the study suggested collaborative learning among students as another positive result in teaching writing skills. Focus group discussions showed that students benefited from the idea of exchange and collaboration on writing assignments. The familiarity of ethnic stories created a sense of community in the classroom, enhancing peer learning and support. This collaboration inspired students to enhance their writing through feedback and discussions, thereby improving their skills.

5.4   Ethnic Stories as a Strategy for Laboratory Learning

The use of ethnic stories enhanced writing proficiency and served as a mechanism for freedom in learning. The main goal of PAR is to introduce social change through involving participants in the knowledge-production process, and this study showed that ethnic stories may be very important to the democracy of learning. Students from minority groups, realized empowerment through the inclusion of their culture and stories in the curriculum. This feeling of inclusion cultivated a greater sense of ownership regarding their learning process. This finding links with the study of Haliem (2020) [14] which believes that culturally ingrained stories encourages learners for deeper reflection and authentic expression.

Students expressed their joy in writing about stories from their culture during informal conversations and focus group discussions. The link between learners' personal experiences and assignments in the classroom has increased their classroom presence and increased their confidence in writing. The study focused on the application of culturally relevant materials, such as ethnic stories that can enhance learners' performance and promote a more inclusive and empowering learning experience for students.

5.5   Challenges and Areas for Improvement

The findings of the study were mostly positive, but some problems were found during the reflection phase. One of the major problems was that some students had problem to transfer ethnic stories into summary and story writing. But students made progress slowly and continuously, teachers had to guide when they moved from telling stories loud to writing formal tasks. Teachers said that students needed extra instruction and exercise to fully master writing skills, when it came to grammar and making sure that ideas flow together.

Another problem was that the teachers already knew many ethnic stories. There were workshops to help them understand and use these stories better, but some teachers thought they needed more time and materials for fully integrating these materials into their lessons. They said that future interventions could use additional training sessions and ongoing support to help teachers improve the ways they use ethnic stories to teach writing.

5.6   Overall Effectiveness and Recommendations

The result of this research showed that ethnic stories were useful to improve writing skills for grades 8 and 9 in Hetauda. The strategy successfully tackled the gaps identified during the needs assessment phase, including low student engagement as well as difficulties in writing organization and grammar. Ethnic stories provide a powerful way of engaging students and enhancing their writing skills through ethnically relevant content. But, Al Amin (2024) [36] found that learners generally faced difficulties with the organization of ideas in context of foreign stories. Thus, the finding of the study contributes to enhancing the perceptions on how culturally connected stories amplify writing skills in English in resources limited and context sensitive classroom. Several recommendations for future research and educational practice can be drawn from the findings. The retention and expansion of culturally relevant materials, including ethnic stories, in the curriculum is essential for maintaining student engagement and enhancing academic performance. It is important to improve training and resources for teachers to ensure they are ready to apply these materials into their classroom procedures. Other research should examine the effects of ethnic stories to develop writing and assess the usability of similar interventions across different subjects and grades.

6   Discussion

Alternative writing activities such as letter writing and essay writing about the local context could also facilitate the development of writing skills and learners' engagement. It recommends adopting an experimental research design to compare the influences of ethnic stories on teaching writing skills. However, this study focuses only on superiority of the intervention of translated ethnic stories into teaching writing skill that significantly promotes learners' engagement in a writing task to develop writing proficiency among secondary students in Nepal. The intervention, based on PAR, revealed that culturally relevant materials such as ethnic stories fill the gap between learners' lived experiences and learners' tasks, promoting motivation for developing writing. These results link the theoretical framework of culturally responsive pedagogy [37] and the transformative potential of ethnic studies [5], which argue that education rooted in students' cultural identities empowers them academically and socially.

The finding of the study suggests that the integration of ethnic stories in teaching writing skill promotes students' ability to apply grammar rules, organize content, and maintain coherence in their writing. This finding is linked with the claim by Seo and Kim's (2020) [4] that use of real, structured models, literature-based instruction scaffolds the development of writing. In spite of having difficulties in initial phase of learning skill with foreign stories, the ethnic stories provided students with a "liberatory" tool [7] that encouraged them to confidently express their ideas. Culturally relevant materials validate learners' identities and give them a voice in academic settings, which is consistent with Attia's (2023) [17] findings. The study also finds problems such as teachers' need for more training to properly use resources regularly and existed learners' difficulties in composing stories from spoken stories. As Saravanan et al. (2021) [27] advocate, these obstacles emphasize the need of continuous professional development and scaffolded teaching. By means of the cooperative PAR model—that included teachers and students as co-researchers—these difficulties were addressed, therefore supporting Blair and Minkler's (2009) [32] focus on democratic knowledge generation in action research.

The findings of the study do not address Nepal's ESL setting. Learners are exposed to multi culture and language inputs, it emphasizes the universal need for curricula to give culturally sustaining pedagogies top priority [38]. Future studies might look at the long-term impacts of ethnic narratives on writing retention or their integration with digital technologies [20] to further democratize education.

7   Conclusion

The study suggests that the ethnic stories are powerful pedagogical tools to enhance writing skills of ESL learners. The focus on students' ethnic stories during the intervention phase has transformed writing from a "scary task" [2] into an engaging and meaningful resource of learning. The PAR approach not only improved writing outcomes—such as organization, grammar, and coherence—but also developed a sense of ownership and pride among students, connecting with the emancipatory goals of ethnic studies [37].

While the study faced limitations, including teachers' adaptation time and students' transitional challenges, its successes advocate for systemic changes in ESL curricula. Policymakers

and concerned authorities should invest in teacher training for culturally relevant resource development, and participatory methodologies to sustain learning. at last, this research contributes to the global dialogue on equitable education by demonstrating that when students see themselves in their learning materials, their academic performance improves. Future studies could expand this model to other disciplines or explore its synergy with technology to amplify impact.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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