

Research Article

English teachers in multilingual classrooms: Ideological stances and experiences

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The multilingual milieu of Nepali classrooms brings tension between the teacher-preferred and student-expected pedagogies in English language classes. English teachers are likely to encounter a subtle inertia in the students regarding English learning. Teachers have to be cautious in such cases to address the linguistic concerns of the students. The present paper delves into the ideological standpoint and experiences of the teachers in multilingual classrooms in Nepal. Based on the responses retrieved from 11 English language teachers teaching in multilingual classrooms, it is found that there are multiple linguistic realities in the class, and teachers realize a dormant tension lying between their preferred pedagogy and students' preferences regarding the selection of the medium of instruction. Teachers' strong belief is that English as the sole medium of instruction for effective English language teaching faces hurdles because of the emergence of multiple language concerns in the classrooms. Teachers accept that despite their beliefs in 'English only' instruction, they shift to translanguaging to explain the content.

Keywords: Teacher ideologies, Translanguaging, Multilingualism, Language concerns, Linguistic capital, Language tension

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1. Introduction

Multilingualism, an inherent reality in Nepali society, also shapes its classrooms. Nepal has historically been a blend of diverse communities, fostering numerous linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and religious groups (Gautam, 2021; Yadava, 2014). Despite linguistic heterogeneity with the presence of 123 linguistic communities, 95.91% of the population speaks 19 languages, and the remaining 4.09% of people speak the remaining 104 languages, uncovering an uneven distribution of languages (Language Commission, 2022). Thus, 56% of the languages spoken here are labelled as endangered (Regmi, 2017).

This distribution disparity can be traced back to the history, particularly to the dominant role of the Nepali language—formerly known as *Parbate Bhasha* or *Gorkha Bhasha*—which was mandated as the language of the nation during the Panchayat regime (1961-90). Proficiency in the Nepali language, during that era, was deemed an essential requirement for education and employment, resulting in the marginalization of minority languages and limiting their use in the public sphere such as education, media, and state administration (Gurung, 2014; Khadka, 2024; Sonntag, 1995; Yadav, 2013).

The multilingual and multicultural landscape of Nepal became evident at the policy level, ensuring conservation of the country's diverse linguistic heritage following the reestablishment of multiparty democracy in 1990 and the political transformation in 2006 (Fillmore, 2020; Sonntag, 1995; Weinberg, 2013). A significant landmark occurred with the Constitution of Nepal 2015 (Nepal Law Society, 2015) as it recognizes all languages that are spoken throughout the territory of Nepal as 'national languages'. This

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represents a significant shift from the earlier constitutional provisions outlined in the Nepal Constitution (1990), which acknowledged Nepali as the only 'language of the nation' while it categorized other languages spoken as mother tongues in various parts of Nepal as 'national languages' (Gautam, 2021).

Notwithstanding the recognition of all languages as 'national languages,' minority languages remain threatened due to the lingering effects of past policies, such as the Report of Nepal National Educational Planning Commission [NNEPC] (1956), which favored Nepali as both the national language and the medium of instruction in schools (Khadka, 2024; Phyak, 2011). Often characterized as internal colonization, this provision privileged Nepali—the language of the ruling elite—over mother tongues in public domains, including media broadcasts, government employment, and official communications, while also discouraging children from minority linguistic communities from using their native languages even at home (Poudel et al., 2022; Sonntag, 1995; Yadav, 2013). Moreover, the modern education system in Nepal, which was influenced by the British Indian education system, has also contributed to this marginalization. Hence, after the political shift in 2006, the discourse of multilingualism, diversity, and the right to mother tongue has gained prominence in the Nepali academic and public spheres, bringing unresolved concerns about linguistic, ethnic, and religious identity to the forefront (Gautam, 2021).

1.1. Multilingualism in Nepal: Past and Now

Multilingualism which is defined as one's proficiency in multiple languages alongside their native language (Haukås et al., 2021), is deemed to be associated with democracy and linguistic diversity and has become a growing concern with the heightened social and political awareness since the People's Movement of 2006 (Gautam & Poudel, 2022). The country has embraced multilingualism to address the inherent pluralities in the political boundaries of the nation; however, since the era of unification, the regions of the *Baise* and *Chaubise* principalities—irrespective of their cultural and linguistic realms—accepted the dominance of the *Khasa* culture and language. As a result, other languages were forced to be limited to non-standard use only (Dahal, 2000). During the Rana oligarchy (1846-1950), the Nepali language was reportedly designated as the official language of court and legal documentation, while procedures conducted in other languages were declared illegal (Weinberg, 2013). In the 1950s, with the embarkment on the democratic journey, languages beyond Nepali—Newari in the Kathmandu Valley and Hindi and Maithili in Terai—were also introduced in schools (Fillmore, 2020; Weinberg, 2013). However, the establishment of the Panchayat system in 1961 formulated the narratives of one nation, one language, establishing the use of the Nepali language nationalism and subsequently pushing other languages to the backstage (Dahal, 2000; Phyak, 2011).

This ended up with the discontinuation of the Panchayat system with the restoration of the multiparty democracy. Nepal Constitution (1990) recognized Nepal as a multiethnic and multilingual country, granting schools the right to teach the mother tongue of the community, which significantly contributed to the strengthening of multilingualism. However, the contradictory provisions in the law hindered its proper execution, owing to non-proactive support from the state (Fillmore, 2020; Sonntag, 1995). This led to language-related grievances rooted in "language as a resource" and "language as a right" perspectives that significantly influenced the sociopolitical landscape of Nepal (Fillmore, 2020).

1.2. Addressing Multilingualism at the Policy Level

After the Peoples' Movement in 2006 overthrew the monarchy and declared Nepal a republic, the new constitution (Nepal Law Society, 2015) addressed diverse cultures, languages, religions, and ethnicities, identifying all mother tongues in Nepal as 'languages of the nation' (Article 6) and designating the Nepali language in the Devanagari script as the official language (Article 7.1). Additionally, provincial governments have the right to determine one or more official languages. Similarly, the law guarantees equal treatment to all languages under the provision of the 'right to equality' (Article 18). Article 32 of the constitution assures the 'right to language and culture'. Under this provision, it has been assured that "Every person and community shall have the right to use their languages" (Article 32.1). Similarly, it has been provisioned in the constitution that it will be the state policy to "promote the national unity while developing mutual cooperative relations between the Federal Units by maintaining mutual cohesion, harmony and solidarity between various castes, tribes, religions, languages, cultures and communities" (Article, 52.2). The present constitution consolidates the status of minority languages in the country, though the need for addressing the multilingual context was estimated almost three decades ago when the National Language Policy Recommendation Commission (1994) submitted a report estimating the linguistic distribution of multiple castes and ethnic groups in the country, attributing mainly five trends; *one-caste-one-language*, *one-caste-several-languages*, *several-castes-one-language*, *one-caste-ethnic-group-and-several-languages*, and *several-castes-*

ethnic-groups-and-one language, recommending teaching of mother tongue as a subject (National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission, 1994).

1.3. Language Ideology of Teachers

As teachers make an integrated part of society, they come into the class with their social, cultural, and emotional beliefs along with values, attitudes, and opinions that "are an important component of instructional decision-making" (Shkedi & Horenczyk, 1995, p. 107). They, like other members of society, hold a particular worldview, which provides a lens through which one visualizes reality and draws meaning. Teachers may not notice the impact of cultures different from their own, which they come across. However, these are the factors that affect the way teachers think and execute their pedagogy in the class (Walker, 2004). A teacher is supposed to hold a particular ideological stance that decides his/her expectations, goals, and beliefs. According to Eagleton (1994), ideology can be understood as a "reflex in the sphere of consciousness of real material conditions" (p. 2). It encompasses both practical and theoretical elements within a social or political philosophy that seeks to explain the world. The ideological stance of an individual is shaped by these social and political conditions.

As the present work deals with the language ideological stand of English teachers, the language ideology is worth discussing here. Though all ideologies are encoded in languages, they, too, have their ideologies, which are "morally and politically loaded representations of the nature, structure, and use of languages in a social world" (Irvine, 1989). For Silverstein (1979), language ideologies are beliefs about language that users use to rationalize or justify their perception of language structure and use. Thus, they are beliefs or feelings about languages as used in their social worlds (Duranti, 2005). Such beliefs and values of teachers may influence their pedagogical decision-making.

The presence of the English language in Nepal can be interpreted from two opposite perspectives. The first perspective views it as a passport to a lucrative status in society, making it a status symbol and a linguistic capital (Bista, 1991; Phyak, 2016; Sah & Li, 2017; Shah & Karki, 2023). Conversely, the second perspective is skeptical about the hegemonic supremacy of English (Crystal, 2012), which is manifested through historical tradition, political expediency, and the desire for commercial, cultural, or technological contact. This perspective regards the proliferation of English as a tool for global linguistic imperialism (Sharma, 2018). In the context of Nepal, the complex linguistic landscape and the multiplicity of minority languages exist under the hegemonic shadow of a global linguistic giant, English, and the state-privileged language, Nepali. Due to these complexities, multiple teacher ideologies emerge within the English language teaching environment of Nepal.

1.4. Language Ideologies and Language Politics in Nepal

Classrooms are microcosms of society, and a teacher entering a multilingual classroom come with specific worldview that significantly influences their classroom planning, material selection, and overall pedagogy. In recent days, especially after the re-establishment of multiparty democracy in 1991, increasing inclination towards English was seen in the form of outgrown privately run schools known as boarding schools, which attracted majorly middle-class families from the urban to rural areas of the country (Phyak, 2016). In the same vein, EMI (English as the Medium of Instruction) has been regarded as a privileged form of linguistic capital, aiding the development of advanced English skills, providing access to higher education, and elevating one's social and economic status, all driven by neoliberal forces (Shah & Karki, 2023; Shah & Li, 2018). These trends reflect strong public support for EMI, which entails content teaching in English, and have significantly influenced the Nepali education system. On the other hand, in recent days – as multilingual education in the country is supported by the policy – various schools have adopted mother-tongue-based education, accepting that "multilingualism is part of the founding philosophy of the country" (Fillmore, 2020, p. 231).

Despite the constitution's easy-going policies, the emergent status of the EMI as the linguistic capital has posed a challenge to the expansion of multilingual pedagogy. This is because EMI is reportedly associated with lucrative promises of better opportunities in the job market (Pandey & Pandey, 2014). Further, the prevailing policy environment sets high expectations and goals regarding multilingualism in education; however, there "lacks the practical details of how to implement them, for example in terms of financial support or day-to-day responsibilities" (Fillmore, 2020, p. 241).

Phyak and Ojha (2019) discussed some ideologies that have shaped language policy in Nepal. In the past, the dominant ideology was *monolingualism*, with a 'one language, one nation' policy, which many policymakers, teachers, and stakeholders adhered to. In contrast, *linguistic diversity* has emerged as an ideology that values the coexistence of multiple languages. Alongside this, *neoliberal ideologies* promote the

commodification of goods, including language, favouring state regulation-free market, and privatization. *Mother tongue ideology*, driven by indigenous activism, emphasizes the preservation and promotion of native languages (p. 345). These varied ideologies significantly influence the execution of multilingualism in Nepal.

While linguistic diversity is now recognized as a valuable resource, the rise of EMI poses a threat to the promotion of a multilingual policy. Prioritizing a particular language in the education system of a country at the cost of multiple language concerns could have severe consequences in the linguistic scenario of the country, such as language death (Crystal, 2012) or even linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009, 2012). Thus, there always lies a challenge of finding an appropriate and balanced approach to the language of instruction where no language is marginalized.

1.5. Addressing Complexities of Multilingualism

Studies have shown that when children are taught in languages other than their home language, it leads to high dropout rates and low academic achievement, resulting in significant class repetition rates due to high failure (Awasthi, 2004; Yadava, 2007). Just as education is assured as a fundamental right for children, so is mother language education. However, the current dynamism of the country poses greater challenges than in the past as people from diverse linguistic communities amalgamate due to migration from the villages to the cities. The English teachers who instruct children from multiple cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds face new challenges as they must exert extra effort to ensure social and linguistic justice in the classrooms that are in flux, especially considering that some children's mother tongue becomes a linguistic capital for them as they speak a privileged language in the home environment too.

Given these complexities, the teacher must address the various linguistic identities present in the classroom while ensuring justice to all. In such a situation, classroom instruction is positioned at a vulnerable zone. When there is a conflict between the language interests in the classroom, an all-accepted third language gets space as the medium of instruction (Ismaili, 2015). Graddol (1999) also consolidated this view saying, "in [the] future [English] will be a language used mainly in multilingual contexts as a second language and for communication between non-native speakers" (p. 925).

The role of English in the context of Nepali education is always a point to debate. Even though English as a Medium of Instruction [EMI] is expected to gain popularity across the country, teachers and the educational system face significant challenges as many students face difficulties in expressing themselves in English (Poudel, 2021). In this situation, stakeholders should be concerned about whether EMI will make things worse. On the other hand, a teacher has to face more challenges in multilingual classrooms than in monolingual ones to minimize prejudices. In such contexts, the attitude and posture of the teachers must be investigated.

This article examines the language ideologies held by English teachers in light of the previously mentioned language ideologies. Additionally, it explores the teachers' ideological stance from the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's 'linguistic capital', which provides the bearer the opportunities to exploit the system of differences and to secure an advantage (Bourdieu, 1992). Linguistic capital refers to the skills and knowledge in a language that enables individuals to acquire social status, economic opportunities, and power within society (Abrar-ul-Hassan, 2021). One's linguistic competence is evaluated within a specific market where underlying power dynamics are often unnoticed or unrecognized (Johnson, 1993). Consequently, those who possess such capital become more privileged and powerful than those who are in deficit of it. English, considered a prominent linguistic capital globally, holds significant value in Nepal as well (Park, 2011; Sah & Li, 2017).

In light of these concepts, the research questions guiding this study focus on understanding the language ideologies that English teachers hold in multilingual classrooms in Nepal, how these ideologies influence their pedagogical decisions, and what challenges and strategies teachers encounter while addressing linguistic diversity in their classrooms.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design and Participants

A qualitative inquiry was employed in this study, utilizing phenomenology as the primary research design to explore and interpret the lived experiences and personal meanings derived from participants' responses (Fochtman, 2008). This approach was chosen for its emphasis on understanding participants' subjective perspectives, especially in contexts where sensory or experiential dimensions play a critical role, such as in the case of visual impairment.

Data were collected from a total of twenty participants who were recruited from various schools. These participants were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit their conceptualizations and perceptions regarding environmental issues. Out of the twenty individuals invited to participate, ten provided written responses that formed the initial qualitative dataset for analysis.

In addition to student responses, the study incorporated insights from a group of teachers, further enriching the dataset with professional perspectives. One of the teachers was interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol, allowing for both guided and emergent lines of inquiry. As a result, the final participant group comprised eleven individuals, all of whom were teachers working with students with visual impairments.

To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' identities, all individuals were assigned pseudonyms. These pseudonyms included an age and gender identifier, where "M" stands for male and "F" for female, followed by the participant's age in years. The coded teacher participants were as follows: Bishal-M34, Basant-M38, Milind-M35, Lava-M30, Naman-M28, Diksha-F35, Anima-F41, Gokul-M25, Nidhi-F27, Urmila-F31, and Punya-M31.

This diverse sample provided a rich foundation for phenomenological analysis, enabling the researchers to examine both the individual and collective meaning-making processes regarding environmental awareness and conceptual understanding among students with visual impairments.

2.2. Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through qualitative methods that allowed participants to express their thoughts and experiences in depth. Specifically, open-ended questions were utilized to gather written responses from ten teacher participants. These questions were designed to elicit detailed and reflective answers concerning their perceptions of environmental issues in the context of teaching students with visual impairments. Participants were given sufficient time and flexibility to respond in writing, ensuring that their perspectives could be captured authentically and without the constraints of predefined response categories.

In addition to the written responses, one participant took part in a semi-structured interview, which was audio-recorded with their consent. The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to follow a guiding set of questions while also allowing for flexibility in probing deeper into relevant topics that emerged during the conversation. This method was particularly valuable in capturing rich, contextualized narratives that complemented the written responses. Together, these two modes of data collection – written reflections and verbal interview – provided a comprehensive and nuanced dataset for analysis.

2.3. Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from both the written responses and the interview transcript were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis began with the familiarization phase, during which the researchers repeatedly read through the data to immerse themselves in its content and gain a holistic understanding. In the second phase, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments within the text that captured important features related to the research questions.

In the third phase, the researchers engaged in searching for themes, wherein similar codes were clustered together based on patterns and conceptual similarities. This was followed by a reviewing themes phase, which involved evaluating the coherence and distinctiveness of each theme in relation to the entire dataset. The fifth phase, defining and naming themes, included refining the scope of each theme and assigning concise and descriptive labels that captured their essence.

The final phase involved reporting the findings in a structured and coherent manner, integrating thematic narratives with illustrative quotes from participants. The interview transcript was fully transcribed and then merged with the ten written responses to form a unified dataset. All data were coded systematically, and the resulting codes were grouped into overarching themes. After iterative cycles of refinement, four major themes were identified: three standalone themes and one theme with three subthemes, thereby narrowing and organizing the data into meaningful analytical categories.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the findings of the inquiry are presented and aligned with the discussion.

3.1. Medium of Instruction: A Dormant Battle

The participants face a dilemma regarding the preferred pedagogies of their students, particularly concerning the medium of instruction. They believe that English should be the sole language used for teaching, while students express a demand for instruction in the language they are more comfortable with. This contradiction creates tension surrounding the medium of instruction in the classroom. Supporting the exclusive use of English in classrooms, Diksha-F35 believed it provides students with "full exposure to the target language", which she considers essential. Milind-M35 shared this perspective, stating that it is necessary to ensure "a real learning situation" in the classroom. However, he expressed his frustration that students frequently insist on using the Nepali language as a medium of instruction. He remarked, "If it is an English class, what else can be the medium of instruction?" It is a common assumption in Nepal that using English as the sole medium of instruction in a multilingual context is beneficial to quality teaching and learning, irrespective of supportive evidence (Phyak & Ojha, 2019). These participants strongly believe that English as a medium in an English class should not be compromised.

Other participants, like Lava-M30, also believe that using English as the medium of instruction is ideal for English language teaching. He strictly uses English in the classroom and tries to convince his students to 'listen to English' from him. By often explaining the benefits of English, he reflects its global communicative domain, which has made it the most desired linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1992). Lava-M30's effort to encourage his students to listen to English represents the growing demand for English as a medium of education in Nepal in recent years (Phyak, 2016; Sah & Li, 2017). There lies a latent conflict between the language concerns of the minorities and the medium of instruction. On the one hand, they expect emancipation from the imposed language policy of the past, and on the other hand, a bigger linguistic capital, that is, English, is preferred in education. This contradiction ultimately restricts the involvement of the mother tongue in education in the realm of federal Nepal.

3.2. Accepted Elite Language Dominance

The presence of language elitism is common in Nepal, as the Nepali language has historically been associated with the ruling elites, and recently, English has joined this elite status due to its higher value as a form of linguistic capital (Gautam, 2021; Gautam & Poudel, 2022). As a result, teachers consequently favour the English language as a medium of instruction while also acknowledging the presence of multilingual concerns in the classrooms. The participants hail from different districts, ranging from Khotang in the east to Kanchanpur in the west. They have been teaching English under different mother tongue situations. Bishal-M34 teaches in the exurbs of the Kageshwari Manohara Municipality of Kathmandu. In his class, the majority of students come from the Tamang community, predominantly having Tamang mother-tongue. The non-Tamang community students mainly speak Nepali, and some of them speak Newari. In his class, he realizes that students find it difficult to understand English when only English is used as the medium of instruction. Explaining some concepts in Nepali is not sufficient because a majority of the students in the class are from non-Nepali-speaking communities. In these circumstances, their English learning endeavour becomes double-fold as they have to struggle to learn two languages simultaneously; that is, Nepali and English. His students ask him to explain the content in Nepali very often, but he finds that students from non-Nepali language backgrounds remain silent even after he shifts to Nepali. He receives most of the queries from Nepali speaking students, who are considerably less in number. Students from the Tamang language speaking community prefer to remain silent when they feel that they cannot express their concerns properly. Bishal-M34 said, "Their Nepali pronunciation is a bit deviated from the standard one; many of them pronounce 'sir' as 'sār' and other Nepali words like 'ghar' as 'gār'." Bishal-M34 said his students feel insecure about their competency in Nepali or English.

Bishal-M34 reflected on his classes and revealed that students compromise their access to education because of the policy-generated inequalities, particularly regarding the limited availability of native languages in the public sphere. This is not only the case of English as a subject, but in other subjects too; students feel marginalized. Almost similar are the experiences of Anima-F41, a teacher from the Krishnapur Municipality of Kanchanpur district. In her class, most of the students come from the *Doteli* and *Rana Tharu* speaking community. (Her school is located in an area densely populated by *Rana Tharu*, and in recent time *Doteli* speaking people migrated from the hilly districts have outnumbered The *Rana Tharus*). Both of the communities have their languages and have to get an education in languages other than their mother tongue. Anima-F41 said that she enjoys the situation, but she cannot speak any of the languages. She proposed that in such a conundrum, English is a panacea. She opined that it should be implemented as the medium of instruction and there should be an 'English only' environment in the class, but she fails to do so.

She said, "I prefer but most of the times it's quite impossible". Participants think that imposing English only in the class enables students to gain mastery over English. Their concern is to develop the capability of the students in both producing the appropriate utterances of the target language and evaluating which utterances to produce in which situation, forming the linguistic capital (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012). This illustrates the elite language dominance in education and other public domains; as Giri (2009) comments, "Despite multilingual language policy rhetoric in the current linguistic and political discourses, hegemonic control of the elite languages persists and consequently, Nepali and English dominate the practice of all other languages" (p.41).

3.3. Taking Mother Tongue as a Counterforce to ELT Pedagogy

All the participants agreed that an ideal second language pedagogy should completely restrict languages other than the target language. They want to use English only in the class but argue that there is the 'student factor' as a hindrance in this way. As Urmila-F31 commented, "I prefer English but incorporate both languages to ensure clarity... Given their diverse backgrounds, relying solely on English in the classroom presents a significant challenge." The participants suspect the supportive role of the mother tongue in the English language learning. They rather perceive the mother tongue as a significant counterforce to second language development, often resisting pedagogical approaches that incorporate it.

3.3.1. A hurdle to 'English only' strategy

Participants think that mother tongue concerns of students are challenges to their 'English only' pedagogy. Diksha-F35 expressed concern about her practice as she realized that she has to compromise with her 'pedagogy' in the classroom. She said, "If I try to maintain an English-only environment, my students often stare at me in confusion... they do not understand." She added, "I have to give up the idea of using English only. I do not prefer this in class, but just for the sake of students, I have to go through this situation". Basant-M38 teaches in Khotang, where he convinces his students to let him instruct them in English. "After some time, he said, "Students have a bizarre look upon me. (I understand) They expect Nepali explanation from me". They believe their teaching becomes ineffective if they are unable to provide sufficient exposure to English in the class. In this regard, Diksha-F35 expressed her dissatisfaction, stating, "I regret not using one hundred percent English in the class. I am worried my students cannot get adequate English exposure in the classroom". Anima-F41 has similar feelings; however, she accepts that mother tongue or the language of convenience cannot be totally avoided. She opined, "I regret not using the target language, but a hundred percent is not possible". Participants revealed that students' mother tongue and their preference for a more comfortable language have become hurdles to their pedagogic practices. Despite their willingness to implement their preferred pedagogy, which they believe is the most effective, they often find themselves compromising due to the pressure of student demands.

3.3.2. Struggling for appropriate pedagogy

Lava-M30 from Kailali teaches in a community school located in the suburb of the provincial capital of the Sudur Paschim province. His school is surrounded by numerous institutional schools run by the private sector, which boastfully advertise their English medium model in the community to attract students. His school, where children come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, has recently begun an English medium wing along with the conventional Nepali medium one because of the pressure from the surrounding schools. Even in the English medium sections, he finds himself struggling for the appropriate pedagogy. He stated, "I mostly use EMI, but my students prefer to use local languages ... I encourage them by stating the importance of the English language..., but they can ask me questions in their mother tongue..."

Moreover, Anima-F41's pedagogical struggle reaches an even higher level, as she believes her ignorance of the local languages sometimes creates a communication barrier between her and her students. Most of her students come from *Rana Tharu* or *Doteli* language-speaking communities. In such a multilingual context, she finds herself in an impasse, unsure of how to proceed, as she belongs to neither of these linguistic communities and has very little knowledge of her students' mother tongues. "... this happens as students' base is of their local language ...," she complained. For her, in such a situation, it is quite difficult to teach English. She clarified, "English is the third language for them, and due to less practice, they always find it very difficult". Participants revealed that they strive for the appropriate pedagogical strategies in classrooms where students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Lava-M30's struggle to teach English while respecting students' preference for local languages, coupled with Anima-F41's challenges with communication barriers due to her limited proficiency in these local languages, highlights the complexities of navigating linguistic diversity. In this context, students often view English as a third language, which

complicates their learning experience. These issues make it difficult for the teachers to determine effective pedagogical approaches for their classes.

3.3.3. *Unmentioned language policing*

The responses of the participants on the classroom practices indicate an unstated language policing – a concept built on the Foucauldian notion of police – in the class. Foucault (2007) defines ‘police’ as the “the set of means by which the state’s forces can be increased while preserving the state in good order”. There is an attempt to restrict the local language in the class using this policing. Milind-M35a’s school is on the outskirts of the city of Kathmandu. He had earlier taught in some of the ‘good’ privately run institutional schools. He adopted a strategy that he saw in institutional schools. He established a rule declaring that speaking languages other than English in class would be considered an offense, with a fine of one rupee imposed for each attempt. He said, “the rule could not last long, however”. Though this sort of ‘forcible motivation’ to promote the target language by punishing children for speaking their native language is unofficially taken as an effective way of teaching English. However, such punishment for speaking one’s language is destructive to that language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009).

It has remained a tendency of the authorities, mostly comprised of the ruling elites, that the issues of unrepresented languages are avoided and ignored in the language planning (Giri, 2009). Skutnabb-Kangas (2009, 2012) argues that placing the mother tongue issues at large in education is to limit the access of such children to education and subsequently lead to language genocide. Teachers seem to restrict the use of local languages by enforcing rules as they believe that this is the most effective way of teaching English, meanwhile, they have to address linguistic diversity and multiple language concerns in the classroom, supporting and acknowledging inclusivity.

3.3.4. *Unstated acceptance to translanguaging*

Translanguaging, a pedagogical practice where students alternate languages for receptive or productive use (García & Leiva, 2014), is employed to develop “abilities in the different functions served by different languages – rather than total mastery of each and every language” (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 1). Participants indicated that they have accepted translanguaging as a pedagogical solution in their classes even though they are influenced by the ideologies such as “*English-as-a-global-language* and *English-as-social-capital* – that ignore the local multilingual and multicultural realities surrounding students’ everyday lives and disregard the evidence that students’ home languages can be a resource for learning both content and language” (Phyak, 2016, p. 199). Although they believe that the best pedagogy for teaching English is through its exclusive use and thus enforce English-only instruction in the classroom, they encounter difficulties when students express a preference for using their home languages. To address this, they adopt translanguaging as a pedagogical practice, allowing students to alternate between languages to support their learning.

To accommodate the languages students are comfortable with, Bishal-M34 has developed a strategy for his instruction. In the lower classes (that is, up to class eight), he uses more English for instruction though with simple short sentences, such as, ‘this is a book’, ‘look here’; and making them repeat him, such as ‘today we study about a travelogue, what? ...a travelogue.’ He believes that in these classes, students do not have to deal with complex language constructions. He thinks that here, he does not have to explain but assign some tasks to accomplish. However, in the upper classes (that is, nine to 12), he frequently uses Nepali for the convenience of students. He explained two reasons for this approach: first, he believes that the reading texts require intensive interpretation; second, many students in classes nine and 11 enrol to his school from the nearby institutions and are not familiar with his and his fellow English teachers’ teaching styles. On the other hand, Lava-M30 acknowledges his use of Nepali in the classroom while teaching English. He stated, “I also prefer exclusive use of English in the classroom, but you can notice students showing no flicker of interpretation, so I use Nepali ... to clarify the concepts.” However, both he and Diksha-F35 agree that when discussing their professional practices, they emphasize the exclusive use of English as the solution to the challenges of teaching English.

Despite their reservations about using only the target language in language teaching, practitioners acknowledge that they often employ translanguaging as a problem-solving tool. They believe that students are strongly motivated to use the language they are comfortable with and tend to resist the use of English, even when teachers emphasize the benefits of English proficiency. This resistance prompts teachers to shift between languages in their instruction.

4. Conclusions and Implications

Nepal is one of those few countries providing a home to more than a hundred languages of diverse families. This diversity has been acknowledged recently by legislative documents (Curriculum Development Centre, 2007, 2018; Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy, 2021; Nepal Law Society, 2015). However, the oppressive state policies at the backdrop still haunt the implementation of the new language policies to a significant extent. Despite the guarantees of linguistic rights by the Nepal Law Society (2015), the children speaking non-elite languages have to be educated in the languages they do not speak at home. The teachers are the main agents of the implementation of language policies in education. Their ideological stance in the class, such as using English only as the medium of instruction, restricting the use of local languages, etc., are significantly meaningful when it comes to the implementation of the policy or addressing the vulnerable language issues in the classroom. Teachers' experiences show that the relevance and applicability of mother tongue-based education in the class is questionable amidst the vast sphere of opportunities said to be offered by instruction in English.

The classrooms are silent battlefields where the minority languages and the language(s) spoken by the social elites confront each other and negotiate for meaning. The students seek to revolt against the overwhelming imposition of English as the sole medium of instruction by the teachers, guardians, and other authorities to acquire a more valuable language capital. Students challenge every attempt of the teachers to impose 'English-only' in the classroom. This subtle resistance counters the belief that such a policy will "enhance English language proficiency; develop human capital to enter global economy; improve the quality of education; and internationalize the local business and education" (Sah & Li, 2017, p. 5). The teachers' dilemma seems endless: they must acknowledge the multilingual reality and its vulnerabilities present in their classrooms while simultaneously trying to persuade their students to accept their notion of 'English only' as the ideal medium for ELT pedagogy regardless of any proven evidence (Phyak & Ojha, 2019).

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