



Multilingual Education :Teacher's Perspectives on Opportunities and Challenges at Basic Level Students

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ABSTRACT

This study entitled 'Multilingual Education: opportunities and challenges' which is qualitative in nature. The aim of this study is to explore teacher's perspective on opportunities and challenges of multilingual education at primary level students. In Nepal. To conduct my study, I have used primary as well as secondary sources of data collection. For its primary sources of data, I have conducted semi-structured interview with a teacher of a public school at basic level to find out their perception towards multilingual education. For secondary sources of data, I have reviewed different policies, research papers and constitution of Nepal etc.

The findings of this study included; the students have better understanding over subject matter and they have good proficiency in language. It was also found that there were some challenges that all the teachers are not multilingual, and there is problem in classroom management. At last, we understood, that multilingual education system is good for quality education but the occurred challenges should be minimized by all the stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

Language is the most effective way of communication which is very important for human life in the entire world. There are so many languages spoken in different societies of the world. Among all the languages, only certain languages which became matter of worrisome and contemplation for other indigenous language have dominant role in educational programs. As a result, the concept of multilingual education has been emerged in the world and different countries have applied the system in education to address the worrisome for all the languages.

Lotherington (2004) says that 'Multilingual education entails teaching and learning of multiple languages.' There has been a long debate whether the language of small language communities should be incorporated in the school curriculum in addition to the language of the nation. Multilingual education also emphasizes the use of mother tongue is the natural means of self-expressions of the experiences and thoughts learnt in childhood that enhance the effectiveness of other languages learning.

The aim of this paper is to find out the perspectives of teachers on using multilingual education in basic classes. Similarly, linguistic diversity is one of the special features of our country where more than 123 languages are spoken (central bureau of statistics, 2024). In this context, it is difficult to run educational programs in only one or two languages because there are students from different linguistics societies even in single class. Which is why the government has applied the multilingual education in different schools of the country. Here, my concern is to explore the perception towards multilingual education of the basic level teachers or how they perceive multilingual education system. They might be facing various problems and might be feeling ease to teach language and other subject matter in the classroom. Likewise, in this linguistically diverse world, preservation of language is being crucial issue. Skutnabb-Kanass (1998) says that the opportunity to learn the mother tongue is also related to linguistic human rights of children.

Therefore, language is also matter of human right. There is no doubt that everyone's linguistic human right is protected in multilingual education system. There is opportunity of using different mother tongues that make language alive in a society for a long time. Thus, multilingual based education is being essential part of every school.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of multilingual education has been emerged in the world and different countries have applied the system in education to address the worrisome for all the languages. Education for all Nepal (2001- 2015) has made special provision of ensuring the right of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basis and primary education through mother tongue. For promoting different languages of the society, it focused to use mother tongue as the subject and medium of instruction by developing writing system of minority language which have no literate tradition.

Designing curriculum and text books in different minority language and making them medium of instructions. Because of this policy different languages of Nepal got right to supervised as part of linguistic human right.

SSDP (2073-2080) clearly stated that mother tongue has to be medium of instruction up to grade three and in grades four and five transition from the mother tongue as a medium of instruction to Nepali as a medium of instructions. This plan has ensured to adopt Nepali as a medium of instruction in grade six to eight, and it also made provision of teacher preparation programs for enabling them to use mother tongue as medium of instruction.

Similarly, Paudel (2010) conducted research on "Teaching English in multilingual class of higher education." The main objective of the study is to identify the problems and challenges of multilingual classroom by employing non-random sampling procedure. Sample was four teachers who have been teaching English at the intermediate level from four different colleges of Kathmandu valley. The tools for data collection were questionnaires, classroom observation and focused group discussion. He concluded that the students were deprived of getting education in their own language. Definitely, in the context of Nepal the using of all the languages as a medium of instruction and language of books is a bit challenging task for us in comparison of resources that we have available. So that government and stake holders should be more responsible to manage this problem.

Likewise, Interim Constitution (2007) and constitution of Nepal (2072) have declared the right of each community to receive basis education in their mother tongue. These provisions have also promoted different languages and their status. UNESCO (1990) stated in general conference countries adopted resolution that established the notion of multilingual education. It states that the nation can use at least three language consisting mother tongue, national language as well as international language in education. Education based on mother tongue (s) in early grade of schooling plays key role fostering and respect for diversity and sense of interconnectedness among the countries of the world. Since the UNESCO has been promoting multilingual education as a means to improve learning outcomes and give life to cultural diversity. SSRP (2009-2015) has stated the different strategic intervention to address linguistic diversity by using mother tongue as medium of instruction in elementary level of school and for schools, for districts, provinces and nation to progressively implement the languages of education. Different books and materials were developed in Nepal's major languages that made learners easy to learn. Teachers were also trained about how to develop children language skills. As we know that learning second language except mother tongue can't be effective for children to learn.

Thus, student should be taught in a mother tongue in their early grades. In the same way, high level national education commission (2075) has also given special emphasis on using of mother tongue in education. For that local and province level governments should conduct encouraging programs to develop instructional materials in mother tongue.

Government will provide the scholarships those students who are interested to achieve higher education to become capable manpower in mother

tongues. English and Nepali both languages have been subject of course of study from class one. Similarly, except Nepali and English language mother tongue should be medium of instruction in basic level by analyzing this provision we can understand that there are not only students who are from English and Nepali language speaking society. So that policy should be made like this in our country to address our cultural diversities.

After studying the provisions of different documents, it is found that different national and international organizations are being involved in addressing the mother tongue based multilingual education. Especially in the context of Nepal various policies, strategies have been made giving emphasis on use of mother tongue in education as a medium of instruction and subject matter. Most of the provisions have clearly said that local level has to be more responsible for developing instructional materials, textbook, selecting the language for medium of instructions, preparing capable human resources in a mother tongue. In the of linguistic imperialism of the world it is very challenging task to uplift minority languages. If we talk about present era English language has dominant role all over the world. Similarly, in the context Nepali language is playing dominant role in the country. In this context most of the people and parents see the benefits of getting education only through dominant language. Because they think there is a chance of good career, if they get education in dominant language. And they think that if they are taught through mother tongue there is no good future of children.

That is why, this is most challenging issues of multilingual education. Another problem is that there is no script written tradition of so many languages of our country. It is very difficult task to develop orthographic system, therefore government and others stakeholders must think about those issues and should make plans, policy accordingly.

METHODOLOGY

In this article, I have applied qualitative research design for the data collection. It has been prepared with the ideas and information collected from document review and field work. The whole discussion is made out of review of field work, theoretical concepts, research-based articles and other related information that have been taken from different websites.

I have reviewed different documents such as high-level national education commission 2075, research report of UNESCO 1990, National educational policy 2076, SSDP 2073-80, SSRP 2066-72, Constitution of Nepal 2072, and other documents. Firstly, I have reviewed the document related to language policy and provision. Secondly, I have reviewed the article and thesis related to use of ICT tools in regard to teaching and learning English language. This paper tries to find out teacher's perspectives on opportunities and challenges of multilingual education at basic level in Nepal.

This study has included relatively a small number of sampling population consisting only one English teacher and one head teacher of public school, Shree Siddhi Mangal Secondary School, Mahalaxmi-6.

Lalitpur using semi-structured interview related to the Multilingual Education: Teacher's Perspectives on Opportunities and Challenges at Basic Level Students. I went to the school of Lalitpur District to collect data and purposively selected two participants to collect data through semi-structured interview from one English teacher, one head teacher of public school at basic level.

I collected enough data from them. I transcribed the recorded interview and gathered all the data obtained from semi-structured interview. After that, the collected data were analyzed qualitatively, and classified into different paragraphs by generating theme to make my study more comprehensible on the basis of objectives

RESEARCH RESULT

After collecting the data from the field, I knew several challenges that are faced by teachers and at the same time different opportunities they got in multilingual classroom. Multilingual education is very much effective in the country like Nepal where linguistic diversity is being existed. Similarly, teachers can get chance to learn different multilingual tongues in multilingual class. There can be good rapport building between teachers and students and students also learn faster through mother tongue than other languages. On the other hand, there are some challenging moments in such class such as if the teacher does not have good knowledge about different mother tongue then he/she can not handle the class in proper way. All the ideas achieved from interview are collected and later on incorporated in different themes.

Effective learning

Without use of language of the students or their mother tongue, it is difficult to make them understand about subject matter. If teachers are taught in other languages than mother tongue then they may not understand so many terms of language as a result, teaching learning activities become worthless. Regarding this, respondent 'A' says, "*There is a competition of students for giving response while I ask question in classroom.*" From this response, I came to know that all the students understand better in their language so that they become curious, enthusiastic, and active in the classroom. In such a class, teacher and students have good rapport building so that students ask different questions without any fear. Mother tongue in education promotes equity, self-esteem faster acquisition of basic literacy and contributes to higher academic achievements.

Student's activation

In teaching and learning activities, students should be more active than teacher for better learning. Classroom is place of linguistic diversity where students are from different linguistic society. In such class, if teaching learning activities are run in second language and the students may not get the instruction, they may be quite and sit down without waving anywhere or they may involve in making noise avoiding teacher's instruction. When the students are taught in their own language and they understand the language clearly, there is more chances of obeying the instruction. As a result, they understand the subject matter in a better way as well as they do whatever teacher asks them. The

respondent 'B' says, *"There is competition of students for giving response while I ask question in classroom."* This response clearly shows that students become more active in multilingual class. Thus, learning rate is determined by students' activation.

Language proficiency

Measurement of how well the person has mastered over a language is language proficiency. Proficiency is measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills. There are four language domains: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Likewise, when students are taught in their own language, there is good cognitive development in their mind. Most of the time they involve in learning activities whether it is reading or writing. The respondent 'A' tells, *"Students take part in every activity of the class room."* In this way, if they practice more, there is chance of getting enormous knowledge about different skills of language, vocabulary, grammar, semantics and so on. Specially, in multilingual class students can ask easily wherever they can find difficulties and there is more interaction between teacher and students. Due to more practice in classroom, students easily master over different aspects of language.

Opportunities

There are a number of opportunities in a multilingual class room. The respondent 'B' says, *"I have learned Newari and Nepali language here during the course of teaching which helps me to teach student clearly."* As he said, every teacher who is involved in multilingual class they have more chance to learn more than two languages. Similarly, if teacher has already mastered over more than 2 languages, he/she won't have to wonder to search a job or they may be easily adjusted in other multilingual schools. On the other hand, students can also learn different languages that will be helpful to them for future academic and personal life. Likewise, different languages of society get right to be survived if they are used in classroom. Therefore, having knowledge of more than one language is matter of benefit for students, teachers and linguistic societies as well.

Challenges

There are not only opportunities but also challenges of multilingual education. One of the challenges is not all of the teachers are multilingual. Here, teacher is the person who teaches the students in the classroom. Teacher has most important role in teaching learning activities. Whatever the teacher instructs that becomes the guideline to the students. In such a condition, if the teacher does not have knowledge about the language of children in classroom then how could students get the points from them? So, this is most important challenging aspects of multilingual class. In this regard, respondent 'A' says, *"Our Hari sir still can't speak Newari language while teaching he speaks Nepali only, so that student cannot understand in better Way."* This statement represents the real situation of some other Nepali teacher who are facing problems. That is why it is sure that if the teacher does not have knowledge about the student's mother tongue then how he could address all the voices raised by students in classroom. Similarly, classroom management is another problem of multilingual class room.

It is difficult to manage the class if the class is full of linguistic diversity, or students may be more than two languages in single class, in that situation the teacher may have problem to instruct them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, I have collected data from two teachers through semi-structured interview. Those data have helped me in findings. There are so many policies and provisions in Nepal which are being applied in our school, but there are no expected consequences. Most of the policies focused on only implementing the multilingual education. They have neglected to focus on other basic aspects of it such as developing the script of different languages which is the basic things for multilingual education.

My findings showed that there are so many opportunities and challenges of multilingual education. Multilingual education helps students and teachers in many ways such as students can learn the subject matter very effectively, there may be good rapport between students and teachers, students can develop language policy and teacher also get chance to learn different languages. On the other hand, there are challenges too, such as difficult to manage classroom while teaching, all the teachers are not multilingual and so on.

Finally, I would like to add that multilingual education is necessary in the context of our country. Government should not make policies only and provisions but it should make strict rules to implement in proper way.

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