

Linguistic Hybridity in Nepalese ELT Classrooms: A Narrative Inquiry into English Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

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Abstract

Despite the growing recognition of multilingualism as a pedagogical resource in English Language Teaching (ELT) settings, English language teachers in Nepal are still in a dilemma in the implementation of multi/translingual pedagogical practices in their classrooms. The study aims to explore Nepalese secondary-level English language teachers' beliefs on linguistic hybridity along with their experiences of navigating sociopolitical and institutional constraints in practice. The study employed narrative inquiry as a research design. Two secondary-level English language teachers teaching at the multilingual public schools of Itahari sub-metropolitan city, Sunsari, were selected as a sample by using a purposive sampling strategy. Using in-depth interviews as a research tool, the participants were interviewed individually. The data was recorded, transcribed, coded, categorized, and thematically analyzed. The study revealed a complex tension between multilingual pedagogical realities and monolingual institutional expectations. The study further explored that English language teachers perceived translanguaging as a practical, inclusive, and context-responsive pedagogy that enhances comprehension, engagement, and confidence. However, teachers experience guilt, self-doubt, and professional insecurity due to internalized monolingual norms that equate English-only instruction with quality teaching. Furthermore, the study found that systemic barriers such as lack of policy clarity, institutional support, parental aspirations for English, prescriptive curricula, and lack of training remain barriers in the implementation of multi/translingual practices in ELT classrooms. The study concludes that linguistic hybridity functions both as a pedagogical resource and an ideological site of struggle in Nepalese ELT settings. The study calls for policy reform, multilingual teacher education, and assessment practices that legitimize multilingual teaching strategies in the classrooms.

Keywords: ELT, hybridity, multilingualism

Introduction

English Language Teaching (ELT) in multilingual settings has been shaped by linguistic diversity, mobility, and contact-induced language practices. ELT classrooms across the globe are full of diversity, and have become the sites where multiple languages intersect, and challenges to the monolingual language ideologies which have historically dominated language education (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014). In that context, English language teachers play a pivotal role as a micro-level policy agent where they [English teachers] not only function as the transmitters of standardized linguistic norms, but also as a negotiator, interpreter, adopter, and mediator of the complex linguistic realities and policy mismatches (Liddicot & Leech, 2020). One of the most challenging complexities in ELT across the globe is linguistic hybridity, which is defined as a dynamic blending or mixing of multiple languages in meaning-making practices (Bhabha, 1994; Garcia, 2009; Pennycook, 2010; Rauteda, 2022). To better understand this complexity, it is important to situate linguistic hybridity within broader theoretical perspectives that reconceptualize the nature of language itself.

The notion of linguistic hybridity is fundamentally rooted in post-structural sociolinguistic traditions, which contest the idea of language as a bounded and autonomous system. Recent studies, for example (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), conceptualize language as a phenomenon that is fluid, dynamic, socially embedded, and shaped by power relations. Moreover, traditional structured language ideologies have been challenged nowadays by the recent paradigm shifts in language teaching, such as multi- or translanguaging. In the context of ELT, this shift has shown growing attention to plurilingualism (Garcia & Otheguy, 2020), translanguaging (García, 2009), and multilingual pedagogies that recognize learners' full linguistic repertoires as pedagogical resources rather than obstacles (Phyak, 2018; Rauteda, 2024b; Rauteda, 2025a). Despite the increasing significance of multi/trans/plurilingual pedagogies in ELT, monolingual classroom practices exist in many developing and postcolonial contexts, and often privilege so-called 'native-like' English and marginalize local languages (Phillipson, 1992). Therefore, despite theoretical advancements, the marginalization of linguistic diversity in practice remains a significant concern in contemporary ELT.

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Nepal is a linguistically diverse country where people speak 124 languages (National Statistical Office, 2021). This linguistic diversity not only exists in the community, but also appears in the classrooms. In this sense, Nepal and Nepalese classrooms embody 'superdiverse' (Blommaert, 2010), sociolinguistic ecology. Despite the vast diversity, Nepali serves as the lingua franca (contact language), official language, while English has a powerful symbolic and functional role in education, mobility, and global competitiveness (Rauteda, 2024a). In Nepali educational settings, English has been expanded rapidly across private and public schooling, higher education, and professional domains, which is positioned as a gateway to socioeconomic advancement (Phyak, 2016; Rauteda & Luitel, 2025; Sah & Li, 2018). This expansion has intensified debates about the medium of instruction, language hierarchies, and the place of local and indigenous languages in formal education.

In the Nepalese ELT classrooms, students bring rich and layered linguistic repertoires that include home languages and Nepali (Rauteda, 2025a). Moreover, classroom interactions often involve code-switching, translation, and translanguaging intentionally and purposefully (Rauteda, 2022). However, the classroom practices are undertheorized and less considered in curriculum, teacher education programs, and assessment systems, and prioritized monolingual English proficiency (Phyak & Sharma, 2021). This gap raises the tension among teachers whether to adopt monolingual [one language at a time] instruction or multilingual strategies, which are flexible, democratic, and inclusive.

Although teachers' beliefs are dynamic, socially constructed, contextual, and contain internal contradictions (Basturkmen, 2012), they play a crucial role in shaping their teaching approach. Studies indicate that teachers' perceptions of language, learning, and students influence their teaching strategies and classroom interactions (Borg, 2015; Pajares, 1992). In multilingual contexts, teachers' perspectives on the validity of students' languages, the significance of code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011), and the impact of English on identity can either facilitate or hinder inclusive pedagogical practices. Thus, how teachers perceive linguistic hybridity and how their perceptions shape their classroom behavior is essential to foster equitable and effective ELT in diverse linguistic settings.

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Despite the growing recognition of translanguage and multilingual pedagogy in ELT, empirical research focusing on teachers' beliefs and practices in Nepalese contexts remains limited. Existing studies in Nepal have largely concentrated on language policy, medium of instruction, and students' experiences (Phyak, 2016; Rauteda, 2024a; Sah, 2022), with comparatively less attention to teachers' lived experiences and pedagogical negotiations. Moreover, much of the available research tends to treat multilingual practices as either problems to be managed or strategies for scaffolding English, rather than as legitimate and transformative pedagogical orientations. However, only a few studies (Phyak, 2013; Phyak, 2018; Rauteda, 2025a) examine how teachers experience and navigate systemic, institutional, and sociopolitical constraints while implementing linguistic hybridity. This gap calls the need for an in-depth qualitative inquiry that foregrounds teachers' voices and situates their practices within broader sociopolitical and ideological frameworks. Hence, the study aims to explore secondary-level English language teachers' beliefs about linguistic hybridity and how these beliefs are enacted in classroom practices in Nepal's multilingual ELT classrooms. By foregrounding teachers' perspectives, the study seeks to uncover the ideological underpinnings of their pedagogical choices and to understand the affordances and constraints they encounter in everyday teaching. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- a) What beliefs do secondary-level English language teachers in Nepal hold about linguistic hybridity in multilingual classrooms?
- b) How do teachers experience and navigate systemic and sociopolitical constraints in implementing linguistic hybridity in Nepalese ELT classrooms?

Literature Review

Linguistic Hybridity and Multilingual Turn in English Language Teaching

In applied linguistics, linguistic hybridity has become a common phenomenon. It basically refers to the conditions where diverse languages coexist. In addition, the multilingual turn is recognized as the paradigm shift in the realm of language teaching, which adopts multiple languages as a resource in teaching rather than a barrier (Garcia

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& Wei, 2014). Moreover, May (2013) says that multilingual turn advocates for the validation of multiple languages and challenges the monolingual and native speaker-centric paradigms. It is taken as a pedagogical movement for alternative pedagogy. In this regard, Bhabha (1994) used the term 'third space' which refers to an in-between liminal space where cultural negotiation takes place, disrupting fixed binary oppositions. In this sense, linguistic hybridity goes beyond the rigid linguistic and cultural boundaries and celebrates diversity. In language education, the notion of linguistic diversity is used to describe the classroom practices where languages interact fluidly, dynamically, and naturally in communication that reflects the language learner's lived sociolinguistic realities (Pennycook, 2010).

In ELT, multilingual turn has been recognized by scholars across the globe for its counter challenge to the monolingual ideologies, and pedagogical importance primarily in multilingual and under-resourced settings. It calls for the utilization of learners' linguistic repertoire as a resource that helps to simplify the content, enhance engagement, foster identity, and ensure deeper understanding (Rauteda, 2025a). ELT in Nepal has been influenced by this shift and adopted the multilingual pedagogies such as translanguaging—the natural, flexible process where bilingual or multilingual individuals use all their available linguistic resources—rather than just one language—to communicate, think, and make sense of the world (Garcia, 2009; Rauteda, 2022) into practice. Additionally, it is a purposeful and intentional use of multiple languages (Hornberger & Link, 2012; Rauteda, 2024b; Seltzer et al., 2025). In Nepalese ELT classrooms, linguistic hybridity involves the integration of English, Nepali, and students' home languages.

In contrast to 'multilingual turn', traditional monolingual teaching is guided by the solo use of English and neoliberal language policies where language becomes a matter of commodity (Rauteda, 2024a). Moreover, monolingual teaching advocates for the exclusive use of the target language to maximize exposure and proficiency and takes students' home language as a barrier in learning the second language (Phyak, 2013). Moreover, the monolingual policies focus on English fluency and often marginalize the students' home language, which results low confidence level and identity crisis on learners (Valdes, 2004). Despite growing theoretical recognition, the implementation of

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multiple languages in ELT remains uneven. Still, many educational organizations are continuing English-only instruction in multilingual ELT settings. This ideological tension creates a disjuncture between theory and practice that necessitates the examination of how linguistic hybridity is understood and negotiated at the classroom level.

Teachers' Beliefs and Multilingual Classroom Practices

Teachers' beliefs basically refer to the propositions, principles, values, and assumptions that teachers accept as true. It serves as a guiding framework for their thought process, classroom behaviors, and decision-making (Borg, 2015). Teachers' beliefs are not formed in isolation; they are shaped by teachers' own educational histories, trainings, institutional norms, and broader sociopolitical ideologies (Pajares, 1992). Moreover, Canagarajah (2013) argues that teachers' beliefs about language are deeply embedded in their sociocultural experiences, based on which they either accept fluid language practices or target language-only practices while teaching. Consequently, in ELT, the teachers' beliefs about language use become influential in the enactment of policies.

The English language has been dominating internationally in different sectors such as education, technology, and daily communication. Recent studies, for example (Rauteda, 2024a; Tembe, 2006) demonstrate that English is positioned as a global language, and taken as a language equalized to mobility, global citizenship, and international competitiveness. Moreover, Pennycook (2010) argued that the global dominance of English has been contributing to the adoption of monolingual ideologies that take English proficiency as an academic and socioeconomic success. In the context of Nepal, English is viewed as a symbol of status and advancement (Phyak, 2016). This perception has significantly influenced teachers to employ the English-only instructional strategies in ELT classrooms.

English language teachers in Nepal frequently work within multilingual, under-resourced, and large class educational settings (Rauteda, 2022). In that situation, teaching English is challenging, and the situation makes teachers adapt context-responsive pedagogy. Studies (Phyak & Sharma, 2021; Rauteda, 2024b; Rauteda, 2025a; Sah & Li, 2018) reveal that Nepalese English language teachers incorporate

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Nepali and students' home languages along with English in the form of translanguaging pedagogy while teaching English for several purposes, such as clarification of the complex content, scaffolding the understanding, and enhancing the learner engagement. Moreover, teachers operate within institutional environments where English-only instruction is privileged (Karki, 2018) in spite of the linguistic realities of their classroom, which demand flexible, culturally responsive, and context-sensitive pedagogy like translanguaging. This divergence between stated beliefs and enacted practices reflects a pedagogical paradox.

Teachers' use of multiple languages in the classroom is strategic and situational. They may allow the use of students' home languages for classroom management and affective support, whereas maintain English only norms in formal high-stakes tasks (García & Kleyn, 2016). Studies in Nepal, for example (Choi & Paudel, 2024; Rauteda, 2024b) indicate that classroom realities encourage a pragmatic integration of students' linguistic repertoire despite the reinforcement of English-only ideologies by the training programs. Thus, exploring teachers' beliefs is essential to understanding how teachers navigate the conflicts between linguistic hybridity and monolingualism as they find a balance between policy expectations and the linguistic realities faced by their students.

Negotiating Monolingual Ideology and Linguistic Hybridity in Nepalese ELT Classrooms

In Nepalese ELT settings, implementing linguistic hybridity [dynamic use of multiple languages] as a pedagogical resource or supporting monolingual instruction is full of challenges. Moreover, ELT classrooms are primarily multilingual in Nepal, but the policies that are formed at the macro level prescribe the exclusive use of English in ELT classrooms (Rauteda, 2025a). Additionally, the monolingual policies that are driven by neoliberal imperatives, such as global competitiveness, create obstacles for students in learning, particularly for those who have limited English proficiency. In this regard, Phyak and Sharma (2021) say that monolingual teaching practices marginalize local languages and cultures, leading to epistemic injustice. Furthermore, the implication of monolingual pedagogical strategies in multilingual settings diminishes the students' engagement, creates difficulty in comprehension, disregards diversity, and adds pressure on teachers, which is detrimental to better learning achievement (Karki,

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2018; Sah, 2022). At the same time, parental preference for English medium education complicates teachers' attempts to balance accessibility with proficiency goals (Sah & Li, 2018). Consequently, the gap between the policy and classroom realities invites anxiety and affects both teachers and students in under-resourced settings.

English language teachers navigate resistance and criticism while implementing multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies in the classroom. For many teachers and administrators, using translanguaging is a symbol of having insufficient language proficiency. Due to this reason, English language teachers often do not adopt translanguaging pedagogical practices, despite recognizing the transformative value of using multilingualism as a resource in ELT classrooms. In this regard, Creese and Blackledge (2010) say that translanguaging is misunderstood as a mere code-switching and a sign of not having sufficient proficiency rather than being recognized as a valid pedagogical strategy. Further, Choi and Paudel (2024) point out that the absence of training in multilingual pedagogies leaves teachers unprepared to effectively integrate multiple languages. Therefore, the lack of acknowledgement of multilingual pedagogy in policy and the lack of multilingual training programs for teachers undermine the effective implementation of such sorts of strategies.

On an ideological level, hybridity carries a stigma that creates a fear in teachers to be judged by colleagues or administrators regarding their professionalism (Phyak, 2018). In the context of Nepal, Nepalese English language teachers speak English as their second or third language, and study it as a foreign language. This very situation may lead teachers towards feeling insecure and inadequate while engaging in hybrid language practices (Tupas & Rubdy, 2015). Additionally, multilingual classrooms are struggling to get the policy support for the recognition of linguistically hybrid practices of teaching. However, there is a policy ambiguity in Nepal. Collectively, the issues discussed above influence the teachers' experiences as they navigate competing demands of inclusivity, language proficiency, and institutional expectations.

Method and Materials

I conducted this study in the context of two government schools in Itahari Sub-Metropolitan City, Sunsari. For the research, I selected two teachers—Himal (pseudonym) from Bright Future Secondary School (pseudonym) and Bhim

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(pseudonym) from Green Valley Secondary School (pseudonym). Bright Future School is situated in a multilingual Maithili-speaking community. The school has good infrastructure and qualified human resources, but its students predominantly come from a working-class background with low financial support. While the majority of students speak Maithili, there are also Nepali-speaking, Tharu, and Hindi-speaking students. In contrast, Green Valley School also boasts good infrastructure, but, being a recently established secondary school, it lacks sufficient human resources. Most of the students at this school speak Tharu, but some students speak Rai, Limbu, Tamang, and Nepali. Both schools have a multilingual and diverse student population. Both Himal and Bhim belong to the Nepali-speaking community and have extensive teaching experiences of 10 years and 12 years, respectively. They both have completed master's degrees in English education and are currently teaching at government schools in multilingual, under-resourced settings.

To conduct this study, I employed narrative inquiry as the research design to explore and analyze the stories and experiences of the participants. According to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) framework, this approach collects narratives through interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences in their own words. This process is also referred to as 're-storying,' where the researchers collaboratively reframe participants' stories and derive meaning (Clandinin, 2013). I chose this research design to understand the subjective meanings of the participants' lived experiences within their sociocultural context. Both the schools and participants were selected purposively based on their experience, teaching situation, and the objective of my research. In-depth interview was used as a data collection tool. The in-depth interviews (45 minutes each) were conducted individually using the interview guidelines. Riessman (2008) notes that researchers can gather stories through interviews, oral histories, or autobiographies of participants in narrative inquiry. The responses of the participants were recorded using a cell phone and also documented in field notes. Then the recorded information was transcribed, coded, categorized, and thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis.

Findings and Discussion

After the analysis and the interpretation of the data, two major themes have been

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developed and interpreted as follows:

Tension between Hybridity and Monolingualism in Multilingual Settings

In multilingual educational contexts, language use is often shaped by competing ideological orientations. Linguistic hybridity conceptualizes language as fluid and dynamic, where speakers draw on their full linguistic repertoires for meaning-making. In contrast, monolingual ideology constructs languages as separate, bounded systems and privileges the exclusive use of a standardized form—often English in ELT settings. These orientations are inherently in tension, as one values flexibility and plurality while the other enforces uniformity and hierarchy. In Nepal's ELT context, this tension is further intensified by policy, curricular, and assessment structures that continue to promote English-only norms despite the multilingual realities of classrooms (Giri, 2020; Phyak, 2016). As a result, teachers operate within a complex ideological space where pedagogical possibilities afforded by multilingualism intersect with institutional expectations of monolingual practice. Moreover, the earlier research studies, for example (Rauteda, 2025a; Rauteda, 2025b) reveal that Nepalese English language teachers incorporate multiple languages in ELT classrooms, although the policies prescribed to use English only instruction. In this regard, Tupas and Rubdy (2015) state that while some teachers embrace multilingualism to support learning, they also feel pressured to uphold 'standard' [native like] English due to institutional demands and parental expectations. Therefore, Nepalese English language teachers have been navigating the tension between multilingual realities and policies. This study dealt with the lived experiences of teachers and explored how they are navigating this tension. Hence, the study discussed the following subthemes as the findings from the analysis of the data:

Translanguaging as a Practical and Inclusive Pedagogy in ELT Classrooms

In Nepalese ELT classrooms, teachers use translanguaging as a practical and inclusive pedagogy intentionally and purposefully. It is recognized for its importance to address the realities of linguistically diverse classrooms (Phyak, 2018; Rauteda, 2024b; Rauteda, 2025a). The study revealed that teachers conceptualized translanguaging not as a theoretical abstraction but as a practical and context-responsive pedagogy. In one of the interviews, the participant, Bhim, Shared;

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In my ELT classrooms, students mainly speak the Maithili, Rai, and Tharu languages as their first language. As a Nepali speaker, I could not understand their home languages. At the beginning, I tried to explain everything in English. After some time, I found my students confused and disengaged. So, I started switching between the languages: Nepali, English, and even allowed my students to use their home languages in the classroom if they felt comfortable. This made my students happy, motivated, collaborative, and engaged...

Hence, the verbatim shows the teacher's pedagogical shift from a monolingual to multilingual pedagogical practices. It shows that the teacher adopted an English-only teaching approach at the beginning, where he was influenced by the dominant ELT norms, but later he realized the limitations of monolingual instruction through his students' disengagement and demotivation in learning. The data further shows that the teacher's use of pedagogical agency, where the teacher mixed Nepali and English, and allowed his students to use their home languages if they felt comfortable. It further shows that the teacher used the translanguaging pedagogy in the form of linguistic hybridity (mixing of multiple languages purposefully) (Rauteda, 2022). The teacher's pedagogical shift further reveals the use of context-responsive pedagogy. Moreover, the teacher's practice reflects the potential use of students' full linguistic repertoires as a resource. Instead of treating language as a separate system, the teacher facilitated a fluid linguistic space where meaning-making occurs across languages. In addition, the teacher's use of such practices increased the motivation, collaboration, and engagement in the teaching-learning activities, further disclosing the practicality of translanguaging pedagogy in the enhancement of learner engagement, motivation, comprehension, and inclusion. Consequently, the teacher's practices show that he is valuing and trying to legitimize the local knowledge and culture in the classrooms. It aligns with the findings of Mazak and Carroll (2017), where the researchers say that the flexible use of multiple languages [translanguaging] challenges dominant monolingual norms and promotes epistemic justice. Moreover, this finding aligns with Garcia and Wei (2014); Phyak (2018) that translanguaging enhances the comprehension and participation and fosters inclusion in ELT classrooms.

Another participant, Himal, shared;

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In my classroom, the majority of my students belong to the 'Maithili' speaking community, and some of the students speak 'Hindi' as a mother tongue. I do not know Maithili, but I speak Hindi. In my classroom, I allow students to share the things in the language that they feel comfortable with. I also mix Nepali and Hindi while teaching English to help my learners understand the things. Because of my flexible language practices, students started interacting and responding confidently. I realized that the use of fluid language practice is important...

Hence, the verbatim illustrates the teacher's strategic use of Hindi, Nepali, and Maithili as a pedagogical resource that helps to mediate the complex concepts. As the teacher allowed students to use their mother tongue, students demonstrated confidence, clearer understanding, and enhanced participation. It further reveals that the use of students' linguistic repertoire strengthens cognitive access, emotional investment, and learner engagement. The teacher's practice of using multiple languages like this technically refers to the translanguaging that advocates for leveraging learners' full linguistic repertoire to support learning and meaning making (García & Wei, 2014; Rauteda, 2022, Rauteda, 2024b; Rauteda, 2025b). Moreover, the data shows that the use of translanguaging also increased the confidence level of the students. In addition, the teacher's realization of his practices further shows that integration of multiple languages enhances the conceptual clarity, classroom participation, interaction, and helps to build the relationship between the students and teachers. Moreover, the information shows that legitimizing multilingualism in ELT classrooms fosters identity and sense of belonging in the ELT classrooms by challenging the deficit view of multilingualism (Phyak, 2018), and it also discloses that learners should feel psychologically secure for better learning, and their identity should be invested in for inclusivity (Cummins, 2006). Consequently, teachers' experience positions translanguaging as a culturally responsive and democratic pedagogy.

In one of the interviews, the participant, Bhim, shared;

In one lesson, I paired 'Tharu' speaking students with Limbu speakers and allowed discussion in their home languages in English class. They helped each other. That class felt alive...

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Hence, the verbatim reveals that the teacher's permission to the students to use their home languages during peer discussion in the ELT classroom strengthened the collaboration, mutual support, and classroom engagement. The data further shows that the teacher positioned translanguaging both as a cognitive scaffold and a social resource through which students negotiate meaning. The description that 'the class felt alive' refers to the transformative change –from passive reception to dialogic and participatory learning (Rauteda, 2025b). Hence, the finding reflects translanguaging as a mechanism for the co-construction of knowledge through interaction (García & Wei, 2014). Moreover, the findings resonate with Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the zone of proximal development, where learners extend their understanding through peer mediation. In addition, students' involvement in both 'Tharu' and 'Limbu' helps them to process ideas within their familiar semiotic systems that reduce the cognitive demands related to English-only instruction (Cummins, 2006). In the context of Nepal, such dialogic and inclusive practices align with critical pedagogical orientations that view knowledge as socially constructed and grounded in learners' lived realities (Freire, 1970).

Through the discussion above, the study found that translanguaging is an intentional, context-responsive, inclusive, and democratic pedagogy that enhances comprehension, participation, affirms identity, creates an equitable and inclusive learning environment, and balances the multilingual ecology of the ELT classrooms.

Monolingual English Ideology: A Struggle with Internalized Norms

Although the translanguaging is being recognized as a practical and inclusive pedagogy, monolingual teaching practices remain dominant in Nepalese ELT classrooms. The participants' experiences show that teachers in multilingual settings struggle between monolingual ideology and the multilingual realities. In one of the interviews, the participant, Himal, shared;

Even though I know students understand better when I use Nepali, and allow them to use Maithili and Hindi, I feel uncomfortable using it too much. It feels like I am not doing my job properly as an English teacher...

The verbatim shows the internal conflict between reality and the teacher's perceptions of the language of instruction. The data further shows that in Nepal, English

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has been equated with the quality of the teachers, and English teachers are expected to use only English while teaching English. Due to this reason, the English language teachers use only English in their ELT classrooms. It further shows that teachers use exclusive English to save his/her professional face. In the broader sense, it refers to the monolingual ideologies that are not only externally imposed but also internalized, that shape teachers' sense of legitimacy and authority (Rauteda, 2024a). The verbatim further reveals that the teacher has a feeling of guilt and perceives themselves as unprofessional if they use students' home languages excessively. Moreover, the data shows that teachers feel uncomfortable using local languages in the ELT classrooms despite acknowledging the pedagogical value of students' linguistic repertoire.

In another interview, the participant, Bhim, shared:

I experience that we English language teachers are trained on how to give more exposure to the students in the target language. Sometimes, I feel sad that English teachers are expected to speak English all the time in the classrooms! If we mix languages, we are overlooked and taken as a weak teacher of English... so sad!

The verbatim reflects a deep tension between pedagogical ideology and classroom reality. It shows that English language teachers are expected to use English only as the medium of instruction in the teaching of English. Additionally, the data shows that English proficiency is the quality of a good English teacher. At the same time, it discloses the fact that ELT classrooms are guided by the monolingual ideology, which is close to the native speakerism and calls for the native like competency. The data also shows the emotional disparity of the teachers regarding the use of language. The norm that makes English language teachers use only English may create performance pressure where teachers are judged not by how effectively students learn, but by how closely they adhere to an idealized English-only instructional practice. The information further shows that perceiving teachers as 'weak' for mixing languages is a deficit view that privileges linguistic purity over learning outcomes. Moreover, the data also talks about the teacher education programs where teachers are trained how English is taught well—and teachers are told to speak English mostly with the students. Thus,

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the evidences disclose the reality existed in Nepalese ELT settings where there is a gap between ideology and reality (Phyak, 2013; Rauteda, 2025a). Consequently, English language teachers primarily experience emotional labor such as feelings of guilt, self-doubt, and anxiety when they allow students to use home languages, although the use of home languages is significant for the enhancement of comprehension and engagement (Rauteda, 2024b).

In one of the interviews, Himal shared;

I mix the Nepali language along with English in my classrooms. It makes me feel guilty. Although I use this technique of teaching, I timely think over it. Sometimes, I think that I'm spoiling their English proficiency by using and allowing excessive use of Nepali in the classroom. Although if I did not mix Nepali and English together, my students would remain silent...

The verbatim shows the mismatches between monolingual norms and pedagogical responsiveness to students' needs. The teacher's sense of guilt when allowing or using Nepali along with English reveals the teacher's internalization of an ideology that equates English language instruction with professionalism and legitimacy (Pennycook, 1994). Furthermore, the data shows the limitation of English-only instruction, where students remain disengaged. In this regard, Phyak (2018) and Rauteda (2024b) say that using multiple languages in ELT classrooms enhances the learners' engagement and make motivated for learning. Thus, the data reveals a call for multi/translingual pedagogical practices.

Systemic and Contextual Barriers to Linguistic Flexibility

Despite teachers' growing awareness of the benefits of translanguaging, their ability to implement linguistically flexible pedagogy is often constrained by systemic and contextual factors. Through the recursive analysis of the data, the following subthemes have been developed and analyzed as challenges or barriers to linguistic flexibility that the teachers are facing in Nepalese ELT classrooms:

Lack of Policy Clarity and Support

The enactment of pedagogical practices is not shaped solely by individual teachers' beliefs or classroom realities but is influenced by institutional and policy environments. In Nepalese ELT classrooms, English language teachers expressed a lack

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of policy clarity and support for the implementation of multilingual pedagogical practices, although these practices are inevitable for multilingual settings. In one of the interviews, the participant, Bhim, shared;

Till I started teaching at secondary schools, I had never attended any training where discussions regarding multilingualism and multilingual pedagogies had taken place. I have not got any training on how to teach in multilingual settings. The curriculum is prescriptive and prescribes that we use English only in the classroom. What does that mean in a class where half of the students do not understand? I am annoyed with the administration, curriculum designers, policy makers, everyone...[Angry]

The verbatim shows the English language teacher's frustration with the curriculum, policy ambiguity, administration, and the curriculum designers. The data further reveals that the multi/translingual practices have been disregarded by the institutional norms, and this creates a gap between the practice and the provisions. Additionally, it shows that teachers are positioned as mere implementers of the policy whose voices are silenced. Furthermore, the data show that teachers have not received the training regarding multilingual pedagogical practices, despite the fact that they are crucial in multilingual settings. Teachers' experience with the prescriptive curriculum and its prescriptions regarding the English-only norm in the ELT classrooms further reflects the dominance of monolingual ideology in Nepalese ELT classrooms, which assume linguistic homogeneity and overlook the linguistic diversity (García & Wei, 2014). Additionally, the rhetorical question, 'What does that mean in a class where half of the students do not understand English?' refers to the gap between policy prescription and pedagogical ethics. The teacher's annoyance further reflects the broader critique that top-down language policies often fail to address the classroom ecologies and multilingual realities (Hornberger, 2002; Tollefson, 1991). Consequently, the teacher's anger towards administration, curriculum designers, and policy makers indicates how institutional silence and rigidity are experienced as the constraints that delegitimize teachers' decision-making.

In another interview, Himal shared;

I adopted translingual practices in my classrooms. Unfortunately, it was hard to

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get support from the administration for the implementation of such practices.

Our headteacher observes the classes. One day, he came to my classroom while teaching and observed. He looked uncomfortable and made a complaint. There's no recognition of these strategies in evaluations...

The verbatim shows that the use of multilingual pedagogy is not rewarded by the administration, though they are pedagogically and culturally responsive. The head teacher's response and complaint in the teacher's use of translanguaging practices symbolizes to the controlling mechanism where the multilingual practices are devalued. It aligns with the research findings by Phyak et al. (2022), who argue that though the teachers create translanguaging spaces inside the classrooms, institutional monitoring reinforces English-only ideologies. Moreover, the comment, 'There's no recognition of these strategies in evaluations', further points to a misalignment between classroom realities and the assessment system. It further shows that the multilingual practices are unrewarded and excluded from evaluation criteria, and become invisible forms of labor that are pedagogically effective, but disregarded in use. In this regard, Regmi and Acharya (2025) explain that teachers in multilingual classrooms often show creativity and make their own decisions, but this work is not formally supported or valued.

Students' and Parents' Aspirations towards English

Students' and parents' perceptions towards English shape both policy and practices. It also helps to form agency, as they are the major arbiters. In one of the interviews, the participant, Himal, shared;

Parents become happy when their children can speak English. Some parents complain to us if they know that the teachers use Nepali or Maithili in class. They want their children to speak 'good English,' but do not think about how hard it is for students to understand without help...

The verbatim shows the influence of parental language ideologies on classroom practice. Moreover, the parents' intention for their children to speak English reflects a widespread belief in English as a marker of social mobility, prestige, and academic success (Rauteda, 2024a; Sah & Li, 2018). However, this aspiration is grounded in a monolingual assumption—that exclusive exposure to English automatically leads to proficiency. Furthermore, the data shows the tension between pedagogical effectiveness

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and symbolic capital attached to the English language (Bourdieu, 1991; Piller, 2016). In addition, the data discloses that the parents' perceptions towards the English language made teachers use English only as the language of instruction, although they know the importance of multiple languages in ELT classrooms.

In another interview, Bhim shared;

Parents often equate English fluency with intelligence, so they think teachers' use of other languages besides English is a sign of weakness. Even if students learn better with Nepali explanations, parents question our methods during parents and teachers' meetings...

The verbatim shows how dominant language ideologies shape parental perceptions of quality teaching and good teachers, and how these perceptions shape teachers' practices. The data reveals that parents take the learning of the English language as a quality attainment, and being intelligent. It further shows that parents reproduce a deficit view of multilingualism—interpreting the use of Nepali or other local languages as a marker of weakness rather than as a pedagogical resource (Phyak, 2018). These beliefs can be rooted in the monoglossic ideology where languages are viewed as separate, hierarchically ordered, and English positioned at the top (García & Wei, 2014). The questioning of teachers' methods during meetings indicates the pressure that the teachers navigate due to the parents' ideologies towards the English language. In this regard, Norton (2013) argues that language is closely connected to social status and symbolic capital so that parental resistance to the use of local languages inside ELT classrooms is not merely about pedagogy but about aspirations for mobility and prestige. In this sense, the teacher's professional judgment is negotiated not only within school policy structures but also within broader societal expectations. Consequently, the findings reveal that linguistic hybridity in the Nepalese ELT classrooms is both a pedagogical practice and an ideological site of struggle. Teachers' beliefs reflect an awareness of multilingual realities and a commitment to inclusive education, yet their practices are shaped by deeply embedded monolingual ideologies and systemic constraints.

Conclusion

The study explores how Nepalese secondary-level English language teachers understand linguistic hybridity and how they negotiate its use within multilingual classrooms shaped by competing ideologies. By analyzing the teacher's experiences collected using in-depth interviews, the study reveals a complex and contradictory landscape. On the one hand, teachers recognize translanguaging as a practical, inclusive, and context-responsive pedagogy that enhances comprehension, participation, and learner confidence. Their everyday practices show a clear commitment to making learning meaningful by using students' full linguistic repertoires. On the other hand, these practices exist alongside deeply internalized monolingual norms that equate English-only instruction with professionalism and quality teaching. The study reveals that the teachers are not simply the passive recipients of policy; they actively interpret, adapt, and sometimes resist dominant expectations. However, their agency is constrained by systemic factors such as rigid curricula, lack of professional training in multilingual pedagogies, institutional surveillance, and evaluation systems that fail to recognize multilingual/translingual practices. In addition, monolingual ideology is reinforced by the parental aspirations towards the English language who equate English proficiency with knowledge and intelligence. The study concludes that there is a mismatch between the provisions and the real practices. Consequently, the study highlights that linguistic hybridity in Nepalese ELT classrooms is not just a teaching strategy but an ideological and emotional space where teachers constantly negotiate identity, legitimacy, and responsibility. The study emphasizes that recognizing and legitimizing the hybrid linguistic practices at policy and institutional levels is crucial. Supporting teachers through training, inclusive assessment systems, and clearer policy directions can help bridge the gap between theory and practice. The study eventually implies that multilingual practices can foster more equitable and contextually relevant education in multilingual ELT settings.

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