Exploring Teachers' Perspectives Towards English-Only Policy Influence on Student-Teacher Rapport

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Abstract

This study explores the multidimensional aspects of the teaching-learning process by emphasising the critical role of student-teacher rapport in educational productivity. It primarily examines how classroom language of communication shapes this relationship, highlighting the significance of using a language in which both students and teachers feel fluent. The study examines the influence of English-only policies in Nepalese institutional schools on the student-teacher relationship, analysing teachers' perspectives on this policy. The study employed a descriptive research design and selected six teachers from the Kaski district as participants. The findings reveal that while the English-only policy aims to enhance language proficiency, it often hinders effective communication, understanding, and student participation, affecting the quality of the educational experience. Therefore, the study advocates for flexible language policies that balance the promotion of English proficiency with the linguistic needs of students to foster a more inclusive and effective learning environment. The study contributes to the broader discourse on language policy in education, offering recommendations for policymakers and educators to enhance student-teacher relationships and overall educational outcomes.

Keywords: Student-teacher rapport, English-only policy, educational inclusivity, linguistic diversity

Introduction

The multiple, complex, and multidimensional aspects of the teaching-learning process can significantly impact the productivity of the educational program. One of the several classroom elements that influences students' learning is the student-teacher relationship. Harmer (2008, p. 25) uses the term 'rapport' to refer to the student–teacher relationship.

Student-teacher rapport is a fundamental element that significantly shapes the quality of learning outcomes. In this regard, Wang (2024) emphasises that a strong rapport between teacher and student can boost student motivation and a sense of acceptance, which are crucial for better academic success. It also shapes the students' attitudes towards their studies and school. Likewise, Krstić (2015) stresses that a positive and secure relationship of students with a teacher impacts not only academic

achievement but also fosters a positive outlook toward school and learning. Furthermore, students who are unable to establish a strong connection with their teachers may struggle to reach their full potential. In contrast, those who build positive relationships are more likely to achieve it. Similarly, Gillespie (2005) asserts that a positive student-teacher relationship can aid students in their journey to develop their full potential. Hence, the education system must prioritise student-teacher connection inside and outside of the classroom. Developing and sustaining the student-teacher rapport is a shared responsibility; however, the teacher is expected to initiate the process.

Teachers adopt various strategies to develop a good rapport with their students. For Harmer (2008), teachers recognise every student, listen to them and show impartiality to establish a good rapport with students. Another major influencing element is classroom language. Classroom language influences not only interaction but also classroom dynamics, which ultimately lead to successful learning. In this connection, Manke (1997) opines that language plays a significant role in building student-teacher relationships, constructing power dynamics within the classroom, and assuming that students understand the teachers' instructions and explanations. This idea is also supported by the work of Lo and Macaro (2012), who found that classroom teaching became more teacher-centred and the opportunities for students to interact and receive assistance from teachers were reduced when the medium of instruction was switched from the students' first language to a second language. Likewise, Vygotsky (1978) notes that the medium of instruction serves as a critical cornerstone in the teaching-learning process. Educational attainment flourishes when students can readily grasp the teacher's explanations and directions. It shows that using language that students are more comfortable with enhances their participation in the learning process. Therefore, using appropriate classroom language is crucial for both enhancing students' learning and building a positive rapport with them.

As English language teachers, we have also encountered the imposition of English both inside and outside the classroom, particularly when interacting with students. This imposition prompted us to delve deeper into its impact on the student-teacher relationship. I (second author) was explicitly asked not to use languages other than English while delivering the content and interacting with students. Correspondingly, students were directed to communicate exclusively in English with their teachers and peers. In Nepal, the institutional schools and some missionary schools have been using English as the medium of instruction. These days, the English-only policy is becoming increasingly prevalent even in community schools. Addressing the increasing demand for English in Nepalese schools, Sharma (2022) says that driven by societal pressure and perceived benefits of English proficiency for enhanced employment opportunities and a better life, Nepalese private schools have adopted a mandatory English language policy.

Furthermore, the desire to uplift institutional reputation and meet global standards also leads to the adoption of English-only policies by schools (Kani & İğsen, 2022). The adoption of the English-only policy is primarily driven by stakeholders' desire to implement it in educational institutions. In their study in Thailand and Vietnam, Sahan et al. (2022) found that stakeholders primarily prioritised an English-only policy. Therefore, schools have adopted an English-only policy due to a combination of factors, including pressure from stakeholders, a desire to improve English language skills, and a need to enhance their institutional reputation.

This trend of an English-only policy in institutional schools in Nepal has been a pressing issue for two significant reasons: one is that it often overlooks the diverse linguistic backgrounds of both students and teachers, and the other is that not all students and teachers may be adequately proficient in English. Therefore, a qualitative inquiry is needed to explore how this policy, from the perspective of teachers, influences student-teacher rapport, student participation and the ability to express complex

ideas. The study will also critically assess how this enforced framework impacts the achievement of the curriculum's stated objectives.

Several studies have explored EMI and English-only policies. However, a few have focused specifically on these policies and their impact on student-teacher rapport in multilingual contexts, such as in Nepal. Ignoring how the English-only policy shapes trust, interaction, and the student-teacher relationship, these studies primarily focus on English language proficiency and policy impact, as well as higher education in a foreign setting, which creates a gap in exploring how the English-only policy functions within the school premises of privately-run institutional schools in Nepal. Therefore, this study fills the gap by exploring perspectives, with a focus on how strict language policies influence student-teacher relationships and educational practices.

This study aims to address the central research question: What are teachers' perspectives on the impact of an English-only policy on fostering rapport between students and teachers? Primarily, the study aims to explore teachers' perspectives on the influence of the English-only policy in institutional schools in Nepal regarding how the policy affects student-teacher rapport. The findings of the study provide valuable insights for students, teachers, teacher educators, researchers, policymakers, and educators. It can support makers in creating a more inclusive learning environment and improve educational outcomes by restructuring language policies.

Literature Review

Based on the study's research questions and objectives, relevant literature was reviewed to provide background and context, identify gaps in existing knowledge, and inform the selection of an appropriate methodology. For clarity and organisation, we reviewed the materials under five themes.

Student -Teacher Rapport Learning Effectiveness

Students and teachers are significant stakeholders in education, as they play a crucial role in the course of teaching and learning. The teacher-student relationship has a strong influence on educational effectiveness, impacting students' learning outcomes and retention (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). A strong student-teacher connection can pique the interest of students who initially were unwilling to learn. To elucidate this, Fredriksen and Rhodes (2004) claim, "Supportive relationships with teachers may augment students' motivation to learn and actively participate in subject domains that have traditionally held little interest for them" (p. 46). Similarly, Hamre and Pianta (2001) assert that studies consistently reveal that a positive student-teacher relationship boosts academic performance, attendance, and focus in class while also reducing the likelihood of students dropping out. Meaningful and explicit interaction between students and teachers is a prerequisite for any classroom activity. If something obstructs student-teacher communication, it hurts the student-teacher relationship. To support this argument, Pianta et al. (2012) argue, "relationships and interactions with teachers either produce or inhibit developmental change to the extent that they engage, meaningfully challenge, and provide social and relational supports" (p. 366). Therefore, for an effective learning environment in a classroom, a strong student-teacher rapport is most important.

Language of Classroom Interaction

The language used by teachers in classroom instruction plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. The language is the foundation of classroom communication, and it directly affects how teachers and students interact, shaping their understanding, participation, and, ultimately, their learning (Genesee et al., 2006). It highlights the importance of language used in the classroom for effective communication. Interaction is a significant

way for maintaining a stronger rapport between them, which is necessary for effective learning. When students feel comfortable with the classroom language, they become more enthusiastic and confident in participating in classroom activities. To elucidate this, Swadi (1997) reported that students are more likely to participate actively and confidently if they are taught in the language of their choice. The English-only policy creates challenges for non-native English teachers in delivering complex issues in English. Supporting this thought, Dang and Vu (2022) revealed that academics from a non-native English background frequently face challenges in delivering content of a complex nature in English, which can affect their delivery of content and interaction with students (Neupane, 2022); the language of communication bridges the gap between students and teachers. When participants possess familiarity with the language of classroom instruction, the process of teaching and learning is significantly facilitated. In contrast, if the classroom language makes it challenging for students and teachers to communicate effectively, it negatively impacts the teaching–learning process.

English-only Policy and Pedagogical Impacts

Classroom language has a significant influence on learning outcomes, as it underpins pedagogy and facilitates meaningful interactions among students and teachers. Language serves as the primary tool for teachers and students to achieve educational objectives (Christie, F., 2000). A strictly imposed English-only policy can hinder students' learning by limiting interaction between teachers and students and creating language barriers that affect content understanding. Nguyen et al. (2010) in their study in Vietnam found that nearly two-thirds of students did not fully comprehend the teaching, and many students also struggled to express their ideas and interact effectively in English. Monolingual enforcement can exacerbate existing inequalities, favouring elite students and sidelining students from marginalised communities. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds often lack early exposure to English, which puts them at a disadvantage compared to their peers from more affluent families. To shed light on this, Dhakal (2021) warns that English as a medium of instruction restricts the learning of students whose first language is marginalised, as their home environment does not support English language learning. Similarly, Dearden (2014) confirms that studies have shown that giving preference to individuals who are already proficient in English can exacerbate existing social inequalities through EMI.

Rather than adhering to a strict monolingual policy, balancing first and second languages by incorporating code-switching and translanguaging can positively impact students' learning. Wang and Lai (2023) claim that classroom interaction is influenced by the language used by the teacher, which includes code-switching and the balanced use of first and second languages. Therefore, the imposition of an English-only policy may create challenges in selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches in the classroom.

Translanguaging and Multilingual Pedagogy

The English-only policy often neglects the use of translanguaging and multilingual pedagogy in the classroom. Translanguing can foster a safe learning environment where students feel comfortable and become confident and enthusiastic. Regarding the benefits of translanguaging, Dougherty (2021) emphasises that translanguaging, whether used with preparation or spontaneously, can positively impact students' understanding of instruction and subject matter, and it can also foster an environment that facilitates students' identity formation and enhanced involvement in classroom activities. In a similar vein, Burton and Rajendram (2019) highlight that translanguaging is acknowledged by several ESL teachers as beneficial in enhanced comprehension and reduced language-related apprehension. Translanguaging can serve as an alternative to rigid monolingual policies, offering several advantages.

The use of students' native language as classroom instruction can promote a positive environment for the students. It can facilitate learning effortlessly. In light of this, McMillan and Rivers (2011) suggest that several teachers believe that teachers' careful use of students' first language has the potential to impact second language learning positively. In contrast, prohibiting the use of the first language and imposing an English-only restriction deprives students of the benefits of multilingualism, leading to several negative consequences. This sentiment is captured by Yang and Jang (2022), who uncover that the pressure faced by Korean bilingual teachers to adhere to an English-only mandate can hinder their ability to teach students effectively who may benefit from bilingual instruction, thereby limiting teachers' use of their first language as an educational tool. This highlights that an English-only approach should not be imposed at the expense of multilingualism.

Globalisation and Language Policy

Globalisation has reinforced English as a global lingua franca, resulting in its widespread use across various fields worldwide. English fulfils the need for a common language to initiate the interaction between people with different first languages. Crystal (2003) highlighted that, due to globalisation, English has emerged as the world's default lingua franca, serving as the essential communication tool in international spheres such as business, science, technology, and academic research. Similarly, Giri (2010) and Neupane (2022) assert that the significance of English has increased drastically with the emergence of globalisation; it is robustly present in every aspect of life. It can play a role in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation because people from diverse linguistic backgrounds can communicate easily in English (Atasheva, 2024). This dominance of English has lured many people to prioritise English for communication, even over their mother tongue (Philpson, 2018).

English is widely used as the medium of education, valued for its role in achieving success in a globalised world, and sometimes replacing less-dominant languages. In this regard, Apple (2004) argues that the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideology in education is undeniable. Policies are increasingly framing education as an investment with anticipated returns, prioritising socioeconomic gains over cultural considerations. English-medium education is viewed as a key to achieving upward social and economic mobility. Parents often choose English medium schools for their children, expecting that it will provide their children with upward socioeconomic mobility. This sentiment is perfectly captured by Sah and Karki (2023), who indicate that parents often perceive EMI as a means of helping their children learn English, which may improve their social and financial status. The influence of neoliberal ideologies is evident in education. These neoliberal values govern education policies. Education is viewed as an investment that yields a return. The socioeconomic aspect is emphasised rather than the cultural aspect. The direct impact of these values is reflected in Nepal's education policies; however, their impact on learning outcomes is questionable. In this regard, Phyak and Sharma (2020) stated that neoliberal ideologies heavily influence the role of English in Nepal's education system, although their impact on educational value remains contested and multifaceted.

Although previous studies have explored the role of English as a medium of instruction, translanguaging, and student-teacher relationships, few studies have specifically investigated teachers' perspectives on how an English-only policy influences student-teacher rapport in institutional schools in Nepal. The research focuses on students' learning outcomes, language proficiency, or social inequalities, leaving the impact on teacher-student rapport unexplored. Therefore, this gap highlights the need for a study that examines teachers' experiences and insights regarding the relational effects of the English-only policy in Nepalese school classrooms.

Methodology

This study is based on a seminar report prepared by the second author for partial fulfillment of the course ELT Seminar and Report Writing (Eng. Ed. 544) in the fourth semester of the M.Ed. program at Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara, under Tribhuvan University, Nepal. The first author served as the subject teacher and internal supervisor, while the second author was a fourth-semester student.

The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore teachers' perspectives on the impact of the English-only policy on building rapport between students and teachers. The target population consisted of schools in the Kaski district where the English-only policy was implemented. Six teachers from institutional schools—referred to using pseudonyms Sita, Kamal, Reema, Keshav, Jyoti, and Rajesh were purposively selected as participants.

The information was collected through an open-ended questionnaire and a consent form. The second author approached each participant to explain the study's purpose, obtain informed consent, and distribute the questionnaire. The responses provided rich insights into the participants' experiences. The collected data were then coded and categorised into significant themes, patterns, and structures. The study employed thematic analysis to identify commonalities, contradictions, and tensions within the data. The interpretation of the results took into account the contextual nuances of the participants' experiences.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they fully understood the purpose of the research and any potential risks associated with it. Confidentiality of all collected data was strictly maintained, and participants were protected from any harm or undue stress. The researchers prioritised building rapport with participants, fostering mutual respect, and maintaining open communication throughout the research process.

Results

This section presents the study's results, which explored teachers' perspectives on the impact of English-only policies on student–teacher rapport in institutional schools in Nepal. The analysis focuses on teachers' views regarding the benefits and challenges of implementing such policies, as well as their perceived effects on classroom interaction, student engagement, and overall learning experiences, all of which influence the student-teacher relationship. The study collected qualitative information through an open-ended questionnaire, allowing participants to express their experiences and perceptions in their own ways. The results are organised thematically to highlight major patterns and insights that emerged from the information, providing a comprehensive understanding of how English-only policies influence the development of positive teacher–student relationships.

Language Fosters Rapport between Student and Teacher

Participants' responses highlighted the pivotal role of language in building rapport between students and teachers. All the participants agreed that clear communication plays a crucial role in building positive and strong relationships between teachers and students in the classroom. Participants emphasised that language is not merely a medium to deliver content; it is also about understanding each other, displaying empathy, and building trust. In this regard, Reema said, "I perceive language as a vital tool in fostering a strong connection between teachers and students. It serves as the medium through which understanding, empathy, and trust are built."   Reema means that students and teachers can understand each other through language. When they understand each other, a close relationship develops among them. In addition, Reema noted, "Effective communication, facilitated by language, not only enhances academic learning but also nurtures a supportive and inclusive classroom

environment where students feel valued and understood." Reema's additional words mean that good communication through language not only improves students' learning but also supports the creation of a positive, supportive, and inclusive classroom environment where students feel valued, respected, and understood. Therefore, Reema's experience acknowledges that language is not only confined to conveying facts but also to building rapport between students and teachers and creating a supportive learning environment in the classroom.

Participants also acknowledged that language proficiency is essential for engaging in meaningful classroom interactions. They revealed that some students are not confident about expressing themselves in an exclusive atmosphere. They also shared the same challenges faced by students. Students often skip speaking because they are not comfortable talking in English. Rajesh's experience with the English-only policy highlighted the complexities of language dynamics. He said, "Sometimes, both the teacher and the student find difficulty in expressing their feelings and ideas precisely due to the English-only policy." Additionally, some prefer not to speak or ask, as they are only fluent in English. This expression shows the intricate connection between language proficiency, self-expression, a teacher's performance, and student participation in the classroom.

Challenges While Communicating with Students

Participants confessed that they face difficulties while communicating with students under the English-only policy. They explored various issues that arise when students' language skills and proficiency need to align with what is needed for learning. In this issue, Keshav confessed, "Due to the English-only policy, I cannot provide whatever they need. It is due to the limitation in the English language only policy. I cannot express in English as in my mother tongue". Keshav's confession highlights a conflict between the schools' expectations for improving students' English-speaking abilities and the reality that even teachers encounter challenges when expressing themselves in English. It means they need support for their native language to express some abstract and complex ideas. They feel comfortable while expressing themselves in their native language.

Participants also discussed the impact of the language barrier on teaching and student engagement. Sita shared that some students need to be more confident in speaking English. The loss of confidence impedes their interaction in the classroom. Similarly, Kamal's experience reflected the challenges faced by teachers who struggle to express themselves in English, as it is not their first language. In this Regard, Kamal stated, "I have encountered challenges to express myself because English is not my mother tongue." This expression highlights the challenges that teachers face due to the strict language policy.

In the classrooms where the English-only policy is implemented, the inability of Keshav and Kamal to express their ideas in English creates a gap in their relationship with students.

Impact of English-only Policy on Classroom Interaction

Exploring the impact of language policy on the depth and clarity of communication, participants shed light on the intricate interplay between language proficiency and pedagogical effectiveness. Their reflections highlight the nuanced challenges in addressing linguistic needs within educational contexts. Reema encapsulated this complexity as, "The English-only policy may impact the depth and clarity of communication by excluding students who are more comfortable expressing themselves in their native language, limiting their ability to fully". This statement highlights that this language imposition restricts classroom interaction, limiting students' capacity to express themselves as they are not comfortable interacting in a second language.

Moreover, participants articulated another concern regarding the potential implications of language policy on inclusivity and access to educational resources. Rajesh's insights into the impact of the English-only policy on student confidence and self-expression shed light on how nuanced dynamics are at play. He noted, "I have noticed some changes in students' confidence or self-expression due to the English-only policy." This statement underscores the need to foster an environment that prioritises equal access to educational opportunities, surpasses linguistic barriers, and ensures all students feel empowered to engage in classroom settings and express themselves without hesitation.

Coping Strategies

The participants shared their strategies to tackle the challenges arising from school language policies. They shared their strategies for building inclusive learning processes. Jyoti emphasised the need for teaching approaches that prioritise student involvement and ownership of their learning, highlighting active participation and student-centred methods. She elaborated, "My strategies include active participation, student-centred techniques, utilising ICT (Information and Communication Technology), and planning based on individual needs and requirements." This well-planned approach demonstrates an effort and commitment to utilising various teaching methods to address the diverse needs of students.

Additionally, the participants emphasised the importance of being flexible and adaptable when implementing language policies to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity in educational settings. Kamal's call for incorporating mother-tongue instruction underlines the crucial role of recognising and valuing linguistic diversity within academic settings. He stated, "Students, if necessary, should be permitted to use their mother tongue to express their ideas." This acknowledgement underscores the importance of adopting inclusive teaching practices that transcend the language barrier, enabling all students to succeed academically and express themselves confidently in the classroom.

Therefore, the difficulties, problems, and challenges that appear in the classroom due to the English-only policy hinder the relationship between students and their teachers, as the teacher is their immediate authority, and ultimately impede their academic growth.

Discussion

This study explored teachers' perceptions of the effects of the English-only policy on student-teacher rapport in Nepalese institutional schools. The findings reveal the complex interaction between policy goals and classroom realities, demonstrating that strict enforcement of language policies may inadvertently undermine the development of positive relationships between students and teachers. Although English-only policies aim to enhance language proficiency, their rigid implementation often creates communication barriers. This aligns with Manke's (1997) assertion that language plays a central role in establishing relationships and power dynamics in the classroom and supports Vygotsky's (1978) view that the language of instruction significantly shapes teaching and learning. The participants' experiences further corroborate Gillespie's (2005) findings, highlighting that positive student-teacher relationships enable students to achieve their full potential, while rigid language policies may constrain student engagement and hinder meaningful classroom interaction.

The results emphasise that language is not merely a tool for instruction but is also vital for fostering understanding, empathy, and trust in academic settings. Participants reported that both teachers and students struggled to convey complex ideas and emotions effectively under English-only restrictions, which often reduced student participation and interaction. This finding is consistent with

Lo and Macaro's (2012) observation that second-language instruction limits interaction opportunities and promotes teacher-centred classrooms. It also supports Nguyen et al.'s (2010) research in Vietnam, where students faced challenges expressing their ideas in English, and Swadi's (1997) assertion that students participate more actively when taught in a language they are comfortable with. Furthermore, the results align with Christie's (2000) argument that language is foundational for achieving learning objectives, suggesting that rigid language policies may discourage the authentic interaction necessary for maintaining strong student-teacher rapport.

The study also raises concerns about the perpetuation of inequality through the implementation of English-only policies in multilingual contexts. Such policies tend to privilege students with early exposure to English, while marginalising linguistically diverse learners, thereby reinforcing existing social and educational disparities. This supports Dhakal's (2021) warning that English-medium instruction (EMI) can disadvantage students whose first language is marginalised and Dearden's (2014) argument that EMI primarily benefits students already proficient in English. The findings align with Phillipson's (2018) assertion that the dominance of English can suppress other languages, as well as with Apple's (2004) analysis of how neoliberal ideologies influence educational outcomes. Additionally, this study aligns with Phyak and Sharma (2020), who highlight that Nepalese educational policy reflects neoliberal values at the expense of equity and inclusion, and with Giri (2010), who notes the pervasive influence of English in social and professional spheres due to globalisation.

In response to these challenges, participants recommended the occasional use of students' mother tongues. These practices align with the translanguaging strategies advocated by Dougherty (2021) and Burton and Rajendram (2019), which emphasise the use of multiple languages to enhance comprehension and reduce anxiety. This approach also supports Wang and Lai's (2023) suggestion for balanced code-switching and McMillan and Rivers' (2011) finding that judicious teacher support for students' native languages benefits second-language learning. Overall, the study highlights the importance of educational policies that strike a balance between the goal of English proficiency and students' linguistic needs, thereby fostering meaningful student-teacher relationships. Such a balance, as emphasised by Hagenauer and Volet (2014) and Pianta et al. (2012), is essential for creating inclusive learning environments and promoting successful educational outcomes.

The study revealed that the English-only policy in Nepalese institutional schools has a complex impact on student-teacher rapport. While the policy aims to enhance English proficiency, its strict implementation often creates communication barriers, which reduce student participation and limit meaningful classroom interaction. Teachers reported difficulties in conveying complex ideas and emotions, highlighting that language is not merely a medium of instruction but also a tool for building understanding, trust, and empathy. The policy was found to exacerbate inequalities, as it privileged students with prior English exposure while marginalising linguistically diverse learners. Participants suggested occasional use of students' mother tongues, reflecting translanguaging practices that support comprehension, reduce anxiety, and enhance interaction. Overall, the findings suggest that striking a balance between English language proficiency and students' linguistic needs is crucial for fostering positive student-teacher relationships and achieving effective learning outcomes.

Conclusion and Implications

This study explored teachers' perspectives on the English-only policy and its influence on student-teacher rapport in Nepalese institutional schools, highlighting significant implications for language policy and classroom pedagogy. The findings demonstrate that language plays a central role

in establishing effective communication, fostering understanding, and building trust between teachers and students. The strict enforcement of an English-only policy, while intended to enhance language proficiency and institutional reputation, often creates communication barriers that hinder student participation, limit engagement, and impede meaningful interaction. Teachers reported difficulties in conveying complex concepts, further affecting instructional quality and student learning outcomes.

The study also revealed that English-only restrictions can exacerbate educational inequalities, as they privilege students with prior English exposure while marginalising linguistically diverse learners. These findings underscore the need for a more flexible, multilingual approach to language policy in educational settings, balancing the goal of English proficiency with the linguistic needs of all students. Adopting such an approach can enhance classroom communication, support inclusive and student-centred pedagogy, and create a safe, participatory learning environment where students feel encouraged to express themselves freely.

From a pedagogical perspective, educators are encouraged to implement strategies such as translanguaging, judicious use of students' mother tongues, and differentiated instruction to accommodate varying levels of English proficiency. Doing so can strengthen student-teacher rapport, foster equitable participation, and promote positive learning outcomes. The study highlights the broader implications of language policies for educational equity, student engagement, and instructional quality, emphasising that effective communication is foundational to building strong student-teacher relationships.

For future research, it is recommended that the long-term impacts of language policies be investigated on student achievement, teacher practices, and classroom interaction. Comparative studies across different educational contexts could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of diverse language policies. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of students, parents, administrators, and policymakers can inform the development of more inclusive and contextually responsive language policies that support both student learning and positive student-teacher relationships.

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