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Building the Bridges or Widening the Divide: Exploring the Realities of EMI Implementation in Community Schools

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Abstract

The adoption of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Nepalese Community Schools has emerged as a significant yet contentious issue in educational discourse. This qualitative multiple-case study examines the gap between the intended implementation of EMI and its actual practices in three secondary schools within the Triyuga Municipality of Udayapur District. Drawing on data collected from in-depth interviews, observations, and reflective journals, this study incorporates perspectives from a diverse range of stakeholders, including head teachers, students, parents, members of the School Management Committee (SMC), and members of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Guided by Pennycook's post-colonial theory, this study explores how EMI is conceptualized, enacted, and experienced in these settings. The findings reveal that EMI is largely seen as a pathway to academic advancement and socio-economic mobility, often driven by aspirations for English language proficiency and global competitiveness. However, systematic challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, a lack of clear government policy, and limited pedagogical interaction in the classroom have hindered the effective implementation of EMI in community schools. The study emphasizes the need for context-sensitive strategies, including teacher training, curriculum adaptation, and the establishment of a clear EMI policy.

Keywords: Context-sensitive, EMI, linguistic capital, multifaceted strategy, post-colonial theory

Introduction

EMI is increasingly prevalent in the educational system worldwide, particularly in countries where English is not the native language. Dearden (2014) defines EMI as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (p. 4). This approach is often adopted to enhance students' English proficiency and to provide access to global academic resources. Similarly, Macaro et al. (2020) define EMI as the practice of delivering academic content in English in regions where English is not the primary language, emphasizing its role in facilitating internationalization, improving educational outcomes.

The medium of instruction policy is a hot topic in school education in Nepal. After the introduction of neoliberal economic policy in the 1990s, many private schools adopted EMI, which attracted many parents influenced by the neoliberal ideology (Neupane, 2022). Existing studies show that the parental preference for EMI is the perceived value of English language proficiency in securing better economic opportunities. The perception has led many parents to transfer their children to private schools that offer Education in the English medium. Consequently, community schools experienced a significant drop in student enrollment in recent years. This situation prompted the school administration and school management committee to introduce EMI in their educational program, aiming to attract and retain students (Dearden, 2014; Poudel, 2019; Sah & Li, 2018; Saud, 2020). They perceive this policy change as essential to survive (Ojha, 2018; Neupane, 2022). Many parents equate EMI with quality education, which motivates them to enrol their children in schools that offer education in English, and the schools also perceive EMI as a strategic response to enrollment challenges in Nepalese community schools (Karki, 2024). While adoption of EMI serves immediate institutional goals, a more balanced approach that acknowledges the role of the mother tongue could lead to more effective educational outcomes (Karki, 2025; Ghimire, 2019; Poudel & Choi, 2021).

The schools that have embraced EMI often promote it confidently, as a guaranteed way to improve education without conducting a proper analysis. In Nepal, many academic institutions eagerly implement EMI, portraying it as a reliable means to deliver quality education (Saud, 2020). Although English proficiency is often regarded as an essential skill, achieving it remains a struggle for many learners (Ojha, 2018). The implementation of EMI brings both opportunities and challenges. If schools can appoint qualified and trained EMI teachers and receive government support to strengthen instructional practices, EMI can yield positive educational outcomes. However, Karki (2018) points out that many community schools adopting EMI in their education programs struggle due to a shortage of proficient teachers, insufficient EMI-related training, and a lack of suitable teaching resources, which can negatively affect students' learning. Considering these issues, this study seeks to investigate underlying factors motivating the shifts from Nepali medium of instruction (NMI) to EMI and to evaluate how EMI is being implemented in community schools within Triyuga Municipality.

Despite the growing adoption of EMI, there is no certainty that these schools are successfully delivering quality education. Parents are particularly drawn to EMI due to its global significance and the perception that it enhances career prospects (Khati, 2016). Many people regard English as a powerful tool for economic advancement and social dignity, associating it with financial success and prosperity. Consequently, EMI adoption continues to rise, driven by the global influence of the English language. Bourdieu (1993, as cited in Saud, 2020, p. 320) supports this notion, asserting that EMI is introduced with new promises of quality education. However, its widespread adoption in Nepalese community schools remains controversial.

This study examines the lived realities, perceptions, and responses of various stakeholders regarding EMI adoption, perceived benefits and drawbacks, and their impact on teaching and learning. Similarly, it also examines the systematic pedagogical difficulties faced during the shift to EMI, including limitations in teacher proficiency, a lack of specific EMI training, and the heterogeneity of students' English language backgrounds. The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. How do stakeholders experience the implementation of EMI in community schools?
ii. In what ways do schools encounter challenges while implementing English as a medium of instruction?

Review of Literature

In this section, we have reviewed Nepal's language planning and policy with historical development. Similarly, we have reviewed postcolonial language planning and policy. Furthermore, we have examined how EMI has become a neoliberal issue in developing countries, including Nepal.

Nepal's Language Planning and Policy: Historical Development

Language planning is an effort to address the linguistic challenges faced by a community through the study of its various languages or dialects and the formulation of an official policy for selection and use (Yadav, 2013). According to Weinstein (1980, as cited by Wardhaugh, 2006), language planning is defined as "a government-sanctioned, long-term constituent, and deliberate attempt to change the function of a language within a society to resolve communicative issues". The language policies are crafted to improve various aspects of society, making them inherently multidimensional (Yadava, 2007). Effective language policies are essential for a nation's smooth functioning. Similarly, Dhami (2024) argued that colonial legacies have shaped both Nepal's education system and language policy, promoting English as a dominant language and sidelining indigenous languages.

Nepal has a historical tradition of Hindu Vedic education, where learning was provided in Gurukuls, Madrasas, Gumbas, and temples. Educational practices relied on Buddhist and Hindu manuscripts written in Sanskrit, with Sanskrit serving as the primary medium of instruction (Joshi, 2020). According to Giri (2011), Nepali was enforced as an official language during the unification period as a military language and a symbol of linguistic supremacy. The subsequent governments continued this policy to control minority languages and cultures. Khadka (2024) reported that policymakers always emphasize the English language, believing that it brings significant socio-economic benefits and provides access to global opportunities. However, this direction fails to take local realities into account and tends to downplay long-term drawbacks. Therefore, it is important to carefully examine the dominant role of English before adopting it as a medium of instruction in countries where English is not the native language (Rana, 2025).

English first entered Nepal's sociopolitical landscape in 1767 during a period of regional conflict (Levi, 1952, cited in Poudel, 2021). Its introduction was politically motivated: Jaya Prakash Malla, a ruler of the Kathmandu Valley, requested aid from the British East India Company to repel invading Gorkhali forces. Captain Kinloch's subsequent arrival with British troops marked Nepal's earliest formal interaction with the English, driven by strategic alliances and internal power struggles (Poudel, 2021). The ruling elite soon perceived English as a marker of elite identity, prompting efforts to educate their children in the language to solidify their social distinction.

The formal introduction of English in Nepali schools began under Jung Bahadur Rana, who assumed power in 1846 after the Kot Massacre. Recognizing the British alliance as vital to his authority, he positioned English as a language of power and prestige. In 1854, he founded Durbar High School in Kathmandu, Nepal's first government-run English-medium institution, prioritizing English education for his descendants (Poudel, 2021; Saud, 2024; Weinberg, 2013). The Ranas established Trichandra College in 1918, primarily to prevent students from traveling to Indian universities, where they might be exposed to revolutionary ideologies (Eagle, 1999; Weinberg, 2013).

After the end of the Rana regime in 1950, King Tribhuvan, reinstated to power, accepted constitutional reforms and worked with parliamentary and cabinet leaders to create a democratic governance framework centered on national progress. In 1953, the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC), chaired by Hugh B. Wood, was established. The authors of the report strongly

supported Nepali as the medium of instruction for schooling. The report examined not only the choice of language for classroom instruction but also its use on playgrounds and in all aspects of daily life.

The Panchayat administration promoted the slogan "ek bhasha, ek bhesh, ek dharma, ek desh" (one language, one dress, one religion, one nation) to reinforce national identity. As part of this effort, the government sought to standardize Nepali as the dominant language, promote Hinduism, and establish other national symbols nationwide to foster a sense of national unity (Phyak & Ojha, 2019, p. 344). Tribhuvan University, Nepal's first university, was established in 1959. It also prioritized English education. Its curriculum also contributed to the growing popularity of the language among the intellectual elite (Malla, 1977). In 1961, the newly formed All-Round National Education Committee proposed shifting the medium of instruction to Nepali in schools and colleges (Weinberg, 2013). A pivotal shift in educational policy occurred in 1971 with the launch of the National Education System Plan (NESP), implemented over five years. The NESP explicitly focused on assimilation and uniformity, outlining its primary objectives as fostering loyalty to the monarchy, strengthening national unity, and reinforcing the Panchayat system (Caddell, 2007, p. 266, as cited in Weinberg, 2013).

The imposition of a Nepali-only policy in public schools, while elites had access to English education, deepened social inequalities, demonstrating the complexities of language policy in Nepal's educational history (Poudel, 2021). When the Panchayat system ended in 1990, the king approved a new constitution officially acknowledging Nepal as a multicultural and multilingual nation. This political shift created a significant opportunity for the voices of marginalized language communities. The 1991 Constitution acknowledged Nepal's identity as a multicultural and multilingual nation. It also ensured that Nepali people have the fundamental right to protect their culture, scripts, and languages (Gautam, 2021). The status planning in Nepal plays a crucial role as it gives clear rules about which language to use in a particular situation (Bhattarai, 2025).

The National Education Commission (NEC) was established following the restoration of democracy and submitted its report in 1992. According to the NEC (1992), schools and communities that were interested were permitted to develop and implement their own curricula, provided they received approval from the Ministry of Education (Poudel, 2019). Similarly, the constitution of Nepal 2015 identified Nepal as a 'multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic nation and made provision to protect, preserve, and promote the languages of communities, and it has ensured equality among religious backgrounds, ethnicities, and political and linguistic backgrounds (Phyak & Ojha, 2019). Likewise, Poudel (2019) highlights that Nepal's education policy is cyclical, as education was based on EMI in the beginning. After the establishment of democracy and the end of Anarchy, the medium shifted to Nepali, and EMI was again promoted and encouraged after the restoration of democracy in 1990.

The 2009 School Sector Reform Plan emphasized the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction for the first three grades. It explicitly states that children's right to receive basic education in their mother tongue will be ensured at least through Grade 3 (Ministry of Education, 2009). The government also adopted a liberal language policy, which increased the number of private schools. As a result, numerous private schools, commonly called boarding schools, were established nationwide. Primarily driven by commercial interests, these schools mainly served affluent families who could afford high tuition fees and other expenses. Subedi, Shrestha, Maharjan, and Suvedi (2013) argue that the privatization of education in Nepal functions as a tool to promote the belief that English language proficiency is essential for competing in the global educational market. According to Davies (2009), private schools adopted English as their default medium of instruction to attract and encourage the return of wealthy Nepali children who were studying in private institutions in India and to enhance

and advance English education within Nepal's education system. The push to bring Nepali students back from India was significantly influenced by private schools' marketing strategies, which included adopting Indian textbooks and hiring Indian teachers to conduct lessons in English (Sharma, 1990).

Poudel et al. (2022) argued that the debate over the medium of instruction in Nepal has persisted since the introduction of modern Western education in the 1950s. While educationists, linguists, and activists advocate for the use of children's mother tongues in schools, many of them choose to educate their own children in English, either domestically or abroad (Poudel, 2019). This contrast has led to ongoing tensions between the public's increasing preference for English and Nepali-medium education and the interests of the political elite. Similarly, Rahman and Hu (2025) examined that Nepal's shift toward EMI is rooted in the aspiration to equip its own students with the linguistic and academic tools necessary to compete in the global economy. However, this language policy risks overlooking the deeper sociolinguistic complexities of Nepal's multilingual context.

Postcolonial Power Dynamics in Language Policy of EMI

The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in Pennycook's postcolonial theory, which critically examines the global spread of English about histories and power dynamics. Persaud (2017) argued that EMI carries the cultural and ideological baggage of imperial expansion, with its vocabulary, text, and communicative practices sustaining the dominant narratives. This theoretical ground offers a critical lens through which to interrogate the role of EMI, particularly in the postcolonial context where language policy intersects with issues of cultural identities, access, and resistance (Parajuli, 2022). Earlier, Gramsci (2009) used the term cultural hegemony to explain how the ruling class maintains its power in capitalist societies, not merely through coercion but by taking the consent of the subordinate classes. The cultural hegemony can be obtained by disseminating a dominant ideology through cultural institutions such as education and media, making it appear as the natural order of things (EI & Yechouti, 2017). Regarding the agency of the English language over indigenous languages, Neupane (2022) explained how powerful languages such as English use a power dynamic and influence the language policy in non-English-speaking countries, including Nepal.

EMI as a Neoliberal Issue

Phillipson (1992) asserted that the extensive promotion of English language education in many postcolonial countries represents a modern extension of colonial domination. Similarly, Harvey (2005) described neoliberalism as a political-economic theory that emphasizes enhancing human welfare by enabling individuals' entrepreneurial freedoms within a system built on private property rights, open market, and unrestricted trade. Similarly, Neupane (2021) argued that the dominance of neoliberal ideologies surrounding the English language in Nepal has led many schools to prioritize the implementation of EMI in community schools. These schools promise a strong English-speaking environment to attract students. Furthermore, teachers, under the pretext of promoting English proficiency, strictly enforce the exclusive use of English in the classroom (Kandel, 2025; Neupane, 2022).

Despite these broad understandings, there remains a notable research gap in providing in-depth, localized qualitative research that specifically unpacks nuanced motivations behind EMI shifts, and critically evaluates how these policies are being implemented at the micro-level within specific community schools in defined municipalities like Triyuga Municipality. The existing studies have identified the general trend of policy-practice disconnect and the symbolic function of EMI. There is limited empirical data that details the everyday classroom realities and impact of formal and informal code switching from teachers and the direct consequences of these implementation gaps on the learning experiences of diverse populations from various linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

This study aims to bridge the gap by offering a granular analysis of these dynamics, moving from broad observations to provide concrete evidence of how market-driven EMI adoption translates into varied and often challenging educational outcomes in a specific Nepalese municipal context, and how schools attempt to navigate these challenges.

Methodology

Guided by the research questions and the purpose of the study, we employed qualitative research, which provided a path to understand the meanings that people have constructed. This research was fundamentally concerned with the research participants' experience and feelings represented by the interpretation of the situation (Duff, 2014). We collected reflections and interviews with the teachers and students to explore the factors of adopting EMI in community schools and its implementation challenges. Similarly, this study observed the learning experience of the students, studied their answer sheets, and observed classroom activities to examine their learning (Kivunja & Kuyino, 2017).

For this study, we have furnished in-depth details concerning the research design. We have chosen a case study research design to achieve our objectives. As suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen' (2006), case study research designs can be categorized into three main types: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study, and multiple or collective case study designs. We employed multiple or collective case studies, and we associated specific issues within a defined boundary and examined cases as interconnected parts of a comprehensive study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, pp. 438-439). Multiple case studies were particularly suitable for investigating real-world practices like the implementation of language policies within authentic settings (Thomas & Myers, 2015, as cited in Choi & Poudel, 2024). By examining multiple cases and integrating diverse data, such as interviews, observations, and document reviews, the research enhanced its credibility through comparative analysis of varied perspectives.

We purposefully selected three community secondary-level schools that adopted EMI. Similarly, we selected four teachers from each school, resulting in a total of 12 teachers and three headmasters, one headmaster representing each school. Additionally, we selected three chairs of the School Management Committee (SMC), one from each school, one chairperson of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and 6 guardians, 2 from each school. Furthermore, 15 students were selected, representing 5 students from each school. Interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals were used as primary data collection tools. We asked open-ended questions in the interview, which allowed us to get rich insights and explore complex issues (Cohen et al, 2018; Richards, 2003). Classroom observations provided information about students' learning behaviors and the teaching effectiveness of EMI contents. The reflective journal served as a continuous record of classroom activities, teaching methods, students' responses, and teacher reflection (Creswell, 2007).

The data collection processes involved the site selection, schools' and participants' consent, piloting tools, scheduling interviews, conducting three rounds of interviews and observation, and maintaining detailed field notes. Recorded interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed for themes. Thick description, prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking. We achieved authenticity through fairness, active participation, and diverse data sources. Reflectivity involved ongoing self-awareness of our roles and biases as a community schoolteacher, shaping both data collection and interpretation (Rabbidge, 2017). We maintained ethical considerations with informed consent, anonymity, beneficence, and justice (Patton & Cochran, 2000; Miles et al., 2013). Participants' emotional and psychological well-being was prioritized, with verbal consent used to minimize discomfort.

Results and Discussion

This section analyzed the data collected directly from participants. The responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and experiences expressed by the participants during the implementation of EMI in their education program. After collecting individual viewpoints through in-depth interviews, we rewrote their lived experience in their native language. Then, we categorized themes into different sections according to the participants' responses. Ultimately, the responses were examined and comprehensively subjected to themes. We extrapolated the subsequent significant theme from the data gathered from in-depth interviews, written accounts, and informal conversations with research participants.

EMI as a Marketing Strategy

The participants involved in the study reported that their schools adopted EMI to prevent their students from going out to English-medium private schools and to attract students to their schools. When questioned about whether the teachers solely use English for teaching or integrate Nepali in the classroom, Roji, one of the student participants, said:

> At first, we were convinced by the sweet promises of receiving a quality education, so we joined the school. Our parents were also motivated to enrol us in community schools because they believed that the teachers were comparatively more qualified and that the tuition fees were much lower than those of private schools. But here, only the textbooks are in English, and the teaching is conducted entirely in Nepali. Some teachers do not have a strong command of English, which confuses both teachers and students, especially when dealing with technical terms in subjects like science, mathematics, and economics. However, we need to write answers exclusively in English as questions are asked in English in the examinations.

The schools promised the parents and students that they would provide quality education, but the promise fell very short. Though books are in English medium and students are required to answer the questions in English, the teachers deliver the content in Nepali. Such inconsistency creates confusion and hinders meaningful learning, especially in technical subjects. This situation reflects what Dearden (2014) and Sah and Li (2018) have noted: without adequate preparation and EMI-qualified teachers and pedagogical support, EMI becomes a superficial reform rather than a substantive improvement. This condition aligns with Joshi and Paneru (2025), who pointed out that the teachers' inadequate proficiency in English hampers not only their teaching performance but also their capacity to handle classroom communication effectively.

Teachers' lack of confidence in English undermines the policy's goals and burdens students. This illustrates a performative rather than transformative use of EMI, where English is used symbolically rather than as a genuine medium for comprehension and learning. The finding underscores the urgent need for teacher training, language support mechanisms, and context-sensitive EMI strategies in public education. However, the implementation of EMI in community schools without addressing gaps in access, resources, and support risks deepening educational injustice rather than promoting inclusive development (Poudel, 2024).

Structural Challenges

Using EMI is a complex educational innovation in non-native environments. Roshan, one of the teachers at Rhododendron School, when asked how teachers have ensured learning with different learning levels, stated:

> The school hosts students from diverse backgrounds, various communities, different ethnicities, and different learning levels and expectations. Among them, most of the students have poor English proficiency. Managing the class for these heterogeneous learners,

convincing parents of fees, and managing capable teachers have created a significant challenge.

Adoption of EMI in community schools has emerged as a complex challenge due to the presence of students from different linguistic, ethnic, and educational backgrounds, which significantly complicates classroom instruction and learners' engagement. Bhattarai (2025) highlights that students in EMI settings frequently fail to express their thoughts effectively in English.

Adopting EMI without a clear understanding of its pedagogical intent mirrors the legacy of the colonial education system, which often transplanted foreign models without adapting them to the local context (Cummins, 200; Willans, 2022). The EMI implementation that regards linguistic realities often serves to maintain existing power structures under the guise of modernisation (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004).

EMI as a Strategic Response to Competitive Pressure

Teachers' responses reflected that many community schools compelled their teachers to adopt EMI as a strategic response to retain their students and compete with the private schools. However, teachers have to adopt EMI without professional and pedagogical support, which has raised a serious question about the quality of education, contrary to the school administrators' expectations. For example, one of the headmasters stated:

> We have been implementing EMI for 9 years. The adoption of EMI was not our will; it became our necessity due to our local context. Our school is surrounded by private schools, and most parents tend to enroll their children in the institutions that offer education in English medium, believing that English ensures a better future for their children. So, in order to address parental expectations and retain our students, we introduced EMI into our education program.

Although the government encourages schools to implement EMI and regards it as one of the indicators of good government in academic institutions, the government does not support building teachers' professional development in EMI pedagogy. Recently, the provincial government has initiated EMI-related professional development training for a limited number of primary-level teachers. However, the teachers at the lower secondary and secondary levels have not received such training either by the provincial or federal government.

The school introduced EMI to retain students' enrollment and satisfy parents' expectations, who commonly associate EMI with socioeconomic mobility and future success. This aligns with the recent studies that describe EMI in community schools as market-driven decisions rather than pedagogical ones (Bhattarai, 2025; Joshi & Paneru, 2025). Similarly, Willans (2022) views the implementation of EMI without any preparation, plan, or adaptation as a form of colonial influence. Successful EMI implementation demands a comprehensive approach that involves teachers' training, hiring competent teachers, and developing assessment strategies (Dearden, 2014).

The obtained data reveal that schools began to adopt EMI due to the pressure from the parents, whose preference for English reflects the colonial hangover, where English is viewed as the key that unlocks many opportunities in the future (Pennycook, 2017), and due to parents' belief that English ensures better local and global job prospects, prompting them to view EMI as essential for securing their children's future success (Sah, 2025).

EMI as a Means to Prove Oneself Competent

Most of the community schools in the study site have adopted EMI to prove in their locality that they are as competitive as the private schools are, because many of them were criticised for the

decreasing number of students in their schools. In other words, teachers reported that EMI came into practice in their schools not because of their interest, but because they had to compete with other EMI schools to hold their students. For example, Jwala from Lotus School expressed:

> In private schools, students speak English very well, while students enrolled in community schools struggle with the English language. This disparity raised doubts among the community and parents about the teaching qualifications and skills of teachers in community schools. This reality encouraged the school family to adopt English as a medium of instruction so that they could prove themselves as competent as private school teachers and win the trust of parents and the community.

The data indicate that the community schools are often perceived as inferior due to their students' limited English proficiency. In contrast, private schools are viewed as advanced simply because their students speak more English. This factor has led community schools to adopt EMI as a symbolic response to public and general expectations. Karki (2025) describes it as a push for "social supremacy" and "maintainability," noting that community schools adopt EMI to appear as prestigious and globally oriented as private schools. The insufficient resources and lack of support for teachers in implementing the policy have resulted in a significant gap in comprehension and overall learning outcomes. This situation reflects deep-seated postcolonial ideologies where English functions as a symbol of power and modernity. In this context, the adoption of EMI in community schools is not just an educational reform, but also a postcolonial act of self-justification which has sidelined the local languages and hindered culturally responsive pedagogy in community schools (Jackson & Choi, 2022; Phyak, 2021).

English is positioned as a linguistic tool for accessing better opportunities, but it also works as a dominant language. This aligns with Pennycook's argument that English is not neutral but is embedded in power relations that privilege certain groups while marginalising others (Persaud, 2017; Neupane, 2022).

Collect the Torn Pieces of Clothes, Stitch with Care, Make a Beautiful Butterfly of Rare (Tala Tuli Batuli Kati Ramri Putali)

To illustrate the fragmented nature of MOI policymaking and its implementation in Nepal's community schools, we used the metaphor "collect the torn pieces, stitch with care, make a beautiful butterfly of rare" (Tala tuli batuli, kati ramri putali). This metaphor encapsulates the conflicting influences shaping MOI policies, where ideological, pedagogical, and socio-political forces function as scattered fragments that require careful integration to form a cohesive and effective educational framework. Just as Ricento and Hornberger (1996) introduced the "onion" metaphor to illustrate the layered complexity of Language Policy and Planning (LPP), and ecological metaphors like "macro-micro" and "top-down, bottom-up" are frequently used to depict policy processes, the butterfly metaphor highlights the intricate and delicate nature of MOI implementation. Similarly, Poudel (2019) used the "sandwiched" metaphor to describe the EMI policy in Nepalese public schools, emphasising the tension between top-down ideological pressures and bottom-up instrumental demands. In the absence of a well-structured and inclusive approach, these fragmented elements remain unconnected, hindering the effective transformation of EMI into a meaningful and equitable educational practice.

Almost all the community schools that have implemented EMI operate in the morning shift. To meet staffing needs, they often hire part-time teaching and non-teaching staff. As a result, the morning shift always looks very rushed and hectic. Due to a shortage of manpower, the schools rely on daytime teachers from their schools, offering them a stipend of 2800 to 3500 RS per period each month. The teachers appointed in the morning shift are only responsible for teaching their assigned

subjects, but they are not supposed to engage in non-academic duties such as managing discipline and organising extracurricular. Consequently, most teachers are disconnected from the overall development of students, often failing to recognise which class their students belong to or being unaware of their academic progress. Limited attention is given to student assignments, and in some cases, teachers also teach at other institutions.

These teachers, colloquially known as 'Helmet teachers, refer to those who move between schools, often leading to poor engagement with students. The current teachers' recruiting system, which resembles **"**Collecting the torn pieces of clothes, stitching with care, and making a beautiful butterfly and rare" (*Tala tuli batuli kati ramri putali***),** has fallen to ensure the delivery of quality education as it prioritises filling positions rather than fostering true academic growth. Labanya, one of the members of the Parents-Teachers Association, stated:

> The school administration and SMC made a very enticing promise in the beginning when they planned to introduce EMI in the school because the number of students was declining, and they needed to attract more students. Many of us parents were frustrated with private schools due to high fees and failure to deliver quality education. We were excited by the idea of giving children an English-medium education similar to that of private schools. As a result, we eagerly enrolled our children, hoping for better educational outcomes. In the beginning, everything seemed promising. However, over time, the appeal of EMI in community schools has started to decline. Unless a school hires full-time teachers, it cannot provide quality education, as the school should not function as a mere tuition or coaching centre.

The above remarks indicate that simply offering English Medium classes does not equate to quality education; schools must focus on long-term teacher retention and training to fulfil the promises made to parents and ensure sustainable learning. The desire for English proficiency is understandable, but simply adopting EMI without addressing underlying structural issues can lead to superficial reforms and reproduce existing inequalities. Pennycook's and Bourdieu's theories help us understand the power dynamics at play and the need for more nuanced and equitable approaches to language and education (Sah, 2018). The situation reveals a stark contrast between the promise of the EMI and the reality on the ground (Kadel, 2024).

The reliance on part-time, underpaid teachers reveals the critical gap between the ideal of EMI and its practice. This situation shows that EMI has become a superficial label. The government's implicit or explicit preference for English, combined with parental demand, creates a system that privileges English, even when resources and support for effective EMI are lacking. Teachers, who often lack the time and training to engage meaningfully with students, highlight the systematic neglect of public education. Rana (2022) highlights that helmet teachers employed under insecure contract-based or temporary arrangements face substantial challenges that adversely affect both their personal well-being and professional performance. Due to the temporary nature of their contracts, helmet teachers often experience stress, exploitation, and emotional neglect (Lopes &Dewan, 2014).

The butterfly metaphor suggests a superficial transformation, where the emphasis is placed on surface changes rather than on deeper educational reform. The image of creating a beautiful butterfly from torn pieces of fabric symbolises the fragmented and inconsistent implementation of EMI. Just as a butterfly made from torn fabric may appear beautiful but lacks durability, the EMI system in these community schools seems promising while remaining structurally weak. This fragmentation mirrors

the broad postcolonial situation where marginalised communities are provided with symbolic access to power but are denied the structural support needed to truly benefit from it (Pennycook, 2002).

Conclusion and Implications

The findings indicate the adoption of EMI as a complex picture in Nepalese community schools. The implementation of EMI in community schools is a strategic response to competitive pressure from private schools and prevailing parents' beliefs that English guarantees a better future, which reflects postcolonial influence where English is seen as a key to opportunities (Pennycook, 2017). The EMI also serves as a means for community schools to prove that teachers and school administrators are competent and achieve social trust in the locality, even if their students' proficiency is very low. The entire implementation process is best captured by the torn pieces of clothes, stitched with care, making a butterfly of rare metaphor, which illustrates the fragmented and inconsistent nature of EMI policy-making and delivery. The program and its operating structural system are weak, as it has deepened educational inequalities and exacerbated existing social and economic disparities, as they provide symbolic access to power without the necessary structural support.

The adoption of EMI in community schools is deeply intertwined with postcolonial power structures and globalisation. Driven by the desire to integrate into the global education landscape and enhance students' future opportunities, the government and parents increasingly support EMI. However, unclear policies limited teachers' training, and linguistic challenges create a significant gap between EMI policy and classroom practice. The study revealed that the EMI implementation often results in bilingual teaching due to students' and teachers' limited English proficiency. The parents, school administrators, and teachers view English as a means of socioeconomic mobility. Pennycook (1998) critiques the trend of adopting EMI as a legacy of the post-colonial agenda, where English dominates local indigenous languages and cultures.

This study confirms that parents, students, and teachers see English as a key to a better future. The government has attempted to reduce disparities between private and public schools by legitimising EMI through policies like the Education Act 2010. However, effective EMI implementation requires EMI supportive infrastructures, structural reform, an appropriate assessment system, trained teachers, and sustained financial support. In the absence of these requirements, EMI risk remaining a superficiality that benefits the few while excluding the linguistically and socioeconomically marginalised majority. Thus, the implications of the study can be useful for making language policy in Nepali community schools because implementing EMI in community schools can have a long-term harmful effect on the multilingual communities in Nepal.

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