

USING NON-DOMINANT LANGUAGES IN BASIC EDUCATION IN NEPAL: MAJOR ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SOME STRATEGIES

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This paper investigates some major issues and challenges in using non-dominant languages (NDLs) in basic education in Nepal and proposes some strategies to meet those challenges. Analyzing both primary and secondary data employing qualitative approach within the perspective of transformative worldview, it has identified some major issues and challenges pertaining to orthography, language policy, language vitality, resources and funding. However, a perplexing tension, though empirically unfounded, between the desire for preserving NDLs and irresistible societal pressure for instant proficiencies in English and Nepali, has strongly debarred NDLs from being used in basic education resulting inequality, class repetition, high dropout and very low quality performance. To address such issues and challenges, the local governments have to frame a multilingual language policy; and local communities as well as experts have to work together following integrative approach to effectively bring NDLs into basic education for ensuring educational equality, quality and empowering the marginalized communities in Nepal.

Keywords: Vitality, inequality, operational mechanism, legal provision, multilingual language policy

1. Background

This paper investigates some major issues and challenges of the use of non-dominant languages (hereafter, NDLs) in education in Nepal and suggests some strategies for meeting those challenges. Nepal is considered to be linguistically diverse country with over 124 mother tongues (NSO, 2023). Of them, 103 mother tongues belonging to different genealogical typologies may be defined as NDLs as they are neither used in basic education nor in other major domains of language use like mass media and office. This has resulted in inequality, class repetition, high dropout and very low quality performance. This situation necessitates, first and foremost, supporting the non-dominant languages to be effectively used in basic education in Nepal. No doubt, there have been made some attempts to prepare curriculum and textbooks to use NDLs in education. The constitution and other policies regarding the use of mother tongues grant the right to mother-tongue education. MTB-MLE approach has been

developed in order to use mother tongues as the medium of instruction in Nepal. However, a formal language policy has not yet been framed except for some self-contradictory provisions against the quintessence of multilingualism, inclusion and equity. There is a loose policy regarding the medium of instruction despite a provision of promoting linguistic diversity and mother-tongue-based education, especially in basic education. In reality, Nepali and English have been most widely used as mediums of instruction, particularly in formal schooling since long. Nepali, the de-facto official language, has been, in a confusing way, assumed to be the only language of national integrity and promoter of sovereignty. Likewise, English is believed to be a language of social prestige and opener of innumerable opportunities in the global world. The use of Nepali and English as mediums of instruction has adversely contributed to the marginalization, educational inequity and social injustice for the communities speaking non-dominant languages. Furthermore, the NDLs are at risk of being lost. No doubt, there is a very

strong sentimental desire to preserve non-dominant languages. However, such desire has to be practically negotiated with the dire need for a higher proficiency in Nepali and English for personal prosperity and socio-economic development of the nation.

Kosonen (2013) and Kosonen and Benson (2021) have provided with some practical and theoretical considerations for bringing the NDLs in education. Till the date, no attempt has been made to conduct a specific study on the use of non-dominant languages enumerated in the 2021 census. Using NDLs in education has been a tough job in Nepal. A promising and inclusive multilingual education policy has not yet been developed and implemented for maintaining the sustainability of using NDLs in education. This paper addresses the following three research questions:

- a) What is present state of affairs of NDLs and their use in education in Nepal?
- b) How are NDLs in the best possible way used in education in Nepal?
- c) Why are NDLs required to be used in education in Nepal?

The major goal of this study is to understand the issues and challenges of using NDLs mainly spoken by marginalized communities for their empowerment and suggest some practical strategies to address such issues and challenges.

This paper is structured into ten sections. Section 2 discusses the research methodology used in the study. Section 3 presents the state of affairs of NDLs of Nepal. Section 4 assesses the use of NDLs in education in Nepal. Section 5 presents views of experts, linguists and stakeholders about the use of NDLs in education. Section 6 examines the major issues whereas in Section 7 we look at challenges of using NDLs in education. Section 8 provides with the strategies for effective use of NDLs in education. Section 9 presents rationales for using NDLs in education. Section 10 concludes with the major findings of the paper.

2. Methodology

This study holding to the philosophical assumptions of the transformative

worldview/paradigm employs qualitative research design in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data. It has employed both primary and secondary data. The primary data are garnered through interviews with the experts, linguists and stakeholders (with open-ended research questions as mentioned above), case studies and field observations. The secondary data were drawn from the published works on the languages of Nepal. There are three main theoretical underpinnings of this study. The first one is linked with the use of language to maintain and change the power relations as argued in Fairclough (2013; 2015). The second one focuses on the cognitive benefits, promotion of linguistic human rights and preservation of culture from mother tongue education. Third one emphasizes the use of NDLs to achieve social equity and inclusion as envisaged in the constitution.

3. State of affairs of NDLs

3.1 NDLs in 2021 census

Linguistically, Nepal is a diverse country. The 2021 census has officially recognized 124 languages as mother tongues. They, genealogically, belong to the four major language families (LF), viz., Indo-European (IE), Sino-Tibetan (ST), Austro-Asiatic (AA) and Dravidian (DR) and a language isolate (LI). Some speakers are categorized under others (OT) and not stated (NS). Sociolinguistically, they can be broadly categorized into majority and minority languages (Regmi, 2023a, p.64). Nepali is an official language of Nepal. Including Nepali, there are 21 dominant languages in terms of number of speakers, viz., Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Tamang, Bajjika, Awadhi, Nepalbhasa, Magar Dhut, Doteli, Urdu, Limbu, Gurung, Magahi, Baitedeli, Rai, Achhami, Bantawa, Rajbanshi, Sherpa and Khash. They are spoken by more than 0.1 million speakers. Of these languages, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Tamang, Bajjika, Awadhi, Nepalbhasa, Magar Dhut, Doteli, Limbu, Gurung and Khash have been recommended for official languages for different provinces. The languages like Urdu, Bantawa, Rajbanshi and Sherpa may taken as non-dominant as they not recommended for any official uses. In Nepal, 83.06% languages have been designated as NDLs. These languages

exercise only a limited linguistic power and status compared to dominant languages. Besides, they have a small number of speakers (viz., less than 0.1 million) and they are predominantly spoken by non-Indo-Aryan communities. Such languages have not been paid a proper attention on behalf of the local governments for bringing them into education. The linguistic and cultural identity has been threatened due to the speakers being encouraged to learn either Nepali or English for economic and social opportunities at home and abroad. There is a strong pressure to be assimilated to the dominant languages and mainstream cultures in the nation. Table 1 presents dominant languages (DLs) and NDLs in the 2021 census of Nepal.

Table 1: DLs and NDLs in the 2021 census

LF	Lg. types	No. of lgs	No. of speakers	% of speakers
IE	DLs	13	23520322	80.8%
	NDLs	34	707089	2.4%
	Total	47	24227411	83.1 %
ST	DLs	8	4175691	14.3 %
	NDLs	64	662117	2.3%
	Total	72	4837808	16.6%
AA	NDLs	3	55916	0.2%
DR	NDLs	1	38873	0.1%
LI	NDLs	1	23	0.0%
OT			4201	0.0%
NS			346	0.0%
Total		124	2,91,64,578	100%

Table 1 shows that there are 47 languages belonging to Indo-European language family. Of them, 13 languages may satisfy the criteria of being dominant whereas 34 languages are NDLs. More than 83.1% people speak Indo-European languages as mother tongues. Socio-politically, there is a disproportionate distribution of number of speakers between dominant and NDLs. NDLs are spoken by 2.4% of the total population of Nepal. There are 72 Sino-Tibetan mother tongues. However, they are spoken only by 16.6% of the total population. There are 64 NDLs under this language family. They are spoken by 2.3% of the total population. All the languages belonging to Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian and Language Isolate are NDLs. They are spoken by 0.3% of the total

population. The number of NDLs under Sino-Tibetan is higher than the number of such languages under Indo-European language family. There are 21 dominant languages of which 13 belong to Indo-European and eight are associated with Sino-Tibetan language family.

3.2 Language vitality

In this sub-section, first, we present an assessment of vitality of the languages enumerated in the 2021 census as reference and then we present a preliminary assessment of the vitality of NDLs of Nepal.

3.2.1 Language vitality of languages

Nepal presents an appalling situation of vitality enumerated in the 2021 census. Table 2 presents an assessment of vitality of the languages in terms of labels as International (INT), National (NT), Provincial (PR), Wider communication (WC), Educational (EDU), Developing (DEV), Vigorous (VG), Threatened (THT), Shifting (SHF), Moribund (MD), Nearly extinct (NE), Dormant (DT) and Extinct (ET) based on the EGID proposed by Lewis and Simons (2010).

Table 2: The vitality of the languages of Nepal

Level	Labels	No. of lgs	100%	Remarks (UNESCO)
0	INT	1	0.8%	Safe
1	NT	1	0.8%	Safe
2	PR	3	2.4%	Safe
3	WC	-	-	-
4	EDU	7	5.6%	Safe
5	DEV	7	5.6%	Safe
6a	VG	40	32.3%	Safe
6b	THT	46	37.1%	Vulnerable
7	SHF	11	8.9%	DEF.EDG
8a	MD	2	1.6%	SEV.EDG
8b	NE	4	3.2%	CRT.EDG
9	DT	1	0.8%	Extinct
10	ET	1	0.8%	Extinct
		124	100%	

Table 2 shows various levels of vitality ranging from the label International to Extinct. Languages categorized from Level 0 to Level 10 may be broadly divided into Safe and Unsafe. The safe languages belong to the levels 0 to 6a (Vigorous)

whereas unsafe are categorized from Level 6b to 10 (Extinct). Accordingly, International (0.8%), National (0.8%), Provincial (2.4%), Educational (5.6%), Developing (5.6%) and Vigorous (32.3%) are safe. In total, the number of safe mother tongues amounts to 59 (47.6%). Likewise, 46 (37.1%) languages are vulnerable; 11(8.9%) are shifting (definitely endangered, DEF.EDG) and 2 (1.6%) are moribund (severely endangered, SEV.EDG). Similarly, 4 (3.2%) are nearly extinct (critically endangered, CRT.EDG), 1 (0.8%) dormant (extinct) and 1(0.8%) extinct. Generally, 52.4% of languages are facing different levels of language endangerment.

3.2.2 Language vitality of NDLs

Some languages of Nepal present a very complex position for a clear sociolinguistic classification. English is enumerated as a mother tongue in Nepal. It is a dominant language as it has been used as medium of instruction for long. However, in terms of number of speakers, it has to be classified as non-dominant language. In terms of vitality, NDLs are broadly divided into safe and unsafe. Table 3 presents an assessment of the vitality of the NDLs based on the EGID proposed by Lewis and Simons (2010).

Table 3: Vitality of NDLs

	Vitality labels	No. of lgs	%
1.	International	1	0.9%
2.	Educational	2	1.9%
3.	Developing	3	2.9%
4.	Vigorous	36	34.9%
5.	Threatened	42	40.8%
6.	Shifting	11	10.7%
7.	Moribund	2	1.9%
8.	Nearly extinct	4	3.9%
9.	Dormant	1	0.9%
10.	Extinct	1	0.9%
		103	100%

Table 3 shows that a total of 42 languages categorized as safe do also belong to NDLs. However, some of them are formally or informally used in education in Nepal.

3.3 Language use levels

In terms of levels of language use, there are two types of languages: sustainable and non-

sustainable within the perspective of Sustainable Use Model (Lewis & Simons, 2017). Theoretically, 11 languages labeled as International (1), National (1) Provincial (3), Nearly extinct (4), Dormant (1) and Extinct (1) are not involved in the assessment of sustainability. Apart from them, 113 languages may be categorized as sustainable and non-sustainable with different labels and vitality levels. Table 4 presents sustainable (SL) and non-sustainable (NSL) levels of language use.

Table 4: Sustainable and non-sustainable levels of language use in Nepal

Use levels	Labels	Vitality levels	No. of lgs
SLU	SL literacy	4(Educational)	8 (7.1%)
	SL orality	6a (Vigorous)	40(35.4%)
NSLU	Transitory levels	5(Developing)	6 (5.3%)
		6b(Threatened)	46(40.7%)
		7 (Shifting)	11(9.7%)
		8a (Moribund)	2 (1.8%)
			113

Table 4 shows that only 48 (42.5%) languages (viz., Educational and vigorous) have the sustainable level of language use. Further, they belong to 4 (Educational) and 6a (Vigorous) corresponding to two sustainable labels of language use, viz., Sustainable literacy and sustainable orality, respectively. Lewis and Simons (2017) defines the languages with sustainable literacy as maintaining both written and oral use over the long term. However, the languages with sustainable orality are maintained only at oral use for everyday communication. Around 65 (57.5%) labeled as lacking sustainable language use include the languages labeled as 5(Developing), 6b (Threatened), 7(Shifting) and 8a (Moribund). Such languages are labeled as belonging to transitory levels (Lewis & Simons, 2017). Such languages require special community-based activities/interventions to be uplifted to the desire levels. The languages labeled as 5 (Developing) require uplifting from the incipient literacy to 4 (Educational), viz., the sustainable literacy. Similarly, 46 languages labeled as 6b (Threatened) have to be uplifted to 6a (Vigorous), viz., sustainable orality by carrying out specific activities within the framework of

Sustainable Use Model. In general, a majority of the languages are lacking sustainable language use. The communities using such languages are gradually lacking power associated with mother language. In Nepal, against the constitutional provision, English is taught in place of mother tongues in many government basic schools.

4. NDLs in basic education

Despite the fact that using NDLs is not only the matter of helping the children in their cognitive development and empowering the marginalized communities compatible with the vision of the constitution to form inclusive and equitable societies, NDLs are formally ignored in education. No languages other than Nepali, English, Tibetan and Sanskrit are substantially used in basic education in Nepal.

4.1 Legal provisions for education in NDLs

In 1990, Nepal ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has conferred right to every citizen to get quality education in his/her mother tongue. Local Government Operation Act, 2017 has authorized local bodies to provide approval, monitor and regulate schools providing education in mother tongue. A framework for MTB-MLE in the context of federalism has been framed (Yadava et al., 2017). It has suggested some policies to encourage the use of mother tongues in basic education to enhance children's learning achievements. National Curriculum Framework, 2019 has been prepared with a view to promoting mother tongue as medium of instruction for basic levels. Compulsory and Free Education Act, 2018 reaffirms the right to every community to acquire education up to the basic level or secondary level in mother tongue. Such community may set up and operate separate school or teaching institute to provide education in mother tongue. Prima facie, these legal provisions are not debarring or discouraging the use of NDLs in education in Nepal. However, a supporting environment has not yet been prepared for the effective use of such languages. NDLs have not yet been identified by using a due method like conducting an independent ethnolinguistic survey. Besides, Nepali, English, or mother tongue as the medium of instruction (MOI) in schools has been

unjustifiably imposed. In other words, mother tongues have not been assured to be a compulsory medium of instructions in Nepal. Consequently, the local governments, which are empowered of framing local education policies compatible with the linguistic diversity, have not been able to prevent schools from using English in place of local languages in early grades. In reality, English is non-verbally authorized to be used in preparing textbooks and reference materials across all levels. English is the “most preferred” medium of instruction and it is deemed to be the only effective pathfinder to better career in the world.

4.2 Practice of NDLs in basic education

In Nepal, only a few NDLs have been used in basic education formally. However, informally, many mother tongues are used in the classrooms. The present constitution regards all the languages spoken as mother tongues as the languages of the nations and formally allows all communities to provide basic education in their mother tongues. This has been supported by the Compulsory and Free Education Act, 2018. However, due to some practical challenges like strong societal preference for English, the formal use of NDLs does not exist in the true sense.

4.2.1 Formal use of NDLs in education

There have always been disagreements among the experts, the policy makers and the concerned agencies on the nature and scope of mother tongue education. Experts argue that, beyond the spirit of MTB-MLE framework, teaching a mother tongue as a subject in early grades cannot be characterized by government agencies as mother tongue education. Some reports inform that MTB-MLE program was initially piloted in Tamang, Newar, Limbu, Magar, Santhali and Rana Tharu. Such program was officially introduced under MTB-MLE policy by Ministry of Education. Mother tongue materials in Rai, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Nepalbhasa, Chepang, Awadhi, Magar, Khaling, Limbu and Dotyali have been prepared by Curriculum Development Center. Textbooks have been prepared in more than 30 languages. Linguistic survey of Nepal (2009-2018) has also prepared mother tongue based textbooks in seven languages, viz., Maithili, Bhujel, Newar, Chepang, Lapcha, Yakkha and

Bote (Regmi, 2017, p.243). On behalf of non-governmental agencies, viz., Nepali National Languages Preservation Institute (NNLPI), tried to bring Rajbansi in Jhapa and Tamang (Western Tamang) in Dhading into basic education. In both languages, the main goal was to provide high quality basic education in the mother tongues within the basic framework and the reality of patterns of language use in the communities. Both of them have been reported being highly successful (Regmi, 2021c, p.41). Some years ago, the Thakali speech community tried to teach Thakali as a subject to the students of basic education in a community school. However, this desire of the community could not be realized as expected. A number of reasons were held responsible for this situation. First and foremost, Thakali, a shifting language was not uplifted to sustainable orality. It has been reported that only a few children are proficient in speaking and understanding Thakali. Secondly, there is a very strong societal and parental preference for Nepali and English as mediums of instructions. Thirdly, there is not any compulsory legal provision for teaching a mother tongue like Thakali in the basic education. Thus, the constitutional provision of teaching NDLs has been practically made de-functional. Textbooks for grade 1 and 2 and some supplementary materials produced a few years ago have been shelved in the library. Such situation prevails in speech communities speaking NDLs as well.

4.2.2 Informal use of NDLs in education

In Nepal, a number of languages, except for Nepali and English, have been used in classrooms of early grades for a long time. In Terai, Rajbanshi, Rana Tharu, Santhali, and other minor languages as well as dominant languages like Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi and Tharu have been used to explain the complex concepts in the classrooms. Similarly, in hilly regions, NDLs like Magar Kaike, Lhowa and Chepang and dominant languages like Tamang, Magar Dhut and Gurung have also been found being used in the classrooms. The teachers have been reported having learnt the local languages informally to help the students to bridge the gaps between home and languages formally used in schools. However,

the education policy has not any provision to record formally this sort of language used in the classrooms.

5. Views of experts, linguists and stakeholders

A number of reality-based views have been expressed by the experts and stakeholders about the present situation of use of NDLs in education, problems and rationales of using NDLs and some ways to use them practically in education. They were translated from Nepali and they are briefly summarized as follows:

5.1 Views of experts

- A. In Nepal, the languages spoken by minority communities, which are expected to be used in school education, are confined to the household. Their use in the classroom is gradually decreasing. The use of Nepali and English languages in the education sector is increasing day by day. Although there have been efforts to expand the use of mother tongue at the local and provincial levels through the initiatives of some active minority language communities, it does not appear that an institutional basis has been established for this.

Although some occasional initiatives have been taken regarding the use of mother tongue in education, the basic provisions in the constitution have not been implemented. The Nepali language is recognized by the constitution as the official language of Nepal and English does not have any constitutional recognition. However, English has become established in schools and universities due to the power of the global market. Universities do not seem to be able to prioritize the study and research of such languages. The government system does not seem to be well informed about the importance of mother tongue in education. The societal fascination with English in private schools, which is taken as the ideal of Nepali education, is, indeed, full of irony. This has hindered the development of emotions and cognition, weakening student learning, and has also weakened the foundation of the Nepali and English languages. Apart from languages that

have gained political and market power, the use of languages spoken by minority communities in Nepal in education is perceived to be in a precarious state. For the effective implementation of mother tongue education, education should be provided completely through the mother tongue from ECD to Grade 5 and thereafter on the basis of a trilingual policy. It seems that Nepali, English, and the provincial languages can be included in the curriculum as subjects.

The mother tongue of a child is essential for cognitive development, emotional and social development, language preservation and recognition, transmission of local indigenous knowledge, ensuring learning, development of second and foreign languages and building a foundation for multiple talents

- B. Due to lack of will power on behalf of the governments, NDLs have not yet been used in basic education despite the existence of positive legal provisions for mother tongue education. Besides, the concerned officials are not set free from the mono-glossic ideology reared by the government for more than three decades. They still fear that using NDLs in basic education creates unfavorable situation for the promotion of Nepali, the official language of Nepal. In Nepal, some highly educated people are confused about the basic concept of teaching in mother tongue and government officers are very interested in facilitating in framing rules and regulations which serve for their vested interest. Furthermore, misconceptions about teaching in mother tongues were shared with the education officers and headmasters by the resource persons in order to promote the selling of textbooks written in English. Curriculum Development Center is also equally responsible for spoiling the concept of teaching in mother tongue. Thousands of people are working in gulf countries under unbearable temperature due to the lack of quality basic education which they had received in early grades. Unless the teachers in early grades are made fully responsible for quality education in NDLs, the desire of the

communities to educate children in mother tongues will never be fulfilled.

5.2 Views of linguists

- A. The major stakeholders, viz., members of the local communities and organizations, lack both sincerity and commitment to bring NDLs into education. They are suffering from the double standard and politics in language. Most of them do not speak mother tongues and they do not encourage their children to learn mother tongues. They speak Nepali at home and they send their children to boarding schools where medium of instruction is primarily English. Moreover, they do not fail to accuse Nepali of being the main factor for weakening the vitality of their mother tongues.
- B. NDLs are not brought into education due to the lack of clarity in the policy regarding the use of language in education. Besides the sponsored preference for English as medium of instruction, no teaching materials in Nepal contains any teaching item comprising of the value of teaching in mother tongue in basic education. Unless the use and usefulness of local languages is integrated with the physical developmental works, such languages cannot be preserved and promoted. The local communities have not been provided budgets for such activities due to long-rooted monoglossic ideology pervading in the minds of the political leaders and policymaker. Such mind-sets/ mentality have to be changed gradually for proper advocacy for mother tongue education. It is also needed for maintaining linguistic ecology in Nepal.

5.2 Views of stakeholders

Due to the sponsored societal preference for English and Nepali as mediums of instructions, NDLs are not used in education. Besides, many NDLs lack sustainable orality. In other words, children do not understand the local language. Unless the local governments do not enforce the community schools to use mother tongues by framing regulations, use of NDLs will not get any momentum.

6. Major issues of using NDLs in education

In the present socio-cultural context of Nepal, in line with the views of experts, linguists and stakeholders as given in Section 5, there are a number of major issues regarding using NDLs in basic education. Such issues are broad, complex involving multiple factors and lacking immediate solutions. The major issue is concerned with looking for the ways of compromising between tensions of the communities to preserve, promote and develop their mother tongues with which ethnic identity is tied up and societal or parental preference for English and Nepali as mediums of instruction for easing the access of young people to employment opportunities at home and abroad. Such issue may demand an in-depth and continuous dialogue among the stakeholders highlighting positive experiences of other countries of the world. However, such dialogue has not yet taken place adequately in Nepal. There are other issues as well. They are briefly discussed as follows:

6.1 Issue of orthography

Most of the NDLs lack native orthography. Only for a few languages, orthographies have been proposed based on the cultural reality of the speech community and phonological reality of the languages (Regmi, 2023b). Such languages include Maithili, Gurung, Tamang, Limbu, Magar Dhut, Newar, Tibetan, Sherpa and Lhowa. Devanagari scripts have been adapted for a number of preliterate Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal. Moreover, languages with native orthographies have in reality been written in Devanagari scripts. However, the choice of orthography for bringing preliterate languages into education has been sometimes made a big issue resulting in preparing materials in both native and adapted Devanagari scripts. In Tamang and Lhowa, for instance, materials have been prepared in both scripts.

6.2 Issue of language vitality

Lewis & Simons (2017) has clearly indicated that languages labeled as shifting have to be progressively lifted up to threatened, threatened to vigorous, vigorous to developing and developing to educational for being used in education sustainably. However, in Nepal, languages

belonging to shifting like Thakali and Bhujel are also demanded for being used in education. It is also true that a language cannot be effectively preserved unless it is used in education. However, a language necessitates having achieved a required level for being used in education.

6.3 Issue of dialectal variation

Regmi (2021a; 2021b) reported that most of the NDLs have somewhat diverged into social or geographical dialects resulting in different degrees of mutual intelligibility among the forms of speech spoken in different points to a great extent. In such a situation, choosing a form of speech for preparing teaching materials ignoring others may give birth to conflict or non-acceptability among members of the speech community. There are again strong arguments among the elites that a formal education must be imparted in a standard form, not in dialects. Some materials in Maithili have been prepared by CDC in high variety and some in common variety.

6.4 Issue of NDLS used as medium or subjects

Theoretically speaking, unless NDLs are used as mediums of instruction in basic education, the cognitive development in children cannot be fostered. Thus, using or bringing NDLs in education does never mean teaching a mother tongue as subjects. This is being normally practiced in Nepal. However, governmental agencies argue that it is also a process of using mother tongues in education.

6.5 Issue of making curriculums and materials

Another issue pertains to at what level (local level or central/provincial level) the curriculum and teaching materials have to be framed and prepared. The law has granted rights to the local levels to frame curriculum and teaching materials. However, due to the lack of skilled manpower, such curriculum and materials prepared at the local levels have been questioned for validity and levels of standard. Some academicians argue that such things have to be prepared under the guidance of experts managed by the central levels.

6.6 Issue of optionality

Using mother tongue of the local communities in basic education is highly desired and expected as the constitution has granted the rights of education to children in respective mother tongues. However, using mother tongue in basic education is not mandatory. It means no legal action is taken when a school fails to do so. So many local bodies addressing the societal preference for English have decided to teach English in place of teaching a mother tongue. Some community members strongly support for using mother tongues in basic education as an optional matter.

6.7 Issue of financial management

Local governments have been reported being disinclined towards financial management for providing teachers to teach mother tongues in basic education. Such programs in schools have been supposed to be the responsibility of the community itself.

6.8 Issue of attitude towards mother tongue

Regmi (2021a; 2021b) have reported that in most of the speech communities speaking NDLs there is not any positive instrumental attitude towards value of mother tongues. It means that they have a positive sentimental attitude which does not foster the use of mother tongue in education as well as in general domains of language use. Practically, using NDLs in basic education may not be goal-oriented in such communities where societal preference for English or Nepali is highly dominant. In Nepal, at present, using mother tongues in basic education has been begging pot for some language activists and some non-governmental organizations so-called dedicated for the promotion of language. In reality, language represents human knowledge at lexical, propositional and multi propositional levels and life crucial knowledge is best represented and communicated in/through mother tongues.

6.9 Issue of framing language policy

Compatible with the multilingual reality of the nation, a multilingual language policy has to be framed for the management of mother tongues in Nepal. However, proper dialogues and interactions among the stakeholders have not yet been held for sketching the model of language

policy at federal level in Nepal. Many linguists as well as the officials at the concerned bodies assume that some cursory provisions spelled out in the constitution function as ad hoc language policy in Nepal. Indeed, a formal language policy is required for providing directions for using NDLs in basic education. However, governments as well the concerned bodies are concerned with framing such policy. Rather, they are worried about framing language bills. This is just putting a cart before the horse.

7. Major challenges of using NDLs in education

No doubt, there are a number of benefits of using NDLs in basic education. They may include improving cognitive and linguistic development and enhancing motivation and engagement of children in the classrooms. However, it is not an easy task to convince the communities with a high preference for English as medium of instruction that higher learning achievements of the children in the basic level are possible to attain only in teaching in familiar languages. Nobody in urban areas is outright ready to send their kids to schools where a local mother tongue has been used as medium of instruction. In such context, there are a number of challenges to the implementation of NDLs in basic education in Nepal. Some challenges are inter-linked with the issues of using NDLs in basic education. Table 5 enumerates some of challenges with a brief discussion.

Table 5: Challenges of using NDLs in education

	CHALLENGES	DISCUSSION
1.	LACK OF RESOURCES AND FUNDS	There is lack of sufficient resources and allocation of funds by government levels.
2.	LACK OF TRAINED TEACHERS	There is shortage of trained teachers for NDLs.
3.	SHORTAGE OF RELEVANT MATERIALS	There is shortage of socio-culturally relevant teaching materials in NDLs.
4.	LACK OF COMMITMENT	There is lack of commitment from community leaders and policymakers.
5.	LACK OF COHERENCE AND CLARITY	There is lack of coherence and clarity in policies and initiatives of stakeholders.
6.	LACK OF PLURALIST IDEOLOGY	Due to monoglossic ideology multilingualism has been taken as burden by the governments of all levels

7.	LACK OF NEED ASSESSMENT	No programs other than executed by NGOs lack need assessment.
8.	LACK OF COORDINATION	There is lack of coordination and interaction between the stakeholders of using NDLs.
9.	LACK OF SUFFICIENT RESEARCH	There is lack of research for making curriculum and teaching materials.
10.	LACK OF VITALITY ASSESSMENT	There is a lack of comprehensive assessment of vitality levels of NDLs.
11.	LACK OF POLICY WITH OPERATIONAL MECHANISM	There is a lack of language-in-education policy and clear operational mechanism.

8. Strategies for bringing NDLs into education

In Nepal, attempts to bring NDLs into education system have nearly failed to produce expected results. In Nepal, constitutionally, basic and secondary level education falls under the local level power. However, local governments have not fully realized this power especially for using NDLs in Nepal. Kosonen and Benson (2021) may be slightly adapted for looking for strategies for bringing NDLs in basic education in the context of Nepal. There are three types of stakeholders for bringing NDLs into basic education. Table 6 presents approaches and stakeholders responsible for putting NDLs into education.

Table 6: Stakeholders for bringing NDLS into education in Nepal

	APPROACHES/ STRATEGIES	STAKEHOLDERS	SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDERS
A.	FROM ABOVE/TOP-DOWN	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES, CHIEF ADMIN. OFFICER AND EDUCATION OFFICERS
B.	FROM BELOW/BOTTOM-UP	LOCAL COMMUNITY	COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR L.G. PRESERVATION
C.	FROM SIDE/LATERAL	LOCAL/NON-LOCAL EXPERTS /STAKEHOLDERS	LOCAL TEACHERS, LINGUISTS AND EXPERTS (FROM LOCAL NGOS)

Following Kosonen and Benson (2021), there are three approaches, viz., from above (top-down approach), below (bottom-up approach) and from side (lateral approach). Each approach is equipped with specific role to bring a necessary change required for using NDLs. In other words, the demand of bottom-up stakeholders drags top-down support and the side stakeholders facilitate

the whole process. These three approaches have to be integrated for synergistic effect, addressing diverse needs of the individuals and communities and effective implementation of the program to bring NDLs in basic education. These approaches are discussed as follows:

8.1 Change from above/Top-down approach

8.1.1 Policy and legislation

The local governments (viz., Metropolitans, Sub-metropolitans, municipalities and rural municipalities) are required to frame language-in-education policies and enact legal provisions for providing official mandate for using NDLs in education. Besides, they have to provide financial, logistic and technical support for integrating NDLs into curriculum.

8.1.2 Training and seminars to teachers

The education departments of the local governments have to develop policies and programs for training and seminars for the teachers to be involved in teaching NDLs.

8.1.3 Resource development

The local bodies have to make appropriate policies for preparing teaching and instructional materials in NDLs.

8.1.4 Official recognition

The local bodies have to officially recognize the NDLs as legitimate mediums of instructions as Nepali and English. There should be a strong support from the local government agencies.

8.2 Change from below/Bottom-up approach

8.2.1 Community initiatives

Non-dominant language communities have to be encouraged through advocacies to initiate educational activities and demand for integrating NDLs in curriculum.

8.2.2 Demand for quality, inclusion and equity

The local communities have to convince the policy makers of the local bodies that life-crucial knowledge can never be properly transferred through other languages like Nepal and English. Thus, ensuring the quality education within the

principle of inclusion and equity, the policy makers needs being pressurized for framing the education policy compatible with the multilingual context of Nepal.

8.2.2 Capacity building of communities

By encouraging initiating their own educational activities based on the resources locally available, the capacity of local communities needs being built and strengthened for a sustainable use of NDLs in basic education.

8.3 Change from the side/ lateral approach

The stakeholders under lateral approach include local teachers, linguists, educators and experts (from local NGOs).

8.3.1 Partnerships for advocacy

The side stakeholders, especially linguists, educators, local teachers and experts from local NGOs have to be encouraged to partner with local communities and local government bodies to advocate for the benefits of using NDLs in basic education.

8.3.2 Financial and technical support

The side stakeholders, especially local NGOs working for the quality education have to provide financial (if needed) and technical support for developing programs, teacher training and producing materials in NDLs.

8.3.3 Sharing successful strategies

The side stakeholders, especially linguists and educators may share some successful strategies and benefits of teaching in NDLs to the concerned authorities of the local governments and members of the communities.

8.3.4 Assessment of language vitality

The side stakeholders, especially linguists have to assess the vitality levels of the NDLs and suggest an appropriate strategy to uplift the vitality level required for being used in education.

9. Rationales for using NDLs in education

Kosonen (2013,p.39) notes “Education systems in multilingual nations have traditionally ignored NDLs (NDL) in favor of the dominant languages,

leading to gross inequalities. Therefore, for speakers of NDLs, multilingual education (MLE) based on their first language (L1) can be highly liberating.” This note indicates the major rationales for using NDLs in Nepal. Some specific rationales are listed in Table 7.

Table 7: Rationales for using NDLs in education

1.	Ensuring educational equality	To ensure the right of quality primary education, NDLs have to be integrated in the curriculum.
2.	Preserving local culture and identity	Using NDLs preserves local culture and identity by cultivating respect for cultural heritage.
3.	Preserving local knowledge	To preserve life crucial local knowledge, NDLs have to be brought into education.
4.	Empowering marginalized communities	Using NDLs helps marginalized communities to gain power.
5.	Enhancing learning outcomes	Teaching in mother tongue in early grades has demonstrated higher learning achievements.
6.	Building base for multilingualism	Using NDLs facilitates to learn other languages and promote overall linguistic development.

10. Conclusion

This paper has investigated some major issues, challenges of using NDLs and suggested some strategies for meeting those challenges. In Nepal, the socio-linguistic situation of NDLs is pitiable. Most of them belong to Sino-Tibetan language family and they are spoken by marginalized communities. Both linguistic and cultural identity has been threatened due to being encouraged to learn either Nepali or English for economic and social opportunities at home and abroad. Majority of such languages are labeled threatened and shifting. Without being uplifted to the required level of language vitality, they cannot be used in education. Formally, only Nepali, English, Tibetan and Sanskrit are used in basic education. However, informally, a significant number of NDLs have been used in classrooms to bridge the gap between the home and school language. The local governments are bewildered between societal preference for English and Nepali as mediums of instructions in early grades and their responsibility to preserve the local languages.

There are issues pertaining to orthography, language vitality, dialectal variation, language policy, financial management and language attitude and some challenges including lack of resource, commitment and coordination from/in from major stakeholders and linguistic research in bringing NDLs into basic education. In order to address and mitigate such issues and challenges, an integrated strategy or approach has to be followed. The local government has to frame a multilingual language policy focusing on the proper valuation and preservation and promotion of life-crucial knowledge, the respective language communities have to make demand for integrating NDLs into curriculum and other stakeholders should provide technical and logistic support. Without further delay, these stakeholders jointly should take immediate steps for bringing NDLs into basic education for ensuring educational equality, preserving local culture, identity and life-crucial knowledge, enhancing learning outcomes and empowering the communities.

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