# Multilingual Turn and the Need of Multilingual Education in the Nepalese Context

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## ABSTRACT

*This article is related with multilingual turn, multilingual education, and the need of it in the Nepalese context. It has highlighted the shifting of monolingual trend into multilingual education. Multilingual turn is a revolution in the sector of education. Day by day the demands of it are increasing for minority and indigenous languages. Similarly, there is need of multilingual education for people from such groups. Accordingly, the need of multilingual education is the focal point of this article. It has linked multilingual turn with multilingual education in the context of Nepal. Multilingual education is significant for learners' cognitive and literacy skills. These skills are possible through the implication of this type of education. The language learning through the access of home language, or mother tongue is better and more effective for language learners. In true sense, multilingual education is bridging between learners' first language and target language. Therefore, linguistic diversity is flourished via multilingual education. Nepal, a multilingual country, has linguistic diversity requires multilingual education.*

**Keywords:** multilingual turn, multilingual education, benefits of multilingual education, Nepalese context

## Introduction

Educating children is providing them education in an enhanced and friendly way. They have to be facilitated to learn better and more effectively. They have to get education in an autonomous way. In doing so, their language diversity is either favoured, or disfavoured in the classroom. If it is favoured, it is termed as bilingual or multilingual class. On the contrary, if learners' mother tongues are devalued and not used in the classroom, then that is a monolingual classroom. Frankly speaking, there are two types of classes existed in terms of language. They are known as monolingual and bilingual classes. But the recent studies have shown that monolingual classes are better for learners in learning languages.

This article has focused on multilingual turn and education. Language learning directing from the linguistic diversity is the main aim of it. Particularly, the need of multilingual education in the Nepalese context is the lightening point of this article. In Nepal, there is a need of multilingual education owing to its multilingual and multicultural richness. Monolingualism is connected in the beginning part of this article. Inside this article, multilingual turn is talked first, and multilingual education is mattered in the latter part. Then Nepalese context is another part of this article. In this way, multilingual turn, need of multilingual Education, and Nepalese context are the central concerns of it.

## Monolingualism

Monolingulism is the term rooted with monolingual. Generally, monolingual means ability to use only one language. Here, Dictionary.com defines monolingual as a person knowing or being able
to use only one language. S/he is known as monoglot. Monolingualism  is that phenomenon which denotes the ability to speak or write in a single language only. the state of understanding or having
the knowledge to speak or write in only one language. Linguistic theories have often assumed monolingualism to be the norm (Pavlenko, 2000), and this view is often held by individual monolinguals who are speakers of a dominant language such as English (Edwards, 1994). Usually, monolingualism is the state of using only one language in communication. It opposes the view of multilingualism.

Monolingualism, in common sense, refers to the situation where a speaker communicates soley in a language. To quote Ostaveshkey (2016), monlingualism does

not respect the communication in foreign languages. She states that:

The monolingual paradigm is not one where nobody speaks any foreign languages, but rather where each person has only one native language (or æmother tongueÆ) that at the same time situates them in their one national community. It is German Romanticism that was historically responsible during the rise of the nation state for the main elements of the monolingual paradigm.

In monolingualism, single language is applied for the purpose of sharing ideas. Foreign languages are not applied. Monolingual education is the medium of instruction that gears the use of dominant language. The linguistic diversity is respected. There is use of dominant language in the classroom. In the context of Nepal, only use of the target language or the Nepali language can be termed as monolingual classroom. That is why it just highlights the use of single. The minority and indigenous languages do not get space in teaching learning purpose of the classroom.

## Multilingual Turn

Multilingual turn is concerned with multilingualism. It is the concept developed against the monolingualism. Linguistic diversity is the flavor it enhances in the classroom. The term multilingual turn is related to superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007). Multilingual turn is primarily talked by Stephen May (2014). Along with the lens turning to the multilingualism and avoiding linguistic genocide (Skutnab-Kangass, 2000), monolingual hegemony went towards lessening. It started to foreground multilingualism rather than monolingualism. It has increasingly challenged bounded, unitary, and reified conceptions of

languages and related notions of native speaker and mother tongue, arguing instead for the more complex fluid understandings of voice (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007), language as a social practice (Heller, 2008), and a related sociolinguistics of mobile resources (Bloommaert, 2010). There has got the conception of metrolingualism. The aim of urban applied linguistics is to describe the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language (Makoni & Pennycook, 2012, p. 449). Therefore, multilingual turn existed with the need of identity formation and continuation of self-language in between communities or among them.

Multilingual turn flourished when people from minority and indigenous groups realized the value of their language. Writing in the early 1990s on the monolingual bias inherent in second language acquisition (SLA) research, as May (2014) reiterates Kachru (1994) despondently observed that, up until that point æfew attempts [had] been made to gather evidence [of second language acquisition] from stable contexts of bi-/multilingualism in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin AmericaÆ (Kachru, 1994, p. 796).

Multilingual turn offers a critique of, and alternative to dominant monolingual theories, pedagogies and practices in SLA, TESOL, and bilingual education (May, 2014). It is an advocacy for multiple competencies of bi/multilingual learners. It is boundary-breaking in sub-disciplinary boundaries particularly, those between SLA, TESOL, and bilingual education. All the languages in the multilinguals' repertoire complement one another to produce the type of composite language competence that suits their needs (Kachru, 1994). Interdisciplinary perspectives for theory, pedagogy, and

practice in each of these fields Sridhar (1994) suggests a 'reality check' to evaluate SLA theories in which an L2 does not replace an L1, but is used along with it. Multilingualism is becoming a social phenomenon governed by the needs of globalization and cultural openness. Mulitilingual turn proffers a vision of accepting the linguistic diversity and dealing with it accordingly.

Monolingualism may be the exception and multilingualism is the norm advocated by the multilingual turn. Multilingual turn is moving beyond the monolingual and psycholinguistic biases. This type of turn is ongoing critique of the monolingual bias in 'traditional/mainstream' SLA, TESOL and additive bilingualism (Sridhar, 1994). There is L1/L2 dichotomization in the array of it. SLA models have dichotomized L1 and L2 code-switching, code-mixing, transfer, convergence, and translanguaging. Different scholars try to conceptual multilingual turn with different terminologies. It can be termed as critical pedagogy (May & Sleeter, 2010) and pedagogy of engagement (Pennycook, 1999). To quote Block (2003), it is a social turn. Sociocultural view critiques linguistic-cognitive SLA. Leung, Harris, and Rampton (1997) opine that the terms native speaker and mother tongue should be replaced with the terms language expertise, language inheritance, and language affiliation.

Cook (2008) advocates for the notion of 'multicompetence' to describe bi/multilingual speakers. Teaching English as an international language needs to be rehearsed with multilateral participation. Teachers in different communities have to devise curricula and pedagogies that have local relevance and linkage. Teaching materials have to be accommodated with the values and needs of diverse settings, with

sufficient complexity granted to local knowledge. In this regard, we need to learn from diverse traditions of professionalization in different communities to develop a richer TESOL discourse (Canagarajah, 2006). Moreover, there is a must of disciplinary cross-fertilization (Corson, 2000). This is meant to say that English has to be taught with the access and ease of learners. The teaching of English does not have to be from the angle of nativization, but not from the aspiration of localization. The linguistic eye has to be with the milieu of learners from the conceptualization of sociolinguistic turn. A language learner needs to create identity. The interconnectedness between cultural globalization, identity formation, and English language education has started getting the attention it truly deserves from EIL educators (Kubota & Lin, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

May (2014) argues that there has to be developed an additive bilingual approach to SLA and TESOL because disciplines and their sub disciplines, such as SLA and TESOL, themselves construct, validate, contain, and exclude particular forms of knowledge. Result of their disciplinary histories and the academic hierarchies established within them. May (ibid.) examines these issues via Pierre Bourdieu's notions of 'habitus' and 'field' and Basil Bernstein's closely related notions of classification and framing. Bourdieu (1991) is connected with the notion of habitus. Habitus is represented dispositions, or ways of viewing and living in the world which affect, shape, and even structure our options and actions. Field is a specific site of economic, cultural, and/or intellectual reproduction, with its own logic of practice. Fields are structured spaces. Capital is refers to economic, cultural, intellectual values,

established norms and boundaries in any field. Practice is a combination of the interrelationship between the structure of the relevant field and the habitus of the agents involved.

As May (2014) by linking the idea with Bernstein states that classification signifies the boundaries that are established both within, and between, academic disciplines or subjects. Framing is the locus of control over pedagogic communication and its context. Singulars are strong boundary maintenance (classification). Distributive (what research is valued), recontextualizing (how teachers enact acceptable research) and evaluative rules. Bernstein's and Bourdieu's analysis helps to explain why academic disciplines, and sub disciplines such as SLA and TESOL, are so often confined by a narrowly derived set of research assumptions, approaches, and related models of teaching and learning. Significant shifts in the structure and distribution of power and in principles of control - that is, in who controls, and what counts as, disciplinary knowledge. Power and control hierarchizes disciplines. May (ibid.) highlights LEAP which refers to Language Enhancing the Achievement of Pasifika (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007). It addresses/redresses directly the long-standing criticism of the monolingual bias in SLA and TESOL. Monolingual bias is considered in English-dominant contexts. Integrated ESL program includes the situation of using the using the mother tongue of students to scaffold their learning. Currently, integration of research on bilingualism, SLA and TESOL has orientation towards learner language friendliness. The goal of it is to recapitulate the multilingual education. Multilingual education nourishes the educational attainment of children.

## Multilingual Education

Multilingual education is the education which fosters the mother tongues of children in their learning process. Sometimes it is known as bilingual education. Simply, learner' languages become the medium of instruction. It is the education system that evokes the usage of learners' language in the classroom. Multilingual Education usually denotes first-language-first education, that is, schooling which begins in the mother tongue and transitions to additional languages. It depicts the bridge used at the time learning the second or foreign languages.

In mother tongue-based multilingual education programs, the students' home language, a regional or national language and an international language are used for instruction. There are many reasons behind the need of multilingual education. Due to such obstacles, their schooling is getting disturbed. One of the reasons for this is that children from minority language communities are forced to attend schools in which only the language of the majority population is used. The fact is children cannot succeed in school if they do not understand what their teachers are saying. That is why multilingual education is a boon for children from the minority and indigenous groups. In respect of defining multilingual education, the UNESCO resolution of 1999 (cited in UNESCO, 2003, p.17) which was instrumental in providing an impetus to the MLE movement, defined MLE as ,Bilingual and multilingual education refer to the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction.

Multilingual education garners the multilingual competence and participatory involvement of learners in language classroom. They are able to develop communicative competence and multilinguistic skills for comprehending the communicative skills contextually. They can grasp the content and linguistic information significantly by the pairing of multilingual classes. In this regard, Garcia and Flores (2014, as cited in May, 2014) depict that common core ate standards are necessary to be in the educators. They say that individuals require the capacities to demonstrate independence as self-directed learner, build strong content knowledge, respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline, comprehend as well as critique, and value evidence. Along with it, they opine that:

The Common Core Standards (CCSS) are an excellent opportunity to provide U.S. students with a rigorous and challenging education that would enable to reach their full potential as learners and scholars. But to do so, the United States would have to come to terms with its own multilingualism and with the complex languaging of its bilingual speakers…the complex language practices of language practices of bilinguals open up multiple worlds to comprehend and critique and offer plural perspectives and multifaceted evidence that that provide further opportunities for rigorous analysis. (p.162)

Multilingual education is a need in the linguistically diverse classes for leading learning to the successful arenas. It handles learners in the correct ways of learning. The learners can develop the skills cognitively. They become motivated to expand their linguistic horizons. They even become able to learn in easy and comprehensible way. Their mother tongues become the means of learning languages. Learners not only learn the target language, but also they try to maintain the relationship between their L1

and L2. So, multilingual education is type of bridging which reduces the gaps.

**Benefits of Multilingual Education**

Multilingual education is better and more effective for learners in learning language. It supports their learning through the situation for using the home language of children. They perform better in the class and they get encouraged for learning language in the classroom.

Adgai (2016) avers that multilingual education benefits learners for learning the target language through their language and can develop them socially. She states that multilingual education helps to learn English and to maintain their home language. She argues that it helps learners to maintain relationship with their families and communities. Adgai opines that multilingual education provides monolingual children the opportunity of learn the second language and become the bilingual. Phyak (2011) argues that MT- based MLE policy has potential to contribute to social development. It bridges the gap between community and school recognizes the identity, epistemology and voices of local communities. His observation of MT-MLE class in the school in which MLE program was piloted shows that student experience a better learning environment and feel comfortable expressing their ideas in their own language.

Multilingual education shapes the cognitive skills of children in effective way. They can be familiar with the target language through the scaffolding of multilingual or bilingual education. Regarding this, Tsimpli (2017) believes that the bilingual education supports in cognitive tasks. Moreover, she states that home language practices usually refer to the time the child spends daily using the minority

and the majority language at home as well as to the type of activities she uses in each language, such as shared book reading and storytelling usually referred to as emergent literacy skills. Her aim is here that multilingual or bilingual education helps for developing literacy skills.

As Nag (2018) states, the use of children's language in multilingual education (MLE) classrooms creates possibility for the classroom discourse to become socioculturally sensitive and collaborative with more symmetrical power distribution between students and teachers. She reiterates that multilingual education is beneficial for being sociocultural sense and collaborative. Panda & Mohanty (2009a) further add that in a cultural psychology paradigm where human action is viewed from the perspective of meaning making and as an intentional act in an intentional world, the role of language assumes further significance. Multilingual education asserts meaning making information and performing intentional act. It amalgamates the visionary categorization for using the learners' language in the classroom.

**Need of Multilingual Education in the Nepalese Context**

Nepal is a multicultural and multilingual country. There is linguistic diversity in this country. There was monocentric policy in Nepal till the pre-2006 period. But later the tradition has changed and directed towards the multictural views from the post-2006 in the sense of Federal Democratic Nepal (Phyak, 2013). Nurmela (2009), Hough (2009) and Hough, Thapa-

Magar and Yonjan-Tamang (2010) see the need of a æbottom up community-based approachÆ to empower multilingual education (MLE) in Nepal. There are 123

national languages in Nepal (CBS, 2011). Due to this linguistic variation, there is huge value of multilingual education in it. In so far, the minority and indigenous groups are suffering from the hegemony of monolingual policy although multilingual education is in access to some districts of Nepal.

Nepal, a tripartite state geographically (i.e. mountain, plain and hill), is a habitat of linguistically and culturally diverse. By and large, people have to attain opportunities of education in their respective languages. For better access in education, multilingual education is paramount. In Federal Republic Nepal, people from ethnic groups have to get education in every part of the state. The teaching learning is intended to be shifted from monolingual perspectives to bi/multilingual perspectives. The teaching of language is necessary to be diverted to the learner centered scenarios. The consideration is crucial on behalf of learners. As Jora (2018, p. 785) concedes æ[t]oday, thinking skills are seen as an essential part of education, because information is easily obtained, so the essential task is now to use that information wiselyÆ. For the effective use of information, learners are better to accomplish thinking skills which can foster to perform desired task. To be specific, multilingual education is likely to proffer learners intended actions.

Multilingual education can offer lots of advantages to the linguistically diverse learners. It can deliver leaners the skills to communicate, multicultural awareness and cultural meaningfulness. They behave linguistically digested. For them, learning language means relating it to other languages. That is why they have to be acquainted with multiple languages in relation with their languages. Young and

Helot (2006) and Garcia and Wei (2014) point out the following advantages of multilingual education:

- Multilingual education for all children.

- It fosters multilingual and multicultural awareness.

- It strengthens multilingual competence.

- It enhances linguistic and cultural sensitivity.

Bi/multilingual education in Nepalese context is an asset to preserve the home languages of learners. The learners deserve the chances to apply their languages in the classroom. However, their ability to use the L2 for learning new, more difficult concepts is a slower process. Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky observed that the ability to talk about ideas is what helps learners think about them. If they are unable to talk about concepts in the second or third language, minority students' thinking is reduced to rote memorization (cf. Vygotsky, 1986). Language choice for medium of instruction has also been linked to measures economic and social inequality. Children are given adequate exposure by using their language in the medium of instruction.

The student-centered pedagogical model, shaped by Northern scholars such as John Dewey and Carl Rogers and popularized in the 20th century by educators such as Maria Montessori, is also heavily dependent on the use of a language which the learner has mastered. Linking with this, Vavrus, Thomas, and Bartlett (2011:81) reveal:

Because this approach relies heavily on critical thinking and dialogue, students and teachers need not only adequate space for discussions but also the linguistic skills in

the [medium of instruction] to express complex ideas and to ask critical questions. Thus, [learner-centered pedagogy] places significantly higher linguistic demands on teachers and students than teacher-centered approaches.

This statement shows that teachers should get special skills to deal with linguistically different children. From the joining efforts of teachers and learners, multilingual education can be smooth and goal oriented. Student centered approaches rely on the uses of learners languages. Teaching learning becomes easier and more successful if there is the situation of using their languages. Thus, use of children children's home language in the class provides tremendous benefits for their education and successful schooling. In Nepalese context, mother tongue medium of instruction is also appropriate for developing their proficiency, cognitive skills and literacy skills as well.

**Conclusion**

Multilingual education is opposite of monolingual education. It comes within linguistic turn because there is use of mother tongues of children. It is the system in which there are situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformative action (New London Group, 1996). In it, learners have the access of associating their target language through the use of self-language. Monolingual education is suitable for linguistically heterogeneous class. It is the type of class which encourages learners using their own languages for understanding the target language. It is the provisionary class in which they have pairing of their language in the paths of learning the target language. Mother tongue based education handovers skills of multicompetence, multicultural

awareness, and linguistic diversity to learners. In Nepal, multilingual education builds on the rapport between in course of teaching and learning. The multiculturality and linguistic diversity get respect in Nepal if multilingual classes are applied in the classes. Moreover, learners' motifs remain encouragement oriented, goal based, and achievement focused.

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