

Analyzing Nepali Language Teaching in Multilingual Context: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: In this qualitative study, how native languages impact second language acquisition among Nepalese students learning Nepali has been analyzed. Utilizing secondary data, it examines the distinct processes shaped by diverse linguistic backgrounds. First language acquisition occurs naturally through family interaction, while second language learning happens in formal settings, influenced by social and educational needs. The study finds that the ease of acquiring Nepali/English as a second language is inversely related to the structural differences between the learner's first and second languages. Closely aligned linguistic structures facilitate easier learning, while significant differences present challenges. The study emphasizes the need for adaptive teaching methodologies that accommodate Nepal's multilingual classrooms. This approach aims to improve academic and social integration among learners. Creating supportive and immersive learning environments can enhance the natural acquisition of Nepali, fostering greater linguistic competence and confidence.

Keywords: Confidence, Diverse, Integration, Linguistic Structure, Teaching Methodology

A. Introduction

We have a diverse setting characterized by its linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity, presents unique challenges and opportunities in the realm of language education. Among its myriad languages, Nepali serves as the lingua franca and is often learned as a second language by a substantial portion of the population. Languages such as Maithili, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Tharu, alongside regional dialects like Bajhangi, Dotyali, and Jumli, contribute to this rich linguistic mosaic. For speakers of these languages, mastering Nepali can be taken to acquiring a foreign language, necessitating specialized pedagogical approaches. Learning and teaching in other language has been one of the aspects of teaching language in Nepalese classroom. As a mother tongue of learners, it has become a difficult issue for the speakers of Languages such as Maithili, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Tharu, alongside regional dialects like Bajhangi, Dotyali, and Jumli etc. In this context, the role of Nepali or English contribute their (Urban, 2020) level confidence and promote autonomy.

It is difficult for them to learn Nepali language (Gautam, 2001). For Dotali and Jumli Nepali speakers, teaching Nepali language at a lower level or in the first grade is to a large extent equivalent to teaching a second language. It is not appropriate to mention what things are similar in the process of learning the first language or mother tongue and the second language. In this issue, the students who learn Nepali as their first language, have faced a number of issues in relation to learning other languages in a multilingual classroom. It has been found that there are many students who learn Nepali as their second language in the schools of our country Nepal (Lamichhane, 2001). Despite the fact that, giving information and awakening them to new ways to teach such students in the process of learning Nepali language for both these types of students will help to improve the Nepali language teaching process and get diversity.

Nepal is a rich mosaic of languages, ethnicities, and cultures. Among the multitude of languages spoken, Nepali serves as the lingua franca and is often learned as a second language by a significant portion of the population. This linguistic diversity includes languages like Maithili, Awadhi, Bhojपुरी, Tharu, and regional dialects such as Bajhangi, Dotyali, and Jumli. For speakers of these languages, learning Nepali can pose considerable challenges, and it is similar to acquiring a second language (Gautam, 2016). For students who speak languages like Dotyali and Jumli, learning Nepali at an early educational level, such as in the first grade, is similar to learning a foreign language. The linguistic structure, phonetics, and vocabulary of Nepali differ significantly from their native tongues. In this case, Tomlinson (2014) mentions that this discrepancy necessitates tailored pedagogical approaches that recognize the unique hurdles faced by these learners. The process of teaching Nepali to these students should not be treated as if it were their mother tongue but rather as a second language, necessitating specific instructional strategies.

Teaching Nepali as a second language, it is crucial to understand the differences in language acquisition between first language learners and second language learners. First language acquisition typically occurs naturally and effortlessly, as children are immersed in their native language environment from birth. In contrast, second language acquisition often requires more explicit instruction and practice, especially in a formal educational setting. This distinction should guide the development of curricula and teaching methodologies (Poudel, 2014). For instance, incorporating bilingual education programs that use students' first languages alongside Nepali can facilitate better understanding and retention. Applying interactive and context-based learning methods, such as role-playing, storytelling, and cultural immersion, can also be beneficial. On the other hand, teachers need to be trained in second language acquisition techniques and should be sensitive to the cultural backgrounds and linguistic needs of their students (Adhikari & Pant, 2012).

When we talk about first and second language acquisition is critical in this context. First language acquisition is typically an organic process, with children naturally

assimilating their native language through immersion from birth. Conversely, second language acquisition often demands explicit instruction and deliberate practice, particularly within formal educational frameworks. This understanding should inform curriculum development and teaching methodologies. State-of-the-art research suggests that bilingual education programs, which integrate students' first languages alongside Nepali, can enhance comprehension and retention. Interactive and context-based learning techniques, such as role-playing, storytelling, and cultural immersion, have proven effective. Furthermore, educators need training in second language acquisition methods and should exhibit cultural sensitivity towards their students' backgrounds.

Many researchers have found that importance of adapting teaching methods to accommodate Nepal's linguistic diversity. Tailored approaches that address the specific challenges faced by students learning Nepali as a second language are vital. Similar to this, Yadava, (2007) found the role of setting aside the various censuses, attempts have also been made by some linguists to identify Nepal's languages by linguists and supported to apply the applicable strategies such strategies, Nepal can enhance the educational experience for all students, respecting and leveraging its rich linguistic heritage. But, connecting to this issue , investigating the major issues teaching the leaners of Nepali language for other speakers of regional dialects such as Maithili, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Bajhang, Dotyali, and Jumli. Therefore, this study will benefit significantly from these insights, promoting a more inclusive environment that caters to the diverse linguistic needs of its student population. Embracing these innovative approaches will not only improve language proficiency but also contribute to the broader goal of educational equity and excellence in Nepal(Dhakal ,2024).

For researchers, and concerned stakeholders in the field of teaching, it is necessary to have clear understanding in to into the differences in learning processes for first language and second language learners of Nepali can significantly enhance teaching efficacy. Recognizing these differences can lead to the creation of more inclusive and effective educational strategies that cater to the needs of all students. This, in turn, can help bridge linguistic gaps and promote better educational outcomes (Rai, 2013). Nepal's linguistic diversity necessitates a nuanced approach to language education. For students learning Nepali as a second language, particularly those from non-Nepali speaking backgrounds, tailored teaching methods are essential. Understanding the unique challenges these students face and adapting teaching strategies accordingly can greatly improve the learning experience and outcomes for these learners. By doing so, Nepal can foster a more inclusive and effective educational system that respects and accommodates its rich linguistic heritage (Subba, 2019).In this study, a systematic review has been conducted in order to explore the necessity of apply and integrate the contextual strategies while teaching language i. e Nepali as a second language in multilingual settings.

Statement of the problem

Nepal's linguistic diversity presents significant challenges in educational settings where students come from various linguistic backgrounds. The primary challenge lies in the effective acquisition of Nepali as a second language. Traditional, formal methods of second language instruction often fail to accommodate the unique needs of students influenced by their mother tongues. This results in difficulties in pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax, which hinder students' academic performance and social integration. Addressing these challenges requires a deeper understanding of the dynamics of second language acquisition influenced by native languages and the development of adaptive teaching methodologies (Yadava, 2007).

The existing educational policies in Nepal often do not fully address the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students. Although there are provisions for mother tongue education at the primary level, the transition to Nepali as the medium of instruction is not sufficiently supported by tailored teaching practices. This policy gap creates a disconnect between the theoretical framework and practical implementation, resulting in inadequate support for students learning Nepali as a second language (Phyak, 2014).

In practice, teachers frequently rely on traditional methods that may not be effective for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. There is a lack of training for educators on how to implement inclusive and adaptive teaching strategies that cater to the needs of second language learners (Awasthi, 2004). For instance, techniques such as differentiated instruction, which involves tailoring teaching environments and practices to create appropriate learning experiences for diverse students, are not widely practiced. In addition, educational materials often lack cultural and linguistic relevance, making it harder for students to relate to and engage with the content. Without contextualized learning resources that reflect the students' linguistic and cultural realities, the effectiveness of language instruction is compromised (Bista, 2011).

From the study conducted by various researchers, it is understood that, there is policy and practice gaps, it is essential to revise educational policies to include comprehensive support systems for second language learners. Implementing continuous professional development programs focused on multilingual education and second language acquisition techniques (Phyak & Ojha, 2019). Encouraging the use of interactive and student-centered teaching methods that accommodate linguistic diversity, such as cooperative learning and task-based language teaching (Ghimire, 2010). Developing and integrating teaching materials that reflect the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students (Gautam, 2001). Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the effectiveness of language instruction and make necessary adjustments (Yadava, 2007). And this study is unresearched as it has

been released the gap between policy and practice gap in this context, and this study would be beneficial for policy makers, linguists, researchers, teachers and so on.

The main area of this study is the study of first and second language. In this study, the learning condition of first and second language, differences and Nepali teaching in bilingual and multilingual context is taken as the main limitation. The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To analyze the impact of students' native languages on the acquisition of Nepali as a second language.
2. To identify the learning processes of Nepali language learners influenced by their linguistic backgrounds.

B. Methods

In this study, a systematic review has been conducted from various secondary sources, including academic journals and articles on second language acquisition and multilingual education, government and NGO reports on language education in Nepal, and case studies and previous research on the impact of native languages on second language learning (Ellis, 1994; Krashen, 1982; Cummins, 2000). The methodological section was divided in to two parts: the library method and the analytical method. Under library method was employed to collect the materials necessary for the study which involved gathering and analyzing relevant works on Nepali language teaching, focusing on both theoretical and practical aspects. Materials were sourced from libraries, ensuring the inclusion of useful and experimental content related to language teaching. Relevant works included foundational texts on language acquisition, such as those by Lightbown and Spada (2013) and Hinkel (2017). The study analyzed the differences between first and second language acquisition, highlighting the distinct challenges and strategies associated with teaching Nepali in bilingual and multilingual contexts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The study and its collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns related to second language acquisition challenges and effective teaching methodologies. The analysis focused on the influence of native languages on learning Nepali, the structural differences between first and second languages, and their impact on learning. It also examined effective strategies and practices in multilingual classrooms. By separately examining the processes of first language learning and second language learning, the study provided a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing language acquisition and proposed effective teaching methodologies to address these challenges.

C. Results and Discussions

The child learns the first language from the mother's arms which starts from the age of three months. A child starts learning a language from his mother, father, family, friends and family environment. The first language is the first language learned. A child's mental development and emotional development is the first language that is learned. A child's first language is not an acquired language. Since a child starts learning from his mother, the mother is known as the first teacher and that language is known as his mother tongue (Adhikari, 2002). The first language is learned naturally. For this, the speaking environment is regular and when working in the environment, such language learning happens automatically. The speed of language learning is always Eknas/similar which constantly changing and there is more opportunity for practice and repetition in learning the first language. Therefore, it is essential to create an acceptable learning environment for the learners who are acquiring the language as the second languages.

Teaching Nepali as a first language

The language that any child first learns from his mother's arms and family environment is called the first language, or mother tongue. This initial language acquisition occurs naturally and forms the basis for the child's linguistic development. While the child grows and interacts within the family, neighborhood, or community, they also make linguistic errors. To address these errors and to learn the standard language, formal education becomes necessary, aiming to achieve linguistic proficiency (Sapkota, 2001). In the context of Nepali education, there is a need to refine and modify linguistic errors and understand the written form of the national language. Nepali, being the national language, has numerous dialectical variations. To use it correctly and to understand its diverse usages, even native Nepali speakers benefit from formal education (Sharma, 2010). Language learning is a habitual process linked to the child's intellectual and muscular development. Once a child becomes habituated to learning a second language, it becomes challenging to adapt to learning another. For someone accustomed to one language, learning an additional language is relatively easy. However, acquiring a second language is not as natural and effortless as acquiring the first language. It involves an artificial process, where the learner must express new ideas and knowledge in a completely different manner and absorb new experiences from the new language (Ellis, 1994).

A learner influenced by the first language may find it challenging to adopt the pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure of a new language. Each language has unique characteristics, making it difficult not to let the second language be influenced by the first. When learning the first language, the learner's mind is devoid of previous language experiences, making the learning process straightforward. Conversely, when learning a second language, the learner already has some language experience, which can either facilitate or hinder the process. If the structural and

syntactical differences between the two languages are minimal, learning becomes easier (Krashen, 1982). Learning a second language is not solely influenced by the first language. In some cases, learners can acquire the second language naturally. If the learning environment is conducive, the reliance on first language experience diminishes, making the second language acquisition process as natural as the first. According to Sapkota (2001), when the linguistic environment is easily and effectively available, the learner's dependence on the first language decreases.

This is particularly relevant in Nepal, where the Nepali language is prevalent and accessible. Many non-native speakers of Nepali have learned it as their first language due to its extensive use in inter-community, educational, and national activities (Sapkota, 2001).

Impact of Learning Nepali as a Second Language Learning Nepali as a second language has significant implications for non-native speakers. The widespread use of Nepali in social, educational, and governmental contexts means that acquiring proficiency in Nepali opens up numerous opportunities. For instance, fluency in Nepali allows individuals to engage more fully in community activities, access educational resources, and participate in national dialogues (Adhikari, 2015).

Furthermore, the rich linguistic environment in Nepal facilitates natural language acquisition, reducing the reliance on the first language. This natural acquisition process leads to better pronunciation, vocabulary, and overall language competence. Additionally, the similarities between the learners' first language and Nepali can further ease the learning process, enabling quicker adaptation and fluency (Sharma, 2010). From the summary, presented above, it is found that the acquisition of Nepali as a second language not only enhances individual capabilities but also promotes cultural integration and national unity. The ability to communicate effectively in Nepali allows for a more cohesive society where individuals from different linguistic backgrounds can interact seamlessly (Adhikari, 2015).

Impact of Learning Nepali as a Second Language

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In this regard, Zentella, (2005) reported a child's first language learned from the family, neighborhood and community cannot be completed, the second language is learned by the child or student in their own environment. In this regard, first language is learned automatically in a comfortable environment. Learning a second language requires effort. Although the process of learning a second language is difficult, students can be included in various language activities and gain proficiency in the language just like the first language. After the arrival of non-Nepali students as a second language, in order to increase linguistic contact and during the course of study, the students should accept Nepali as a second language. Nepali speakers are also more active in learning Nepali language as a second language in order to be able to do it because of the creation of high-quality literature. Due to these and similar reasons, they are in need of quality Nepali language teaching.

The impact of environment in which any child learns their first language is a natural, comfortable setting. The first language, often referred to as the mother tongue, is acquired independently through this familiar environment. On the other hand, the second language is learned through experience and is often acquired in a more controlled and less comfortable setting. For instance, a child learns Nepali, their first language, in a comfortable home environment, but learns a foreign language in a more structured, controlled environment (Khatri, 2020). Learning the first language does not require a long period; it happens naturally as the child interacts with their surroundings. In contrast, acquiring a second language requires a significant investment of time and effort. The first language acquisition is a natural process, whereas the second language learning is more artificial, involving intellectual and emotional exercises (Adhikari, 2018). For example, children whose mother tongue is Nepali may not necessarily need to learn other languages, underscoring the non-compulsory nature of second language learning.

When a person learns their first language, they typically have no prior exposure to other languages. Conversely, a person learning a second language usually has some knowledge of at least one other language, such as Tamang, Newar, or Maithili. This prior linguistic experience can influence the learning process of the second language (Bhattarai, 2019). Students learning their first language are not affected by other languages and thus can pronounce almost all words correctly, gradually achieving proficiency through trial and error. However, in learning a second language, the pronunciation of the first language can interfere, making it difficult to pronounce certain words in the second language. For instance, Newari students may struggle with pronouncing certain Nepali sounds like "ta" and "rat."

Since Nepali is the mother tongue for many, its influence is evident when learning other languages. Learning a first language is a culturally neutral process, while learning a second language involves cultural influences, making it more challenging (Tamang, 2021). Perfection is often achieved in first language learning, but it is rarely attained in second language learning due to the bilingual or multilingual status that

develops through second language acquisition. There is social pressure to learn the first language well, but second language learning is often driven by personal or professional motivation rather than societal pressure (Poudel, 2017). Therefore, creating a dictionary in a particular language requires in-depth knowledge of that language, but it does not necessarily require proficiency in other languages. Dictionaries such as Nepali-English, Nepali-Limbu, Nepali-Tamang, and Nepali-Rai are possible with a thorough understanding of Nepali have positive impact to learn the expected language such as Nepali or English.

Teaching Nepali in a bilingual and multilingual context

A multilingual country like Nepal, it is common for students from various linguistic backgrounds to come together in educational settings. This diversity poses challenges for students and educators, particularly when students must transition from their mother tongue to learning in Nepali at school. For students who primarily use their native language at home, encountering Nepali in an academic environment can present significant difficulties. Teachers, too, face challenges in addressing the diverse linguistic needs of these students, who must learn to understand and express themselves in Nepali (Sharma, 2022). In some families, more than one language is spoken, with the mother tongue and the predominant language of the society being used interchangeably. This bilingual environment allows children to learn vocabulary from both languages, adapting their language use according to the context. However, teaching Nepali in such linguistically diverse backgrounds is a complex task for educators. Bilingual students might struggle more with Nepali, particularly if it is not their first language. Teachers need to identify the specific linguistic challenges faced by each student to provide effective instruction. Grouping students with similar linguistic difficulties can make teaching more relevant and engaging, allowing for targeted language instruction (Thapa, 2021).

Teachers of bilingual or multilingual students should aim to enhance their understanding and expression in Nepali. While students cannot achieve all educational objectives solely through their mother tongue, teachers can encourage active development of speech skills in Nepali. In Nepal's multi-ethnic and multilingual context, it is common for students from various linguistic backgrounds to share the same classroom. This situation requires special strategies to teach Nepali effectively. Some strategies include identifying the number of students speaking the same language, grouping students according to language families, and providing special education tailored to individual abilities and levels (Bista, 2020). Additionally, creating an environment where students can use Nepali at school and home is crucial. Teachers should offer opportunities and resources based on students' interests and abilities, keeping parents informed about their children's progress. In multilingual classrooms, some students may excel in speaking Nepali but struggle with writing. These students should be encouraged and supported in improving their reading and

writing skills, with teachers providing specific guidance on areas needing improvement (Koirala, 2019).

Aligning with this, in Nepali language classrooms, a teacher's ability to identify students' weaknesses and progress and provide tailored suggestions is vital. Simply offering equal opportunities to all students, regardless of their linguistic background, may not yield the desired educational outcomes. Teachers must consider the students' linguistic backgrounds and tailor their instruction to support the development of language skills. This approach can make Nepali more accessible and appealing to all students, regardless of their native language, enabling them to achieve a high level of proficiency in Nepali (Gurung, 2023).

D. Conclusion

The process of language acquisition is deeply rooted in the environment and cultural context in which a child is raised. The first language, often referred to as the mother tongue, is acquired naturally from an early age through interaction with family and community. This initial language learning is fundamental to a child's mental and emotional development. Conversely, acquiring a second language involves a more structured and deliberate effort, often influenced by prior linguistic knowledge and the surrounding environment. Teaching Nepali, whether as a first or second language, presents unique challenges, especially in a multilingual context like Nepal. Students from various linguistic backgrounds must navigate the complexities of transitioning to Nepali, which necessitates tailored instructional strategies. Educators must recognize and address the specific linguistic needs of their students, creating a conducive learning environment that supports both spoken and written language development.

In bilingual or multilingual settings, it is crucial for teachers to enhance students' understanding and expression in Nepali by leveraging their existing linguistic skills and providing relevant opportunities for practice. This involves grouping students with similar linguistic challenges, offering individualized support, and maintaining regular communication with parents about their children's progress. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a high level of proficiency in Nepali, enabling students to engage fully in social, educational, and national activities. This not only enhances individual capabilities but also promotes cultural integration and national unity. By adopting inclusive and adaptive teaching strategies, educators can ensure that all students, regardless of their linguistic background, have the opportunity to succeed in learning Nepali.

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