The Use of Nepali in Secondary-Level English Classrooms: Challenges and Strategies for Promoting English Medium Interaction

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Abstract

As part of a mini-research conducted in Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur district, this article examines the role of Nepali in secondary-level English classrooms in a rural multilingual context. The study is guided by two research questions: what factors influence Nepali use in English classrooms, and how teachers, students, and parents perceive the challenges and strategies for promoting English-medium interaction. The study follows a qualitative, exploratory research design and uses purposive sampling to select 12 students from two secondary schools: grade 10 students from Arun Secondary School and grade 12 students from Shadananda Secondary School. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and focus group discussions with parents, and analyzed by developing codes, categories, and themes that reflect classroom practices and stakeholder perceptions. The study reveals that English-medium instruction is implemented in a mixed-mode approach, with Nepali frequently used to mediate classroom communication. The findings highlight challenges in teachers' fluency and student confidence, classroom management, and the lack of an English-friendly environment. The study concludes that promoting English interaction requires a balanced and context-sensitive approach. It recommends structured activities, role-plays, group discussions, a gradual increase in English input, teacher training, student-oriented confidence-building tasks, and institutional support.

Keywords: English medium instruction (EMI), Nepali medium instruction (NMI), code-switching, low English proficiency, classroom interaction, scaffolding

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Introduction

This research paper examines the role of Nepali in English classrooms in a multilingual setting. Nepal is known for its remarkable linguistic diversity, with more than 120 officially recognized languages spoken across its geographical and cultural landscapes (CBS, 2021). These languages reflect the nation's rich heritage and are tied to distinct ethnic, regional, and cultural identities. Within this multilingual setting, Nepali plays a central role as both the official language and the lingua franca. It helps communication among speakers of different mother tongues in education, administration, and public life. According to Poudel and Baskota (2025), alongside Nepali, English has gained significant prominence since its introduction during the Rana period. Over time, English has become a language of prestige and opportunity. It is linked with modernity, global engagement, and socio-economic mobility. Today, English is taught as a compulsory subject from the early grades, and it plays a vital role in higher education, government affairs, tourism, and international commerce. The dual importance of Nepali and English creates a unique backdrop for language education in Nepal.

In rural and semi-urban contexts such as Shadananda Municipality in Bhojpur District, language use in education is shaped by both linguistic diversity and the limited role of English in daily life. The municipality is home to communities like Rai, Tamang, Magar, and others, each with its own indigenous language. While these mother tongues are important for family and community life, Nepali is the primary language of communication in schools. For many students, Nepali is already a second language, but it remains the main medium through which they learn the national curriculum. English, in contrast, is mostly limited to classrooms. Students get very few opportunities to use English outside formal lessons. This lack of exposure affects language learning, especially in oral proficiency and communicative confidence.

Classroom observations in Shadananda show that English instruction is often mediated through Nepali. Teachers frequently switch to Nepali when explaining grammar, vocabulary, or classroom instructions. For students whose first language is not Nepali, this creates a two-step process: learning English through Nepali, which is itself not their mother tongue. While this may help with understanding, it also reduces the likelihood of direct engagement with English. This creates a paradox. Nepali helps bridge understanding, but overuse of it limits the immersive environment necessary for meaningful English learning.

The use of a first language or lingua franca in English teaching has been debated worldwide. Supporters of L1 use say it gives both cognitive and emotional support. It helps learners understand difficult concepts and reduces anxiety. This is useful when students have low English proficiency or little exposure. Too much reliance on Nepali in English classrooms can prevent students from actively practicing English. The main challenge is to decide when Nepali helps learning and when it becomes a barrier.

In Shadananda, this challenge is more pronounced due to classroom realities. Teachers often handle large classes with mixed abilities and limited resources. In such situations, using Nepali seems practical to make sure all students understand. But English use outside school is almost absent. This reduces chances for practice, and students lose motivation to use English in daily life. Many students see English as only an academic subject. They do not see it as a real communication tool. This view is strengthened when classroom talk is mostly in Nepali. Students feel no strong need to use English with peers or teachers.

The medium of instruction is closely linked to student achievement. Research shows that L1 can help in understanding and concept development. But learning a new language well requires regular exposure and meaningful use. For English, this means students need more practice in speaking and listening, not only in reading and writing. Motivation is key in this process. When learners believe English will help in education, jobs, or international opportunities, they invest more effort. But when English seems irrelevant, motivation decreases. Teachers' roles are central here. Their consistent use of English and encouragement can build a positive classroom culture where students feel safe to try.

The case of Shadananda highlights broader issues in teaching English in rural multilingual areas. Nepali helps connect diverse groups of students, but can also limit English-medium interaction when overused. A balance is needed. Teachers

must use Nepali strategically to aid understanding, but they must also create more opportunities for students to practice English. This balance does not come from banning Nepali. Instead, it comes from strategies such as planned code-switching, task-based learning, peer group work, role-plays, and authentic English materials. A gradual increase in English input, with supportive feedback, can help students grow in confidence and competence.

This research is conducted in Shadananda Municipality, Dingla. This study addresses two research questions. The first question asks: What is the current situation of Nepali language use in secondary-level English classrooms, and what are the reasons behind it? *And the second asks*: How do teachers, students, and parents perceive the challenges and strategies for promoting English-medium interaction in these classrooms? In line with these research questions, it has two main objectives. The first is to examine the current situation of Nepali language use in secondary-level English classrooms and to explore the reasons behind it. The second is to identify the challenges and strategies for promoting English-medium interaction in these classrooms.

This study investigates the use of Nepali in secondary-level English classrooms in Shadananda Municipality, focusing on both challenges and strategies. It examines teacher practices, student experiences, and the sociolinguistic context of classroom language use. The findings aim to contribute to the debate on the use of the first language in English teaching. They are expected to give practical insights for teachers and policymakers working in similar multilingual contexts. The goal is not only to teach English as a subject but also to build students' ability to use English for real communication in an interconnected world.

Delimitation of the Research Inquiry

Delimitation refers to the specific features that define the scope and boundaries of a research study. It delimits the researcher from going beyond the area of the existing research. No study can encompass the entire population under investigation. Moreover, no research can employ every available tool or address every aspect of the subject area, owing to time, budget, and resource constraints. Similarly, this research has some limitations. This article primarily examines pedagogical approaches used in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms to develop communicative competence in English at the secondary level. The study was based on a small sample of informants. This study was conducted in the Shadananda Municipality area, Bhojpur district. There are 13 secondary-level community

schools altogether. This study was conducted in two secondary-level schools, namely Shadananda Secondary School and Arun Secondary School. Six from Grade ten at Arun Secondary School and six from Grade twelve at Shadananda Secondary School, all twelve students, participated in questionnaires, classroom observations, and reading/speaking assessments. Similarly, one teacher from each school and the parents of participating students of Shadananda municipality, Bhojpur district, were interviewed.

This study paper provides information only on the uses of Nepali in secondary-level English classrooms in Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur. This study was delimited to secondary-level community school students who face problems with English communication due to the Nepali language. This article explains how students developed their English communicative skills after learning Nepali. Although there were no informants from outside the secondary-level students of the community school, due to the small sample size and limited data from the questionnaire and interviews, the findings cannot be generalized to a large sample or territory. I analyzed the collected data descriptively.

Literature Review

The researcher has strengthened this research by a rigorous exploration of the materials. I collected relevant materials from various sources. Some of the materials were sent to me by my facilitators. Most of them were articles I gathered from online sources, while the online libraries I discovered during my exploration were also very helpful.

Each study builds on previous studies in the same field to achieve its objectives. Several studies have been conducted at the national and international levels. They have some connection to my research, too. As a researcher, one has to accumulate plenty of insights from previous studies, which provide a basic framework for further research. This research article also builds on previous research in the same field. Hence, I made a rigorous attempt to review the various studies related to my topic. There are few studies on the perceptions of the Tamang community students of the English language. Few studies were conducted on this subject around out of country.

Regarding methodology, Creswell (2012) wrote a book titled Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. This book offers a truly balanced, inclusive, and integrated overview of the field

as it currently stands. This text provides thorough coverage of the methods and procedures used in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. It helped me learn to begin conducting research, see a project through, prepare an article, and read and evaluate research reports.

To find out the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents towards Nepali and English medium instruction, I mentioned the article of Khadka (2024), entitled "Perceptions and Practices of English and Nepali Medium Instruction," and explored stakeholder perceptions and practices of Nepali Medium Instruction (NMI) and English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Nepalese community schools. Employing a quantitative research design, structured questionnaires were administered to 200 participants, including 100 students, 50 teachers, 20 SMC chairs, and 30 parents, selected from four government schools via purposive sampling. Findings revealed a strong parental preference for EMI (70%) in future opportunities, while teachers (70%) and students (47%) preferred NMI for better comprehension. Challenges included EMI hindering student confidence (32% of parents, 37% of teachers) and limited Nepali-language resources.

Rai (2022) in Classroom Challenges of Secondary-Level English Teachers at Remote Government Schools in Nepal aimed to explore secondary-level English teachers' classroom challenges in remote government schools in Nepal and to analyze how these factors affect English Language Teaching. Key findings included teachers' limited understanding of local languages, overcrowded classrooms, students' predominant use of their native language (L1), and limited linguistic backgrounds. The study highlights that 63.15% of classes frequently use L1 instead of English, and that teacher time is significantly diverted by attendance and discipline issues, thereby limiting actual learning. It employs a mixed-methods approach.

Similarly, I studied Dahal (2023), who conducted a study titled "English Medium Instruction in Public Schools in Nepal: An Ethnographic Study." This study explored eighth-grade students' perceptions of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in a public school and its effects on their academic performance. Using an ethnographic methodology, Dahal selected four eighth-grade students and gathered data through prolonged observation and in-depth interviews. Findings indicated that students viewed English as a language of power and opportunity, which enhanced proficiency. Yet, EMI also served as a barrier to academic performance, fostering rote learning and impeding comprehension, especially for those from Nepali-medium backgrounds. The study concluded that while EMI enhances English skills, first-language instruction promotes quality education.

Furthermore, I studied Khanal (2024), titled "Learning English in Multicultural Contexts: Experiences and Strategies of Secondary-Level Students in Rural Nepal." This qualitative case study explored the English-learning experiences and strategies of secondary-level students in rural Nepal's multicultural context. Employing semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with five purposively selected students from diverse cultural groups, Khanal found that self-learning strategies were influenced by socio-cultural and economic realities. Indigenous students faced challenges due to heavy household workloads and limited access to resources, while mainstream students demonstrated proactive collaboration and resource engagement. The study emphasizes the critical role of translation strategies for meaning comprehension and advocates for culturally sensitive pedagogy.

To examine the challenges faced by secondary-level Nepalese students in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), I studied the article by Rai (2024), "Secondary Level Students' Experiences in English as a Medium of Instruction: A Nepalese Context." This narrative inquiry explored the experiences and challenges of seven secondary-level Nepalese students in English as a Medium of Instruction using semi-structured interviews. The study revealed that students perceive EMI as a confidence booster for personal and academic excellence, despite confronting challenges related to low English proficiency, particularly in speaking, listening, and writing. Despite these hardships, students strongly favor the continuation of EMI, viewing it as essential for navigating globalization and technology.

Moreover, to examine parents' and learners' motivation towards English-medium instruction, I reviewed Kadel, P. B. (2024). This phenomenological study, based on interviews with 8 teachers from 4 schools, aimed to explore the potentialities and challenges of adopting English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at the school level in Nepal, as well as the reasons for its implementation. Key findings highlighted the use of translanguaging in EMI classrooms, excessive parental and learner motivation towards EMI, and a notable lack of teacher preparation. The study concluded that EMI is essential for learners' bright careers due to English's global dominance as a lingua franca, despite its role in the loss of mother tongues.

Furthermore, the literature review by Upadhyay, M. P. (2024), which explores secondary-level students' participation in English classrooms in Nepal, aims to identify factors influencing students' engagement and propose strategies to enhance participation in English classrooms in Nepal. Adopting a descriptive qualitative methodology through library research, the study thematically analyzed data from various scholarly sources. The main findings indicated significant impacts from

socio-cultural influences, motivational factors, language-learning strategies, and classroom dynamics. The study suggests student-centered pedagogies, culturally relevant practices, and building language confidence to improve participation.

Methodology

This study is based on an exploratory qualitative research design. I used a qualitative interpretive exploration method to identify the uses of Nepali in Secondary-Level English classrooms in Shadananda Municipality. Guided by a qualitative exploratory design, the research purposively selected 12 students. I have selected the case of 6 students, i.e., 3 boys and 3 girls, of grade 10 at Arun Secondary School, and 6 students, i.e., 3 boys and 3 girls, of grade 12 from Shadananda Secondary School of Shadananda municipality. The research participants were two teachers from the same school. One of them taught English to tenth-grade students, the other to twelfth-grade students, and the parents of participating students were also included. Data collection employed questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and classroom observations. I visited with the permission of the respected school's head teacher and subject teachers to gather information from students at each school. To maintain the research informant's anonymity, their real names were replaced with pseudonyms.

The FGD was conducted with the parents of the selected secondary-level students at the respective school, with the help of the head teacher, for 1.5 hours. Similarly, 10- to 15-minute interviews were conducted with each teacher participant. Some of them stay in my neighborhood; I met them several times and had informal conversations with them. The conversations were not recorded to maintain the natural setting. Instead, I wrote a descriptive account of the interview experience. I prepared such a note immediately after the conversation with them. I recorded the FGD and transcribed it. Similarly, the classroom observation was conducted with the selected secondary-level students in their classroom for 20 to 25 minutes. The main points related to the themes are noted down in the notebook. I analyzed the data by developing meaningful codes and categories, which led to the generation of final themes for the interview and FGD data.

Results and Discussion

The study investigated the use of Nepali in secondary-level English classrooms in Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur. The findings are based on three main data sources: teacher questionnaires and interviews, classroom observation of twelve

students, and focus group discussions with parents. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive view of the current state of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Nepali Medium Instruction (NMI), the causes of Nepali use, the role of Nepali in English language teaching, the challenges faced, and strategies to promote English-medium interaction. The discussion is structured thematically to connect evidence from different perspectives.

Present Situation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Nepali Medium Instruction (NMI)

In Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur, the practice of English Medium Instruction (EMI), and Nepali Medium Instruction (NMI) shows a mixed reality. Although English is officially promoted as the medium of instruction in English subject classrooms, the actual practice often shifts toward Nepali. Teachers frequently use Nepali when explaining grammar, giving instructions, or clarifying difficult concepts. Students also display similar patterns, using English for short answers but switching to Nepali for discussions and longer explanations. Parents further confirm that children tend to rely on Nepali when discussing schoolwork at home. This situation highlights a dual-medium practice that creates a flexible space for learning, but also shows that EMI remains more of a goal than a consistent classroom reality.

Both participating teachers from Shadananda Secondary School and Arun Secondary School reported that EMI is formally encouraged in English subjects. However, they admitted that implementing EMI fully is difficult. Participant teacher, Teacher 1, said that although he tries to use English for grammar and instructions, he often switches to Nepali when students look confused. Participant teacher, Teacher 2, described EMI as "encouraged but not strictly implemented." He noted that students expect teachers to explain difficult parts in Nepali.

Observation of twelve students confirmed this situation. In both schools, teachers began lessons in English by greeting students, stating objectives, and reading texts. However, once students were asked comprehension questions or required to explain something, Nepali became dominant. Students at Shadananda Secondary School made brief attempts in English, often with incomplete sentences, before moving on to Nepali. At Arun Secondary School, students used Nepali almost exclusively during group work. EMI appeared more symbolic, functioning as teacher input rather than student interaction.

Parents also noticed that their children were studying in a mixed medium. Parents from Shadananda reported that teachers initially used English, but then explained it again in Nepali when students did not understand. Parents from Arun said EMI was less consistent, and their children usually explained lessons at home in Nepali.

These findings suggest that EMI is aspirational rather than fully realized. While policies and school practices promote EMI, actual classroom discourse is bilingual. The Nepali language is playing a central role. This situation is not unique to Bhojpur but is reported in other multilingual contexts where English is promoted as a medium of instruction. The practical reality shows a gap between language policy and classroom practice.

Causes of Using Nepali in English Classrooms

In many schools in Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur, English Medium Instruction has been introduced to improve students' English skills and academic performance. However, the practice of Nepali Medium Instruction still plays an important role in classrooms. Teachers and students often switch between English and Nepali depending on the situation. This study explores the current situation of EMI and NMI in the municipality's secondary schools. It also examines the causes of the use of the Nepali language in English teaching.

Both teachers agreed that the main reason for using Nepali is the students' low proficiency in English. Teacher 1 explained that if he used only English, students "get lost and the lesson takes longer." Nepali, therefore, becomes a time-saving tool. Teacher 2 estimated that he used about 70% English and 30% Nepali, depending on lesson difficulty. He mentioned: "When I try to explain new grammar only in English, students look confused. Using Nepali for explanation makes them feel safe and clear." Teachers also mentioned that students themselves request Nepali explanations when they cannot follow in English.

Classroom observation indicated that many students struggle with basic English vocabulary and sentence construction. Observations showed four main causes:

(a) **Comprehension difficulties:** When instructions were given only in English, students delayed starting tasks or asked peers to explain in Nepali.

(b) **Fear of mistakes:** Students began in English but quickly switched to Nepali when unsure.

(c) **Habitual reliance:** In group discussions, students automatically used Nepali,

even when asked to use English.

(d) **Time efficiency:** Teachers used Nepali to clarify grammar or vocabulary quickly, and students did the same in group work.

Parents reinforced these views. They said their children's English foundation was weak, so they felt lost when lessons were only in English. Parents also pointed out that rural life provides little exposure to English, so Nepali is the natural fallback. They also believed teachers used Nepali to maintain interest and save time.

The causes of Nepali use are both structural and pedagogical. Limited student proficiency is the most important factor, but it interacts with classroom efficiency, cultural comfort, and teacher limitations. Students expect Nepali support, and teachers find it necessary for clarity. This reveals that Nepali persistence is not a matter of negligence but a practical response to classroom realities.

The Role of Nepali (L1) in English Classrooms

In English classrooms of Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur, Nepal, the students' first language (L1) plays an important role. Teachers, students, and parents notice that Nepali can both help and hinder English learning. On one hand, it acts as a bridge, helping students understand difficult concepts and complete tasks. On the other hand, excessive use may reduce English practice and limit opportunities to think in English. This dual role shows that Nepali can be a supportive tool or a barrier, depending on how it is used. Understanding this balance is essential for effective teaching in bilingual classrooms. The study highlights both facilitative and obstructive roles of Nepali in English teaching and learning.

Facilitative role

Teachers, students, and parents all recognized that Nepali plays a supportive role. Teachers described it as a "bridge" that helps weaker students. Observations confirmed that students used Nepali translations to clarify meanings, which helped them complete tasks. For example, in a reading activity, a student at Shadananda translated "climate change" into Nepali, after which the group quickly finished their answers. Parents said Nepali prevents children from feeling discouraged and gives them a step-by-step understanding.

Obstructive role

At the same time, participants acknowledged that overuse of Nepali reduces English

practice. Teacher 1 warned that students may become dependent on it. Parents also worried that "students always expect translation" and therefore "never try to think in English." Observations showed that when students were allowed to answer in Nepali without reformulation, their English exposure remained minimal.

The role of Nepali is clearly dual. It supports comprehension and lowers anxiety, but also limits opportunities for English output. This duality reflects findings in bilingual education research, where the first language (L1) can be a scaffold or a barrier, depending on its frequency and purpose. The challenge for teachers is not whether to use Nepali, but how much and in what ways.

Challenges of English Language Teaching

English language teaching in Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur, is shaped by multiple challenges. The implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) is affected by teacher, student, and institutional factors. Teachers often struggle with fluency, classroom management, and limited access to resources and training. Students face difficulties such as restricted vocabulary, low confidence, and weak listening comprehension, which hinder active participation. At the institutional level, schools lack an English-speaking environment, as most communication, both inside and outside the classroom, occurs in Nepali. Parents also observe that children rarely practice English at home or in the community. These issues highlight that the challenges of EMI extend beyond the classroom and are closely connected to broader social and institutional conditions.

Teacher-related challenges: Teachers reported difficulty sustaining EMI due to their own fluency limitations and the need for classroom discipline. Sometimes students' unexpected questions were difficult to answer in English. The lack of teaching resources and professional development also made EMI more difficult. Parents echoed this concern, saying teachers themselves often mix too much Nepali. A parent from School 2 in a focus group discussion noted, "Sometimes even teachers mix too much Nepali because they find it easier."

Student-related challenges: Observation and discussion revealed five major challenges:

(i)   Limited vocabulary and expressions.

(ii)   Low confidence and anxiety, with students afraid of making mistakes.

(iii)   Peer pressure, as some laughed at mistakes, discouraged attempts.

(iv)   Weak listening comprehension, requiring Nepali repetition of instructions.

(v)   Inconsistent exposure, since English was never used outside classrooms.

Parents agreed, noting that their children hesitate to speak in English even at home, and struggle with vocabulary.

Classroom and institutional challenges

Both teachers mentioned that the school lacked an English-speaking environment. Other subjects were taught in Nepali, and even notices were written in Nepali. One parent from School 2 explained in a focus group discussion, "English is only in class. Outside, in the playground, at home, in the village, everywhere is Nepali." Parents added that the community and home environment provided no English input, making EMI seem unnecessary. Large class sizes, mixed ability levels, and a lack of digital or reading resources further limited EMI.

The challenges are multifaceted. Teacher, student, classroom, and community factors all interact to make EMI difficult. The lack of an English environment is the most serious challenge, because without reinforcement outside the classroom, students do not see English as functionally necessary.

Strategies for Promoting English Medium Interaction

Promoting English-medium interaction in secondary-level classrooms requires careful planning and practical strategies. This study explores different ways to enhance English use in Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur, focusing on teachers, students, and schools. Teachers can encourage participation through group work, discussions, role plays, and consistent use of simple English. Students respond positively to interactive activities such as storytelling, games, debates, and presentations, which also help build confidence. Schools and parents play an important role by providing resources, creating an English-friendly environment, and supporting practice at home. The findings suggest that completely eliminating Nepali is neither practical nor desirable. Instead, a balanced approach that strategically uses Nepali while gradually increasing English can create effective learning spaces that promote meaningful English interaction.

Teacher-oriented strategies

Both teachers recommended increasing group work, peer discussion, and role plays in English. They also suggested using simple English consistently, encouraging

questions in English, and gradually increasing EMI while reducing the use of Nepali. Parents highlighted the need for teachers to be more consistent and confident in EMI, suggesting additional professional training.

Student-oriented strategies

Observation showed that students became more participative when tasks involved storytelling, games, or role plays. Teachers suggested confidence-building activities such as debates and presentations. Pairing stronger and weaker students could also help. Parents believed that students should be encouraged to practice English at home, even with simple phrases.

Institutional and Classroom Strategies

Both teachers and parents recommended extracurricular activities such as debates, speeches, and English clubs. They also stressed the need for more resources: English books, audiovisual materials, and digital tools. Parents emphasized the role of schools in creating an English-friendly environment. Policy monitoring, without being punitive, was also suggested to ensure consistency.

Balancing Nepali and English

The study makes it clear that eliminating Nepali is neither realistic nor desirable. Instead, a balanced approach is needed, where Nepali is used strategically as scaffolding, but English use is gradually expanded. This strategy aligns with the concept of "translanguaging spaces," where languages complement each other, yet with conscious efforts to privilege English in instructional tasks.

Based on the discussion of different themes above, this study shows that English-medium instruction in Shadananda Municipality is implemented in a mixed mode, with Nepali continuing to play a central role despite the EMI policy. Teachers, students, and parents all recognize the necessity of Nepali for comprehension, but they also acknowledge its risk of limiting English development if overused.

The causes of Nepali use are clear: low student proficiency, teacher limitations, cultural comfort, and the need for efficiency. The role of Nepali is dual, supportive as a bridge, yet obstructive when relied upon excessively. The challenges are wide-ranging, involving teachers, students, classrooms, institutions, and the wider sociolinguistic environment.

However, the study also identifies many strategies that can strengthen EMI. These

include professional training for teachers, confidence-building activities for students, more resources, and the creation of English-friendly environments. Importantly, the study calls for a context-sensitive EMI approach that balances Nepali support with increasing English exposure.

English-medium instruction in Shadananda Municipality is not a simple replacement of Nepali with English. It is a bilingual practice shaped by local realities. The way forward is to accept the supportive role of Nepali while working strategically to increase English interaction, ensuring that students gain both comprehension and competence in a gradual, sustainable manner.

Conclusion

This study investigated the uses of Nepali in secondary-level English classrooms of Shadananda Municipality, Bhojpur. It explored the current state of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Nepali Medium Instruction (NMI), the reasons for the use of Nepali, the role of Nepali in English learning, the challenges faced by teachers and students, and strategies to promote English-medium interaction. The research employed a qualitative approach, collecting data from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and focus group discussions with parents. The findings offer valuable insights into bilingual education in a rural and multilingual context.

The study shows that English-medium instruction in Shadananda Municipality is implemented in a mixed manner. While English is officially promoted as the medium of instruction in English subject classrooms, Nepali continues to play a central role. Teachers start lessons in English, but frequently switch to Nepali to explain grammar, vocabulary, or instructions. Students also shift to Nepali when they are unsure or find it easier to communicate in their first language. Parents confirmed that children use Nepali to explain lessons at home. This mixed use of languages highlights a gap between policy and practice. EMI is more of a formal requirement than a consistently applied reality in the classroom. Nepali serves as a supportive bridge but also limits students' opportunities to interact in English.

The research identified several reasons for the continued use of Nepali in English classrooms. Low proficiency in English was the most common reason. Students often struggle to understand English instructions, construct sentences, or express ideas. Fear of making mistakes also pushes them toward Nepali. Teachers reported that explaining concepts in Nepali saves time and prevents confusion. Classroom observations confirmed this, showing that students habitually rely on Nepali during

group discussions and activities. Parents added that limited exposure to English outside the classroom reinforces the use of Nepali. These findings suggest that the causes of Nepali use are both pedagogical and contextual. Teachers and students use Nepali not out of neglect, but as a practical solution to the challenges of multilingual classrooms.

The study highlighted the dual role of Nepali in English classrooms. On the one hand, it facilitates learning. Nepali helps students understand difficult concepts, complete tasks, and reduce anxiety. For weaker learners, it provides a necessary scaffold. On the other hand, excessive use of Nepali can obstruct English learning. Over-reliance on the first language limits students' exposure to English and reduces opportunities for active practice. Observations showed that when students answer in Nepali without attempting English reformulation, they miss chances to think and communicate in English. This duality emphasizes the need for teachers to use Nepali strategically, balancing support with opportunities for English output.

The challenges of English medium instruction in Shadananda Municipality are multifaceted. Teacher-related challenges include limited fluency, difficulties managing classroom interactions, and the lack of professional development. Teachers sometimes find it difficult to answer students' questions in English or maintain consistent EMI due to class size and mixed proficiency levels. Student-related challenges include limited vocabulary, low confidence, peer pressure, weak listening comprehension, and inconsistent exposure to English. Observation and focus group discussions revealed that students rarely use English outside the classroom, further reducing their confidence and fluency. Classroom and institutional challenges include an English-unfriendly environment, insufficient teaching resources, and the dominance of Nepali in the wider community. Large class sizes and limited access to digital or reading materials make full implementation of EMI challenging. Collectively, these factors indicate that promoting English interaction requires interventions at multiple levels, not just within classroom instruction.

The research also identified practical strategies for promoting English-medium interaction. Teacher-oriented strategies include group work, peer discussions, role-plays, and consistent use of simple English. Teachers should gradually increase English usage while strategically reducing Nepali usage. Student-oriented strategies include confidence-building activities such as debates, presentations, storytelling, and games that encourage students to speak English without fear. Institutional strategies include creating an English-friendly environment, providing teaching resources such as books, audiovisual tools, and digital aids, and supporting

extracurricular activities, such as English clubs and competitions. Parents play an important role by encouraging English practice at home and supporting school initiatives. The study emphasizes that eliminating Nepali completely is neither realistic nor desirable. Instead, Nepali should be used as a scaffold while gradually expanding the use of English.

The findings suggest that a context-sensitive approach to EMI is essential in Shadananda Municipality. Teachers should recognize the supportive role of Nepali and use it judiciously, while consistently creating opportunities for English communication. Structured activities, interactive learning, and gradual immersion in English can enhance learners' motivation, confidence, and communicative competence. Encouraging students to think and speak in English, even in small steps, can strengthen language acquisition over time. Schools and communities should also contribute by reinforcing the functional value of English and creating environments where students see its practical relevance.

This study contributes to the understanding of bilingual education in rural, multilingual contexts. It demonstrates that EMI's success depends on a careful balance between L1 support and exposure to the target language. Nepali is a valuable tool when used strategically, but can become a barrier if overused. Teacher preparedness, student engagement, classroom organization, and institutional support are all crucial in determining the effectiveness of EMI. The strategies identified in this research provide actionable guidance for teachers, schools, and policymakers seeking to promote the use of English while respecting students' linguistic realities.

In conclusion, English-medium instruction in Shadananda Municipality is implemented as a mixed practice, with Nepali continuing to dominate certain classroom interactions. Nepali serves as both a bridge and a potential barrier in English learning. The challenges of EMI are interconnected, involving students, teachers, classrooms, and the broader sociolinguistic environment. Strategies to promote English-medium interaction must therefore address multiple dimensions by combining teacher training, student-oriented activities, and institutional support. A balanced approach, in which Nepali is used to scaffold understanding while English is gradually expanded, can enhance communicative competence, increase confidence, and foster meaningful engagement with English. By adopting such context-sensitive strategies, secondary-level students in Shadananda Municipality can develop stronger English skills while effectively navigating their bilingual reality.

Overall, the study highlights the need for patience, consistency, and careful planning in implementing EMI. It emphasizes that bilingual education is not about replacing Nepali with English, but about creating an environment where both languages support learning and communication. This research provides insights for similar rural multilingual settings, demonstrating that strategic use of L1 and practical interventions can promote English interaction and gradually build students' language proficiency.

Implications

At the policy level, the study shows a gap between official promotion of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and actual classroom practice. Policies should be more flexible and context-sensitive. Instead of imposing strict EMI policies, policies should recognize Nepali as a supportive bridge. Clear guidelines on when and how Nepali can be used strategically in classrooms can help teachers balance both languages. Policy should also focus on teacher training, resource development, and monitoring that encourages rather than punishes.

At the practice level, teachers need to apply strategies that gradually increase English use while using Nepali only when necessary for clarity. Group work, role-plays, debates, and storytelling in English can foster more interaction. Teachers should consistently use simple English to build confidence. Schools should provide English-friendly environments through extracurricular activities, English clubs, and resources such as books and digital tools. Parents also have a role. They can encourage children to use English at home in small ways, even through simple phrases.

At the research level, this study highlights the need for more in-depth work in rural multilingual areas. The findings are limited to two schools, so larger studies across different districts are necessary. Future research could explore long-term effects of balanced bilingual strategies, compare rural and urban EMI practices, and examine how teacher training impacts classroom language use. Research should also delve more deeply into students' voices to understand their motivations and challenges.

In sum, the study shows that effective EMI requires supportive policy, practical classroom strategies, and continued research. A balanced approach, in which Nepali scaffolds learning while English interaction gradually expands, is essential for sustainable language development.

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