

‘FOR OUR CHO:TLUNG’: DECOLONIZING LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND
(RE)IMAGINING MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN
NEPAL

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents.

*I lost both mom and dad within a year (2013-2014) when I was pursuing my doctorcal degree in
Hawai'i.*

Nogen, mom and dad for teaching me lessons about life, language, and learning.

I will try my best to protect the cho:tlung you have left for us.

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Abstract

Recent studies on ‘the multilingual turn’ (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014) reveal both the theoretical and pedagogical inadequacy of monolingual ideologies and instructional practices in language education. Yet, dominant language policies and pedagogical practices, including multilingual ones, are deeply influenced by monolingual habitus and biases (Benson, 2013; Gogolin, 1997; May, 2014) and monoglossic ideologies (García & Kleyn, 2016) which both solidify ‘inequalities of multilingualism’ (Tupas, 2015) and delegitimize the use of minoritized languages and language practices in education. By putting ‘language ideology’ (Kroskrity, 2009; Makihara & Schieffelin, 2007; Pennycook, 2013; Woolard, 1998) at the center, this engaged ethnographic study analyzes decolonizing efforts (Maldonado-Torres, 2010; Quijano, 2007; Smith, 2012) with a group of indigenous people, Limbu, towards denaturalizing and transforming hegemonic language ideologies in Nepal’s language education policies and practices. More specifically, this study emphasizes ideological analyses with indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth towards building critical ideological awareness, advocacy, and activism in reimagining equitable multilingual policies and pedagogical practices in Nepal. Building on engaged language policy (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, forthcoming; Shohamy, 2015), this study adopts a multisited and multimethod approach (McCarty, 2011) to engage Limbu bi/multilingual villagers, teachers, and youth in ethnographically grounded dialogue on language ideological issues. Informed by ‘indigenous critical praxis’ and ‘indigenous epistemology’ (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002, 2013), dialogic engagement (Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 1970) with the participants is grounded on collaborative ethnography, counter-narratives, critical language awareness workshops, and focus-group discussions.

This study reveals that ethnographically grounded dialogue builds the participants' critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) of multiple language ideologies and further engages them in reclaiming their identities as a knower and transformative agent for creating multilingual schoolspace. In particular, dialogic engagement contributes to 'ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981; Ball & Freedman, 2004) which represents the participants' critical awareness about the hegemony of dominant nation-state and neoliberal ideologies and identities as social critics, advocates, and activists. This process further involves participants' 'ideological clarification' (Fishman, 2001; Kroskrity, 2009) about the coloniality of the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies in both dominant and resistance language policy discourses.

This study shows that dialogic engagement is necessary to challenge the invention of language as a fixed, bounded, and monoglossic entity and to empower language minoritized people towards taking an activist position in transforming monolingual ideologies and practices. While the indigenous villagers denaturalize the monolingual nation-state and hierarchical neoliberal ideologies, the teachers construct translanguaging ideologies and pedagogies (García & Li, 2014) towards supporting 'epistemic access' (Heugh, 2015; Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015) of bi/multilingual indigenous children. Similarly, the indigenous youth reclaim their multilingual identities and position themselves as counterpublics through dialogic engagement. This study further theorizes 'engaged language policy' (Davis, 2014; Shohamy, 2015) and contributes to knowledge in 'the multilingual turn' in language education by integrating decolonizing efforts towards transforming monolingual ideologies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Entry into the Dissertation

As usual, I visit my neighbor Asma's (pseudonym) house. I address her as *aanchume*¹ (auntie), following our kinship system. She has three sons: two of them go to a local public school while the youngest one is just two years old. She does not have any formal education; she never attended school. She is a Nepali-Limbu bilingual speaker. She dominantly speaks Limbu, her primary language of communication, at home and in the community. But when she has to speak with other ethnic groups, she uses Nepali. As she explains "I can't speak **shudda**² Parbate [pure Nepali]." She tells me that her sons often *me-et* (laugh) about her Limbu-accented Nepali. After having an informal *taa:jeng* (conversation) with her about the condition of farming and other household chores, I wanted to discuss with her the issues concerning language practices and policies at home and school. I wanted to know about her language ideologies and awareness of sociopolitical issues surrounding language use. However, she jokingly refuses to be interviewed and tells me that she does not know anything about language policies. In a friendly way, she laughs and says "*aangaa ga the:aang melesungin-ro*. "**Kākā saṅga kurā gara hai**" (I don't know anything. Talk to your uncle). Although I tell her that she has a lot of knowledge and that I am going to ask questions about what she already knows, she is hesitant to talk about language issues. She keeps saying "*aangaa the:aang melesungin*" (I don't know anything). Although we have a long conversation on other topics, we cannot talk about language ideological issues.

After one week, there is a *tangsing* in the village. A Limbu word, *tangsing* literally refers to the act of meeting together or to collaborate. As a "social get-together held for the happiness

¹ Italicized words are in Limbu. I have used Roman script for Limbu words.

² Bolded words are in Nepali. I have used Nepali transliteration symbols of R. L. Turner (1980) for Nepali words.

and prosperity of all men [sic], families and societies” (Kainla, 1996, p. 34), *tangsing* is a major type of Mundhum, a collection of Limbu indigenous people’s folk narratives which guide their ways of being, doing, and knowing. Narrated dialogically, Mundhum is dynamic, oral, and multiple, and represents the collective consciousness of the Limbu people. As part of Mundhum, the *tangsing* in the village was organized for a night to remove curses and to achieve collective *cho:tlung* (sense of completeness, pride, and success/accomplishment) among the whole community. Performed traditionally by Shamans, a *tangsing* is dialogically narrated and grounded on the belief that *sikkum* or *sikkuma niwaa* (knowledge) is collectively constructed through a dialectic relationship between *ni:saam* (perception/knowledge) and *itsaam* (reflection/reasoning) (Subba, n.d.). *Tangsing* holds the assumption that knowledge is holistic and dialogic which connects the past (history), present, and the future.

All the villagers, including Asma, attend the village *tangsing*. Youth, elders, women, and men all participate throughout the night. As an intergenerational dialogic space, the villagers share with each other memories of their ancestors and lived experiences of struggles, and discuss a future course of actions for collective *cho:tlung* in the *tangsing*. For the Limbu people, it serves as a collective space in which young people learn about language, culture, history, and place from *tumyaangs* (elders) who are known as the major source of knowledge in the Limbu community. Led by Shamans as collective performance, a *tangsing* is indeed a space for remembering and healing, rather than amnesia, pain, and dejection. In the village *tangsing*, parents, including Asma, are telling their children to listen to the narratives performed in it. During its intervals and the end, I and villagers particularly discuss the importance of indigenous practices like the *tangsing* and how such practices are being erased in the current modern sociopolitical, cultural, and educational discourses. Surprisingly, unlike her hesitation to

participate in the previous individual interview sessions, Asma becomes very active in wanting to share her opinions concerning language and cultural issues. Building on her own lived experiences, she explains that although both Limbu and Nepali are used indiscriminately in the community, there is a perceived assumption that speaking Limbu is considered the symbol of being ‘**anapaḍh**’ (illiterate) and ‘*yaangkesaabaa*’ (poor/powerless people). She brings her own story into a discussion and reveals that she never felt any kind of linguistic insecurity during her childhood as everyone spoke Limbu in her community. But since her children started going to school, she began to feel that she does not feel comfortable to speak Limbu. She shares that her children keep telling her to not speak Limbu, but instead standard Nepali. She tells me that “*yaakthung paan **chāi sāno. Parbate chāi ṭhulo** paan mela aaintaandik*” (these days, people say that Limbu is a small language and Nepali is a big language). While participating in dialogue, she contends that “*aani-e yangkesaabaa aabokhe. Aani paanin **kasaile sundaina***” (we are powerless. Nobody listens to our language).

What strikes me most is the way Asma relates the loss of indigenous language, culture, and values with the loss of *cho:tlung*; Asma says “*aani paan maasing-lo pe. Aani **riti thiti** masing-lo pe. Aani cho:tlung keng-lo pe. Aalla cho:tlung pongbong*” (our language is disappearing. Our cultures are disappearing. Our *cho:tlung* is falling off. We should now regain it). For the Limbu indigenous people, *cho:tlung* is at the center of their collective identity and sense of self-esteem. It includes the highest degree of learning, awareness, and sense of pride and achievement. For the Limbu people, the loss of *cho:tlung* occurs when the sense of morality, collaboration, and commitment for wellbeing of the entire community degrades. As they keep sharing their ideas, Asma and other villagers share their concerns about the increasing gap between school and community in terms of language use. The villagers further describe that the

recent establishment of private ‘boarding’ schools, TVs, NGOs/INGOs, and mobile phones have contributed to the increased dominance of English as the language of ‘*yarik saaplaa kinipaahaa*’ (highly educated people), ‘*kelebaa mammi*’ (knowledgeable people), and ‘**bikās**’ (development) is unquestionably embraced by the public.

Asma’s case reveals three critical issues with regard to language ideologies in the current language policy discourses and practices in Nepal. First, the existing educational policies and practices are not able to strengthen community *cho:tlung*, but rather are creating language hierarchies in which local indigenous languages are indexed as the language of the poor and powerless people. Second, Asma’s voice represents a complex and ambivalent ideological position and the struggles of multilingual indigenous people in a context where monolingualism has been a norm in education and public spheres. Asma’s reflection on the existing local sociolinguistic reality has shown how English and Nepali receive greater indexical value than indigenous languages, perceived as ‘**sāno bhāṣā**’ (small language). Third, Asma’s hesitation to be interviewed individually and her active dialogic engagement during the village *tangsing* provides critical insights into understanding alternative ways of learning, knowing, and being with Limbu indigenous people. Asma’s dialogic engagement embraces the underlying principle of *tangsing*, collectivism and a sense of belonging and community. Most importantly, her voice not only reveals linguistic inequalities and an unequal indexicality of languages in current language policies and practices, but also indicates the need for ‘regaining *cho:tlung*’. In this dissertation, I discuss how indigenous villagers, youth, and teachers relate multilingual policy with their own *cho:tlung*.

Background of the Study

This dissertation is an engaged ethnographic study of language policy in the multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural context of Nepal. More specifically, this dissertation analyzes how engaged language policy (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, forthcoming) contributes to decolonizing language ideologies and reimagining an equitable multilingual education policy in Nepal. Although critical language policy scholars have been paying increasing attention to the centrality of language ideology in language policy (e.g., Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2015; McGroarty, 2013; Pennycook, 2013; Piller, 2015; Tollefson, 2013; Wright, 2016), efforts towards engaging language policy actors (and in particular marginalized communities), towards decolonizing hegemonic language ideologies still remains one of the least explored research agendas globally. Recent studies have revealed that despite the cognitive, social, and educational benefits of ‘the multilingual turn’ (May, 2014), monolingual ideologies still govern language policies and pedagogies, including multilingual ones (e.g., Benson, 2013; Tupas, 2015). Piller (2016) has discussed how monolingual ideologies contribute to social injustice and the self-marginalization of multilingual speakers (see also Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, Mohanty, & Panda, 2009), and, as described in the following section, Nepal is no exception in this regard.

Despite being a multilingual and multiethnic country³, Nepal’s dominant language policies and practices in education and beyond continue to reproduce, both implicitly and explicitly, monolingual ideologies (Phyak, 2011). Although the discourses of language rights and mother tongue education have gained currency in the post-1990 era, indigenous minoritized languages are still marginalized and multilingual practices are erased from public policies and discourses (Turin, 2004). In an attempt to address the local indigenous people’s voices and the

³ The Census Report (2011) has identified 123 languages spoken by 126 different ethnic groups.

goals of global education campaigns⁴, the state developed a ‘mother-tongue-based multilingual education’ (MTB-MLE) policy in 2009⁵ (Ministry of Education, 2010). Previous studies have shown that the policy has significantly addressed language-minoritized children’s drop-out rate, non-participation in classroom activities, and lack of motivation in learning (Hough, Thapa-Magar, & Yonjan-Tamang, 2009; Rai, Rai, Phyak, & Rai., 2011; Phyak, 2012). Unfortunately, this well-intended policy has not received much attention in dominant language policy and educational reform discourses (Phyak, 2013). More strikingly, public schools⁶ throughout the country, including the MTB-MLE experimental schools⁷, are introducing English-as-a-medium-of-instruction (EMI) policy from the first grade (e.g., Baral, 2015; Seel, Yadava, & Kadel, 2015). Furthermore, public schools are replacing teaching the ‘mother tongue’ as a subject with additional English courses, on top of mandated ‘compulsory English’ courses from the first grade (see Seel et al., 2015).

Studies have discussed various technical and apolitical reasons, such as the unavailability of ‘mother-tongue’ teachers, lack of textbooks, and standardized orthography and grammar, behind the current non-implementation of multilingual education policies (Rai et al., 2012). Dominant discourses further blame the language minoritized communities themselves to be responsible for the non-implementation of ‘mother tongues’ in schools. In other words, language minoritized communities are discursively presented as ‘unaware’ subjects (Awasthi, 2015) who unquestionably accept the hegemony of dominant languages and thus demand an EMI policy. However, what is missing from the existing literature is, first, the critical analysis of

⁴ The government of Nepal has signed a number of global educational and other campaigns, such as Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals, and Sustainable Development Goals.

⁵ According to the policy, indigenous languages can be used as the mother tongue up to Grade 3.

⁶ Private schools use English as a de facto medium of instruction.

⁷ MTB-MLE was experimented for two years in seven different schools with eight languages in six districts. One experimental school from Jhapa has replaced MLE with EMI and other schools continue to feel pressure to do so (Seel, Yadava, & Kadel, 2015).

language ideologies contributing to the derecognition and erasure of indigenous minoritized people's multilingual identities, voices, ideologies, and epistemologies from the existing language policies and practices. Second, the ways in which indigenous peoples can be engaged at the grassroots level in exploring, analyzing, resisting, and transforming dominant language ideologies that affect their lived experiences, sociopolitical positionalities, and participation in public spheres including education still remain a blind spot in Nepal's language policy research.

Using engaged language policy (ELP) (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2015) as a conceptual framework, this dissertation analyzes how one of the indigenous groups, Limbu, are engaged in decolonizing language ideologies that shape and are shaped by current language policy discourses and practices. More specifically, I discuss how Limbu indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth are engaged in decolonizing hegemonic language ideologies. Decolonization, as Smith (1999) defines, is a transformative process which involves "a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices" (p. 20). As a transformative theory of knowing and learning, decolonization, and "the whole discourse around it ...[is] an invitation to engage in dialogue" which "aspires to break with monologic modernity" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 261). Engaging in decolonizing language ideologies indeed involves reimagining language policy from a different epistemic, methodological, and theoretical stance, beyond Western/Eurocentric nation-state and neoliberal ideologies. Reimagining is not about building a world of fantasy which is never achievable, rather it is an ideologically committed action towards transforming policies to address the needs of multilingual and multicultural people.

In this dissertation, building on Smith (1999) and Maldonado-Torres (2007), I take decolonization as a process of becoming critically aware of marginalizing language ideologies

and developing alternative ideologies and practices that transform language hierarchies, essentialized boundaries, and social injustices built around nation-state and neoliberal ideologies. This process involves (a) an explicit analysis of underlying language ideologies and their linkage with macro sociopolitical ideologies; (b) building awareness of strategies—both discursive and structural—through which dominant language ideologies are constructed and reproduced; and, (c) reimagining alternative ideologies to transform the status quo. More specifically, decolonization involves critical scrutiny of a colonial mentality—the state of consciousness which accepts dominance of Eurocentric language ideologies, discourses, and epistemologies as a natural social condition—which restricts human consciousness to think of language as a unitary, fixed, monoglossic, and standardized entity. This dissertation examines how an engaged language policy (ELP) contributes to empowering Limbu indigenous teachers, youth, and villagers to uncover colonial ideologies of language, literacy, and epistemologies and building alternative policies which legitimize their fluid multilingual practices.

ELP takes an interdisciplinary approach (Davis & Phyak, 2015). This dissertation draws on the theories from language ideologies (Blommaert, 2014; Bourdieu, 1991; Irvine & Gal, 2000; Kroskrity, 2009; Piller, 2015), critical theories (e.g., Foucault, 1977; Gramsci, 1971; Habermas, 1962, 1991), critical and ethnographic language policy (Canagarajah, 2006; Johnson, 2013; McCarty, 2011; Tollefson, 2013), multilingual education (Benson, 2013; Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Conteh & Meier, 2014; García & Li, 2014; Pennycook, 2013; Tupas, 2015); indigenous languages and multilingualism (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013; Wayman, McCarty, & Nicholas, 2013), and transformative educational theories (Fine, 2006; Freire, 1970) towards portraying and analyzing the engaged language policy efforts with Limbu teachers, youth, and villagers from eastern Nepal. This interdisciplinary approach takes language policy as a locally

situated ideological space (McCarty, Collins, & Hopson, 2011) which goes beyond ‘policy-as-text’ and embraces ‘discourses’ and their ‘effects’ (Ball, 1994, 2006) on people’s consciousness about language, language learning, use, and policy. More specifically, this dissertation takes language policy as ‘a site of ideological struggle’ (Kroskrity, 2009) that engages teachers, youth, and villagers in exploring, analyzing, and transforming language ideologies that shape public discourses and perceptions about language use, learning, and policy in the multilingual context of Nepal.

As seen in Asma’s case, this dissertation embraces the underlying principle of *tangsing*, coming together, to engage participants towards decolonizing the dominant language ideologies and creating an equitable space for the use of indigenous language in schools and other public spheres. This process involves a collective and dialogic process of achieving *cho:tlung* through *posaam* (building awareness) and *itsaam/itchchaam* (critical consciousness/critical reflection). The focus of this dissertation is particularly on two colonizing ideologies—the nation-state and neoliberalism—that, as Asma mentioned above, have been a major logic for the dominance of Nepali and English as cultural, economic, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) in the Nepali dominant public sphere. More specifically, I look at participants’ ‘critical awareness’ (Freire, 1970) of the historical and discursive construction and reproduction of these ideologies in Nepal’s language policies and their impact on the ways in which literacy and pedagogical practices are enacted for indigenous multilingual learners.

At the center of this engaged language policy remains collaborative ‘dialogue’ (Bakhtin, 1984; Freire, 1970) with the participants. As both a critical theory and method of inquiry, dialogue engages participants in exploring and transforming hegemonic language ideologies by raising their critical ideological consciousness with regard to how language policies and practices

relate to their own identities, ideologies, and epistemologies. Dialogic engagement involves participants in ‘praxis’ (Freire, 1970) and supports their ‘ideological becoming’ (Bakhtin, 1981) by helping to gain ‘ideological clarification’ (Fishman, 2001; Kroskrity, 2009) with regard to their own identities and ideologies in relation to dominant language policies and practices. As Bakhtin (1981) argues, dialogue involves engagement with ideological tensions between both centripetal and centrifugal forces in language policies. While centripetal forces (also known as authoritative discourses) impose unitary, monolithic, and monolingual ideologies, centrifugal forces (also known as internally persuasive discourses) embrace diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity (Bakhtin, 1981). This dissertation engages Limbu youth, villagers, and teachers in analyzing the ideological tension between monolingual ideologies constructed in nation-state and neoliberal discourses and multilingual practices which embrace their identities, voices, and epistemologies. In this dissertation, I discuss how dialogic engagement with these tensions builds participants’ ‘critical consciousness’ (Freire, 1970) and ‘ideological becoming’ (Bakhtin, 1981) which embrace counter-consciousness or alternative ideologies that support equitable multilingualism and reject the hierarchical nature of multilingualism in language policy.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation contributes to expand on the recent conceptualization of engaged language policy (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2015; Davis & Phyak, forthcoming) by integrating the idea of ‘decolonizing language ideologies’ as a way of engaging indigenous multilingual people in critical dialogue towards transforming dominant language ideologies in dominant language policy discourses and practices. This dissertation promises to contribute to the field of language policy and multilingual education both at the theoretical and methodological levels. At the theoretical level, ELP fills the existing shortfall of language policy

literature that not only analyzes transformative, agentive, and activist language policy efforts, but also focuses on the centrality of decolonizing language ideologies by raising critical awareness of subaltern publics such as indigenous peoples (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming). ELP goes beyond ‘policy-as-text’ and engages language policy actors in analyzing ideologies constructed and reproduced in policy ‘discourses’ and their ‘effects’ (Ball, 2006) in the lives, identities, and ideologies of multilingual people (Davis & Phyak, 2015). While focusing on decolonization, ELP engages (emergent) multilingual people in challenging the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies which continue to impose the ideology of language as a fixed and unitary object and reimagining language policies which address their fluid and multilingual practices (Lin, 2013).

This (re)imagining constitutes the recognition of multilingual speakers’ right to language policy that is fluid, flexible, and in the borderlands (García, Skutnabb-Kangas, & Torre-Guzmán, 2006). An ELP perspective goes beyond language rights discourses and focuses on the multilingual people’s ‘right to make language policy’ (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming) by respecting their identity as knowers and agents for change. While acknowledging the contribution of historical-structural and ethnographic approaches (e.g., Johnson, 2013; McCarty, 2011; Tollefson, 2013), an ELP approach focuses on how language policy actors become aware of hegemonic language ideologies and develop new consciousness which includes alternative ways of seeing, knowing, and doing language policy from a multilingual perspective.

At the methodological level, this dissertation contributes to expanding the notion of ‘engaged ethnography’ (Clair, 2012; Clarke, 2010; Davis & Phyak, 2015; Low & Merry, 2010) by incorporating ‘dialogue’ (Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 1970) as a method to engage the subaltern publics, here indigenous people, in exploring and analyzing language ideologies shaping the current language policies in Nepal. Although dialogue has been used in language and literacy

teaching (Van der Linden & Renshaw, 2004; Wells, 1999), critical pedagogy (e.g., Crookes, 2012; Freire, 1992; Giroux, 2000; Pennycook, 2007), and transformative education (Fine, 2006; hooks, 1994), it has not yet received extensive attention by language policy scholars. Dialogue, as Freire (1970) argues, is not “simply the description of an interactive exchange between people, but a normative definition of how human relationships should be formed—namely, on the basis of equality, respect and a commitment to the authentic interests of participants” (Renshaw, 2004, p. 1). Dialogue provides participants with a space where they have opportunities to understand and critique the conditions of their own oppression. In dialogue, the subalterns interrogate how they are alienated from their own linguistic and cultural practices and critically analyze how they are forced to accept the language, culture, and ideology of the dominant ruling groups of society. Most importantly, as Freire and Macedo (2000) argue, dialogue enables them to engage in ideological analyses that empowers them and contributes to combating increasing linguistic inequalities in the neoliberal regime. This dissertation does not just discuss language ideologies that the participants reproduce, as in traditional ethnography, but focuses on raising their ideological awareness. In this sense, this dissertation argues that critical ideological awareness through dialogic inquiry is a necessary condition and an ongoing process of empowering the subalterns towards language policy transformation.

This dissertation also provides significant insights into (re)imagining multilingual education in Nepal by keeping ideological awareness at the center of language policy transformation. While the existing body of knowledge on Nepal’s multilingual education policy mostly focuses on liberal democratic discourses of language rights, it largely ignores how indigenous people’s fluid and dynamic language practices are a resource. In other words, the existing discourses of multilingual education policy, discursively labelled as ‘mother-tongue

education' in resistance discourses, is not sufficient to address 'simultaneity' and 'fluidity' in indigenous people's language practices (see Pradhan, 2016), nor do they challenge the nation-state and neoliberal language ideologies which create an 'either-or' choice (McCarty, 2006) for multilingual learners by imposing 'monolingualism as a norm' in education. In other words, the existing policies and practices of multilingual education still reproduce monolingual ideologies, despite the indigenous people showing (as Asma does) complex, fluid, and hybrid language practices.

As this dissertation engages indigenous youth, teachers, and villagers in ideological analysis and praxis, it can provide critical insights into understanding how the people, who are considered as 'unaware' subjects, can contribute towards language policy transformation while transforming their own language ideologies. The voices, agencies, alternative ideologies, and knowledges discussed in this dissertation support efforts towards (re)imagining equitable multilingual education policies and practices in Nepal from the bottom-up. In addition, this study is expected to help indigenous communities create a greater space for their language practices, ideologies, and epistemologies in education and other public spheres. Furthermore, critical consciousness-raising efforts further strive to offer the Ministry of Education, policy makers, educators, and indigenous communities in Nepal ideas to understand on-the-ground ideological complexities and indigenous people's enduring struggles in reclaiming their right to be recognized as a knower, rather than a mere consumer of dominant policies and practices.

In sum, this dissertation, as postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak (1988) argues, claims that language policy transformation is not possible unless the subalterns, the colonial subjects, or Others, become a *speaking subject* to challenge dominant language ideologies, discourses, and narratives of language policies. Uncritical acceptance of dominant language ideologies,

epistemologies, and policies reproduce the status quo and obscure alternative ideologies and epistemic positions with equitable and transformative potentials. I strongly believe that engaging the subaltern publics such as indigenous youth, villagers, and teachers in critical dialogue offers new ways to (re)imagine an equitable and inclusive language policy. Most importantly, this dissertation highlights that language policy creation and implementation processes, including teacher education program, must focus on engaging teachers, youth, and communities in explicit analysis of language ideologies.

Motivation for the Study

The motivation for this dissertation is embedded in my own personal, sociocultural, linguistic, and academic trajectories. My own lived linguistic, cultural, and educational experiences are the most important factors shaping my beliefs, perspectives, and positions about language, multilingualism, language policies, and pedagogies in education. My past memories and present lived experiences of (a) learning languages, both formally and informally; (b) membership in a multilingual and multiethnic community; (c) both hardships and privileges; and (d) interactions with the people from diverse language and cultural groups all have contributed to the making of who I am and what I believe about language education policy. My family members, friends, neighborhood, schooling, and broader sociopolitical context together create a complex sociopolitical landscape from which my thoughts and ideas about the importance of linguistic diversity in education emerge. Thus, the perspectives in this dissertation are not linear and simple, nor do they represent the end results. Rather they embrace tensions, multiplicity, fluidity, and desire for transformation.

I was born and brought up in a Limbu indigenous family in a rural agrarian village of Nepal's eastern hill. In the village, I learned farming activities such as plowing, shoveling,

planting, and harvesting crops. I learned how to weave baskets from bamboo strips and make compost for fertilizer. The community itself was an open learning space for me. I have learned about land management, indigenous knowledge, cultural sensitivity, sustainability, and a sense of community. I acquired both the Limbu and Nepali language in my family. My grandparents mostly spoke Limbu with occasional Nepali code-switching. My parents and siblings spoke both Limbu and Nepali. In my childhood, I predominantly spoke Limbu with my parents and grandparents, though I had to speak Nepali with non-Limbu speaking friends and neighbors from other ethnic/caste groups, such as Rai, Magar, Tamang, Sunuwar, Bahun, Chhetris, and Dalits. My grandparents and mother never went to school. My father could read and write basic Nepali. He dropped out of a local primary school because he had to help my grandparents in taking care of the whole family. I feel lucky that my parents sent me and my siblings to a local primary school. When I was a child, many Limbu parents did not send their children to school. They wanted to keep their children home to do household chores. Most of my friends discontinued their studies beyond secondary level.

I finished my primary schooling from a local school. But every day I had to walk almost one-hour-and-fifteen-minutes each way for my secondary level education from a school located in another village. In school, I had to speak Nepali to communicate with my friends, with occasional Limbu for conversations with Limbu friends. I was fortunate to be one of the few students to pass the School Leaving Certificate (SLC)—a national examination—from the entire village. About 90% of students (and sometimes even higher numbers) from my village still fail national examination, and, therefore, could not go to college. Most students do not complete college due to socioeconomic reasons. As **berojgārī** (unemployment) is the major problem in my

village, young people often become migrant laborers in the Middle East, Malaysia, Qatar, and South Korea.

Throughout my schooling, I was taught in Nepali. Limbu and other indigenous languages were banned in school. So I did not learn how to read and write in Limbu. The national textbooks were written in Nepali. We had to study only Hindu cultural practices, and the textbooks included the glorified history of the past kings and their families and the bravery of the warriors during the unification process of modern Nepal. I still remember that we had to recite the lines such as **“hāmro rājā hāmro desh, prāṇ bhanda pyāro cha”** (we love our king and our nation more than our own life). We were taught about the history of Nepali nationalism, including biographies of the people who contributed to Nepali language development. Hindu religion and festivals, the cow, and the Nepali language were all valorized as sacred and an iconic representation of Nepali nationalism.

I still wanted to speak in Limbu with my Limbu friends in school but I was ashamed of doing so. Non-Limbu-speaking friends used to tease us about speaking Limbu. Our Nepali accent and speaking style was still considered non-standard and deviant. I remember friends teasing us by reproducing our ways of talking such as *‘hau’* and *‘dhik’* (an emphatic marker). Through textbooks, pedagogies, and social interactions, I internalized the symbolic value of speaking standard Nepali as an index of national identity, literacy, and high social status.

English was taught from Grade 4 onwards in school, but I rarely used English inside or outside the English language classroom. I had to memorize all the essays dictated by the teachers to pass English tests. Following local teachers’ advice, I took English as my major in college. There was a prevalent belief that only smart students could become an English major. In the beginning of my first year of the Bachelor’s program, I started teaching in an English medium private school

to financially support my studies. I had to teach and speak in English with my students and colleagues. I had never used English for social interactions before. I had to work hard to prepare English lessons and teach in English. Initially, I was not comfortable to teach in English. Often times, I could not make my points clear to the students in English. My students also wanted to speak in Nepali to communicate their ideas, but as part of school policy, they have to speak 'English-only'. In the school, my role was not just as a teacher, but also as a sort of language police. Following the instructions of the school, I had to watch to see if students were speaking Nepali. I had to keep record of the students who did not speak English. I had also appointed some of my students to be language spies in each class. Those students used to report to me whether their friends were speaking English.

I was not critically aware of the sociopolitical, educational, and cognitive issues linked with my own language policing. All private schools in the town had introduced English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy and had hired teachers from the neighboring country, India, as they were perceived to have better English proficiency than Nepali teachers. English-medium education is still the most crucial part of private schools' business model of education in the town. In the beginning of each academic year, private schools would spend a great amount of money on promotional advertisements which valorize English-medium education as their 'salient feature'. When a teacher at the school, I wrote some of the attractive brochures to promote our school and distributed them among the parents in the town. For three years, I was a neoliberal ideology broker for the benefit of the owner of the private school. My role as language 'police' not only contributed to impose a monolingual ideology over bilingual/multilingual students, but also erased their multilingual voices, identities, and cognitive investment in learning.

My thought structure about language and language education began to change when I completed my two master's degrees, first in Nepal and later in the UK. Readings on sociolinguistics, multilingualism, and second language learning helped me reflect on my own language ideologies, experiences, and practices. During my MA TESOL course at the Institute of Education, University College London, I began to embrace a critical gaze on existing language policy and the importance of 'social turn' (Block, 2007) in language education. Working closely with David Block, I continued to critically look at the intersection between second language identity, neoliberalism, and social class. My MA thesis examined how multilingual Limbu indigenous youth construct and negotiate their identities in urban contexts. That study helped me understand how ethnolinguistic, cultural, and social identities are shaped by the state ideology of language policies.

My critical gaze on language policy has been further nurtured in a number of seminar courses taken at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa as part of my doctoral studies. Working under the close supervision of Kathryn A. Davis, I am increasingly convinced that linguistic injustices are a part of broader sociopolitical marginalization and disenfranchisement. Interdisciplinary readings from the courses I have taken across departments have been quite helpful for me to understand language policy as an ideological space. I continue to believe that language policy transformation is possible only through ideological awareness, particularly of subaltern publics whose identities, ideologies, and voices are largely erased in dominant policy discourses.

Recent sociopolitical changes and ongoing ethnic tensions in Nepal have also informed my critical perspectives on language issues. The 2006 People's Movement has created new political discourses on nationalism, ethnicity/caste, identity politics, and state-restructuring. The

identity politics of both dominant caste groups and ethnic minoritized groups is a major contentious issue in national politics. The ongoing identity politics and the counter-narratives of nationalism also frame my views on the ideological meaning of language policies. The state has just drafted its new constitution in September 2016, but indigenous/ethnic minoritized groups, Madhesis (people from the southern part of the country who have close cultural and linguistic relations with India), Dalits, and women are still lodging a protest against some major discriminatory provisions including language issues in the constitution.

This dissertation also represents my own identity as a *borderman*. I find myself in a fluid space between indigenous language practices (fluid and heteroglossic ones) and nation-state ideologies (unitary and fixed notion of language). My 'self' exists 'in-between' Western, national and local spaces, and my voices are grounded in the complex interplay between postmodernism and modernism. My critique on structural inequalities such as caste, ethnicity, race, and social class embraces the traits of modernism. At the same time, I consider ideological awareness of structural inequalities as an emerging process, a process which constitutes multiplicity and tensions between structure and agency and between unitary and diversifying forces. This tension creates an ideological 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994), a space where both modernist and postmodernist perspectives come together. This third space is a dialogic space between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic language ideologies through which I make sense of the multilingual world.

In sum, this dissertation represents my own and the participants' evolving ideological awareness with regard to language policy. It uncovers my own *learning, unlearning, and relearning* about language education issues as part of the broader sociopolitical landscape of Nepal. I should also mention that this dissertation includes my own biases: that is, biases in

support of equitable multilingual education. My biases recognize the importance of the transparency of biases that are against the hierarchy of languages and the ‘ideology of contempt’ (Dorian, 1998) towards minoritized languages.

Research Problems and Questions

Research problems and research questions in an ELP study are evolving and collaboratively decided (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming). Research questions keep changing as the participants are engaged in dialogue. In the beginning of this research, the gap between macro language policy and actual language practices with regard to multilingual education was a major research problem. Other associated research problems included (a) the replacement of local languages, including Nepali, by English as a medium of instruction from the early grades, and (b) the lack of positive responses from the community, teachers, and youth towards multilingual education. The questions I asked were:

1. Why is there a gap between official multilingual education policies and actual classroom practices?
2. Why is English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy increasingly adopted in public schools?
3. What are the perceptions of indigenous parents towards multilingual education?

Adopting an ethnographic approach, I wanted to explore the on-the-ground practices of multilingual education policies in two public schools in Nepal. I also wanted to explore the reasons behind public schools adopting the English-as-a-medium-of-instruction (EMI) policy. In addition, I wanted to find out the perceptions of parents towards multilingual education. I had a plan to observe classes, interview parents and teachers, and analyze policy documents. But initial observations and interviews with the participants made me rethink about the above research

problems and questions, along with the research method. During the interviews with teachers, villagers, and youth, the participants pointed out the need to engage them in critical dialogue to help them become aware of language ideological issues that keep pressuring them to adopt monolingual approaches to their pedagogies. Interviews with two teachers, for example, revealed that public schools are asked to introduce an EMI policy to compete with private schools. In my observations, I also found that, like Asma, other indigenous parents showed fluid multilingual practices and expressed their sense of frustration as their multilingual practices are not recognized in school. As I conducted more semi-structured interviews and observed classes, I saw that language ideological issues were critical to language policies and practices. Although both students and teachers have dynamic multilingual practices, schools keep imposing a monolingual ideology in their pedagogical practices. There is a craze for an EMI policy, but this monolingual policy has been creating learning challenges and the silencing of voices of multilingual learners. In speaking with teachers, parents, and students, I observed the deep influence of nation-state and neoliberal ideologies shaping the teaching and learning in schools.

In conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents, their comments reflected a reproduction of the notions of ‘official language’ and ‘national language’ to describe the dominance of Nepali. More importantly, by linking the current practice of local public schools adopting English as a de facto medium-of-instruction policy with broader discourses, teachers and parents repeatedly said they are ‘made to think’ of English as an index of ‘quality education’, ‘high social class’, the ‘language of market and foreign employment’, and as ‘more educated people’. Those interviewed also said that local languages are discursively considered ‘inappropriate’, ‘underdeveloped’, and ‘have-no-use’ in education. However, although the teachers showed their concerns over the ways local languages are not used in schools, they

repeatedly said that they are asked to follow the monolingual approach in their pedagogical practices. More interestingly, even indigenous teachers (also commonly referred to as ‘mother tongue teachers’) and parents reproduced ‘monoglossic’ ideologies despite the fact that they had dynamic language practices. Monoglossic ideology refers the assumption about language as a separate and discrete entity (García, 2009). Nevertheless, these teachers and parents suggested that there is a need for ‘raising awareness’ among teachers, parents, and youth with regard to multilingual education and repeatedly mentioned that ‘nobody talks about multilingual education’ as schools are adopting an EMI policy.

These preliminary observations and interviews made me rethink my previous research problems, as I now found the ideological hegemony of monolingualism to be a major problem in current multilingual education policies and practices. In other words, despite students have multilingual language practices, teachers are expected to teach them monolingually. Closely related to this problem is language ideological unclarity in policy-making processes. With these emergent research problems and following the suggestions put forward by the teachers and parents, I reformulated the above research questions as follows:

1. How do nation-state and neoliberal ideologies reproduce monolingual language ideologies and how do they impact Nepal’s current language education policies and practices?
2. How can participants—indigenous teachers, youth, and villagers—be engaged in building language ideological awareness and activism to promote equitable multilingual education policies and practices in Nepal?
3. How does an engaged language policy approach contribute towards decolonizing language ideologies to create space for equitable multilingual education?

Since ELP is focused on processes, these research questions were finalized only after the end of the data analysis and interpretation. As language policy engagement involves a series of emergent activities, the above research questions were determined in a dialectical relationship with the interpretation of data from the dialogic engagement with teachers, parents, and youth.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized under ten chapters. This introductory chapter has discussed background, motivation, and research problems and questions of the study. The second chapter deals with the theoretical aspects of the dissertation. More specifically, it discusses decolonizing language ideologies in relation to the multilingual turn in language education and policies. Following this, the third chapter focuses on the conceptual framework of the study, engaged language policy. The notions of ideological becoming, ideological clarification, counter-narratives, indigenous praxis, critical language awareness, and language activism, all related to engaged language policy, have been discussed in the third chapter. Chapters four and five are about critical analyses of Nepal's current language policy discourses and practices. While the fourth chapter deals with the impact of nation-state ideology, the fifth chapter analyzes how neoliberalism has informed current language policies and practices in education. Similarly, engaged ethnography has been discussed as research methodology in chapter six. Following the methodology chapter, I analyze and interpret the language policy engagement with participants in the following three chapters. Chapter seven attends to engagement with the villagers/parents, while chapter eight and nine focus on engaging with teachers and youth, respectively. The final chapter summarizes the major findings of the study and analyzes both the theoretical and context-specific (related to Nepal) implications of the study.

Chapter 2: The Multilingual Turn: Decolonization, Language Ideology, and Language Policy

Introduction

Social man [sic] is surrounded by ideological phenomenon, by objects-signs...of various types and categories: by words in the multifarious forms of their realization (sounds, writing, and the others) ..., by scientific statements, religious symbols and beliefs, works of arts, and so on. All of these things in their totality comprise the ideological environment, which forms a solid ring around man [sic]. Human consciousness does not come into contact with existence directly, but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world. (Bakhtin, 1978, p. 14)

Decolonizing language ideologies first and foremost involves a critical understanding of the historical authenticity of colonial language ideologies (Fishman, 2001). As Conteh and Meier (2014) and Tupas (2015) argue, engaging in exposing discriminatory and hegemonic language ideologies itself is the first step in efforts towards resisting colonial ideologies that ‘invented’ language as a fixed, autonomous, and essentialized marker of ethnic identity (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005, 2007). In other words, decolonizing language ideologies includes engagement in unraveling the processes and ‘mechanisms’ (Shohamy, 2006) through which monolingual language ideologies are constructed and reproduced (Slaughter & Hajek, 2015), both implicitly and explicitly, in language policies and practices. In other words, decolonizing efforts embrace the need for engagement in critical understanding of power relations, inequalities, and tensions in the broader ‘ideological environment’ (Bakhtin, 1978). As Davis (2014) argues, these efforts involve engaging language policy actors in building critical awareness of sociopolitical dynamics of language policy.

With this backdrop, this chapter discusses the major theories that inform the dissertation. I particularly focus on the notions of decolonization, language ideology, and construction and

reproduction of colonial ideologies in language policy. I begin the discussion with the notion of ‘the multilingual turn’ to set up the overarching background for understanding the relevance of these theories.

The Multilingual Turn

The multilingual turn (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014) not only informs my perspective on understanding the centrality of language ideologies, but also on supporting the need for developing alternative ideologies and epistemic stances in multilingual policies and pedagogies. At the pedagogical level, the multilingual turn argues for embracing children’s multilingual practices, identities, and voices as resources (Ruiz, 1984) for effective second language acquisition and multilingual learners’ academic achievement. As Cummins (2006) argues, multilingual pedagogies are necessary to empower and affirm students’ multilingual and multicultural identities in learning processes. Cummins (2006) and other scholars (e.g., Block, 2007; Norton, 2000) consistently argue that recognizing students’ multilingual identities contributes to students’ greater cognitive investment and transformative skills and knowledge in language pedagogies.

A significant body of literature has shown that the multilingual turn in language education is necessary to create schools as an equitable learning space, where children from diverse linguistic, cultural, and ethnic groups feel respected as legitimate members. Skutnabb-Kangas et al. (2009) have discussed that embracing students’ home languages as a resource contributes to greater participation of indigenous children in education thereby promoting social justice. McCarty (2009) has found that Native American youth bring multiple voices, ideologies, and ways of learning in school if they are allowed to use their home languages. Hélot and Ó’Laoire (2011) assert that multilingualism helps all children make sense of their learning

experiences and enhance their language awareness and sensitivity towards cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. Other studies have further revealed that multilingualism in education (a) supports indigenous and ethnic minoritized students' access to education (Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012); (b) enhances metalinguistic awareness and divergent thinking (e.g., Baker, 2011; Bialystok, 2012); and, (c) promotes community and parental engagement in education (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

This dissertation particularly embraces the alternative language ideologies and epistemic stances upheld by the multilingual turn. By recognizing complex linguistic diversity as a natural condition of human society, this 'turn' questions the relevance of dominant language ideologies such as 'native speaker', 'monolingualism', and 'standard language'. In other words, the multilingual turn challenges the ideological construction of language as a fixed, standard, and autonomous object and instead reconstitutes it as a dynamic, flexible, and fluid phenomenon (May, 2014; McCarty, 2014). Such fluid and dynamic language practices of multilingual people are described as 'translanguaging'⁸ (García, 2009; García & Li, 2014). Lewis, Jones and Baker (2012) define translanguaging as the use of languages in a "dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, literacy, and, not least, learning" (p. 641). For García (2009), translanguaging is multilingual people's 'multiple discursive practices' that breaks language boundaries and hierarchies. It also:

creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience. (Li, 2011, p. 1223)

⁸ Other terms that are used to describe multilingual practices are crossing (Rampton, 1995); polylingualism (Jørgensen, 2008), heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), plurilingualism (Council of Europe) and metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010).

However, it is important to note that such fluid multilingual practices are not a new phenomenon, but rather they existed before the colonial era and the formation of nation-states (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013). Makoni and Pennycook's (2005, 2007) study shows that the construction and reproduction of language as a fixed and autonomous entity is historically a European colonial invention. These authors discuss various colonial tools such as language surveys, language mapping, and language documentation/standardization processes through which local multilingualism is dissected and fragmented into multiple named languages. Anzaldúa's (1987) 'borderlands' have already challenged how such colonial language ideologies exclude and marginalize bi-/multilingual people with fluid and alternative language practices.

The multilingual turn challenges the monolingual normativity in language policies and practices and reimagines alternative ones which recognize the 'multicompetence' (Cook, 1991), 'multiliteracies' (Street, 2003), and 'multilingual identity' (Block, 2007) of multilingual learners. Taking such alternative epistemic stances, the multilingual turn questions the idea of multilingualism as a totality of autonomous languages—known as 'parallel monolingualism' (Heller, 1999) or as 'two solitudes' (Cummins, 2007)—and embraces locally situated multilingual practices characterized by fluidity and dynamism (Lin, 2015). This perspective sees multilingual learners as a source of rich linguistic and cultural knowledge rather than deficient in learning a standard language.

However, despite a growing interest in alternative ideologies and epistemologies advocated for in the multilingual turn, dominant language policies and pedagogies are deeply influenced by a monolingual bias (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; May, 2014) and a monolingual mindset (Clyne, 2005). Critiquing the colonial ideology of monolingualism, Conteh and Meier (2014) contend that language minoritized people are "marginalized and even to a certain extent

excluded from unfolding their full potential for their individual progress and for the benefit of society” (p. 2). In this regard, decolonization provides critical insights into both unraveling monolingual ideologies and supporting alternative perspectives discussed in the multilingual turn. Benson (2013) makes a similar observation below:

If we can learn to recognize the monolingual habitus inherent in educational policies and practices, even bi- and multilingual ones, we have the potential to change the paradigm. This will lead to greater recognition of the linguistic and cultural resources that learners bring with them to the learning process, which will in turn lead to development of methods and materials that maximize those resources to promote not only communicative competence but also cognitive development. (p. 295)

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss multiple ideologies that support monolingual habitus in education. Before that let me discuss what decolonizing language ideologies means in language policy.

Understanding Decolonization and Coloniality

My perspectives on decolonization are informed by Smith (1999, 2012), Quijano (2000, 2007) and Maldonado-Torres (2007). These scholars discuss decolonization as a form of critical and transformative theory to challenge coloniality and develop alternative ideological and epistemic perspectives. Maldonado-Torres (2007) defines coloniality⁹ as a “long-standing pattern of power” (p. 243), while Quijano (2007) defines it as the domination “over the modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectivized expression, intellectual or visual” (p. 169). In this dissertation, I take coloniality as a

⁹ For Maldonado-Torres (2007), “coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire” (p. 243).

“general form of domination” (Quijano, 2007, p. 170; Smith, 2012) and a social order in which the identities, language practices, and epistemologies of some groups are deprived of legitimacy and recognition. Coloniality additionally reproduces the superiority and hegemony of dominant ideologies and epistemologies by creating hierarchies, dichotomies, and boundaries among languages and in language learning processes.

Recent studies have used coloniality as a framework to understand how educational policies perpetuate inequalities. Hsu (2015) adopts coloniality to analyze the domination of English in language policy in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. While looking at the connection between English and neoliberalism, Hsu’s (2015) study shows that the ideology of linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011) that has been used to justify the importance of English has not only supported the colonial legacy but also created language hierarchies at the local level. Piller and Cho (2013) and other scholars (Kubota, 2015; Wee, 2003) discuss how uncritical acceptance of the neoliberal ideology of English as a language of the global educational market has derecognized the linguistic, cultural, and epistemic identities of multilingual people. Most importantly, the coloniality of English has constructed categories which valorize English as the language of salvation and progress (Shahjahan, 2013), while other languages are discursively regarded as inappropriate for educational and other purposes in public spheres.

Decolonization is engagement in critical analyses of how language policies impose particular ideologies and epistemologies. Decolonization in this dissertation has to be understood as “an invitation to think modernity/coloniality critically from different epistemic positions and according to the manifold experiences of subjects who suffer different dimensions of the coloniality of Being” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 261). This dissertation invites indigenous parents, youth, and teachers—who otherwise are excluded from such conversations—to dialogue

about the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies that dominate the existing language policy discourses and practices in Nepal from alternative perspectives and identity positions. This invitation to dialogue embraces a deep sense of respect and love and commitment for social justice (Freire, 1970). However, as Smith (2012) argues, decolonization should not be understood as a total rejection of dominant ideologies nor is it just about the deconstruction of hegemonic ideologies; rather, “it is about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (Smith, 2012, p. 39). Decolonization also involves the “processes which *connect*, *inform* and *clarify* the tensions between the local, the regional and the global” (Smith, 2012, p. 39, emphasis added).

As an unfinished process, decolonization emphasizes ‘ideological clarification’ (Fishman, 2001; Kroskrity, 2009) and involves the process of ‘ideological becoming’ (Bakhtin, 1984) by raising critical ideological awareness (Freire, 1970, 1994) of the people who have long been hegemonized by colonial ideologies. Decolonization involves an alternative understanding of master narratives of what counts as a legitimate language and transforming dominant language ideology that influences the current language policy discourses (Lin & Martin, 2005). For this study, this understanding of decolonization is rooted in the Limbu indigenous epistemology of Mundhum: the collection of oral narratives about life, the universe, and human relations. Mundhum focuses on “plurality and multiplicity rather than unity, differences rather than sameness, and diversity and variety rather than homogeneity” (Subba, n.d.). As a totality of the Limbu people’s ways of learning, being, and doing, Mundhum is dialogic and dynamic and embraces folk/non-standard language practices and ‘wholeness’ as the core of human consciousness.

In sum, decolonization in this study focuses on engaging participants in developing critical ideological awareness in language policy discourses and practices and their linkage with macro sociopolitical and economic ideologies. It moves out attention from the ‘ideological hegemony’ (Blommaert, 2005) of linguistic nationalism and neoliberalism to engage in (re)imagining equitable language policy in a liberating process. Yet, decolonization is not a reversal of colonial language ideologies, but rather is, first, about engaging in critical analysis of the construction, reproductions, and impacts of those ideologies, and then the creation of new ideologies which address linguistic oppression and discrimination at the local level. Decolonization liberates language policy actors from their own ideological domestication and supports their agency, advocacy, and activism towards creating space for grassroots multilingualism in education and other public spheres. Decolonization in this sense holds alternative histories, alternative knowledges, and alternative ways of doing things (Smith, 1999). In Lin and Martin’s (2005) words, decolonizing language ideologies includes “finding a way of understanding and exposing new forms of inequalities in education and society and new productions of subaltern subjectivities under globalization” (p. 6). In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss language ideology and its centrality in language policy and analyze the processes of the construction and reproduction of colonial language ideologies.

Language Ideology: Definitions and Perspectives

Language ideology, also known as ‘linguistic ideology’ and ‘ideology of language’, is defined in a number of ways in linguistic anthropology, applied linguistics, and sociolinguistics. Silverstein (1979) was among the first linguistic anthropologist to define language ideology as a “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Conceived as a general belief about language

use, Silverstein's conceptualization of language ideology embraces human consciousness and subjectivity in the interpretation of language and language practices. While Heath (1989) takes language ideologies as "self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language" (p. 53), Irvine (1989) considers them "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (p. 255). As a political economic process, language ideology constitutes diverse sociopolitical and economic interests and power relations (Gal, 1989; Heller, 2010; Ricento, 2015).

While acknowledging the above ideas, the perspectives on language ideologies in this dissertation are primarily informed by the work of two linguistic anthropologists, Kathryn Woolard (1998) and Paul Kroskrity (2009). Woolard (1998) claims that language ideologies include "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (p. 3). She further maintains that:

ideologies of language are not language alone. Rather, they envision and enact ties of language to *identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology*. Through such linkages, they underpin not only linguistic form and use but also the very notion of the person and the social group, as well as such fundamental social institutions as religious ritual, child socialization, gender relations, the nation-state, schooling, and law. (p. 3, emphasis added)

More importantly, language ideologies have "an intimate connection to social power and its legitimation" (Woolard, 1998, p. 238). These perspectives clearly imply language ideology as a relevant theoretical framework to consider in understanding whether or not multilingual learners' identities, beliefs, and knowledge are recognized in language policies and practices. More importantly, language ideology provides insights into analyzing a complex intersection between language policies and a state's political economic conditions. Like Woolard (1998), Makihara

and Schieffelin (2007) also reiterate that language ideologies connect language practices with “identity, power, aesthetics, morality, and epistemology” and represent “significant social institutions and fundamental notions of persons and community” (p. 14). These conceptualizations of language ideology help to unravel what counts as a legitimate language and whose epistemologies and identities are represented in a language policy. As Piller (2015) argues, language ideologies are essentially social rather than linguistic and thus they serve social ends.

Kroskrity’s (2009) argument that language ideologies “represent the perception of language and *discourse* that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group” (pp. 72-73, emphasis added) is particularly relevant for me to understand how language policies are affected by dominant sociopolitical and economic discourses at local, national, and global levels. This perspective is helpful to discuss how the perceptions of people towards a particular language and language practices are not neutral, but instead are deeply embedded in historical and contemporary political, economic, ethnic, and racial discourses (Davis, 2014; Lippi-Green, 1997; Tollefson, 2013). In other words, language ideology provides a relevant framework to understand how language policies are connected with people’s lived experiences, past memories, and struggles associated with their language and identity issues (Woolard, 1998). Language ideology also helps to unravel how the legitimacy of a particular language supports or denies symbolic violence and self-censorship among minoritized languages (Bourdieu, 1991).

Both Woolard (1998) and Kroskrity (2009) consider language ideology as a multiple and contested sociopolitical construct. This dissertation takes language ideology not to be singular and fixed, but rather as a multiple, dynamic, and discursive sociocultural and political process (Kroskrity, 2010). Language ideologies are not autonomous and isolated a priori assumptions

about language and language practices, but are instead evolving; they exist in a continual tension between the local and global, and the dominant and dominated (e.g., Jaffe, 2009; Leeman, 2014; Sayer, 2015). I emphasize language ideology as a mediating tool between language policy and larger sociopolitical conditions and discourses that are constituted by the “struggle to acquire or maintain power” (Woolard, 1998, p. 7). Understanding this struggle invites us to explore what and how languages are legitimized by language policies and practices and how they impact the lived experiences of different social groups. For example, Errington (2000) observes that the ideology of standardized and modernized Indonesian is guided by the instrumentalist ideology of social elites that eventually erase the minoritized ethnic identities and languages. In the context of South Korea, Piller and Cho (2013) explain how the ideology of English language commodification in higher education has derecognized the social capital of the Korean language and suppressed the freedom of speech of Korean speakers.

In sum, this dissertation takes language ideology as a constellation of human consciousness, values, attitudes, discourses, and epistemologies about language and language policies. As a site of struggle, language ideologies connect language policies and practices with sociopolitical issues at local, national, and global levels. A language ideological perspective considers language policy and practices as a sociopolitical process linked with power relations and sociopolitical interest, and as such this perspective helps to understand human consciousness about language policies and practices. In what follows, I discuss the centrality of language ideology in language policy.

Centrality of Language Ideology in Language Policy

Language ideology has always been a part of language policy research. As Blommaert (2006) argues, “language policy is invariably based on linguistic ideologies, on images of

‘societally desirable’ forms of language usage and of the ‘ideal’ linguistic landscape of society” (p. 244). Schiffman (1996, 2006) considers language policy a social construct which is shaped by the linguistic culture, which is a “repository of ideas, values, prejudices and attitudes” (p. 276). McCarty, Collins, and Hopson (2011) describe this complex phenomenon as New Language Policy Studies (NLPS), which view language policy as “the complex of practices, ideologies, attitudes, and formal and informal mechanisms that influence people’s language choices in profound and pervasive everyday ways” (p. 335). Farr and Song (2011) maintain that “the relationship between language ideologies and language policy is inseparable; that is, language ideology inevitably informs policy” (p. 645). Focusing on the centrality of language ideology, they claim that:

[i]t thus seems crucial to clarify the educational ecology of language ideologies, so that educators who ‘appreciate the power, scope, and latent contradictions’ of this ecology can ‘take up the challenge of deconstructing and reconstructing the linguistic ideologies that surround [and mitigate] their efforts’ (McGroarty 2010:30). That is, in order to deal most effectively with the multiplicity of language ideologies in education, we must first understand them. (p. 650)

In what follows, I trace the space of language ideology in language policy under different approaches.

The Neoclassical Approach

In the beginning of the field of language policy in the 1960s, the neoclassical approach considered language policy a neutral phenomenon (Ricento, 2006). As seen in Table 1, during this period language planning was taken as a technocratic and apolitical activity. Language policy activities were focused on corpus planning (development of grammar, orthography, and dictionary), status planning (choice of language for official purposes), and acquisition planning

(language of instruction) (Baldauf & Kaplan, 1997). Although language policies were claimed to be neutral, these activities were charged with deep sociopolitical meanings. Various tools such as language standardization, modernization, and linguistic surveys were systematically used to promote the ideology of linguistic homogeneity. As Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue, by using these tools in language planning efforts in post-colonial contexts, Western European linguists ‘invented’ languages as a fixed, objective, and enumerative entity; for them, the invention of named languages is indeed a project of Western linguists to organize the post-colonial nation-states according to their worldviews.

Table 1. Historical trajectory of language policy and planning

Approaches	Macro socio-politics	Epistemology	Purpose	Methods of inquiry	Foundational works
1960s Neoclassical	Nation-states; Nation-building; Modernization and standardization of languages;	Predominance of structuralism; Corpus planning; Status planning; Language policy as ideologically neutral technocratic phenomenon	Solving-language problems in multilingual contexts; National unity and linguistic homogeneity	Linguistic surveys; Language documentation; Top-down approach; Four-step framework: <i>Selection, Codification, Implementation, and Elaboration</i>	Cobarrubias (1983); Haugen (1966); Kloss (1969); Rubin & Jernudd (1971); Tauli (1974)
1970s-1980s Critical sociolinguistics	Sociopolitical change	Language policy as a socially-situated practice; Increased attention to sociopolitical and ideological issues; Language orientations: <i>language-as-resource, language-as-right, and language-as-problem</i>	Managing social change; Addressing local voices; Managing languages in schools: <i>Acquisition planning</i>	Ethnography of speaking; Social interactions	Cooper (1989); Hornberger (1988); Hymes (1980); Labov (1972); Ruiz (1984)
1990s	Problem of modernization:	Non-autonomous view of language;	Access to minoritized	Critical historical analysis;	Bourdieu (1991); Davis (1994);

Historical-structural/ Critical language policy	Language hierarchies; Stratification of society; Linguistic imperialism	Traditional notions like ‘native speaker’ were called into questions; Language ideology and power relations are at the center	language speakers; Unravelling social inequalities related to language; Linguistic human rights; Language maintenance	Emergence of ethnography	Hornberger (1988); Jaffe (1999); Lippi-Green (1997); Pennycook (1994); Phillipson (1992); Tollefson (1991, 1995); Wiley (1996)
2000s Public sphere Approach	Globalization; Neoliberalism	Postmodernism; Ecology of language; Focus on agency and ideologies; Commodification of language; Emergence of linguistic activism; Governmentality and policing	Dynamic language practices; Negotiation, appropriation and interpretation of policy; Implicit language policy	Critical discourse analysis; Critical ethnography of language policy	Canagarajah (2005); Heller (2007); Hornberger & Johnson (2007); Kaplan and Baldauf (2003); Pennycook (2006); Ricento (2006); Shohamy (2006)
2010s Counter publics/Engaged language policy	Increasing neoliberalism and disengagement of multiple publics; (Dis)citizenship	New Language Policy Studies (LP as an intersection of practices, ideologies, attitudes, and formal and informal mechanisms); Linguistic activism and ideologies	Participation and social transformation: empowerment of minority and indigenous language speakers; Counter-hegemonic discourses; Alternative language ideologies; Social justice and multilingualism	Engaged ethnography; Critical-consciousness-raising; Participatory action research	Davis (2014); García (2008); McCarty et al. (2011); Ramanathan (2013); Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh (2012); Tollefson (2013); Wyman, McCarty, & Nicholas (2014); Shohamy (2015)

(Note: This table is based on Ricento (2000) and Johnson and Ricento (2013).

Critical Sociolinguistics

Since the 1970s, language policy has been influenced by the work of critical sociolinguists Dell Hymes and William Labov. Dell Hymes’ call for resistance against

marginalizing ideologies and language domination provided a strong foundation for language activism (Hymes, 1984). Similarly, Labov's emphasis on the ethical responsibility of linguists to work for the benefit of minoritized languages engages researchers in activist and advocacy projects (Labov, 1972). Ruiz's (1984) three orientations of language—language-as-problem, language-as-right, and language-as-resource—have immensely contributed to the emergence of alternative perspectives in language policy. His conceptualizations of language-as-right and language-as-resource counter the dominant belief that minoritized languages create a threat to national unity and advocate for ensuring the rights to education in one's home languages. Most importantly, his language-as-resource orientation supports the idea that children's home languages can be a significant resource for equitable and meaningful education.

The Historical-Structural Approach

Language ideology has received most explicit attention since the 1990s. With the emergence of an historical-structural approach, scholars began to see language policy as a mechanism to reproduce sociopolitical and economic inequalities. Tollefson (1991, 2006) critically examines how language policies reproduce the status quo and existing socio-structural inequalities. While calling for linguistic equity, he critiques the role of dominant language policy in supporting monolingual ideologies. Tollefson (1991) claims:

The policy of requiring everyone to learn a single dominant language is widely seen as a common sense solution to the communication problems of multilingual societies. The appeal of this assumption is such that monolingualism is seen as a solution to linguistic inequality. If linguistic minorities learn the dominant language, so the argument goes, then they will not suffer economic and social inequality. The assumption is an example of an *ideology*, which refers to normally unconscious assumptions that come to be seen as common sense ... such assumptions justify exclusionary policies and sustain inequality. (p.10, emphasis added)

As Tollefson (1991) maintains, nation-states' language policies see linguistic diversity as a problem and continue to impose monolingual ideologies over multilingual users of language. Consequently, monolingualism becomes common sense or 'hegemony' (Gramsci, 1971) among the general public. Blommaert (2006) argues that embracing the assumption that monolingualism addresses socioeconomic inequalities is nothing more than an example of 'ideological hegemony'. Ideological hegemony occurs when the general public accept monolingualism as the best way to respond to social inequalities. Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) describes monolingual dominance as 'linguicism'—a diverse range of discriminations in terms of language—and contends that monolingualism perpetuates sociopolitical injustices. Phillipson (1992) critiques the global dominance of English as linguistic imperialism and takes it as an historical continuation of Western colonialism.

Tollefson's (2006) critical analysis of dominant language policy as a carrier of Westernization and modernization is particularly useful to understand how colonial ideologies are legitimized in language policies and practices. Fishman (1994) also acknowledges that language planning has tended to reproduce sociocultural inequalities and support Western and modern language ideologies. A significant number of studies have critically analyzed the impacts of modern nation-state and Western colonial ideologies in language policy. Wiley (1998, 2013), for example, explores the hegemony of the English-only ideology in the US and discusses how mainstream language policies have been designed to forcefully integrate minoritized language speakers into an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) of English-only American nationalism. Lippi-Green (1997) and De Costa (2010) explore how standard language ideology discriminates against minoritized language speakers in the US and Singapore, respectively.

Although the historical-structural approach provides a critical framework to understand the conditions of structural discriminations, as Davis (1999) argues, it lacks the portrayal of language policy processes and pays little attention to the agency of language policy actors (see also Davis, 2014; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Johnson (2013) contends that an exclusive focus on the “subjugating power of policy helps perpetuate the idea that language policy is a necessarily monolithic mechanism for cultural and linguistic hegemony in education and helps to reify critical conceptualizations as disempowering realities” (p. 214). This limitation of the historical-structural approach leads to the emergence of an ethnographic approach to language policy.

Ethnography of Language Policy

As a multimethod, multilayered, and multisited approach (McCarty, 2011), ethnography of language policy focuses on the role of the “agency of individuals to manipulate policy in creative and unpredictable ways” (Johnson, 2013, p. 12). In other words, ethnography of language policy deals with the power of language policy agents in the creation, interpretation, and appropriation of language policy (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2013). Johnson (2013) asserts that an ethnographic approach focuses on how language policy actors such as teachers can create ideological and implementational space for minoritized languages despite restrictive dominant language policy. In this sense, ethnography of language policy maintains the balance between structure/power and human agency by linking language policy with local sociocultural contexts (see Johnson, 2015).

Moreover, ethnography of language policy uncovers indistinct voices, motivations, desires, ideologies, and the consequences of language policy, and analyzes how official policies play out in local contexts (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; McCarty, 2011). Most importantly,

ethnography of language policy illuminates “cross cutting themes of cultural conflict and negotiation, identity, ideology and linguistic human rights” (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011, p. 280). Cincotta-Segi (2011) finds that teachers can create space for multilingualism in schools despite the official policy promoting monolingualism in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. Taking educators as language policy arbitrators (Menken, 2008), studies such as Johnson (2007) and Menken and García (2010) portray teachers as language policy agents and arbiters to support students’ home language practices in schools. Other ethnographic studies such as Ramanathan (2005, 2013) and Hopson (2011) discuss language ideologies as key aspect of language policy. McCarty et al. (2011) consider language policy as an embodied sociocultural phenomenon invested in power relations and thus impacting people’s daily lives. For them, ethnography of language policy embraces the importance of the sociopolitical ecology in which the language policies are situated. This approach also provides insights into analyzing language inequalities and power relations, and examining language policy as covert and overt, de facto and de jure, and bottom-up and top-down (McCarty, 2011).

However, ethnography of language policy is not adequate to critically discuss how agency is linked with structure (Giddens, 1984). It is important to note that human capability to act has a direct bearing on power relations in a social structure. Tollefson (2013) and Johnson and Johnson (2015), for example, have recently argued that the structure-agency duality cannot be separated in language policy. Based on their ethnographic project in the US state of Washington, Johnson and Johnson (2015), for example, discuss the role of language ideologies and power in shaping agency in language policy. Their study shows that language policy arbiters who possess more sociopolitical and education power in the dominant public (e.g., English speakers) influence language policy creation, implementation, and transformation more than

those who do not have power (e.g., Spanish speakers) (Johnson & Johnson, 2015). This clearly indicates that there is no guarantee that agency may always support the use of minoritized languages in education. Whether or not human agency promotes an equitable multilingual education policy depends upon one's ways of seeing, believing, and knowing about language and language education. Scholars working with indigenous minoritized language communities—such as Fishman (2001), Kroskrity (2009), and Lee (2014)—have contended that ideological clarification and building critical ideological awareness is a necessary condition for building agency towards creating equitable space for minoritized languages in education.

Recent conceptualization of engaged language policy (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, forthcoming), which I describe in the next chapter, integrates agency and structure by engaging language policy actors explicitly in ideological analyses towards building critical ideological awareness and in putting this awareness into transformative actions. This approach focuses on dialogical engagement in understanding ideological tensions and in building critical awareness of what counts as equitable language ideologies. It pays attention to counterpublic spheres that emphasize alternative ideologies, identities, and knowledge in language policy. Keeping critical ideological awareness at the center, engaged language policy focuses on the ways in which language policy actors become aware of the ideological meaning of language policies and practices and play an agentive role towards transformative practices (e.g., Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013). Such awareness involves critical consciousness of how language policies are related to political meanings of language ideologies.

The Political Rootedness of Ideology

Decolonizing language ideologies involves critical analysis of political meaning and power relations invested in language policies, practices, and discourses. In this section, I discuss

the historical construction of ideology in political theories and analyze how they inform this dissertation. The term ‘ideology’ was first coined by Antoine Destutt de Tracy, a French philosopher, as a general science to study “intellectual faculties, their principal phenomena, and the more remarkable circumstances of their activities” (1801, p. 4, as cited in Richard, 1993, p. 103). Considering human ideology as ‘a part of zoology’, Destutt de Tracy focuses on how human sensations—perception, memory, judgment, and volitions—are shaped or misshaped by physiological circumstances (Richard, 1999). It was Karl Marx who first defined ideology from a materialist perspective and interpreted it as the ruling class people’s political tool for dominance. In his classic book *The German Ideology* (with Frederick Engels), Marx considers ideology as the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness that determines how people imagine and conceive the world.

Marx consider ideology as ‘superstructure’ of human consciousness and claims that it embraces the ‘ruling ideas’ of the dominant elites who control the material conditions; that is, the means, modes, and relations of production. In critiquing the unequal power relationship between the ruling and working class in a capitalist political economy, Marx consistently argues that market-based ideologies obscure unequal social relations between the people who control and the people who work in the market. His notion of ‘commodity fetishism’ contends that when an object “emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness” (Marx, 1867, p. 163). Throughout this dissertation, I use the notion of ‘commodity’ to discuss English language spread in neoliberal education reforms in Nepal and analyze how the commodification of English obscures sociopolitical inequalities in terms of class, language, and locality. More specifically, I argue that commodity ideology cultivates a ‘false consciousness’ about social

relations among the subordinated group of people and misrepresents the realities of linguistic and cultural exploitation, domination, and marginalization.

Gramsci's (1971) 'hegemony' is particularly important in understanding the discursive process of linguistic and epistemic dominance in education. For Gramsci, hegemony, which occurs when the beliefs, ideas, and worldviews of one class or group governs other alternative views, is a soft power (as opposed to militarization) for the dominant groups to rule over the subalterns. Hegemony is formed when the individuals or groups unquestionably embrace one belief or ideology, usually the dominant one, as a natural social condition or 'common sense'. Conceived as a process of domination through consent, hegemony indeed is a terrain of struggle for a particular political order—usually the one which is favored by the dominant social class. Gramsci's hegemony provides an important framework to understand ideological tensions and analyze how the general public buy-into the dominant language ideologies (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Holborow, 2015; Ricento, 2015). Recent studies have critically examined the 'ideological hegemony' (Blommaert, 2008) of English as a language of global capitalism (Lin, 2011; Ricento, 2015). While analyzing English language dominance in education, scholars such as Phillipson (2012), Luke, Luke, and Graham (2007) and Piller and Cho (2013) contend that English language hegemony is reproduced through neoliberal educational policies and discourses.

Foucault's (1977) 'discourse' further helps to understand how knowledge, consciousness, and subjectivity in language policies are created and become hegemonic. Although Foucault prefers to use discourse instead of ideology, his conceptualization of discourse as a mode of constituting power and knowledge provides insights to understanding how language policies are affected by broader sociopolitical discourses that sustain and privilege dominant language

ideology and epistemologies. Foucault's discourse provides a framework to analyze power relations in language policies and practices and unravel how they contribute to 'epistemic violence' (Foucault, 1977; Spivak, 1988) or 'epistemic injustice' (Fricker, 2007). Epistemic violence occurs through the imposition of one set of knowledge and the erasure and delegitimation of other alternative and non-dominant epistemologies. I have used these concepts to examine how the imposition of monolingual ideologies in education erases diverse knowledge and the ways of knowing of multilingual and multicultural children.

As this dissertation is related to language policy in schools, I use Althusser's (1971) notion of 'ideological state apparatuses' to describe how schools serve an institution to support dominant language ideologies and discourses. Althusser (1971) claims that ideology "always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (p. 168); for him, "there is no practice except by and in an ideology" (p. 170). Althusser's perspective considers schools as an ideological space and argues that any practices within this space have ideological meanings. Using Althusser's notion of 'ideological state apparatuses', Mowbray (2012) analyzes how educational institutions reproduce state ideologies and entrench linguistic injustice.

Building on all of these perspectives, I take ideology, hegemony, and discourses as interlocking concepts in exploring and analyzing multiple and contested language ideologies in Nepal's language policy discourses and practices. While ideology helps to understand the political-economic conditions of language policy, hegemony and discourses provide insight into understanding how particular language ideologies are embraced as taken-for-granted assumptions in public spheres. Most importantly, both hegemony and discourses help to unravel contested language ideologies as they are situated in local contexts. Marx's 'false consciousness' and 'commodity fetishism', Gramsci's 'hegemony' and 'common sense', Althusser's

‘ideological state apparatuses’, and Foucault’s ‘discourse’ and ‘epistemic violence’ have been used throughout this dissertation to analyze the ways in which language ideologies are constructed and reproduced in language policies and practices. All these ideas have been useful to engage participants in dialogue to help them become aware of how language policies and practices are implicated in sociopolitical inequalities and injustices.

Construction and Reproduction of Colonial Language Ideologies

Engaging in decolonizing language ideologies first involves a critical analysis of colonial language ideologies and examining how nation-states reproduce them in language policies and practices. In what follows, I discuss how different colonial language ideologies are constructed and how they are reproduced in language policy discourses and practices worldwide.

The Ideology of Contempt as Colonial Ideologies

Dorian (1998) provides a critical analysis of how Western European colonial ideologies have contributed to the current delegitimization of minoritized and non-standard language practices in education. In this dissertation, I draw on Dorian’s (1998) three major assumptions that comprise Western colonial ideology: (a) an ideology of contempt for subordinated languages and non-standard language practices; (b) a belief in linguistic survival of the fittest, a social Darwinism of language; and (c) a belief that bilingual/multilingualism is onerous (Dorian, 1998).

These language ideologies are linked with the rise of the 18th and 19th century European political ideology of nation-state as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991). Particularly in France and Britain, linguistic heterogeneity and non-standard language practices have been systematically delegitimized in state apparatuses in the guise of nationalism as a group of people speaking the same language. During the French Revolution, for example, patois were categorized as coarse, stupid, and vulgar languages and considered inappropriate for French nationalism

(Farr & Song, 2011). As Dorian (1998) argues, the hegemony of one single standard form of language and its legitimacy as a national language created a hostile linguistic environment in which minoritized languages are devalued in education and other state apparatuses. During the colonial period, the European colonizers, while promoting their own languages as a legitimate for wider sociopolitical functions, they espoused an ideology of contempt against subordinated and minoritized indigenous languages (Farr & Song, 2011; King, 2000).

The ideology of contempt not only ignores the importance of multilingualism, but also, and more importantly, dismisses the fact that “people who lacked a rich material culture might possess a highly developed, richly complex language” (Dorian, 1998, p. 9). By doing this, the European colonizers contributed to the constriction of ideology which “wrongly assumed that primitive technological means implied primitive linguistic means” (Dorian, 1998, p. 9).

Language policy scholars such as Kamwangamalu (2010) and May (2012) have contended that the ideology of contempt towards minoritized languages in broader sociopolitical discourses still impacts language education policy and practices. Tupas (2015), in the context of the Philippines, argues that indigenous minoritized languages are still not provided with equal space in school because of the ideology of contempt that colonial ideologies have systematically constructed.

Linguistic Darwinism (Dorian, 1998) is another Western colonial ideology which is most influential in the current (neo)liberal language policy discourses. This ideology assumes that certain languages or varieties, and particularly standard languages, have the natural ability to thrive while other non-standard varieties and subordinated languages do not have that internal ability (Dorian, 1998; Farr & Song, 2011; King, 2002). This ideology upholds the view that displacement of minoritized languages in education and other public spheres is a language-internal issue; in other words, minoritized languages do not have equal space in education only

because they are unable to express modern thoughts and knowledge. However, this assumption is not based on any objective linguistic criteria but rather is deeply rooted in the historical and contemporary sociopolitical and ethnic/racial discriminations and inequalities (Tollefson, 2002). Mohanty (2006) rightly argues that “disabilities and disadvantages associated with minority [minoritized] languages are not inherent; they are socially constructed with institutionalized discriminations in educational, political, economic, and other social spheres” (p. 266). Flores and Rosa (2015) describe this kind of ideology as raciolinguistic ideology that legitimizes the power and supremacy of people who speak the standard language.

The ideology of bilingualism/multilingualism as onerous is also rooted in Western colonial history. During the colonial period, multilingualism was considered a problem and irrelevant for socialization and educational purposes in mainstream society. As a result, mainstream language policies have taken multilingualism to be a threat to social harmony and as a sign of cognitive deficiency. Most strikingly, this ideology constructed an assumption that one’s language ability should be judged against the monolingual and standard language norms of native speakers (Dorian, 1998). As Dorian (1998) argues, it is important to be clear that the cumulative effect of the ideology of contempt, of linguistic Darwinism, and of a belief in the onerousness of bilingualism/multilingualism not only ignores the complexity and expressivity of indigenous minoritized languages, but also, and perhaps most importantly, delegitimizes the languages and language practices of people who lack material resources and sociopolitical power.

Invention and Legitimation of Language

Colonial language ideologies have been reproduced both structurally and discursively. I draw on Makoni and Pennycook’s (2007) ‘invention’ and Bourdieu’s (1991) ‘legitimation’ to

analyze how the construction and legitimation of the ideology of language as a fixed and autonomous entity is historically rooted in Western colonialism. Makoni and Pennycook's (2007) studies in post-colonial Africa and India have revealed that the European colonial linguists first 'invented' language as a homogeneous, fixed, and enumerative entity to segregate linguistically diverse communities and erase their diverse sociocultural and linguistic identities. Using various tools such as linguistic survey, dictionary making, language mapping, and language documentation, the colonial linguists not only created fixed boundaries between languages, but also constructed the ideology of essentialized linkage between ethnicity and language. Such an 'invention' of language has not only failed to recognize linguistic diversity, but also reproduced a hegemonic epistemic stance. In other words, the colonial ideologies constructed the ideology of monolingualism as a norm in language policies, language teaching, and learning. Most importantly, their separatist ideology of language contributed to the emergence of ethnic tensions in Africa, South Asia, and other parts of the world (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007).

The colonial invention of language as a monolithic object shapes language policies and practices through multiple processes and mechanism. Bourdieu's (1991) notion of 'legitimation' provides critical insights into understanding how one particular language is developed as a legitimate 'official' language of the nation-states¹⁰. As a socio-historical process, the construction of a legitimate language involves a set of assumptions that support the privilege of a written standard language as the 'official' language of nation-states and educational and other market places. Bourdieu (1991) asserts that during the colonial era, European linguists standardized language varieties spoken by the upper class elites to legitimize those varieties as

¹⁰ Legitimation refers to sustaining domination through recognizing a language as an official or national language.

national languages that the people of different languages are forced to speak in the guise of nationalism. As Bourdieu (1991) claims, the legitimization of a standard language as official language misrecognizes the identity of non-standard dialects and language practices as “corrupt expressions and mispronunciations” (p. 4) in schools and other public spheres. More importantly, Bourdieu (1991) contends that these language ideologies have been the guiding principles for language education policies.

The educational system, whose scale of operations grew in extent and intensity throughout the nineteenth century, no doubt directly helped to devalue popular modes of expression, dismissing them as ‘slang’ and ‘gibberish’and to impose recognition of the legitimate language. (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 13)

For Bourdieu (1991), the reproduction of a legitimate language is also rooted in the symbolic capital of language. Symbolic capital is largely determined by the economic capital of a language in a market. In a capitalist market economy, a language which is given a greater market value is often considered a legitimate language of education. Critiquing the issue of representation, Bourdieu (1991) argues that the legitimization of a standard language embraces high class people’s ‘habitus’, a disposition determined by social structure (Bourdieu, 1991). The ideological impact of the legitimization of a standard language is quite pervasive. Bourdieu (1991) explains that the common public are forced to self-censor their language behaviors and use standard language, or else will become a victim of symbolic violence. Language policy scholars have drawn on Bourdieu’s (1991) ‘habitus’ to discuss the reproduction of monolingual ideologies and its sociopolitical meanings (see also Benson, 2013).

Decolonizing language ideologies is also concerned with how hegemonic ideologies are constructed discursively. Ideologies may not always be explicit: they are reproduced by ‘concealment’ (McLaren, 1998) as ‘hidden agendas’ (Shohamy, 2006). In what follows, I discuss

some major discursive processes through which colonial ideologies are reproduced in language policies and practices.

Metadiscursive Regimes

Bauman and Briggs (2003) discuss the notion of ‘metadiscursive regimes’ as a process through which Western European language ideologies are reproduced. Metadiscursive regimes, as Makoni and Pennycook (2007) define, are “representations of language which, together with material instantiations of actual occurring language” (p. 2); these involve “social action, social facts and can function as agents in the exercise of social and political power” (Jaffe, 1999, p. 15). In other words, metadiscursive regimes include “specific orders that condition the way we talk about language” (Park, 2013, p. 558) and “normative discourses about language” (Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck, 2005, p. 212).

Wee (2010) argues that metadiscursive regimes “are not simply descriptive but contain normative implications about how individuals and/or groups ought to be acting with respect to language” (p. 112). Wee (2010) finds that Singapore’s bilingual education policy is shaped by the metadiscursive regimes of the standard language ideology and essentialized language-ethnicity linkage. The policy assigns each community with a mother tongue: Mandarin, Malay and Tamil to Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities, respectively. However, this mother tongue ideology does not represent linguistic diversity in each of these community. For example, Chinese communities also speak Cantonese and Indian people also speak Hindi. Most importantly, the policy imposes a standard English ideology and bans the use of Singlish, a local variety of English in schools.

Makoni (2012) and Ndhlovu (2015), among others, have found that the multilingual education policies and their related discourses in South Africa are heavily loaded with the

metadiscursive regimes of colonial language ideologies. Makoni (2012), for example, argues that the mainstream understanding of multilingualism contains “a power sense of social romanticism” (p. 192) which does not necessarily challenge the long history of linguistic and racial discriminations in South Africa. Similarly, Ndhlovu (2015) contends that the “epistemological architecture of multilingualism” (p. 12) in education and national policies is located in a modernist colonial ideology. He contends that the reproduction of the colonial ideology, which promotes a hierarchical and additive nature of multilingualism, has reinforced “social class hegemony and privilege by masking endemic inequalities, narrow forms of ethno-nationalisms, and xenophobia” (p. 12). Indeed, these scholars contend that the colonial language ideology has not addressed the actual state of linguistic and cultural diversity and complexity in South Africa.

Iconization, Linguistic Nationalism, and Standard Language Ideology

In this dissertation, I use ‘iconization’ as a major discursive process through which colonial language ideologies are reproduced in local language policy discourses and practices. Based on their work in South Africa, Irvine and Gal (2000) define iconization as a process through which ‘social images’ and identities of languages are constructed. Iconization is concerned with categorization of languages and labelling and giving identities to speakers of different languages. It also deals with the indexicality of a language; that is, the prestige, value, and power of a language (Blommaert, 2005). In this dissertation, I have used iconization to interpret the ways in which different languages—Nepali, English, and indigenous languages—are given differential values and prestige in language policy discourses and practices.

Iconization has been a major discursive process through which the ideology of linguistic nationalism is reproduced. Scholars such as Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991), and Blommaert (2014) have discussed the role of language in the creation of the nation-state. These scholars

argue that the 18th century European ideology of the nation-state has pushed the ideology of language as a homogenous and unifying force in order to strengthen nationalism. This ideology defines one's national identity in terms of their ability to speak 'a national' language, which is used in print and is spoken by members of the upper classes. It is through such monolingual policies that the nation-state categorized one language as a 'national' language and others as 'mother tongue' and 'ethnic languages'. However, Anderson (1991) contends that monolingual nationalism is very limiting and marginalizing: "only a tiny fraction of the population...uses the national language in conversation or on paper" (Anderson, 1991, p. 58). Mostly importantly, this ideology excludes the multilingual language practices and identities of multilingual speakers from national policies.

Blommaert (1999, 2006, 2014) analyzes how Tanzanian language policy has promoted the knowledge of Swahili as a 'socially desirable' and 'ideal' linguistic skill (Blommaert, 2006). Swahili was imposed as the sole language of education, politics, government business, and the mass media. It was also standardized as a "purified artifact of normativity" (p. 244) supporting the nation-building project. Consequently, speaking 'purer' and 'standard' Swahili becomes the sole marker of one's Tanzanian national identity. The nation-state ideology is equally influential in other countries as well. For example, Boyd (2011) shows that Swedish language policies are guided by the ideology of uniformity in which "Swedish is to be a complete language serving and uniting society" (p. 26). As Swedish is legitimized as the 'official' language of courts, administrative agencies, and other public domains, other minority languages do not find significant spaces in public spheres.

Related to nation-state ideology, standard language ideology has been reproduced through the iconization of language in language policy and practices. Standard language

ideology, as Milroy (2001) defines, is “the belief that there is one and only one correct spoken form of the language, modeled on a single correct written form” (p. 1). Lippi-Green (1997) maintains that this ideology is “drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class” (p. 64) and creates hierarchies of language by labelling minoritized languages as ‘incorrect’ and ‘inappropriate’ for nationalism and modern education. For example, the dominant language policy in the US still reproduces a standard English ideology, particularly in its testing system (e.g., Menken & García, 2010; Wiley, 2013). Consequently, non-standard language practices used by minoritized groups—including African American Vernacular English and Pidgins—are not recognized as legitimate languages in education. More strikingly, multilingual learners are labelled as ‘English language learners’ (ELLs) and as students with ‘limited English proficiency’ (LEP) in terms of their non-standard English. Such labels iconically construct the identity of multilingual learners as ‘deficient’ and ‘weak’ and reject their linguistic and cultural capital, identities, and voices. Moreover, Flores and Rosa (2015) have contended that the appropriation of standard language ideology in education reproduces racial inequalities and discriminations.

The reproduction of standard language ideology in language policy creates an order of indexicality (Blommaert, 2005). For Blommaert (2005), an order of indexicality refers to “stratified normative complexes that organize distinction between, on the one hand, ‘good’, ‘normal’, ‘appropriate’, and ‘acceptable’ language use and, on the other, ‘deviant’, ‘abnormal’ etc. language use” (p. 6). For example, as Wee (2011) discusses, Singapore’s language policy discourages the use of Singlish, a local variety of English, in education because it is iconically labeled as a ‘handicap’. Quoting the former Prime Minister, Wee (2011) maintains that the Singapore government advocates for Speak Good English Movement because it “fears that the

presence of Singlish might actually undermine English language proficiency” (p. 99). However, the dominant use of Singlish is in social interactions, even by government officials, political leaders, and social media. In another study, Olthuis, Kivelä, and Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) have shown that the Saami people in Norway have had their language described as a “degeneration, a low cultural level and weak mental capacities, physical and mental stultification” (p. 221). Similarly, Native Americans have been described as people “distinguished from beasts only by possessing the bodily human forms” (p. 221). All of these negative labels for minoritized languages and language practices are rooted in the iconization process, which was used by Western European colonizers to make a distinction between and maintain unequal power relations with indigenous people (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

Ideological construction of the iconization of language is also concerned with the (mis)representation of people speaking different languages. Bhatt (2010) and other scholars such as Ramanathan (2005) and Annamalai (2003) analyze the role of European colonial ideologies in creating an essentialist dichotomous ideology which define the role of English as ‘superior’, ‘civilized’, and ‘modern’ in language policy in India. Drawing on the Macaulay’s Minutes, which set the foundation for modern education in India, Bhatt (2010) shows that the Minute—which has reproduced the European language ideology—has described local Indian languages as poor and rude and not fit for literary and scientific information.

Erasure and Marginalization of Minoritized Languages

I use ‘erasure’ to discuss the displacement of minoritized languages from schools and public discourses. Irvine and Gal (2000) define the concept as a process which “renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible” (p. 38). Erasure includes the process in which the “facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get

explained away” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). In other words, erasure occurs when language and/or language practices that do not fit in the colonial ideological scheme of language as a fixed, standard, and autonomous object are purposefully made invisible and considered illegitimate. For example, Irvine and Gal (2000) observe that European linguists did not pay attention to dialectical variations in the Sareer language (e.g., Cargin dialect) for the sake of maintaining ‘linguistic purity’ in Macedonia. They further find that Macedonia, following the colonial ideology, adopted a monolingual language policy after its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.

In modern Greece, Tsitsipis (2003) finds that Arvanitika is marginalized in dominant language policy because it is iconically presented as simply the language of the ‘past’ and of certain cultural performances, but it is not embraced as the language of wider sociopolitical and educational purposes. Arvanitika is also not given an equal space in national language policies due to a dominant assumption that its lack of a writing system is a symbol of inherent inadequacy. Based on his analysis of both dominant and resistance discourses in Singaporean language policy, Tan (2012) reveals that Chinese dialects other than Mandarin are erased from official policy despite the growing public concern to recognize other Chinese languages such as Cantonese. Other languages are erased because they do not fit into the government’s ideology of Chinese national identity being a homogenous group of Mandarin speakers; that is, the government assumes that Mandarin is the only dialect that represents Chinese ethnic identity.

The erasure of indigenous languages and language practices even more pervasive globally. Scholars such Skutnabb-Kangas and Heugh (2012) and Wyman et al. (2014) have revealed that languages used by indigenous children are erased from schools because they do not fit into the monolingual nation-state ideology. McCarty (2003, 2006) has argued that indigenous

languages are being erased from mainstream education due to standard language ideology and the increased influence of the global neoliberal ideology of English. García (2009) and Menken (2013) further reveal that the punitive de facto English-only policy has erased multilingual speakers' translingual practices from schools. Such an erasure however results in minoritized children's linguistic insecurity, sense of inferiority, and lack of participation in the teaching-learning process (Cummins, 2006). More strikingly, monolingual English-only policies and practices have deeply instilled a number of false assumptions, such as 'English equals quality education' and 'English provides better life opportunities'.

Fractal Recursivity and the Monolingual Mindset

Fractal recursivity is another ideological process through which colonial language ideologies creep into language policies and practices. Fractal recursivity occurs when the "dichotomizing and partitioning process that was involved in some understood opposition recurs at other levels, creating either subcategories on each side of a contrast or supercategories that include both sides but oppose them to something else" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). In other words, it involves the "repetition of the same contrast but at different scales" (Gal, 2005, p. 27). Fractal recursivity provides critical insight into analyzing how monolingual ideologies recur, implicitly and explicitly, even in multilingual education policies, discourses, and practices.

Mother Tongue Ideology and Multilingual Education Policy

The term 'mother tongue' is popularly used in language policy documents, particularly in those related to indigenous and minoritized languages. Policy makers, indigenous people, teachers, students, activists, and media intuitively use the term to describe indigenous and minority languages. However, the historical, sociopolitical, and ideological meanings of the term

‘mother tongue’ are complex; there needs to be a nuanced discussion to better understand whether or not the term reproduces the metadiscursive regime of Western colonial ideologies.

As Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) argue, the term ‘mother tongue’ is “extremely difficult to define” (p. 19). Kroon (2003) defines it as “one’s native language, i.e. the language of one’s mother or the language one speaks with one’s mother—more generally, the language that is provided by a child’s direct attendants in the home, without any participation of education institutions” (p. 35). It is also defined as a language that a child first picks up from family members, mostly from the mother. However, this conceptualization of mother tongue has a number of complications. First, as Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) discuss, children can simultaneously pick up multiple languages and use them equally for socialization in a multilingual context. They might become more competent in a language other than the one used by his/her mother or parents. In this sense, “it is impossible to designate that individual’s ‘mother tongue’ except in the literal sense” (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 19).

Although ‘mother tongue’ has become a popular term in liberal language rights discourses (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1989), its epistemology is located in the Western colonial metadiscursive regime. During the Nazi regime, German was constructed as the ‘mother tongue’ to fight for nationhood and self-preservation (Weber & Horner, 2012). The Nazi regime adopted German as a common ‘mother tongue’, standardized it, and promoted it as the symbol of German nationalism (Coulmas, 1995). The German ‘mother tongue’ was invented to develop a common national consciousness among the public that speaking languages other than standard German was not part of German nationalism. Indeed, the notion of ‘mother tongue’ was created in contrast to ‘other tongue’ (Pattanayak, 1981). In this sense, ‘mother tongue’ embraces the

same linguistic nationalism ideology which promotes a dichotomous, homogeneous, and standardized notion of language (Kroon, 2003).

Fractal recursivity of colonial language ideologies is seen in language policy discourses and practices, including multilingual ones. In the context of India, for example, the notion of mother tongue was created by British rulers and maintained by Indian elites as a way to ‘other’ languages other than the standard that had no written tradition (Khubchandani, 2003). While the term ‘mother tongue’ has contributed towards creating the discourse of ethnolinguistic identity and nationalism in the post-colonial era, this ideology does not necessarily embrace the complex heterogeneity that exists within ethnic groups and indigenous communities. In other words, the British colonial ‘mother tongue’ ideology did not embrace the complex linguistically heterogeneous landscape of India which existed in the pre-colonial period (Canagarajah & Ashraf, 2013). Critiquing how multilingual language policy discourses are still carrying the same colonial metadiscursive regimes in India, Khubchandani (2003) argues that mother tongue ideology consistently insists on uniformity and homogeneity. He finds that the mother tongue education policy privileges a standardized variety of minority languages spoken by the urban elites. Indeed, the mother tongue policy does not take into account speech variations and multilingual complexity at the grassroots level.

The mother tongue ideology also reproduces dichotomous and essentialized ethnicity-language relationships. Wee and Bokhorst-Heng (2005) contend that the mother tongue ideology in Singapore’s language policy considers ‘mother tongue’ as an inherent embodiment of “one’s ethnically defined culture” (p. 167) and English as an embodiment of “a different culture” (p. 167). The mother tongue policy is conceived as a way in which the students are imparted with “Asian values” to counter “the Western decadence association with learning English” (Wee &

Bokhorst-Heng, 2005, p. 178). Although mother tongue policy recognizes Asian values, this language ideology does not embrace Singapore's local linguistic diversity within ethnic groups. For example, although Tamil is considered the mother tongue for the Indian community, there are other languages that Indian people in Singapore speak. Most interestingly, as Tan (2012) argues, the resistance discourses that seek to recognize other Chinese dialects in language policy also reproduce essentialist ideologies. Cantonese speakers, for example, claim that they have to speak their own dialect, not Mandarin, to self-recognize as Chinese (Tan, 2012).

Weber and Horner (2012) conduct a critical analysis of how mother-tongue education in South Africa is not adequate to address local multilingualism and the continuance of biliteracy. As the mother-tongue ideology shows an essential linkage of language with ethnicity and race, policies based on this ideology do not necessarily embrace growing linguistic diversity and complex language practices.

Additive Multilingual Education and Language Purism

Recent studies have critically examined the additive approach to multilingual education (García, 2009). Building on the traditional model of bilingual education as teaching two autonomous languages, this additive approach focuses on teaching two or more languages one after another. This sequential approach to multilingual education reproduces the notion of 'two solitudes' (Cummins, 2006) or 'parallel monolingualism' (Baker, 2011). García (2009) argues that the additive approach to multilingual education embraces a monoglossic ideology which "assumes that legitimate linguistic practices are only those enacted by monolinguals" (p. 115). In this approach, languages are carefully compartmentalized and multilingual learners' proficiency is evaluated according to monolingual norms. In other words, additive multilingualism reproduces monolingualism as a norm in learning multiple languages. In this approach,

languages are functionally kept apart and students are expected to perform monolingual standards.

In other words, the additive approach to multilingual education rejects fluid multilingual practices that do not fit into the monolingual standard norm as a legitimate language in education. This approach reproduces the ideology of language purism which assumes that code-switching, dialect-mixing, and translingual practices are signs of language deficiency (García, 2009; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Weber & Horner, 2012). Moreover, this approach sees minority language speakers as monolingual and takes their multilingualism as a problem (García, 2009). Rather than promoting the coexistence of multilingual practice, this approach focuses on multilingual education as a way to help minority students successfully transition to dominant languages and cultures.

Since additive multilingualism embraces the recursiveness of colonial metadiscursive regimes, García (2009) proposes recursive and dynamic multilingual education that embraces heteroglossic practices. Heteroglossia, as opposed to diglossia, not only includes multilingual practices such as translanguaging (see Chapter 8), but also embraces multiple voices, identities, and modes of using language (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). Focused on language revitalization, recursive multilingual education recognizes language minorities as emergent bilinguals and sees their multilingualism “as a right, and works towards the acceptance of all of their linguistic and cultural differences” (García, 2009, p. 118). Likewise, dynamic multilingual education embraces translingual language practices, transcultural identities, and hybrid cultural experiences as a resource. Rather than focusing on separate functional allocations, this approach of multilingual education pays attention to functional interrelationships and the coexistence of different languages.

The additive model of multilingual education policy supports, rather than challenges, colonial language ideologies such as monolingualism, standard languages, and language purism. For example, Canagarajah and Ashraf (2013) find that India's trilingual policy (Hindi, English, and a local/indigenous language) reproduces a monolingual ideology which defines language as a bounded object. They claim that such policies do not address multilingual practices which are characterized by the fluidity and simultaneity of languages in the local context. García (2009) and Flores and Rosa (2015) further contend that additive bilingualism does not embrace the non-standard and multilingual practices of emergent bilingual speakers, but rather reproduce the same monolingual ideology which considers native speaker proficiency as a model for assessment.

Neoliberalism and the Creative Destruction of Linguistic Diversity

We are now experiencing a tremendous shift in the world's political-economic condition. Social policies, economic plans, and education policies are all influenced by economic globalization which constitutes a free and competitive market economy, state deregulation, and privatization (Harvey, 2005; Lipman, 2011). This new political-economic condition, known as neoliberalism, has influenced our views about what counts as a legitimate language and language policy. Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as:

a theory of political economic practices that proposes human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. (p. 2)

First conceived in the early 1980s by Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the US, neoliberal ideology has become hegemonic as a mode of discourse (Harvey, 2005) in education policy, including multilingual policies. In the current neoliberal discourses, human consciousness and behaviors, including language use and learning, are shaped “not by collective institutions and interaction, but by supply and demand, by entrepreneurs and consumer choice, by individual companies and individual people” (Holborow, 2015, p. 34). As language, like other objects, is reconstituted as a commodity in the market (Heller, 2010), educational policies and practices unquestionably embrace the legitimacy of the language that dominates the local and global educational marketplace. Because neoliberalism has redefined education as a means to produce human capital (a neoliberal subject who is competent to serve in the capitalist market economy), policy-makers reproduce the hegemony of English as a language of the global market.

Neoliberalism supports the recursiveness of Western colonial ideologies in language policy. Ricento (2015) and Phillipson (2008) critically examine the political economy of English as a global language and critique that its dominance has exacerbated the unequal distribution of knowledge and economy. Phillipson (2008) contends that the expansion of English as symbolic capital in the educational marketplace is indeed a deliberate effort to maintain the dominance of American and British history of colonization, militarization (rule over the world), and economic accumulation. Phillipson (2008) claims that English-as-a-global-language ideology is guided by two implicit colonial ideologies: linguistic nationalism and language-as-commodity. On the one hand, this ideology reflects an Anglo-American desire to develop an imagined global community that speaks the same language, English. On the other hand, English is promoted as a commodity to maintain Anglo-American dominance in the educational market globally. For example, Piller and Cho (2013) discuss how English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy in South Korean higher

education supports social inequalities. They find that “while the benefits of English proficiency to some individuals in South Korea are obviously substantial, the costs of English to the common good are potentially much larger” (p. 39). Piller and Cho (2013) contend that by presenting English as the de facto language of competitive market education, neoliberalism has suppressed freedom of speech by not recognizing the use of Korean as a legitimate language of competition in education. They further argue that English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy has created a heavy financial burden for the nation-state along with fear and anxiety of failure (even leading to suicide) among South Korean educators and students in schools and universities.

As language education policies are influenced by global neoliberal ideologies, the space for minoritized languages continues to diminish and the nature of multilingualism becomes even more hierarchical. Heller’s (2010) analysis shows that the past nation-state ideology has now been relegitimated and replaced with the ideology of language-as-commodity. As the choice and legitimacy of language in education are determined by their exchange value in the free educational market (Block et al., 2012), minoritized languages and language practices are given the least priority or are erased from educational policies due to their low commodity value. Holborow (2015) contends that the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism reproduces linguistic, political, and economic inequalities between developed and developing countries and between the poor and rich (also see Block et al., 2012).

Drawing on language policies from the post-colonial contexts of India and South Africa (and other countries where English is taught as a foreign and additional language), Ricento (2015) aptly argues that the English language expansion—both as a subject and a medium of teaching—has actually exacerbated the gap between the poor and the rich. He claims that “English is often promoted by its advocates as a social ‘good’ with unquestioned instrumental

value; yet access to quality English-medium education in low-income countries is mostly restricted to those with sufficient economic means to pay for it” (Ricento, 2015, p. 1).

Recent studies have shown that neoliberal ideologies have supported colonial ideologies and created a hierarchy of languages in local contexts. In the Philippines, for example, Tupas (2015) argues that the inequalities of multilingualism rooted in linguistic colonialism and nationalism are further exacerbated by the introduction of English as the working language of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). As the Philippines is a member of ASEAN, there is thus growing interest in the teaching and learning of English. Tupas (2015) also shows that students are punished for speaking languages other than English in school. Like in the Philippines, other post-colonial countries are heavily affected by neoliberal English language ideology. Mohanty (2006), for example, reveals how English language ideology has created a multilingualism of unequals in India. Due to the historical dominance of the colonial metadiscursive regime of English as a superior, elite, or modern language, Mohanty (2006) asserts that India’s multilingualism has become hierarchical. Minoritized languages do not receive much attention because of their perceived low status in the hierarchy of multilingualism. This hierarchy is closely linked with the sociopolitical hierarchy. While a relatively small percentage of the Indian population take advantage of the English education policy, a large number of people still lack literacy and are affected by a high level of poverty (Annamalai, 2003; Ramanathan, 2005).

Davis and Phyak (forthcoming) have argued that it is important to acknowledge that neoliberal ideologies contribute to a ‘creative destruction’ (Harvey, 2005) of linguistic diversity, minoritized languages, and non-standard language practices that do not enjoy greater symbolic value in the local and/or global market. They claim that

in promoting the ideology of language commodification, neoliberalism not only creates unequal access to production, distribution, and consumption of linguistic and educational resources, but also weakens a sense of “collectivity, social responsibility, equality, and solidarity” (Lipman, 2011, p. 10). Thus, indigenous and other socioeconomic challenged peoples are often dispossessed from the benefits of utilizing their own languages, cultures, knowledge systems, and literacy practices. Given language policies are dictated by the economic market, schools and universities develop policies that are ultimately defined as spaces to produce ‘human capital’ in which market and educational knowledge and skills are repackaged as marketable entities that can be bought and sold (see Holborow, 2015). (n.p.)

This perspective is particularly helpful for me to analyze how Nepal’s current expansion of English-as-a-medium-of-instruction is shaped by the global neoliberal discourses. More specifically, this perspective provides critical insights into analyzing how neoliberalism supports English-only ideology and how this ideology contributes to the erasure of multilingualism in education.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the construction and reproduction of colonial language ideologies in language policies. I have shown that despite the fact that the multilingual turn is an existential reality in schools and communities, hegemonic monolingual ideologies still dominate language policies and practices. I have discussed how the multilingual turn upholds an alternative ideological perspective with regard to language and language policies. Two issues emerge from the discussion in this chapter: first, the importance of understanding the construction and reproduction of language ideologies that exacerbate language domination, language hierarchies, the erasure of multilingualism, and epistemic violence. As the monolingual

ideologies in the guise of nationalism and neoliberalism have been accepted as the norm in education, I have argued for engagement in decolonizing language ideologies.

This chapter states that it is necessary to make explicit the discursive processes, such as metadiscursive regimes, iconization, fractal recursivity, erasure, commodification, mother tongue, and additive multilingualism through which the colonial ideologies—a standard language, monolingualism, language purism, homogeneity, linguistic nationalism, and neoliberalism—are reproduced. As Conteh and Meier (2014) and Tupas (2015) argue, exposing such ideologies and processes through which they are reproduced is the first step towards transforming language policies by decolonizing hegemonic languages ideologies. The theories discussed in this chapter provide a critical framework to engage participants in decolonizing language ideologies and creating alternative ideologies to promote multilingualism in education. In sum, the critical analysis of colonial ideologies and their impacts indicates that there is the need for engaging with decolonizing language ideologies. To this end, this chapter signposts the need for understanding the “wholeness of marginalized communities” and “a pluralistic mode of thinking where we celebrate different cultures and identities” through “actively negotiated epistemological tradition” (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 20). This chapter also indicates that it is important to question dominant paradigms and practices in language policies, including those that are multilingual, to promote equitable language education.

Chapter 3: Engaged Language Policy and Practices

Introduction

Ideological creation and its comprehension only take place in the process of social intercourse. Each individual act in the creation of ideology is an inseparable part of social intercourse, one of its dependent components, and therefore cannot be studied apart from the whole social process that gives it its meaning. (Bakhtin, 1978, p. 126)

We engage in dialogical approaches not because they are methods guaranteed to succeed, but fundamentally because we are drawn to the spirit of equality, mutuality, and cooperation that animates them. (Burbules, 1993, p. 143)

In the previous chapter, I have unraveled colonial language ideologies that pose unrepresented challenges—both ideological and implementational—for multilingualism in education. While exposing hegemonic language ideologies as part of decolonial efforts, it is equally important to focus on how language policy actors engage in building critical awareness of and transform these ideologies. In this chapter, I discuss ‘engaged language policy’ (ELP) (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2015; Davis & Phyak, forthcoming; Phyak & Bui, 2014) as an overarching conceptual framework of the dissertation. ELP pays attention to the process of engaging language policy actors in decolonizing language ideologies by raising critical awareness of hegemonic language ideologies and engaging them in creating and supporting liberating practices.

As an interdisciplinary theory of language policy, this approach draws on critical and transformative theories from multiple disciplines, such as (a) critical ethnography of language policy (e.g., Canagarajah, 2006; Davis, 2009; McCarty, 2011; Pennycook, 2013; Ricento, 2015; Tollefson, 2015); (b) linguistic anthropology (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Kroskrity, 2009; Silverstein, 1979; Woolard, 2006); (c) social psychology (Fine, 2009); (d) critical theories (Althusser, 1971;

Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu, 1991; Gramsci, 1970; Habermas, 1991; Harvey, 2006); (d) critical sociolinguistics (Blommaert, 2013; Hymes, 1996; Labov, 1982); (e) transformative education (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994); (f) indigenous language education (Hornberger, 2006; McCarty et al. 2014; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013); and, (g) critical multilingual education (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009; Heller, 20006). All of these theories help to question dominant assumptions, paradigms, and practices and provide insights into engaging language policy actors in language policy transformations.

Engaged Language Policy as a Paradigm Shift

ELP is a recent conceptualization of the language policy efforts from a transformative and equity perspective (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2015; Shohamy, 2015). Considering language policy as a complex ideological phenomenon informed by local and global sociopolitical dynamics, Davis (2014) defines ELP as “a conceptual and dialogic approach grounded in critical theory and informed by political activism” (p. 83) and places “critical engagement at the center of transformative and agentive language practices” (p. 83). While acknowledging the contribution of both historical-structural and existing ethnographic approaches, ELP focuses on ethnographically-grounded and locally-situated efforts towards decolonizing dominant language ideologies that shape mainstream views of language and language policies and reconstructing new knowledge claims about language policies (Davis & Phyak, 2015). While reimagining language policy from social equity perspective, ELP focuses on what Lin (2013) says below:

We also need to confront ourselves with a central set of tasks or questions: why are students and teachers are constantly put under such language policies that are counterproductive to their learning and teaching? What are the legitimation processes of such policies, and what the hegemonic mechanisms at work? Why are these hegemonies

so persistent and difficult to break? What can initiate change in language policy and planning? What further resources can local actors harness to counter the hegemony of these policies?” (Lin, 2013, p. 224).

This study discusses the ways in which indigenous villagers, youth, and teachers in Nepal are engaged in countering and transforming hegemonic language ideologies. I heavily draw on Davis and Phyak’s recent and forthcoming publications (e.g., Davis & Phyak, 2015; Davis & Phyak, forthcoming). I particularly build on their perspective that ELP which emphasizes the engagement of language policy actors in “critical dialogue to unravel, challenge, and transform hegemonic language ideologies that shape dominant language policies and practices” (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming; see Phyak & Bui, 2014). Davis and Phyak (forthcoming) focus on “the right to multilingual practices in schools and other public and private spheres” and take ELP as a process of supporting “local participants in meeting their language, education, economic and human welfare needs” (n.p.). Drawing on critical and transformative theories, ELP perspectives in this dissertation, as Davis and Phyak (forthcoming) argue, “discuss ways in which communities are engaged in agentic processes towards transforming marginalizing educational and social welfare policies” (n.p.). More importantly, the ELP perspectives challenge the top-down approach to language policy and seeks to engage multiple actors in policy creation, interpretation, and transformation processes. At the same time, ELP focuses on empowering marginalized communities and promoting their language activism for equitable language policies.

While embracing the above perspectives, this dissertation considers ELP as a paradigm shift and argues for moving our attention from colonial ideologies to local epistemologies and language practices (Canagarajah, 2005; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013; Lin, 2013; Lin & Martin, 2005). As Davis (2014) argues, “moving towards the local suggests acknowledging not only

traditions, but also innovation that realistically meets situated socioeconomic, educational, health, and other human welfare needs” (pp. 83-84). This paradigm shift in language policy is informed by public sphere theory (Tollefson, 2013), which Habermas (1964) defines as “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (p. 49). In the public sphere,

Access is guaranteed to all citizens.... They [citizens] then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion--that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions--about matters of general interest. (Habermas, 1964, p. 49)

The public sphere theory provides critical insights into understanding how dominant public opinions are formed and whose ideologies, voices, identities, agencies, and epistemologies are representing those opinions. Public sphere theory also embraces the importance of multiple counter-publics or subaltern publics. The notion of subaltern public sphere supports the idea that there are alternative perspectives, ideologies, and practices among the people who are often disengaged from mainstream language policy making processes. While taking an engaged approach, this dissertation focuses on “the margins and borders of states, regions, and communities” (Tollefson, 2013, p. 27) and on the construction of alternative ideologies, identities, and epistemologies with regard to language policies and practices.

Negotiating Ideological Tension and Ideological Becoming

ELP acknowledges the ideological tension in language policies and engages with different language policy actors to understand and negotiate that tension. Engaging in this tension is dialogic in nature and arises as dominant ideologies continue to be imposed in

linguistically diverse contexts (Blommaert, 2013). Bakhtin's (1981) discussion on dialectic relationships between centripetal and centrifugal forces helps to understand ideological tension in a multilingual context. As unifying factors, centripetal forces work toward "verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of *sociopolitical and cultural centralization*" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 271, emphasis added). These forces include "the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization" (p. 271) which are opposed to everyday heteroglossic multilingual practices. In other words, centripetal forces continue to reproduce the metadiscursive regimes of nation-state ideology and linguistic homogenization (Lin, 2014). On the other hand, centrifugal forces challenge the view of language as a unitary and autonomous entity. As an "uninterrupted process of decentralization and disunification" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272), these forces constitute linguistic diversity and socio-ideological diversification. ELP builds on the ideological tension between centripetal and centrifugal forces as integral to engaging language policy actors towards ideological awareness and activism for language policy transformation.

Bakhtin's (1981) notion of 'ideological becoming' further strengthens the epistemological stance of ELP as an approach to build ideological awareness of language policy actors. From a Bakhtinian perspective, 'ideological becoming' refers to "how we develop our way of viewing the world, our system of ideas" (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 5). Also known as 'socio-ideological language consciousness', ideological becoming is an ongoing process which emerges from participants' constant engagement in understanding and analyzing ideological tensions created in language policy discourses and practices. For Bakhtin (1981), ideological becoming does not occur in an isolated fashion, "but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world" (p. 14). ELP in this dissertation engages indigenous villagers, youth, and

teachers in analyzing sociopolitical environment that surrounds language policy issues.

Engagement in understanding sociopolitical and economic environment is particularly important because human consciousness about language policy is determined by the ‘ideological environment’ (Bakhtin, 1981) they are situated in. Bakhtin (1981) underscores the importance of how it is important to understand ideologies for building critical consciousness as follows:

In fact, the individual consciousness can only become a consciousness by being realized in the forms of the ideological environment proper to it: in language, in conventionalized gesture, in artistic image, in myth, and so on. (p. 14)

In this dissertation, my focus is on engaging participants in exploring and analyzing language ideologies in relation to the broader sociopolitical environment (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2015). For Bakhtin (1981), the ideological environment is filled with contradictions and tensions emanated from two discourses--authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses (Bakhtin, 1981). The authoritative discourses, located in a ‘distanced zone’, represent dominant voices, ideologies, power and authority. As a ‘prior discourse’ (Bakhtin, 1981), these discourses are unquestionably taken as a granted; remain unchanged; and provide no room for alternative discourses. On the other hand, internally persuasive discourses are “denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society..., not even in the legal code” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342). Critical consciousness about dominant language ideologies and the process of ideological becoming (construction of new consciousness) begins as participants engage in dialogue to analyze the tensions between these two discourses. Therefore, ELP in this dissertation embraces the ideological tension as a transformative space for engaging language policy actors in unveiling the impact of colonial ideologies on their own lived memories, social lives, educational experiences, access to political power, and community dynamics. This engagement leads to ideological awareness of language policy actors by helping

to build greater ideological clarification (Fishman, 2000; Kroskrity, 2009) and ideological becoming (Bakhtin, 1981).

Engaged Language Policy for Ideological Clarification

Ideological awareness involves two interrelated concepts: ideological clarification and ideological becoming. These concepts support the idea that “the need for clarity of political beliefs, practices, and commitments is as important as the actual pedagogical strategies used in instruction” (Trueba & Bartolomé, 2000, p. 278). To put it differently, an ELP perspective argues that engaging language policy actors such as students, teachers, and parents in ideological analysis is equally important as engaging in actual pedagogical practices. Indeed, as Benson (2013) and Tupas (2015) argue, if we are committed to transform hegemonic ideologies and promote equitable multilingualism in education, ideological analysis must be an integral aspect of education policies and practices, including teacher education.

The notion of ‘ideological clarification’ has provided critical insights into making sense of what my participants were achieving by engaging in dialogue on language policy issues. Used in the field of language revitalization (e.g., Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998; Fishman, 2001) and linguistic anthropology (e.g., Kroskrity, 2009), this concept refers to the process of developing ideological awareness of the constraints on minoritized indigenous languages. As a precondition for ensuring space for minoritized languages in the public sphere, Kroskrity (2009) defines ideological clarification as follows:

Language ideological clarification is the process of identifying issues of language ideological contestation within a heritage language community, including both beliefs and feelings that are indigenous to that community and those introduced by outsiders (such as linguists and government officials), that can negatively impact community efforts to successfully engage in language maintenance and renewal. This process of identifying and raising consciousness about linguistic and discursive issues enables

appropriate discourses to occur between community members, or between members and either linguists or government officials who have differing opinions. Ideally these discourses would promote actual resolution—a clarification achieved—or foster a tolerable level of disagreement that would not inhibit language renewal activities. (p. 73)

Ideological clarification involves engaging in contesting ideologies and raising critical consciousness which is built upon local epistemologies, language practices, histories, and activism. Lee (2009) has engaged Native American youth in counter-narrative projects as a way to enhance their critical ideological awareness about how the ideologies of Native American people are not recognized in dominant language policies. Lee's (2009) study shows that engaging youth in understanding and negotiating ideological tensions helps them become aware of ideologies in dominant language policies and their impacts on the lived experiences of Native American people. She additionally finds that this awareness leads to youth agency and activism towards reclaiming their linguistic and cultural identities and a commitment towards creating space for minoritized languages in the public sphere of education. Such awareness and activism builds on language policy actors' engagement in negotiating inherent ideological tensions that emerge from complex interactions between indigenous, national, colonial, and postcolonial perspectives on language policy (Kroskrity, 2009).

Fishman (2001) describes ideological clarification as a way to denaturalize hegemonic language ideologies favoring monolingualism as a norm. He critiques that an extremely reductionist market-oriented neoliberal language derecognizes the interconnectedness of language with identity, community problem solving, education, health, and cultural creativity (Fishman, 2001). Fishman (2001) also contends that the Western colonial ideology of language Darwinism emerges from the interest of the dominant groups to maintain their political power.

Most importantly, he claims the linguistic nationalism ideology which promotes a monolingual ideology must be denaturalized.

As an ‘ongoing process’, Kroskrity (2009) further theorizes the notion of ideological clarification as a central component of language policy transformation. He discusses three aspects of ideological clarification: awareness, positionality, and multiplicity. Awareness deals with a critical analysis of common sense linguistic beliefs and practices and the development of “discursive consciousness” (Kroskrity, 2009, p. 80) of ideological issues. Because one’s perspectives about language and language policies are determined by their sociopolitical and economic position, an engagement in the process of achieving ideological clarification also involves a critical understanding of the sociopolitical positionality of the language policy actors. Moreover, ideological clarification involves the process of being aware of multiple ideologies and how they impact language policies and practices. This process eventually leads to increased critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) about marginalizing language ideologies and the creation of alternative discourses and practices.

Engaging in Awakening a Sense of Injustice

Keeping ideological awareness at the center of ELP, this dissertation focuses on engaging participants in awakening a sense of injustice (Duetsch, 1974), which involves knowing, talking, and building critical awareness about the connection between broader social injustices and linguistic injustices (Piller, 2016). Awakening a sense of injustice “unveils and provokes critical consciousness and actions” (Stoudt, Fox, & Fine, 2011, p. 166). I take this concept as a way to analyze how ELP contributes to raising participants’ awareness of linguistic discriminations—which Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) calls ‘linguicism’—in dominant language policies and practices. ELP engages the participants in analyzing and understanding “ideologies, structures and

practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, p. 13). Awakening includes becoming aware of how linguisticism operates “as a more subtle way of hierarchizing social groups in the contemporary world” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 241) and how it affects the sociopolitical and educational experiences.

In this dissertation, engaging participants’ in awakening a sense of injustice is focused on ‘parity of participation’ (Fraser, 2009; Piller, 2016) and ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2007). Parity of participation, related to procedural justice, is concerned with the question of who has the right to make language policies (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming). ELP engages participants in critical dialogue to raise critical consciousness of their own role, participation, and identity in existing language policies and practices. While engaging the participants in understanding how the dominant language policies disengage and disenfranchise certain groups of people, ELP engages them in understanding and transforming epistemic injustices imposed by monolingual ideologies. Fricker (2007) argues that epistemic injustice occurs when the identity of someone as a knower is erased.

Recent studies have shown that monolingual ideologies pose formidable challenges for multilingual learners’ epistemic access to literacy and academic skills in mainstream schools. In South Africa, Makalela (2015) critically analyzes how language policies (including multilingual policies)—which embrace the colonial ideology of language as a separate, fixed, and autonomous entity to be taught as distinct and pure subjects—disregard the multilingual identities and fluid language practices of minoritized language speakers in this country. This study reveals that imposing a segregationist monolingual ideology in education both minimizes

the identity of minoritized language speakers as sources of knowledge and creates problems for having access to knowledge taught monolingually. Makalela (2015), therefore, speaks of ‘moving out of linguistic boxes’ and engages pre-service teachers in adopting translanguaging approaches in teaching multilingual indigenous children. By showing teachers how using three different languages supports children’s ways of learning, Makalela (2015) argues that translanguaging recognizes multilingual learners as knowers by recognizing their own knowledge-base to access schooled literacy and academic knowledge.

García and Leiva (2014) describe translanguaging as a “mechanism for social justice, especially when teaching students from language minoritized communities” (p. 200). Their study shows that engaging teachers in translanguaging not only transforms the hegemonic language ideologies, but also, and more importantly, contributes to create a safe and dialogic learning space for language minoritized students. In this space, the minoritized students bring their own lived experiences which include their own struggles and marginalization in the dominant society. They have shown that translanguaging recognizes multilingual learners’ alternative knowledge and consciousness that represents their histories, knowledge, and discourses (see also García & Li, 2014). Engaging with translanguaging involves the negotiation of ideological tensions and the development of a new ideology which constitutes liberating action from historical and linguistic oppression. As García (2009) argues, translanguaging as pedagogy rests upon two basic principles: social justice and social practices. Social justice includes the pedagogy that builds on students’ language practices that enact “multiplicities of language uses and linguistic identities, while maintaining academic rigor and upholding high expectations” (García, 2009, p. 153). In other words, linguistic tolerance and social equity are important aspects of translanguaging pedagogy. The social practice principle, on the other hand, “places learning as a

result of collaborative social practices in which students try out ideas and actions...and socially construct their learning” (García, 2009, p. 153).

Engaging in Counter-Narratives and with Indigenous Praxis

ELP builds on counter-narratives and indigenous praxis to engage different language policy actors in resisting and transforming ideological hegemonies. The notion of counter-story or counter-narrative (Delgado, 1989), used in critical race theory, refers to stories of lived experiences that are not represented in master narratives. Counter-narratives, as opposed to master narratives, tell how people from racially/ethnically marginalized and minoritized communities have experienced history, culture, language, and politics that affect their lives and communities. In this dissertation, I take counter-narratives as a “mechanism for resisting standard [or master] narrative[s]” (Settlage, 2011, p. 293) which “essentializes and wipes out the complexities and richness of a group’s cultural life” (Settlage, 2011, p. 293). Counter-narratives provides insights into analyzing how dominant language policies and practices discriminate against a particular ethnic/racial, linguistic, and cultural group and how that group can resist them. Counter-narratives helps to engage participants in uncovering how dominant language policies perpetuate racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural inequalities (Crump, 2014; Delgado, 1989; Flores & Rosa, 2015) and develop alternative ideologies to transform them.

Recent language policy studies have drawn on counter-narratives to engage indigenous and minoritized language speakers in critical dialogue. Lee (2009, 2014) adopts a counter-narrative method to engage Navajo and Pueblo youth in analysis of contested language ideologies with regard to their heritage language and identity in relation to dominant language policies and practices in the US. Drawing on critical race theory, Lee’s (2009, 2014) counter-narratives embrace indigenous youth’s counter-stories of their own lived language experiences,

frustrations about increased language shift, and continual struggle to reclaim their heritage language identity in the face of hegemonic language policies and practices. Through counter-storytelling, youth find themselves in a contact zone in which they encounter tension between dominant ideologies and their own language practices and worldviews about language policies. Lee (2009) shows that the indigenous youth developed strong ‘critical Indigenous consciousness’ for reclaiming their linguistic and cultural identities by engaging them in counter-narratives. Building on Freire (1970), Lee (2009) defines critical indigenous consciousness “as an awareness of the historical and broad oppressive conditions that have influenced current realities of Indigenous people’s lives” (p. 318) which leads to “acknowledging, respecting, and embracing one’s role in contributing to and transforming their communities and families” (p. 318).

Engaging in counter-narratives not only enhances language policy actors’ critical ideological awareness, but also fosters their agency and activism towards transforming discriminatory language practices. In Lee’s (2009, 2014) study, as the youth became aware of the structural conditions of their own marginalization, they became critical of the role of government and urged that the policy should recognize the importance of the heritage language. These indigenous youth awakened from a sense of injustice and named the modern neoliberal conception of economic and educational development as a discriminatory ideology. For example, like other youth, Danielle (a Pueblo college youth) is critical about the absence of programs and policies that pay attention to minority languages and argues that “people have ranked other issues such as economic development, infrastructure development, blood quantity, and personal conflicts as more important than preserving our language” (Lee, 2009, p. 316).

While engaging in telling their counter-narratives, these youth further became aware of how their heritage language is crucial for cultural continuity and socialization. For example, Angie, a Navajo teenager, says, “I wish I knew Navajo so I could talk to older people. I feel bad when I can’t talk to an older person. It’s not my fault. I wish someone had taught me” (Lee, 2009, p. 313). With this awareness, these youth develop strong agency and activism in promoting heritage language use in the family and society by raising awareness of their own family members and friends. For example, Christine, a young Navajo mother says, “my children are currently learning Navajo and we continue to make it fun. My eldest son has enrolled in Navajo classes and has learned so much. We know whom [*sic*] we are and will never generate shame as to our identity” (Lee, 2009, p. 317).

Drawing on the notion of emergent ideology (Kroskrity & Field, 2009), Nicholas (2014) engages Hopi youth in counter-storytelling to transform the contemporary unequal sociolinguistic context of Hopi land. Redefining language ideologies as lived experiences, she describes the agentive power of three youth (Dorian, Jared, and Justin) to modify and shift away from traditional ideology to negotiate and respond to changing sociolinguistic situations. By situating language ideologies in the Hopi philosophy, she engages the youth in telling their life stories related to language, culture, and identity. Her findings show that Hopi youth respect their heritage language and culture and want to learn about them, despite the increasing language shift among Hopi youth. As these youth engage in counter-narratives, they develop emergent ideologies of continuance, persistent, commitment, responsibility, and hope for the Hopi culture and language against the backdrop of restrictive language policies. For example, Justin (a youth), says, “If I do have kids, I just wanna keep telling ‘em to do this just the way my...*so* ‘o [grandfather] told me...put it on *them* and have ‘em learn it too, keep it going, and just don’t let

it go” (original italics, p. 87). This consciousness of ideological environment and alternative ideologies reveal that there is a need for providing indigenous populations the space for dialogic engagement in which they share their stories, voices, and knowledge that contribute to imagining multilingual education policies.

In another study, McCarty et al. (2006) engage indigenous youth in ideological analysis by using counter-narratives which include exploring the personal, familial, and academic stakes in repressive monolingual policy. In this project, Native American youth are engaged in analyzing how the current sociopolitical context of language policies and practices have contributed to indigenous language loss and their sense of identity. Their study shows that indigenous youth’s counter-narratives include inherent ideological tension between discourses of pride, shame, and caring. In situating the impact of dominant language policies and practices in their own lived experiences, these youth are critical about monolingual ideologies and are becoming aware of the significance of their heritage language for their sense of identity and belonging. As they become ideologically aware of the power relations embedded in dominant language policies and practices, these youth take an activist position towards caring about and creating space for their language in education.

Building on Freirian praxis, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001, 2013) develop the notion of indigenous critical praxis to engage indigenous villagers and youth towards transforming the domination of neoliberal ideologies and epistemologies in language policy in the Solomon Islands. Indigenous praxis refers to “people’s own critical reflection on culture, history, knowledge, politics, economics, and the sociopolitical contexts in which they are living...[and then] taking the next step to act on these critical reflections” (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001, p. 59). Their work with Kwara’ae villagers and youth portrays how indigenous people’s lives,

identities, and knowledge are devalued by neoliberal educational and language policies, but then they discuss how these people resist neoliberal ideologies by embracing their own indigenous epistemologies. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) define indigenous epistemology as “a cultural group’s ways of thinking and of creating, reformulating, and theorizing about knowledge via traditional discourses and media of communication, anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture” (p. 58). While engaging in critical indigenous praxis, these villagers become aware of ethnic tensions, unemployment, mass migration, linguistic oppression, and cultural insensitivity created by neoliberal discourse regarding development.

As they engage in critical reflection of their own existential reality, the Kwara’ae people become aware that their children are not learning effectively in school. Their children are ridiculed by the dominant language speakers when they use the Kwara’ae language, Falafala, in school. The villagers also found that their children are lacking cultural knowledge and a sense of respect for indigenous practices, values, and knowledge. Gegeo and Watson (2013) portray the activism and agency of the Kwara’ae people in educational reform based on indigenous language, culture, and epistemology through various projects like the Kwara’ae Genealogy and the Eagle Nest movement. While engaging in these projects and related dialogue, the villagers reimagine education and the village development from an indigenous perspective.

In contrary to the dominant educational practices, the villagers focus on ‘liato’o’anga’ (knowledge/wisdom, insight, enlightenment) as the “ability to address life and social issues with clarity” (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013, p. 243), rather than learning something from a textbook. As they reflect on their struggles and indigenous history, these villagers also redefine the notion of an educated person as one villager argues, it is instead “*ngwae ali’afu ki* (complete human beings) firmly grounded in Kwara’ae language before they learn other things” (original italics,

Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013, p. 243). One important aspect of this critical awareness and activism is indigenous people's continual dialogic engagement with the ideological tension between indigenous practices and Western neoliberal ideology. As they engage in dialogue and appropriate actions towards community development, they face strong ideological intervention of the people who support neoliberalism. However, engagement in this kind of ideological tension further enhances their critical awareness and activism; they become even more committed to create space for indigenous languages and epistemologies in education and other spaces by countering the Western model of education. This case is another example of language policy counterpublics which show the construction of alternative ideologies and epistemologies in education. That said, very little is known about how these indigenous villagers promote the multilingual practices—falafala and additional languages—that indigenous youth use. While these critical villagers' collective activism to resist Western ideologies of education and development and to promote indigenous epistemology are profound, it is also important to look at how these people construct and negotiate divergent ideologies.

Critical Language Awareness and Language Activism

Davis and Phyak (forthcoming) have discussed critical language awareness (CLA) as one of the major approaches to engage language policy actors in resisting and transforming dominant languages and building activism towards supporting equitable policies. Fairclough (1999) defines CLA as an approach to analyzing awareness of how languages are invested with power relations and ideological processes. Corson (1999) is among the first to use CLA in language policy. He argues that teachers, administrators, parents, and policy-makers first and foremost build their critical awareness of connections between language practices and race/ethnicity, economics, gender, and other kinds of inequalities to create equitable language policies in

schools. More importantly, Corson (1999) maintains that students should also be engaged in understanding how language practices are implicated with racism and marginalization in schools and beyond. CLA helps to develop ideological clarification of language policy actors and promotes equitable policies and practices.

Hélot and Young's (2006) study in France show that engaging parents, teachers, and children in language awareness activities promote multilingual awareness and cultural sensitivity in schools. Their studies show that a language awareness approach resists monoglossic ideologies and engages language policy actors in reimagining language policy from a multilingual perspective. Language awareness engages teachers in understanding the value of translanguaging and other multilingual practices in schools.

García's (2008) multilingual language awareness (MLA) provides critical insights into engaging teachers, students, and schools in understanding the social, political, and economic manifestations of multilingual language practices. As "the understanding of the social, political and economic struggles surrounding the use of the two [or more] languages" (García, 2008, pp. 387-388), MLA focuses on awareness of how languages are used in "undemocratic ways to exclude and discriminate" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 182). García (2008) has engaged teachers in various ways to raise their awareness of multilingual differences and reimagine pedagogy that deconstructs monolingual and standard language ideologies. She describes different strategies for engaging teachers in MLA. First, García (2008) suggests that teachers should be engaged in exploring and describing complexities surrounding children's multilingual language practices in different domains. In this process, teachers observe, document, and analyze how children use languages in communities. They also collect languages in public signs, newspapers, and magazines by using photographs and videos. Moreover, they interview community leaders and

parents about their sociopolitical and economic struggles and gather data about institutions supporting minoritized languages and the struggles they face in doing so. Teachers also collect funds of knowledge from the community and teachers. While analyzing the authentic data they gathered, these teachers became aware of sociopolitical issues concerning multilingual differences. They also use this data to provide explicit instruction to students about multilingual practices in society.

García (2008) further engages teachers in close observations and descriptions of how language and literacy is used by the teacher and students in the classroom. The teachers then analyze how particular language practices and discourses are used in different contexts and purposes, such as class arrangements, lessons, assignments, and testing. While collaboratively analyzing language and literacy practices in the classroom, the teachers also compare language practices they have collected from outside classroom. This encourages teachers to transform what is not working for their multilingual classroom and to embrace what is helpful for their students. The teachers then produce multilingual texts which include their own personal experiences of linguistic and cultural understandings and then share these texts with their colleagues. They then engage in dialogue that generates multiple understandings about the texts they produce. As these teachers become aware of their student's language practices, the sociopolitical aspects of the speech community, and the complexities of the multilingual classroom, they further engage in developing multicultural and multilingual curricula for their classes. They also try out the curriculum and engage in reflection and transformation of practices. Having a greater ideological clarification about language issues, the teachers often become social activists; they transform their ideological awareness into actions, they help families with translation services, and can be more prepared to participate in advocating for the

transformation of national policies. Teachers in this study (García, 2008) also organized a letter campaign about multilingual education, participated in radio programs on language issues in education, and spoke to politicians about the inequities and struggles of immigrants learning English.

Yet, critical language awareness is not just about multilingual awareness. It is also concerned with supporting ongoing grassroots activism and advocacy towards ensuring multilingual education that represents school demographics. Shohamy (2006) defines language activism as “specific actions that can be taken by linguists, teachers and the public at large to open the discussion of LP [language policy] as a tool of power that should be examined and critiqued” (p. 159). Such acts include protests against the uses and misuses of language policy affecting language behaviors in schools and society, through political movements, and through the judiciary systems to protect rights and promote inclusion. For Shohamy (2006), language activism calls for

language professionals to take an active role in leading such a discussion of an expanded view of language and by making the mechanism and their consequences more open, less hidden, and monitor their consequences and thus incorporate [a] democracy of inclusion with regard to LP. (p. 159)

Leeman, Rabin, and Roman-Mendoza (2011) adopt a critical language awareness approach to engaging college Spanish as a heritage language (SHL) speakers in activism that counters school-based subordination of SHL in the US. While focusing on identity, agency, and advocacy as key components of language activism, these authors contend that monolingual ideology and the institutionalization of linguistic subordination “not only can lead to lowered self-esteem and a sense of disempowerment, but it also reinforces linguistic discrimination and reduces the chances of attaining education and societal success” (Leeman et al., 2011, p. 482). Their action

research involves college students in a critical service-learning program designed to teach SHL and literacy skills to young learners in a public elementary school, and with dialogue being the major component of the program. Student-teachers engaged in dialogic processes with community members towards collectively exploring and discussing ideological issues surrounding SHL. In the after-school reading and writing classes, student-teachers invited Spanish-speaking parents to be guest lecturers and discussants towards acknowledging sociopolitical issues concerning SHL. These student-teachers also developed online tools such as wikis¹¹ and blogs¹² to critically reflect on what they learned during their engagement with teaching SHL and in dialogue with parents and youth.

Leeman et al. (2011) argue that engaging pre-service education students in critical service learning raises their awareness of language ideologies and policies created through the promotion of one-language-one-nation stances. Thus, student-teachers not only gain expertise in promoting the heritage language and literacy skills, but also become aware of the need to embrace their own identities as experts, activists, and advocates for home and heritage language education. While further embracing their identity as an activist, the student-teachers further challenged the dominant language ideology present in schools and communities that consider SHL speakers' as limited or deficient learners. In sum, student-teachers have the ability and the right to engage in critical activism and ideological awareness by participating in dialogue with communities and utilizing their knowledge and skills in school settings towards promoting equitable and socially just language education policy.

Through a collaborative action research, Wallen and Kelly-Holmes (2015) engaged Republic of Ireland teachers in dialogue towards promoting awareness of the need for bilingual

¹¹ Wiki is a website which allows multiple users to collaborate and edit its content.

¹² A website where individuals or groups can write their updates in an informal style.

education in the children's Irish home language and English-as-an-additional language. In countering an English-only policy, these advocates used dialogue as a method of critical consciousness-raising that built on teachers' own language experiences along with theories of bilingual education and second language learning. Wallen and Kelly-Holmes (2015) revealed in their study that collaborative dialogue in which teachers are given opportunities to discuss both dominant and alternative ideologies of language learning promoted teachers' critical reflection on their own practices and assumptions towards developing alternative perspectives on bilingualism. For example, Tara, one of the participants, began to see the value of students' home language through learning that "...if the pupil has already succeeded in their first language, it will mean faster progress with a second language" (Wallen & Kelly-Holmes, 2015, p. 9). This dialogic inquiry process implies that engaging teachers in explicit and critical analysis of ideologies and experiences contributes to transforming an ideology of contempt towards the use of students' home languages in school towards promoting multilingual and multiliteracy education in the classroom.

Engaging in Understanding Sociolinguistic (In)Justice

Engaged language policy focuses on engaging participants in understanding the broader sociolinguistic context that determines the space, scope, and power of languages. Labov's (1972, 1982) sociolinguistic studies have focused on social injustice issues, and particularly the marginalization of Black Vernacular in the context of Standard English dominance. His 'principle of debt incurred' calls for the researcher's commitment to use their expertise for the benefit of the community of research. Another of Labov's principles, 'the principle of linguistic democracy', challenges the use of a standard dialect in creating a barrier for social mobility and supports the use of non-standard languages in public spheres. Most importantly, his 'principle of

representation' argues that the representation of the people and the community being researched must be ensured in order to guarantee their voices, knowledge, and identities in the research process (see also Davis, 2014).

Hymes (1980, 1996) conceptualization of 'ethnography of speaking' and 'ethnographic monitoring' further highlights the researcher's role as an activist and advocate for social justice to challenge linguistic discriminations and promote linguistic justice in communities. Considering ethnography as a 'counter-hegemonic' and 'democratic science', Hymes (1980, 1996) builds a strong theoretical foundation for activist work in language education. While his 'ethnography of speaking' focuses on a situated analysis of language use in relation to broader sociopolitical conditions, an 'ethnography of monitoring' deals with the underlying sociopolitical and ideological aspects of language education policies (Blommaert, 2009, 2013; Van der Aa & Blommaert, 2011). Considering the role of language activism in promoting linguistic justice and bi/multilingualism, Hymes (1996) argues that ethnographers must remain vigilant against a diverse range of linguistic discrimination and pay attention to community awareness with regards to the unequal distribution of resources among languages and language varieties. In focusing on linguistic discrimination as part of sociopolitical inequalities, Hymes' emphasis of bi/multilingual education to erase education and linguistic inequalities has had a deep influence on promoting activist work in sociolinguistics and language policy. His use of ethnopoetics and folk-narratives are two major ethnographic tools to ensure that people's voices, struggles, ways of speaking, ideas, and identities are recognized in dominant public spheres.

Building on the groundwork of William Labov and Dell Hymes, scholars across disciplines such as sociolinguistics, education, and language policy have focused on the importance of social justice and language activism. For example, Neville Alexander's

‘democratically conceived’ transformative work, *Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa*, has addressed linguistic human rights issues and engaged local actors in promoting multilingualism and maintaining minority languages in schools and societies. Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, and Richardson (1992) have argued that the empowerment of communities being explored must be the core ethics of sociolinguistics research. Wolfram (1993, 2013) has argued for the principle of linguistic gratuity¹³ and has developed various community-based public outreach programs to support linguistic communities. Researchers’ engagement with community-based courses, schools, and projects have significantly contributed towards promoting equitable language education policy (García & Kleifgen, 2010).

In California, Bucholtz, Lopez, Mojarro, Skapoulli, Vander-Stouwe, and Warner-García (2014) engaged poor working-class high school students, who speak a ‘politically subordinated language’, in exploring and interpreting the political meanings of community language practices embedded in the non-recognition of their language within educational contexts. These youth engaged in the research processes of documenting and interpreting the importance of politically subordinated languages such as slang and language varieties. Through recognizing community funds of knowledge and the importance of heritage languages/language varieties in education, these youth were able to challenge hegemonic standard language practices and embrace the relevance of their own language varieties towards realizing academic success. Bucholtz et al. (2014) argue that engaging youth in research not only helps to unravel and counter unseen linguistic inequalities, but also contributes to promoting larger issues of ‘sociolinguistic justice’.

¹³ The idea that researchers have ethical responsibility to work for the benefit of the community being researched.

Denaturalizing and Transforming Hegemonic Ideologies/Discourses

Engaged language policy (ELP) is concerned mainly with empowering participants to denaturalize deeply ingrained hegemonic language ideologies. ELP assumes that engaging language policy actors in ideological analysis in multiple ways eventually contributes to develop students' strong sense of agency to intervene in current discriminatory policies and practices.

Ball (2000a, 2002b) documents how teacher educators challenge authoritative discourses by engaging them in analysis of a three-year teacher education program in the US and South Africa. With an aim to develop their 'ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981), Ball develops a teacher education program in which teachers from both countries were provided with an opportunity to participate in dialogue on how critical social issues such as race, language, and social class affect the literacy practices of children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The program was conceived as a 'contact zone' (Bakhtin, 1981) for both dominant and alternative ideologies about language and literacy teaching. When the teachers entered the program, they had a very limited knowledge of literacy and how non-recognition of students' linguistic and cultural practices—as seen in the dominant language policies in both countries (the USA and South Africa)—which they bring to the classroom can be resources for literacy learning. In the beginning of the program, teachers shared their own autobiographical literacy practices. Then, they were engaged in strategically selected readings¹⁴ that focused on critical and transformative theories and best practices of teaching students from diverse linguistic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. These readings provided teachers with alternative ideas that challenged the existing ideologies of pedagogy that denied linguistic and cultural diversity.

¹⁴ Some of the major readings were: McElroy-Johnson's (1993) *Giving Voice to the Voiceless*, Giroux's (1988) *Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals*, Freire's (1994) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Gee's (1989) *Discourses as Identity*, and Delpit's (2000) *The Acquisition of Literate Discourse and Teaching Other People's Children*.

Teachers were also engaged in small-group discussions, interviews, writing reflective journals, and actual classroom teaching. In this process, the teachers' ideologies concerning both theories and practices of language education were changing and the teachers themselves showed their strong commitment to promote equitable practices in their own teaching. For example, Dorene, a South African teacher who attended a teacher education program for teaching at multilingual and multicultural schools, wrote in her reflective journal that

Culturally, the learner has to identify with themselves, knowing their own language, and then acquiring the ability to communicate in the other languages that are around them, thereby understanding the society they live in. The linguistic growth of students is increased when parents also see themselves as co-educators. (Ball & Freedman, 2004, p. 15)

In her personal letter to Ball, she wrote "I know now that for my pupils to be bilingual, I have to encourage them positively, not teaching them for the purpose of academic achievement only. But to let them adapt to all situations. Your handouts have been a great help and will keep on helping me" (Ball & Freedman, 2004, p. 17). Most of the teachers who attended this teacher education program argued that they had not known much about how to address the voices and needs of the minority and marginalized population before they participated in the program. By engaging teachers in analyzing multiple ideologies of literacy and education, Dorene and other teachers eventually developed their own ideologies and challenged discriminatory official discourses, policies, and practices.

Davis' (2009a) agentive youth research in Hawai'i is an important example of engaged ideological analysis. Drawing on critical transformative theories (Delpit, 2006; Fine, 2006; Freire, 1970), Davis (2009) developed a three-year secondary school project entitled *Studies of Heritage and Academic Languages and Literacies* (SHALL) to engage students and teachers in understanding the importance of multilingual practices and cultural identities in education. More

than 300 Filipino students were engaged in reflecting on their own hybrid language practices and local identities as well as an analysis of interviews conducted in their own heritage languages. These students also engaged in exploring how their languages were historically marginalized in the dominant language policy discourses and in what ways their heritage or local language identity is judged in mainstream policies and practices. While engaging in analyzing power relations rooted in the historical oppression of Pidgin, for example, these students showed increased ideological transformation with regard to language policies and practices. For example, a student named Brandon initially embraced the Standard English ideology and believed that the use of Pidgin in college would not be considered professional. However, after he engaged in a series of critical dialogue with teachers and other students on issues surrounding the use of Pidgin, he gradually changed his previous ideology about Pidgin. In one of the dialogues focused on derecognition of Pidgin in college, he argues: “[...] but they can’t [ban] cause it’s like our language—that’s like...telling English people not to speak English—what is there else to speak?” (Davis, 2009, p. 213). These youth also engaged in reading literature written in Pidgin and doing a textual analysis through participatory action research in interviewing community members in either Pidgin or the heritage language. In this process, these youth built increased awareness of racial, historical, linguistic, and cultural oppression and challenged authoritative discourses that derecognize their linguistic practices and cultural identities.

Like Ball’s (2000a, 2000b) teacher education program, Davis (2009) also developed a course to address increased educational failure of the Generation 1.5 students in community colleges in Hawai‘i due to the Standard English ideology. The course was based on theories of a ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994), ‘communities of practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and ‘textual awareness’ (Luke & Freebody, 1997). Davis (2009) engages Generation 1.5 students in Hawai‘i

to analyze conditions of linguistic oppression caused by the dominance of Standard English ideology in language policies and practices. Taking on the role of researcher, these students investigated multiple discourses related to language policies and developed cultural, textual, and academic discourse awareness. For example, they (a) investigated how they are acculturated or socialized into particular communities; (b) explored social relationships and the suffering of people in different social environments in terms of linguistic and cultural identities; and (c) engaged in analyzing newspaper articles to help them further understand ideologies regarding language and literacy. While engaging in investigating literacy practice in their community-college environment, these youth not only came to understand multiple ideologies, but also developed their own identities and constructed their own ideologies about language learning and academic literacy. In other words, these youths' 'ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981) challenged the relevance of the dominant language policies and practices that excluded the identities and ideologies of Generation 1.5 youth.

Beyond Policy-as-Text: Anthropology of Policy and Policy Sociology

The epistemology of language policy in ELP is informed by an interdisciplinary approach to policy studies. Two major related theories of policy studies—the 'anthropology of policy' (Shore & Wright, 1998) and 'policy sociology' (Ball, 2013)—inform ELP to reconceptualize language policy from a holistic sociopolitical perspective. Shore and Wright (2011) define policies not simply as "external, generalized or constraining forces, nor are they confined to texts. Rather, they are productive, performative and continually contested" (p. 1). From this perspective, language policy is considered a contested sociopolitical space which "finds expression through [a] sequence of events; it creates new social and semantic spaces, new sets of relations, new political subjects and new webs of meaning" (Shore & Wright, 2011, p. 1). From

an ‘anthropology of policy’ perspective, language policy is part of a larger sociocultural process in which sociopolitical discourses, ideologies, assumptions, agencies, and identities are integral to shaping one’s ideas about what counts as language and language policy. In other words, language policy is an embodiment of multiple ideologies, discourses, and practices rooted in a local cultural and political process (McCarty et al., 2011).

I particularly build on Ball’s (2006) threefold characterization of policy: policy-as-text, policy-as-discourse, and policy effects. For Ball (2006), policy-as-text refers to representations which are encoded and decoded in complex ways. This perspective helps to understand whose voices, ideologies, and epistemologies are represented in ‘official’ language policies and practices and to examine how they are contested with on-the-ground ideologies and practices. In other words, this perspective considers policy as a social space open for interpretation and negotiation. However, policy-as-text is not sufficient to capture the broader sociopolitical complexities and transformation of language policies.

Ball’s (2006) two other concepts, policy-as-discourse and policy effects, take us away from the text-oriented theorization of language policy. Discourses—practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1977, p. 49)—as Ball (2006) argues, influence “the way in which policy ensembles, collections of related policies, exercise power through a *production* of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’” (p, 48). In other words, the ways in which we *see* language and language policies are constructed by the discourses about what counts as a legitimate language and knowledge about language (Bourdieu, 1991; Hymes, 1996). A policy-as-discourse perspective not only provides insights into understanding contested ideologies, but it also highlights the importance of creating alternative discourses for language policy transformation. Such alternative discourses emerge when language policy actors are engaged in

exploring and analyzing ideological tensions between ‘legitimate’ and ‘lived’ language policies and practices. This calls for engagement in ethnographically rooted critical reflection, as discussed in this dissertation, about how language policies and practices impact the lives, memories, histories, identities, economies, and education of people representing different linguistic and cultural groups.

According to Ball (2006), there are two orders of policy effects. The first order of policy effects includes changes in existing practices and structures, while the second order deals with whether or not policies promote access, opportunity, and social justice. This perspective embraces the idea of ‘language policy-as-practice’ (Backman, 2009) to engage participants in analyzing how language policy supports or hinders multilingualism in actual pedagogical practices. This perspective critically examines whether or not policies (both as text and discourse) have been able to support minoritized language speakers’ access to knowledge and other sociopolitical resources. Such engagement leads to ideological awareness which eventually creates new discourses and ideologies about language policies to promote access and social justice through equitable language policies. ELP focuses on creating alternative discourses, ideologies, and epistemologies at the grassroots level rather than just producing a language policy as a text, the latter of which eventually seeks to promote uniformity and linguistic normativity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed different perspectives and approaches on which ELP is built. I have argued that at the center of language policy transformation lies critical ideological awareness by engaging language policy actors in explicit analysis of ideologies impacting language policies and practices. As Kroskrity (2009) argues, engaging in ideological analysis

“synthesizes an interest in interrelatedness of linguistic awareness, linguistic beliefs, feelings, and practices, and relations of political economic power” (p. 72). More specifically, engaging in ideological analysis involves: (a) identification of marginalizing colonial ideologies; (b) analysis of the intersection of those ideologies with local sociopolitical and economic conditions and the lived experiences of people; and, (c) building language policy actors’ critical awareness, agency, and activism to transform hegemonic ideologies. All these considerations draw on multiple theories and approaches to engage language policy actors in exploring, understanding, and transforming unequal language policies and practices. As discussed above, ideological awareness and language activism build on language policy actors’ own lived experiences and struggles to make sense of their ideologies, identities, and knowledge in an ideological environment dominated by monolingual ideologies.

I have discussed that ideological becoming and ideological clarifications are the core of ideological awareness. ELP pays attention to how language policy actors can become an ideological subject by gaining strong clarity of the ideological complexities in language policy. I have discussed that engaging with counter-narratives, critical language awareness, and indigenous praxis supports ideological becoming by providing language policy actors with opportunities to negotiate multiple contradictory ideologies. While paying attention to ideological becoming, ELP does not simply report multiple ideologies that language policy actors enact, rather they are engaged in dialogue of those ideologies to raise their critical consciousness about linguistic inequalities and injustice. In other words, rather than taking dominant ideologies as ‘common sense’, ELP engages language policy actors in analyzing and critiquing unequal power relations and language hierarchies embedded in that ‘common sense’.

ELP recognizes the marginalized people's identity as 'critical expertise' and their 'right to research' (Appadurai, 2006; Fine, 2006) language policy issues. Rather than considering them as individuals who should follow the monolingual norms created by the dominant discourses and practices of language policies, they are recognized as sources of multiple knowledge, languages, and ideologies important for promoting equitable language policies. In this sense, ELP constitutes a "radical commitment to inquiry-inspired action" (Fine, 2009, p. 2).

Chapter 4: Linguistic Diversity, Nationalism, and Language Policies in Nepal

Introduction

Nepal, famous for its Himalayas, Sherpas, and Gurkhas globally, is currently in the process of institutionalizing a new political regime, the *Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal*. The 2006 *Jana-Aandolan-II* (People’s Movement-II) ended the long history of hereditary monarchical regimes and paved the way for transforming the unitary state into a federal democratic republic. This transformation of the political regime has opened up new, yet contested, discourses with regard to nationalism, language policy, and governance. Under the broad discourse of *Nayaa Nepal* (New Nepal), (a) issues of identity politics; (b) the names and nature of new federal states, and most importantly; and (c) the minoritized peoples’ linguistic, cultural, and political rights, among many others, are at the center of current political debate (Lawoti, 2012). This “awakening of Nepali people” (Baral, 2012, p. 48) has influenced language policy discourses in many ways.

The historically marginalized groups, particularly *Adibashi Janajatis* (indigenous ethnic groups), *Madhesis* (the residents from the low-land Terai), and *Dalits* (traditionally untouchables) are taking **pahichaan** (identity) as a major political trope towards addressing their historical and contemporary forms of institutional marginalization and lack of political representation in the state mechanisms (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016). For these minoritized¹⁵ groups, identity—and particularly ‘ethnic identity’—takes center stage in political activism. The ongoing identity politics is built on the assumption that the state failed to recognize the minoritized people’s ethnic identities and (mis)used them as a basis for sociopolitical and

¹⁵ Both Nepali and foreign scholars use the term ‘minority’ to describe ethnic and indigenous people. However, throughout this dissertation I use the term ‘minoritized’ to argue that indigenous ethnic groups are not ‘minority’ groups but rather they are linguistically and politically ‘minoritized’.

cultural discriminations by privileging high-caste habitus in public policies (Hangen, 2010; Lawoti, 2007); yet, the minoritized people's voices are contested, mostly resisted, in dominant public spheres. The most common comment includes that *identity politics* fuels 'ethnic tensions', 'civil war' and 'social disharmony', leading to the disintegration of the state (Baral, 2012). In this chapter, I situate language policy discourses in the existing political tensions and discuss what language ideologies both dominant and resistance political discourses construct and reproduce. I particularly look at what epistemic stance of language and language policies these discourses support. In other words, I examine whether or not the ongoing discourses on language politics embrace the minoritized people's multilingual practices which are 'always in flux' rather than rigid (Turin, 2004). Answering this and other related questions requires us to engage in analyzing the historical construction and reproduction of 'colonial language ideologies' (Dorian, 1998; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) that view language as a fixed, autonomous, and rigid entity rather than as fluid and flexible.

Although Nepal never had a colonial history, the domination of colonial language ideologies and epistemologies are deeply rooted in its language policies and practices. However, this issue has not yet been extensively discussed in language policy studies in Nepal. Building on Bourdieu's (1991) 'legitimate language' and Makoni and Pennycook's (2005) '(dis)invention of language', in this chapter, I analyze how colonial language ideologies have historically shaped dominant language policies and practices and look at how these ideologies are further reproduced in minoritized language policies and practices. Since language as an ideological construct is a historical phenomenon (Blommaert, 2014), a sole dependence on 'a presentist approach' (May, 2005) may be inadequate to unravel the sociohistorical and sociopolitical processes involved in the construction, imposition, and acceptance of a 'legitimate language'

(Bourdieu, 1991). In this chapter, I delve into unraveling the historical and sociopolitical process in the construction of ‘Nepali’ as a legitimate ‘official’ and ‘national’ language and discuss the ideological underpinnings in this construction. I also discuss how this construction is shaped by the colonial ideology, particularly the ideology of the nation-state. In order to situate this discussion in the multilingual context of Nepal, I first present how linguistic heterogeneity is integral to Nepal’s sociolinguistic context.

Linguistic Heterogeneity and Multilingualism

Karma (pseudonym), 26, lives in a village in eastern Nepal. He stopped his education due to repeatedly failing the national examinations, called the School-Leaving Certificate (SLC). He got married, and started farming like other villagers do in order to make a living. He went to Malaysia as a migrant laborer for two years, but quit his job last year because he was not making as much money as he dreamt to make before he went to Malaysia. He said “I have to work like a donkey. I didn’t have a good *salary*¹⁶. I was ill as well. It’s not easy to work in a foreign country.” He doesn’t want to go to Malaysia again, but would go to other countries if he could have a *free visa* to work in a good *company*. Karma speaks both Limbu and Nepali at home and in the community. He frequently mixed English words while describing his life in Malaysia. He also uses *text*, *miss call*, *chat* and *memory* [memory card] in explaining his cell phone and how he used to communicate with his family when he was in Malaysia.

Like Karma, Limbu indigenous people, in my research sites, have fluid language practices; they do not maintain a hard boundary between languages. As Karma does, they speak both Limbu¹⁷ and Nepali in their everyday interactional practices. Even a person who has never taken an English language class unconsciously mixes English words in their social interactions. In addition, most Nepalis mix Hindi while speaking Nepali. Hindi TV programs, movies, and songs

¹⁶ Bolded and italicized words are in English in original conversation.

¹⁷ Limbu is spoken as the ‘mother tongue’ of 1.29% of the total populations.

are popular among Nepalis, even in rural areas. Turin (2004) describes language practices in Thangmi, another indigenous community, as ‘dynamic organisms’ in which Thangmi youth use words like ‘aeroplane’, ‘video camera’, and ‘Maoist’ in their social interactions. Similarly, Pradhan (2016) reveals a greater fluidity and simultaneity of languages among Tharus, yet another indigenous community from southern Nepal.

However, such linguistic heterogeneity is not a new phenomenon in Nepal; it existed before the creation of Nepal as a modern nation-state in the 19th century. Located between China and India, Nepal shares a high degree of cultural and linguistic similarities with the both countries. A recent census (Census Report, 2011) has reported that Nepal is home to 123 languages spoken by 125 ethnicities. Among these languages, 44.6% of the total population speak Nepali as their ‘mother tongue’; other major languages include: Maithili (11.7%), Bhojpuri (5.98%), Tharu (5.77%), Tamang (5.11%), Newar (3.2%), Bajjika (2.99%), Magar (2.98%), Doteli (2.97%), and Urdu (2.61%). While the indigenous people, known as *Adibashi Janajatis*, dominantly speak Tibeto-Burman languages, the people from the caste groups speak Indo-Aryan languages as their mother tongue.

Before the formation of the nation-state, transculturation was integral to society due to the waves of internal migration and immigration. This linguistic diversity has become more complex due to increased internal migration since the beginning of the 20th century. Consequently, languages have crossed their traditional ‘homelands’ (Gurung, 1997), defying linguistic homogeneity and discrete linguistic borders (Bohlen und Halbach, 2014). Based on his study conducted two decades ago, Caplan (1995) argues that “the cultural, social and linguistic boundaries in the middle hills have all along been fluid, and the labels attached to people...are, as Macfarlane puts it, to some extent random and recent” (pp. 29-30).

Fluidity and linguistic heterogeneity is an indigenous characteristic of Nepali society. Such linguistic heterogeneity involves ‘language crossing’ (Rampton, 1995), characterized by the use of a language that speakers do not “thought to belong to” (Rampton, 1995, p. 1). The crossing of language borders is quite natural among the indigenous minoritized groups. Anthropologist Fisher’s (2001) ‘fluid boundaries’ in the Thakali indigenous community captures how Nepal’s indigenous people in general construct and negotiate their multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious identities in the broader sociopolitical context. Fisher (2001) shows that the Thakalis have “demonstrated mastery of the multiple character of their borderland and have been able to move in and out of a variety of situations adroitly” (p. 8) by using multiple languages and embracing multicultural practices. My own previous study (Phyak, 2009) reveals that Limbu indigenous youth enact multiple identities through their fluid language practices which include the features of Limbu, Nepali, and English. Although these youths are proud of ‘being Limbu’ and link their Limbu language proficiency with their ‘Limbu ethnic identity’, they do not speak as much Limbu as they want to due to the Nepali-English dominance in Nepal’s dominant public sphere.

Despite this linguistic heterogeneity, the colonial ideologies which define language as a fixed, autonomous, and standardized entity (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) and construct contempt towards minoritized languages (Dorian, 1998) are still most influential in Nepal’s language policy discourses and practices, including multilingual ones. Although the state “cursorily recognizes” the linguistic, cultural, and ethnic identities of minoritized groups, the state’s unitary social policies force them to be “assimilated into the dominant group’s identity in



Figure 1: This public notice by security personnel is in Nepali. It says that the mass meetings, rallies, processions, slogans, crowds, and gatherings are prohibited within this area. @Prem Phyak

the name of forming a synthetic [national] identity” (Baral, 2012, p. 32). Scholars are critical about the ‘**ek-desh-ek-bhāṣā**’ (one-nation-one-language) policy that the state adopted since the formation of the modern nation-state (e.g., Turin, 2007; Tumbahang, 2009; Yadava, 2007). As seen in Figure 1, most public signs are written in standard Nepali. Baral (2012) speaks of the assimilationist “psychology of Nepali rulers” which assumes that all ethnic minoritized groups’ assimilation into “broad Gorkhaali [Nepali] culture would be the rock bottom of the modern Nepali state” (p. 28). In what follows, I discuss the construction of language ideologies that support the state’s assimilationist national policies by situating language policies and practices into different historical times. I particularly focus on how ‘Nepali’ is invented as a legitimate ‘official’ or ‘national’ language and how this invention reproduces colonial language ideology. I also analyze how language ideologies constructed by this invention are reproduced in the current language policy discourses, both dominant and minoritized.

Invention of Nepali as a Legitimate Language

Nepal never had a Western colonial history; it has always been a sovereign and independent state; however, this does not mean that its policies are not influenced by Western colonial ideologies. Carney and Rappleye (2011) argue that the state's ideologies for modernization and developmental policies, including education policies, “must be seen in a historical context and therefore, necessarily as part of *colonial genealogy*” (p. 4, emphasis added). Indeed, since the formation of the nation-state in the 19th century, Nepal's state ideology has been deeply influenced by Western European colonial ideologies (Awasthi, 2004, 2011). The most significant influence is seen, first, in the process of the *invention* of the Nepali language, and then in its *legitimization* as an ‘official’ and ‘national’ language (Bourdieu, 1991). Critical applied linguists and linguistic anthropologists, particularly Makoni and Pennycook (2005) and Irvine and Gal (2000), have unraveled multiple social and semiotic processes of the construction of language as an ideological object. Based on their critical historiography of sociolinguistics in India and Africa, Makoni and Pennycook (2007) have particularly argued that “languages were, in the most literal sense, invented, as part of the Christian/colonial and nationalistic projects” (p. 2).

As a sociopolitical process, the *invention* of language is supported by the creation of colonial and nationalist ideologies through language education and literacy programs. These ideologies support the ideology of homogeneity by legitimizing a particular language as the ‘official’ and ‘national’ language through a process of standardization and modernization. More importantly, this process creates a hierarchy among languages (Irvine & Gal, 2000) and promotes hegemonic ‘metadiscursive regimes’ (Bauman & Briggs, 2003) which support the ideology of language as “separate and enumerable categories” (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006, p.

2). As a project of ‘Eurocentric governmentality’ (Said, 1989; see also Foucault, 1979), this ideology not only promotes the essentialist linkage between language and ethnicity, but also, and most importantly, upholds the view that only ‘codified’ and ‘standardized’ languages are valid and legitimate in education and other public spheres.

Multiple sociopolitical and discursive processes are involved in the invention of Nepali as a ‘legitimate language’. The naming of ‘Nepali’ itself is deeply influenced by the Western European nation-state ideology which assumes that nationalism is an ‘imagined community’ of people speaking the same language, Nepali (Anderson, 1991; Onta, 1996). Before it was named Nepali in the early 19th century, Nepali was known as **Khas Kurā** or **Gorkha Bhāṣā**¹⁸, the language spoken by Khas ethnic groups, particularly from Gorkha. Khas, more particularly Khas-Arya, are now known as the Bahun-Chetri high-caste groups. As the former kings who formed and ruled the modern nation-state were from the Khas ethnic groups of the Gorkha kingdom, only Khas Kurā was used as a legitimate official language of the country. Khas Kurā was later renamed as the Gorkha language after Nepali rulers and the British East India Company signed a treaty to recruit Nepali youth into British military. The British East India Company used the Gorkha language instead of Khas Kurā to eulogize the bravery of the Gorkha soldiers¹⁹. More strikingly, the Company wanted to create the (false) understanding that Gorkha soldiers belonged to one ‘homogenous nation’, that is ‘**Gorkha jāti**’ (Gorkha nation) (see Bandhu, 1989; Onta, 1996)²⁰.

¹⁸ Kurā and **bhāṣā** both mean language.

¹⁹ In Western colonial discourses, Gorkha (wrongly spelled as ‘Gurkha’) soldiers, who are still recruited in the British and Indian Army, are described as the ‘bravest of the brave’ soldiers. Impressed by the bravery of the Gorkha soldiers, the British East India Company agreed to have a separate Gorkha regiment which constructed an independent Gorkha race as a “superior martial race” (Lal, 2012, p. 14).

²⁰ Gurung (2005) claims that the establishment of the Gorkha regiment was ideologically motivated. British rulers did not want Gorkha armies to have contact with other local Indian languages so that they would not empathize with other soldiers (Lal, 2012). The armies in the Gorkha regiment were from different linguistic and ethnic groups, such

Scholars such as Onta (1996), Chalmers (2003), and Hutt (1986) have critically analyzed the role of middle-class intellectual Nepalis from India, particularly Darjeeling and Banaras, in the invention of the Nepali language. These scholars have shown that the ‘self-improvement activism’ (Onta, 1996) of Nepalis in India—which includes the modernization and standardization of the Gorkha language through the publication of newspapers, dictionaries, and magazines—contributed to the renaming of the Gorkha language as ‘Nepali’²¹. These middle-class intellectuals not only borrowed Sanskrit words to keep Nepali as a distinct language from Hindi (Hutt, 1986), but also wanted to show that the Gorkha language was no longer a ‘**jaṅgali**’ (uncivilized/from jungle) language as it was described in the dominant public sphere in India (Onta, 1996). More importantly, the renaming of Nepali was intended to unify the Nepalis as a single homogenous ethnicity in India.

The invention of Nepali in Banaras and Darjeeling later became the key ideology in shaping the state’s ideology of Nepali nationalism as an ‘imagined community’ of the people speaking Nepali as a ‘legitimate language’ (Onta, 1996). The state used multiple social, discursive, and political processes to promote Nepali as a national language. With an aim to modernize and standardize Nepali, the state formed the *Gorkha Bhāsā Prakāsiṇi Samiti* (Gorkha Language Publication Committee) in 1913. This was later renamed the *Nepali Bhāṣā Prakāsiṇi Samiti* (Nepali Language Publications Committee) in 1933, and then the *Shājhā Prakāshan* in 1964. Tumbahang (2009) critiques that the state not only promoted Nepali as a national language by investing in its standardization process, but it also destroyed the documents written in various indigenous languages; he further contends that indigenous writers and activists were arrested and

as Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Gurung, and Magar; however, they were required to speak Nepali and follow Hindu religious practices.

²¹ J. A. Ayton (1820), a European linguist who worked in India, used the word ‘Nepali’ for the first time in his book *Grammar of [the] Nepali Language*.

imprisoned. Since 1921, languages other than Nepali were legally banned in courts and other government offices. This kind of linguistic oppression is further supported through the ‘iconization’ (Irvine & Gal, 2000) of Nepali as the ‘national language’ while calling other indigenous languages ‘**jaṅgali**’ (from jungle).

Nepali has been officially defined as a ‘national language’ in the state’s constitution since 1959. As Toba, Toba, and Rai (2005) contend, the ideology of linguistic nationalism has exacerbated the ‘ideology of contempt’ (Dorian, 1998) and structural oppression towards minoritized languages. Most importantly, their analysis shows that this ideology has not only erased the country’s linguistic diversity, but also derecognized the use of non-standard Nepali dialects—such as Doteli, Palpali, and Dhadeldhure—as a symbol of Nepali national identity. Nepali scholars have argued that the state’s ideology of linguistic nationalism has created unequal hierarchies of language and reproduced the linguistic privilege of the high-caste people (Bahun-Chhetris) and social elites who speak standard Nepali (Angdembe, 2012; Awasthi, 2008; Lawoti, 2007; Shrestha, 2007²²; Upadhyaya, 2010; Yadava, 2007²³)

Caste/Ethnicity and Assimilationist State Ideology

The invention of Nepali as a national language is supported by the state’s caste-based assimilationist ideology. Gurung (2001) defines caste (*Jaat*) as “social groups with internal hierarchy” (p. 35) based on the Hindu *varna* system and ethnicity (*Jaati*) as groups of people with distinct language, culture, and religion. Historically, ethnic groups are not part of the orthodox Hindu caste structure²⁴. A recent census (Census Report, 2011) shows that two caste

²² Shrestha (2007), for example, argues that the rulers renamed Khas Kuraa as ‘Nepali’ to erase the identity of the Nepal Bhaashaa and promote Khas Kuraa as an official language.

²³ As Yadava (2007) claims, Khas Kuraa has been replaced by ‘Nepali’ “with an intent to transform it into the national and official language” (2007, p. 10). Since the creation of modern Nepal, standard Nepali, used by the Gorkha rulers, has been made a de facto ‘official’ language of the nation-state, and banning other indigenous languages in courts, schools, and other public offices.

²⁴ However, many indigenous communities have been Hinduized (see Bhattachan, 2000).

groups, Chhetris and Brahmans, are the most dominant groups with 16.59% and 12.17% of the country's total populations, respectively. Other major ethnic groups include: Magar (7.13%), Tharu (6.56%), Tamang (5.81%), Newar (4.99%), Kami (Dalits) (4.75%), Muslim (4.39%), and Yadav (3.98%).

The 1954 Muluki Ain (henceforth Ain), the first legal code of the country, restructured the state's legal system on the basis of the four-fold Vedic model²⁵ (Gurung, 2006; Whelpton, 2005). The major goal of the Ain was to assimilate non-caste ethnic groups into a caste-based Hindu hierarchy. Adhikari and Gellner (2016) claim that Jang Bahadur Rana²⁶, who developed the Ain, imported the ideology of Code Napoléon during his visit to London and Paris in 1850. As seen in Table 2, Nepali society has been divided into five different hierarchies, where the high-caste people (the Tagadharis, meaning the 'wearers of the holy cord') and Hinduized ethnic groups are at the top.

²⁵ The four-fold Vedic model includes: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors), Vaisyas (cattle herders and farmers, etc.) and Shudras (laborers).

²⁶ Jang Bahadur Rana was the first Rana Prime Minister. The Rana regime lasted for 104 years (ending in 1950). Ranas were against the idea of mass education; they had a fear that if people were educated, they would become aware of and revolt against their autocratic system. Although some describe him as a man of 'international stature' and 'personal avarice' (Dhungel, 2008), Jang Bahadur Rana's role can also be described as an 'ideology broker' for the British colonial power. He visited Britain in 1850 to observe British military power. Upon his return to Nepal, he established a new English school at his palace. Unlike Shah rulers, he even supported the British East India Company against the independence movement in India. Lal (2012) argues that he added a 'mercenary military' as an ingredient of Nepali nationalism.

Table 2. Caste hierarchy in Muluki Ain

Hierarchy	Caste/ethnic groups
Wearers of Holy Cord: <i>Tagadharis</i>	Parwatiya/Parbate (hill) upper castes (Brahman, Chetri, Thakuri, Jaisi, Sanyasi) Newar Brahman, Terai Brahman, Newar upper caste
Non-enslavable alcohol drinkers: <i>Namasinya matawalis</i>	Magar, Gurung (Gorkha Army), Sunuwar (Hinduized), Newar (non-Hindu)
Enslavable alcohol drinkers: <i>Masinyaa mataawaalis</i>	Bhote (and other Tibetonoids), Sherpa, Chepang, Kumal, and Hayu, Tharu (Terai ethnic), Gharti (progeny of freed slaves)
Impure but touchable: <i>paani nacalnyaa choi chito haalnunaparnyaa</i>	Lower caste Newar (e.g. Kasai, Dhobi, Kulu, Kusle), Religious minorities (e.g. Muslim, Christian)
Impure and untouchable: <i>paani nacalnyaa choi chito haalnu parnyaa</i>	Parbate artisan castes (e.g. Damai, Kami, Sarki, Badi, Gaine), Newar scavenger castes (Chyame, Pode)

Source: Gurung (2006)

Taking Hinduization as a state's political project to assimilate ethnic minoritized people into the mainstream Nepali culture and society (Gurung, 2005; Lal, 2012), the Ain creates hierarchies of people in terms of *purity*. While high-caste people are considered 'pure', other people are considered 'impure'. Ethnic minoritized groups are labelled as the *Matawaali* caste (alcohol drinkers)²⁷ and are 'impure' under this system. There are two categories of 'impure' castes: impure-but-touchable and impure-but-untouchable. The people in the 'impure-but-untouchable' category are now known as *Dalits*²⁸. Although *Mataawaalis* are '**paani chalnyaa**' (water-acceptable), they are considered 'impure', as alcohol drinking itself is not pure in the Hindu caste

²⁷ According to the Ain, the *Namaasinyaa Mataawaalis* (non-enslavable Matawalis) include ethnic groups such as the Magar, Gurung, Sunuwar and Newar. On the other hand, *Masinyaa Matawalis* (enslavable alcohol-drinkers) include ethnic groups such as the Bhote, Sherpa, Chepang, Kumal, Hayu, Tharu, and Gharti, who could have been punished by slavement for certain offences.

²⁸ According to the Ain, people from all other caste groups must not drink any water touched by Dalits.

system. The Ain also includes a number of far-fetching discriminatory legal provisions; for example, in the case of incest, Brahman (high-caste) offenders are punished by life-imprisonment and the degradation of the caste, but other groups are punished by the death penalty (Gray, n.d.). Studies have shown the adverse impacts of such discriminations and high-caste hegemony on the socialization, education, and political participation of ethnic minoritized people, including Dalits (Hangen, 2013; Lawoti, 2007).

The main ideology shaping the Ain is the nation-state ideology. The Ain supports the nation-building project by “integrating ethnically diverse groups into the hierarchy of castes” (Höfer, 1979, p. 52; see also Gurung, 1997) and strengthens the “centralized agrarian bureaucracy and...the privileges of the state-bearing elites” (Gray, n.d.). Pfaff-Czarnecka (1997) calls the high-caste hegemony in the Ain ‘the empire model’ of nationalism in which the people are considered a ‘subject’ rather than a ‘citizen’. She claims that through the Hinduized caste system the state envisages a multicultural and multilingual society under the “uniform sociopolitical framework” in which “diversity has been translated into inequality” (p. 425). As the minoritized groups are increasingly linked to the “societal periphery and [are] denied a voice”, the high-caste Hindu rulers “promote their own vision of the Gorkha Kingdom [Nepal]” (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997, p. 426).

Although the caste system was legally abolished in 1963, the hierarchical social order created by the Ain still shapes social discourses, behaviors, and cultural practices, affecting the lived experiences of the minoritized people (e.g., Egli, 2014; Hangen & Lawoti, 2012). *Dalits* and other low-caste people are still deprived of access to sociopolitical and economic resources (see Gellner, 2007). More importantly, the assimilationist state’s ideology has left strong discursive impacts in the current political discourses. At the heart of these *discursive impacts*,

there are at present questions of what counts as ‘Nepalipan’ [Nepaliness] (Lal, 2012) and whose identities, ideologies, and epistemologies count for nationalism, as the Ain laid a strong foundation for monocultural and monolingual ideology of Nepali nationalism. Gurung (2006) contends that the Ain’s caste-based hierarchy has made people think that one’s Nepali identity must uphold Hindu religion and ability to speak standard Nepali. Lal’s (2012) analysis shows that the Ain has built a very narrow ideology of nationalism by privileging the linguistic and cultural hegemony of the high-caste people. Although there are some signs of changes as the state accepts Nepal’s identity as a multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic country in its 2015 Constitution, the assimilationist ideology deeply impacts the ways of thinking and talking about nationalism, as well as nationalism in practice. Bista (1991) argues:

It is considered only natural that the culture of [the] majority [minoritized] group becomes the legitimate national culture, and that the hierarchization of the ethnic peoples is continuous with the development of a consolidated national identity. (p. 153)

The assimilationist nationalist ideology has immensely contributed to the sociopolitical exclusion and under-representation of ethnic minoritized people in state mechanisms and public policies (Hangen & Lawoti, 2012). While structural inequalities²⁹ are still critical issues, the metadiscursive regime that the Ain has constructed is even deeper and more devastating in terms of the cultural and linguistic marginalization of the minoritized populations. In what follows, I discuss how language education policies have been used to create an imagined community of Nepali nationalism.

²⁹ The 2009 statistics, for example, shows that in the highest level of bureaucracy, the high-caste elites dominate with 83.93% of their representation, followed by the Madhesis (8.93%) and Newars (7.14%); however, the indigenous nationalities (except the Newars), Dalits, and Muslims have no representation at all (Lawoti, 2012; Neupane, 2000).

The Wood Commission: Language Education Policy as an Ideological Tool

Language education policy has been used as a major sociopolitical process to support the state's assimilationist ideology of nationalism. After the fall of the autocratic Rana regime (1846-1950), the state focused on the expansion and modernization of education, beginning as early as 1950³⁰. The first democratic government established the Ministry of Education and also formed a 20-member National Education Board (NEB) in 1952 to expand and systematize education. In 1953, and following the NEB's recommendation, the Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC) was formed as the first planning commission in Nepal's history. The NEB, in close consultation and collaboration with the United States Operation Mission, appointed Dr. Hugh D. Wood, professor of the University of Oregon, USA, as an educational advisor to the NNEPC (see Appendix 1 for the list of the members in the commission.).

NNEPC, popularly known as the Wood Commission, produced a 259-page report on various aspects of modernizing education. Based on surveys and discussions with multiple stakeholders from across the country, NNEPC made a number of recommendations on the structure of education, teacher development, curricula, and language policy. Although it provided some significant insights into the state's planned educational efforts, NNEPC reproduced a monolingual ideology by legitimizing the role of Nepali as the sole language for

³⁰ Until the mid-20th century, the general public did not have access to education. The Shahs and Ranas who invested most of their time in war (internal and external) had opened a very limited number of schools, mainly for their own family members. The rulers, especially the Ranas, had thought that if the people acquired education, they would become aware of their rights and would resist the discriminatory system (Whelpton, 2005). When the Rana regime was overthrown in 1951, there were some 310 primary and middle schools, 11 high schools, one college, one teacher training center, and one technical school. In the entire country, less than 1000 students had completed high school and only 300 people had a college degree (Wood & Knall, 1962). Children were taught in Gumbas (Buddhist monasteries) and Ashrams (Sanskrit education). There were some Hindi medium schools in the southern part of the country along the Indian border. Some English schools were also established for the children from the rulers' families in the mid-19th century. In addition, some Rana rulers had opened some 'Basic Schools', following Gandhi's Basic Education model in India. The expansion of education in Nepal began in the 1950s with the imitation of 'Indian-style education' which was developed by British Raj to produce clerks to help them (Reed & Reed, 1968).

the medium of instruction. With a goal to create “a uniform system of education for the whole country” (Pandey, K.C., & Wood, 1956, p. 1), NNEPC supported the ideology of Nepali as a national language and focused on its teaching and learning for ‘national unity’. Here are several relevant excerpts from NNEPC:

- The medium of instruction should be the national language [Nepali] in primary, middle, and higher educational institutions, because any language which cannot be made the lingua franca and which does not serve legal proceedings in court should not find a place....The use of the national language can bring about equality among all classes of people, can be an anchor for Nepalese nationality, and can be the main instrument for promoting literature. (Pandey et al., 1956, p. 95)
- No languages [other than Nepali] should be taught, even optionally in primary school, because [only] a few children will need them and they would hinder the use of Nepali...and those who wish and need additional languages can learn them in the sixth grade. (Pandey et al., 1956, p. 95)

NNEPC further states:

- If the younger generation is taught to use Nepali as the basic language, then and greater national strength and unity will result. The study of a non-Nepali local tongue would mitigate against the effective development of Nepali, for the student would make greater use of it than Nepali – at home and in the community – and thus Nepali would remain a “foreign” language. If the younger generation is taught to use Nepali as the basic language, then other languages will gradually disappear, and greater national strength and unity will result. (Pandey et al., 1956, p. 97)

- [...] it should be emphasized that, if Nepali is to become the *true national language*, then we must insist that its use be enforced in primary school..... Local dialects and tongues other than *standard Nepali* should be vanished [banished] from the school and playground as early as possible in the life of the child. (Pandey et al., 1956, p. 97, emphasis added)

NNEPC's recommendations clearly supported institutionalized oppression against the speakers of languages other than Nepali and present monolingualism as a norm in education in the guise of nationalism. While Nepali is iconically presented as a 'true national language' and a 'language of equality', the other languages are constructed as a 'hindrance for nationalism' and inappropriate for official usage, such as legal proceedings in court. This ideological process contributes to the 'othering' of minoritized languages as being 'non-Nepali'. More strikingly, the Commission reproduces standard language ideology by recommending the ban of using 'local dialects and tongues' even from school playgrounds.

Awasthi (2004, 2011) critiques that the NNEPC's recommendations are guided by 'Western colonial ideology' that views linguistic diversity as a problem. He claims that NNEPC embraces the ideologies of the 1835 Macaulay Minute on Indian Education³¹. Despite the fact that the majority of survey respondents preferred to introduce local 'mother tongues' as a medium of instruction at the primary level, NNEPC insisted on adopting a monolingual policy for the purpose of nation-building. NNEPC argues that "it will not be practicable to give the same status to all the languages simultaneously" (Pandey et al., 1956, p. 62), thus it is necessary

³¹ Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was overseeing major educational and legal reforms in the British East India Company, prepared the Minute which imposed an English-only medium-of-instruction policy, erasing India's indigenous linguistic diversity. The Minute iconically described English as an 'elite language' and the language with 'vast intellectual wealth', thus recommending its use as the sole medium of instruction in the Indian education system.

to select a language spoken by the majority of people as the language of education. Most strikingly, NNEPC states that “local languages generally lack grammars and dictionaries and it takes a long time to prepare them” (Pandey et al., 1956, p. 62), thus a monolingual policy solves the “problems of multiplicity of languages” and promotes “the integrity and sovereignty of Nepal” (Pandey et al., 1956, p. 63).³² NNEPC’s report has received significant attention in the national newspaper; *Gorkhapatra*, the only state-owned newspaper, states:

U.S. education expert, Dr. Wood expressed his views on the problem of the medium of instruction in primary education. He said that two hundred years before, the very problem had stared them in the face in the United States of America, which, at that time, had a multiplicity of spoken languages; but after the War of Independence, English was given due prominence as the medium of instruction, and that today there was no problem of language there. (*Gorkhapatra*, 3/26/1954, as cited in Wood, 1987, p. 26)

The newspaper further reports:

Without laying any emphasis on minor local languages, Dr. Wood referred to the three-fold benefit of giving prominence to one language: first, it strengthened national unity; second, it economized books and teachers; and third, little boys and girls were apt to learn other languages quicker than when they were fully grown up. Therefore, he added that if primary education was imparted in a national language, they would begin to understand it better from their very childhood. (*Gorkhapatra*, 3/26/1954, as cited in Wood, 1987, p. 26)

The Wood Commission’s monolingual language policy is highly contested throughout the country; for example, activist Bedananda Jha formed the Nepal Tarai Congress party to resist the banning of Hindi in schools because it was also considered a ‘foreign language’ (Gautam, 2008).

Other indigenous nationalities also organized mass protests against monolingual policy

³² Although local languages are rich in their oral practices, they are erased from language policy simply because grammars and dictionaries have yet to be developed. While claiming that it is not difficult for local people to understand Nepali as it has been ‘an official language for a long time’, NNEPC misrecognizes the linguistic problems and discriminations endured by minoritized language speakers due to the imposed monolingual policy.

throughout the country (Hangen & Lawoti, 2012; Lawoti, 2007). Awasthi (2011) considers NNEPC's monolingual ideology a 'non-Nepali construct' which is supported by five social processes: assimilation (of people into the dominant culture/language), destruction (of multilingualism and indigenous languages), perpetuation (using state mechanisms to perpetuate inequalities), possession (monopoly of intellectual resources), and restriction (control over production of materials).

***Eka-desh-ek-bhāṣā*, Nation-Building, and Linguistic Oppression**

The monolingual ideology in the Wood Commission was further strengthened during the Panchayat era (1960-1990). Popularly known as *Mahendra Rāshṭrabād* [Mahendra Nationalism] in the current sociopolitical discourse, a partyless Panchayat Regime (1960-1990) established by the former King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah legally banned the use of languages other than Nepali in public spheres such as courts, government offices, and the mass media. The 1962 Constitution has legally defined Nepali, written in Devanagari script, as 'the national language of Nepal'. In addition, the identity of Nepal as a state is defined as 'a monarchical Hindu State' and 'cow' as 'the national animal'. The Nepali language, monarchy, and Hindu religion together formed the three major pillars of Nepali nationalism during the Panchayat era.

The ideology of '**eka-desh-ek-bhāṣā**' (one-nation-one-language) has guided the state's language policy. Multilingualism has been considered a problem and the use of minoritized languages have been described as 'unconstitutional'. More strikingly, the state repressed language activism against the monolingual policy by banning the freedom of speech and the ethnic organizations (Angdembe, 2012; Tumbahang, 2009). A new National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971 further solidified the monolingual and monocultural ideology of nationalism during the Panchayat era. NESP focused on "harmonizing diverse multilingual

traditions into a single nationhood, consolidating the loyalty and faith in the Crown and accelerate socioeconomic progress in order to transform the geopolitical entity of Nepal into a positive emotional integration” (Ministry of Education, 1971, p. 9). NSEP states that the goal of education is to promote “the social unification of the Nepalese people” and “create a mass awareness...of nation-building” (Ministry of Education, 1971, p. 9).

NESP imposed Nepali as the medium-of-instruction with two major goals: (a) to produce citizens who are loyal to the nation, monarchy, and national independence, and (b) to preserve, develop, and propagate the national language, literature, culture, and arts (Ministry of Education, 1971). It aims to homogenize, rather than diversify, ‘intellectual traditions’ to strengthen solidarity and national unity. This clearly implies that the state wants to promote homogenous epistemologies of language, education, and national identity. In other words, the state imposes the idea that Nepali language literacy is the only legitimate way to construct one’s identity as Nepali. This policy not only derecognizes the use of minoritized languages in education, but also erases diverse epistemologies embedded in their cultural practices.

As an effort to unify Nepali language learning and teaching, NESP promotes ‘a standard language ideology’ (Milroy, 2000). NESP emphasizes the development of ‘national textbooks’ in standard Nepali for all students, irrespective of their language and cultural backgrounds. These efforts discursively create negative ideologies towards minoritized languages and non-standard Nepali language practices. The minoritized languages are stereotypically labelled as “the speech of the illiterate” (Malla, 1979, p. 112) and “the dialect of the jungle” (Hutt, 1986, p. 6). Lippi-Green (2000) argues that such negative iconization of languages is indeed connected with the identity of speakers of those languages. Shah (1993) has discussed how NESP supports the cultural and linguistic habitus, and privileges of the high-caste people; he also argues that the

state developed curricula and textbooks that included various symbols such as the cow, Hindu festivals, and biographies of brave warriors to “implant a vigorous and forceful patriotism among the youth” (Shah, 1993, p. 9).

Onta (1996) is critical about the monolingual and monocultural ideologies of nationalism that the state has promoted through textbooks. He critiques that the national textbooks valorize high-caste people’s contributions to Nepali literature and eulogize their bravery in nation-building. However, these textbooks purposefully exclude the contributions of the minoritized people. Upadhyaya’s (2010) study shows that Nepali textbooks still produce monolingual and monocultural ideologies and support high-caste social elites’ hegemony. Since Hindu cultural practices, festivals, and symbols dominate the textbooks, people from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds feel excluded and unrecognized (Shah, 1993; Upadhyaya, 2010).

Institutionalized Linguicism and the Paradoxes of Liberal Democracy

Nepal has entered into a new political era—the era of liberal democracy—since 1990. After the overthrow of the Panchayat regime by the people’s movement, the state adopted a liberal multiparty democratic ideology. The 1990 Constitution recognizes the identity of Nepal as ‘a multilingual and multicultural country’ and provides space for **mātribhāṣā shikṣā** (mother-tongue education) at the primary level (Article 18.2). The Constitution states that citizens are not discriminated against in terms of their linguistic, cultural, ethnic, gender, and political ideology, and that all communities shall have the irrevocable right to preserve their cultures, scripts, and languages (Article 26.2). Yet, these liberal constitutional provisions are not only far from being implemented in practice, but also, most importantly, full of paradoxes, which eventually reproduce the old nation-state ideology of language.

Although the Constitution recognizes the identity of minoritized languages as ‘mātribhāṣā’ [mother tongue] and ‘national languages’ (Article 6.2), it states that the Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the ‘language of [the] nation’ and the ‘official language’ (Article 6.1). On the one hand, the distinction between ‘national languages’ and ‘the language of [the] nation’ does not embrace the multilingual identity of the country; on the other, the provision to use Nepali, written in Devanagari script, as ‘official language’ reproduces the monolingual ideology from the past regimes (Yadava, 2007). More importantly, the state adopted the ideology of language as a fixed and bounded entity by labelling minoritized languages as ‘mother tongues’. The minoritized language activists and linguists also embrace ‘mother tongue’ in their language rights discourses and activism; however, what is missing from the resistance discourse is the analysis of the ideological implications of the ‘mother tongue’, that is, whether or not this concept embraces the epistemologies, identities, and language practices of the minoritized peoples. In other words, there is lack of critical analysis of whether or not the ‘mother-tongue’ discourses challenge hard linguistic boundaries and monolingual ideologies created by the nation-state. Before I discuss this issue, let me present some examples of institutionalized linguicism in the liberal democratic regime.

One explicit example is the verdict of the Supreme Court which banned the use of two local languages—Newari and Maithili—in local municipality offices. In 1997, Kathmandu Metropolitan City and the Dhanusha and Rajbiraj municipalities decided to introduce Newari and Maithili, respectively, as additional official languages to provide efficient services to the local people. The indigenous people of Kathmandu, the Newars, dominantly speak Newari and the majority of the people, Madhesis, speak Maithili in Dhanusha and Rajbiraj. The decision was

later supported by the government's 1999 Local Self-Governance Act, which gave the local government authority to protect and promote local languages, religions, and cultures.

However, a group of high-caste Nepali native speakers filed a case against the decision to use local languages as co-official languages in the Supreme Court. Contrary to the expectation of the minoritized people, the Supreme Court gave a final verdict on June 1, 1999, and ruled to ban the use of local languages for official purposes. In its verdict, the Supreme Court claimed that the use of languages other than Nepali in government offices is 'unconstitutional' as it goes against the constitutional provision of Nepali as the 'official language'. As Turin (2007) argues, the court's verdict raised questions about the "sincerity of the government's commitment" (p. 18) to the minoritized languages. The verdict not only bars the Newari and Maithili speaking Nepalis to access public services effectively, but also continues to reproduce the monolingual nation-state ideology. This ideology erases the multilingual identities of the minoritized people. The minoritized people protested against the verdict throughout the country by organizing street protests and seminars on language rights. They condemned the verdict of the Supreme Court as an attack on the linguistic rights of minoritized peoples (Rana, 2008)³³. Every year, minoritized people remember June 1 as '**āāshik Kālo Din**' (Linguistic Black Day) and organize programs on language rights.

Another example of linguicism includes the delegitimacy of languages other than Nepali in the qualification exams for **sarkārī jāgīr** (government jobs). The government hires its civil servants in various posts by administering exams through the Public Service Commission. Such exams, however, are given only in Nepali (and in English for jobs in the Foreign Ministry). The

³³Activists Padma Ratna Tuladhar, Parshu Ram Tamang, Gore Bahadur Khapangi, and Suresh Ale Magar, among others, were at the fore front of resisting the Supreme Court's verdict.

state's public notices in newspapers, on TV, and on the radio are in Nepali (and in English in some cases). Moreover, public signs are written mostly in Nepali throughout the country (see Appendix 3). Many scholars (e.g., Angdembe, 2012; Giri, 2010, 2011; Hangen & Lawoti, 2012; Sonntag, 2007; Toba et al., 2005; Tumbahang, 2009; Yonjan-Tamang, 2006) are critical about the privileging of Nepali, the language of high-caste elites, as the national language and the sole medium of instruction in schools. Sonntag (2007) claims that the construction of Nepali as a national language not only defies the state's recognition of Nepal as a multilingual country, but also gives "prominence to Nepali over...other languages" (p. 210). Sapkota (2010) considers the monolingual policy an example of "autocratic language politics" (p. 208). Moreover, Maddox (2003) takes the monolingual policy as part of a larger political process and argues that Nepali as an official language has been imposed as a counter-response to growing ethnic activism for linguistic and cultural rights.

However, the majority of people who speak Nepali as their first language still support the monolingual policy and argue that Nepali has been "the language of [the] nation" not because it is the 'victor's language', but because it is "a neutral language...with the oldest written tradition" (Pokhrel, 1998, p. 7). Most surprisingly, Dhungel (2010) argues that the state did not develop a monolingual policy nor had it suppressed minoritized languages; for him, the construction of Nepali as a national language was "the demand of that time" (Dhungel, 2010, p. 180). All of these arguments reproduce the ideology of linguistic Darwinism (Dorian, 1998) which takes Nepali language dominance as neutral and desirable and that other minoritized languages are not fully developed to become a national language. In what follows I discuss more paradoxes of liberal democratic ideologies with regard to minoritized language rights and multilingual education policies.

Mother-Tongue Ideology and the Rights-Based Discourses

The term ‘mother tongue’ has received incredible agency in the post-1990 political and language policy discourses in Nepal. As part of the resistance discourse against the state’s repressive language policies, indigenous people have been demanding the preservation and promotion of ‘mother tongues’. Indigenous people’s rights-based activism has become more visible in mainstream political discourses after the formation of the National Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)³⁴, an umbrella organization for all indigenous people. This organization has been playing a critical role towards ensuring indigenous people’s sociopolitical, cultural, and linguistic rights in the changed political contexts (Gellner, 2007; Onta, 2006). NEFIN’s activism is based on various global United Nations human rights and indigenous rights declarations including ILO 169³⁵. Language rights discourses and activism are also shaped by these global discourses. One of the major aspects of ethnic minoritized people’s ongoing language activism is a ‘mother-tongue ideology’, which upholds the assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between language and ethnic identity (Khubchandani, 2003). ‘Mother tongue’ is defined in various ways, including “a language one learns first; a language one identifies with and/or is identified by others as a native speaker of; and the language that one is most competent in or uses most” (Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty, 2008, p. 7). Looking from a language ideological perspective, ‘mother tongue’ upholds the assumption that there is an essential linkage between language and ethnicity. Scholars from post-colonial contexts such as South Africa (e.g., Busch, 2010; Makoni, Brutt-Griffler, & Mashiri, 2007) and India (e.g.,

³⁴ Although NEFIN’s initial focus was cultural preservation, literacy, livelihood, documentation and publication of indigenous knowledge, and empowerment of the indigenous nationalities, it is active in ensuring the indigenous people’s rights to land and natural resources, self-determination and autonomy, and identity-based federalism through lobbying, awareness raising programs, and the nation-wide mass movements.

³⁵ ILO stands for International Labor Organization; its convention 169 deals with the indigenous and tribal people. Nepal has rectified this convention. For details http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314

Benidikter, 2009; Khubchandani, 2003) have revealed that ‘mother-tongue’ is a colonial construct used as a tool to segregate multilingual communities into homogenous linguistic boundaries. In Nepal, the notion of ‘mother tongue’ was invented in the late 19th and the early 20th century. Brian Houghton Hodgson, a colonial administrator who worked in the capacity as the British Resident officer in Nepal in the early 19th century, documented the languages, customs, architecture, animals, religion, and natural history of the country (Hangen, 2010). Hodgson labelled different languages by naming them according to their ethnicity and territory. Shneiderman and Turin (2006) rightly argue that his work “further solidified the nascent caste and ethnic categories propagated in the Muluki Ain” (p. 99). In other words, Hodgson assigned each ethnic group a distinct language, known as a ‘mother tongue’. The same language ideology used by Hodgson has been reproduced by subsequent linguists, language activists, and policy-makers, without critically analyzing how Hodgson’s categories and classifications of language do not represent the actual language practices of ethnic groups.

Hodgson’s essentialist categories were later reproduced by the government’s census reports, linguistic surveys, and education policies. As seen in Table 3, the first census report (in 1952) listed 44 ‘mother tongues’ (Yadava, 2014), while the census of 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011 shows 36, 17, 18, 31, 92, and 123 ‘mother tongues’, respectively.

Table 3. Languages in census

Census	1952	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Languages	44	36	17	18	31	92	123

(Source: Yadava, 2014)

From this, we can clearly see that the categorization of mother tongues is ideological; for example, the number of ‘mother tongues’ in the 1971 and 1981 censuses is less because of the

state's emphasis on monolingual policy for nation-building. Many minoritized languages are not included in the census reports as linguistic diversity was considered a threat to nationalism. More importantly, languages such as Hindi and Urdu were not included in these census as they were considered 'foreign' because both languages were used in the neighboring country of India. Other minoritized languages were not recorded because they were considered as 'dialects'. As an ideological process, national censuses are used as a tool to obscure linguistic diversity and the fluid language practices in society (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). In Nepal, the census categorizes languages as 'mother tongues' by showing a one-to-one correspondence between language and ethnicity. However, this ideology misrepresents linguistic heterogeneity among ethnic groups.

Despite this rigid ideology of the 'mother tongue', language-rights-based discourses keep reproducing the term. The state's constitutions and educational policy documents continue to reproduce 'mother tongue' as an essential category to describe the language rights of ethnic minoritized people. However, these liberal-rights-based policies, as discussed below, are not adequate to create multilingual school spaces where minoritized children feel safe to use their multilingual repertoires.

Mother-Tongue Education: Ideologies and Limitations

In 1993, the government formed the National Language Policy Recommendations Commission (henceforth Commission) to advise the Ministry of Education (MOE) about the plans and programs to implement mother-tongue education at the primary level, as mentioned in the constitution. Led by a language activist and prominent literary figure, Til Bikram Nembang, the 11-member Commission (see Appendix 4 for the list of members) make some significant

recommendations with regard to the identification, modernization, and preservation of minoritized languages. For example, the Commission recommends the government to:

- Begin programs to provide education through the *mother tongue* for children on a priority basis by *categorizing* the languages into three categories, i.e. languages with literate traditions, languages that are developing literate traditions, and languages with no literate traditions.
- Make a provision to study the mother tongue as the subject of all *categories of schools*, mother-tongue schools, bilingual, and multilingual schools.
- To provide education through the *mother tongue* in schools with mother-tongue-speaking children, provide bilingual education (the mother tongue and language of the nation) in the schools with bilingual context and *use the language of the nation in the school with multilingual contexts*. (Nembang et al., 1994, p. 2, emphasis added)

These recommendations have been used as a foundation for subsequent language education policies. Although the Commission has tremendously contributed to create spaces for minoritized languages in education, it keeps reproducing the nation-state ideology. First, by categorizing the minoritized languages in terms of the availability of ‘literate traditions’, the Commission reproduces the standard language ideology which focuses on the importance of learning script rather than language, and through language itself. The Commission suggests that ‘mother-tongue textbooks’ should be prepared in a standard dialect and the selection of the mother tongue in a multilingual context should be based on the majority of speakers. This clearly implies that non-standard dialects and minoritized languages without a writing system and yet have more speakers are still marginalized in ‘mother-tongue education’. Following these

recommendations, the MOE has developed a mother-tongue education policy which allows the teaching of ‘mother tongues’ (as an optional subject), as per the demand of communities and schools. However, the curricula and textbooks for mother-tongue teaching should be developed by the ethnic communities and schools themselves, in collaboration with the Resource Centers and District Curriculum Coordination Committee that are later moderated and evaluated by the Curriculum Development Center. Textbooks in some 25 different ‘mother tongues’ have been developed for mother-tongue education.

The textbook-oriented mother-tongue education has constructed an ideology that only those languages with standard and modernized orthographic systems are legitimate languages for mother-tongue education. Ethnolinguistic activists and communities are currently focusing on developing orthographies, with support from linguists, for their own mother tongue. This process indeed embraces the previous caste-based hierarchy as a model to promote mother-tongue education; Turin (2004) calls this a “caste-system of languages” (p. 9), which places script as the prerequisite for mother-tongue education. Moreover, the Commission provides an extremely limited idea on the use of ‘mother tongue’ in schools. While reproducing additive and monoglossic ideologies (García, 2009), the Commission recommends that mother tongues can be used only in monolingual schools and reiterates that the language of the nation [Nepali] is appropriate in schools with multilingual contexts. More interestingly, the Commission itself recognizes linguistic fluidity and heterogeneity, due to the migration and mobility of the people. Considering multilingualism as ‘a reality’ and ‘a necessity’ for everyday communication, the Commission reveals that “it is difficult to demarcate where one language ends and another begins” (Nembang et al., 1994, p. 10). The Commission finds that “linguistic features tend to converge from one language to another” (Nembang et al., 1994, p. 10) due to Nepal’s complex

multilingual situation. Paradoxically, the Commission claims that language shift and loss is one of the “vital consequences of multilingualism” (Nembang et al., 1994, p. 10). If multilingualism is ‘a reality’, how can it contribute to language loss? The fact, however, is that it is not multilingualism nor migration that contributes to language loss, rather it is the monolingual ideology of language policy that contributes to the marginalization of minoritized languages.

Although the Commission shows its commitment to preserve and promote minoritized languages in education, the nation-state ideology it reproduces is extremely limiting and unable to embrace linguistic heterogeneity. Indeed, the Commission strengthens the homogenizing language ideologies by labelling minoritized languages such as Magar, Tharu, Tamang, Gurung, Limbu, Thami, and Sherpa as ‘ethnic languages’. The Commission claims that these languages have “a one to one correspondence between and ethnic/caste group and its language” (Nembang et al., 1994, p. 12). However, the speakers of these and other ‘ethnic languages’ are bi/multilinguals who at least use their ‘mother tongues’ and Nepali³⁶. For example, Turin’s (2004) study shows that Thami speakers have very fluid and flexible language practices. Scholars like Holmberg (1989) and Whelpton (2005) find that there is no clear linguistic boundary between Tamang and Gurung ethnicity; their studies show that Tamang ethnicity is not constructed due to a common linguistic and cultural background, but is given by the state to homogenize different caste groups, such as Lama and Bhotas.

While focusing on standard written language, the Commission reproduces an essentialist notion of language as a unified, fixed, and standard written system and supports, rather than challenges, an elitist version of language education (Phyak, 2011). It should be noted that out of the 123 different ‘mother tongues’, only eight languages have their own orthographic system

³⁶ They also speak Hindi and basic English in some contexts.

(Yadava, 2007). Unfortunately, the Commission states that “mother-tongue schools shall be opened in the areas where there are monolingual students” (Nembang et al., 1994, p. 37). Rather than imagining education from a multilingual perspective, the Commission discursively presents multilingualism as a problem for mother-tongue education. The Commission, for example, states that a mother tongue is *difficult* to use as a medium in education in a language community with “sporadic settlements” or in settlements with “a combination of several language communities” (Nembang et al., 1994, p. 27).

There are three major language ideological issues which are not critically discussed in mother-tongue education policy. First, this policy discursively constructs the identity of minoritized language communities as a group of homogenous and monolingual speakers. In other words, this policy reproduces monolingualism as the norm in language education. Second, this policy promotes ‘elite multilingualism’ rather than ‘grassroots multilingualism’ (Han, 2013) as seen in minoritized language communities. By emphasizing the invention and standardization of orthography, the mother-tongue education policy is unable to embrace the importance of the oral and folk/non-standard language practices of minoritized communities as well as dialectical variations within each minoritized language. Third, this policy promotes a hegemonic ideology which assumes that minoritized languages cannot be used in multilingual schools. If mother-tongues cannot be used in a multilingual context, where do we use them and for what purpose? If mother tongues are appropriate only for monolingual students, how can it be appropriate for ethnic minoritized students who are bi/multilinguals?

The lack of ideological clarity in existing mother-tongue education policies have created implementational challenges for minoritized languages. Because most schools in Nepal are bi/multilingual, the monolingual imagining of mother-tongue education has not been

implemented effectively, despite growing mother-tongue activism. The Ministry of Education (2014) itself shows a gloomy picture of mother-tongue education: the MOE finds that mother tongues are taught as a subject only in “less than 5% (could be as low as 1-2%) [of] schools in [the] early grades” (p.7). It further contends that “there is no real educational objective for teaching [the] MT [mother tongue]...since Nepali and English are taught simultaneously in grade 1, and literacy instruction is initiated in both from the first few days of school [onwards]” (Ministry of Education, 2014, p.7). As minoritized languages are excluded from education, ethnic minoritized children’s identities, knowledge, and literacy skills are erased, affecting their overall educational achievement (Rai et al., 2012). Yet, there is lack of critical and engaged discussions on language ideological issues affecting the current language policies for minoritized language speakers.

What’s in a Name? Language, Ethnicity, and Politics

Ethnic activism has a long history in Nepal’s politics (Hangen & Lawoti, 2012). Before 1990, ethnic activism was not quite visible as the state had legally banned any activities that promoted ethnic voices. However, Lawoti (2007, 2010) and other scholars (e.g., Gellner, 2007; Hangen, 2013) have revealed some major ethnic activism against the state’s hegemonic monolingual and monocultural ideologies and policies. Such activism included the Limbu indigenous people’s movement to reclaim their right to use their ancestral land, called *Kipat*, and the Newari language movement to resist Nepali-only policy and the ethnic minoritized people’s Dashain boycott movement (Hangen, 2013). Ethnic activism has emerged as a response to minoritized people’s identity crises, sociopolitical exclusion, and other forms of marginalization due to monolingual and monocultural social policies (Hangen, 2007; Thapa, 2012). For example, Whelpton (2005) shows that 81% of total professors in the country’s oldest university

(Tribhuvan) are held by high-caste people: Bhrahmin and Chetri. Das and Hatlebakk (2010) reveal sharp and systematic inequalities among castes and ethnic groups which have hindered the political representation of minoritized people and the overall socio-economic development of the country.

Since the 1990s, social inclusion/exclusion has gained agency in ethnic activism. Questioning the lack of their representation in state mechanisms, ethnic activists have been demanding various affirmative actions and equal sociopolitical representations to empower and ensure the rights of ethnic minoritized people. The 2007 Interim Constitution embraces an inclusive democracy as a way to address the voices of ethnic minoritized people. Accordingly, the government adopted an **āraḷakṣṇa** (reservation) policy, also known as a quotas policy, for ethnic minoritized people, Dalits, Madhesis, person with disabilities, women, and other marginalized people in its hiring policy of civil servants. With this policy, women receive 33% of reserved seats while ethnic minoritized groups have a share of 27%. Likewise, Madhesis and Dalits receive 22% and 9%, respectively, while 5% of seats are reserved for the people with disability and 4% from remote areas. More importantly, the 2007 Interim Constitution includes a proportionate electoral system to ensure the political representation of ethnic minoritized people in terms of their population (Suhrke, 2014). Although these provisions are not properly implemented, the representation of ethnic minoritized people in parliament has increased in the 2008 and 2013 constituent assembly elections, compared to the past parliaments.

One of the major contested issues in the current political discourse is the restructuring of the state, which includes the names and the number of federal states. Although the state has been able to develop a new constitution, the issue of federalism, language, identity, and inclusive democracy remains unsettling and controversial. Historically marginalized groups continue to

lodge national protest by demanding the amendment of the Constitution to make the country more inclusive, participatory, and just. Although the 2015 Constitution states that “all the mother tongues spoken in Nepal shall be the national languages” (Article 6), it reproduces the past monolingual ideology by legitimizing “Nepali language written in Devanagari script” as the “language of official business in Nepal” (Article 7/1). At the same time, the Constitution states that one or more mother tongues spoken by the majority of people can be used for the purpose of official business in different provinces. The indigenous people are particularly concerned with the erasure of mother-tongue education as one of the fundamental rights of the people as it was ensured by the 2007 Interim Constitution. The new Constitution states that “all communities have the right to education in their own mother tongue, as provided for by law, and open schools and educational institutions for that purpose” (Article 31/5). This provision not only disregards the mother-tongue education as one’s fundamental right³⁷, but also implies that linguistic communities themselves, and not the state, are responsible for opening mother-tongue schools.

At the heart of the current politics is the name and the number of federal states. Building on the criteria developed by the State Restructuring Committee of the 2008 Constituent Assembly³⁸, the ethnic minoritized groups are now demanding for provinces to be given names that reflect their identities—historical, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural. For example, the national organization of the Limbu people, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, are lodging protest to ensure a Limbuwan state. Similarly, Newars, Gurungs (Tamus), Tamangs, Tharus, and Rais want new provinces to be named Newa, Tamuwan, Tamsaling, Tharuhat, and Kirat, respectively (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016). Framed broadly under the discourse of self-determination and social inclusion,

³⁷ The 2007 Interim Constitution has recognized mother-tongue education as fundamental rights.

³⁸ One of the major criteria for the state restructuring is identity, which includes the historical continuity, linguistic and cultural background, and population of the ethnic groups.

activists from ethnic minoritized groups argue that such names recognize their historical, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities. For example, one Limbu activist stated in an interview that “it’s necessary to respect our identity. Limbuwan isn’t only about ethnicity....[T]his name shows the history of this land. It includes language and cultural identity as well.” Ethnic activists argue that given such names to the new provinces is necessary to reflect their identity is “a symbolic concession that had inherent value in and of itself” (Suhrke, 2014, p. 10).

Scholars claim that the identity politics of ethnic minoritized communities should be considered an effort towards redefining monolingual and unitary Nepali nationalism (Gurung, 2012). Hangen and Lawoti (2013) describe the current identity politics as part of ‘people-centric nationalism’, as opposed to ‘state-centric nationalism’. These scholars define people-centric nationalism as “efforts by marginalized groups to establish their own state or gain autonomy within an existing state that enables them to self-govern in matters that affect them” (Hangen & Lawoti, 2013, p. 7). In contrast, state-centric nationalism refers to “identification with and mobilization of the political community associated with and promoted by the state, which is often controlled by a dominant group in multiethnic societies” (Hangen & Lawoti, 2013, p. 7). As discussed above, the dominant ideology of nationalism invents and reproduces master narratives of homogenization, while people-centric nationalism embraces counter-narratives through which marginalized groups respond to the dominant narratives (Bhabha, 1990).

Although the identity politics of the ethnic minoritized groups have opened up alternative ideologies and perspectives on Nepali nationalism, it is not far from being contested in broader political discourses. On the one hand, the essentialized ideology of ethnic identity that most ethnic minoritized activists hold itself is a challenge to negotiate the agenda of ‘people-centric nationalism’ in a multiethnic sociopolitical context; on the other, the rising counter identity

politics of dominant caste group, in the guise of national unity and social harmony, has created a strong ideological divide among the people. This ideological divide influences, directly and indirectly, Nepal's current language policy discourses

Backlash Movement and On-Going Ideological Tension

As the agenda of identity politics of ethnic minoritized people received growing national attention in the post-2006 era, the dominant caste/ethnic groups also began a new identity politics by forming their own caste-based organizations that were non-existent before 2007. While ethnic minoritized peoples' activism is rooted in their ongoing struggle to ensure their sense of belonging in the country, the identity politics of the dominant caste groups emerges as a response to minoritized people's activism. Adhikari and Gellner (2016) make a comprehensive analysis of the motives and emergence of dominant high-caste groups' (Bahuns and Chetris) identity politics as a backlash movement.³⁹ Their study shows that these dominant caste groups have formed their own organizations—such as Brahman Samaaj and Chetri Samaaj in 2009—for two major reasons: (a) they felt increasingly under attack and vulnerable due to the ongoing ethnic activism, and (b) they felt that the state's affirmative action policy in bureaucracy, elections, the army, and other sectors, is limiting their employment opportunities and political representation (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016).

As the ethnic minoritized people demand for new names of provinces that reflect their historical, linguistic, and ethnic identity, the dominant high-caste groups of the Brahmans and Chetris see themselves as “undifferentiated ‘Others’ without a designated province in the proposed federal set-up” (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016, p. 22). More than a dozen organizations

³⁹Adhikari and Gellner (2014) reveal that Bahuns and Chhetris, comprising 31.6% of the population, occupied 77% of the top positions in the judiciary, tertiary education, and the bureaucracy, and well over 50% in most other fields, and were underrepresented only in commerce and industry.

have emerged to unite the dominant caste groups throughout the country to counter the ongoing ethnic activism. Since 2009, these organizations have organized multiple street protests and national strikes to mitigate against the minoritized people's voices. Adhikari and Gellner (2016) discuss four major demands of the ongoing backlash movements; the demand for: (a) an end to discrimination on the basis of caste/ethnicity⁴⁰; (b) the removal of Bahuns, Chhetris, Thakuris, and Sanyasi from the non-indigenous 'Others' groups and granting them a 'Khas-Arya' identity as indigenous people; (c) the promotion of a reservation system (also known as quota system) based on class rather than caste/ethnicity; and, (d) not naming federal states after ethnic names. These demands are backed up by the major political parties as well; therefore, the government accepted these demands. Although the reservation policy (quota policy) in terms of ethnicity is still there, the recent constitution has included a new 'Khas-Arya' identity category as a collective identity of the Bahuns, Chhetris, Thakuris, and Sanyasis castes (the dominant caste groups). Khas-Aryas are also entitled to proportionate representation in elections. Indeed, Adhikari and Gellner (2016) rightly argue that this new identity construction is the reproduction of the caste categories of the old Muluki Ain in new forms: Khas-Arya, Adibashi Janajatis, Madheshis, Dalits, and Other.

While these are some visible consequences of the backlash movement, its discursive impacts on public opinion concerning language policy, nationalism, and ethnicity is very pervasive. There is a growing polarization and divide between ethnic minoritized and high-caste people on the issue of language, nationalism, and politics. As one of the local leaders representing a major political party argues⁴¹, the ongoing backlash movement has discursively iconized minoritized languages as 'ethnic languages' and the issue of mother-tongue education is described as part of 'ethnic identity politics' and thus a problem for 'social unity' and

⁴⁰ High-caste people felt discriminated due to the reservation policy.

⁴¹ I had a two-hour long interview with the leader. He belongs to the high-caste Brahman community.

nationalism. Like this leader comments, the public debates in social media and the mass media discursively present mother tongues as ‘small languages’ and ‘meaningless traditional languages’ (Phyak, 2015). The local leader further argues that “we have many mother tongues. Which should we teach in schools? If we teach one, another ethnic groups become angry.” The backlash movement has also created a deep sense of insecurity and fear of ethnic minoritized people about raising the issue of education in local languages. For example, in an interview, a Limbu indigenous parent said that he should be cautious in raising the issue of mother-tongue education because he is aware that ‘other people’ call him ‘*sāmpradāyik socko mānche*’ (a person with a communal thought) and ‘*jātibādī*’ (ethnocentric). He further says that people think that he is a member of ‘Limbuwan Party’⁴² because he raises the issue of mother tongue. But he is not a member of any political party. “I’m just a common man”, he says.

Multilingual Education Policy: Challenges and Prospects

Of late, there is a growing realization of the need for a multilingual education policy. Building on local legal provisions, minoritized people’s activism, and global educational campaigns such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, the government has developed a number of educational policies⁴³ that give space for ‘mother tongues’ both as a subject and medium of instruction. Since 2007, the Nepal Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Finnish government, developed and piloted a mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) program to address the learning challenges of ‘non-Nepali speaking

⁴² The Limbuwan Party is a regional political party formed by a group of Limbu activists. This party focuses on ensuring that a new province in eastern Nepal be created and named ‘Limbuwan’, and that Limbu should be used as an official language in a new Limbuwan province.

⁴³ The Education for All (EFA) National Plan of Action (Ministry of Education, 2003), the EFA Core Document for 2004-2009 (Ministry of Education, 2004), the primary level curriculum (Curriculum Development Center, 2008) and the School Sector Reform Plan for 2009-2015 (Ministry of Education, 2009) all clearly mention that primary education can be provided in children’s mother-tongues.

children⁴⁴ since 2007 (Ministry of Education, 2009; Taylor, 2010). According to this policy, language minoritized children are taught in their own ‘mother tongues’ at the basic level of primary education, up to Grade 3⁴⁵.

Models and Practices

The MTB-MLE policy highlights the need for the mother-tongues-as-a-medium-of-instruction to “guarantee children’s access to quality basic education” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.3). The policy further asserts that all subjects, except Nepali and English, are taught in “local mother tongues” up to Grade 3, with a gradual transition to Nepali from Grade 4 onwards; also beginning in Grade 4, mother-tongues are taught only as a subject. Between 2007 and 2009, the Department of Education (DOE)⁴⁶ first piloted the MTB-MLE program in eight different mother tongues in seven schools across six districts. As Table 4 below shows, the DOE categorizes schools as ‘monolingual’ and ‘multilingual’ in terms of the number of languages spoken in the school. The policy states that in ‘monolingual schools’ students come from only one linguistic community, which presumably means only one ethnic group, whereas in ‘multilingual schools’ they come from diverse linguistic/ethnic backgrounds.

⁴⁴ Although the policy documents and reports use ‘non-Nepali speaking children’, I disagree with the term; it implies that indigenous children are not Nepali because they do not speak Nepali.

⁴⁵ Recently, the government restructured the level of education. Accordingly, basic education includes the first eight grades.

⁴⁶ The DOE is a policy-implementing institute under the Ministry of Education.

Table 4. Models and classroom features in MTB-MLE policy

Model of MTB MLE	District / Language(s) / School	Classroom features
Model I monolingual mono-grade grade teaching	Dhankuta Athapahariya Rai (Grades 1-3) <i>Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School</i>	One teacher teaches all subjects (except Nepali and English) in Athapahariya Rai in one grade. Some teachers cannot speak Athapahariya Rai.
Model II monolingual mono-grade subject teaching	Kanchanpur Rana Tharu (Grades 1-3) <i>Rastriya Primary School</i>	Separate teachers teach different subjects in children's mother tongue in one grade.
	Palpa Magar (Grades 1-3) <i>Nava Jagriti Primary School</i>	All teachers can speak children's mother tongue.
	Rasuwa Tamang in Grades 1-3 <i>Saraswati Primary and Bhimsen Primary Schools</i>	
Model III monolingual multi-grade grade teaching	Jhapa Santhal (combined class of Grades 1 and 2) <i>Rastriya Ekta Primary School</i>	One teacher teaches all subjects (except Nepali and English in Santhal). There is a lack of Santhal-speaking teachers.
Model IV monolingual multi-grade subject teaching	Sunsari Uraw (combined class of Grades 2 and 3) <i>Sharada Primary School</i>	Separate teachers teach different subjects in Uraw. All teachers can speak Uraw.
Model V multilingual mono-grade subject teaching	Sunsari Tharu/Maithili, Uraw and Nepali (Grade 1) <i>Sharada Primary School</i>	Separate teachers teach different subjects in three languages. All teachers are multilingual.
Model VI multilingual multi-grade grade teaching	Sunsari Tharu/Maithili and Nepali (combined class of Grades 2 and 3) <i>Sharada Primary School</i>	One teacher teaches all subjects of two grades (except Nepali and English) in both languages.
	Jhapa Rajbansi and Nepali (combined class of Grades 1 and 2) <i>Rastriya Ekta Primary School</i>	Half-day instruction in Rajbansi and half-day instruction in Nepali by one teacher.

Adapted from Department of Education (2009) and Phyak (2011)

Similarly, there are two pedagogical models: grade teaching and subject teaching (see Department of Education, 2009). In a grade-teaching model, one teacher teaches all subjects for a specific grade, except Nepali and English, in the children's mother tongues. Meanwhile, in a subject-teaching model, separate teachers are assigned to teach different subjects. The grade teaching model has been implemented in schools where not all teachers speak the children's mother tongues (Taylor, 2010). On the other hand, the subject teaching model is relevant in the schools where all teachers have a good command over local mother tongues. Likewise, in multilingual schools (e.g., Jhapa and Sunsari) children from two grades are combined and taught in their mother tongues (i.e., multi-grade teaching).

One important aspect of the MTB-MLE program, during its experimental phase, was its focus on community engagement and indigenous knowledge and values (Hough et al., 2009). Various indigenous knowledge about conflict resolution, medicine, ecology, the arts, food, farming, weaving, and plants, along with folktales, poems, songs, and stories were collected from local communities and were used as materials for teaching. Indigenous values of collectivism and cooperation were guiding principle for the program. Students and parents (mostly community elders) were engaged in telling stories, drawing images, and documenting various cultural practices and oral histories. Hough et al. (2009) call this approach 'critical indigenous pedagogy', which challenges the Western colonial notion of literacy and knowledge as scripted, top-down, and non-situated. Various studies have examined both the educational and sociopolitical impacts of MTB-MLE in the experimental schools and have found that this policy has addressed academic challenges and the non-participation of the indigenous-minoritized children in mainstream schools (Phyak, 2012; Rai et al., 2012; Seel et al., 2015; Taylor, 2010). Taylor (2013) describes MTB-MLE as a transformative policy in the "process of becoming" (p.

269) with a great potential to accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity to support efforts towards providing minoritized children with the best educational opportunities that recognize their linguistic and cultural identities.

However, despite these transformative potentials experienced during the experimental phase, MTB-MLE, unfortunately, did not receive any significant public attention when the MOE developed a national policy to implement multilingual education throughout the country. The MOE's own study shows that the MTB-MLE policy has been implemented only in about 25-30 schools (Ministry of Education, 2014). Seel et al. (2015) find that some MTB-MLE-piloted schools teach mother tongues only as a subject, while some schools have replaced them with additional English courses. Among them, one school has already introduced English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy (I will discuss why public schools are switching to English-medium education in the next chapter).

Challenges: Technical or Ideological?

A number of studies have discussed the various technical and practical challenges of MTB-MLE. Such challenges include the unavailability of textbooks, scripts, teachers, and adequate funding (e.g., Ministry of Education, 2014; Seel et al., 2015). In addition, some studies have even discussed the lack of awareness of language minoritized communities and the public desire for English language education as major challenges for implementing MTB-MLE (e.g., Dhakal, 2015). However, these challenges are superficial; at the heart of the issue is an ideological challenge, which includes the questions of: (a) how we (re)imagine linguistic heterogeneity—a problem or resource—in education; (b) what epistemologies, ideologies, and identities are reproduced in the existing multilingual education policies and practices; and, (c) whether or not the existing policies and practices challenge linguistic inequalities. A critical

analysis of these questions are important in order to understand the actual challenges of multilingual education in Nepal.

Nurmela, Awasthi, and Skutnabb-Kangas (2011) make some important observations with regard to the issue of linguistic heterogeneity in the current multilingual education policy. They argue that since schools and villages are multilingual and linguistically heterogeneous, Nepal's education system needs language policies and pedagogical models that are different from those designed for monolingual students. Linguistic heterogeneity characterized by fluidity and dynamism is an indigenous character of Nepali schools and communities (Dhakal, 2015; Ghimire, 2014). Language boundaries collapse as people participate in social interactions in multiethnic and multilingual contexts. However, the existing language policies and practices provide an extremely narrow ideology of multilingualism as an additive, sequential, and fragmented process rather than a heteroglossic, simultaneous, and dynamic process (García, 2009; Li, 2011; May, 2014).

A lack of 'language ideological clarity' (Kroskrity, 2009), which supports the domination of monolingual colonial ideologies and epistemologies, is a major issue in Nepal's current multilingual education policies and practices. Taylor (2010) has rightly pointed out that in the beginning of the MTB-MLE program, the 'Western European model' of multilingual education which assumes that all children share the same first language does not address Nepal's complex linguistic heterogeneity. Scholars such as García et al. (2006), Skutnabb-Kangas et al. (2009), and Benson (2013), among many others, have pointed out that transitional and additive approaches to multilingual education (i.e., major European models) are not adequate to address the educational needs in linguistically heterogeneous contexts like Nepal (also Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995). These and other scholars (e.g., Cummins, 2006; Flores & Rosa, 2015) contend that these

approaches reproduce a nation-state ideology of language as fixed and separate, and impose monolingual norms among multilingual learners. More importantly, these approaches promote, rather than transform, linguistic inequalities and unequal power relations.

Although it has good intentions towards promoting the space for minoritized languages in education, Nepal's MTB-MLE reproduces transitional and additive models of multilingual education. On the one hand, students are assimilated into a Nepali or English medium of instruction after Grade 3, and on the other, classroom pedagogies reproduce monolingual ideologies. In order to create a 'monolingual class', language minoritized students are segregated in terms of their ethnicity/language background, which Taylor (2010) rightly argues is a 'European model' of multilingual education. In other words, students from diverse language backgrounds are separated and organized in ethnically homogenous groups to be taught in their mother tongues. This approach is guided by the ideology that there is a one-to-one correspondence between ethnicity and language and that ethnic minoritized students are 'monolinguals'. The policy also includes the possibility of using more than one local language in a class (multilingual classes), but such a linguistically heterogeneous approach is considered a problem and ineffective in the current multilingual education policy discourses (see Dhakal, 2015; Ghimire, 2014). More strikingly, the Ministry of Education itself describes "heterogeneous Nepalese communities with diverse linguistic and sociocultural structures" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 19) as [a] challenge in implementing multilingual education and wrongly claims that the use of local languages-as-medium-of-instruction is "practical only in homogenous communities" (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 12).

The discourse of linguistic-heterogeneity-as-a-problem shapes the ideology of teachers and parents with regard to what counts as legitimate language in multilingual education. One

head teacher from a local public school in eastern Nepal, for example, says that “MLE is possible only in schools with monolingual students. It’s difficult to implement in our school.... We have speakers of more than four mother-tongues.” Such ideology is connected with the standard language ideology as well. Teachers and even policy makers narrowly think that multilingual education is difficult to implement because most mother-tongues do not have standard written script and so textbooks cannot be written in those languages (Ministry of Education, 2014). Pradhan’s (2016) analysis shows that the current MTB-MLE discourses and practices reproduce the nation-state ideology and the same standardization process of the construction of Nepali as ‘an official language’. Pradhan’s (2016) ethnographic study of a Tharu⁴⁷ school shows that—although both teachers and students speak Tharu and Nepali simultaneously—teachers and parents have a deeply held assumption that only ‘**raamro [rāmro] Tharu**’ (good Tharu) (i.e., the standardized variety included in the textbook) is the legitimate Tharu for multilingual education. They assume that they speak ‘**phohor**’ (unclean) and ‘**je payo tyehi**’ (unsystematic) Tharu (Pradhan, 2016, p. 5). However, Pradhan’s (2016) study shows that the standard language ideology not only erases the multiple non-standardized dialects of Tharu, but also delegitimizes the ‘simultaneity’ of multilingual practices. Kadel’s (2013) study in another multilingual school shows that children and teachers use multiple minoritized languages such as Uraw, Maithili, and Tharu interchangeably in classroom (see also Ghimire, 2014). These studies clearly point out that the language ideologies as seen in the current MTB-MLE policies and practices reproduce the ideology of multilingualism as ‘parallel monolingualism’ (Heller, 1999) and a ‘double solitudes model’ (Cummins, 2006) that are not sufficient for addressing the *real* multilingual practices of language-minoritized children.

⁴⁷ One of the indigenous communities in Nepal.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed language ideological issues by situating language policy discourses and practices in the historical and current sociolinguistic and sociopolitical context of Nepal. I have particularly looked at how the colonial ‘invention’ of language as a fixed and autonomous entity has been reproduced in language policy discourses and practices—both dominant and resistance ones—in the non-colonial and multilingual context of Nepal. My goal in this chapter is to show how the notions of language, language policy, and multilingualism are ideological constructs which have broader sociopolitical meaning and historicity. While arguing the need for ideological clarification, I have discussed that colonial language ideologies are still salient in language policies and practices in the guise of nationalism. In tracing the history of the invention of Nepali as a national language, I have argued that the nation-state ideology of language continues to pose challenges for linguistic heterogeneity in education and other public spheres.

Two major issues emerge from this discussion with regard to promoting multilingual education policies. First, although the liberal democratic ideologies have opened up space for rights-based discourses such as mother-tongue education, they are not adequate to address the complex linguistic heterogeneity of the country. As Giri (2011) argues, such liberal ideologies have been an ‘invisible language politics’ of the ruling high-caste elites to discourage the use of minoritized languages in education and other spaces. Although ruling elites repeatedly express their ‘goodwill and commitment’ to ensure language rights and promote linguistic diversity, they are indeed “not being serious about creating the necessary political and economic infrastructure to implement it” (Giri, 2011, pp. 203-24). As discussed above, despite the state having expressed its commitment to promote minoritized languages by signing global declarations and including

language-rights-based provisions in local policies, it lacks commitment towards transforming the monolingual ideologies that shape the language ideology of bureaucrats, teachers, and common people. Nurmela et al. (2011) argue that ‘the old conceptions’ of language education still dominate people’s mentality about what counts as legitimate language. Considering language education policy as part of ‘power politics’, ruling social elites who appear to be “ill-informed about the benefits of MLE” have “succeeded in influencing parents and education officials due to their social and economic capital” (Nurmela et al., 2011, p. 171) to not focus on minoritized language education. This situation calls for raising ideological awareness of bureaucrats, teachers, parents, and all other concerned actors about multilingual education.

Second, I have discussed how multilingual education is linked with broader sociopolitical ideologies and power relations. By situating language education policy in Nepal’s sociopolitical context, I have argued for adopting a critical approach to multilingualism and multilingual education (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Heller, 2007). Keeping language ideology at the center of the analysis, I have critically examined how current multilingual education policies and practices are affected by the ongoing political tensions, and have shown that minoritized language policy discourses are still influenced by essentialized monolingual and standard language ideologies. In other words, the ideologies of language as a fixed and autonomous entity still shapes language policy discourses, including multilingual ones. The ‘ideological hegemony’ (Blommaert, 2006) of monolingualism in the guise of nationalism continues to exacerbate fear of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1991) of dominant languages and promote the state of coloniality of dominant ideologies (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Seel et al. (2015) reveal that the discourses of ‘national unity’ and ‘social cohesion’ have been used by the ruling elites to “suppress debate and avoid change” in language policy (p. 28). These powerful discourses make common minoritized

people assume that monolingual ideologies and epistemologies are natural conditions of society (Giri, 2011; Toba et al., 2005; Yadava, 2007).

In sum, I have argued that we need to critically examine epistemologies and ideologies that shape language policies and practices. My analysis shows that rather than focusing on an additive approach to multilingualism, it is important for policy makers, teachers, and parents to recognize linguistic heterogeneity, fluidity, and dynamism as the norm in Nepal's multilingual landscape. For this, it is necessary to redefine old conceptions of language as a bounded and autonomous entity and embrace new approaches of language pedagogies that respect the multilingual and multiethnic identities and repertoire of all children.

Chapter 5: Neoliberalism, Development Discourses, and English Language Ideology

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have discussed how the nation-state ideology has impacted language policy discourses and practices. While critically analyzing the invention and legitimization of Nepali as a national and official language, I have also analyzed how the on-going minoritized language policies and discourses are not adequate to address the linguistic complexities in indigenous/minoritized communities. In this chapter, I focus on how the nation-state ideology co-opts Western colonial ideologies such as neoliberalism, to shape local language education policies and practices. I particularly focus on how neoliberal ideology, and particularly the discourse of development and privatization, has naturalized the role of English as a natural medium-of-instruction in education. As Piller and Cho (2013) assert, “to understand the spread of English—despite its obvious costs—one has to look outside language and link language explicitly to the socio-economic order” (p. 24). To this end, I look at the discourses of development and socioeconomic contexts—particularly the role of migrant laborers—and link them with language education policies. I begin with the historical construction of neoliberalism in Nepal

Donors-Driven *Bikaas* and Neoliberal Ideologies

Since the early 1990s, Nepal has adopted the neoliberal ideology of **desh bikās** (national development). Building on the Structural Adjustment Program of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the state has restructured its national economic, educational, and other social institutions to adopt market-led approaches to **bikās** (development). The state reformed its nationalized banking system to open up space for direct foreign investment and involvement of both national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs and

INGOs) in banking activities (Rankin, 2004). Under the broad discourse of **bikās**, both governmental banks and non-governmental organizations are focusing on ‘**garībī niwāraṇ**’ (poverty alleviation) and ‘**grāmiṇ bikās**’ (rural development) by adopting various market-led neoliberal economic ideologies. More than six thousand NGOs and some two hundred INGOs, popularly known as **bikāse sāsthā** (developmental organizations) are supported by foreign donors to engage in **bikās**-related activities with the poor, indigenous people, women, Dalits, and people from rural areas.

Currently, Nepal receives over \$1 billion in foreign aid every year, contributing to about a quarter of the government’s **bikās** budget (Bell, 2015). Statistics show that Nepal owes \$3.8 billion in debt to various multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and IMF (Pant, 2015). This foreign investment is in the form of loans and grants which are based on the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Loan and the IMF’s Structural Adjustment Facility. In order to achieve assistance from both the World Bank and the IMF, the Nepal government has to reform its economic and other major structural policies. Following these organizations’ policy guidelines, Nepal embraces neoliberal economic policy with an emphasis on massive privatization, free market-oriented price systems, and a greater reduction in tariffs. Based on the World Bank’s structural reform policies, the state reduces its budget on public services, such as subsidies to farmers, public education, and health, among others, to promote a competitive and free-market approach to development. Consequently, the country is experiencing foreign investment, donor-driven development initiatives, and privatization of public institutions (Pandey, 2012).

Known as ‘the least-developed country’ in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2014), the current neoliberal ideology of **bikās** has constructed new discourses, epistemologies,

and worldviews regarding what counts as development in Nepal. **Garībī niwāraṇ** and **grāmiṇ bikās** enter into Nepal's national developmental discourse. Under this discourse, foreign-aid agencies are investing huge amounts of money towards restructuring Nepal's rural agrarian society (Rankin, 2004; Sugden, 2009). Statistics show that more than 80% of Nepal's total populations are from rural agrarian areas. Foreign donors, (I)NGOs, and the government are launching various programs such as microcredit self-help groups, income-generating activities, and other capitalist modes of poverty alleviation programs. Consequently, growing attempts have been made towards integrating the traditional non-capitalist modes of agricultural productions into the global capitalist economy (Rankin, 2004) which derecognizes the non-capitalist forms of agrarian economic activities.

Neoliberal discourse of development has discursively constructed new social imaginary of **bikās** as “commodities that come from elsewhere” and as an indexicality of modernity (Pigg, 1993, p. 48). In this imaginary world of development, rural villages are categorized as “...a space of backwardness--a physical space that imprisons people in what is considered inferior and outmoded way of life...” (Pigg, 1992, p. 507). In other words, the neoliberal discourses discursively construct the perceived belief that living a rural agrarian lifestyle is a symbol of poverty. Villages are viewed as an underdeveloped space needing external support from the government, donor agencies, and non-government organizations. Since neoliberal development discourses support Western and modern modes of knowledge, technology, and policies (Escobar, 1995), local knowledge, traditional practices, and indigenous technology are constructed as inappropriate and underdeveloped to support development initiatives. Consequently, Western modes of epistemologies and perspectives about social progress, education, and development become hegemonic among the common public and policy makers (Rappleye, 2011).

The neoliberal development discourses have also changed the people's subject positions. Sugden's (2009) analysis shows that neoliberal discourse on development has shifted the identity of rural people from 'citizens' to 'entrepreneurial subjects' who, including the poor, are "encouraged to find their own solutions to their livelihood needs through utilizing one's own skills and resources to seize the opportunities made available by the global economy" (Sugden, 2009, p. 636). In a neoliberal economy, the state's role is only to open up the free-market and to facilitate the free-flow of people, capital, and technology globally (Appadurai, 2006; Harvey, 2005). In capitalist mode of knowledge and economy, the identity of the rural citizens is discursively constructed as people who lack 'consciousness' or 'awareness' of modern knowledge, literacy, and technology (Fujikura, 2001). Since neoliberalism focuses on economic capital as a sole indicator of development, rural people who lack the economic capital are discursively identified as 'poor', 'backward', and "trapped in a vicious circle of poverty" (Ghimire, 2009, p. 224).

'Failed Development': Neoliberalism and Sociopolitical Inequalities

Building on Ferguson's (2005) critical analysis of Western discourses of development in Africa, Carney and Rappleye (2011) describe Nepal's on-going development discourses as a form of colonialism. They argue that

[...] 'development', like its predecessor 'colonialism', can be seen as a 'regime of representation' promising a range of images of the self and of society that are seductive, but which are necessarily and inextricably bound up in systems of power that are inherently unequal and exploitative. (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 5)

As neoliberalism dominates the discourse of development, sociopolitical, educational, and economic inequalities are often obscured. Income inequalities among Nepalis are on the rise. Recent data show that 47% of Nepal's national resources are consumed by the richest 20% of the

people, while only 8% of resources are distributed among 20% of the poorest population (Census Report, 2011). The Census data also reveal that about one-fourth of indigenous people are living in extreme poverty and are deprived of equal access to educational and economic resources. For example, the literate population of the indigenous people who have School Leaving Certificates or higher degrees is only about 11% while 54% of the high-caste (hill Brahmins-Chetris) people are literate with the same degree.

Both Nepali and foreign scholars have critically examined the role of neoliberalism and argued that it is doing more harm than good, particularly for rural populations and working class families. Two Nepali scholars Dor Bahadur Bista (1991) and Devendra Raj Pandey (1999) have been critical of foreign-aided neoliberalized development since the 1990s. Both of these scholars argue that foreign-aid agencies often lack critical understanding of local socio-political inequalities and thus the ideologies of development they have promoted have merely contributed to Nepal's 'failed development' (Pandey, 1999, 2012). As Pandey (2012) argues, foreign-aided development initiatives have become the most effective means for foreign donors to impose their own ideologies, agendas, and interests rather than paying attention to the social transformation and empowerment of marginalized communities. Therefore, the neoliberal development projects are under 'elite capture' (Pandey, 2012) and make very little difference in the lives of socio-politically and economically marginalized people.

Dixit (1997) and Mishra (2007) argue that foreign-aid-based development has promoted a dependency syndrome and erased the collective principle of the people. These scholars contend that neoliberal development discourse has not addressed the historical-structural inequalities between the rich and the poor, and between the urban and the rural villages. Shakya's (2013) ethnographic study reveals that neoliberal economic reforms have supported the privilege of

ruling elites by supporting their disproportionate representation in policy-making processes. She argues that without addressing the unequal structure in Nepali communities, it is hard to achieve the goal of development projects. At the worst level, Leve's (2007) analysis points out that neoliberal development efforts have contributed to the decade-long Maoists insurgency in the country.

Most importantly, neoliberalized development efforts are not making the state itself responsible for addressing the sociopolitical inequalities, but rather they are promoting the ideology of self-help and individualism. Based on an ethnographic study of developmental projects for rural women, Rankin (2004) argues that the neoliberal ideology of development has discursively constructed the identity of women as a 'client' whose social capital is used to serve the neoliberal market. Indeed, neoliberal development projects are promoting 'social Darwinism' (Kulic, 2004); individuals are responsible for their own failure in the competitive market economy. Therefore, Rankin (2004) claims that neoliberal development has not been able to challenge, but instead reproduce, historical caste-based privileges and inequalities. Sharma (2014) makes a succinct analysis of the growing influence of neoliberalism in national policies and claims that foreign-aid-based development has promoted the Nepali people's 'sense of helplessness'. For him, neoliberal development efforts have benefitted people involved in (I)NGOs, while the poor and other marginalized communities are even more vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Bell (2015) blames aid agencies for pouring in money without understanding the actual needs of the country. The recent foreign debt of the country is about \$4 billion. Pant⁴⁸ (2015) argues that the bilateral and multilateral monetary agencies, such as the World Bank and Asian Development, should not 'suck' money from the 'poorest country' like Nepal in the name of

⁴⁸ The author was also the member of Constituent Assembly from 2008-2012.

‘debt servicing’ (n.p.). His point is similar to that of Bell, who critiques that money is not the problem, but rather the real problem is the way in which monies are invested without understating the local situation.

Modern Slavery: Migrant Laborers and Neoliberal Markets

One major aspect of global neoliberalism is the free flow of cheap laborers across national borders. After Nepal adopted a global neoliberal ideology for national development in the early 1990s, the country also developed policies and created institutions to facilitate the ‘labor migration’ of Nepalis in foreign countries. Some major migrant laborer employment-related policies include: the Nepal Labor Act (1992); the Labor Regulations (1993); the National Labor Policy (1999), and the Foreign Employment Act (2007). The government has also established the Department of Foreign Employment to implement plans and policies related to labor migration. More importantly, the government provides private recruiting agencies, famously known in Nepal as *manpower companies*, with licenses to send laborers to various foreign countries.

As employment opportunities are rare in rural areas, the government of Nepal claims that “[labor] migration and foreign employment have provided alternative livelihood opportunities to many people in the face of slow socio-economic growth” (Ministry of Labor and Employment, 2014, p. 1). The government further claims that “the international distribution of labor is an integral component of the globalization process, and migration and foreign employment have characterized much of Nepal’s immersion with modernity” (p. 1). The Department of Foreign Employment reports that about 1,500 Nepali youth leave for the country for foreign employment every day. In the 2011-12 fiscal year alone, 384,665 youth have joined the foreign labor market. The 2010-11 Nepal Living Standards Survey shows that 55.8% of households receive

remittances annually. Statistics show that remittance contributes to about 30% of the country's total gross domestic product⁴⁹. Moreover, Seddon, Adhikari, and Gurung (2002) reveal that 57% of the economy of rural households is contributed to by the individual remittances sent by people working elsewhere in Nepal. The largest remittance-providing countries include India (18.6%), Malaysia (4.4%), and Saudi Arabia and Qatar (11.2%), with the remaining percentage covered by countries like Afghanistan, Israel, Kuwait, Canada, South Korea, and Japan.

Although the national economy heavily relies on remittances, the degree of exploitation Nepali migrant laborers have to face in the neoliberal market is often overlooked in government policies and plans. On the one hand, these young Nepalis are exploited at home by recruiting agencies⁵⁰. In many cases, these agencies not only provide false information and promises of lucrative jobs, but also charge expensive fees for the services they provide. Each Nepali youth pays more than \$1,400 (three times more than the average national income) for a job in Qatar while they earn between \$8-10 per day (see Pattison, 2013). Amnesty International (2011) reveals that the majority of migrant workers are paid much less than what was promised by recruiting agencies and so they are forced to work without breaks and to work on weekends; moreover, they do not receive good food to eat nor are provided a place to live. Most of these migrant workers are employed in large, multinational construction companies, while others work as drivers, security guards, and camel herders. The money they earn is just enough to pay off the loans they borrowed to cover the service charges of recruiting agencies. Even worse, their companies did not allow these migrant laborers to join their families during the 2015 devastating earthquakes that hit Nepal (Chaudhary, 2015).

⁴⁹ Nepal is one of the top 10 countries with the highest share of remittance in their national GDP.

⁵⁰ There are more than 760 recruiting agencies throughout the country.

More strikingly, young migrant laborers die every year due to difficult and dangerous working conditions. Doward (2014) reveals that about 400 Nepali workers died in the time between 2010 and 2013, while working as part of Qatar's construction projects in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Furthermore, Pokhrel (2015) reports that on average two Nepali workers die in Qatar every three days; with regard to the causes of death, he cites what the former ambassador to Qatar said: "In general, it is due to tension led by exploitation, adverse climate, poor working and living conditions and alcoholic intoxication" (n.p.). The death of their main breadwinner impacts families in many ways. On the one hand, they should bear the burden of reimbursing the loan monies paid to the recruiting agencies and, on the other, they endure deep psycho-social problems in the loss of their family members. The neoliberal development discourses have not paid much attention to these issues.

As Nepal continues to remain one of the major countries in South Asia to supply young laborers to the neoliberal market economy, rural and low-class people in particular have been enduring social, cultural, and economic challenges. These migrant laborers have also contributed to bring modernity to rural villages. Most of the returnees bring cell phones, TVs, and other modern items, including food and fashion. All of these contribute to connect villagers with the outside world. More strikingly, as most young people leave for foreign employment, the productive farmlands are increasingly becoming barren due to lack of people to farm them; consequently, the traditional subsistence farmers are becoming more dependent on food supplied in the market.

Ideology of English-as-Capital and the Language of Development

Scholars around the globe have discussed how the discourse of development has contributed to the expansion of English in developing countries. Coleman (2011) reveals that

developing countries introduce English from the early grades because they consider it as a language to fulfill the ‘dream’ of development, both human and national. Seargeant and Erling (2011) critically examine the ‘emergent ideology’ of English as a language for international development in Bangladesh. Their study reveals that the discourse of development has deeply influenced the ideology of English in developing countries like Bangladesh. Although international donor agencies invest in English language projects as their efforts towards supporting developing countries in their development initiatives, Seargeant and Erling (2011) and Wedell (2011) find such projects fail to fulfill such dreams due to a lack of the projects’ understanding about local sociopolitical, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

In Nepal, the on-going discourse of development has discursively constructed the ideology of English as ‘capital’ (Bourdieu, 1991). Aid-agencies and (I)NGOs hire candidates who are proficient in English (Eagle, 2000); although some NGOs have started using local languages in their community-based programs, they plan projects and write reports in English to communicate with donor agencies. More importantly, studies have shown that most developmental organizations are under the control of high class/caste elites and are based in urban areas (Pandey, 2012). Heaton-Shrestha (2006) considers (I)NGOs an urban middle-class phenomenon and argues that they prefer the employees who speak ‘good English’; in other words, “competence in English meant [means] that NGO members could partake fully of life in development circles, where English was [is] still the lingua franca” (Heaton-Shrestha, 2006, p. 200). The (I)NGOs develop their project proposals, reports, newsletters, brochures, and memos in standard English. As the aid-workers and (I)NGOs reach out to the community, they show very little attention to linguistic, epistemological, and cultural sensitivity towards local

communities; instead, they additionally prefer to organize seminars, workshops, and other programs in English and Nepali rather than in the local languages.

As (I)NGOs continue to expand their presence in local and rural communities, the common public, including the poor, assume that English is the language for development. For example, during an interview, one local community leader said:

I've attended many **goṣṭhi** (seminars) on various issues such as literacy, community building and peace organized by NGOs. Most seminars are in English and sometimes in Nepali. Most concepts are English....NGOs also bring foreigners in the village. They speak in English. We don't understand much English...but local boys interpret in Nepali. We don't need to speak English in community, but knowing English has become compulsory to work in NGOs.

This community leader further asserts that people who work in “projects”⁵¹ are **jānne** (knowledgeable/smart)” because they speak in “English with **bideshī** (foreigner)”; he assumes, “they earn much money”. As the leader says, the development discourses have discursively constructed the indexicality of English as a language of ‘projects’ that employ only ‘smart’ people with English language proficiency. However, Dahal’s (2014) analysis shows massive inequalities between the salaries of local and expatriate NGO workers. He argues that an expatriate receives a salary as much as thirty times higher than their local counterparts. Calling them ‘profit-making organizations’, Dahal (2014) further argues that (I)NGOs spend much more money in administrative expenses and other fringe benefits, such as per diem travel allowances, insurance, and other facilities. More importantly, Dahal (2014) describes (I)NGOs as ‘elite organizations’ which hardly represent the grassroots reality of Nepali communities. These organizations are mostly led by the middle/upper class and elite people.

⁵¹ In Nepal, development-related activities of (I)NGOs are commonly known as ‘projects’. Employment in ‘projects’ are assumed to be lucrative.

Despite these inequalities, English language proficiency has become ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1991) to have access to the job market in aid-agencies. On the one hand, (I)NGOs hire people with English language proficiency and on the other, this practice of hiring supports the ‘symbolic capital’ of English. In other words, as English is linked with the employment opportunities in development aid-agencies, it is assumed to be a legitimate language of development. However, it is not true that knowledge of English language proficiency itself is sufficient for NGO workers. As one local NGO worker said that they should have the skills to write a grant proposal, develop a research design, and write reports for their donor agencies; he reveals that “we often request someone to write [a] proposal. Writing a proposal and report in English is not easy for us.” Donor agencies not only teach English to the employees of local NGOs, but also educate about organizational and proposal writing skills to seek funding from the Western donor market.

While promoting the ideology of English as capital, the neoliberal discourse of development has contributed to shape Nepali people’s reimagining about their society from Western neoliberal perspectives. In the following section, I provide several excerpts from the publically available documents of one non-profit organization based in the US, The Mountain Fund⁵², in order to discuss how local NGOs are represented in global development discourses and what ideologies such global organizations promote through their work in Nepal. In calling for donations on Global Giving for one of its project to support local NGOs, The Mountain Fund (n.d.) states that

Local NGOs need coaching and training in order to take advantage of the power of Global Giving. The first level training is basic *corporate structure and governance* such

⁵² On its website (<http://www.mountainfund.org/about/>), this organization states that it “aims to create healthy, vibrant mountain communities where people have access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunity in an environment where human rights are valued and respected.”

as the formulation of a *clear mission and vision and strategic plan*. The next level of training is understanding *our culture and our world view*. Few locally based NGOs who are doing the real footwork in the trenches of rural Nepal, where 85% of the population is, have any contact with westerners. They simply don't understand us, what excites and motivates us. (emphasis added, n.p.)

Here it can clearly be seen that INGOs supporting local NGOs impose a neoliberal ideology of corporate structure and governance and promote their own culture and world view with regard to development and organizational skills. The Mountain Fund asserts that local NGOs should be taught English so that they are able to understand and explore the Western donor market. In its project rationale, the organization further explains that

...a lot of good NGOs simply cannot tell their story to the western donor community because they don't know the English language or understand western sensibilities and context. We can host...seminars on a variety of topics pertaining to presenting a need to a western donor market in a way that is relevant for those donors. (The Mountain Fund, n.d., n.p.).

The Mountain Fund's statements here discursively construct the identity of local NGOs as 'ideological brokers' (Blommaert, 1999) who must understand the Western neoliberal ideology of governance and implement them in their developmental projects; that is, they are represented as someone who does not know anything about how to run an organization nor can communicate in English. Most importantly, the subject positions of local NGOs are constructed as institutions that are fully dependent upon Western donors. Therefore, they have to learn English from Western people to be able to create projects, with clear visions and missions that appeal to Western donors and Western audience.

As the country is still reeling from the massive earthquakes experienced in 2015, Nepal is experiencing the increased influence of donor agencies, including the World Bank and Asian

Development Bank, in the rebuilding and reconstruction efforts. As the government has to deal with multiple donor agencies, English has become the de facto language of bilateral/multilateral agreements with these agencies. Since the government adopted a neoliberal ideology in the early 1990s, most development-related project reports, proposals, and action plans have been prepared in English. Consequently, English has become a de facto and uncontested official language of Nepal. Although the government has defined Nepali as the only official language, English is dominantly used as an official language in (I)NGOs, government offices, donor agencies, and public signs (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: This public sign is an advertisement for one private school in Kathmandu.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss how the state's neoliberal ideology of development has shaped language policies, and particularly English language policy. I specifically analyze how the Structural Adjustment Program of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—that promoted the privatization of education—have constructed English-as-capital in the neoliberal educational market. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the indigenous people's

activism is heavily focused on rights-based discourses which counter the unitary assumption of nationalism. Yet, such rights-based discourses have not paid much attention to how neoliberal ideologies of development and education have posed both ideological and implementational challenges for multilingual education.

Privatization of Education and the Commodification of English

The privatization of public services is one of the major aspects of the global neoliberal economy (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism upholds the assumption that individuals prosper if they are given choice from competitive and free educational market places (Block et al., 2012; Holborow, 2015; Price, 2014). In Nepal, the privatization of education is part of the neoliberal restructuring of state institutions following the reform plans of the World Bank and IMF. Since the early 1990s, the World Bank invested towards restructuring the educational system by adopting a market-based approach. As a condition to obtain loans for educational reforms, the Bank imposed its own neoliberal structural reform plans through two initial projects: the Primary Education Project (1984–1992) and the Basic and Primary Education Project (1992–1999) (see Winther-Schmidt, 2011). Accordingly, the Bank asked the government to cut the budgets for public services, such as education and health, and to focus on economic growth to reduce poverty so that Nepal can reimburse the loans to the Bank.

In his recent analysis, Regmi (2016) critically examines the World Bank's hegemonic presence in promoting neoliberal ideologies—privatization, marketization, and decentralization—in Nepal's educational reforms since the early 1990s. He aptly argues that rather than focusing on social equality in education, the Bank insisted the state adopt unequal and competitive neoliberal policies. Accordingly, the public investment in education was reduced and the legal provisions and related institutional arrangements were made to promote privatization and market-oriented educational reforms. The Bank argues that the privatization of

education is the best way to compensate the low public financing in education and to diversify the educational market so that it will generate “a variegated range of employment opportunities” (World Bank, 1994, p. 12). The Bank further recommends that the state should alleviate a diverse range of constraints so as to clear the way for private investment in education, industry, health, transport, and other developmental activities. Following the Bank’s structural reform plans, the state developed policies which allowed private investors to run private schools, famously known as *boding* [boarding]. The Department of Education (2012) shows that out of a total of 33,666 schools, there are 5,213 boarding schools which share about 15%⁵³ of the total student enrollment in the country. Private schools are mostly located in urban cities and in districts with higher per capita income to cater to the needs of high-and-middle-class families (Subedi, Shrestha, Maharjan, & Suvedi, 2013). These schools with a profit-motive adopt a market-oriented approach to compete with others by using various means of advertising, such as commercials on TV and in newspapers (Bhatta & Budhathoki, 2013). English language teaching and its use as a medium of instruction remain at the center of private schools’ strategies to attract parents and students. Private schools commodify the value of English as a language of globalization, international markets, and foreign employment. The commodification of English includes the processes through which it is given high economic exchange value in both local and global educational and markets (Cameron, 2012; Heller, 2010). For example, one elite private school in Kathmandu describes its ‘language policy’ as follows:

English is the medium of instruction, as fluent English is usually a basic requirement for admission to centers of higher education. It gives access to modern knowledge not readily available in Nepali....It is an easy means of communication in the international sphere of life. It is a language which can be easily understood in different parts of the world. With

⁵³ However, Subedi et al. (2013) claim that private schools cover 20% of total student enrollment.

the growth of trade and commerce, it has spread across the length and breadth of the whole world. At present it has become a language of universal culture and embraces various departments of knowledge. English is the language of diplomacy and it contains many a rich literary treasure; it gives us an introduction to western thought and culture.

Bhatta and Budhathoki's (2013) study shows that private schools conduct door-to-door campaigns and post promotional pamphlets and signboards in public places to convey the message among parents that they teach students English through English. By doing this, private schools want to convince parents that they produce the most competitive students who have better English language proficiency, which is assumed to be necessary for a **ujjwal bhabishya** (bright future). Caddell (2006) further states that private schools "emphasize how attending their institutions offers the opportunity for students to become 'doctors or engineers' and allow children to move away from the village" (p. 469). English medium education is a major tool to convince parents that private schools can help fulfill those aspirations. Commenting on the commodification of English in private schools, Caddell (2006) observes that:

English-medium instruction emerged as a key dimension of the selling of dreams that characterizes these aspirations. Use of English—even of a very poor level—is considered to connect students to a wider international project, offering a greater potential for mobility than Nepali-medium government schools. (p. 468)

The commodification of English has very strong discursive impact on parents, students, teachers, and even policy makers. Bhatta's (2014) analysis shows that parents think that "mastery in English is essential in modern times as it is used globally" and that "English education will provide [a] good job as [a] doctor, engineer, or pilot, and in NGOs" (p. 71). However, this dream is not always fulfilled. On the one hand, all private schools do not provide better education in English (Caddell, 2006). While expensive elite and international schools, with competent

teachers, sufficient infrastructure, and resources can provide better English language education, other private schools that cannot hire more competent teachers and lack other resources cannot do so. The Ministry of Education itself has categorized private schools into four types (A, B, C, and D) in terms of physical infrastructure, human resources (teachers), responsibility and transparency, school operation process, students' achievement and performances, and other related outcomes. Subedi, Shrestha, and Suvedi (2014) explain that while type A and B private schools have qualified teachers and are able to pay the government-mandated salary, type C and D schools have under-qualified teachers that are paid as per their qualifications.

More strikingly, these schools can charge different tuition fees from parents as determined by the Ministry of Education; for example, type A and B schools can charge 25-50% higher fees than type C schools' fees, and type D schools must charge 25% less than type C schools. However, Subedi et al. (2013) find that most private schools are not following the educational regulations of the government. For example, one type A grade school in the Kathmandu Valley charges as much as 1,554 Nepali rupees (US 15.53) per month, which is 44.8% higher than the government-determined fees. Despite this hierarchy, private schools in general are discursively presented as better and the producer of more competent students than the public schools because of their English language policy.

Ideology of Quality Education and English Language Policy

Neoliberal ideology assumes that quality education is promoted only through free market-based educational reforms (Lincove, 2009). From this perspective, schools are considered as part of a competitive and free market economy and educational policies are designed to support the supply-demand mechanism in the market rather than to promote social justice and equity (Harvey, 2005). As neoliberal rationality dominates Nepal's development

discourses, educational policies are often framed under the ideology of quality education. Under the neoliberal regime, quality education is defined in terms of students' ability to compete in the free-market economy and their skills for employability in the global capitalist market (Levidow, 2001). In other words, neoliberalism considers students as 'human capital' and measures their quality in terms of their participation in the global market economy (Holborow, 2015). More importantly, neoliberal ideology focuses on quality in terms of the quantitative and enumerative measurement of students' cognitive achievement in test scores (see Carney, 2003).

The ideology of quality education in Nepal is deeply influenced by the donor-constructed neoliberal ideologies of educational reforms. Donor agencies such as the World Bank and its allies embrace students' achievement test scores as the sole indicator of quality education and school effectiveness. Carney's (2003) analysis shows that the World Bank and other donors have been funding 'school effectiveness studies', also known as 'national achievement studies', which focus on students' achievement on test items from the national curricula and textbooks. These studies show low test scores by students in public schools when compared to the scores of private school students in national exams. However, Carney (2003) was among the first to critique the neoliberal ideology of school effectiveness in terms of students' test scores.

These achievement test scores provide a very narrow idea of what counts as quality education. Carney (2003) rightly argues that the neoliberal ideology of quality education obscures local socioeconomic, linguistic, political, and cultural factors that affect students' achievement in public schools. Most public schools are located in rural areas and provide education to children from relatively poor families. These children do not even receive textbooks, nor do they have other educational and social support from parents and schools. More importantly, defining 'quality education' from a neoliberal perspective is ideological as it ignores

the issue of access, equity, and social justice in education (Carney, 2003; Regmi, 2016). Carney (2003, p. 93) argues that

while the response of policymakers has been to press on with efforts to improve both access and quality in basic education, those promoting cognitive achievement as a major measure of quality have made possible a different educational agenda. Rather than concentrate policy makers on the role of education as a tool for social justice and nation building, such studies have legitimized a particular type of excellence at the expense of broader considerations of equity.

That ‘particular type of excellence’ includes the ability to score high in national exams and being able to acquire better English language proficiency. In their survey study, Subedi et al. (2013) found that parents choose private schools because they think that they provide quality education because they adopt an English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy. Parents embrace this ideology from the dominant discourse of quality education which discursively constructs achieving high scores in national exams and being competent in English as two major indicators of acquiring quality education. On the surface, private schools are better in both of these aspects: the statistics show that more than 90% of private school students pass the national exams, while less than 35% of public school students pass these exams. More than 90% of unsuccessful students, particularly students from rural villages, fail in English, science and math (Budhathoki et al., 2014). As it is a compulsory subject at school curricula, all students must pass English to go to college. However, as public school students repeatedly fail in English, many drop out of school and join the labor markets both at home and abroad (Budhathoki et al., 2014).

Applied linguists have argued that imposing a foreign language in a compulsory education system is both educationally and socio-politically ineffective and marginalizing (e.g., Davies, 2009; Phillipson, 1992). Price (2014) argues that “the imposition of a foreign language,

such as English, into compulsory—and competitive—education systems potentially has particularly damaging effects on educational equality and thus socioeconomic mobility” (p. 568). However, the neoliberal regime continues to discursively construct learning English *as* acquiring quality education in Nepal. This ideology emerges from the logic of the comparative advantage⁵⁴ (Sayers, 1953) of public and private schools in terms of their results in national achievement test scores (Regmi, 2016). For example, Bhatta’s (2014) study shows that even parents from lower working-class families choose to send their kids to private schools because they assume that private schools teach in English from the early grades. A similar ideology is understood and enacted by a parent who sends his children to a local private schools in a rural village:

At least, my students speak some English. They don’t fail the SLC [the national exam needed to enter college]. They can go to college, right? If they know English, they can go to a foreign country to study. They also need English to use the computer. But in public schools, many students do not pass the SLC. If students fail [in English], they can’t go to college. So I send my kids to private school. I want them to pass [the SLC] in the first division⁵⁵.

The ideological hegemony of English as quality education is deeply rooted in the neoliberalization of education in that the state itself does not invest much funding on the improvement of public education. Rather than focusing on social justice and equity, the neoliberalization process focuses on weakening public institutions and strengthening private education as part of the global market economy in which English plays the most dominant role (Block et al., 2012). In the case of Nepal, the World Bank (2003) justifies its agenda of

⁵⁴Originally, economist David Ricardo’s idea was based on the assumption that gains in the free market economy and trade are not absolute, but rather are based on comparisons against factors related to production and consumption.

⁵⁵The Ministry of Education has recently introduced a letter grade system rather than the old use of divisions. As this interview was held two years ago (before this change in grading), I have transcribed what this parent said based on his initial reference to the old system.

privatization in education as follows: “the large gap between the pass rates in the SLC examinations of public and private schools...is being perceived as a glaring example of the failure of the public school system” (p. 2). Although the Bank does not explicitly mention the role of English in its neoliberal effort towards Nepal’s educational reform, it embraces and covertly supports its ‘capital’ as a language of the global market economy. As the Bank discursively presents privatization as a successful educational reform, it reproduces the inequalities in terms of social class (Regmi, 2016). As mentioned above, private schools are affordable only for the people who have access to the economic resources. More importantly, the Bank’s neoliberal ideology of quality education discursively constructs public schools as a ‘failure’ and ‘unsuccessful’ while private ones are portrayed as ‘successful’ and ‘appropriate’ for the neoliberal market economy.

More strikingly, the neoliberal rationality of quality education has discursively constructed a very derogatory identity of public school students as ‘incompetent’, ‘poor’, and ‘traditional’. For example, a head teacher from a local public school said that “public schools are considered poor. People think that only poor students study in public schools. Our students are considered incompetent.” Seel et al. (2015) have found that poor parents want to send their children to private school because they are heavily influenced by the behaviors and ideologies of elite parents whose children go to prestigious English medium schools. Their study shows that young people associate English with modernity and distance themselves from speaking their own mother tongues which they ideologically assume is a symbol of backwardness. My own studies (Phyak, 2013, 2016) show that as dominant educational discourses continue to embrace neoliberal ideologies, poor parents continue to feel pressure to send their children to private schools and endure the ‘symbolic violence’ of English language ideology (Bourdieu, 1991).

The ongoing neoliberal ideology of quality education conceals this and other social issues and unequal sociopolitical power relations that affect students' educational success in public schools (Carney & Bista, 2009). Regmi's (2016) analysis shows that private school students' high success rate in national examination has no relation with the quality of private schools. He asserts that since private school students come from high-and-middle-class educated families, they receive more parental care and other additional facilities and resources (such as private tutoring, reference books, and release from household chores) to support their education. In other words, parents invest their time and money towards helping their children to succeed in national exams. In contrast, most public school students do not have such privileges and resources due to their poor economic backgrounds. Most strikingly, under the influence of neoliberalism, the state has paid very little attention to the improvement of public schools.

Competition as a Covert Language Policy and English-for-All

Neoliberalism embraces competition as a major imperative in defining quality education. Piller and Cho (2013) have argued that neoliberalism creates a structure of competition which imposes "English as a natural and neutral medium of academic excellence" (p. 24). Price (2014) argues that neoliberalism constructs the notion of competition as a norm in education by creating a free market-oriented system of education. Accordingly, public schools are pressured to compete against themselves and mostly with parallel private schools. In the following section, I discuss how the neoliberalization of education in Nepal has constructed competition as a covert language policy that supports two interrelated ideologies of English language education: (a) the-earlier-the-better ideology, and (b) the-more-the-better ideology. Both of these ideologies support the assumption that public schools become more effective in participating in the neoliberal competitive market that unquestionably embraces the cultural capital of English.

‘The-Earlier-the-Better’ Ideology and ‘Compulsory’ English

Nepal’s formal education began with an English medium school, famously known as the *Durbar School* (palace school) that the first Rana Prime Minister, Jung Bahadur Rana, established in 1854. Upon his return from a visit to Britain, he started a school to teach royal family members English from two British native speakers of English. In the guise of nationalism, English education was not widely available for all until 1990. However, some elite private, missionary, and international schools have been teaching English and through English to children from high-and-middle-class families (Phyak, 2016; Weinberg, 2013). This situation has now changed, along with the sociopolitical and economic contexts. Although English has been a compulsory subject in the national school curricula from the 4th Grade onwards until 2003, private schools have already been teaching English and through English from the 1st Grade, following the state’s neoliberal ideology.

With global neoliberal ideologies continuing to influence the state’s socioeconomic policies, the state introduced English from the 1st Grade since 2003. Without any research evidence, the policy was introduced following the then education minister’s announcement that he wanted to make sure that all children—both in public and private schools—learn English from the 1st Grade. The Ministry of Education (MOE) justifies the new policy as follows:

English has been a second language taught in all schools in Nepal and the medium of teaching and learning at higher level. Furthermore, the National Education Commission reports and [the] interaction programs held at different places [and] times and with various groups e.g. stakeholders, teachers etc. have laid great emphases on introducing English as a *compulsory subject in all schools of Nepal from the very beginning of school education*. (Curriculum Development Center, 2008, p. 154, emphasis added,).

The MOE's view clearly embraces the-earlier-the-better ideology of second language acquisition. This ideology is based on Lenneberg's (1967) controversial critical period hypothesis which assumes that second language acquisition occurs only before the age of puberty. In other words, the MOE assumes that students become more competent in English if it is taught from the early grades. The MOE also expects that students will develop "a comprehensive communicative competence" and develop "a basic [English language] foundation for their further studies in and through English" (Curriculum Development Center, 2008, p. 154). However, this expectation remains just a dream. As discussed above, most students who fail in national exams are unsuccessful in English. During one interview, a head teacher from a public school in eastern Nepal said that public school students fail in English because "they have a weak English language background in the early grades." He strongly believes that teaching English from the 1st Grade is "a better way to improve students' vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking skills in English." He goes on to argue that "English knowledge is necessary to compete with private schools. English is an international language. Students can go anywhere if they know English."

Price (2014) has discussed a similar ideology in Taiwan and argues that such an ideology is guided by the competitive nature of the education market created by neoliberalism. The-earlier-the-better ideology in Nepal's case is shaped by the discourse of globalization. The MOE in its national curriculum framework, for example, asserts that "globalization compels schools of any country to develop the capacity among students to acquire relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that they can compete in the world market and remain up to date with the changes in the world" (MOE, 2005, p. 17). More strikingly, the MOE adopts a monolingual pedagogical approach to teaching English. It states that "English should be taught in English." However,

scholars in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and teaching English as a second/other language (TESOL) have argued that a monolingual ideology in English language teaching is inappropriate for bi-/multilingual learners (Cummins, 2006; García & Li, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2013; May, 2014). In the opinions of these scholars, monolingual ideologies restrict multilingual learners from investing their full potential in the language-learning process. While teachers themselves lack the needed English language proficiency to teach English in English, the students who do not have to use English in their everyday social interaction struggle to make sense of the lessons and participate in classroom activities in English (Phyak, 2016).

Davies (2009) is critical about the-earlier-the-better ideology of English in Nepal. He argues that such ideology is not based on any academic rationale, but rather it is guided by political motives. Such motives are linked to the reproduction of educational inequalities and the legitimization of elite privilege. Giri (2011) rightly argues that the expansion of English in the lower grades without any research-based justification reproduces the power and privilege of the elites while delegitimizing linguistic diversity in education. Sayer (2015) reports similar findings from Mexico; in critically analyzing the role of neoliberalism in English language expansion, Sayer (2015) argues that the expansion of English in Mexican public schools is grounded on the assumption that if lower-class and underprivileged children know English, they will have better opportunities in life and access to jobs in the global markets. However, the disparity between the nominal and quality of English taught in public school and the great emphasis placed on English in private schools, mostly elite and international, have contributed to a division along socioeconomic lines in access to English acquisition. Yet, the neoliberal ideology of competition hardly addresses such issues related to social justice and equity. As national policies are strongly

influenced by neoliberalism, the early English policy is associated more with the free market economy rather than effective pedagogy.

A number of scholars have identified (a) the low English proficiency of teachers; (b) an ineffective use of textbooks and the lack of other available resources; and, (c) the teaching strategy of rote-memorization as major factors contributing to ineffective English language teaching (Kansakar, 2011; Phyak, 2016). Davies' (2009) analysis is particularly important to understanding why the early English policy in a foreign language context is not academically justifiable and promotes sociopolitical inequalities. Provided that the state lacks competent English-as-a-foreign-language teachers and a sufficient budget for teacher education programs, the early English, which "may sound superficially sensible", "leads to *repeated failure* and loss of motivation to learn. It also leads to a drain on English for school resources" (Davies, McLean, & Glendening, 1984, p. 6). While analyzing the local political and educational context, Davies (2009) argues that English should be made either an 'optional subject' or its teaching can be started from Grade 8 onwards. Like Price (2014) and Sayer (2015) discuss in the case of Taiwan and Mexico, respectively, the imposition of English as a foreign language in a compulsory education system has contributed to sociopolitical and educational inequalities, such social class division and low students' educational achievement (see Giri, 2011; Phyak, 2016; Sonntag, 2003). However, as neoliberal ideologies become common sense in dominant educational discourses, the issue of social inequalities is neutralized and considered as part of an individual's deficiency.

'The-More-the-Better' Ideology and English-as-a-Medium of Instruction

Piller and Cho (2013) analyze how the global dominance of neoliberalism as a free-market ideology has created structures and practices in which competition is embraced as a core

value. They argue that the competitive imperative of neoliberalism has contributed to promote English as a natural and neutral medium of instruction in education. On top of the early and compulsory English policy, as mentioned above, public schools in Nepal are increasingly adopting English-as-a-medium-of-instruction (EMI) policy from the pre-primary level (Baral, 2015; Khati, 2015; Sah, 2015; Seel et al., 2015). Despite the fact that the state seems to recognize the right to mother-tongue education in the constitution and other educational policies (e.g., Ministry of Education, 2010, 2014), the issue of minoritized languages has not received significant attention in public discourses on education. The Ministry of Education (2014) does very little to create multilingual schoolspace rather it simply reports and laments the fact that its own MTB-MLE policy is increasingly being replaced by an EMI policy. At the center of this shift lies the imperative of competition that neoliberalism has created in free market-based educational and other spheres, locally and globally. In Nepal, the notion of competition has gained currency in educational policy discourses as public education is being reimagined from a neoliberal perspective in order to make them competitive to private schools.

On the one hand, public schools are facing formidable challenges in maintaining the required student numbers due to the emergence of the business-model of private schools. Since private schools are discursively constructed as ‘better schools’, particularly due to their high test scores and English medium policy, most parents are sending their children to English medium private schools (Baral, 2015; Bhatta, 2014). On the other hand, the global neoliberal discourses such as the commodification of language and economic benefits in competitive markets have reached out to rural areas as well, particularly through migrant laborers. While analyzing the English language ideologies, Seel et al. (2015) assert that “neoliberal commodification and globalisation are seemingly working in their own way. Now people are only interested in the

economic benefits of education, creating problems on the demand side for multilingual education” (p. 30). As English becomes the most preferred language of instruction in private schools, public schools feel ideological pressure to adopt the same policy to compete with private schools. This pressure is reflected in what one teacher from a public school that has recently introduced EMI says:

We introduced this policy last year. Most schools in the region have implemented this policy. We feel pressure to compete with private schools. Some four new private schools are established in this village alone. They teach in English. They’ve smart uniform for students. People like it. It looks modern. Parents have started sending their kids to private schools. The student number is decreasing in public schools. Public schools are shut down if we don’t have students. So we have implemented the new policy to show the parents that we can also teach in English. We want to attract more students in our school.

As this teacher says, the neoliberalization of education has put increased pressure on public schools to compete with private schools. Since EMI policy is a major selling point for private schools, public schools want to do the same to reverse the decreasing trend of students leaving public schools. Although there is no exact data about how many public schools have implemented an EMI policy, there is a growing craze for this policy. Indicating a rapid change-over to EMI, the Ministry of Education (2014) estimates that in some districts as much as 70% of public schools have already implemented the EMI policy. This number will certainly increase as academic rationalities are systematically erased from the current neoliberal regime. As English becomes a natural medium of instruction in public schools, it is discursively positioned as the language of the competitive educational marketplace and a magic savior of public schools. For example, in her article *The Queen’s English in a New Republic* in a famous national weekly, Gurung (2014) describes the role of EMI policy in public schools in one district, Chitwan, as follows:

Like all community schools in the country, Balkumari started out as a Nepali-medium school. But after recording a continuous decrease in enrollment it changed into an English school in 2006. This school in Chitwan's main city now offers classes in English to 700 students enrolled from grades one to seven. Other community schools in Chitwan and across Nepal which were losing students to private schools have responded to public demand for English-medium instruction. "These days, parents only want to send their children to English boarding schools, so it is tough for community schools to survive if they stick to being a Nepali medium," says assistant District Education Officer Ram Chandra Khanoj. Until four years ago, Dharmeshwar Lower Secondary School in Chitwan had less than 60 students. Today, the school in Kumruj VDC, Dharampur has a total of 200 students, a change that Headmaster Rudra Subedi credits to the school's decision of changing into an English-medium. "The numbers went up almost instantly," says Subedi.

Gurung's (2014) description captures the ideological hegemony of English as the language of competitiveness and discursively presents it as a neutral and necessary medium of education to help public schools survive. More interesting, Gurung (2014) describes that migrant laborers want their children to be taught in English because they have experienced that "Nepalis in the Gulf and Malaysia...earn less than their Filipino or Indian counterparts because they don't speak English" (n.p.). Gurung (2014) cites one parent who sends his children to an English-medium public school: "Even though we are poor, we want our children to study English because it is a must in today's world....I want my children to learn English because I know there is no future in this country and they should be able to communicate with others once they are abroad" (n.p.). These views clearly reflect the deep impact of global neoliberal discourses in which English remains a de facto language of competition in the free market.

While the MOE itself has developed a multilingual education policy (Ministry of Education, 2010), the monolingual English-only policy is gaining great currency in current

policy discourses. The bureaucracy which handles policy-related activities predominantly promotes EMI since they lack awareness of multilingual education (Nurmela et al., 2011). One Acting District Education Officer, in an interview with me, argued that

the EMI policy is a demand on our time. Parents think that their children can do something more if they know English well. We have to encourage schools to adopt EMI to compete with private schools as well. You know well that English is a global language.

What is most intriguing to me is the way this and other bureaucrats show their lack of awareness with regard to multilingual education policies and pedagogies. As I spoke with this education official, he claimed that “EMI provides children with more exposure to English. They can learn more English.” Even top-level officials in government strongly support EMI policy as neutral and appropriate for public schools. For example, the executive director of the National Center for Educational Development⁵⁶ argues that parents should have the right to choose the medium of instruction in which they want their children to learn, and claims that the EMI policy has promoted the quality of education. Thus, he holds the opinion that the “time has come to select teachers who have at least basic communication skills in English and...[that] we need to test the English language skills of teachers.”

On the surface, the notion of choice sounds neutral, but it is one of the major aspects of neoliberalism (Price, 2014). As neoliberalism embraces competition as its core value (Piller & Cho, 2013), choice always goes in favor of the dominant language, like English, that presumably makes students more competitive in the neoliberal market. Indeed, the choice for the EMI policy emerges from the World Bank’s global approach to school decentralization policy which

⁵⁶ This organization is part of the MOE which looks after the professional development of in-service teachers.

minimizes the role of the state in financing and managing public education (Khanal, 2010)⁵⁷. Based on the World Bank's recommendation, the MOE revised its Education Act in 2001 that handed over the authority to manage public schools to the School Management Committee, which is comprised of parents, teachers, and local government officials. Following this self-help approach, public schools are asked to hire teachers, generate funds, and do other academic activities to promote the quality of education. To help with this process, the World Bank (2003) invested money for the Community School Support Project (2003-2008). Accordingly, the community managed schools have been provided with grant money based on their performance, mostly judged in terms of the student numbers and achievement test scores. As the student numbers go down due to private schools and other sociopolitical and economic reasons, the public schools not only lose funding, but they are also closed down by the Ministry of Education. These schools therefore are forced to adopt the EMI policy.

Social Justice: Whose Agenda?

As neoliberalism continues to shape language policies, the issue of social justice is largely ignored in dominant educational policies and practices; in particular, not only social justice with language rights but also the parity of participation (Piller, 2016) in education. In order to understand the issue of social justice, it is important to acknowledge the fact that the

⁵⁷ Although the idea of decentralization sounds promising, the World Bank's policy has been a complete failure due to its inability to address local sociopolitical inequalities and hierarchical power relations. Edwards (2011) argues that the Bank's decentralization reforms promote the disconnection of communities as they adopt highly centralized and top-down policy making processes. Rather than engaging parents in policy processes, the Bank's globalized policy reform has assisted in the capture of elites and local political leaders who generally do not like to engage parents in school-related activities (see Khanal, 2010). Rather than empowering the common people, the Bank blames them for their inability to embrace educational reforms. As Regmi (2016) critiques, the Bank labels parents as illiterate and unaware and states that "the poorest may live too far or lack the needed time to attend meetings, and may not even know what their rights are" (World Bank, 2010, p. 22). Such donor-driven context-insensitive educational reforms have eventually been successful to fulfil their hidden agendas of constructing competition as a core aspect of education.

global neoliberal economy perpetuates social hierarchies and inequalities (Block, 2014). Such inequalities include the threat to one's right to know and access knowledge by using their epistemologies and identities. As neoliberalism promotes the marketization of education, these issues remain ignored in language education.

The children's right to know is hugely affected by on-going neoliberal dominance. At the macro level, donor agencies such as the World Bank (2001) are forcing the state to not focus on free education policies because without enough funding such policies "have inadvertently led to a decline in the quality of the education which low income children receive" (World Bank, 2001, p. iv). However, the privatization of education to compensate the low funding in public education is not only creating a social divide among various ethnic/caste and class groups, but also, and most importantly, unequal access to knowledge. Baral's (2015) study critically analyzes how the neoliberally grounded English medium policy has posed serious social and educational challenges. His analysis shows that the monolingual EMI policy has posed a threat to the self-confidence of students in learning academic content. More importantly, the EMI policy has silenced students from expressing their ideas in the classroom. He cites what one teacher has said:

Silence in [the] classroom does not mean there is discipline or we cannot say there is better teaching and learning. It is necessary for better learning that there is sufficient interaction and discussion in the classroom. When we use ELOI [English as the language of instruction], learning through discussion and interaction is minimized. (Baral, 2015, p. 47)

We see that the EMI policy is minimizing classroom interaction and promoting student silence. Piller and Cho (2013) argue that students being silenced in the classroom is an example of the violation of the right to 'freedom of speech'. Critical pedagogy scholars (e.g., Giroux, 2000; hooks, 1994) consider silencing in the classroom to be an anti-democratic practice. Applied

linguists have further argued that silencing students due to language barriers contributes to anxiety, disengagement, and a lack of investment in the learning processes which eventually affect cognitive investment (Conteh & Meier, 2014; Cummins, 2006). As market and economic profits, mostly imagined, are dominant in the current EMI policy, the issue of whether students learn what they are entitled to learn from academic content area subjects remains critical. In this regard, Baral (2015) cites one of his participants as follows:

Children can only get content knowledge better when they have a level of mastery over the language [English]. In our case, students and teachers are both challenged by the need to learn the language [English]. While teachers themselves lack [the] required proficiency, children have [the] challenge both to learn the language and the content. This has made learning in English more difficult. (p. 47)

The above excerpt shows that the EMI policy has exacerbated an ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2007) by restricting students from learning the content knowledge they can learn in the language through which they have mastery. In other words, children are wronged in their capacity as a multilingual speaker who can easily learn academic content through languages other than English, including their home language(s). Their capacity to learn has often been challenged due to the neoliberalized the EMI policy.

The neoliberal education reform has further naturalized social divisions in terms of class. Mathema (2016) argues that the privatization of education has indeed segregated the rich and the poor: the poor go to free public schools, while the rich opt for private schools. As the state is influenced by donor-driven ideologies, market imperatives become more important than social inequity in educational policies and practices. Consequently, public schools are encouraged to imitate private school’s policies and practices to promote so-called quality education. However, very little attention has been paid to addressing repeated student failure in national exams and the increased drop-out rate among students in public schools. The Department of Education (2013)

reveals that about 60% of students leave school by the time they reach 10th Grade and out of this number only approximately 44% pass the national examinations; also, only about 30% of public school students pass the national exams. These data show educational disparity in terms of social class. This inequality is closely related to language issues as well. The knowledge of English is discursively considered the language of success and the language of higher achievement, while the knowledge of home and other languages is indexed as a symbol of poverty and failure. This kind of categorization leads to symbolic violence and the self-marginalization of minoritized people (Piller, 2016).

Macpherson (2014) argues that “the market-based distribution of educational opportunity confers both status and recognition on those who are able to compete and, conversely, devalues and demeans those who are not” (p. 294). In the neoliberalized education marketplace, people with more capital—social, economic, and cultural—have access to knowledge and economy, while the poor working-class people are deprived of those resources. As Carney (2003) claims, the legitimization of private schools’ language policies and their ideology of educational success as being demonstrated in a high achievement on test scores provide spaces for the elites to “redefine and reorder schooling in ways that reinforce historic power differentials and socio-economic distinctions” (p. 95). Indeed, neoliberal education reforms support social Darwinism (Smith, 2012) in which individuals are blamed for their own failure to compete.

Subedi et al. (2014) not only find unequal representations of various caste/ethnic groups in private schools, but they also reveal that the graduates of public and private schools have differential access to employment and higher education opportunities. They find that most students from elite private schools go abroad, mostly the US, the UK, and Australia, for their higher education after they finish school. On the other hand, the public school students from the

village cannot even afford colleges at home. Moreover, private school graduates are preferred in the job markets of (I)NGOs due to their English language proficiency and other skills, which the public school graduates lack. This scenario shows that neoliberal education policies and practices are strengthening the state's historical caste/ethnic, class, and linguistic inequalities. In this regard, Carney (2003) contends that neoliberal policies “have tended to shift attention away from the government's overall policy objective of democratic and inclusive schools, towards the technical and managerial inputs required to enhance pupils' cognitive development” (p. 92). This shift has contributed to the erasure of multilingualism in education—both at the discourse and practice levels—and promoted unequal access to resources and knowledge.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how neoliberalism as an ideology has impacted the construction and reproduction of an English language ideology in Nepal's language education policies and practices. More particularly, I have unraveled how neoliberal ideologies have become hegemonic in national development and educational policies. This chapter reveals how the colonial ideology of neoliberalism is shaping the public assumptions about what counts as a legitimate language in market-based educational reforms. As educational policies are framed under the development discourse, the state is unquestionably embracing neoliberal ideologies in education, creating strong challenges for ensuring social justice.

While analyzing the impact of neoliberal ideology in language policy, I echo Block et al.'s (2012) critique that there is a “shift from pedagogical to market values [that support] the abandonment of the social and cooperative ethic in favor of individualist and competitive business models” (p. 6). By supporting an EMI policy in the guise of competition and quality of education, neoliberalism has contributed to the ‘creative destruction’ (Harvey, 2006) of students’

multilingual practices, local indigenous values, and local knowledge systems. As Piller and Cho (2013) claim, “in addition to the human cost of high levels of social suffering, the spread of English MOI must also be understood as a means of suppressing critical inquiry” (p. 25). As Nepali (bi-/multilingual) students are taught through an English-only policy, they are not able to invest their full linguistic knowledge into the learning process. The students cannot participate in classroom interactions and discussions in English, as they can in language in which they are fully competent.

In sum, I have discussed the coloniality of neoliberalism in Nepal. In particular, I have looked at how neoliberalism has shaped the epistemologies and ideologies in dominant language policies and practices. We can draw two implications from the impact of neoliberal ideologies in Nepal’s language policies and practices. First, as neoliberalism frames students as members of a competitive market, their ways of learning, speaking (using languages), and identities are distanced from educational activities. Consequently, the students are disengaged and disempowered in the entire learning processes. What is even more disturbing is the discursive construction of public schools as ineffective and sites of education failure. Second, the hegemony of neoliberal discourses, as Pennycook (2007) contends, naturalizes and indexes English as ‘inherently good’, ‘useful’, and necessary for ‘full participation’ in the global society while reproducing the existing socioeconomic and political power relations, at local and global levels. More importantly, the EMI policy, which is framed under the “discourse of the development of a country’s human capital in order to support global competitiveness and economic development” (Sayer, 2015, p. 53), as seen in Nepal’s case, indeed contributes to the accumulation of wealth for multinational companies and other corporates in the global marketplace.

Chapter 6: Engaged Ethnography as a Research Methodology

Introduction

Ethnographers do not just observe what happens in education; they engage with the inequalities they observe and work collaboratively with the community in order to open new opportunities and horizons. In practice, this means that ethnographers challenge the dominant language ideologies they witness in educational practices, particularly in stratified multilingual environments where one language dominates the other (often indigenous minority) languages. (Blommaert, 2013, p. 128)

This dissertation adopts ‘engaged ethnography’ (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming; Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2015) as a research methodology to engage indigenous youth, teachers, and villagers⁵⁸ in exploring and analyzing dominant language ideologies towards building critical awareness, agency, and activism for equitable language policy. Ethnography has made huge contributions by integrating sociocultural situatedness, human agency, and ideological complexities in the creation, interpretation, and implementation of language policies (e.g., Davis, 1994; Hornberger, 1988; Johnson, 2013; McCarty, 2011). Ethnography of language policy has provided significant insights into understanding the ideological tensions, attitudes, and ideologies of different social groups, and the role of agency (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2015). However, as Blommaert (2013) contends above, how ethnographers challenge the discriminatory language ideologies that influence educational policies and practices in “stratified multilingual environments” (p. 128) has not received much attention in language policy research (see Davis & Phyak, 2015). In other words, although an ethnography of language policy “report[s] research concerning on-the-ground language policies and practices, descriptions of the politics, processes

⁵⁸ I use villagers, community members, and parents interchangeably in this dissertation.

and intent of language research often go unreported” (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming). More importantly, existing ethnographic studies pay little attention to how researchers raise the critical ideological awareness of participants who have long been disenfranchised and disengaged from language policy processes and whose agency, epistemologies, and ideologies have long been ignored in dominant language policies.

In this dissertation, I take an alternative epistemic stance of ethnography, an engaged perspective which redefines ethnography from an activist and transformative perspective. Rather than focusing just on ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973), as in traditional ethnography, engaged ethnography is concerned with the advocacy, empowerment, and activism of language policy actors (Davis & Phyak, 2015). With this brief backdrop, I first discuss the meaning, historicity, and basic principles of engaged ethnography by drawing on insights from multiple disciplines such as anthropology, political science, sociology, and critical sociolinguistics.

Understanding ‘Engaged’ in Engaged Ethnography

In a general sense, the terms ‘engaged’ or ‘engagement’ refers to meeting and talking with people. In this dissertation, I have used these terms to refer to two interrelated phenomena: participation in critical dialogue (Freire, 1970) and commitment towards decolonizing ideological hegemonies to transform unequal language policies and practices (Davis & Phyak, 2015). The term ‘engagement’ comes from Latin, meaning “dedicating or binding oneself by means of a pledge”, and is derived from the French *en gage*, or “moral commitment” (Clair, 2012, p. 132). ‘Engagement’ and ‘engaged’ are not just about sharing verbal exchanges (Freire, 1970), but rather are concerned with “civic awareness, engagement, and activism” (Elavsky, 2009, p. 384) and social movements (Clair, 2012).

Clair (2012) describes ‘engagement’ as both a theoretical and methodological concept.

He argues that theoretical engagement is seen as central to activism in relation to movements towards social justice. At the methodological level, engagement operates in terms of: (a) the researcher's role; (b) the researcher's perspective; (c) how and why the researcher enters into and enacts with the cultural phenomenon; (d) how the researcher tends to the subjects; and, (e) how the researcher presents the story. An engaged ethnographic study reimagines researcher's multiple roles—such as a facilitator of dialogue, co-participant, advocate, co-learner, and activist—towards supporting participants' transformative agency and activism. These roles however change as per the need, context, and the purpose of the engagement. An engaged ethnographer's perspectives are shaped by critical theories which support commitment towards social justice and the empowerment of participants (Davis & Phyak, 2015). The notion of engagement further requires researchers' personal engagement, rather than distancing themselves, in the issues/topics of discussions by building 'solidarity' with the participants towards transforming different forms of domination (Mathers & Navelli, 2007). In this regard, an engaged ethnographer recognizes participants as agents for change and presents their stories in a more reflexive manner (Clair, 2010).

In this dissertation, I take 'engagement' as an invitation to critical dialogue on issues concerning language policies and practices in relation to social justice. As Ghorashi and Wels (2009) suggest, I hold engagement as a "reflective space...for a deeper understanding of the views and experiences from the field" (p. 246). In this space, both researchers and participants explore the sociopolitical aspects of language policies and construct new epistemologies and ideologies while challenging dominant ideologies. In this sense, engagement in this dissertation has to be understood as a critical and transformative concept that provides space for both researchers and participants not only to engage in understanding the ideological meanings of

language policies and practices, but also building new consciousness, knowledge, and actions necessary for equitable language policies and practices.

Engaged Ethnography as an Anti-Hegemonic Science

In adopting engaged ethnography as a research methodology, this dissertation considers ethnography as an ‘anti-hegemonic science’ (Hymes, 1996) and a theory of ‘democratic engagement’ (Fine, 2006) or ‘public engagement’ (Forman, 1993). This perspective challenges the positivist paradigm of research as a top-down, objective, and neutral phenomenon (Smith, 2012) and counters the researcher-researched dichotomy which places the researcher’s role as a passive observer and the researched just as a source of data. Rather than reproducing the dominant paradigm of research as a value-free and non-dialogic process, engaged ethnography “sees the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation” (Macedo, 2000, p. 12). In this regard, Davis and Phyak (2015) claim that engaged ethnography emphasizes the ways in which participants and researchers collectively engage in transforming complex discriminatory language ideologies and practices, especially in peripheral communities of marginalized populations (see also Davis, 2014; Phyak & Bui, 2014).

Although engaged ethnography is a recent approach in language policy and language education (see Davis & Phyak, forthcoming), there is a long history of activist ethnography in anthropology, sociolinguistics, and political science; as such, I acknowledge and briefly discuss here the major historical works. Franz Boas and Margaret Mead have set up a strong background from their activist anthropological work in the early 20th century, followed by Dell Hymes’ (1969) *Reinventing Anthropology*. Hymes’ ethnography of folk linguistics—the narratives of inequalities and ethnolinguistic injustices—urges ethnographers to take an ‘anti-imperialistic stance’ and support community engagement for the empowerment of marginalized people.

Recent language policy scholars have discussed Hymesian ethnography, particularly ‘ethnographic monitoring’ as an activist ethnography towards transforming linguistic inequalities in the face of the hegemony of neoliberal ideology in education (Blommaert, 2013; McCarty et al., 2011; Van der Aa, & Blommaert, 2011). These and other scholars (e.g., Davis & Phyak, forthcoming; Davis & Phyak, 2015) have analyzed the role of Hymesian ethnography in pushing the role of ethnographers as activists towards supporting the democratic engagement of participants, and in particular the speakers of minoritized languages. George Marcus and Michael Fischer’s (1986) *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* and James Clifford and George Marcus’ (1986) *Writing Culture* have equally contributed to expanding the importance of an activist ethnography by incorporating ‘cultural critique’ as a way to recognize the voices of the subalterns.

Parallel to this development in anthropology, Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* further expanded the relevance of an engaged activist ethnography in sociology. His ethnographic works have used ‘social critique’ as a tool to unravel and resist sociopolitical, cultural, economic, and linguistic inequalities. Bourdieu uses ethnography as a tool to unravel how structural dispositions, ‘habitus’, are reproduced and how this reproduction is invested in power relations and domination. As Blommaert (2005) argues, Bourdieusian ethnography is not just a methodological issue but rather is an ‘epistemological issue’ which in practice “becomes a site for constructing subjective knowledge and questions about knowledge” (p. 228). His reflexive approach to ethnography provides a critical framework to understand how micro practices are connected with macro sociopolitical and economic structures. In portraying Bourdieu’s contribution to resist neoliberalism, Mathers and Novelli (2007) discuss his work as a major foundation for an engaged ethnography to transform

neoliberalism.

In Bourdieu's (2003, p. 47) words, the researcher is required to establish 'modes of communication and discussion of a new type' with the researched. The researcher is also encouraged to assist social movements to enter the public sphere. This is a question of making the movements visible. (p. 233)

In language policy, Bourdieu's 'social critique' has been used as a major tool to analyze how monolingual ideologies create distinctions and hierarchies between languages and exacerbate symbolic violence against minoritized languages speakers (e.g., Benson, 2013; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013). More specifically, Bourdieu's ethnography provides critical insights into challenging neoliberal ideologies and connecting on-the-ground practices with macro sociopolitical ideologies.

Paulo Freire's (1970) work has been instrumental in theorizing ethnography from an engaged perspective. In his classic work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire uses 'dialogue' as both a theory and a method of pedagogy to engage the oppressed in liberatory and emancipatory processes of learning and transforming ideological and epistemological dominations. Dialogue, as opposed to monologue, challenges 'a ready-made truth' and the status quo, and promotes egalitarian ways of learning (Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 1970; see also Dewey, 1933). From a Freirian perspective, dialogue is not "simpl[y] the descriptions of an interactive exchange between people, but a normative definition of how human relationships should be formed-- namely, on the basis of equality, respect and a commitment to the authentic interests of participants" (Renshaw, 2004, p. 1). From this perspective, participants are considered "living members of communities with histories and cultural resources that need to be understood and respected" (Renshaw, 2004, p. 1). In this dissertation, Freire's (1970) dialogue helps to engage participants in understanding both the historical and contemporary roots of linguistic inequalities.

For Freire (1970), dialogue challenges the ‘banking-model’ of learning and calls for a participatory approach in which authoritative ideologies, assumptions, and ways of learning are critically examined, resisted, and transformed. Most importantly, Freire’s dialogue is a way to engage the oppressed in raising their critical consciousness and engaging them in social actions which are informed by theories of social justice.

Building on Freire (1970), scholars across disciplines have used participatory action research (PAR) to engage participants in collaborative research towards transforming social inequalities (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007). Smith’s (1999, 2012) ‘decolonizing methodologies’ advocates for PAR to engaging indigenous people in research processes. Critiquing the hegemony of positivist research, Smith (2012) argues for decolonizing the dominant colonial epistemologies and urges recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge, epistemologies, and ideologies in the entire research processes. For her, such research processes respect the right to self-determination, planning, and critical reflection of the people being researched. Appadurai (2006) adopts PAR as a way to ensure youth’s ‘right to research’ while Cammarota and Fine (2008) and Morrell (2008), among others, use PAR to engage youth in ‘extraordinary conversations’ on racism, poverty, and social marginalization, and transformative actions to address these issues (see also Torre & Fine, 2011). Together, these scholars challenge the positivist research paradigm and urge for alternative epistemologies that build on the agency, activism, knowledge, and identity of historically marginalized people (Davis, 2014).

Low and Merry’s (2010) recent conceptualization of ‘engaged anthropology’ further expands the significance of engaged ethnography to support advocacy and activist work. They argue that an engaged ethnographer should be able to critique the “misuse of concepts within everyday discourse, particularly when these concepts lead to discriminatory behaviors” (Low &

Merry, 2010, p. 208); for them, engaged ethnographers must pay attention to (a) sharing knowledge and power with communities; (b) empowering communities through social critique and collaborative actions; and, (c) contributing to the public-policy making process. Keeping social equity at the center of ethnography, Low and Merry (2010) focus on ethnographer's engagement with communities and individuals as activists and social critics towards transforming a host of social problems that affect the lived experiences of the people.

Reflexivity in Engaged Ethnography

Reflexivity is a key aspect of engaged ethnographic research; as a process of self-critique and self-appraisal (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Koch & Harrington, 1998), reflexivity invites researchers to “turn back on ourselves” (Davis, 1999, p. 92). More specifically, reflexivity engages researchers in asking themselves: What is the research for? Who will benefit? What authority do they have to make claims about the research site? How will it make a difference in people's lives? (Madison, 2005, p. 7, as cited in Relaño Pastor, 2011, p. 188). Giampapa (2011) speaks of reflexivity as an engagement in ‘the politics of being and becoming a researcher’ and argues that

recognizing and casting a reflexive gaze on who we are as socially constructed beings not only focuses the lens on what we research but also on the ways in which we research.

That is, in “being and becoming” researchers, our histories, social and linguistic forms of capital, and our identities position us in particular ways in relation to participants and the communities in which they are embedded. (p. 133)

Reflexivity also includes “the reflective process of choosing between conceptual alternatives and making value-laden judgments of meaning and method to challenge research, policy, and other forms of human activity” (Thomas, 1993, p. 4). As mentioned in Chapter 1, my perspective to take an ‘engaged’ approach with a focus on decolonizing language ideologies is grounded on a

dialectic relationship between (a) the literature I read—and particularly those related to critical language policy and multilingual education—and (b) the current on-the-ground language practices, including my and the participants' own 'lived experiences' (Giampapa, 2011); such lived experiences include multilingual indigenous people's socioeconomic, political, linguistic, and educational positions in the broader sociopolitical and sociolinguistic context. As a member of a Limbu indigenous community, my own and other community members' language practices are multilingual and are characterized by fluidity and flexibility. The community possesses rich 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and the people enact alternative epistemologies and ideologies contrary to dominant language policy discourses. At the same time, they are ideologically impacted by dominant political, language policy, and educational discourse and practices. They have been culturally and linguistically oppressed.

The funds of knowledge, alternative ideologies, and multilingual practices are largely ignored in dominant language policies and practices, despite both local and global studies which reveal that multilingualism must be recognized to support equitable education (Cummins, 2006). This condition troubles me and motivates me to question the relevance of my own initial research approach; that is, one that was designed to simply explore the language ideologies of the indigenous people and whether or not they challenge the dominant language ideologies in the current language policy discourses and practices. I asked myself: what was the use of my research? How was it contributing to the community? These questions redefined my research paradigm. I began to engage some indigenous activists, youth, and teachers in critical discussions and all who participated critique that '**ekal bhāshik soc**' (monolingual ideology) should be transformed; in addition, the need for '**cetanā jagāunu**' (raise [critical] awareness) was highlighted in the initial discussions with the participants. These ideas further forced me to ask

myself: How do we raise the critical awareness of indigenous peoples? What theories inform the transformation of monolingual ideologies?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I wanted to conduct individual interviews with the villagers but, as seen in Asma's case, this method was ineffective; thus, I had to adopt a collaborative approach, influenced by the 'tangsing', to engage participants in dialogue in multiple ways. Rather than doing individual interviews, I adopted an ethnographically grounded dialogue (discussed below) which is informed by 'empowerment-oriented research' in which a study is not conducted 'on' but 'with' the participants (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1993; see also Davis & Phyak, 2015). This method worked well to engage participants in dialogue and other relevant activities. However, the theoretical framework was not determined until I had a critical understanding of the participants' voices, ideologies, agency, and activism during the data analysis and interpretation processes. As I critically analyzed the transcripts (of what the participants said in their dialogues across different times and in different spaces), my field notes, videos, and collaborative activities, I found that the participants did not simply challenge the dominant language ideologies, but also constructed alternative epistemic stances and ideologies; in other words, these participants were engaged in decolonizing language ideologies (Lin & Martin, 2005; Smith, 2012).

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality is one of the major aspects of reflexivity in this dissertation. Positionality includes what roles and identities the researcher enacts during the entire research process, as well as both how the researcher positions the participants and, conversely, how s/he is positioned by the participants (Giampapa & Lamoureux, 2011; Relaño Pastor, 2011). Considering positionality as both an ethical and validity issue, Canagarajah and Stanley (2015)

maintain that language policy and planning researchers must constantly negotiate their multiple identities by asking themselves who they are and how their identities influence the research process, including the views and perspectives of the participants. Researcher positionalities are embedded in complex power relations between the researcher and the participants in the sociocultural, linguistic, and political contexts in which the research is conducted.

Lin (2015) argues that researcher positionality is determined by the type of knowledge researchers are interested in exploring and the paradigm of research they adopt. As my interest includes critical and emancipatory knowledge and research, I and the participants take the position of “subjects of knowing” and “enter into a dialogue on equal footing” (Lin, 2015, p. 26). Since the purpose of this dissertation is to not just describe and report what participants have said and what I had observed in the field, but to also transform ideologies and unjust policies by empowering the participants (Davis & Phyak, 2015), I thus hold multiple roles and identities throughout the research process. I consider myself to be a member of the community and thus a participant, while also being a facilitator of dialogue. By having the same ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background, we share similar narratives/counter-narratives which embrace the indigenous peoples’ struggle to make sense of their own ways of being and using language in the dominant society.

As a member of the community, I created a dialogic space for the participants in which they explored, analyzed, and confronted the ideological tensions and problems they have experienced in their own contexts. I organized village meetings and focus group discussions to engage the participants in critical reflection on their own linguistic, political and cultural experiences. With regard to the role of engaged ethnographer, Davis (2014) argues that “the researcher/facilitator grounds dialogue in analyses of how macro level ideologies and imposed

policies/practices may be detrimental to individuals and communities” (p. 91). She goes on to argue that “in promoting awareness, an engaged approach suggest that the researcher/facilitator takes seriously her/his positions as *leader* in the act of dialogue with others” (Davis, 2014, p. 91, emphasis added). Building on what Davis (2014) has argued, I led the dialogue by providing ethnographic information or sharing what other people have said with regard to the language issues. In addition, I have also shared the findings from the literature on language education and brought my own narratives and other ethnographic vignettes from the local communities and schools to facilitate the dialogues. I have also presented official language policies and practices during the dialogues. All of these invite participants to critical dialogic engagement.

Although my identity as a ‘**shikṣit mānche**’ (an educated person) or ‘**jānne bujheko mānche**’ (a learned person) was quite often given by the participants in the beginning of research, my ‘insider identity’ as determined by the kinship system became more salient the more I worked with them. The Limbu indigenous community is organized under a kinship system in which an individual’s positionality is shaped by their position in the genealogy. For example, most villagers I worked with were my ‘*aambhungaa*’ (uncle), ‘*aanchumaa*’ (auntie), ‘*thebaa*’ (grandfather), ‘*yumaa*’ (grandmother), and so on. This means that my ‘ascribed identity’ (Blommaert, 2006) as an ‘educated person’ did not play any significant role to creating unequal power relations with the participants. I was always treated as someone’s nephew, grandson, brother, and so on, during my research in the community. As a community member, I participated in cultural activities such as funerals and *tangsings*. I also participated in community work, including cleaning up the roads, fixing broken pipes that supplied the drinking water, and working with the villagers in the fields to plant a rice paddy. To my knowledge, my identity as a doctoral student and researcher did not create a researcher-researched distinction. Rather, I found

that the villagers, teachers, and youth were proud to know that I am doing research on indigenous language issues. I frequently heard them saying: “Our community needs people like you” and “People like you should guide our community and the people.”

In sum, I shuttled between multiple roles and identity positions as per the need and purpose of the dialogue. I position myself as a member of the community, a co-learner, a co-researcher, and an advocate of multilingual education and social equity.

Research Ethics

While discussing the importance of ethics in language policy research, Canagarajah and Stanley (2015) argue that “rather than remaining detached in the name of objectivity, LPP [language policy and planning] researchers can help community members interrogate conflicting viewpoints on language relationships and clarify their interests” (p. 37). Ethics in this engaged research are informed by a commitment towards supporting the communities and participants towards transforming social inequalities. This dissertation is grounded on the ethics of social responsibility, reflexivity, and praxis (e.g., Fine, 2009; Guishard, 2009). In working closely with the villagers, teachers, and youth, I have paid attention through this engaged research to my own social responsibility towards supporting indigenous communities, teachers, and youth in transforming unequal language policies. To achieve this goal, the participants were engaged in interrogating and challenging the dominant ideologies and practices.

While building on their own narratives, voices, and ideologies, the participants were educated about the importance of multilingualism and multiliteracies in education. In respecting their ‘right to research’ (Appadurai, 2006), the participants were also engaged in exploring, documenting, and analyzing language ideologies, policies, and practices. In this process, the participants not only learned about the intersection between language policy and sociopolitical

realities, but also, and more importantly, recognize themselves as a legitimate source of knowledge. With strong ideological awareness of the conditions of their own oppressions, the participants were further engaged in ‘praxis’ (Freire, 1970), such as organizing workshops, facilitating village meetings, and implementing multilingual pedagogies. Throughout the research, I recognized the participants’ identity as a rich source of diverse linguistic, cultural, and historical knowledge. Participants were free to use any of their languages—Limbu, Nepali, and English—with which they felt most comfortable; however, we predominantly used Limbu-Nepali bilingual practices during our dialogue.

Trust-building is another important aspect of ethics in engaged research (Davis, 2014; Davis & Phyak, 2015). In this research, I established a strong rapport and built trust with the participants by showing my own critical engagement in dialogue with them. Rather than presenting myself just as a researcher by recording what they had said, I also engaged myself in a series of sustained and meaningful dialogue with the participants. In these dialogues, I not only showed my interest in supporting the community, teachers, and youth towards creating spaces for indigenous languages in schools and beyond, but we also collectively organized workshops, focus group discussions, and village meetings on these issues. I did not present myself as a distant observer in the back of the classroom or of language practices in communities, but rather I initiated and participated in reflexive dialogues with the participants on the issues collected from both schools and the communities; this process helped me develop a deep sense of trust with the teachers, parents, and youth.

Research Methods

In this study, I have adopted a multimethod and multisited ethnographic approach (McCarty, 2011) to collect data from teachers, villagers, and youth. Before I describe the two

sites of focus—one village and two public schools—I discuss the major research methods I adopted in this study.

Ethnographically Grounded Dialogue

This dissertation adopts a dialogic approach (Bakhtin, 1984; Freire, 1970) to engage Limbu indigenous youth, teachers, and parents in becoming ideologically aware of the conditions of the language policy issues in their communities. Building on Freire (1970), dialogue is taken as a critical reflective process in which the participants and researchers are engaged in a meaning-making process. More importantly, ‘dialogue’ in this dissertation is used as a space for the critical analysis of multiple perspectives, ideologies, and power relations embedded in language policies and practices. As a space for the creation of critical consciousness, ‘dialogue’ in this dissertation is also embraced as a contested space in which the researcher and the participants bring both dominant and alternative discourses into discussion (Bakhtin, 1981), and who collaboratively build alternative knowledge to transform existing policies and practices (Wells, 1999).

However, dialogue in this study is ethnographically grounded, and so I refer to it as an *ethnographically grounded dialogue*. As a major research method, ethnographically grounded dialogue involves critical reflection on the participants’ own narratives, their lived experiences, and their local sociopolitical and sociolinguistic contexts. In other words, dialogue is situated in the participants’ and researchers’ understanding and observation of the local sociopolitical context. In this dissertation, the dialogic engagement of participants is grounded on multiple ethnographic anecdotes, classroom vignettes, newspaper articles, and stories from local communities. Such ethnographic resources are based on collaborative ethnographic explorations of language practices in schools and communities, and discussions with teachers, parents, and

youth. In short, dialogue in this dissertation is contextualized and reflective.

Ethnographically grounded dialogue is collaborative as well. Dialogues with the participants were based on collaborative activities, such as collaborative observations of community and school language practices. Ethnographically grounded dialogue provides both participants and the researcher with a safe dialogic space to discuss how dominant language ideologies and practices impact people's lives and how those ideologies and practices can be transformed. In this process, both the participants and the researcher shared their own narratives and ethnographic anecdotes which they have experienced in their own communities. In this sense, ethnographically grounded dialogue not only respects the participants' knowledge about local complexities, but also supports their activism towards transforming those complexities by raising critical awareness of sociopolitical issues. In this dissertation, ethnographically grounded dialogue is used in the form of exploratory talks⁵⁹ (Mercer, 2000), collective argumentation, (Brown & Renshaw, 2000), and social critique (Low & Merry, 2010).

Engaging Villagers

Villagers or parents are often disengaged in language education policy creation and implementation; yet, they can play an agentive role in promoting egalitarian language policies (see King & Fogle, 2006). In order to raise their critical ideological awareness about language policy issues, I adopted the following methods to engage Limbu indigenous villagers/parents.

Collaborative ethnography. I worked with three Limbu indigenous villagers as my collaborators in one rural village⁶⁰ to observe and document language policies and practices in schools and communities. These villagers, all of them are in their mid-fifties, were chosen based

⁵⁹ In exploratory talks different ideas are shared, respected and challenged. In such talks, contributions are built on participants' existing knowledge.

⁶⁰ I have incorporated the descriptions of research sites in the data analysis chapters.

on their participation in the preliminary discussions. All of them are known as ‘*tumyaahaang*’ in the community. They have not completed their school education. They can read and write Nepali and speak both Limbu and Nepali. In our initial discussions, these villagers showed their own frustration about the erasure of indigenous languages from schools and other public places. Most importantly, they revealed that they did not know how to change the negative mentality of people towards indigenous languages. At the same time, I found that their ideologies are also deeply impacted by the dominant nation-state and neoliberal ideologies. So the selection of three participants are purposeful and influenced by collective interests.

We visited families, talked to parents and children, and closely observed language practices in the community. We also had *chumlung*s (village meetings) with the other villagers, youth, and teachers. These *chumlung*s were audio-recorded and documented in the form of field notes. We also visited the local schools, observed language practices, and talked to the teachers about language and education issues in general and particularly the space for local indigenous languages. Some 15 classes were both audio- and video-recorded while others were documented as field notes. The purpose of the collaborative ethnography was to engage these villagers in exploring the nature of local multilingualism in community; to help them critically analyze language policies and practices in schools and communities; and, to engage them in analyzing how these policies and practices are related to wider sociopolitical ideologies. After each observation and interview, these villagers were engaged in ethnographically grounded dialogue on what they observed and learned from the collaborative ethnography. We focused on specific ethnographic vignettes which were collected during observing language practices and talking with other villagers, youth, and teachers. The major questions we discussed were the impact of monolingual nationalism and privatization of education, history of indigenous people, and the

strategies for multilingual education.

Counter-narratives. Counter-narratives provide an alternative perspective and ideologies on language and language policies (Wyman et al., 2014). I had adopted a counter-narrative method to engage the villagers in critical dialogue on the impacts of dominant language ideologies in the lived social, political, cultural, and economic experiences of the indigenous people we spoke to. Our counter-narratives were focused mainly on counter-histories and the struggles of indigenous people in the ideological environment dominated by linguistic nationalism and neoliberal ideologies. The counter-narratives also included issues related to indigenous funds of knowledge, sustainable economic development, and re-imagining language education from indigenous perspectives.

Engaging Teachers

I adopted three major methods—collaborative ethnography, focus group discussion and praxis—to build teachers’ ideological awareness and engage them in creating space for multilingualism in schools. I selected two primary schools—Sewaro and Laaje (pseudonyms)—from two rural villages of eastern Nepal. Sewaro is a government-aided public school which has six teachers and about one hundred students. Out of them only two are Limbu indigenous teachers. Laaje is a community school established to teach youth the Limbu language and philosophy. The school is initiated and managed by the community itself. There are five teachers, all of them, except for one, is Limbu (see engaging teacher chapter in data analysis for details). I selected these schools due to their unique characters. Sewaro has just introduced an English as a medium of instruction policy due to, as the teacher says, “an increased pressure from the parents who are deeply influenced by newly established private schools in the village.” At the same time, this school is teaching an additional English course, on top of compulsory

English, by reducing the teaching hours assigned for Aaani Paan (Limbu language course). The community had decided to introduce Limbu ‘mother tongue’ a decade ago. Sewaro is the only school in the country which has been established for teaching the Limbu language, literature and philosophy at the community level. At the same time, this school has recently introduced both Nepali and English as compulsory subjects, following the national curriculum. Both schools represent a complex ideological tensions with regard to what counts as a multilingualism and effective language policies for minoritized children.

Collaborative ethnography. Although all the teachers from both schools were engaged in dialogue, I focus on the engagement with the two teachers—one from each school. These teachers were engaged, first, in observing and documenting language practices in local community and schools. I and the teachers visited families and participated in informal meetings to observe and talk about issues concerning language policies and practices in education and beyond. We collected ethnographic anecdotes and critical language issues that we used as resources for dialogue. We observed classes (10 classes, from each school, were video-recorded using flip video camera, iphone and ipad and 20 classes were audio-recorded using digital audio-recorder device) and critically reflected on language issues in these classes. In the process, the teachers also collected and analyzed parents’ stories about how language ideologies are affected by the recent opening of private schools in the community. In addition, we talked with other teachers and villagers about language policy issues in education. The goal of this method was to help teachers understand language practices, ideologies, and struggles of Limbu indigenous people and become aware of language ideological tensions and the impacts of dominant ideologies in the lives of indigenous people.

Focus-group discussions. The information and issues collected from collaborative

ethnography have been used as a resource for critical dialogue in focus group discussions with teachers. Our (I and the teachers) dialogue was particularly focused on classroom language practices and their impact on the educational experiences of multilingual children. We critically discussed how existing language policies and practices are supporting or hindering multilingual students' learning processes, in the study schools, by reflecting on the classroom video-recordings⁶¹ and by reading field notes⁶². We also discussed ethnographic anecdotes⁶³ from the community to analyze how language policies and practices were related to social justice issues. We discussed questions such as: How are (or how aren't) language policies and practices in school empowering children from indigenous communities? How are (or how aren't) the current language policies and practices promoting grassroots multilingualism which is characterized by fluid and translingual practices? What role can teachers play in creating multilingual schools and classrooms? In these discussions, we also talked about the possibilities of adopting alternative pedagogical practices such as translanguaging and funds of knowledge that are built in local context. In these processes, I also shared with the teachers about the relevance of and possible approaches to multilingual education by connecting their ideas with findings from previous studies from across the globe.

Praxis. In addition, the teachers were also engaged in adopting a multilingual approach in their classroom pedagogy. Rather than following a monolingual and monoglossic approach, the teachers tried using translanguaging pedagogies by supporting their students' bi-/multilingual language practices. The teachers then engaged again in critical dialogue on their own pedagogical approaches.

⁶¹ We watched 6 classroom videos from each school and discussed language issues as seen in the classroom.

⁶² I took most of the field notes which were shared with the teachers to engage them in dialogue.

⁶³Such anecdotes were based on what we have seen in the village with regard to language policy and other relevant issues.

Engaging Youth

Youth activism has been an important aspect of language policy transformation (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Wyman et al., 2014), and as such indigenous youth are key participants in this study. Similar to the teachers, I engaged indigenous youth⁶⁴ in a series of ‘emancipatory discourses’ concerning language, politics, and identity issues (Davis, 2009a). Considering youth’s activism as key to challenging ideological hegemony and promoting grassroots multilingualism, the following methods were used to engage youth in this study.

Counter-narratives. In order to raise the critical ideological awareness of Limbu indigenous youth, they were first engaged in sharing their own counter-narratives. Counter-narratives engaged the youth in understanding the complex sociolinguistic reality in their community and the nation, and to analyze how it relates to their own lives. These narratives were built around their own struggles, contested language ideologies, and visions for change. These counter-narratives were further used as a base for engaging youth in ideological analysis. Our dialogue focused on youth identities and ideologies of language.

Critical ideological awareness workshops. Indigenous youth engaged in a series of workshops at the local and national level, following their own suggestions in the beginning of the research⁶⁵. My roles in the workshop were to facilitate discussions, present findings from studies on multilingual education, and record the entire process of the workshop. Dialogical engagement was the core component of these workshops. In these workshops, youth critically analyzed the sociopolitical contexts of current language policies and practices. They brought their own sociolinguistic contexts into the discussion to make sense of how linguistic diversity is ignored in

⁶⁴ I have discussed the whole process in the analysis chapter for the youth engagement.

⁶⁵ In the initial phase of the discussions with the students affiliated with Limbu Students’ Forum, these youth focused on the need for raising awareness of Limbu indigenous people with regard to language inequalities and other sociopolitical issues.

the dominant language policies and practices. In these workshops, the youth were educated about the importance of their home languages in education as they participated in dialogue. They critically read official language policy documents such as constitution and MTB-MLE policy and language policy related newspaper articles to analyze the process of the reproduction of monolingual ideologies. As these youth became more aware of the ideological issues, they built their agency and activism for language policy transformation⁶⁶.

Praxis. Indigenous youth were also engaged in putting their knowledge into actions. For this, they collectively developed plans on how to create space for indigenous languages in education and put those plans into actions by engaging other youth, teachers and other language policy actors into awareness-raising activities⁶⁷. These youth were instrumental in creating grassroots activism and opening up a space for multilingualism in schools and beyond (see the youth engagement chapter for details).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This dissertation uses multiple methods of data analysis and interpretation. As engaged ethnography focuses on the ‘process’ (Davis, 2014), my analysis specifically focuses on the process of ideological awareness, transformation, and the subsequent activism of participants. This dissertation combines critical ethnography (e.g., Madison, 2012; Thomas, 1993), grounded theory (e.g., Charmaz, 2006), and dialogic inquiry (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 1970) to analyze data. The approach that combines these theories is what I call an ethnographically grounded dialogical approach. While critical ethnography provides insights into linking data with broader sociopolitical ideologies and inequalities, grounded theory focuses on “the studied *phenomenon* or *process*—rather than to a description of a setting” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 22, original italics).

⁶⁶ Their activism is mentioned in the data analysis chapter for the youth engagement.

⁶⁷ The activities are discussed in the data analysis chapter for the youth engagement.

Grounded theory helps me to theorize the actions and processes as I engaged indigenous youth, teachers, and parents in critical dialogue. I use grounded theory as an emerging data analysis process in which data analysis and theory building are recursive, reflexive, and simultaneous (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 2002). In other words, theory-building is an ongoing process and deeply grounded in data, which in this dissertation are dialogic in nature.

Dialogue lies at the center of data analysis and interpretation in this dissertation. Dialogue embraces ideological contradictions, participants' responses to them, engagement and critical awareness of the participants, and new consciousness that emerges from dialogic engagement. Following grounded theory, I asked myself what the dialogic data meant (in terms of theory) as the participants were engaged in dialogue. From the very beginning, I began to code and categorize dialogic data under multiple themes such as nationalism, neoliberalism, and multilingual practices. As the dialogic engagement continued, the initial codes changed and new codes emerge. I have selected 'focused codes'⁶⁸ (Charmaz, 2006) for analysis in this dissertation. These codes, as seen in upcoming chapters, are more concrete, are representative; reflect ideological complexities; and demonstrate the awareness and activism of participants in their local sociopolitical contexts. The analysis of dialogic data is linked with ethnographic information to discuss how the engagement is situated in the local sociopolitical context (Davis & Phyak, 2015). Such an ethnographically grounded dialogic approach embraces reflexivity, co-construction, and critical interactions as integral aspects of data analysis and interpretation (Sullivan, 2012). This approach is also supported by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2007) and critical narrative analysis (Langdrige, 2007) to interpret the sociopolitical meaning of

⁶⁸ Focused codes are the revised codes based on the most recurrent themes that emerge from the dialogic engagement.

what participants have said and discuss how their sociopolitical, cultural, and ideological conditions are affected by dominant language policy discourses and practices.

The dialogue from participants were coded in terms of the most frequent themes which are centered around language ideologies, ideological tensions, and the critical awareness and activism of the participants. How participants position their perspectives on the current language policies and practices remains at the center of the data analysis. I draw on linguistic anthropology, critical language policy, activist sociolinguistics, indigenous praxis/research, multilingual education, transformative education, and critical theory to interpret dialogic data. These theories support on-going ideological clarification and ideological becoming which embrace participants' 'critical subjectivity' (Reason, 1994). Critical subjectivity, as opposed to naïve subjectivity, involves critical self-reflection, the ability to negotiate the ideological tension between self and others' discourses, and liberation from 'ideological domestication' (Thomas, 1993).

Conclusion

While focusing on ideological awareness as a key component of language policy transformation, engaged ethnography, as discussed in this chapter, adopts a multimethod approach to qualitative research that focuses on collaborative, participatory, and ethnographically-grounded dialogic inquiry. In viewing policies as "political in nuanced and public ways" (Davis & Phyak, 2015, p. 147), I have discussed engaged ethnography as a research methodology which focuses on the ways in which "the dispossessed work to possess the right to research, advocate, and acquire sustainable, equitable, self-defined honorable ways of learning and living" (Davis & Phyak, 2015, p. 147). I have also discussed that reflexivity and researcher positionality are important aspects of engaged research.

I have also discussed that engaged ethnography embraces the role of researcher as a social critic and advocate and support activism for equitable policies. At the center of this process lies ethnographically grounded dialogue; such dialogue raises participants' critical awareness and focuses on how they can transform dominant language policies and practices. I have shown that there are multiple methods of engaged ethnography which argue for 'dialogic engagement' as their central component. More importantly, I have argued that analysis and interpretation of dialogic data focus on the relationship between personal lived experiences and the broader historical and socioeconomic conditions. As Milner (2007) argues, I have discussed that it is necessary to link personal experiences and ideologies with historical, social, economic, racial, and cultural realities to understand how research participants develop new consciousness and ideologies with regards to language policy and practices.

Chapter 7: Critical Villagers⁶⁹: Transforming Language Ideologies from Within

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my engagement with the Limbu indigenous villagers in one remote village, which I call *Khaam*. With about 14,000 people, this multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural village is connected with the nearby city by a rugged road. The major occupation of the villagers is subsistence farming. There are eight public and six private schools. Most young people left the village during the Maoist insurgency for ten years and most of them are now working as migrant laborers in the Middle East. In this chapter, I focus on my engaged work in the most “underprivileged”⁷⁰ area in the village; I call this specific community *Miklung*. The majority of the population in *Miklung* are Limbus. The villagers are Limbu-Nepali bilinguals, but they speak Limbu as their dominant language in daily conversations and Nepali with people from other ethnic groups. Although they do not have to speak English for any interactional purposes in the village, English words such as *SMS*, *chat*, *like*, *message*, *charge*, *battery*, *comment*, *send*, *dress*, *phone*, *cover*, *interview*, *meeting*, *salary*, *visa*, and *passport*, among others, have been part of the villagers’ language practices due to the recent arrival of cell phones and the discourses of migrant labor employment.

As one local teacher said, the villagers are “unaware” and “uninterested” in education and school-related activities. In this chapter, I particularly focus on how dominant language ideologies have shaped this population’s ideologies about language policies and practices, as well as discuss how they are engaged in the process of constructing alternative ideologies to transform existing language policies which continue to erase space for local languages in education.

⁶⁹ The notion of ‘critical villagers’ is borrowed from Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2013).

⁷⁰ These terms are used by the villagers themselves.

‘Big Fish Eat Small Fish’⁷¹? Understanding Inequalities in Multilingualism

In my preliminary observations of language practices and discussion with some villagers and local teachers in *Miklung*, I found a deep sense of an ideology of contempt (Dorian, 1998) towards the use of Limbu in schools and other public spheres. Although the villagers simultaneously use Nepali and Limbu, they discursively construct language boundaries and hierarchies when they are asked to comment on the sociolinguistic situation of their own community. For example, one villager used the phrase “big fish eat small fish” to describe how Limbu is gradually disappearing due to Nepali and English language dominance. My preliminary discussions with the villagers show that although the villagers are proud of being able to speak Limbu, they take the marginalization of Limbu as a natural condition in the existing sociopolitical and economic context. For example, one villager contends that “it’s hard to believe, but *aani paan* (our language) lacks [economic] value. So people don’t use it.” Such views are common among the villagers. In order to engage the villagers into understanding the ideological meanings of this and other views, with the help of a community leader, Mukul⁷², three *chumlungs* (village meeting)⁷³ were first organized to discuss why Limbu is not used in schools and other public spheres. In the *chumlungs*, the villagers expressed their anxiety about the growing loss of indigenous languages and cultures and pointed out the urgency of building the *posam* (awareness) and *itsaam/itchchaam* (critical consciousness/critical reflection) of the villagers to create an equitable multilingual education.

Accordingly, three community leaders—Mukul, Angla, and Saila—and I together developed a plan to engage the villages in critical dialogue on ideological issues in language

⁷¹ Translated from “saano maachaale thulo maacha khaancha” as one of the villagers said.

⁷² All names of participants in this chapter are pseudonyms.

⁷³ Each meeting was attended by 5-10 villagers.

policy. According to the plan, these three community leaders were engaged as ‘community research collaborators’ (CRC) (McCarty et al., 2014) to document (a) language practices in the community and the local school; (b) beliefs and perceptions about languages; and (c) local discourses about language policies and practices. We observed the language practices of different age groups, interviewed ten local public and private school teachers and twenty parents, and organized village *chumlung*s. We took field notes and pictures and audio-recorded conversations with the teachers and other villagers. After that, the CRCs were engaged in identifying and analyzing major issues from the community ethnography. We shared with each other what we noticed during our collaborative ethnography of language practices and ideologies in the community. One of the major issues we found was that the villagers have a deep sense of respect for the Limbu language, but due to its perceived lack of instrumental value its delegitimation in local schools is neutralized. Mukul, for example, reflected on what one villager said about the significance of Limbu:

These days, people think it’s fine not to speak *aani paan* [our language]. As [X] said, now people ask what happens when we speak *Aani Paan*⁷⁴. In *school*⁷⁵, *radio*, and government *office* [sic] everywhere people speak Parbate (Nepali). Parbate must be spoken even if people don’t speak it very well. As [X] said, our cultural values don’t work without *aani paan*. But all speak Parbate because it’s a national language.

Mukul’s reflection shows that the construction of Nepali as a national language is shaping the language ideologies of the villagers. Since Nepali is used “everywhere”, the villagers are forced to speak Nepali. Similarly, Saila makes a similar observation about the use of Limbu. He said that villagers wanted their children to learn and keep speaking Limbu; however, they do not see

⁷⁴ The italicized words are Limbu in original conversation.

⁷⁵ The bolded and italicized words are in English in original

any relevance of Limbu as “it is not used in school or the media.” Reflecting on his discussion with parents, Saila said that people think that learning Limbu is “not relevant in this modern age.” Angla added to Saila’s observation and asserted that most people, particularly young people, think that the use of Limbu in schools and other places is related to the symbol of shame and inferiority. As the CRCs continued sharing what they found in their interactions with the villagers, one striking point that Saila pointed out was the issue of self-marginalization (Piller, 2016) and self-censorship (Bourdieu, 1991). Saila shared the following anecdote:

Anecdote #1: Feeling Shy

Last week, I was going up to **bajār**. Some boys and girls were returning home from **school**. Some were playing **football** on the **road**. I stopped for a while and watched their game. After a while some boys also came and stood by me. I thought they were children of X, Y, Z⁷⁶. They felt shy when I asked *what their names were*. They didn’t speak when I asked whether they knew *Yakthung Paan*⁷⁷. They walked away laughing when I asked *why they didn’t speak (Yakthung Paan)*. The next day, I went to Y’s house and found that his children were speaking Limbu. They don’t like to speak Limbu although they know it. They speak both Parbate and *Yaakthung Paan* equally.

As the villagers reflect on their own observations of language practices in the village, they learn the ideological aspects of local bi/multilingualism. They understand that despite both Limbu and Nepali being used at home and in the community, Limbu youth feel shy to speak Limbu. As Saila hinted above, the Limbu youth “don’t like to speak Limbu although they know it.” Saila further said that “our children feel shy to speak Limbu in public places” because “*aani paan* is still undesirable in education.” I asked Mukul, Saila, and Angla why they thought that indigenous youth self-marginalize with regard to the use of Limbu in public spaces. These CRCs

⁷⁶ The real villagers’ names mentioned by the participants are replaced with X, Y and Z to maintain their anonymity.

⁷⁷ *Yakthung Paan* is a Limbu word for ‘Limbu language’.

critically reflected on their previous interactions with the villagers and built on their own experiences, then argued that ‘**bhāshik asamaantaa**’ (linguistic inequality) is the major reason for the self-marginalization of Limbu. These villagers repeatedly said that the Limbu language is considered a ‘**sāno bhāṣā**’ (small language) compared to Parbate and English, and so Limbu youth do not like to speak Limbu.

Treating ‘linguistic inequalities’ as an emergent theme⁷⁸ (Freire, 1970), the CRCs were further engaged in critical dialogue on understanding how linguistic inequalities are constructed, reproduced, and transformed. My role in the dialogue was to inform, clarify, and help them connect local ideological tensions with national and global discourses and practices. In addition, I posed questions and encouraged participants to raise more questions to make our dialogues more productive and critical. As seen in the following excerpt, I began the conversation by bringing up the issue of the negative iconization of Limbu as a ‘**sāno bhāṣā**’ (small language) and as a code to generate further discussion on the issue of linguistic inequalities.

Dialogue #1: It’s all about mentality

Prem: All speak Limbu and Nepali at home and in the community. But why is Limbu called a ‘**sāno bhāṣā**’? What makes it so?

Angla: It’s all about mentality. Specifically, when schools were opened in the village, children didn’t get [access to a school] environment that uses Limbu. We must send children to school, but Limbu is not used in school.

Prem: Right. This problem applies to other languages as well. If there is a multilingual policy, children could use Limbu as well, right?]

Saila: Yes. But here is a problem. We cannot stop sending our children to school, but our

⁷⁸ For Freire, a ‘theme’, which emerges from existential reality, includes a sociopolitical topic that generates genuine dialogue among the participants.

own language and culture is disappearing while we are sending our children to school. Likewise, only Nepali is used in the local village office; [for example] letters are written in Nepali. All of these affect the use of Limbu.

Mukul: The issue of local languages is ignored in the current situation. What happens if no space is given to use local languages? The state should think about this. But it has not been so. Local languages aren't given importance due to linguistic inequalities.

As we continued to engage in dialogue, the CRCs began to see language issues from an ideological perspective. For these villagers, linguistic inequalities, created by the existing educational and other sociopolitical structures, have shaped the '**soc**' (mentality) of the villagers to iconically represent Limbu as a '**sāno bhāsā**' (small language). For these villagers, schools and local government offices (such as the local village office) serve as an 'ideological state apparatus' (Althusser, 1971) which supports Nepali language dominance in the local sociolinguistic context. While engaging in dialogue, these villagers also build on their own experiences being affected by the non-recognition of Limbu in schools. For example, as Saila argues above, the villagers are not happy about the education their children are receiving. Although they have to send their children to local schools, they are critical about the way the existing educational policies and practices derecognize linguistic diversity and exacerbate the loss of local language and culture. As they engage in dialogue, they become more aware of the ideological tensions in the current educational and socioeconomic policies that promote increased gaps between schools and the community language use.

The dialogue also provides the CRCs with opportunities to understand the current linguistic situation as part of a broader 'ideological environment' (Bakhtin, 1984). Mukul reflects on the impact of '**bhāshik asamāntā**' (linguistic inequality) on shaping the mentality of the villagers and argues that the existing structure does not allow a wider space for local languages.

These villagers further argue that the state should rethink its existing policy and give an equal space for local languages in education. More strikingly, the CRCs became aware of how existing institutional practices in education and other state mechanisms have created an ideological environment which supports “inequalities of multilingualism” (Tupas, 2015, p. 113), a structural and ideological process in which languages are given unequal resources and power. With this understanding, these villagers argue that it is important to embrace all languages as equal, particularly in education, to transform the existing ideology of contempt towards local minoritized languages. This leads us to discuss how local language issues are linked with national language policies and practices.

‘We Don’t Know What’s in the Policy’: Understanding Disengagement and Awakening a Sense of Injustice

One of the major issues in language policy is the lack of parental engagement in the policy-making processes (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming). Studies have pointed out that parental engagement is key to creating spaces for equitable multilingualism in education (García & Kleifgen, 2010; Hough et al., 2009). However, our collaborative ethnography revealed that the villagers, including the CRCs, did not know much about the national language policies and educational policies, and about how multilingualism can be a resource for better educational experiences of minoritized children. With an aim to discuss the relevance of multilingual education and literacy, I and CRCs organized three *chumlung*s and a series of following dialogues with the villagers. In these *chumlung*s, I shared with the villagers that mother-tongue-based multilingual education policy (MTB-MLE) allows schools to use mother tongues as a medium of instruction up to Grade 3, and then teach them as a (optional) subject throughout school level education (Ministry of Education, 2010; Yonjan-Tamang, 2012). I also mentioned

that the constitution ensures the right to preserve and promote local languages (Government of Nepal, 2007). After that we discussed how the denial of students' home languages affect cognitive, social, and psychological aspects of multilingual students' learning experiences.

The *chumlung*s adopted a dialogic inquiry mode, rather than a top-down banking model, and they began with villagers sharing their individual experiences. Most villagers mentioned that their children are not only losing their knowledge of Limbu, but also developing a “negative attitude” towards their own bilingual language skills; for example, one villager even mentioned that his children “do not want him to speak Limbu at home”. Another villager mentioned that her children want her to speak ‘**shudda Nepali**’ (pure Nepali); she said that she speaks Nepali in a ‘**Limbu pārā**’ (Limbu tone/style) and mixes a lot of Limbu while speaking Nepali. The villagers further asserted that as the schools discourage the use of non-standard Nepali, children in turn do not like their parents' non-standard Nepali. In responding to my question of whether or not bilingual and non-standard language practices should be allowed in school, most parents had an opinion that their children should learn ‘standard Nepali’, otherwise they could not compete with their Nepali-speaking friends. The villagers, however, were ignorant of the ideological meanings and negative impacts of the legitimation of monolingual and standard language practices in education. Building on critical language education scholars (e.g., Cummins, 2006; Lippi-Green, 2000; Milroy, 2001), I shared with the villagers about how standard language ideology reproduces social inequalities and marginalizes the multilingual identities of minoritized language speakers. I mentioned that standard language ideologies give more privilege to Nepali monolingual speakers in learning processes. Building on Cummins (2006) and Skutnabb-Kangas et al. (2006), I also shared with the villagers that students' bi/multilingual practices can be a rich

resource for helping language minoritized students have better educational experiences and develop a sense of belonging in the learning process.

While participating in dialogues, the villagers, including the CRCs, continued to have a critical understanding of the tensions between dominant language policies and on-the-ground language practices. For example, linking what I shared above about the marginalization of minoritized language speakers due to monolingual and standard language policies with his own story, one villager said that his children do not like to interact in school because they think that their Nepali is “not as good as the children from the Bahun-Chetri [high caste] family” who speak Nepali as their first language. However, he further revealed that “we do not talk about such issues [language issues]” because he thinks that they are not important; instead, he explains: “we just think about whether or not our children are passing or failing the exams.” Angla, one of the CRCs, contributed the discussion by saying that “I didn’t know that language issues were that serious. Here we all have a mentality that learning Nepali and English is enough in school.” Building on his own experiences, however, Angla argues that his children can better express their *‘ningwaa’* (thoughts) in Limbu. He also shared his opinion that “if children actually see the importance of Limbu in schools, they use it outside of school as well”; for him, it helps to link schools and community language practices. As the villagers become aware of the importance of students’ home languages, they began to question why the government and schools do not encourage students to use their home languages; one villager questioned why a school that is located in a multilingual community does not embrace local languages.

The villagers’ critical awareness about language policy continued to evolve as they began to see complex ideological tensions between authoritative and alternative discourses (Bakhtin, 1981). Authoritative discourses reproduce monolingual ideologies while alternative discourses,

which we discussed with the villagers, represent alternative ideologies. While participating in the dialogue, the villagers critically analyzed this tension and interrogated their own ideologies. Indeed, the villagers, including the CRCs, continued to “awaken a sense of injustice” (Deutsch, 1974, as cited in Stoudt et al. 2011, p. 116) within themselves regarding the existing language policies and practices. While participating in the dialogue, the villagers contended that they felt excluded and discriminated against, as they are not informed about the MTB-MLE policies by the local school. In a more critical manner, one villager said “we don’t know what’s in the policy. We’re not informed about the *policy* because they may think that if we know about it we’ll ask for our [own] rights.” Most strikingly, the villagers were even more critical about the liberal language-rights-based discourses. Mukul, for example, made a comment that

Rights are not enough.... Everyone should be made aware...*what to do with the policy?*
It should be experienced in *practice*. Here is the status quo. *Where is the use of Limbu?*
The state should invest in raising people’s awareness about the importance of local languages. The state seems to grant language rights, but it hasn’t implemented local languages in schools. This isn’t good.

We see that the villagers are critical about the liberal language-rights-based discourses that have dominated Nepal’s current language policy discourses. As Mukul has said, language rights are not adequate to transform the status quo. Like Mukul, the villagers suggested that the state should support the empowerment and awareness of teachers and parents about the importance of multilingual education. As they engaged in dialogue, they questioned the intention of the government with regard to promoting local languages in education and argued that it is not possible to ensure the use of local languages in schools without changing the existing ‘**ekal-bhāshik soc**’ (monolingual mentality) from the bottom-up. Adding on what Mukul said, Angla, another CRC, contended that the government does not provide teachers and financial resources

for mother-tongue education, but instead asks the communities themselves to hire teachers. He claims that the government has to strictly implement multilingual policies in schools and argued that policy-makers should make all parents understand the importance of multilingualism in education.

As the villagers engage in dialogue, they continue to become more critical about the existing language policies and practices in education. For example, in sharing his thoughts in one of the *chumlung*s, Saila (another CRC), contended that “it’s an absolute injustice not to allow students’ home languages despite the fact that their use supports the learning process.” Building on the discussion of multilingual education in the previous *chumlung*s, Saila claimed that “we should also rethink our own mentality. I’m glad to know that *our languages* have value in education.” As they became aware of the importance of local languages in education, the villagers began to rethink their own assumptions about language education. During participation in one *chumlung*, one villager questioned “*why schools don’t tell us* about the importance of multilingual education” and argued that the state ‘**jānī jānī**’ (deliberately) does not like to make villagers aware of the right to provide multilingual education to their children. Commenting on what the villager said, Saila argued that “if Limbu is also used in education, *our children learn better*. They also become more educated. So I now feel that the state does not like to see indigenous people become more educated.” Together, the villagers not only became aware of how the use of local languages is important in school, but also became critical about how the denial of local languages is related to the historical and contemporary marginalization of local indigenous languages in education and other public spheres.

The marginalization of local languages is not always explicit; it can also be hidden and discursive (Shohamy, 2006). While participating in another *chumlung* on how local indigenous

people have been marginalized, the villagers (including three CRCs), revealed that English has been the most ‘**rucāiyeko bhāṣā**’ (preferred language) in local schools, even above Nepali. At the surface level, most villagers have embraced the importance of English as the language of employment, modernity, and social prestige. Therefore, English is unquestionably accepted as a neutral language of instruction in local schools. Angla describes the dominance of English as follows:

*Currently, there is a demand for English due to **boarding** schools. Those who have some money send their children to **boarding** schools. The mentality that English is learned better in **boarding** schools than in public schools is dominant now. We saw in the next house [referring to what we saw during collaborative ethnography] ...they used to send their children to public school until last year. But from this year on they are sending them to a private school. Other children also want to go to private schools *as they see their friends going there*. This situation has made people think that **boarding** [schools] are better than public schools due to English. Most people think that public schools aren’t good because they don’t teach in English. You see...there is a **boarding fashion**.*

As Angla mentioned above, the arrival of private schools in the village has constructed a hegemonic discourse in which English is unquestionably taken as ‘capital’, both cultural and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1991). Angla builds on an example from our collaborative ethnography to describe how the neoliberalization of education—in particular, private education—has presented English as a neutral and the most desirable language of instruction. Angla’s reflective comments on the local existential reality of private schools show that privatization in education has discursively constructed English as the language of the ‘*kegappaa*’ (haves) who can afford to send their children to boarding schools. As private schools use English-as-the-medium-of-instruction policy, the villagers believe that this new ‘**calan**’ (practice/phenomenon) is the indexicality of ‘**rāmro**’ (better) education. Such an iconization of English—which has emerged

primarily from the state's neoliberal ideology—has eventually constructed public schools as 'narāmro schools' (bad schools). This construction has influenced the villagers' decision to send their children to private schools.

Angla's ethnographic description provided a significant space for dialogic engagement with the other villagers. Building on his ethnographic account, other villagers critically analyzed how local languages are marginalized due to hegemonic English language ideologies. As a facilitator, I resituated Angla's example to ask some questions about the current English language policies and practices in education. Most importantly, I also shared with them how the use of English as a sole medium of instruction in a multilingual context—where children do not have to use English in their social interactions—can be detrimental to learning both the academic content and the language itself (e.g., Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2006; Cummins & Early, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2013). As a member in the *chumlung*, I also contributed to the dialogue by sharing political economic aspects of English language spread in relation to local indigenous languages (e.g., McCarty, 2003; Phillipson, 2008; Ramanathan, 2005; Ricento, 2012). In order to avoid my authority as an expert, I situated my views in the local ethnographic context. For example, referring to Angla's ethnographic account, I shared with the villagers that:

Yes, it is true that parents are sending their children to private schools. They want their children to be taught in English. But I think we should also ask whether or not students learn effectively in English-only *policy*. I have seen that [referring to a classroom observation I made in a local school] students in the early grades just remain silent. *They don't speak at all* in class. They have to copy what the teachers tell them. Students can learn better by using their home languages, right? *If they don't learn* what they are expected to learn then that's not good, right? Here we have children from different language backgrounds. We can use them [these languages] as resource to teach children effectively. If students aren't allowed to use the languages they know best in the learning process, then students don't feel confident.

With this background, I asked what the villagers thought about the increasing dominance of the English language ideology. Mukul reflects on the dominant language ideology among the villagers as follows:

We only think that it is better to teach students in English. *All* have the same mentality. We didn't know that students' home languages are important for better learning. Here, people have a mentality that it isn't necessary to use *aani paan* in school. In our own school [referring to the local school], there is English-medium teaching beginning from last year. *Now this discussion* makes me rethink the use of *policy*.

In the dialogue, the villagers acknowledged the instrumental value of English, but they became critical about the ideology of contempt it has constructed against local languages. Building on what Mukul said, another villager commented that since *kerek* (all) perceive English as a 'better language' in terms of its utilitarian value, he used to think that English is 'everything' for his children. As he engaged in dialogue, he became aware of how the increasing push towards English has created a negative ideology towards local languages (I will discuss this issue later in this chapter).

Through engaging in dialogue with the villagers and the CRCs, they not only came to rethink their own existing ideology of English, but also understood the intersectionality between English language ideology and their own linguistic marginalization. For example, in referring to what I shared with them above, Mukul mentioned that the current EMI policy is '**dohoro mār**' (double marginalization) for the indigenous people: "We had a Nepali-only policy in the past. *Now we're* running after an English-only policy." He regrets not being able to understand the underlying ideologies of the existing policy and claims that a '**soc pariwartan**' (transformation of mentality) among the policy makers in the existing system is the only way to promote an equitable multilingual policy.

Learning from *tangsing*: Counter-Narratives and Transforming Ideologies

Counter-narratives tell how people from racially and ethnically marginalized and minoritized communities have experienced history, culture, language, and politics that affect their lives and communities (Delgado, 1989). As a “mechanism for resisting standard narratives” (Settlage, 2011, p. 812), engaging in counter-narratives provides critical insights into understanding how new alternative narratives are constructed that counter the ‘master narratives’. As seen in the above discussion, the ‘master narratives’ (also called majoritarian stories [Solórzano & Yosso, 2002]) of language policy not only provide ‘a very narrow depiction’ of multilingualism and language learning, but also “essentialize...and wipe...out the complexities and richness of a group’s [multilingual people’s] cultural life” (Montecinos, 1995, p. 293). As was pointed out by the villagers, I and the CRCs further developed a plan for raising awareness of the villagers about language ideological issues. Our plan was based on the principle of *tangsing*, coming together, in which all the villagers collaboratively set agendas, share each other’s ideas and experiences, and build consensus for transforming policies. While everyone has an equal footing in the *tangsing*, *tumyaahaangs* or *tumyaangs* (community elders) play a central role in sharing their knowledge about history, culture, and place.

Counter-Narrative #1: Land, Language, and History

In the past, everyone used to speak Yakthung Paan. Even non-Limbu used to speak it. See, X speaks very good Limbu, right? There were no ‘big’ and ‘small’ languages. This kind of distinction emerged recently. Our language became a small language after schools were opened. Parbate (Nepali) became a big language. Parbate was made a national language. In the past, we had our own land. The Kipat⁷⁹ was there. Later, the Kipat was taken away. There were no government offices. Land was not bought or sold. After the Kipat is lost, there was a land survey. Land must be registered.

⁷⁹ *Kipat* is the communal land of the Limbu people.

We had to go to the **māl** office (land registration office). *It was hard to understand Parbate in the office. Parbate was the official language. We used to speak Parbate with a great difficulty.* People used to laugh at our non-standard Nepali. I never spoke pure Nepali. I speak both Nepali and Limbu equally. We used to speak Limbu in market as well. There were not that many Parbate speakers here.

When the Kipat was taken away, *aani paan* (our language) became weaker. The places and villages had Limbu names in the past. Those names were given Nepali names by bureaucrats as the land must be registered. For example, *Pheden* became Phidim. The Kipat was our ancestral land. It was our identity and right to use the land. Our *cho:tlung* (sense of pride) fell down after the Kipat was taken away. Limbu people protested against the state's policy. *They met the then King and he told them that the Limbu people have the right to use their own land.* But it did not happen in practice.

After schools were established, people started thinking about employment after getting education. But the *aani paan* was prohibited in school and job market. People were punished for speaking Limbu. *Parbate-only became the Nepali language.* Culture and other values are disappearing as indigenous languages are not legitimized.

I could not study more than primary education due to family reason. But I studied Mundhum from my father-in-law and other elders. I learned basic literacy in the Sirijonga script. In 1977, *I and my friends opened a night school to teach the Limbu language and Mundhum to youth.* We collected Mundhum from the elders. But the state sent police to arrest us. *We had to run away from the village.* Some friends were arrested and imprisoned. We wanted to teach Limbu at night as its use in school was banned. But the state assumed that we were anti-nationalists.

This counter-narrative was told to us (the CRCs and me) by Kaman, a community elder in Kham, during our collaborative ethnography. This counter-narrative provides space for engaging the villagers, particularly the CRCs, in dialogue on linguistic oppression. After documenting Kaman's counter-narrative, we (the CRCs and I) critically looked at its sociopolitical and historical aspects. Our discussion was focused on how the marginalization of the Limbu language is not just a language issue but rather is an historical, political, and cultural issue.

Building on what Kaman said about the history, Saila first raised the question of why schools do not teach this powerful history of the Limbu people and argued that young people should know about this kind of “untold history”. Indeed, as Saila said, Kaman’s counter-narrative reveals a complex intersection between language, history, and land. The *Kipat* is the communal land of the Limbu people. After failing to win a three-year battle against the Limbu kings, King Prithvi Narayan Shah, known as the ‘father’ of modern Nepal, had to sign a Limbuwan-Gorkha treaty in 1774. Accordingly, Limbuwan would become part of the Kingdom of Nepal, but the Limbu people still had the right to use their customary land, *Kipat* (Regmi, 1984). As the symbol of “local autonomy” (Forbes, 1996, p. 4), this ‘inalienable land’ represents the Limbu people’s cultural continuity, historical linkage, and collective identity (Caplan, 2000). The Limbuwan-Gorkha treaty paved the way for the arrival of ‘new settlers’, most dominantly Hindu Indo-Nepali caste people, who spoke an Indo-Aryan language, Nepali, in Limbuwan. These caste groups later gained more cultural, educational, and linguistic privilege with the state’s recognition of Hindu and Nepali as the national religion and language, respectively. Most importantly, the Limbu people gradually lost their control over the *Kipat* due to a number of modern capitalist land reform acts. Eventually, in 1968, with a new land reform legislation, the state legally denied the Limbu people’s rights to use their ancestral land and introduced modern mechanisms such as ‘cadastral surveys’, ‘land tax assessments’, and ‘private land registrations’ to abolish the *Kipat* (Caplan, 2000).

Engaging in dialogue on counter-narrative helps the CRCs become aware of how schools as a state ideological apparatus contribute to marginalize indigenous languages. Kaman’s story reveals that linguistic hierarchies in which Limbu is iconized as a ‘*chuksaa bhāṣā*’ (small language) has been created after schools were opened in the village. Kaman’s counter-narrative

also provides the villagers with alternative perspectives about the construction of the unequal indexicality of languages and marginalization of Limbu. Reiterating Kaman's narrative, Angla said "many people still cannot speak standard Nepali. As Nepali-only is the official language, other languages are devalued." Most importantly, the villagers go beyond the linguacentricism of language policy (Spolsky, 2004) and focus on the centrality of 'history, culture, and place' (Luke, 2011). Mukul, for example, recounted that it is important to teach such histories to our children so that they understand the importance of the land and ancestry, which he thinks is necessary for reimagining equitable education policies. Mukul further said "*I'd never thought that land, language, and **culture** are so deeply connected.* But now Kaman's story helped me understand how replacing the name of places in Limbu with Nepali is linked with the erasure of the historical and collective identity of the Limbu in Nepal."

As the dialogue progressed, the villagers critically unraveled the condition of their own subordination as a 'colonial subject' (Bhabha, 1983), whose land, language, and culture have been taken away. With this awareness, they focused on the importance of the *tangsing* for building collective activism towards regaining their fallen *cho:tlung*: as Angla stated, "We should come together and *explore* our histories. Many things are not taught to our children." While engaging in dialogue on Kaman's counter-narrative, the CRCs became social critics and critically discussed how the dominant discourses of language policy and practices are embedded in a colonial mentality, and result in the subordination of indigenous languages. While analyzing the sociopolitical meanings of Kaman's counter-narrative, they became more aware of how Limbus are alienated in their own land and came to understand how modernity has posed challenges for indigenous people's collective principles. Saila, for example, said: "the land reform policies weakened our relationship with the land. *We've lost* our history and language."

As they developed critical consciousness about the oppressive history, the CRCs, as Mukul claims, contended that schools should not just focus on teaching and learning languages, but rather they should also pay attention to teaching the alternative histories of indigenous people. For him, this will help students know about ‘multiple histories’.

Counter-Narrative #2: Citizenship, Nationalism, and Language Policy

I speak both Limbu and Nepali. I understand some English as well. I always think that local languages should be used in education. I have talked to the local teachers in schools as well. *I have also talked to some parents. But people call me* an ethnocentric and narrow-minded person. They talk about nationalism. Talking about the use of Limbu is perceived to be anti-nationalist. People believe that one becomes Nepali only if they speak Nepali. *But I think all languages are Nepali languages.* Nepali is actually called the Khas-Parbate language. Our language policy should be able to change such a mentality. All languages are equal. But currently people call the Khas-Parbate language an official language and other languages mother tongues. Limbu is called an ethnic language. In reality, Khas-Parbate is also the mother tongue of the Bahun-Chetris. In that sense, Nepali is also an ethnic language. Nepal is a multiethnic and multilingual country. So it is unjust to think that one cannot be Nepali without speaking Nepali. This kind of mentality does not reflect our multilingual identity. Can't people who are not able to speak Nepali be Nepali citizens? Our language policies should talk about multilingual nationalism. Such policies increase everyone's participation in education.

The above counter-narrative of Madan, one of the district level indigenous leaders, was collected as part of a collaborative ethnography with the CRCs. This counter-narrative denaturalizes the dominant ideology of nationalism as an ‘imagined community’ of homogenous language speakers (Anderson, 1991). We did not just listen to Madan's story but used it to engage the villagers in further dialogue with regard to issues of language policy and nationalism. In another *chumlung*, we discussed whether or not the multilingual and multicultural identities of

indigenous people are addressed by the current language policies and practices. Building on Madan's story, I first reiterated two major issues: (a) how the indigenous people's voices are labelled as 'ethnocentric' and 'anti-nationalist'; and, (b) how language policies can address multilingual nationalism and citizenship? Saila begins with what he learned from Madan's story. He reiterated that Madan's story presents the current situation of the indigenous peoples and links it with his (Saila's) own experience: he shared that "I also feel that if I talk about 'mother tongues', people don't take it very well." Saila strongly claims that since Nepal is a "multilingual and multiethnic country", Nepali nationalism should be redefined from a multilingual perspective.

The villagers linked Madan's story with the ongoing political discourses in Nepal. Another villager, for example, stated that "*these days* if we talk about mother tongues we are described as communal. *If we talk about* ethnic identity, people think we are asking for an ethnic state." This view shows the villager's awareness about how language policy issues are affected by the current political tensions at the national level. In the post-2006 era, the voices of the historically marginalized and underprivileged groups have become a major debate in national political discourses. Ethnic minoritized groups throughout the country have formed their own organizations and are organizing various activist activities to ensure their linguistic, cultural, and political rights (Lawoti & Hangen, 2013). Most strikingly, these groups are demanding recognition of their historical identity through the renaming of new provinces in the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. However, there is strong backlash from the dominant caste-group against the minoritized groups' voices for secularism and identity-based names (see Chapter 4). These backlash movements are not only creating 'ethnic tensions', but also, and most

importantly, constructing and reproducing hegemonic discourses which narrowly define the voices of the minoritized as ‘racist’, ‘ethnocentric’, and ‘a threat to national unity’.

As Bakhtin (1981) argues, the new consciousness emerges from the dialogue that holds the tension between the dominant discourses and internally persuasive discourses. While engaging in dialogue on Madan’s story on the connection between language policy and nationalism, the villagers critically analyze the dominant discourse of nationalism in relation to language policy. As Madan argues, Angla, for example, maintained that the monolingual ideology of nationalism erases their ‘multilingual identity’ and claimed that all languages are ‘Nepali languages’. However, he sees the ethnic minoritized people’s position as “**pinjaḍāmā rākheko sūgā**” (a parrot kept in a cage); they are trapped in the oppressive structure created by the ideological hegemony of linguistic nationalism. He contended that:

Indigenous people are like a parrot in a cage. What’s the use of the parrot’s wings? It cannot fly. *It doesn’t know what’s going on outside the cage. It’s beautiful, but repeats the same ‘gopī Krishna kāu*⁸⁰. *We never learned new ideas.* All languages are not equally respected. At this point, we cannot be blamed for not using indigenous languages. It’s all due to the one-language policy. Our language carries our history and cultural identity. But our histories have been erased. Our children are finding it hard to learn Mundhum. They don’t have an opportunity to use the *aani paan* (our language).

While engaging in dialogue, the villagers became aware of the condition of their own marginalization and showed their understanding about the ideological tensions created by the hegemonic ideology of linguistic nationalism. In participating in the dialogue, Mukul agrees with what Angla and Madan said and maintained that “we must remove the distinction between

⁸⁰ In Nepal, this expression is known as what a parrot repeatedly produces.

‘mother tongue’ and ‘official language’.” He comments that this distinction has a deep impact within society.

The dialogic engagement on counter-narratives challenged the monolingual ideology of nationalism and empowered the villagers to “evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries—both actual and conceptual—[and to] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which ‘imagined communities’ are given essentialist identities” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 300). These villagers’ evolving critical consciousness in dialogue calls into question the ideological construction of Nepali as the sole symbol Nepali identity. While resisting the ‘totalizing boundaries’ created by the ideological distinction between ‘national/official language’ and ‘mother tongue’, ethnographically grounded dialogue empowers the villagers to reimagine nationalism from a multilingual perspective. They not only disturb the authoritative discourses, but also engages villages in constructing new ideological awareness about how the voices for promoting multilingualism are often labelled as an ethnocentric or racist agenda.

Engaging with Two Stories: Social Class and Neoliberal Language Ideology

As mentioned above, our collaborative ethnography with the villagers in Kham shows that there is a growing impact of private schools on the villagers’ beliefs about language. We found that English is often associated with ‘**sāmājīk pratishṭhā**’ (social prestige), ‘**guṇastariya shikṣā**’ (quality education) and ‘**ādhunikatā**’ (modernity). Although the villagers do not have to use English in their social interactions, they consider learning English as a means to enter into the ‘imagined community’ of the global and national ‘job market’ after receiving an imagined quality education in English. The villagers imagine that learning through English from the early grades helps children—irrespective of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds—become ‘competent’, ‘successful’, and ‘smart’ in the job market.

Based on our informal discussions, we found that most villagers, teachers, and youth are not aware of the ideologies embedded in the EMI policy from the early grades. As Som, one parent in the community, states below, the villagers' ideologies are largely shaped by what '**aru mānche**' (other people)—who are also called '*kegappaa*' (rich people) and '*saaplaa kinipaahaa*' (educated people)—say about the importance of English in the village. As the current dominant discourses on education have been iconically represented by private schools as 'better' and that they are 'quality education providers' due to their emphasis on the EMI policy, the villagers who can afford tuition and other fees prefer to send their children to private schools (Phyak, 2013, 2016). Although the socioeconomic status of the entire community is dependent upon subsistence farming, the villagers—particularly young people (both men and women)—are dropping out of school/college and leaving the village to work as migrant laborers in the Middle East and other countries including India. Despite the fact that the villagers are exploited in the neoliberal market (see Chapter 5), they imagine that going to '**bidesh**' (a foreign country) elevates them from poverty to in turn support 'better education' for their children; however, this imagined 'better education' is an 'English medium' education, mostly in private schools. As the number of **bidesh**-goers increases, the number of students in local public schools continues to decrease. During our collaborative ethnography with the CRCs, we had a number of formal and informal discussions with the villagers and noticed the huge impact of 'bidesh' discourse in the community in that most bidesh-goers' families migrate to the cities. While the desire for sending their children to English-medium private schools is one major reason behind such migration, the villagers also want to live a '**sukhī jīban**' (a better life), which one villager calls an '**ādhunik jīban shailī**' (a modern lifestyle).

As the villagers begin to send their children to private schools, the local public schools, like others throughout the country, fall short in terms of student numbers. Therefore, as the local teacher said, public schools ‘must imitate’ private schools’ policies. While English-medium policy is accepted as a natural condition of the current socioeconomic situation, we found out that there is a lack of critical dialogue about this policy from a locally situated perspective. Therefore, we planned to engage the villagers in dialogue on the EMI policy. We first collected ‘ethnographic vignettes’ (McCarty, 2014) and used them as a ‘code’ (Freire, 1970) for further dialogue, primarily with the villagers. I will now discuss two representative vignettes.

Vignette #1: Migrant Laborer and English Language Ideology

Ranbir, 28, has just returned from Malaysia after working for three years in two different multinational companies. He borrowed some 200,000 rupees as a loan to get a passport and pay the processing fees to ‘a manpower’ (recruiting agency) in Kathmandu. The agency had promised that he would be working as a security guard in a big company with an attractive pay and other facilities. But he had to work in an electronic factory for much less pay than was mentioned in his contract, and also in dangerous working conditions. He had to work 15-18 hours every day. After several months he moved to another factory which paid a bit more than the previous one. But the working environment was still dangerous. He did not get any days off and had to work for more than 15 hours a day. He said there is much more ‘**dukha**’ (pain) than what he had imagined before we went to ‘**bidesh**’ (a foreign country).

Like most youth in the village, Ranbir did not pass the School Leaving Certificate (the national examination). His entire family of seven had relied on subsistence farming on a small plot of land in order to make a living and provide for themselves; however, it was not sufficient for them. So he decided to go to ‘bidesh’ to earn money and support his family. He wanted to provide a good education to his children. Although there is a public school near his house, Ranbir is now sending his son, 6, to a newly opened private school in the village. He says he does not have enough money, but can afford tuition and other fees from his hard-earned money in Malaysia. He maintains that he doesn’t want

his son to be like him. “I failed in English because I studied in a public school,” he said, “I learned English from Grade 4. I didn’t speak even a single sentence in English until I was in Grade 8.” He says he does not know much about what quality education means, but believes that private schools are ‘better’ than public schools “because they teach in English.” He wants to see his son with better English language proficiency than he has.

Ranbir has seen that those who could speak better English are offered better jobs and higher pay in the factories he worked with in Malaysia. He describes English as a ‘**sansārko bhāṣā**’ (world language) and believes that even if he cannot afford to send his son to college, his son’s English proficiency will help him to find a better job in ‘**bidesh**’. Showing his son, Ranbir says, “He (his son) already started using some English. He can count numbers in English. He can say his age and name in English.”

Ranbir thinks that the use of English is linked with one’s ‘**pratishṭhā**’ (prestige). As the **kegappaa** (haves) send their children to private schools, he believes that most villagers would like to do the same. He says, “I don’t know about how teachers teach and what students learn in school, but at least they learn English and are taken care of.” He thinks that Limbu is important for Limbu culture and people, but in this ‘modern age’, learning Limbu has become ‘**asāndharbhiḱ**’ (irrelevant). Today’s children have to ‘compete with others’ and be ‘**bikne hunu**’ (sellable) in **bajār** (market).

Vignette #2: Two Types of School, Two Language Policies

Som’s bilingual family lives in a wooden house. He and his wife cannot read or write in any language, but they speak both Limbu and Nepali. They have three kids, two daughters and a son. All of them go to a local public primary school. One evening, I and my collaborators visited Som’s house to informally talk about his family, education, and other related issues. When we reached his house, he was weaving a basket from bamboo strips. His kids were playing in the corn field. While we were talking, Som was reminding his children that they had to collect some fodder for their cows and goats. Som’s wife made some tea for us. After a while, three other community members also joined us. Som told us that his family migrated from a neighboring district to look after the house and the field of another person whose entire family migrated to Kathmandu,

and with some members also going abroad. He comfortably identified himself as a ‘**sukumbāsī**’ (a landless person). Som’s family does not have any source of income other than farming. When asked what he thinks about private schools in the village, he said that they are only for the ‘*kegappaas*’ (haves). “I cannot send my kids to boarding schools. They are expensive,” he said. He further said that “people say that they [private schools] are better than ‘sarkari’ (government) schools.” He expressed his ‘unawareness’ about how private schools were good. But he repeatedly mentioned in our almost two-hour discussion that private schools teach in English. He also said only ‘**jānne-bujhne**’ (aware) parents send their kids to private schools. He then gave a couple of examples of the **jānne-bujhne** people who were sending their kids to private schools.

Describing the impact of private schools, he mentioned that his own kids do not like to go to public schools. “As their friends go to boarding schools, wearing a tie and nice uniform”, he said that his kids keep asking him to send them to a boarding school. He further said that his kids also feel inferior in front of their friends. “But the *kehoppaas* (‘have-nots’), like me, cannot pay expensive fees. Their books are expensive.” He cannot answer whether English medium of instruction policy is good or bad, but he kept saying that English is a *yambaa* (big) and **kāmlāgne** (with a utilitarian value) language. “I don’t know what’s good...what’s not good,” he said, “but many parents have started sending their kids to private schools.” He further said “there is a strong belief that private schools are better than public schools because they teach in English.” He said that *Yakthung paan* (Limbu) is used only at home, and people think that speaking *aani paan* (our language) is something like...feeling shy....Som thinks that *aani paan* is important for his kids’ socialization in the community, but it is not given emphasis in school. “If schools teach all languages...children don’t feel ashamed of speaking *aani paan*. But what can we do? Nepali and English are dominant in schools.” For him, due to the two types of schools, *kegappaas* and *kehoppaas* have a different education.

Both of these vignettes provide a rich dialogic space to engage the villagers in analyzing how language issues are inextricably linked with social prestige and social class (Block, 2014). As seen in these vignettes, most villagers see their own subject position as ‘poor’ and as a ‘non-

knower' of ideological issues related to English language dominance in education and other spheres. They see English as an uncontested language which is necessary for their children's imagined bright future. These ideologies are deeply influenced by what the villagers, like Som and Ranbir, have seen and experienced in dominant public spheres, such as the labor market and private schools. After collecting these vignettes, I and the CRCs organized two *chumlung*s to discuss the sociopolitical aspects of the above vignettes. The local public school teachers were also invited to these *chumlung*s to know how English language policy has affected multilingual learners' educational experiences. I began each *chumlung* by highlighting the major issues from the above vignettes. Below, I discuss two representative dialogues from these *chumlung*s.

Dialogue #2: Ṭṭkka ṭukka English (Random English)

Teacher 1: Most parents who have been to **bidesh** (a foreign country) send their children to private schools. The **mentality** of education in English is dominant now. Like Ranbir and Som think, parents feel proud of their children speaking **ṭṭkka ṭukka (random)** English. They think speaking English shows **quality of education**. So we're obligated to introduce an **English-medium policy**.

Prem: That's true. Can you tell us more about **ṭṭkka ṭukka** English?

Teacher 1: Some English like 'good morning', 'good afternoon', 'My name is....'

Parents think that their children must speak some English. In private schools they impose an English medium policy from the first day. So students speak some English. And parents feel proud of that.

Prem: Like Ranbir and Som think, education in English is considered as better education. But does this policy help children learn effectively? What do you think?

Teacher 2: Very interesting question. I think children in the early grades don't learn effectively through English. They don't understand English well. They cannot even read textbooks well.

Prem: I've seen the same in schools. Studies also show that it is hard for students to achieve the learning goal if they are taught in a weak language. But why then do parents still think that learning in English is better than learning in local the

languages?

Villager 1: Private schools advertise English medium as part of quality education. Rich and elite parents send their children to English medium schools. We are following what they think.

Mukul: I think people don't care about what and how students learn here. They just see private schools and English as a hope for their children. Parents see people speaking English in foreign countries. So they want their children to study in *English-medium schools*. But this mentality has created challenges for local indigenous languages. Private schools don't use local indigenous languages. So *parents* think *aani paan* (our language) is not appropriate for modern education.

Prem: Local languages cannot be a problem, right? Don't children learn better if they are allowed to use their home languages?

Teacher 2: Yes. They learn better in their home languages.

As the villagers engaged in dialogue with teachers to discuss the major issues in Ranbir's and Som's stories, they became more critical about the monolingual English policy. On the one hand, the villagers understood the socioeconomic processes through which the English language ideology is constructed. As discussed above, labor migration and elite-supported private schools are shaping the villagers' English language ideology. On the other hand, while participating in dialogue the villagers became aware of the fact that local indigenous languages are not a problem, but rather they can be a resource for learning, as the teachers also said above. Most importantly, the villagers became aware of the fact that the neoliberal ideology of English, as seen in the above vignettes, has shifted the parents' attention away from pedagogy and learning to instead be on market and economic capital (see Block et al., 2012), which they do not have an easy access to.

In dialogic engagement, the villagers shifted their own English language ideology and embraced the ideology of multilingualism as a norm for better education. For example, in the

same discussion with teachers, one villager shared that “we should change our own mentality first. I agree that students learn better in their *home languages*. It’s easy for children to express their ideas in their home languages.” In the same way, Angla asserted that a “market-oriented language policy doesn’t support local languages” and argued that “local languages are necessary for effective learning” [in reference to what the teachers said above]. Moreover, Angla focused on having “such good discussions [referring to our dialogue] with all teachers and villagers.”

The dialogic engagement further challenged the ‘epistemic violence’ (Spivak, 1988) that the neoliberal ideology of English has imposed on the villagers. Spivak (1988) argues that epistemic violence occurs when the knowledge and values of subalterns are not recognized and hegemonic epistemologies are imposed upon them as a legitimate knowledge. While engaging in ethnographically grounded dialogue, the villagers collectively became aware of how the neoliberal market-based ideology of education has shaped their own and other people’s ideologies. In other words, they explore and understand how the neoliberal rationality of education is dehumanizing them by derecognizing their language practices, multilingual identities, and the ability to learn. This awareness led them to rethink their own language ideology and appreciate the role of local languages in education. Furthermore, they described the neoliberal ideology of English as a ‘**dohoro mār**’ (double burden) for indigenous peoples.

Dialogue #3: Double Burden

Villager 1: We are facing a **dohoro mār** (double burden) now. We had Nepali-only policy before. *Now we have* English-only policy.

Prem: *Right*. But there is a multilingual policy as well. The Ministry of Education has made a policy which allows the use of local languages in schools.

Villager 1: There’s no use for a policy if it isn’t implemented.

Angla: The main problem is attitude... negative attitudes towards indigenous languages.

Nepali and English are still given a greater value in schools. Next, private schools don't follow the government's language policy. They just focus on English.

Villager 2: True. Indigenous languages are not given value because of our low socioeconomic status. Some people blame us that we are not interested in speaking *aani paan*. In fact, *we like to speak it. Our children like to speak it*. But it isn't given an equal status.

Prem: You mean social inequality affects language policy?

Villager 2: Right. Most Limbus are *yaangkesaabaa* (poor) here. Some are educated but they don't have the power to make policies.

Mukul: As long as a profit-oriented, market-based education exists, indigenous languages don't receive space in education. *We see this here....*Private schools are already popular in a short time here.

We see that the villagers, including the CRCs, became social critics as they engaged in dialogue. As Angla critiques, the villagers became aware of how the neoliberal ideologies continued to marginalize the local languages in school. Most strikingly, the villagers, as Villager 2 argued, relate the marginalization of their languages as part of their low socioeconomic status and social exclusion from the policy-making process. Since indigenous peoples have long been oppressed due to assimilationist language and cultural policies in education, their voices are not well represented in the policy-making process (Hangen & Lawoti, 2012). The dialogic engagement further reveals the villagers' growing awareness about how the neoliberal conceptualization of education is devaluing the local linguistic and cultural needs of indigenous communities. As Mukul argues, the villagers became ideologically clear; that is, unless the neoliberal ideologies keep dominating language policy discourses, it has to create equal spaces for the indigenous languages in education.

‘It’s our *Cho:tlung*’: Indigenous Activism and Reimagining Multilingual Education

The ongoing dialogic engagement contributed towards gaining ‘ideological clarification’ (Fishman, 2000; Kroskrity, 2009) on the part of the villagers. While analyzing the tensions between dominant ideologies and alternative ideologies, they continued to transform their own ideologies about language policies and practices. As discussed above, such transformation does not take place in a top-down manner, but rather in a continual engagement in dialogues that represent multiple and contradictory ideologies. The villagers, and more particularly the CRCs, developed new consciousness which challenges language hierarchies constructed by both linguistic nationalism and neoliberal ideologies. With this consciousness, the CRCs were further engaged in putting their knowledge and awareness they developed in the process of collaborative ethnography and following up on the dialogues with the villagers and teachers with action. We collaboratively planned to carry out different activities to raise the ideological awareness of other villagers. One major activity was a community-wide advocacy program, which I am going to discuss below. The goal of this project was to look at how Mukul, Saila, and Angla solidified and utilized their new consciousness into action.

For the first project, the CRCs took the lead to organize more village *chumlungs* (meetings) with local teachers, indigenous leaders, youth, and parents. In a series of such meetings, they discussed multiple language ideological issues and contributed by sharing their own knowledge they have learned from the previous dialogues and collaborative ethnography. Such meetings were attended by the villagers from different ethnic and language groups, not just Limbu. In these *chumlungs*, these villagers shared about the history of linguistic inequalities and responded to the questions raised by the teachers, youth, and other villagers. As seen in the

following dialogue, the CRCs were confronted with multiple critical questions and language ideologies which they respond to by building on what they had learned in the previous dialogues.

Dialogue #4: What's the Use of Mother Tongues?

Villager 1: What's the use of mother tongues in education?

Mukul: Do you mean local indigenous languages?

Villager1: Yes. Like Limbu, Rai, Tamang.

Mukul: I myself used to ask the same question. Children can learn better in their home languages. They feel confident to express their opinions in their home languages.

Saila: *Everyone* asks this question. We only think about the monetary value of language. So we focus on English and Nepali. But languages have cultural, social, and educational value as well. For example, Limbu children better understand the local culture in Limbu. They learn better in Limbu. Next, we aren't talking about *this or that language*. We should talk about all languages and about multilingual education.

We see that both Mukul and Saila responded to the most common yet contested question by utilizing the ideas they learned from previous dialogues. Both of them focused on the educational, social, and political importance of local indigenous languages in education. These CRCs not only help other villagers become ideologically clear about the relevance of local indigenous languages, they continued to become self-aware of how the denial of students' home languages affects their children's educational experiences. In responding to the question about the educational relevance of indigenous languages, Mukul showed his own ideological transformation, as before he used to question the significance of indigenous languages in education. However, dialogic engagement helped him to understand the importance of indigenous languages and to become an advocate for promoting multilingual education in schools.

By engaging in dialogue, the CRCs developed alternative ideologies which embraced students' home language as integral to their cultural, social, and educational experiences. While challenging the neoliberal ideology which focuses only on economic profit (Block et al., 2012), these villagers reimagined an inclusive multilingual education policy. For example, Saila argued that we should not talk about 'this or that' but the fact that 'all' of the languages students bring into schools should be included. As the villagers confronted the challenging questions raised in the *chumlungs*, they developed their own identity as advocates and activists and with a greater awareness of the sociopolitical issues of language policy. Beyond educational relevance, the villagers began to see the use of local languages as a social justice issue and argued for radical transformation in the existing mentality of education.

Dialogue #5: Parents Want English Now...

Villager 1: But don't parents want English now? And isn't there pressure from private schools?

Angla: *I used to think that way.* Yes, parents want English, but not English-only. We don't need to follow ***private schools' policy***. Multilingual education includes English as well.

Mukul: Absolutely. *I also used to think* that children learn better in the English medium from the early grades. *But it's hard.* My own son cannot understand what is written in the textbook. He cannot do homework as well. So he has to imitate what his teachers write.

While responding to the villagers' question with regard to the importance of English, the CRCs challenged the monolingual mentality and reimagined a multilingual policy which allows children to use their home languages in school. They critically reflected on their own ideologies and experiences to support their responses to the villagers. Angla, for example, said that he also wanted his children to be taught in the English medium. But now he believes an 'English-only'

policy is not appropriate and argues that it is important to focus on multilingual education, which does not exclude English language teaching. Mukul's use of his own son's story shows his own deeper understanding of how an 'English-only' policy from the early grades negatively affects students' educational experiences.

These CRCs also became aware of how an English-only policy reproduces unequal privileges and power. For example, in another *chumlung* with indigenous leaders, Angla shared that "after all, only high-class children who are in expensive private schools with better English language teachers and resources can take advantage of the existing English medium policy." Building on what one indigenous teacher said (who also participated in the *chumlung*), Angla asserted that children do not even learn English well because of a lack of "trained and competent teachers in the village.... Our teachers cannot speak English well....How do we expect quality education?" Building on **ṭākka ṭukka** English, as mentioned above, Angla critiques that "children might know some English, but they are losing many things....*They don't learn what they are supposed to learn* when they are not allowed to use their home languages....They lose their confidence and linguistic identity." More importantly, the CRCs showed their activism and commitment towards transforming the existing ideological hegemony of English and Nepali.

Dialogue #6: It's Hard to Change the Mentality, Right?

Indigenous leader: It's hard to change people's mentality. How can we do this? Some people don't like to see indigenous languages in schools. They see them as ethnic languages.

Angla: That mentality is a main issue. That's why we need *chumlungs*. We need to raise the awareness of all.

Mukul: You're right [referring to the indigenous leader]. It takes time to change the existing mentality. Multilingual education is for all....It isn't just for one ethnicity. All languages are equal.

Saila: I think that making policy is not enough. Schools need to show the benefits of multilingual education. Schools should not create a hierarchy of languages.

We see that Mukul, Saila, and Angla constructed their emergent identity as an activist and advocate while engaging in dialogues with teachers, indigenous leaders, and youth. They not only put their knowledge from previous dialogue into awareness-raising *chumlungs*, but also reimagined an equitable multilingual education that respects all languages, particularly minoritized languages. For this, they particularly emphasized the need for ideological awareness towards creating a multilingual policy. These villagers are not only proud of linguistic diversity, but also engaged in decolonizing hegemonic language ideologies—neoliberalism and linguistic nationalism. As Mukul said, multilingual education is not just about one language and for one ethnicity, and argued that all languages are equal. While advocating for multilingual education, these villagers further reimagined language policy from a practice perspective. For example, Saila opined that official policy is not enough; unless schools transform language hierarchies, policies do not make any difference.

The entire dialogic engagement with the villagers was built on ‘indigenous critical praxis’—reflection on local historical, linguistic, and cultural practices—and ‘indigenous epistemologies’ (local knowledge) (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013). While reimagining an equitable multilingual education policy, Angla, in one of the *chumlungs*, claimed that the use of Limbu in schools respects their children’s *cho:tlung* (a holistic achievement and sense of pride). In participating in the dialogue with the villagers, he contended that because current language policy and practices are “disrespectful to local indigenous languages and cultures, we have the moral challenge to maintain our cultural practices.”

Together, the villagers argued that an equitable multilingual education does not just mean teaching ‘this’ or ‘that’ language. For them, multilingual education should be able to transform the dominant mentality that has shaped the minds of the villagers, parents, teachers, and students with regard to what counts as a legitimate language in education. Providing an equal space for local languages, as Mukul argued, strengthens their collective *cho:tlung*, which includes not just the necessity for individual achievement/success in tests, but upholds the knowledge that contributes towards the empowerment and prosperity of the community.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have portrayed dialogic engagement with the villagers in exploring, analyzing, and transforming the ideological hegemony of linguistic nationalism and neoliberalism. Situating dialogue in the local ethnographic context, three villagers were first engaged in exploring the language practices, ideologies, and ethnographic sociopolitical realities of the community. Through collaborative ethnography, the CRCs first investigated the language ideologies of other villagers in the forms of counter-narratives, anecdotes, and vignettes. These ideologies were further discussed in dialogue with other villagers and local teachers. In other words, the villagers were not just engaged in exploring the dominant ideologies but also, and perhaps most importantly, engaged them in analyzing how these ideologies affected their language policies and practices.

Two important issues that emerged from the dialogical engagement with the villagers were: (a) ideological transformation is possible by engaging the villagers in critical dialogue; and, (b) dialogic engagement empowers the villagers to reclaim their own identity as a *decolonial subject*. The decolonial subject position includes a critical understanding of how the dominant language ideologies have shaped the villagers’ own mentality and reclaiming themselves as an advocate and agent for language policy transformation. As noted in this

chapter, the villagers kept reiterating the need for transforming the colonial mentality and used their knowledge to help other villagers transform their ideologies. As a decolonial subject, the villagers liberated themselves from the dichotomous ‘they-versus-us’ discourses and reimagined multilingual education from a social justice perspective. They not only redefine nationalism from a multilingual perspective, but also rejected the market-oriented and instrumental ideology of language that shapes existing language policies and practices. This awareness builds on engagement in unravelling the tensions between authoritative and alternative ideologies. Such ideological awareness challenges language hierarchies and reimagines language policy from an inclusive and multilingual perspective. I have also discussed that the villagers’ ideological awareness is tension-filled. On the one hand, they become aware of the importance of multilingual education, but on the other, they have ideological challenge in resisting and transforming both nation-state and neoliberal ideologies of language. Indigenous villagers’ critical awareness involves their own becoming as social critics and transformative agents for creating language policy.

Chapter 8: Teachers Transforming Language Policies: Building Multilingual Awareness and Creating Translanguaging Space

Introduction

Studies have placed teachers' agency at the epicenter of language policy creation, interpretation, and implementation (Johnson, 2013; Menken & García, 2010). Yet, agency may not be adequate towards creating space for minoritized languages and language practices, particularly in a context where language policy discourses and practices are dominated by assimilationist monolingual ideologies. Scholars have unraveled that agency is in a constant interaction with broader the sociopolitical structure in which individuals live in (Giddens, 1979). More importantly, agency is determined by the extent to which individuals have access to resources—sociopolitical, economic, and educational—and awareness of language ideologies and pedagogies that support or constrain children's multilingual practices in school (e.g., Young, 2014).

Focusing on the centrality of teachers' language ideology (Tupas, 2015), this chapter analyzes how teachers develop critical ideological awareness towards creating multilingual policies and pedagogies in two public schools. More specifically, I discuss how teachers, who are not provided with any comprehensive teacher education courses on multilingual education, build critical ideological awareness and create multilingual school space in the face of increased neoliberal ideology on top of linguistic nationalism. The first school, which I call 'Sewaro', is a public primary school located in a multilingual and multiethnic village. The majority of people are Limbu indigenous people who speak both Limbu and Nepali for interactional purposes. This school, along with other public schools in the village, has recently introduced an English-as-a-

medium-of-instruction (EMI) policy from the first grade and replaced *aani paan*⁸¹ (the Limbu language as a subject) with additional English for three days a week. The second school, which I call ‘Laaje’, is a community-based school which was established by the community members themselves to teach the Limbu language and *Mundhum*. In the beginning, the school had its own curricula, with a focus on indigenous language, literature, philosophy, spirituality, and history. However, the school is now following the national curricula for six years in order to receive financial support from the government⁸². Consequently, Nepali, English, and mathematics are also taught in the school. The head teacher said that “the community decided to follow the national curricula so that the certificate [diploma] of the students who graduate from the school is also recognized as legitimate.”

Unravelling Teachers’ Language Ideologies through Dialogic Inquiry

Scholars adopting a dialogic method (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 1970; Wells, 1999) have argued that dialogue must be built upon participants’ own understanding about existential realities, lived experiences, and personal struggles. Although I had dialogues with all of the teachers from both schools, I particularly focused on how two Limbu indigenous teachers (e.g., Kumar⁸³ [pseudonym] from Sewaro School) and Aita [pseudonym] from Laaje School) became critically aware of the dominant language ideologies that shape the existing language policies, followed by building multilingual awareness and then applying this awareness to their own classroom pedagogies. In order to situate the dialogue in the local context and within the scope of teachers’ understanding of the local existential reality, Kumar and Aita (henceforth referred to

⁸¹ Following the national curricular structure and the suggestions from parents, the school also introduced *aani paan* as an optional subject for almost all of these six years.

⁸² The community-based schools can receive a certain amount of funding from the government, but is based on the number of students in the school; however, such schools have to teach the national curricula, and especially the subjects of Nepali, English, and mathematics.

⁸³ All the names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

as the ‘collaborating teachers’) were first engaged in a collaborative ethnography of school language practices in school and community. For this, we first observed the classes of some teachers, including these collaborating teachers, in both schools. We also took notes from classroom observations. All of these resources were used for dialogical engagement with teachers. Let me first begin with one classroom vignette from one of Kumar’s classes.

Classroom Vignette #1: Social Studies, Grade 2

As Kumar and I entered the second grade class, the students stood up and greeted us in English: “Good morning, Sir.” Kumar had pieces of chalk, a duster [chalkboard eraser], and a textbook for his class. The English version of the textbook is translated from the national textbook in Nepal. As the school has introduced an English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy, existing Nepali textbooks have been replaced by English ones. As usual, Kumar began his lesson by asking the students to open to a particular page of the textbook on which the topic of the lesson *Daily Routine* was mentioned. The objectives of the lesson were to enable students to describe what they do in a day and discuss what activities they ‘can’ and ‘cannot’ do. After writing the topic on the board, the teacher asked what the students knew about the topic in English. The whole class remained silent. After that, Kumar read-aloud a paragraph about one person’s daily routine from the textbook and the students followed him, as he instructed. Then, he asked them about their own daily routine as follows:

Teacher: What time do you wake up?

Students: (silent)

Teacher: What time do you wake up? (repeats this)

Students: (Silent)

(Then, Kumar himself gives the answer.)

Teacher: I wake up early in the morning. (The teacher then asked students to repeat the whole sentence.)

Students: I wake up early in the morning.

As very few students were able to produce the whole sentence correctly, Kumar asked them to read aloud each word after him. For example, the teacher broke down the

sentence “I wake up early in the morning” into four segments—’I’, ‘wake up’, ‘early’ and ‘in the morning’—and the students read these aloud after him. After that, the teacher asked what the students do after they wake up. Some students started asking each other what the question was about in Nepali. One student asked the teacher whether she could answer in Nepali. Kumar insisted on speaking English because they were ‘reading an English textbook’.

As the students could not answer his questions in English, Kumar himself wrote the answer “I brush my teeth” on the board and asked them to copy the sentences, with ‘good handwriting’. Following this, Kumar asked the students to read the remaining passage from the text first and then respond to his questions: “When do you have your lunch?” “What do you do after having lunch?” “What do you do in school?” He moved around the class to check whether the students were reading. I saw that only a few students were actually reading and trying to answer the questions. Most students could not read so they started talking about the passage in Nepali. Some were using Limbu as well. Students even did not understand what the questions were about. But Kumar kept reminding them: “this is [an] English medium class. Don’t speak Nepali.” The students tried to answer the questions in Nepali, but he kept telling them to speak English. As he did not receive any answer from the students, Kumar himself wrote all the answers on the board and asked the students to copy them. The forty-minute lesson came to an end after several repetitions of the same strategy.

As the school has adopted an EMI policy, teachers like Kumar have to teach all subjects in English. Although students try to use Nepali to participate in classroom activities, they are forced to speak in English. None of the students in school have ever used English outside the classroom—they do not have to use it to socialize—as indigenous Limbu children speak Limbu and Nepali at home and high-caste Brahmin-Chettri children speak Nepali-only. Since children hardly understand and speak English in their daily social interactions, they want to ask questions and interact using Nepali and other home languages in the classroom. However, like in Kumar’s class, students do not participate in classroom interactions and thus remain silent as they are

forced to use English. In other words, the monolingual English approach that teachers have adopted in class keeps muting students' voices and poses serious challenges for 'epistemic access'; that is, the access to knowledge (Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015). Rather than engaging in dialogue, the students just follow what teachers read, and copy what they write on the board. Indeed, the monolingual pedagogy in English supports a 'banking model' of pedagogy (Freire, 1970) which restricts children from investing their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge for their engagement in learning processes. In what follows, I discuss Kumar's and other teachers' (from Sewaro School) language ideologies which are enacted during our dialogue based primarily on the above classroom vignette.

Dialogue #1: English Medium Means to Teach in English

Prem: Let's talk about the class. Is it ok if I ask some questions?

Kumar: Sure. I need your ***advice*** as well. We've just started teaching in English since last year. It's a ***new experience*** for us.

Prem: I noticed that students wanted to talk in Nepali. Some were speaking Limbu as well. But you were reminding them to speak English, right?

Kumar: You're right. We have an English medium policy now. We have to teach in English. We have ***English textbooks***.

Prem: Right. Sounds interesting. I saw that most students were ***silent*** in class. They did not answer your questions. They could not use their home languages, right?

Kumar: Yes. They're ***weak*** in English. Their ***base*** is not ***strong***. So they want to use their home languages. If we ***allow*** students to ***use*** their own home languages, then they ***don't learn English***. We have ***introduced [the] English medium policy*** to teach in English.

Kumar's justification of why he does not allow students to use their home languages in his class depicts hegemony of monolingual ideology. As an EMI policy has been introduced in the school, he claimed that teachers have to insist on using English in the classroom. As Kumar argued, in

the preliminary discussions, the teachers in the school hold the view that a monolingual English policy helps children learn better English, so they do not encourage students to use languages other than English. In other words, students' home languages are presented as a 'problem' rather than a 'resource' (Ruiz, 1984) for teaching and learning content-area subjects such as social studies (as in Kumar's case). In preliminary discussions, the head teacher said that the new policy has been introduced in the school because they think that "children become more competent in English if they are taught, and taught through, English from an early age." He claimed that although they as teachers have 'challenges' in teaching in English, he still believes that "public schools should focus on the EMI policy because of the growing pressure from private schools." Moreover, Kumar argued that they are focusing on EMI because English is an 'international language', a 'language of foreign employment and education', and the 'language of technology'.

Like Kumar, other teachers in the school have also unquestionably embraced a monolingual English ideology which discursively positions students' existing linguistic and cultural knowledge as a problem to learning English. In various informal discussions, they mentioned that they have not thought about using the other languages to support learning, not because the students are deficient in their other languages, but because of the ideology that teaching through English-only is the most effective pedagogy. In addition, they reproduced 'the earlier-the-better' ideology of learning English as a foreign language. As these language ideologies shape classroom language practices, students are continually disengaged from classroom interactions and thus are unable to access the knowledge they are expected to achieve from different content-area subjects.

Monolingual ideologies are salient not only in the English-medium policies of public schools, but they are also prevalent in indigenous community schools as well. Let me give an example from the Laaje School which was established to teach the Limbu language, literacy, philosophy, and *Mundhum*. All students in this school are Limbus by their ethnicity, but they are Limbu-Nepali bilingual speakers. These students' language practices are dynamic and they feel very proud of learning Limbu language literacy and *Mundhum* in the school. The language practices of all of the teachers are also dynamic and heteroglossic. However, during preliminary discussions, the teachers, including Aita, said that students' fluid language practices are not 'good' and show a sign of 'incompetency' in Limbu. Although both the teachers and students in Laaje School use Limbu and Nepali (and sometimes also English for classroom purposes), Aita does not consider his own 'mixing style' of language practices in the classroom to be a legitimate approach to teaching the Limbu language. Expressing his own frustration, he asserted that "I try to speak only in Limbu. But the students don't speak just Limbu; they use Limbu and Nepali equally." Like Aita, other teachers in the preliminary discussions maintained that the students should speak 'pure Limbu' and 'perfect Limbu', without mixing Nepali. In other words, their Limbu language ideology presents Limbu students' bilingual practices as 'non-standard' and 'still weak'.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the processes of how the teachers were engaged in transforming their own ideologies to create a multilingual school space.

Teachers Building Critical Multilingual Language Awareness

Building on previous language awareness (Hawkins, 1984) and critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1999) approaches, García (2008) has argued that it is necessary to engage all teachers in *multilingual language awareness* (MLA) activities to transform the monolingual

adversity that schools around the globe are embracing. Going beyond ‘linguacentricism’ (Schiffman, 1996), García (2008) defines MLA as “the understanding of the social, political and economic struggles surrounding the use of the two [or more] languages” (pp. 387-388). Drawing on this perspective, I and the collaborating teachers worked towards engaging the teachers from both Sawaro and Laaje Schools in ethnographically grounded dialogue towards building *critical multilingual awareness (CMA)*. CMA not only includes teachers’ awareness of sociopolitical and economic struggles but also, and perhaps most importantly, liberating themselves from existing ideological hegemony to address the ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2007) deeply rooted in monolingual policies and practices. In other words, I define CMA as the teachers’ critical consciousness about how monolingual ideologies and practices are “undemocratic ways to exclude and discriminate” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 182) against multilingual learners from having access to the knowledge they are entitled to.

Engaging in the Ethnography of Language Socialization

In order to engage teachers from both schools in critical dialogue, I and collaborating teachers made a plan and explored the language socialization of children who are attending both schools. Language socialization research focuses not only on how children interact with other members in the community, but also pays attention to the beliefs, values, and ideologies of a particular groups towards language and language practices (Duff, 2007). In our collaborative ethnography, we closely observed discourses at home and in the community and interviewed ten parents from each school with regard to their children’s language use. We audio-recorded (fifteen from each school) and video-recorded (10 from each school) language practices in social interactions and interviews, and took notes of what we observed in the community and in the

homes of five children from each school. As seen in the following excerpt, we found there to be very fluid language practices between the parents and their children.

Mother: **Kānchā** *tho kembhungaaro pegeaang kaangīng yure ta.* **bholī cāincha.**

[Younger son, go up to your uncle and bring a spade. It's needed tomorrow.]

Son: **kaile lageko hāmro kodālo,** *amdhungaare? taandik yaalek chan ra?*

[When did the uncle take our spade? We have yaalek⁸⁴ tomorrow?]

Mother: **asti lageko ni.** [Took the day before yesterday.]

Both parents and children constantly break the linguistic boundaries of both Nepali and Limbu and challenge the hierarchy between them. As seen in the above excerpt, the parent-children interactions enact a fluid bilingual practice. Such interactions are mostly about farming and other household related topics. During the weekends and holidays, children from both schools accompany their parents to the farmland; they learn how to plant and harvest rice paddy, corn, wheat, and other crops from their parents. Very few parents were found to be engaged in helping their children do their homework as the parents did not know much about 'schooled' literacy (Evans, 1993). For example, one parent from Sewaro School said: "I cannot read and write English....I don't understand the textbooks. So I cannot help my children to do their homework."

Although children and parents do not speak English for social interactions, they are heavily influenced by the English language ideology. As one parent (from Laaje School) said, most parents link English with 'modernity', 'elitism', and 'social prestige'. They wish their children would learn 'better English'. At the same time, they are also worried about the growing language shift in the community. As neoliberal private schools continue to shape community language ideologies, children from both schools feel a sense of self-inferiority for not being able to go to private schools, which are discursively constructed as 'better schools'. During our

⁸⁴ In Limbu, *yaalek* are the neighbors who come to help other neighbors in farming and other related activities.

collaborative ethnography, we observed that children's language practices in both Sewaro and Laaje Schools are heteroglossic. They mostly use Nepali when they have to talk with people from other ethnic groups such as Rai, Newar, Bahun-Chhetris, Magar, and Tamang. They use Limbu to communicate with their parents and the Limbu friends. The Limbu children from both schools have learned Limbu cultural practices, folktales, and indigenous knowledge from their parents/grandparents and community members.

Critical Reflection on Ethnography

Dialogue is an important part of our collaborative ethnography. After exploring the language practices and ideologies of the communities, I and the collaborating teachers shared and discussed what we found and learned from our observations and interactions during our collaborative ethnography with the other teachers. In a series of such reflective sessions, I and the collaborating teachers brought ethnographic vignettes into the discussions and analyzed the sociopolitical aspects of the language practices. One major issue we found, as was also mentioned by Kumar, was the growing **durī** (distance) between students' home and school language practices, particularly in the case of Sewaro School. Reflecting on what we found during the collaborative ethnography, Kumar said: "in school, we focus on English. But at home and in the community, children use Nepali and Limbu. We expect them to speak English from the first day of school. It's really difficult for students to understand English." Participating in the dialogue, another teacher from Sewaro School said, "Students don't speak English outside school. They feel shy...because they don't have the habit of using it. But parents still want them to be taught in English."

The case of Laaje School is slightly different. Parents who send their children to this school expect their children to learn *Mundhum* and ‘**bhāṣā**’⁸⁵ (language), which they call the ‘mother tongue’. Although parents’ and children’s language practices are heteroglossic, our collaborative ethnography shows that parents not only expect their children to speak ‘pure Limbu’, but also assume that the teachers should not use ‘Khas-Parbate’ (Nepali) in class. Aita reflects on the current situation as follows:

Parents have such *thinking*....Parents themselves have experienced a one language education. As X said, *they were taught only in Nepali*. Now they think that we should teach only in Limbu. But children use Nepali and Limbu equally to learn and understand Mundhum.

Critical reflection on ethnographic information helped the collaborating teachers to understand the gap between language practices in schools and communities. As they engaged in discussing what they found during interactions with the parents, they became aware of how the state’s monolingual ideologies shapes parents’ views and perspectives about language pedagogy. For example, building on Aita’s reflection, another teacher from Laaje School said: “we’re in a difficult situation. Parents don’t like us to mix languages while teaching Limbu.”

However, as the teachers reflected on the local ethnographic realities, they began to rethink the relevance of monolingual ideologies in both schools. They developed critical multilingual awareness as they understood how monolingual ideologies create learning inequalities among students. For example, Rabina, another teacher from Sewaro School, said that “children in the early grades don’t learn effectively in English. We should use their home languages such as Nepali and Limbu as well.” However, the teachers in Sewaro School revealed that they were facing ‘pressure’ to use ‘English-only policy’, as private schools have become

⁸⁵ ‘**bhāṣā**’ literally means ‘language’, but the parents use ‘**bhāṣā**’ to refer to the ‘mother tongue’, which is Limbu.

‘popular’ among parents. At the same time, they believed that students do not learn as effectively as they could learn in their home languages. In the case of Laaje School, as the teachers reflected on their own ethnographic contexts, they became aware of the gap between the Limbu language ideology and the actual language practices in the community. As they engage in dialogue, the teachers became aware of the sociopolitical aspects of the monolingual ideology and its impacts on the Limbu children’s educational experiences. For example, Mina, a teacher from Laaje School, said that “our indigenous languages, cultures, and identities are not given value in public schools. So this school emphasizes teaching the Limbu language, culture, and philosophy.” However, she asserted that “we must be ‘realistic’ and ‘strategic’ when teaching students. We cannot just ask them to speak Limbu-only.”

Together, while engaging in ethnographically grounded dialogue, the teachers in both schools become aware of how language policies and practices in schools are supporting or constraining students’ voices; that is, having the ‘capacity to be heard’ (Blommaert, 2005) and having ‘epistemic access’ (Heugh, 2015). As Kumar said, they became aware of how the students’ total linguistic knowledge is an important resource for connecting the school and community. Most importantly, the teachers came to understand the pervasive impacts of the monolingual ideology and began to question their own language ideologies and pedagogical practices. Commenting on the disengagement of children in the learning process, Kumar, for example, said that “I think we aren’t doing justice to our students.... We’re running after the English-only *mentality*...but we have to look at what we’re doing from students’ *side*.” Teachers in both schools realize that that there is a need for change in both current ideologies and practices to create space for all languages in schools.

As the teachers critically reflected on existing ideologies and language practices, I shared with the teachers some major findings from scholarly literature (e.g., García, 2009; Hornberger, 2009; Hornberger & Link, 2012; McCarty & Wyman, 2009) on how indigenous youth's fluid bilingual practices can be used creatively and purposefully to promote effective language and academic content learning. I situated those findings in the local ethnographic contexts to help teachers understand how it is important to recognize students' fluid language practices for their effective learning. Following this dialogic engagement, the teachers came to embrace students' bi/multilingual practices and tried to create spaces for them in their lessons.

Creating Translanguaging Space in the Classroom

Rather than considering children's multilingual practices as a problem, the teachers in both schools began to incorporate them in their classrooms to support all children to have a better educational experience. Let me begin with how Kumar creatively capitalized on the Limbu indigenous children's bi/multilingual practices.

Classroom Vignette #2: Social Studies, Grade 2

Kumar and I entered his class. As usual, he had a textbook and pieces of chalk as materials to use in his class. The topic of the lesson was 'Our Festivals'. After checking whether the students had done their homework, he asked them whether they knew the meaning of the word 'festival'. However, the students kept quiet. Then he gave some examples, such as Dashain, Tihar, Lhotsar, Chhatha, and Christmas. After that some students said "Sir, **cād ho**, festival **bhaneko**?" (Sir, does festival mean **cād**?) [Nepali means festival]. As most students could not pronounce the word 'festival', he asked them to pronounce the word after him. After that he read the passage from the textbook which describes various festivals celebrated by different communities in the country. While describing the festivals, Kumar translated the key words such as **celebrate, lake, worship, fast, donate, decorate**, and **enjoy** into Nepali. As seen in the following excerpt, he switched between English and Nepali to engage students in the learning process.

Kumar: *What do you do in Dashain*⁸⁶? **Dashainmā ke garchau.**

Student 1: *I go [to] māmā ghar* (I go to my maternal uncle's house.)

Student 2: **Ma ta nayā lugā lāuchu.** (I wear new clothes.)

Student 3: **miṭho khāne kurā khāne. Ani ṭika pani lāuchau.** (I eat tasty food. And put on tika.)

Student 4: **hmi ta ṭika lāudainau, sir.** (We don't put on tika⁸⁷, sir.)

Kumar: *Why? Kina ṭika nalāune?* (Why don't you put on tika?)

Student 4: **Limbu haru Dashainmā lāudainan bhaneko cha bāule.**
(My father told me that Limbus don't put on tika in Dashain.)

Kumar: *What do you do in Tihar?* **Tiharmā ke garchau?**

Student 5: **Cow puajā. Laxmi puajā.** (Worship cow. Worship Laxmi.)

Kumar: **Pujā garnulāi ke bhanincha ta?**

Student 6: **hāmi ta maang sewaa garne bhanchau.**

Kumar: **Ani Englishmā cāhī ke bhanincha?**

Students: (silent)

Kumar: **Worship. Aba bhanata?**

Students: **Worship.**

Kumar: **We worship a cow in Tihar.**

After describing how the other festivals of Lhotsar, Eid, Chhatha, and Christmas are celebrated, Kumar asked the students to do an activity, following the instructions in the textbook. The students had to discuss what and how other festivals are celebrated in their community. As the students did not understand the question “what festivals do you celebrate in your community?” Kumar translated it into Nepali: “**timro samudāyamā kun kun festivals manāuchan bhaneko**”. As he translated his question into Nepali, the students provided different names of festivals such as **Sāune Sakrāti** and **Māghe Sakrāti** which they celebrate. Although the students used Nepali, Kumar appreciated their responses and asked them what was ‘**manāunu**’—the key word the students used when

⁸⁶ Dashain is the biggest Hindu festival in Nepal.

⁸⁷ *Tika*, prepared by mixing rice, yogurt, and vermilion, is to put on the forehead as a symbol of blessing and prosperity from seniors and parents/grandparents. Putting on ‘*tika*’ is a major event in Dashain.

describing the festivals—in English. Since the students did not know its meaning, he again translated it as ‘celebrate’ and asked them to read the word aloud. Again, Kumar asked the students “**aru kun kun festival celebrate garchau.**” One student responded, “Sir, **hāmī maangena** garcha, **maanghukpaa pani garchau**” [Sir, we do *mangena* and *maanghukpaa* as well.] After that, Kumar asked the students to describe what they do in these festivals. He allowed them to use Nepali and Limbu to discuss, and then write about what they said on the board in both Nepali and English. Following this, the students copied the sentences from the board. Kumar concluded his lesson by giving the students homework: to write three things they do in each festival they mentioned above.

As can be seen here, unlike his previous class mentioned above, Kumar did not impose an ‘English-only’ policy in his class, but rather he created a translanguaging space for his students. Li (2011) defines a translanguaging space as ‘a social space’ in which multilingual speakers engage in a meaning-making process by “bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief[s] and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience” (p. 1123). As seen above, Kumar broke the rigid monolingual boundary between Nepali, English, and Limbu, and allowed his students to bring their linguistic and cultural knowledge into their learning processes. Rather than forcing his students to use English-only, Kumar creatively used translation and other bilingual strategies such as code-switching to help students invest their existing linguistic knowledge in the learning process.

As the students see their teacher using both Nepali and English and allowing them to use their home languages, they feel safe and comfortable to invest their cognitive, sociocultural, and linguistic knowledge to engage in the learning process. For example, while describing what they do in Dashain, the students brought their own lived experiences into the class; while some ‘go to their maternal uncle’s house’ and ‘wear new clothes’, others ‘eat tasty food’ and ‘put on tika’.

Most strikingly, the translanguaging space built a safe dialogic space for these multilingual and multiethnic students to bring their alternative perspectives and conflicting views about the topic of discussion into the classroom. For example, what Student 4 said above—“My father told me that Limbus don’t put on tika in Dashain”—has a deep political meaning; it counters the dominant assumption that all Nepalis celebrate Dashain. Although the textbook supports the state’s ideology that defines Dashain as a de facto ‘national’ festival (see Upadhyaya, 2010, for an analysis of how national textbooks support hegemony of Hinduization), indigenous activists are ‘boycotting’ this festival (see Hangen, 2010) as part of resistance against the state’s ideology of ‘cultural imperialism’ (Lawoti, 2010). As Student 4 mentioned above, the Limbu people have already stopped celebrating Dashain because they do not consider it as one of their authentic indigenous festivals (Bhattachan, 2013; Onta, 2006).

Kumar’s flexible multilingual approach helped his students make sense of their multilingual and multicultural world (García, 2009). Going beyond what was given in the national textbook, the students were able to discuss different festivals celebrated in their community. As one student mentioned, the Limbu people celebrate ‘maangena’ and ‘maanghukpaa’, which was not included in the textbook. Both of these cultures are performed to achieve the Limbu people’s collective ‘*cho:tlung*’: their sense of pride, progress, and community well-being. The Limbu people believe that every individual should have a strong ‘*maangena*’ (strength and self-esteem to do something) and liberate themselves from curses and sins, which can be done by collectively performing ‘*maanghukpaa*’. Indeed, as Li (2011) argues, flexible language practices—such as those in Kumar’s class—embody both ‘creativity’ and ‘criticality’. They are creative because they allow students to ‘push and break boundaries’ (García & Li, 2014) between languages and encourage them to navigate between the dominant and alternative

worldviews. The translanguaging practices in Kumar’s class are critical as they support students’ “ability to use available evidence appropriately, systematically and insightfully to inform considered views of cultural, social and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematize received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations” (Li, 2011, p. 374). Most importantly, the multilingual practices in Kumar’s class are transformative as they not only encourage bi/multilingual students to invest in their existing and emergent linguistic, cognitive, and cultural knowledge, as well as their experiences and beliefs, but also transform a frozen monolingual class into a safe and interactive multilingual learning space.

Like Kumar, the other teachers in Sewaro School continued to build on students’ emergent multilingual practices as resource to engage students in meaningful learning processes. After having a series of dialogues about her own classes, Rabina (another teacher at Sewaro School) creatively used students’ home languages to ensure her learners’ participation in her compulsory English language class. In preliminary discussions, Rabina revealed that since her students do not have a strong English language proficiency, it is “really had to teach English in English.” The Ministry of Education (MOE) has a mandated policy that English and any other languages, including ‘mother tongues’, should be taught in the same language; that is, monolingually. However, as seen in the following classroom vignette, Rabina uses translanguaging to support her emergent multilingual students in developing confidence and building self-esteem in learning English as a foreign language.

Classroom Vignette #3: English, Grade 2

Rabina began her lesson by writing the topic from the textbook on the board. The objectives of the lesson were to enable students to use “How many/old...?” and “There/he/she is/are...” correctly in speaking and writing. Rabina first showed each picture from the textbook and asked the students to name them. Showing the picture of a

bird, she asked “first of all, what is this?” Some students responded in Nepali **carā** [‘bird’ in Nepali] while others say *pu* (‘bird’ in Limbu). In Nepali, she asked “**carā lāi ke bhanincha**” (what is ‘charaa’ called?). As the students remained silent, Rabina answered herself: **carā lāi bird bhanincha** (caraa is called ‘bird’). “B-I-R-D bird”, she spelled the word. After that, she asked the students “how many birds are there?” Again the students remained silent, as they did not understand what the teacher was asking. After that, Rabina engaged them in classroom activities as follows:

T: **Kati waṭā birdharu chan. Count garau ta aba.** (How many birds are there? Now, let’s count.)

SS: **Ek, dui, tin** (one, two, three...)

T: **One, two ... bhanana.** (say one, two.)

SS: **One, two, three, four, five, six...**

SS: **Miss, one zero ten waṭā.** (Miss, there are ten.)

T: **There’re ten birds. How many birds?**

SS: **There are ten birds.**

S1: **Miss, birdharu rukhmā baschan.** (Miss, birds live in trees.)

T: **Ho ho treemā baschan. Ke ke birds dekheko chau?** (Yes, yes. They live in trees. What birds have you seen?)

S2: **Maile hijo ḍhukur dekheko.** (I saw a dove yesterday.)

S3: **Bird khāincha, Miss?** (Do we eat birds, Miss?)

T: **No. birds khānu hudaina.** (No. We should not eat birds.)

T: **What is this? Yo ke ho ta?** [Shows the second image from the textbook.]

SS: **Mākurā.** (Spider)

T: **Spider** [Asks students to reproduce the word after her.]

SS: **Spider.**

T: **Timī haru ko gharmā spider chan?** (Are there any spiders in your home?)

S1: **Huncha Miss.** ([There are, Miss.]

T: **How many spiders are there?** [Showing the image again.]

S2: **One two...twelve, Miss.**

After that Rabina moved to another activity. The goal of the activity was to enable students to ask questions about and describe the age of people by using appropriate grammatical structures. Like in the previous activity, Rabina first showed the picture from the textbook and asked in Nepali who the person in the picture was. Students provided multiple responses. Some said ‘**buḍho mānche**’ (an old man) while others described him as ‘**dokānī**’ (a shopkeeper). One student even described him as ‘**mero sāthi X ko bāu**’ (my friend X’s father). After that, as mentioned in the textbook, Rabina told the students that he was ‘grandfather’ and asked them to pronounce the word. Some students asked “*Grandfather bhaneko ke ho, Miss?*” (What is grandfather, Miss?).

T: *Grandfather bhaneko, hajurbubā.*

S1: *Baaje ho?* (Grandfather, right?)

T: *Yes.*

S2: *Miss, thebaa hoina ra?* (Miss, isn’t it *thebaa*⁸⁸?)

S3: *Miss, hāmi KOPAA bhanchau.* (Miss, we say KOKPAA⁸⁹.)

T: Ho. *Limumā thebaa pani huncha. Rai le KOPAA bhanchan.* (Yes. It is *thebaa* in Limbu. Rais say KOPAA.)

T: *How old is your grandfather? Kati barṣhako pugnu bho timro thebaa.*

S2: *thāhā chaina, Miss.* (I don’t know, Miss.)

After that Rabina gave her own grandfather’s age: “My grandfather is 74 years old.” She then asked the students to follow the same structure to describe their grandfather’s age. Rabina concluded her lesson by giving homework to describe the age of their family members.

Like Kumar’s class, Rabina also allowed students to invest their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge towards meaningful cognitive and interactional engagement in the classroom.

Although the national curriculum states that “while teaching a compulsory subject of [the] English language, the medium of education shall be English” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 11), Rabina created space for students’ home languages to make her English lesson more

⁸⁸ Thebaa means grandfather in Limbu.

⁸⁹ All-caps are in Rai, one of the indigenous languages in Nepal.

interactive and purposeful. She used ‘bilingual label quests’ (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) to invite multiple ideas from the students and adopts a simultaneous translation technique to explain the purpose of the activities and the related questions. As Rabina asked the students to name the images, they labeled them using Nepali, Limbu, English, and Rai. For example, some students use ‘*carā*’ for ‘bird’ in English, while other students used the Limbu word ‘*pu*’. Such translanguaging practices not only contribute to achieve the objectives of the lesson (the use of “There/he/she is/are...” and “How many/old is/are...”) in a multilingual classroom, but also respect the students’ identity as multilingual learners (see Li & Zhu, 2013). Rabina’s translanguaging approach helped create a classroom environment that allowed for a linguistic and cultural ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994) in which multilingual children, particularly indigenous minoritized ones, were able to invest their linguistic, ethnic, and cultural resources to make sense of their multilingual and multiethnic world (García & Flores, 2014).

As we see above, the students capitalized on their knowledge of the kinship system, such as ‘*thebaa*’ (Limbu), ‘KOPPA’ (Rai) and ‘*hajurbubā*’ (standard Nepali) to understand the meaning of ‘grandfather’. This kind of epistemic diversity would not have been possible with an English-only policy which not only puts significant psychological, linguistic, and cultural pressure on multilingual learners, but also erases their multilingual and multiethnic identities. Indeed, both Kumar and Rabina transformed the monolingual ideology which derecognizes multilingual students’ ways of learning and being.

Translanguaging in the Indigenous Classroom: Connecting Indigenous

Philosophy and Language

Scholars have recently been exploring translanguaging as an integral aspect of multilingualism in indigenous contexts. Hornberger (2010) has particularly discussed the

importance of translanguaging in helping both indigenous teachers and students to access academic content by capitalizing on their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge while simultaneously acquiring new language and literacy skills. Hornberger (2010) argues that translanguaging enables indigenous students to “draw from across their multiple languages and literacies in accomplishing academic tasks collaboratively” (p. 3). Wyman et al. (2014) have revealed examples of fluid and dynamic indigenous language practices and reiterated the need for embracing them to support indigenous youth’s ‘identity investment’ (Cummins, 2006) in education. Translanguaging provides indigenous youth, whose educational experiences have been negatively affected by the state’s assimilationist language policies, with affordances to use their bi/multilingual and multicultural knowledge in the learning processes. In what follows, I discuss how Aita and other Limbu indigenous teachers in Laaje School creatively use translanguaging in their school.

As mentioned above, Laaje School was established by the Limbu community to teach Limbu children *Mundhum* and Limbu language literacy. As Aita said, one of the major goals of the school is to address the growing Limbu language shift and loss in the community. Describing the current status of the Limbu language, he asserts, “our children are forgetting the [Limbu] language, culture and *Mundhum*....We want them to learn our *Mundhum* and language.” Aita and other teachers, however, contend that it has been ‘extremely difficult’ for them to encourage indigenous youth to learn the Limbu language and *Mundhum* due to the dominance of Nepali and English: “Children always like to speak Nepali. Now we have boardings [private schools]. They teach English....” Despite these challenges, Aita and his colleagues creatively use their students’ bilingual practices as follows:

Classroom Vignette #4: Taageraa Ningwaafumaang⁹⁰

After finishing the morning assembly, I and Aita entered his Grade 5 class. The lesson was about one of the popular beliefs in *Mundhum* regarding about the creation of the universe and human civilization. As the collection of rich myths about place, land, universe, knowledge, and society, *Mundhum* is considered a guiding principle for the daily living, community building, cultural performance, and learning of the Limbu people. As a collection of oral folk narratives, Limbus have learned *Mundhum* from their ancestors. Aita had a book which included the myths he himself collected from the community elders. He began his lesson by asking the class whether they had done their homework.

T: *Him yaambak kejogum? Katti pani hoina pā̃c waṭā cha. Alla pogumaang paatum saarum.* (Did you do your homework? Not too many, only five. Now you should stand up and say.)

[One student stands up and tells what he learned from the reading.]

T: *misaak saarik paate. kerekle menghepsun.* (Read it louder. All are not listening.)

[The student reads it louder. And the teacher asks another student to read aloud the text.]

S1: *aangaa ga milesuninglo. Jānina.* (I don't know. Didn't know.)

T: *taandik ka paato hau. Ek din cāi le?nne.* (You should say tomorrow. I leave you for one day [today].)

Aita's language practice is fluid from the very beginning. He interchangeably uses Limbu and Nepali. After that he asked the students to listen to the myth about how the universe and human community were created. His language practice was flexible; he mixed Nepali with Limbu to help the students understand the myth. He explained 'Taageraa Ningwaafumaang' as the creator of the earth and knowledge. Referring to *Mundhum*, Aita told the students that 'ngaasi tumyaahaang-haa' (five community elders) went to 'Taageraa Ningwaafumaang' to seek 'sikum niwaa' (knowledge/wisdom) to live in the earth.

⁹⁰ In Limbu mythology, *Taageraa Ningwaafumaang* is the symbol of the creator and knowledge.

- S1: *Siksaambe, sikum niwaa bhaneko ke ho?* (Sir, what is *Sikum Niwaa*?)
- T: **Buddi bibek, cetanā bhaneko.** *Sikum niwaa binā the-aang mebong-in, membi?* (It's wisdom, conscience. Nothing is possible without wisdom, conscience, right?)
- S2: **Aile cāhī nisaam him bāṭ sike jasto?** (Now, it's like learning from school?)
- T: **Testo mātra hoina. Aile schoolmā ta kitābmā lekheko rak aalesum.** *Taageraa Ningwaafumaangle ngaasi Tumyaahaang-haa menchaagen naamyamisaa-o tukmaa saakmaa pong saangraa lungi memechingle septemsimme mechchi.* (It's not only like that. In school, we only learn what is written in the textbook. *Taageraa Ningwaafumaangle* told five *Tumyaahaangs* to take care of human beings when people are sick and cursed.)
- S3: *Saangraa lungi bhaneko ke ho?* (What's *Saangraa lungi*?)
- T: *Saakmuraa ho athabā sarāpnu.* (It's *saakmuraa* or a curse.)
- S4: *Tumyaahaang haru cāhī siksaambaa jastai?* (*Tumyaahaang* are like teachers?)
- T: *Tumyaahaang-haa nisaam him membenen. Uniharule maukhik rupmā Taageraa Ningwaafumaang-bāṭa sikum niwaa mihusing. Budhā pākā Mundhum jānne haru Tumyaahaang aametumsim.* (*Tumyaahaangs* didn't go to school. They obtained wisdom from *Taageraa Ningwaafumaang* orally. Elderly people who know *Mundhum* are *Tumyaahaang*).
- S3: *Tumyaahaang ta ṭhulo mānche po rachan.* (*Tumyaahaangs* are great people, right?)
- T: **Ho.** *hunchire tangsing chokmaa, saakmuraa waadema, udhau, ubhau* **garne calan sikāye.** (Yes. They taught to perform *tangsing*; clear curses; and perform **udhau, ubhau**⁹¹.)

After that, Aita asked the students to answer a number of questions based on the myth he just told them. He also responded to the students' questions about '*tangsing*' and

⁹¹ Udhauli and Ubhauli are the festivals for the Limbu people to celebrate the beginning of the harvesting and plantation seasons, respectively,

‘*saakmuraa waadema*’. Using very fluid language practices, Aita describes ‘*tangsing*’ as ‘**sāmuhi**k **calan**’ (a collective ritual) to achieve ‘*cho:tlung*’ and clean ‘*saakmuraa*’. He concluded the lesson by giving his students some questions to answer as their homework for the next class.

Linguistic fluidity in Aita’s class was transformative in nature; such language practices not only challenge the monolingual ideology, but also engage students in accessing knowledge about *Mundhum*. Using the famous indigenous myth from *Mundhum* as a resource for teaching in itself counters the dominant ideology of ‘schooled literacy’ (Evans, 1993) as the learning of ‘modern’ and ‘scientific’ knowledge through the scripted and standardized textbooks. Critical literacy scholars (e.g., Gee, 1991; Street, 2003) have critiqued this kind of literacy for being ‘autonomous’ and culturally insensitive, and call for a literacy which acknowledges students’ social identities, knowledge, and values. Through his translanguaging approach, Aita successfully engaged his students in a culturally sensitive learning process by situating the lesson in the sociocultural and philosophical context of the Limbu people. He purposefully used translanguaging to teach very deep Limbu philosophical concepts such as ‘*sikum niwaa*’, ‘*saangra lungi*’, ‘*tumyaahaang*’, ‘*tangsing*’, and ‘*saakmuraa waadema*’. He kept motivating the students to listen to the myth and explained the content of the myth by switching between Limbu and Nepali. Translanguaging engages both the students and the teacher in critical thinking processes as it allows them to compare and contrast how the notions of literacy and education as envisioned in *Mundhum* are different from their modern conceptualizations.

The myth told by Aita itself included major philosophical concepts which shape the Limbu people’s ways of learning, being, and doing. Aita describes ‘*taageraa ningwaafumaang*’ as a creator of knowledge and universe. The Limbu people consider ‘*taageraa ningwaafumaang*’ as the symbol of consciousness, wisdom, and source of knowledge. As Aita translated ‘*sikum*

niwaa’ as a ‘**buddi**’ or ‘**cetanā**’ (wisdom or awareness), the students used translanguaging to compare the concept with how the students learn in modern schooling. However, Aita further explained that ‘*Sikum Niwaa*’ is more than what students learn from school textbooks. He argued that ‘*Sikum Niwaa*’ is a holistic ability and awareness towards taking care of the entire community. When he said “**aile schoolmā ta kitābmā lekheko rak aalesum**” (In school, we only learn what is written in the textbook), he brings an alternative ideology of literacy and knowledge which is not written in the textbook but instead in the myth rooted in the ‘history, culture, and place’ (Luke, 2011) of indigenous people.

Translanguaging engages both the teacher and students in critical and analytical thinking processes. When Aita talked about ‘*tumyaahaangs*’ (literally ‘community elders’), the students compared them with modern ‘*siksaambaa*’ [teachers] in school. In response, Aita argued that they are not like teachers because “*Tumyaahaang-haa nisaam him membenen. Uniharule maukhik rupmā. Taageraa Ningwaafumang- bāṭa sikum niwaa mihusing*” (Tumyaahaangs didn’t go to school. They obtained wisdom from *Taagera Ningwaafumaang* orally]. As Aita described, Tumyaahaangs are the elders who can retell myths in Mundhum orally to other people.

Translanguaging is integral to the pedagogy in Laaje School. We clearly see that by allowing students to use their fluid language practices, the teachers are engaging Limbu indigenous students in critical and transformative learning processes. Translanguaging helps both the students and teachers in reimagining language education from an indigenous perspective which rejects an autonomous model of language pedagogy and embraces a socially situated approach to learning. Indeed, the teachers in this school are promoting students’ epistemic access

to Mundhum. Let me give another example of another teacher's translanguaging classroom from Laaje School.

Classroom Vignette #5: Yaambe Sigaangbaa (Organs in the Body)

Makal began his class by introducing the title of the lesson: *Yaambe Sigaangbaa* (Organs in the Body). He first translated the title of the lesson into Nepali, and then described in Limbu what the class would be about. He also described in Nepali the purpose of the lesson: **āja hāmī hāmrā sharirko aṅga haru ko yaambak ko bāremā paḍhchau** (Today, we are learning about *the functions* of our body organs). He read a popular 'khedaa' [folktale] about the organs of the body. Makal himself had collected this and other folktales from Tumyaahaangs to use them as resources for his own class. He retold the 'khedaa' as follows:

laang, huk, thek, mik, nebo jamma ek choti ingdaa mejoge. Kasari sallā gare ta alla khepsemmo. "Mikkin hene kehopillega aanige kerekle yaambak hop," arule bhanyo. Mikkinlle "mamātra hoina muraalennaang yaambak waa" paatu. Tesai garī muraale aang mettusi "kayyoga nebore aang yaambak waa, nekhore aang yaambak waa. nebore naammaa, nekhore khemma-aang ...sabaiko kām cha." **Testai saappokpaan hoppillega kasaiko pani kām chaina mebaattu. Hekkele saappokpaalle mettusi "aangaanulang yarik tukkhe kejaabaa ga laangngin waa."** **Tespachi laangngin le bhanyo "ma bhandaa pani tukkhe kejaabaa hukkin waa..hātle sabailāi tak pirusiaang bacāko cha."** *Hekkele ga hukkille hune?nulaang yambaa sikkum niwaa waaro paatu. Hātle ma bhandā pani ṭhulo ta sikkum niwaa cha bhanyo.*

(Once upon a time, leg, hand, head, nose all had a discussion. What did they discuss, now listen? "Eye, we cannot do anything without you," others said. Eye said, "Not just me, mouth also has its role." Likewise, mouth also told them "Here, nose has a role...ear has a role. Nose smells, ear hears...all have their roles." Moreover, they said that none of them can do anything without stomach. Then stomach said "Leg has to struggle more than me." Then leg said, "Hand has to struggle more than me. Hand has given food to all for their living." And then

hand said that *sikkum niwaa* is greater than him. Hand also said that “*sikkum niwaa* is greater than me.”)

After telling the ‘*khedaa*’, Makal asked some questions to check whether the class understood the message. He asked, “*Sikkum Niwaa hopille the aabongbe?* (What do we become without *sikkum niwaa*?]. As the students did not answer, he asked them to answer in Nepali. One student responded “*laataa huincha ni, sir*” (We become a dumb, Sir.). Building on the student’s response, Kamal further described what it means to be a person without *Sikkum Niwaa*. He explained, “*sikkum niwaa hopille ga mechaamsaa kusing aandhaapin*” (Without *sikkum niwaa*, we don’t become like a human being.). He further explained that *sikkum niwaa* is necessary to achieve *cho:tlung* and support our community prosper. “**Hāmi koi pani sāno ṭhulo chainau. Tangsing garera sikkum niwaa pāincha.**” (None of us is great or trivial. We achieve *sikkum niwaa* collectively.” After that, Makal asked some confirmation questions in Limbu and Nepali to check students’ understanding and concluded his class by telling them to read the story of the ‘**goṭhāle**’ [cowboy] at home.

Like Aita, Makal built on his students’ existing linguistic and cultural knowledge. He adopted a flexible approach to help his students understand the key concepts in Limbu mythology. In order to teach the functions of different human body organs, Makal used a popular folktale that he himself had collected from the community elders. He taught different words, such as ‘*namma*’ (smell), ‘*khemma*’ (listen) and ‘*ni:*’ (see) using the folktale. Most importantly, he engaged his students in making sense of the deeper meaning of the folktale, *Tangsing*. The Limbu people take the *tangsing* as the core part of their being and livelihood. Makal folktale itself challenges the hierarchical nature of modern knowledge-building processes and resists the hegemonic assumption that the traditional folktales the indigenous communities believe in are not appropriate for literacy purposes. Indeed, the folktale creatively presents the functions of the organs of the body by situating it in the Limbu sociocultural context. Makal’s fluid languaging helped his students to understand the meaning and process of achieving *sikkum niwaa*

(consciousness or awareness). By explaining the folktale through the use of translanguaging, both the teacher and the students were able to understand the importance of indigenous epistemologies such as *tangsing* and *sikkum niwaa*.

Ideological Transformation: Building Translanguaging Ideology and Legitimizing Multilingual Practices

Ideological transformation is a necessary condition for language policy transformation (Davis & Phyak, 2015). Scholars such as Lin (2013) and Tupas (2015) have discussed the importance of ideological transformation to support equitable multilingual policies. Ideological transformation includes teachers' critical awareness about sociopolitical and educational inequalities and their 'ideological becoming' or 'ideological self' (Bakhtin, 1984); ideological becoming includes alternative perspectives towards viewing language policy that supports diversity—linguistic and epistemological—as part of equitable multilingual education policies. Building on Freire's (1970) idea that an action without critical reflection may not be empowering and transforming, the teachers in both schools were further engaged in critical dialogue on their own translanguaging pedagogical approaches. In addition to Kumar and Aita, we also engaged the majority of teachers from both schools in four different focus group discussions per school. These discussions focused on the ideological meaning of the fluid language practices that teachers in both schools have used in their classes. The goal of these discussions was to support teachers' 'ideological clarification' (Kroskrity, 2009) towards reimagining equitable multilingual education.

Building Translanguaging Ideology

A translanguaging ideology holds the view that bilingual/multilingual speakers' language practices are fluid, dynamic, and heteroglossic, rather than fixed, autonomous, and monoglossic

(Li & Zhu, 2013). This ideology includes critical awareness about how nation-state and neoliberal language ideologies in dominant language policy and discourses reproduce social and educational inequalities and embrace multilingual speakers' language practices as resources for teaching and learning. The translanguaging ideology not only challenges the colonial invention of language as a modern, autonomous, and fixed entity (Flores & García, 2013), but also and more importantly reimagines language education policy from an equitable multilingual perspective, in which hierarchies and the unequal iconization of languages are erased. However, it should not simply be understood as linguistic scaffolding and a mixing of languages, but rather is about recognizing language minoritized and indigenous people's political struggle to make sense of, resist, and transform their own conditions of linguistic, cultural, and political organizations (Flores & García, 2013; Wyman et al., 2014).

The teachers in both schools built a translanguaging ideology as they engaged in dialogue in which they critically reflected on their own fluid language practices in their classrooms and came to better understand their students' sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts. While engaging in dialogue on their own classroom practices, the teachers constructed alternative ideologies with regard to multilingual education policies and practices. As seen in the following excerpt, the teachers became even more reflexive of their own pedagogical approach and liberated themselves from their own state of 'ideological domestication' (Thomas, 1993).

Dialogue #1: Many Languages, Many Ideas⁹²

Prem: What do you think about the ***use of students' home languages*** in your ***class***?

Was it helpful for ***teaching and learning***?

Rabina: Students, in anyways, use the languages they speak. We've seen students ***learning better by allowing them to use Nepali and Limbu***. For example, they

⁹² In this dialogue bolded and italicized words are in English (same as in other chapters), while the words in normal positions are in Nepali.

said ‘baaje’, ‘thebaa’ and ‘KOPAA’ for ‘*grandfather*.’

Prem: Yes. We saw that. Students speak without *separating* Nepali and Limbu. They learn *English effectively* by using Nepali and Limbu, right? Rabina: *Right*. It’s *natural* for *students* to use the *language* they already know in *class*. We cannot ask *students* not to speak Nepali while teaching English, *for example*. I think we should be able to *use* them to *help students* learn better.

Kumar: The use of multiple languages brings multiple *ideas* into the classroom. See *for example*, in my *Social Studies class*, students have to *discuss* and write about their *family, society, culture*. It is *impossible for students* to do so when asking them to do this only in English.

Prem: *Great*. You mean teachers should not *impose an English-only policy*.

Kumar: Yes. *Students* can *use* any *language* they feel *comfortable to use*.

Head teacher: We should not think about what *students* should learn. We should not forget how they learn. The language *students* know *helps* them to learn *English* and other *subjects*. Actually, it isn’t possible to ask students to speak just one language in our *multilingual context*.

The teachers link their own fluid language practices with the broader sociocultural context to develop a translanguaging ideology. Rabina and the head teacher shared that students use their existing languages even if they are asked to speak English-only. Building on her own class experience, Rabina, explicitly mentioned that it is ‘natural’ for students to use their home languages in English classes, so she suggested that it is important to use students’ existing and new language practices creatively and purposefully to support their better educational experiences. In the same way, Kumar reflected on his own translanguaging pedagogical approach and maintained that students’ multiple languages allow them to discuss multiple ideas, which is not possible in an English-only policy. Kumar’s opinion clearly shows that translanguaging practices open up a space for bringing students’ own knowledge about their “family, culture, and society” into the classroom through discussing them with their friends.

As the teachers engaged in dialogue, they developed an alternative ideology to transform the existing dominant of monolingual ideology. Rather than embracing the ideology of language as a fixed and bounded entity, as constructed by nation-states and neoliberalism, the teachers presented themselves as ideologically clear language policy-makers. Although they face strong ideological pressure to introduce English-only policy, the teachers in Sewaro School came to recognize that monolingual policies do not work in multilingual contexts. In building a translanguaging ideology, these teachers argued that translanguaging generates divergent ideas and knowledge that are embedded in the local historical and sociocultural context.

As the teachers embraced translanguaging ideology as the norm for their classroom, they kept students at the center. In other words, they focused on how students learn; all of the teachers in Sewaro School agreed that students learn effectively if they are allowed to use their home languages for learning purposes. This new consciousness emerged from their critical understanding of their own and their students' struggles to participate in classroom activities in the existing language policies that reproduce neoliberalism and the nation-state ideology. In this process, the teachers recognized their students' identities as 'multilingual learners' of English.

Dialogue #2: We must use students' home languages⁹³

Prem: What do you think about the *simultaneous use* of languages in class?

Translations? Code-mixing? Are they *useful* in your *classes*?

Rabina: As I said above, it is *natural* for *students* to *mix* languages. They already speak, *mixing* Nepali and their '*mother tongue*'. They don't *use English* outside *class*.

So when they *use English* they *mix* Nepali and their *mother tongue*. I *use translation* when needed...for example, *explaining questions* and describing *difficult concepts*. I think it is *useful*.

Prem: Yes. It's hard to *separate* languages for multilingual speakers, right?

⁹³ In this dialogue the bolded and italicized words are in English while the normal ones are in Nepali.

Head teacher: You're right. See we're *mixing* languages already. When we speak English, we *mix* Nepali. I think we can *use* all languages to make our *class effective*.

Kumar: I agree. *Students mix* languages in their *natural* conversations. Students feel *comfortable* to *communicate mixing* languages. *Students* can ask *questions*, *express* their *opinions* using their home languages.

Prem: Do they learn better if they are allowed to *mix languages*?

Kumar: *Yes*. As I did in my *class*, we must *use students' home languages* as needed. We cannot *separate students'* existing language knowledge while teaching English. As we *discussed last time*, I think that we just make *students silent* if *English-only* is *imposed*.

We see that these teachers became ideologically clear about how translanguaging can be a useful approach to address the educational needs of bi/multilingual students. As they engaged in dialogue, these teachers developed a new epistemology of language which breaks language boundaries and hierarchies. This new epistemology recognizes the fact that it is hard to separate languages and it is difficult not to allow multilingual students to translanguage in classes. This consciousness challenges monoglossic ideology of language as a standard and unitary norm in education. Although these teachers are asked to teach English in English (Ministry of Education, 2006), they transformed this monolingual ideology by introducing translanguaging in their classes. While engaging in dialogue, these teachers transformed their own monolingual ideology in their pedagogical practices which they now think silences students' voices and restricts their learning abilities. Indeed, translanguaging provides students with a comfort zone for expressing opinions, asking questions, and engaging in a critical learning process. Therefore, the teachers, as Kumar contended, agreed that classroom teaching should be multilingual.

Legitimizing Multilingual Practices and Transforming Policies

The teachers from both schools have heard about the state's multilingual policy, known as a mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) policy (Ministry of Education, 2010). One teacher from each school has also attended a teacher training on MTB-MLE. According to this policy, schools 'can' use 'mother tongues' as a medium of instruction up to Grade 3, followed by teaching them as an 'optional subject' throughout school-level education. As mentioned in previous chapters, this transitional and additive approach to multilingual education policy has not received great public attention despite being transformative and culturally sensitive. Engaging in dialogue also helps teachers understand ideological issues in the current multilingual policies and practices and develop alternative ideologies to create spaces for multilingual education. The teachers from both schools described the current multilingual education policy as teaching 'Limbu' as a subject in school. Although these teachers appreciated the importance of teaching the 'mother tongue' to preserve the Limbu indigenous culture and identity, they reproduced a monoglossic ideology which defines multilingualism as learning three different languages: 'Nepali', 'English', and the 'mother tongue' (e.g., Limbu) in their standard written form. For example, Aita argued that 'mother-tongue education' is 'multilingual education' and claims that 'students should be taught in Limbu-only' to help them learn better Limbu. This kind of 'monolingual mother-tongue ideology' is the most dominant in Nepal's indigenous language policy and multilingual education discourses.

However, as the teachers engaged in dialogue to analyze language and literacy practices in and outside their own schools, they portrayed their emergent ideological transformation by building new consciousness and legitimization of a wide range of multilingual practices, such as translanguaging and translation, in their own classroom pedagogy. As seen in the following

dialogue, Aita and his colleagues critically discuss the relevance of fluid language practices in teaching the Limbu language and philosophy.

*Dialogue #3: Cannot Separate Languages*⁹⁴

Prem: What do you think about the *use* of both Limbu and Nepali in your *class*.

Aita: I would like to teach without *mixing* Nepali. But *students use* both languages. *It isn't just Limbu...it isn't Nepali-only either*. It looks like neither here nor there while *using* both languages. But *students* learn that way.

Prem: The *students* speak both languages in the community. That's why they also mix them in class, *right*?

Head teacher: *We also speak* both Nepali and Limbu. *Parents* think that should not *speak* Nepali...*they say that we should* use Nepali only. But students learn Limbu and Mundhum better if we allow them to use Nepali as well. For example, Nepali helps to learn *concepts* such as '*tangsing*', '*saakmuraa*', '*sikum niwaa*'.

Aita: *We have become* bilingual now. Our students are multilingual. We cannot *separate* languages, Nepali and Limbu. I think *forcing* students to speak Limbu-only is the same as forcing them to speak Nepali-only, *right*? First, students should learn, *right*? Actually, I'm happy to know that *what we're doing is good*.

While engaging in dialogue, these teachers recognized students' fluid bilingual practices as a legitimate approach to teach Limbu literacy, indigenous history, and Mundhum. As Aita shared, these teachers have an ideological burden created by the monolingual ideology of the nation-state. Yet, as they continued to reflect on their own and their students' language practices, they transformed the 'monolingual habitus' (Benson, 2013); this habitus has been governing their own and their parents' ideology about what counts as a legitimate pedagogical approach to teaching indigenous languages and literacy for a long time. As they engaged in dialogue, they continued to denaturalize the monoglossic ideology—a by-product of the nation-state ideology—

⁹⁴ In this dialogue, italicized words are in Limbu and italicized and bolded words were originally in English. Other words are in Nepali.

and embrace a translanguaging ideology to support their students in learning Limbu literacy and Mundhum more effectively. Because the nation-state adopted a monolingual Nepali-only policy since the beginning of formal education in the mid-20th century (see Chapter 4), as Aita claims above, the indigenous parents and teachers embraced the assumption that a monolingual approach is the best way to teach indigenous languages. Yet, these teachers continued to believe that it is not possible and effective to teach the Limbu language and philosophy by separating bilingual indigenous students' language practices.

While engaging in dialogue, the teachers constructed their own space—'a third space' (Bhabha, 1994)—which counters dominant assumptions about language education. While justifying the use of both languages in teaching Limbu literacy and Mundhum, Aita argued that "it isn't just Limbu...it isn't Nepali-only either." This consciousness recognizes the students' identity as 'multilingual' subjects and transforms the binary distinction that the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies have created between languages. More striking, the engagement in dialogue, as Aita maintains, empowered teachers to reclaim their own multilingual practices as a 'good' and legitimate pedagogical approach in multilingual contexts.

As a member of the dialogue, I shared with the teachers from both schools—Seaware and Laaje Schools—how translanguaging is integral to indigenous and ethnic minoritized communities around the world. I drew on ideas from scholars who are working in indigenous multilingual contexts (e.g., Hornberger, 2002, 2010; McCarty & Wyman, 2009). In a reflexive manner, I linked those ideas with what we discussed above and invited teachers to share their ideas. For example, in participating in dialogue on the importance of multilingual practices, Kumar focuses on the role of identity in language learning (Cummins, 2006) and asserts: "Our students already speak Nepali, Rai, Tamang, and Limbu. They're bilinguals...some are

multilinguals. As I said, the knowledge in these languages helps to learn a new language. We should use them.” He further says that “As you [Prem] mentioned, we should *respect* what they know, how they speak, how they learn. I will do only a *one-way teaching* if I don’t do so.” The head teacher from Sewaro School agreed with Kumar and felt empowered to know about the use of students’ multilingual practices as a legitimate practice in other contexts. In a reflexive fashion, he maintained that

I used to think that it wasn’t *a good idea*⁹⁵ to use students’ ‘mother tongues’ in my *class*. I *translate* and shift between languages. Sometimes, I *use* Nepali to ask and *explain questions*...sometimes to describe *meanings*...sometimes to *encourage students* to interact. Now, I’m glad that what I’m doing is *an appropriate way* of teaching in *our context*.

As the teachers became aware of the relevance of translingual practices, they appreciated their own pedagogical practices as ‘appropriate’ for their multilingual students. As the head teacher maintained that they understood the multiple purposes of using translanguaging. This evolving process of ideological becoming further engaged teachers in questioning the current discourse of multilingual education in Nepal. In a focus group discussion, the head teacher from Sewaro School critiqued that as ‘only one mother tongue spoken by the majority ethnic group in the community’ is chosen to be used as a medium of instruction and subject of teaching, the speakers of other indigenous languages ‘don’t feel good’: “I’ve experienced such tension among the parents here,” he said. Building on our previous discussions, he maintained that “if we allow *students to switch* between languages we can *easily incorporate* as many languages as possible.” As this head teacher critiqued, the existing MTB-MLE policies and practices not only reproduce the ideology of ‘double monolingualism’ (Cummins, 2006), but it also does not necessarily

⁹⁵ Bolded and italicized words in English. Italicized words are in Limbu and others in normal positions in Nepali.

challenge Nepal's existing sociolinguistic hierarchy and ideological hegemony of the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies. Like the head teacher, Rabina reflected on her own class and argued that "if we don't impose one language, students can learn multiple languages and know about different cultures and languages in the learning processes." Yet, she suggested that all the teachers and policy-makers "must know what we've discussed here...these are important."

As the teachers were engaged in dialogue, they reclaimed themselves as a legitimate source of knowledge for reimagining multilingual education policy. In this process, they came to understand the ideological struggle of indigenous communities to reclaim their identity and epistemologies in assimilationist state policies (McCarty & Wyman, 2009; Nicholas, 2009). For example, in one focus group discussion, the head teacher from Laaje School asserted that "in fact all indigenous people don't keep languages separate. It's not new thing. We teach the Limbu language and Mundhum bilingually." He further states that "we want to promote our language. We want our children to learn Mundhum. But we don't force them to speak only Limbu." As they became ideologically clear, these teachers appreciated how indigenous youth experience tension in learning Limbu and built a sense of belonging in their community in the face of the monolingual ideology. Nicholas (2009) has revealed a similar finding from her study on Hopi youths' language practices and ideologies. Aita, for example, argued that "we don't have to feel bad when students mix languages while learning Limbu. They are bilingual." These teachers' views challenge the ideology of the indigenous language as an homogenous and a fixed object (Wyman et al., 2014) and reclaim their translingual practices as legitimate and transformative. In the case of Laaje School, the teachers embraced 'recursive bilingual education' (García, 2009) which aims to reverse language shift and maintain the Limbu language and culture while allowing students to use their translingual practices in the classroom.

Conclusion

Keeping teachers' language ideology at the center of language policy transformation, this chapter has portrayed dialogical engagement with the teachers from two schools. The analysis of teacher engagement shows two major issues with regard to reimagining multilingual education to address the struggles, identities, and epistemologies of indigenous and minoritized children. First and foremost, teacher's language ideology, which is currently given the least importance in language policy, should be an integral component of multilingual teacher education. More specifically, this chapter shows that teachers working with multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural students should have a deeper understanding not only of pedagogical methods, but also, and perhaps most importantly, a critical understanding of the sociolinguistic, sociopolitical, educational, and epistemic injustices associated with the erasure of multilingualism. Building such awareness involves engaging teachers in both exploring and analyzing multilingual children's language and literacy practices (both in and outside school) and support them in unpacking their ideological dimensions. Second, this chapter has further shown that engaging teachers in ethnographically grounded dialogue not only helps teachers unpack and transform their own language ideologies (Young, 2014), but also builds their critical multilingual awareness (García, 2008). Such awareness leads to transformative praxis—the creation of 'translanguaging space' (Li & Zhu, 2013). Further dialogic engagement on their own praxis liberates teachers from their own condition of ideological domestication and empowers them to construct a new consciousness that embraces multilingual practices as a resource.

Chapter 9: Youth as Transformative Agents: Critical Language Awareness, Indigenous Youth Ideologies, and Activism

Introduction

Youth agency, ideology, and activism always remain at the center of social transformation. Ginwright and Cammarota (2006) claim that “the advancement of an active and engaged citizenry requires the edifying practice of acknowledging and supporting youth agency, and young people’s capacity to become subjects of knowledge and social transformations” (p. xix). While Appadurai (2006) argues for youth’s ‘right to research’, Ginwright and Cammarota (2006) contend that they have the “right to change, challenge, or disrupt policies, laws, and regulations that unfairly create inequality” (p. xx). However, youth, particularly indigenous and minoritized ones, are still considered peripheral agents of language policy. In other words, their voices, ideologies, knowledge, and struggles are largely erased from dominant language policy discourses and practices.

Building on the idea of indigenous youth as ‘language policy-makers’ (McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol, & Zepeda, 2009), this chapter analyzes indigenous youth’s language ideologies, construction of critical ideologies awareness, and activism towards promoting equitable multilingual education. More particularly, I discuss how Limbu indigenous youth negotiate a complex ideological environment and build their activism towards creating space for indigenous languages in education and other public spheres. In other words, this chapter focuses on the critical ideological awareness of Limbu indigenous youth towards awakening from a sense of injustice and transforming hegemonic language ideologies that shape the current language policies and practices. The indigenous youth in this study are affiliated with the Limbu Students’ Forum, a Limbu indigenous student organization at Tribhuvan University, Nepal. The

Forum was formed by some Limbu graduate students in 1998 to promote the Limbu language, culture, script, literature, and history. Initially, its scope was limited to organizing an annual picnic program to establish a network among the Limbu students in various colleges in Kathmandu.⁹⁶

Youth Engagement in Understanding Sociolinguistic Borderlands

Drawing on Native American youth's competing language ideologies, struggles, and desire to learn their heritage language and fluid language practices, McCarty (2014) develops the notion of *sociolinguistic borderlands* to theorize how indigenous youth negotiate, challenge, and resist stigmatized and stereotypical ideologies about indigenous languages as 'primitive' and 'rural'. Building on the 'sociolinguistics of mobility' (Blommaert, 2010) and 'borderlands' (Anzaldúa, 2012), McCarty (2014) defines the concept as "spatial, temporal, and ideological spaces of sociolinguistic hybridity and diversity" (p. 255) which include lived linguistic, educational, and political experiences of indigenous youth. Sociolinguistic borderlands provide a critical lens to explore and understand the ideological impacts of dominant language policies and practices on the lives of indigenous youth and engage them in reimagining "what is possible to change and to *do*" (McCarty, 2014, p. 265). In this chapter, I first discuss two representative counter-narratives of two indigenous youth to begin dialogic engagement with indigenous youth.

⁹⁶ However, after the 2006 People's Movement, the Forum became actively involved in political activities concerning indigenous rights and identity. Critical dialogue in this study are drawn from a collaborative project entitled *Indigenous Youth and Critical Language Policy* with the Limbu students from 2011-2014. The major goal of this project was to engage the Limbu youth in dialogue to raise their critical awareness about ideological issues and empower them towards taking necessary actions to create space for the Limbu language, culture, and knowledge systems in education and other public spheres. I met this youth in 2011 at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, where I used to work as a lecturer. As we share the same cultural, ethnic, and heritage language identity, we have participated together in various Limbu indigenous programs, cultural festivals, and carnivals where we have talked about language, culture, history, and politics.

Counter-Narrative #1: Pride and Shame

Nabina (pseudonym), who is from eastern Nepal, is now doing her MA degree in Kathmandu. She left her village, first, for her college in the district headquarters and later for an MA in Kathmandu. She wants to identify herself as ‘Limbu by ethnicity’; however, she does not feel comfortable to call herself ‘a Limbu’ in terms of her ‘Limbu language proficiency’. “I understand and speak Limbu. But my Limbu isn’t so good.” She says that since she did not have to use Limbu in school, she does not speak Limbu fluently. “I mix Nepali, Limbu, and sometimes [laughs] English as well. I cannot read and write Limbu very well yet,” she says. When asked whether her parents told her to speak Limbu, she says that “because my parents speak both Nepali and Limbu, they didn’t ask. But my mother sometimes used to ask what something is called in Limbu.”

Nabina shows mixed ideologies with regard to the importance of indigenous languages. She says that all languages are important because “they help in socialization...they show our culture, history, and collective identity.” For her, Limbu helps to understand culture and indigenous knowledge. Nabina becomes quite serious when asked about how she feels for not being able to fluently speak Limbu. She says “I feel bad. I feel that I’m not a Limbu.” She explains that when she was child no one told her about the importance of the Limbu language. “Actually, I used to be ashamed of speaking Limbu outside the home. I used to think that I would be a *sāno mānche* (person with low status).” However, Nabina became critical about the condition of her own self-marginalization when asked what made her feel ashamed of speaking Limbu.

She says, “Limbu was not taught in school. It was not used on the radio. Textbooks were all in Nepali,” she says. “Nobody speaks Limbu in schools.” She further mentions that English has become an important language for her academic success in college and university, and also that she did not have time to learn Limbu. As we continue to discuss, she begins to critique the state’s policy that supports inequalities among languages. For example, she says that “If there was a multilingual policy, I could learn to read and write Limbu.” However, Nabina has been learning Limbu language literacy since she joined college. She mentions: “I joined the forum [Limbu Students’ Forum] to learn Limbu. We now organize picnic programs. We focus on learning and teaching cultural performances and discuss political issues as well.” Nabina clearly

challenges the dominant assumption that indigenous languages are used only at home and rural villages. For her, it is not necessary to speak ‘perfect Limbu’, but “we should have awareness about and respect to all languages,” she says. “We speak Nepali with other ethnic groups. We also need English....It is an international language.” Commenting on her own language practices, Nabina says that “it’s hard for me to speak ‘**shudda Limbu**’ (pure Limbu). I mix Limbu and English when I speak Nepali. I mix Nepali and English when I speak Limbu,” she says. However, she feels ‘excluded’ when her friends don’t understand her ‘mixing style’. She recalls one anecdote as follows:

I remember that one day in school I said *thapraa* (marigold). But my friends didn’t understand. I also said *lumbaa* (a metal bowl) and they did not understand. I mixed languages but they didn’t understand. I did not know why. I just felt I wasn’t speaking Nepali. So I asked my parents why my friends didn’t understand me. They told me that they were Limbu words. I frequently listen to those words from my family and neighbors in the community. I felt I wasn’t accepted in the group of my friends.

Nabina’s counter-narrative embraces indigenous youth’s struggles to make sense of their multilingual identities in a broader sociolinguistic context of Nepal. Like Nabina, indigenous youth develop both a sense of ‘pride’ and ‘shame’ in Nepal’s unequal multilingual context. On the one hand, Nabina appreciates the role of Limbu in sustaining indigenous culture and epistemologies and, on the other, she holds a sense of ‘shame’ as she cannot speak ‘pure Limbu’. Indigenous scholars such as Nicholas (2014) and Wyman (2014) have discussed that such mixed and contested ideologies of indigenous youth provide them with transformative agency if they are engaged in further dialogue. Phyak and Bui (2014) have also analyzed the ideological struggle of indigenous/minoritized youth towards reclaiming their multilingual identities in the face of the growing dominance of neoliberalism. As she is further engaged in dialogue, Nabina links her ambivalent ideologies with the state’s discriminatory language policies that restrict the use of Limbu in school.

Nabina is not happy with the way indigenous languages are not given space in education and government offices. She says, “I could definitely read and write Limbu if it was taught in school.” However, she is happy that she is learning Limbu these days. Although Limbu is not taught or used in her courses, she says, “I learn it from short literacy classes. It’s fun and easy to learn now. I can compare it with Nepali and English.” When asked why she is interested in learning Limbu in this age of globalization, she comments that “extra care should be given to indigenous languages” because most youth are not “interested in learning them.”

Engaging in counter-narratives empowers indigenous youth to become social critics who can critically analyze how language policies may reproduce social inequalities. Nabina not only challenges the state’s language policy for ignoring indigenous languages in education, but also resists the monolingual and monoglossic ideology of both Nepali and Limbu. Mixing Limbu while speaking Nepali resists the standard Nepali ideology. At the same time, she contends that “we cannot ask indigenous youth just to speak their ‘mother tongues’,” she says. Her self-learning efforts of the Limbu language are highly influenced by the indigenous cultural performances and festivals she has been attending in Kathmandu on different occasions. “I have participated in Udhauli, Ubhauri⁹⁷, and other festivals. I like *paalaam*⁹⁸ and *Mundhum*. I want to know more about them.” Although Nabina is away from her birthplace where Limbu is traditionally spoken, she now uses Limbu as much as possible with other Limbu friends, which she did not do when she was in the village. This clearly deconstructs the dominant assumption that indigenous languages are only learned at an early age and that they are spoken only in rural areas (McCarty, 2014). As she tells her own narrative, she embraces her own identity as a

⁹⁷ These festivals are celebrated by the Limbu people as symbols of the beginning of the plantation and harvesting seasons.

⁹⁸ *Paalaam* is a Limbu song performed during a cultural performance called ‘*Dhaan Naach*’ [the ‘Paddy Dance’].

multilingual youth and shows a greater awareness and respect of all languages. In order to strengthen the use of indigenous languages, she suggests that youth should not feel ashamed of using their ‘mixed style’ of Limbu, but rather that they should be proud of what they already know. For this, she suggests that “I think we should raise awareness of all indigenous youth” with regard to language issues.

Counter-Narrative #2: We Aren’t Monolinguals

Like Nabina, another indigenous youth, Amar, who was doing his MA in education during the time of this research, builds on his own narrative to navigate sociolinguistic fluidity and simultaneity in reimagining equitable multilingual education.

Amar used to speak Limbu dominantly at home and in his community before he went to a public primary school in the village. His family is bilingual. However, they preferred to speak Limbu as the primary language of socialization. There are very few Nepali monolingual speakers in his village. He learned to read and write in Nepali, which he calls Khas-Nepali, in school. As all the teachers were from the Khas community, “we never got an opportunity to speak Limbu”, he says. “Actually,” he reveals, “we weren’t allowed to use Limbu in school.” When asked about the impacts of the monolingual policy, he maintains, “I thought it was fine not to use Limbu in school. I used to speak it at home and in the community.” Going back to his early schooling experiences, he says, “It was definitely hard for me and my [Limbu] friends to not use Limbu. We used to mix Limbu while speaking Nepali.” He contends that “it was really hard for me to understand what the teachers taught in the early grades.”

As he tells his narrative, Amar becomes critical about how both the monolingual nation-state and neoliberal ideologies have constructed negative attitudes towards indigenous languages. While responding to my question of whether he has seen any sign of language policy changes towards recognizing the use of indigenous languages in education, he promptly comments “I see some. There is a mother-tongue education policy. But there is no implementation.” As we continue to discuss why the ‘mother-tongue policy’ is not implemented, he critiques that the “**ekal bhāshi soc**” (monolingual mentality) still governs teachers’, bureaucrats’, and even indigenous people’s beliefs

about language in education. Giving an example of his recent conversation with a parent, he says:

Parents are influenced by what they see and hear. Recently, I talked to a parent who is sending his son to a private school. He thinks that if his son can learn English he will have a better future. English is linked with modernity and the quality of education. Such an English-craze has created a negative attitude towards indigenous languages.

As we discuss local language ideologies, Amar becomes more critical about the ‘misrecognition’ of indigenous youth’s multilingual identity. “I speak Limbu, Nepali, and English,” he says. “My parents love to speak Limbu. It helps me participate in Limbu cultural performances.” He maintains that “I speak Nepali when I talk to ‘Chetri-Bahun friends’. I learn and speak English for my course.” He says that all indigenous youth who are in school speak at least three languages. “We aren’t monolinguals. We are multilinguals,” Amar claims. With regard to indigenous youth language practices, Amar reveals that “it’s normal to mix languages for indigenous youth like me. I know some seniors don’t like it....They think I don’t speak Limbu well [laughs]. But you know...we mix languages, since we speak Nepali and English as well.”

Amar himself identifies as a ‘multilingual’ speaker and naturalizes fluid language practices as part of his and others’ struggle to create a space for their multilingual identity in the broader sociolinguistic context. For Amar, it is important to give equal space to local indigenous languages in order to respect their ‘multilingual identity’. When asked about the importance of indigenous languages, he claims that indigenous languages are a “part of our history, identity, and culture” and argues that “if they aren’t used in education, young people like us aren’t interested in using it.” He further adds that “indigenous languages are assets for the nation, for all of us.” Like Nabina, Amar is also very active in organizing various activities, such as Limbu literacy classes and workshops for Limbu students. He has written articles on indigenous rights in local newspapers. In response to my query about the challenges of indigenous youth activism,

he maintains that their efforts towards promoting indigenous languages are affected by the current ongoing political tensions of ‘identity politics’ (see Chapter 4). Reflecting on the existing sociopolitical tension, Amar contends that his ‘Nepali native speaker friends’ always ask him why he talks about ‘mother tongues’; his friends think “...it is narrow-minded to talk about ‘ethnic languages’. They link language issues with ethnic politics,” he recounts. At the same time, he reveals that all indigenous people are not quite aware of linguistic inequalities. So, like Nabina, he suggests that it is important to raise the awareness of indigenous youth who can make other people aware of language issues.

In their engagement in counter-narratives, both Nabina and Amar situate themselves in sociolinguistic borderlands which embrace their competing language ideologies and struggles to reclaim their multilingual identity. While engaging in counter-narratives, these youth became aware of the “dynamic and complex sociolinguistic ecologies they inhabit and give meaning to and that they simultaneously claim, contest, honor, and resist” (McCarty, 2014, p. 264). In other words, engaging in dialogue provides indigenous youth with opportunities for building ‘sociolinguistic awareness’ (Kellermann, 2001) by unravelling competing language ideologies and their impacts in their personal and collective lived experiences. As a dialogic space, these counter-narratives provide indigenous youth with the power to engage themselves in negotiating a complex ideological environment in which indigenous languages and its speakers’ are invisibilized due to nation-state and neoliberal ideologies. In this process, both Nabina and Amar cross boundaries between languages and embrace their multilingual identity. The counter-narratives recognize indigenous youth’s engagement in the sociolinguistic fluidity and embrace their awakening of a sense of injustice (Deutsch, 1974, cited in Stoudt et al., 2011), which

involves knowing, talking, and building critical awareness of the intersection between language policies and social injustices.

Both Nabina's and Amar's awakening of a sense of injustice "unveils and provokes critical consciousness and actions" (Stoudt et al., 2011) with regard to creating space for indigenous languages in Nepal's public spheres. Building on these youth's suggestions, as seen above, we collaboratively planned and organized a series of awareness-raising workshops on language policy, multilingualism, and indigenous languages.

An Awareness Approach and Youth Engagement in Language Policy

An 'awareness approach' (Siegel, 2006), which deals with linguistic inequalities and their impacts on the minoritized people's lives, has been used as an attempt to engage people in understanding, critiquing, and circumventing oppressive language policies, ideologies, and practices. Scholars have used different forms of an awareness approach towards resisting and transforming marginalizing policies and ideologies which affect the role of language in social life. Building on a 'language awareness approach' (Hawkins, 1984), Hélot and Young (2006) engage teachers and parents in exposing and building children's awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and using them as a resource for empowering minoritized language speakers in the face of a French monolingual policy. As an 'alternative model' of language education (Hélot & Young, 2006), a language awareness approach supports an inclusive model of language policy in which all children have opportunities to know about how their peers from different languages and cultures use language.

My engaged work with indigenous youth builds on critical language awareness (CLA) which, as Fairclough (1992) argues, "highlights how language conventions and language practices are invested with power relations and ideological processes which people are often

unaware of” (p. 7). Scholars working with indigenous youth (e.g., Lee, 2014; Wyman et al., 2014), heritage language learners (e.g., Leeman et al., 2011), and minoritized language varieties (e.g., Siegel, 2006) have shown that CLA is a very relevant approach to raise youth’s ‘critical consciousness’ (Freire, 1970); this approach helps to build youth’s critical agency, and support their activism and advocacy for resisting and transforming marginalizing discourses and language ideologies in language policies and practices.

‘We are Blindfolded’: Extraordinary Conversations on Linguistic Marginalization

Following our collective plans with Amar, Nabina, and other Limbu indigenous youth, we organized a series of *Indigenous Youth and Language Policy* workshops at the national, district, and local levels between 2012 and 2014. In seven different workshops (totaling 30 hours), indigenous youth were provided with a dialogic space to share and discuss their language practices, ideologies, and narratives in relation to local, national, and global language policy discourses. In these workshops, indigenous youth were engaged in exploring and analyzing interdisciplinary issues concerning three major topics: (a) the current sociolinguistic situation and the status of indigenous languages; (b) language ideologies and their impacts on language policy discourses and practices; and, (c) multilingual education, indigenous knowledge, and the role of indigenous youth in language policy. My role during these workshops was as a facilitator, co-learner, and one of the participants. As a facilitator, I presented (a) the current local, national, and global language policy discourses and practices (e.g., Hough et al., 2009; Phyak, 2011; Rai et al., 2011; Ricento, 2006; Tollefson, 1991, 2013); (b) the status of indigenous minoritized languages in Nepal and around the globe (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012; Yadava, 2007); and, (c) the role of language ideologies—particularly linguistic nationalism and neoliberalism—in language policies (e.g., Anderson, 1991; Fishman, 2001; Gegeo & Watson-

Gegeo, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Kroskrity, 2009). In addition, I also presented the role of multilingual education for social justice and empowering minoritized language speakers (e.g., Cummins, 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009) and the indigenous youth's role in transforming language policy (e.g., McCarty et al., 2009; Wyman, 2009).

Ethnographically grounded dialogue was at the center of these workshops. In addition to engaging them in critical discussions in the breakout sessions, the participants were asked to present their ideas and comment and question each other's opinions. As the goal of the workshops was not just to *inform* but to raise indigenous youth's critical awareness and to support their agency and activism towards transforming the hegemony of dominant language ideologies, they were given ample opportunities to *connect and clarify* ideological tensions at local and national levels. I now turn to a discussion of how indigenous youth described the status of indigenous languages and the people in the current discourses of language policy and practices.

In one ten-hour workshop, some thirty-three students representing various ethnic and caste groups were present. The discussion began with a brief overview of Nepal's sociolinguistic situation and led up to exploring national language policies, both explicit and implicit. Based on the issues raised in the discussion, the participants then formed six different groups to discuss: the language situation of their own communities, the reasons why children are hesitant to use their 'mother tongue', and the importance of using multilingualism in education. The groups then discussed these issues and came up with multimodal (both visual and textual) interpretations of what they think about Nepal's sociolinguistic situation and the identity of the indigenous people within it.



Figure 3: A youth explaining an image they drew to describe the current situation of indigenous languages. @Prem Phyak

As seen in the above image (Figure 3), one group drew a map with a blindfolded man at one end of the river. When asked to describe the visual, one participant from the group described it as follows:

The blindfolded man at one end of the bridge represents the common people, particularly ethnic minorities, who are not informed about the policies. Although there are policies that allow the use of indigenous languages in education, ethnic minorities are already blindfolded....They are in the darkness. They don't know where to go. They aren't sure what languages should be used in school. Without being aware of the importance of multilingualism and indigenous languages, they cannot take strong activist positions....You know...they might fall into the river.

We see that the image and the above textual description represents the indigenous youth's sociolinguistic knowledge and their understanding about how indigenous peoples are

marginalized in Nepal's current sociopolitical context. Cummins (2006) describes such collaborative products, which reflect the youth's identities and knowledge, as 'identity texts'.

The above identity text shows these indigenous youth's deeper understanding about the condition of their own marginalization in current language policies and practices and invites other youth to participate in dialogue. As the group finished presenting their identity text, other youth asked questions and made comments. For example, one participant questioned why indigenous peoples were described as 'blindfolded' and argued that "actually, the state is blindfolded. It hasn't been able to 'see' the importance of indigenous languages." Another participant built on what the group presented and interpreted the image as follows:

I think we [indigenous youth] are like the 'blindfolded man'. See...we have the dominance of Nepali and English. We're told that after learning English we can cross the bridge; we'll find a modern city. We imagine we'll have a good life there, good job...[laughs]. But we don't see indigenous languages there....We have our own language and culture. They're disappearing. Even if we learn English or Nepali, we cannot cross the river without knowing our language and culture. Knowing about our culture and language will help remove the blindfold from our eyes.

These 'extraordinary conversations' (Fine & Weis, 2003) show indigenous youth's critical awareness and ideologies with regard to the current sociolinguistic situation. While participating in dialogue, these youth metaphorically presented themselves as a 'blindfolded man' over the river. These youth argue that it is equally important to know about their 'own' culture and language to 'remove the blindfold' from their eyes. Removing the blindfold for youth refers to building critical consciousness and a sense of respect towards indigenous language and culture. These youth speak of the discursive impacts of the dominant language policy discourse which takes English as the language of 'modernity', a 'good life', and a 'good job' in shaping the language ideology of indigenous youth. While focusing on the role of their 'mother tongue',

these youth critiqued the limitation of learning Nepali and English in understanding their actual community, which is multilingual and multicultural. As seen in the above excerpt, these indigenous youth have shown their concerns about the increasing disappearance of indigenous languages and cultures.

Studies have shown that the hegemonic position of the dominant society constructs—both structurally and discursively—an unequal order of indexicality of languages (Blommaert, 2005). Accordingly, a dominant language discursively “signifies ‘progress’ and is associated with modernity and advancement” while non-dominant languages are “relegated to a position in the past, as static and vanishing” (Lee, 2014, p. 138). Schools perpetuate this kind of ideology through their language policies, pedagogies, and curricula.

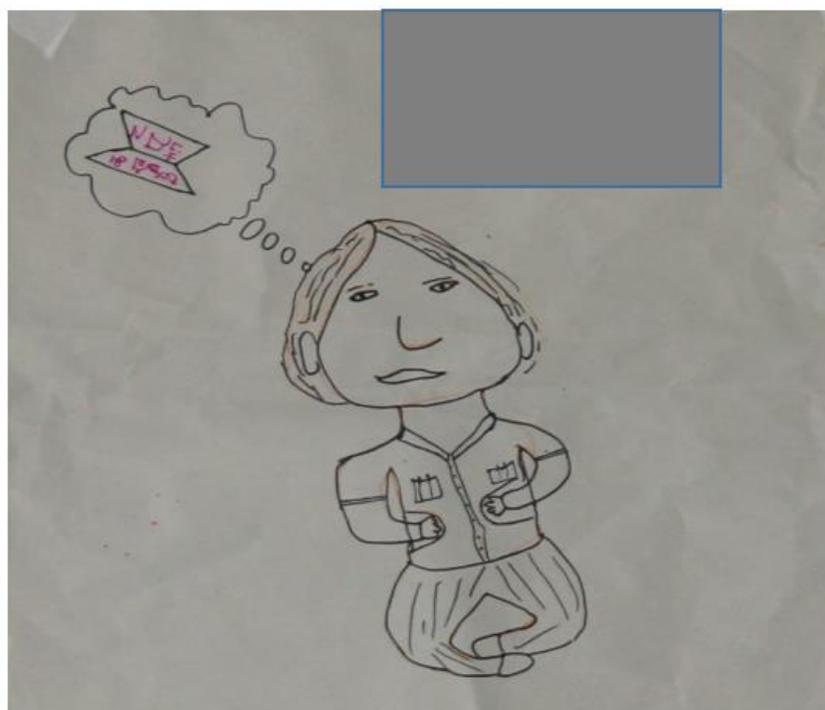


Figure 4: An image drawn by indigenous youth to describe the impact of linguistic marginalization. @Prem Phyak

While participating in dialogue on why indigenous languages are marginalized, these youth became more critical about the inequalities and intolerance against indigenous languages in

education. For example, one group of participants described the current language education policy by drawing an image of a girl whose hands, legs, and tongue are tied (as mentioned in Figure 4). They interpreted the meaning of the image as follows:

We go to school and learn what we are taught. We have to learn how to speak, read, and write in Nepali and English. Nepali and English are ‘compulsory’. But we don’t learn to read and write in our ‘mother tongues’. Textbooks are in Nepali and English. Textbooks don’t include indigenous languages and cultures. Teachers don’t encourage us to use indigenous languages. We learn only for our head, but this kind of learning does not help us to move and speak up without our ‘mother tongues’. We’re in a difficult situation. Our legs, hands, and tongues are tied. So we should change the existing language policies and practices.

Here, the indigenous youth show a special kind of critical awareness which Lee (2014) calls ‘critical indigenous consciousness’. This consciousness includes indigenous youth’s “awareness of the historical and broad oppressive conditions that have influenced [the] current realities of Indigenous people’s lives” (p. 145). This awareness emerges from the dialogic engagement in which the indigenous youth discussed language issues in relation to both macro and micro policies and practices. While critiquing the hierarchy of languages in the current policies (Nepali and English are compulsory), these youth became more critical about the exclusion of indigenous languages and cultures in schools and textbooks. More importantly, they challenged the dominant ideology that recognizes only the knowledge of Nepali and English as desirable for students to succeed in education.

More strikingly, these youth critically analyzed the impact of the dominant ideologies in their educational experiences. They critiqued that the current language policy imposes learning ‘for the head’, but it does not support indigenous freedom of speech. As the indigenous youth contended, their “legs, hands, and tongues are tied” as their multilingual identities, particularly

the ones based on indigenous language, are not recognized in education. With this awareness, the indigenous youth were further engaged in analysis of ideologies that are reproduced in the official language policies and in the public spheres of the mass media.

Critical Reading: Indigenous Youth Becoming a Counterpublic

One major component of the critical language awareness workshops was to engage indigenous youth in the ‘critical reading of language policy’ (Watts, 2001) documents and other related texts/documents from the public sphere of both local and national newspapers. In addition, we also discussed how local schools and teachers are interpreting and implementing the ‘official’ policies based on the data that I have collected and the youth have brought into the discussions. The goal of this activity in the workshop was to empower the indigenous youth by engaging them in the analysis of the creation, production, and impacts of dominant ideologies in current language policies and practices. The discussions around the critical reading of language policy texts were informed by Ball’s (1994) three dimensions of policy: *policy-as-text*, *policy-as-discourse*, and *policy-as-effects* (or practice). In the beginning of this group discussion, I briefly presented the state’s ‘official’ language policy from the Constitution, the National Education Act, the National Curriculum Framework and Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy

After that the youth were engaged in analyzing ideologies in these official language policy documents. The issue of whether or not policies embrace multilingualism in education and give equal space to indigenous languages was the major issue of the discussions. Each group came up with very critical and insightful ideas. While these youth acknowledged the constitutional provision that guarantees the indigenous people’s “right to get basic education in [the] mother tongue as provide for in law” (Government of Nepal, 2007, p. 8), they were critical

about the state's "lack of commitment" in putting this provision into "action" and "reality". During the group discussion, one youth commented: "We cannot do anything with rights only. The state's responsibility is necessary. Indigenous languages and cultures were oppressed for too long, so the state should support indigenous communities." Another youth also critiqued the insufficiency of the liberal ideology of language rights (Bruthiaux, 2009) and questioned why indigenous languages are not given space in schools despite the rights to mother-tongue education. As the dialogue continued, these youth presented their own identity as a social critic. They not only unraveled inconsistencies between 'official' policies and on-the-ground practices, but they also became critically aware of the processes through which linguistic injustices are reproduced, implicitly and explicitly. For example, commenting on the medium of instruction policy in the National Education Act, one group of youth commented that the state's language policy treats mother tongues "unequally", as "it states that primary education *may be* (**sakinecha**⁹⁹) provided in [the] mother tongue" (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 11, emphasis added). For these youth, *sakinecha* does not show the state's "true intention" to promote local languages as the medium of instruction in schools; that is, the National Education Act indeed states that the medium of instruction for education "shall be" in Nepali, English, or both languages.

Hidden Policies and Multilingual Education

Engaging in a critical reading of language policy helped the indigenous youth become aware of how language hierarchies are constructed and reproduced in dominant policies and practices. For example, commenting on the constitutional provision of Nepali as an 'official language', one youth contended that "the state still has a **ekal bhāshik soc** (one language

⁹⁹ In Nepali 'sakinecha' means something that isn't for sure; rather, it just shows possibility.

mentality)” and argued that “unless Nepali-only remains as a **sarkārī bhāṣā** (official language), other languages don’t receive public attention. People think that **sānaa bhāṣā** (small languages) do not have any value if they aren’t used in government offices.” Indeed, these youth want the state’s “sincere commitment” to embrace the “multilingual and multiethnic identity” of the country. As they critically read the policy, they became aware of tensions between the dominant ideologies and their own ideologies and came to understand how language education policies are still reproducing linguistic inequalities. For example, one group of youth commented on the existing national curricula as follows: “Our curricula are not equal. Nepali and English are ‘compulsory’ subjects, but ‘mother tongues’ are optional.” As they critiqued the policy, they also brought what they have seen in actual practice into the dialogue. One youth, for example, shared what he has seen in a public school in his own village:

Aani paan [our language] is taught in the local school [in his village]. But it’s sad that the government doesn’t provide any *quota* for ‘*mother tongue teacher*’. The *community* itself has to *manage [develop] textbooks* and the *teacher*. I think mother tongue education is *just like a formality*. *Aani paan* is taught in the *last period* of the day. But English and Nepali are taught in the beginning of the day. Students are already *tired* so they aren’t *motivated* to learn *aani paan*.

Building on this reflection, another youth argued that “indeed, the state doesn’t like to promote indigenous languages.” These views show that the youth are unraveling the hidden or implicit policies which continue to reproduce linguistic inequalities in subtle ways. As the youth mentioned above, the government does not take responsibility in developing the textbooks, training teachers, or providing other technical and financial supports to schools and communities for ‘mother-tongue education’. Most strikingly, ‘mother tongues’ (like *aani paan*) receive less emphasis in schools as they are usually scheduled for the last period of the day; in contrast,

English and Nepali are taught in the beginning of the day. As children are already tired by this time of the day, they are not motivated to learn their ‘mother tongue’. Such ‘hidden’ policies by the schools create a hierarchy of languages and diminishes the cultural and linguistic capital of the local languages.

The indigenous youth critically appreciate the relevance of the ‘mother-tongue-based multilingual education’ policy. In the workshop, we particularly critically read two policy documents: (a) the *Multilingual Education Implementation Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 2010), and (b) the *Multilingual Education Program at a Glance* (Ministry of Education, 2007). When participating in dialogue, the indigenous youth acknowledged the state’s efforts to give space for indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in education. They particularly liked the inclusion of ‘indigenous knowledge’ and the use of ‘mother tongues’ as a medium of instruction in the policy (Ministry of Education, 2010). However, they raised some critical questions with regard to the ideologies and practices of MTB-MLE. One youth questioned: “Why are children taught in their mother tongue up to Grade 3 only? Schools don’t teach in the ‘mother tongue’ if they have to teach in Nepali and English later [after Grade 3].” Clearly, these youth’s analysis challenges the additive approach to multilingual education which reproduces the nation-state ideology in education (Farr & Song, 2011).

Studies from around the globe have shown that an additive approach to multilingual education reproduces ‘double monolingualism’ (Cummins, 2006) and is unable to address the fluid and non-standard language practices in indigenous and minoritized language communities (see Heugh, 2015). Flores and Rosa (2015) have argued that the additive approach to multilingual education appropriates monolingual and standard language ideologies as the norm for multilingual learners. García (2009) claims that an additive approach to multilingual

education still reproduces a monoglossic ideology which imposes monolingualism as a norm and expects the multilingual learners “to be and to do with each of their languages the same things as monolinguals” (García & Torres-Guevara, 2010, p. 189). Furthermore, critical reading of official language policies empowers these youth to question the relevance of the transitional model of multilingual education. As minoritized languages are used as a medium of instruction only up to Grade 3, these youth made a point that schools and communities do not see the long-term relevance of the policy. Indeed, García (2009) argues that a transitional bilingual education not only lacks a clear language policy, but also “supports and values monolingualism and permits bilingualism only as a temporary measure” (p. 124). Clearly, the existing MTB-MLE policy merely presents students’ knowledge of the ‘mother tongue’ as only a support for learning of the dominant languages of Nepali and English.

As the youth were engaged in critically reading the MTB-MLE policy, they unraveled the way the Ministry of Education has framed the policy as a ‘choice’ for schools. During the workshop, one group of indigenous youth questioned why the multilingual education policy should be implemented only in “the schools that *want to* provide education in the mother tongue” (Ministry of Education, 2010, emphasis added). Rather than being proactive towards promoting multilingual education, the Ministry of Education has a given ‘choice’ to schools: they may or may not implement the multilingual education policy. Price (2014) has pointed out that ‘choice’ as a neoliberal ideology reproduces the power and privilege of the dominant languages and the people who have access to those languages. Indeed, while embracing ‘choice’ as a guiding principle, the MTB-MLE policy not only reduces the state’s role to promote multilingual education, but it is also complicit in the neoliberal ideology which supports English as the most desired language of education (more discussion are provided later in this chapter).

Countering the Public Sphere Ideologies

Dominant language ideologies are also constructed and reproduced discursively through various mechanisms. Critical scholar Habermas (1991) has discussed the role of the media as a public sphere in the discursive construction and reproduction of dominant capitalist ideologies. He argues that the media and elites control the dominant public sphere in a capitalist political economy while the common citizens are considered to be just a consumer of goods and information. Tollefson (2014) has critically examined the role of the media in constructing language ideologies that shape language education policies. As one goal of the workshop with indigenous youth was to engage them in ideological analysis, they were further engaged in a critical reading of language policy related to newspaper articles published in local and national dailies. Three major questions these youth focused on were: (a) What language ideologies are constructed and supported in the newspaper articles?; (b) Do they support multilingual education, and particularly the use of minoritized languages?; and, (c) What are the impacts of such policies in the educational and social lives of indigenous children?

The youth first read three newspaper articles (see Appendix 5) in groups and analyzed the ideologies constructed in the articles. All of these articles report on the increasing trend of adopting English-as-a-medium-of-instruction (EMI) policy in public schools. While engaging in critical reading, the indigenous youth first named the ideologies in the articles. Some called them ‘**aṅgreji soc**’ (English language ideology) and ‘**boardingko fashion**’ (the fashion of boarding), while others named them ‘**bajār-mukhī shikṣā**’ (market-oriented education) and ‘**angrejimaapadhmaa-quality-education-huncha-bhanne thinking**’ (learning-in-English-is-receiving-quality education thinking). Some other names were: ‘English-as-modernity’, ‘English-as-an-international language’, and ‘English-as-social prestige’. Then the youth linked these names with

broader educational and sociopolitical discourses. All the youth identified ‘privatization’ and ‘market-oriented education’—key neoliberal ideologies—as major processes to construct all these ideologies in education. Reflecting on the articles, for example, one youth asserted:

These [newspaper] *articles* reflect the *present reality* in education. They *report exactly* what people are thinking about education. You know...there is an *English language mentality*. Private schools are everywhere these days. In my village, there are two private schools. They say that they teach in the English medium *to attract students*. Some parents are already sending their children to private schools. So public schools are pressured to *imitate* what private schools are doing....It’s sad, but public schools have to do this.

Like this youth, other youth also linked the English language ideology reported in the newspaper articles with their own existential reality and critiqued the ideological construction of the English medium as ‘quality education’. As they engaged in dialogue, they became aware of the ‘ideological hegemony’ (Blommaert, 2006) of English and showed their critical consciousness about how such monolingual hegemony reproduces social injustice in education. For example, when asked whether the English language mentality supports multilingualism and the effective learning of minoritized language speakers, one group of youth maintained that

...public schools and parents don’t see any other option. As mentioned in the newspaper [referring to one newspaper article], they [public schools] claim that it’s a ‘new way’ to attract students. Teachers think that an *English-medium policy* is the only way to ‘*compete*’ with private schools. They think that an *English-medium policy* is ‘the most effective way’ to provide ‘*quality education*’. But how can students learn effectively in English if they don’t understand it well? Why should public schools *compete* with private schools? Teachers [as mentioned in the articles] have claimed that student numbers increased after they introduced an English-medium policy, but they don’t say anything about whether or not students are learning *effectively*. These articles show that English is

‘the best language’ and the ‘only appropriate language’ of education. But they don’t say anything about the *challenges* of teaching and learning in English.

While analyzing ideologies in the newspaper articles, the indigenous youth came to understand how the neoliberal ideology of privatization has constructed ‘competition’ as a norm for public schools which puts pressure on them to adopt an English-medium policy. Piller and Cho (2013) have argued that as neoliberalism redefines educational institutions as entities to ‘compete’ with each other, at the local and global level, linguistic and other sociopolitical inequalities are further exacerbated. Considering ‘competition’ as an ideological construct, Piller and Cho (2013) argue that such an ideology naturalizes English as a neutral and de facto medium of education and supports the false assumption that learning through English helps students become more competitive to be successful in the educational marketplace. However, as indigenous youth engaged in dialogue, they questioned the neoliberal ideology in education and contended that the valorization of English as being ‘quality education’ is problematic and does not necessarily support effective learning. As mentioned above, they contended that this policy poses cognitive challenges for students as they find it difficult to understand content taught in English. As the discussion continued, I shared with the youth that teaching academic content in a language that students have not fully mastered yet poses cognitive, social, and educational challenges in their learning (Conteh & Meier, 2014; Cummins, 2006).

While engaging in dialogue, the indigenous youth created a counterpublic sphere or a subaltern counterpublic sphere of language policy. Fraser (1992) defines a counterpublic sphere as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (p. 123). In this new space, these youth felt free to invest their knowledge of the local

sociopolitical context into critique dominant discourses and construct alternative discourses towards supporting linguistic diversity. As they engaged in dialogue, these youth critiqued the way the media public sphere is constructing the ‘metadiscursive regimes’ (Bauman & Briggs, 2003; Park, 2009) which discursively constructs English as “a life-saver for public schools”, “the best way to promote quality education” and “a language for educational reform.” Although they acknowledged that English language proficiency is necessary, they were critical about the way it is presented as a ‘panacea’ for public schools, without analyzing whether or not it supports effective learning. More importantly, these indigenous youth became aware of how the media public sphere valorizes the role of English and contributes to the ‘erasure’ (Irvine & Gal, 2000) of linguistic diversity in schools. In responding to my question of whether or not the news articles support multilingualism, one youth asserted:

They [news articles] give a *wrong message* that languages other than English aren’t necessary in education. Even Nepali isn’t used as a medium language like in private schools. The articles are presenting English like it’s everything in education. This kind of idea *devalues* the importance of linguistic diversity.

The youth critiqued how the media is creating a hierarchy of languages in which English is constructed as ‘everything’ while other languages “aren’t necessary in education.” As these youth became aware of dominant ideologies, they began to see how multilingual education policies are affected by the neoliberal ideology of English. Another youth, for example, stated that there is a “huge *gap*” between “what the government says and what it does.” He questioned the state’s “*real intention*” with regard to multilingual education and contended that “the state isn’t committed to promoting multilingual education in practice. You see...the District Education Officers [referring to one of the newspaper articles] are promoting [an] *English-medium policy* in public schools. But they don’t even talk about ‘mother tongues’.” As these youth critique, rather

that supporting multilingual education in public schools, the government is now pushing the EMI-policy in public schools from the early grades (Phyak, 2013, 2016). On the one hand, the government seems to be committed to promoting multilingualism by giving space to ‘mother tongues’ in education, both as a subject and medium of instruction, but, on the other hand, it is also strongly pushing the EMI policy (Baral, 2015), which indeed reproduces the neoliberal ideology in education.

Engaging in critical reading and dialogue supports the indigenous youth to become ideologically clearer about how neoliberal ideology erases the space for multilingualism in education. Commenting on the impacts of the English language ideology, as constructed in the newspaper articles, these youth spoke of ‘**bhāshik anyāya**’ (linguistic injustice) and an ‘**ekal bhāshik soc**’ (monolingual mentality). As seen below, these youth reflected on their own context to justify their argument:

For example, in my own village, public schools have decided to teach in the *English medium* from the first grade. One school used to teach *aani paan* before. But it is now replaced with an *extra* [course] in English. These schools are following...the private school policy. They think that the English medium promotes *quality education*. But *nobody talks* about ‘mother tongues’ now. ...They aren’t used in schools. It’s a linguistic injustice. The major problem is...this policy has *developed a negative attitude* towards ‘mother tongues’ and linguistic diversity. It doesn’t recognize the multilingual identities ...and cultures of students from different indigenous communities.

As these youth engaged in dialogue, they critically reflected on their existential reality to discuss how the neoliberal ideology of English is reproducing ‘linguistic injustice’ (Piller, 2016). These youth argued that since the English-medium policy has not only displaced the use of local languages, but also “*developed negative attitudes* towards ‘mother tongues’ and linguistic diversity.” The media public sphere has further contributed to solidify the ideology of contempt

towards local languages and erase the discourse of multilingual education policy. In other words, the neoliberal English language policy is supporting the ‘creative destruction’ (Harvey, 2005) of linguistic diversity and reproducing a ‘monolingual mentality’ in language education. Such a monolingual mentality eventually disregards the multilingual identity and ‘multicompetence’ (Cook, 1991) of indigenous youth.

Transcending Linguistic Shame: Youth Reclaiming Their Multilingual Identities and Agency for Language Policy Transformation

Language shame among indigenous and ethnic minoritized youth has been discussed as one of the major impacts of assimilationist language policy all over the world (Wyman et al., 2014). Indigenous youth’s sense of language shame is “compounded by youth insecurities about their language abilities” (McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol, & Zepeda, 2009, p. 301) and it is linked with the process of stigmatization of their multilingual identities in the dominant public sphere (Lee, 2009). As Nabina has stated in the beginning of our conversations, the indigenous youth participating in the language policy workshops revealed that they feel ashamed of speaking Limbu, as one youth recounted, not because they “don’t like to speak Limbu” but because they don’t like “other people” to know that they speak “an inappropriate language” and that they are “narrow-minded people.” These indigenous youth are “not immune to [the] social pressures” that discursively index speaking indigenous languages as a sign of “backwardness and traditionalism” (McCarty & Zepeda, 2010, p. 331) while speaking Nepali and English is indexed as being ‘modern’ and ‘educated’. Scholars have contended that indigenous and language minoritized children’s sense of linguistic shame is embedded in the hegemony of the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies which keep pressuring them to assimilate into the ideologies, epistemologies, and identities defined by monolingual norms (Kubota, 2015; Lin, 2013).

While engaging in dialogue, these youth critically looked at the impacts of assimilationist monolingual ideologies in the marginalization of indigenous youth. For example, Muksam (pseudonym) revealed that he used to feel ashamed of speaking Limbu outside of his home because “it wasn’t part of the school curriculum and textbook” and because his non-Limbu-speaking friends used to tease him about his language. Muksam shared this anecdote:

Last week, I was in my village. I asked a group of boys what language they speak and what language(s) they would like to speak. Those youth speak both Limbu and Nepali....They *mix English words* as well in *natural* conversations....Their family members speak both Nepali and Limbu. But I was *surprised* with these boys’ *negative attitude* towards Limbu. Some said they speak only a ‘little Limbu’. Some said they don’t speak ‘good Limbu’. But most of them didn’t like to show their Limbu language ability. I’m shocked....One boy said ‘I don’t speak [Limbu]....Nobody understands....I’m ashamed’. It’s sad....*Young* boys hide their ability to speak. They say that schools don’t use Limbu so they don’t like to speak it.

These youth’s voices reflect that the assimilationist language policy is not only erasing indigenous youth’s multilingual identity, but also makes them think that monolingualism is (and should be) the norm in education. As seen in the anecdote above, indigenous youth are self-marginalizing (Piller, 2016) their own multilingual identity due to monolingual pressure. The indigenous youth speak Limbu and Nepali (and, in the classroom, English), but the dominant ideologies and assimilationist language education policy forces them to make an ‘either-or-choice’ (McCarty et al., 2009) between Limbu and Nepali and/or English. While engaging in dialogue, these youth began to see themselves as multilingual speakers and felt proud of who they are and what they actually know. In this process, they reflected on their own dynamic language practices and analyzed why they are not legitimized in education. While participating in the dialogue, Amar, one of the leaders of Limbu Students’ Forum, asserted that he is “proud of

speaking Limbu” in public places, but, quite interestingly, he sometimes “fears speaking Limbu” with other Limbus, particularly with the elders, because of his “**mismāse Limbu**” (mixed Limbu). He asserts that “*young* people like me don’t speak Limbu because they think that they don’t speak ‘**shudda**’ [pure] Limbu. When I speak Limbu, I *mix* Nepali and English words. I cannot *separate* them. But you know...some of my own relatives have laughed about my Limbu and asked ‘*aakhtham khaale kebaape hau?*’ (What kind of Limbu do you speak?).” As indigenous communities have long been assimilated into policies that promote monolingual and standard language ideologies, the dominant beliefs with regard to language maintenance, learning, and teaching are shaped largely by monolingual ideologies (Kroskrity, 2009). Consequently, communities expect ‘pure’ and ‘standard’ versions of language use from indigenous youth.

However, the Limbu youth embrace linguistic fluidity as a legitimate and transformative practice in Nepal’s multilingual context, as they are further engaged in dialogue. Building on their own struggles to make sense of their multilingual and multiethnic world, they further unravel the tension between indigenous people’s multilingual practices and hegemonic monolingual ideologies in dominant language policies. As one of the participants, I shared my observations of fluid language practices from Laaje and Sewaro schools and the community to facilitate dialogue on how indigenous youths’ fluid multilingual practices (translanguaging and heteroglossia) are not a sign of language deficiency (e.g., García, 2009; Heugh, 2015). As they engaged in dialogue, the indigenous youth transcended their sense of language shame and self-marginalization and reclaimed their multilingual identity and competence. For example, reflecting on the language practices in his own community, one indigenous youth said:

I always speak Limbu and Nepali at home and in the community. With my non-Limbu friends, I *generally* speak Nepali. I don’t use English to interact in the community. But I

have to use it for *classroom purposes*. I thought that I wasn't good in all of these languages. I *mix* Limbu, Nepali, and English. It's hard. I agree with you that knowledge of one language helps to learn a new language. I'm learning three languages that way. It's hard to separate one language from another. I try, but I can't....Schools should rise up beyond one language mentality.

Another youth added his views:

I now know that the *real problem* is in our *language policies*. I think our *policies* have not addressed such issues. I agree that multilingual learners have different ways of learning and using languages. Now I'm aware of my own multilingual identity. All indigenous youth are multilingual. But schools don't *treat* us like that. We already discussed that indigenous students are taught either in a Nepali-only or English-only medium. So I used to think that language *mixing* isn't good in the classroom. But...you know...I learned English using Limbu and Nepali. So I think present *policies* and practices should be completely changed to *promote real* multilingual education. Schools should also ensure that teachers allow students to use multiple languages in class. This will change the present monolingual mentality.

These comments show that indigenous youth enacted their ideological becoming with regard to their multilingual identity and its role in their educational experiences. As they engaged in dialogue, these youth took their own multilingual practices to be positive and resisted the colonial invention of language (and reproduced through nation-state and neoliberalism) as a fixed and autonomous entity. These youth's evolving ideological becoming challenges the 'either-or' dichotomy constructed in the existing policies and pedagogical practices. This process involves indigenous youth's critical reflection on their own language ideologies and multilingual practices and their contested relationship with dominant language ideologies and practices. As they analyzed this relationship, they were able to reclaim themselves as multilingual subjects and

embrace multilingual practices as a legitimate part of their multilingual identities and thus as a resource for learning and making sense of their multilingual worlds.

This ideological awareness or ideological becoming leads to building indigenous youth's critical agency, which Leeman et al. (2011) defines as "the recognition of one's ability to act, together with purposeful action or activity" (p. 484). As they became ideologically aware, they converted their previous linguistic shame into collective power and knowledge to act towards transforming hegemonic language policies and ideologies. They put their awareness into developing plans of action to create spaces for indigenous languages in education. In groups, the indigenous youth discussed various possible actions, weighed their consequences and implications in the larger society, and identified other possible actors they would like to engage in their efforts towards creating a multilingual school environment. For example, one group came up with the idea of using folktales and the traditional knowledge of different ethnic groups in the classroom. They shared that "We have many folk stories in our communities. We can collect them and use them. We also have traditional knowledge. You know...different ethnic groups know how to make different food and drinks. We know how to make clothes, baskets and medicine. We have different cultural practices...." These youth claim that using folktales and traditional knowledge not only helps youth to learn language and literacy skills, but also builds their multilingual and multicultural awareness.

In planning for action, the youth decided to organize awareness-raising programs at the school and community level. They focused on collaboration with teachers, parents, community leaders, and even political activists. Building on their multilingual awareness, these youth further analyzed power relations and ideological challenges to develop a plan for awareness-raising activities. In challenging the existing model of teacher professional development programs, the

indigenous youth also pointed out that all teachers—both teachers of English and the local languages (including Nepali)—should be educated about the importance and use of multilingualism in education. In justifying the relevance of a joint awareness-raising program for English and other local language teachers, these youth reflected that the monolingual mentality is prevalent in teaching all languages and [content-area] subjects. “All teachers should be aware of multilingual issues. They can learn from each other,” the group suggested. While developing such plans, the youth were not only putting their knowledge into action (by developing plans), but, perhaps more importantly, also reclaiming their identity as ‘a critical language planner’ (McCarty, 2009). Their other plans included: engaging youth in multilingual and multicultural activities; developing multilingual materials using indigenous knowledge; establishing a multilingual education support center; and, organizing awareness-raising activities for youth, teachers, and parents.

‘For our *cho:tlung*’: Youth Activism for Language Policy Transformation

Ginwright and Cammarota (2006) claim that youth have the ‘right to change, challenge, or disrupt policies, laws, and regulations that unfairly create inequality’ (p. xx). Youth, particularly indigenous youth, are “the most critical stakeholders” (McCarty, 2014) and “icons and agents of radical sociolinguistic change” (Wyman, 2009, p. 336) for promoting greater linguistic diversity and social equity. As Limbu youth become aware of ideological issues and recognize their own agency for language policy transformation, they become language activists and advocate for multilingualism in education. These youth utilized their multilingual awareness as a key source of knowledge for ‘language activism’ (Shohamy, 2006) to engage other indigenous youth in dialogue with teachers and parents. They collectively worked to transform the existing monolingual ideologies in language policy. At the institutional level, the indigenous

youth collaborated with the Limbu Students' Forum to push the agendas of multilingual education at the local and national level.

At the national level, these youth organized a one-day workshop/discussion program on language policy. The goal of the program was to raise awareness of and engage Limbu youth in language activism for promoting equitable multilingual policies. Attended by more than fifty students, the workshop focused on issues in current language policies and practices and discussed the role of youth in multilingual education. As I was invited to facilitate the discussion, I presented the impacts of monolingual hegemony and briefly discussed how indigenous youth could contribute to transform language policies. Amar and Muksam, who were instrumental in organizing this and previous workshops, presented what they have learned from previous dialogic engagement. Their reflections show strong ideological transformation that supports their efforts to reclaim their identity as responsible and ideologically aware activists towards promoting linguistic justice. For example, responding to questions from other youth, Muksam said, "we have a big responsibility to help other youth and parents understand language issues. We have to share with them what we know. We have to talk with them about the impacts of a monolingual mentality. We have to talk about multilingual education."

The indigenous youth's activism helped them to "open up the discussion of LP [language policies] as a tool of power that should be examined and critiqued" and engaged them in "protesting against the use and misuse of LP affecting language behaviors in schools and society" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 159). Following their collective decision, these youth took a grassroots approach to language activism. They organized (and are still organizing further activities) a series of discussions with other youth, teachers, and parents in village schools. For example, Amar works with other youth and teachers to start Limbu language and literacy

teaching in his own village schools. Although they don't receive much support from the state, he said, "they're using folktales and *Mundhum* collected by local villagers and teachers to teach Limbu to young people." While resisting the monolingual ideologies of the nation-state and neoliberalism, Amar focuses on indigenous history, culture, and epistemologies in their collective efforts to promote equitable language policies. In order to address the lack of materials, these youth have developed reference materials by including indigenous knowledge, folktales, history, and cultural performances. They have also used the biography of the people who have contributed towards the promotion of the Limbu language, literature, and history in such materials.

These indigenous youth's activism challenges dominant language ideologies and shows their commitment for linguistic justice. In this process, they not only utilize what they've learned from the previous dialogues, but also, build on what they learn from the dialogue with teachers, youth, and parents as they continue their activist work. Language activism in an ideologically averse context is not easy, but these youth take a cautious yet transformative approach to engage all concerned in dialogue. For example, Amar says that "it's a difficult task. Different people have different opinions. You know...some people don't know what multilingual education is. Some don't like mother tongue education...they just talk about English. We have to listen and talk to them as well." This kind of difficult moment and experience further empowers these youth to become more agentive and active in promoting multilingual education. Amar, for example, asserts that "people have misconceptions. It's hard to change a deep-rooted monolingual ideology. Most people think that multilingual education is against English and Nepali. They think that multilingual education negatively affects learning English and Nepali."

But these youth are aware of how and why such ideologies are constructed and pursued and become more agentive towards engaging in dialogue.

Indigenous youth activism is grounded on their own critical understanding of the local educational, linguistic, and political contexts. As the indigenous communities have been marginalized, disengaged, and misinformed about language education, these youth see themselves as aware and resourceful agents for language policy transformation for the benefit of their communities. These youth believe that their activism will motivate the entire community. Muksam, for example, says, “People think that youth don’t like to use Limbu. They think that college students like me want to learn Limbu. So if we tell them the importance of indigenous languages, the whole community is motivated to promote indigenous languages.” This clearly shows that youth activism challenges the dominant ideology which defines their identity as someone who doesn’t want to learn Limbu. In other words, they deconstruct the dominant beliefs which reject the knowledge of indigenous languages as legitimate knowledge in modern education.

The indigenous youth activism goes beyond language education. In collaboration with indigenous activists and teachers, they have replaced Nepali-English bilingual signboards in schools and other public spheres with the multilingual ones (Limbu-Nepali-English). Scholars have shown that the language of public signs, known as linguistic landscapes, serve as a major language policy mechanism (Shohamy, 2006, 2015) to impose or reproduce state ideologies. In Nepal, most public signboards, particularly official ones, are either in Nepali or English or both. However, the minoritized languages are erased from these public signs. Public signboards in this sense represent the hegemonic dominance of Nepali and English in Nepal. The indigenous youth’s activism to replace the old signboards with new ones is transformative; it challenges the

ideological hegemony of Nepali-English bilingualism and creates a public space for minoritized languages. Marten, Mensel, and Gorter (2012) reveal that the visibility of minoritized languages reflects their vitality, maintenance, identity, and status in larger sociopolitical contexts. Limbu indigenous youth claim that it is important to use Limbu on public signboards to recognize indigenous historicity and the identity of the Limbu indigenous people.

In addition, the indigenous youth are also participating in media discussion on language policy. They have been interviewed by local FM radio stations on issues regarding multilingual education. Some of them have also written op-eds for local newspapers. Youth engagement in all of these activist work shifts their identity from disengaged youth to critically engaged and ethically responsible citizens for reimagining a multilingual education in which all children feel respected as knowledgeable. As Wyman (2009) asserts, Limbu indigenous youth resist “damaging discourses and binary assumptions” (p. 348) that are created and imposed by the nation-state and neoliberal language ideologies. While reclaiming their own multilingual identity, these youth present themselves as critical agents and the most important stakeholders of language policy. Indeed, they create a greater space not just for indigenous languages but for themselves as fully knowledgeable language policy actors. Indeed, their engagement portrays their own ideological transformation and desire to ‘participate fully’ (Ramanathan, 2013) in the language policy making processes.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed indigenous youth engagement in language policy. Considering indigenous youth a change agent, this chapter has shown that dialogic engagement builds youth’s critical consciousness about the hegemony of language as a fixed and autonomous entity and its sociopolitical impacts in the lives of common people. This critical consciousness

emerges from youth dialogic engagement that builds on analyses of ideological tensions between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. While the authoritative discourses keep imposing monolingual ideologies, internally persuasive discourses support alternative ideologies such as translanguaging and heteroglossia. As they became informed about internally persuasive discourses and ideologies from various studies, the indigenous youth critically analyzed them in relation to their own lived experiences and existing knowledge. This dialogic engagement eventually led to indigenous youth's ideological transformation which recognizes multilingual practices as a resource rather than a problem and a matter of shame.

This chapter reveals the importance of understanding 'setting', 'identity', and 'critical voice' (Yonezawa, Jones, & Joselowsky, 2009) to engage indigenous youth in language policy transformation. At the center of youth engagement remains the critical discussion on language policies and practices in local sociopolitical contexts. These youth brought in their own understanding of local sociolinguistic contexts while participating in dialogues on the 'text', 'discourses', and 'effects' (Ball, 1994) of dominant language policies and practices. Identity is another important aspect of language policy engagement. As indigenous youth are engaged in dialogues, they begin to see themselves as a multilingual subject and, more importantly, as a knower of what equitable education policies looks like. In the process of this new identity construction, the indigenous youth critically analyze their own struggles, lived experiences, and identity positions in the dominant language policies and practices. 'Critical voice' is another important aspect of youth engagement; as can be seen here, rather than simply reporting what the youth have said, it is important to engage indigenous youth in questioning the relevance of dominant language ideologies in relation to power relations, sociocultural ecology, and sociolinguistic contexts. Throughout language policy engagement, the indigenous youth

challenged the existing hegemony of monolingual policies and practices and saw language policy from an ideological perspective.

Finally, dialogic engagement leads indigenous youth towards organizing grassroots activist works, which can be seen ‘praxis’ (Freire, 1970); that is, theoretically informed actions. Indigenous youth’s praxis embraces their agency, ideological awareness, and activism as key aspects of language policy transformation. Indeed, this chapter highlights that youth’s ideological awareness is “a prerequisite for effective democratic citizenship, and should therefore be seen as an entitlement for citizens, especially children developing towards citizenship in the educational system” (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 2–3). Indeed, the indigenous youth’s ideologically informed activism towards promoting multilingual education supports their right to participate in making and remaking language policies for a just and equitable society.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

Engaged language policy (ELP) holds the view that ideological awareness is at the center of language policy transformation. In this dissertation, I have discussed how monolingual ideologies are constructed and reproduced in language education policies and how they are transformed. More specifically, I first analyzed how language education policies and practices, including multilingual ones, keep reproducing, rather than resisting, the historical domination of colonial language ideologies that pose formidable challenges for language minoritized people's educational, social, and political lived experiences.

The major component of this dissertation is dialogic engagement with indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth. I have portrayed the process of engaging them in critical dialogue for building enhanced critical ideological awareness and activism towards transforming the hegemony of colonial ideologies, particularly linguistic nationalism and neoliberalism. In this chapter, I first summarize the major issues discussed in this dissertation, before then discussing both the theoretical and pedagogical implications of this dissertation.

The Reproduction and Impacts of Monolingual Ideologies

One of the objectives of this dissertation was to analyze the reproduction and impact of monolingual ideologies in Nepal's current language policies and practices. I have analyzed how the country's nation-state and neoliberal ideologies have contributed towards the construction of monolingualism as a norm in education and beyond. Taking an historical approach (Blommaert, 2014; May, 2005), I have argued that the invention of Nepali as the 'national language' itself is a colonial construct, which is shaped by the 18th and 19th century European nation-state ideology. My analysis shows that although Nepal never had a colonial history, its language policy has been

deeply influenced by colonial language ideologies since the formation of Nepal as a modern nation-state. In imagining nationalism as a community of homogenous language speakers, the state adopted a one-nation-one-language ideology and imposed a Nepali-only policy in state apparatuses, including education. This ideology has been reproduced through a ‘legitimization’ process (Bourdieu, 1991) which includes the standardization and modernization of **Khash Bhāṣā** (Nepali) and its imposition as the official ‘Nepali’ language. This process is further supported by the three semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure (Irvine & Gal, 2000). As Nepali is iconically constructed as a ‘national’ language, other minoritized languages are erased from the public discourses, policies, and spheres.

The ‘erasure’ of minoritized languages or language practices in language policies and practices occurs mostly through the metadiscursive regime of language created by the nation-state ideology. On the one hand, while reproducing the European colonial ideology, the nation-state constructs a metadiscursive regime in which languages are viewed as fixed, autonomous, and essentialized objects (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). This ideology of language denies the fluid and dynamic language practices that multilingual minoritized language speakers enact as legitimate language practices in education and other public spheres. This ideology supports an extremely limited epistemology of language education which supports monolingual speakers’ language competence as a model for developing language policies and pedagogies for multilingual learners (García, 2009; McKinney, Carrim, Marshall, & Layton, 2015). My analysis shows that despite being supportive in promoting literacy in indigenous languages, the mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) policies and practices in Nepal are dominated by Western European epistemologies of language (Taylor, 2010). As discussed in this dissertation, the MTB-MLE policy has the potential to transform monolingual ideologies;

however, its adoption of a transitional model and an additive approach to multilingual education still supports learning the dominant languages of Nepali and English; in other words, the use of minoritized languages is considered to be temporary (García, 2009). More importantly, the MTB-MLE policy solidifies boundaries among languages and is not adequate to address the simultaneity and fluidity of language practices in linguistically heterogeneous schools (Pradhan, 2016).

Another dominant ideology which has strengthened the monolingual ideology—particularly English language monolingualism—is neoliberalism, which is not yet extensively discussed in Nepal’s language policy discourses. My analyses show that the state’s neoliberal political-economic ideology has reproduced the power and privilege of English as a de facto and neutral language of education. As Asma’s and other participants’ stories in this dissertation indicate, the neoliberalization of education—particularly privatization—has contributed immensely to the construction of English as a sole medium of instruction in education (Bhatta, 2014). This construction is linked with the global discourse of ‘English-as-capital’ (Price, 2014) in the free market economy and the local discourse of donor-funded ‘development’ which iconically presents English as the language of ‘human development’, ‘wealth’, and ‘quality of education’. I have also discussed how as neoliberalism gains more currency in national developmental and educational discourses, the state unquestionably embraces the dominance of English in its reform efforts to make education ‘competitive’ and ‘market-oriented’. Phillipson (2008) characterizes this global phenomenon as the linguistic imperialism of neoliberal regime. As educational policies are reformulated to support neoliberal ideologies, the hegemony of English becomes even stronger all over world.

In Nepal, the major impact of the neoliberal ideology is seen in the growing trend in adopting English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy. As national policies are greatly influenced by the discourse of globalization, particularly by neoliberal ideologies, schools focus on English not for pedagogical reasons but rather on the free market rationality. This shift eventually erases the ethics for social justice and collectivism (Block et al., 2012) and promotes unequal access to knowledge and other sociopolitical resources (Piller & Cho, 2013). My analysis of the on-the-ground language policies and practices (particularly in the Sewaro School) reveals that the English-only medium-of-instruction policy has posed challenges for all children—and particularly indigenous minoritized ones—to have access to the knowledge of academic content. Most significantly, students are silenced because they find it difficult to understand instruction in English.

Together, both nation-state and neoliberal ideologies contribute to the ‘erasure’ (Irvine & Gal, 2000) of multilingual practices and identities of indigenous minoritized people and support the ideological hegemony of monolingualism in education. Carney and Rappleye (2011) speak of a ‘colonialism of the mind’ as they analyze how an “...uncritical adoption of imported systems and values” (p. 4) in Nepal’s socio-economic and educational policies and plans have reinforced social hierarchies, inequalities, and disengagement of people in the policy-making process. Engaged language policy in this dissertation shows that the ideological hegemony must be challenged towards transforming the status quo and reimagining equitable multilingual policies.

(Re)imagining Equitable Multilingual Education

This dissertation has two major implications, both locally and globally, for (re)imagining an equitable multilingual education. The first implication relates to the centrality of language

ideologies and the second is concerned with multilingual pedagogies; I discuss these implications in the following section.

Focus on Language Ideology and Ideological Awareness

This dissertation highlights the importance of ‘language ideological clarification’ (Kroskrity, 2009) with regard to the current discourses and practices of multilingual education. As a process of “identifying and raising consciousness about linguistic and discursive issues” (Kroskrity, 2009, p. 73), language ideological clarification promotes new discourses and practices among community members, teachers, linguists, and policy-makers. This concept is particularly important in the context like Nepal where language policy discourses, including multilingual ones, are significantly shaped by the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies. It is also important because the discourse of multilingual education is one of the most contested issues in global political discourses in multilingual contexts.

First, it is necessary to acknowledge that, as pointed out by the teachers, youth, and villagers in this dissertation, the current gap between multilingual education policy and on-the-ground practices is not so much a ‘technical’ problem (such as lack of textbooks, standard written orthography, mother-tongue-speaking teachers, and adequate financial resources), but rather is a language ideological issue. One current ideological issue concerns the question of what counts as multilingualism in multilingual education. Closely related to this question is the issue of what counts as a ‘legitimate language’ (Bourdieu, 1991), language competence, and pedagogies in multilingual education. Studies should pay attention to such ideological issues in efforts towards (re)imagining multilingual education policies. On the one hand, as seen in the case of Nepal, the official multilingual education policies may uphold a monolingual ideology—known as ‘two solitudes’ (Cummins, 2005) or ‘parallel monolingualism’ (Heller, 1999)—by

focusing on a transitional and additive approach as a pedagogical model of bi/multilingual education. In other words, the policies expect that the indigenous children, discursively labelled as ‘mother-tongue speakers’ (or even worse, as ‘non-Nepali speakers’), are first taught in their first language (known as the ‘mother tongue’) up to Grade 3, followed by a gradual transition to dominant languages (like Nepali in Nepal). This kind of early transitional model of multilingual education is based on the assumption that children’s first language competence should eventually support learning the dominant languages (García, 2009).

More strikingly, as this study shows, the official policy reproduces a monoglossic ideology of language which assumes that languages are discrete, separate, and bounded entities (McKinney et al., 2015) by promoting the pedagogical model in which children are separated according to their ‘mother tongues’ (Ministry of Education, 2009). This kind of monoglossic ideology reproduces another discriminatory language ideology—standard language ideology—which assumes that native speaker competence is the legitimate language competence (García, 2009). This ideology has a deep discursive impact among the indigenous communities. For example (in the case of Nepal), rather than focusing on the use of minoritized languages as a medium of instruction, indigenous communities are emphasizing the creation, standardization, and modernization of orthographies and textbooks for multilingual education. While reproducing the nation-state ideology, these efforts, if done without ideological awareness, may contribute to the erasure of non-standard spoken varieties of indigenous languages. Above all, such policies and practices firmly support a monolingual ideology in language teaching; they require teachers to teach language subjects, including the ‘mother tongue’, in the same language, like in Nepal (Ministry of Education, 2010).

However, recent studies have shown that such monoglossic ideologies and additive approaches that seek ‘sequencing’ rather than ‘simultaneity’ are not adequate to reimagine multilingual education in linguistically, ethnically, and culturally heterogeneous contexts (e.g., Heugh, 2015; Lin, 2013; McCarty, 2014). On the one hand, as these ideologies delegitimize fluid and dynamic language practices, language minoritized children face the formidable challenge of ‘epistemic access’ (Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015). Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) aptly argues that monoglossic policies and practices “...silenc[e] the ways in which bilingual children *language*, thus limiting their educational and life opportunities” (p. 141, emphasis added).

As discussed in this dissertation, there are deep discursive impacts of monoglossic ideologies on teachers, villagers, and youth. Rather than using linguistic heterogeneity—as seen in indigenous communities—as resources in the classroom, multilingual education is viewed simply as the teaching of different ‘pure’ language subjects: for example, English, Nepali, and mother tongue. This monolingual perspective on multilingual education discursively constructs linguistic heterogeneity as a ‘problem’ which is ‘impossible’ to implement in schools. Unfortunately, this lack of clarity due to language ideologies has eventually created a negative attitude towards the entire discourse of multilingual education policy in Nepal. Therefore, language ideologies should be an integral component of teacher education programs and language policy discussions with regard to creating equitable multilingual education. More importantly, teacher education programs should focus on engaging teachers in collaborative ethnographies of language socialization and translingual practices and ideological analysis of those language practices in relation to multilingual education.

Teacher engagement in this dissertation clearly shows the need for educating *all* teachers, including English-as-a-foreign-language teachers, about multilingual education. Although the

Ministry of Education provides teacher professional development programs on multilingual education, these short-term programs are generally intended only for ‘mother-tongue teachers’ (teachers who teach ‘mother tongues’). More strikingly, these programs do not engage teachers in locally situated analyses of language ideologies nor do they educate them about pedagogical approaches that embrace the fluidity, heterogeneous/heteroglossic, and simultaneity of multiple languages in a multilingual and multiethnic classroom. Consequently, teachers are not only ill-prepared to teach a multilingual class in a more inclusive way, but also remain unaware of the fact that monoglossic ideologies are against the core values of multilingualism, which are heterogeneity and fluidity. In other words, multilingual teacher training programs are inadequate at present to transform this deep-seated ‘monolingual mentality’ (as the teachers discussed in this dissertation) nor do they engage teachers in critical, creative, and transformative multilingual pedagogies. Therefore, multilingual teacher education programs should focus on the ideological clarification and transformation (Kroskrity, 2009) of teachers by raising their critical multilingual awareness (García, 2008). Critical multilingual awareness further engages teachers in ideologically committed pedagogies towards addressing the voices, ideologies, and identities of multilingual learners.

As discussed in this dissertation, an ideological commitment towards creating space for multilingualism emerges from teachers’ ideological awareness, which in turn liberates them from the coloniality of language ideology as a fixed, monoglossic, and autonomous entity and instead embraces a ‘translanguaging ideology’ (Li & Zhu, 2013). As a transformative and critical ideology (García & Li, 2014), the translanguaging ideology assumes that indigenous people’s hybrid, fluid, and heteroglossic language practices are “resources upon which to build, rather than as limitations to be remediated away” (McCarty, 2014, p. 265). This ideological position

“can envision what is possible to change and to *do*” (McCarty, 2014, p. 265, emphasis original) and reimagine multilingual education from an inclusive perspective.

In keeping language ideology at the center, it is necessary for multilingual teacher education programs to engage teachers in critical analysis of how both dominant monoglossic and alternative translanguaging ideologies support or hinder multilingual learners’ social and cognitive investment in the learning process. Rather than a top-down approach, teachers can be engaged in exploring language practices in their own communities and classrooms and engage them in ethnographically grounded dialogue to link those language practices with the learning processes of multilingual learners. For this, there is a need for strong and comprehensive teacher education programs, possibly at the university level, which focus on engaging teachers in transforming their own ideologies in order to transform language policies.

Translanguaging Pedagogy and Epistemic Access

Another implication of this study is related to the pedagogical approach in multilingual contexts. Engaging in dialogue with teachers, youth, and villagers in this dissertation clearly shows the inadequacy of monolingual policies and practices to address complex linguistic heterogeneity in multilingual schools. To address this issue, there is a need for engaging schools and teachers in developing and adopting locally situated, culturally sensitive, transformative approaches to multilingual education which address the simultaneous use of multiple languages in the classroom. Originally developed by Cen Williams (1994) in a Welsh language program, *translanguaging* has recently been used, in both indigenous and non-indigenous contexts, as a pedagogical approach to recognize fluid and heterogeneous language practices as a legitimate resource for multilingual education (e.g., Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2009; García & Li, 2014; Heugh, 2015; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Makalela 2015).

While García (2009) considers translanguaging as bi/multilingual speakers' "multiple discursive practices" (p. 45), Li (2011) takes it as a "full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users for purposes that transcend the combination of structures, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information and the representation of values, identities and relationships" (p. 1223). In challenging the hegemony of a 'separatist ideology' (Makalela, 2015) of multilingual education, translanguaging pedagogy allows teachers and students to use multiple languages simultaneously "in a planned, developmental, and strategic manner, to maximize a student's linguistic and cognitive capability, and to reflect that language is sociocultural both in content and process" (Baker, 2011, p. 290). As an alternative approach in multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging respects the multilingual identities, knowledge, histories, and struggles of multilingual learners.

Engaged language policy in this dissertation implies that it is necessary to engage all teachers in understanding how it is necessary to adopt translanguaging pedagogies to teach linguistically heterogeneous classes. By using translanguaging pedagogy in their classes, the teachers, as discussed in this dissertation, are not only challenging the domination of monoglossic ideologies (which are they asked to believe is the norm), but are also creating a transformative 'social space' in which children feel comfortable to "bring together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment" (Li, 2011, p. 1223). The use of translanguaging indeed contributes to breaking students' silence and reimagining education as 'the practice of freedom' (hooks, 1994). More strikingly, as discussed in this dissertation, translanguaging pedagogy contributes to raising the interest of indigenous youth to learn and have access to knowledge of Limbu philosophy and values. Indeed, translanguaging pedagogy is a 'dialogic pedagogy' (Freire, 1970) which contests the idea of education as an information-

gathering process and engages students and teachers in the co-construction of knowledge by investing their total linguistic and cultural knowledge and identities. Kerfoot and Simon-Vandenberg (2015) aptly argue that translanguage pedagogies “seek to democratize classrooms, enabling all learners regardless of linguistic background to perform at the same high level and to modify relations of power in the classroom through the collaborative construction of knowledge” (p. 179).

More importantly, this study supports the idea that translanguaging pedagogy is necessary for ensuring the ‘epistemic access’ (Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015) of multilingual learners to schooled literacy, language, and content knowledge. Going beyond the dominant European nation-state ideology of language “as hermetically sealed entities” (Heugh, 2015, p. 281), recent studies have shown that translanguaging pedagogy supports multilingual students’ access to knowledge by “bridging [the] epistemological divide” between school and community (Heugh, 2015, p. 281). Probyn’s (2015) study in South African schools shows that the systematic and purposeful use of students’ home languages and discourses, which he calls ‘pedagogical translanguaging’, is necessary to provide students, who are taught in the English medium, with improved opportunities to access knowledge of science. Her findings imply that pedagogical translanguaging bridges the epistemologies in schools and the community and promotes minoritized language speakers’ access to knowledge. Makalela’s (2015) research with South African pre-service teachers further reveals that translanguaging—in this context, alternation across four languages—in teaching indigenous African languages is effective for both language and literacy development and affirming indigenous teachers’ multilingual identities. He argues that translanguaging pedagogies (a) support a deeper understating of the content of teaching and reinforces plural identities; (b) bridge linguistic and cultural boundaries; and, (c)

increase reasoning power. Based on these findings, Makalela (2015) argues that teacher education programs, including indigenous language programs, should ‘move out of linguistic boxes’ to empower teachers towards adopting translanguaging pedagogies.

Although translanguaging has been theorized as a concept in the Euro-American scholarship, it is not a new practice in post-colonial and other multilingual and multiethnic contexts, such as Nepal (see Canagarajah, 2009; Heugh, 2015). As indigenous teachers, villagers, and youth have pointed out in this study, fluidity and simultaneity are integral to indigenous people’s language repertoires since before the formal language education policies were developed. Teachers from both Sewaro and Laaje schools asserted that they have been using students’ bi/multilingual practices in teaching both indigenous and English languages. However, their mentality is colonized by the monoglossic ideology which is reproduced through teacher education programs and dominant discourses of language policies and practices.

Indigenous Critical Praxis and Grassroots Activism

This study has also shown that critical ideological awareness and grassroots activism are necessary for promoting equitable multilingualism in education. Based on engagement with participants, it is clear that without building critical ideological awareness about the intersection of language policies and sociopolitical inequalities, it may not be possible to support ideologically committed activism towards supporting linguistic diversity in practice. In this regard, the notion of ‘indigenous critical praxis’ (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001, 2013) can be an appropriate concept to engage indigenous people, specifically villagers and youth, in transforming the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies that pose increased threat to local multilingualism. As a decolonial effort, indigenous critical praxis refers to a “critical reflection on culture, history, knowledge, politics, economics, and the sociopolitical contexts in which

people themselves are living their lives; and then take the next step of acting on these critical reflections” (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002, p. 399). Such praxis is built upon indigenous epistemologies which include “a cultural group’s ways of thinking and of creating, reformulating, and theorizing about knowledge via traditional discourses and media of communication, anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture” (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001, p. 58). Indigenous epistemologies assume that the construction of knowledge is a sociopolitical, ideological, and dialectical process which involves conflict, tension, change, and distortion (Smith, 2012).

The engagement with the indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth in this dissertation implies that indigenous critical praxis provides an alternative perspective to transforming dominant ideologies of language. As I have discussed, dialogic engagement with the participants is deeply grounded on critical reflection of their own lived experiences in local sociopolitical, sociolinguistic, and economic contexts. The narratives, counter-narratives, and ethnographic vignettes and anecdotes are all based on their understanding of local sociopolitical conditions. The dialogic engagement in these activities is informed by indigenous epistemologies—*tangsing* and *cho:tlung*—constructed in oral mythology, *Mundhum* (in this study). Throughout the study, the indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth maintain that it is important to promote multilingualism for their *cho:tlung*. This ideology challenges the market-based ideology of language education and supports indigenous people’s identity affirmation, cultural continuity, and collectivism as part of language policy transformation. *Cho:tlung* builds on the Limbu people’s holistic knowledge about history, culture, society, and language and embraces the belief that knowledge is co-constructed, collective, and non-standardized. *Tangsing*—collective actions—guide Limbu indigenous people’s being, becoming, and ways of knowing, and supports

the dialogic engagement and collective advocacy and activism of Limbu youth and villagers towards creating multilingual school-space.

This study also implies that it is important for language policy-makers to identify and build on indigenous epistemologies that shape their ways of learning and making sense of their multilingual world. For example, in the case of Nepal, during the experimental stage of the MTB-MLE program, indigenous epistemologies were given importance (Hough et al., 2009); however, as the multilingual education discourses and practices are framed under the dominant monoglossic ideologies—the same ideologies used for Nepali and English language teaching—indigenous epistemologies are erased from pedagogical practices. As these indigenous participants have pointed out, it is important for policy-makers to recognize indigenous epistemologies which provide alternative perspective to reimagine multilingual education. At the center of this effort lies ethnographically grounded dialogue with indigenous people and ideologically-committed activism towards reimagining multilingual education that supports social justice, epistemic access, and linguistic diversity.

Theoretical Implications

In addition to the above implications with regard to multilingual education, this study also has several major theoretical implications to language policy. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss these implications.

Engaged Language Policy as a Decolonial Turn

Engaged language policy as portrayed in this dissertation calls for a ‘decolonial turn’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2007) or ‘decolonial option’ (Mignolo & Escobar, 2010) in multilingual education policies. A decolonial turn involves “action-oriented counter-hegemonic strategies” (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p. 79) to counter the state of coloniality and reimagines

alternative ideologies and epistemologies which are empowering and transformative. As the most “general form of domination” (Quijano, 2007, p. 170), coloniality refers to the hegemony of Western/European ideologies and epistemologies with regard to what counts as language and language competence in multilingual education. In contrast, decolonization involves the liberatory process in “the production of knowledge, reflection, and communication from the pitfalls of European rationality/modernity” (Quijano, 2007, p. 117). In other words, decolonization itself is an engaged process which involves the ‘epistemological reconstitution’ (Quijano, 2007) of language as a dynamic, fluid, and co-constructed social phenomenon, rather than as a fixed, autonomous, and essentialized object (see Makoni & Pennycook, 2006).

This dissertation shows that an engaged approach to language policy contributes towards decolonizing hegemonic ideologies and reimagining an equitable multilingual education policy from the bottom-up. The dialogic engagement with indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth shows that the decolonial turn occurs “from below and from within” (Escobar, 2010, p. 393). The decolonization effort in this dissertation is firmly grounded in ‘indigenous critical praxis’ and ‘indigenous epistemologies’ (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2013, see also Smith, 2012). As a collaborative and transformative effort towards transforming hegemonic categories, modes of knowledge production, and hard boundaries of languages—all constructed by oppressive nation-state and neoliberal ideologies—engaged language policy provides the indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth with a dialogic space to (a) critically reflect on their own lived experiences, histories, struggles, culture, and place to understand the conditions of their own marginalization; (b) resist hegemonic ideologies; and, (c) take necessary actions for language policy transformation. All of these efforts include “a gradual epistemic decolonization, understood as a

long-term process of re-signification and re/construction towards words and knowledges” (Escobar, 2010, p. 397).

While engaging in dialogue, the participants in this dissertation “turn[ed] away from imported and borrowed knowledges, shift[ed] from hegemonic frames, and cultivate[d] a rich understanding of local frames” (Segalo, Manoff, & Fine, 2015, p. 343), which Grosfoguel (2007) calls an ‘epistemic decolonial turn’. The indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth together built on their own linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge and the struggles to make sense of the multilingual and multiethnic world to redefine multilingual education as a way to strengthen their *cho:tlung*: holistic knowledge, awareness, success, and a sense of collective pride. This perspective implies that multilingual education should not just focus on the teaching and learning of multiple ‘separate’ languages, but on engaging them in exploring, understanding, and transforming “new forms of inequalities in education and society and new productions of *subaltern subjectivities*...under forces of globalization” (Lin, 2006, p. 3, original italics). This perspective echoes what Hornberger (2010) argues:

Multilingual education is, for me, all about standing in the oppressed places of the world, under the hot sun with the millions that toil each day, in the nonviolent fight for a liberating education. And it is not so much that I have strength to give them, but rather the reverse—that I am continually renewed by the unfathomable energy, vision, and forgiveness of those who toil. (p. 4)

Engaged language policy is indeed a decolonial effort towards empowering the oppressed to fight for their own liberation. Taking as an “unfinished iterative project” (Segalo et al., 2015, p. 343), decolonizing ideologies in this dissertation strengthen counter-consciousness and activism that builds on the critical awareness of both authoritative ideologies and locally situated alternative practices. As discussed in this dissertation, such counter-consciousness involves a

redefinition of nationalism from a multilingual perspective and reimagining language policy from a subaltern perspective (Tollefson, 2013). Together, these perspectives recognize the fact that linguistic inequalities are *real* and the efforts towards transforming them require an ethically committed engagement with these historically marginalized people groups. As portrayed in this dissertation, decolonizing efforts involve breaking the silence (Segalo et al., 2015) of the subalterns in countering ideological hegemony which erases their multilingual identities, knowledge, and language practices, both implicitly and explicitly. This study implies that engaged language policy is an effort towards “*unfreezing*...the subaltern’s potential for *thinking otherwise*” (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p. 79, emphasis original), which as Kumaravadivelu (2016) argues, is needed “to recognize that the hegemonic forces have created a condition by which the subalterns are persuaded to think that the logic of coloniality is normal and natural” (p. 79). Engaged language policy supports the subalterns in becoming ideologically clear about the condition of their own marginalization and reclaim their multilingual identities and dynamic language practices as resources for their own empowerment in education.

Epistemic (In)Justice and Language Policy

Another important theoretical implication of this study is concerned with awakening the subalterns from their own sense of social injustice. I would like to discuss one particular aspect of social injustice, ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2007, 2008), that this dissertation has focused on. Epistemic injustice occurs when someone receives a deflated degree of knowledge, identity, and credibility. Defined as a state of “being wronged in one’s capacity as a knower” (Fricker, 2008, p. 69), epistemic injustice restricts individuals from investing their full potential in the process of knowing. Epistemic injustice, although not widely discussed in language policy studies, is a particularly important concept to unravel whose knowledge, identities, and

ideologies are represented in language education policies and practices. In other words, awakening a sense of epistemic injustice deals mainly with the question of who is recognized as an *epistemic being* (or legitimate source of knowledge) in language policy and practices.

While engaging in dialogue, the participants in this study became aware of how the nation-state and neoliberalism shape dominant language policies and practices that derecognize their multilingual identities and knowledge as legitimate resources in education; that is, rather than recognizing indigenous people as multilingual subjects, their identity is positioned only as monolingual ‘mother-tongue speakers’. Consequently, their fluid, dynamic, and heterogeneous multilingual practices are not recognized as legitimate knowledge in education. Engaged language policy however challenges this kind of ‘epistemic violence’ (Spivak, 1988) against indigenous people; in particular, it pays attention to empowering the subalterns so they can reclaim their identity as multilingual speakers and the knower of what counts as equitable multilingual education policy. Epistemic injustice includes two major types of injustices: testimonial and hermeneutical.

Testimonial injustice occurs when someone is wronged in their “capacity as a giver of knowledge” (Fricker, 2007, p. 7). Despite having rich indigenous knowledge, experiences of struggle, and culturally appropriate pedagogical practices, indigenous teachers, villagers, and youth contend that they are not recognized as ‘a giver of knowledge’ in language policy-making processes; rather, they are disengaged and dehumanized as their knowledge and language practices are delegitimized as language policies and practices continue to reproduce nation-state and neoliberal ideologies of language. This leads to hermeneutical injustice, which puts indigenous teachers, youth, and villagers at “an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences” (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). At the macro level this disadvantage

emerges from the indigenous people's relatively powerless position and disengagement from the language policy-making process. Epistemic injustice also occurs at the macro level as indigenous students' access to knowledge is negatively affected by the double burden of nation-state and neoliberal ideologies.

Engaged language policy as portrayed in this dissertation calls for an ethically grounded and theoretically informed approach to epistemic justice. Epistemic justice is promoted with greater critical awareness and sensibility about one's identity as a knower and subject of social understanding. While engaging teachers, youth, and villagers in exploring their own sociopolitical conditions and in ethnographically-grounded dialogue, they continue to reclaim themselves as a knower of what works best for the educational experiences of multilingual and ethnic-minoritized learners. By taking an activist position, they use their knowledge and awareness in educating other villagers, youth, and teachers. In doing this, they are transforming the epistemic injustice of indigenous people due to identity prejudice and structural marginalization.

The Right to Language Policy

Engaged language policy goes beyond the liberal ideology of language rights and instead takes 'the right to language policy'¹⁰⁰ perspective (Davis & Phyak, forthcoming). This perspective focuses on ensuring the right to engagement of the disengaged and disenfranchised people in the making of language policy. As a radical and transformative approach, the right to language policy calls for new strategies to resist and transform hegemonic ideologies by engaging the language policy agents—mostly those whose participation in the language policy-making processes is often ignored—in critical dialogue and social actions that empower them to

¹⁰⁰ This concept is influenced by Henri Lefebvre's 'the right to the city' which he defines as "a radical restructuring of social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond" (Purcell, 2002, p. 101).

take transformative roles, such as social critic, activist, and advocate. This perspective recognizes the need for “more radical, systematic, and contextually sensitive ways than [those] currently in place to deal with the implications of diversity, especially linguistic diversity, in education” (Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015, p. 178). In engaging indigenous youth, teachers, and villagers, this dissertation uses engaged ethnographic methods such as ethnographically-grounded dialogue, counter-narratives, collaborative ethnography, and awareness-raising workshops towards building critical ideological awareness with regard to language policies and practices. The right-to-language-policy perspective focuses on the importance of ensuring the language minoritized peoples’ right to change themselves by changing language policy.

This perspective emerges from the contention of indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth about the inadequacy of the liberal ideology of language rights in addressing ‘the right to multilingualism’ (García et al., 2006) at the micro level. As the participants contended, despite indigenous people being granted the right to mother-tongue education in the Constitution, the school space is not significantly open to accepting minoritized languages; rather they are increasingly erased and invisibilized from schools due to the increased neoliberal English language ideology. Therefore, the right to language policy pays attention to the empowerment and activism of marginalized linguistic groups in order to challenge linguistic hierarchy and unequal power and privilege distributed among languages. Piller’s (2016) recent critique on how linguistic diversity is interlinked with social justice issues further supports the right to language policy. She poignantly argues that:

...if we do not understand how linguistic diversity intersects with social justice and if we are unable to even recognize disadvantage and discrimination on the basis of language, we will not be able to work towards positive change. (Piller, 2016, p. 5)

More importantly, this dissertation has portrayed that it is important to understand the intersection between language diversity and social justice ‘with’, not ‘for’, the minoritized language speakers. The perspective recognizes ‘sociolinguistic borderlands’ (McCarty, 2014) which hold indigenous people’s ongoing struggles to make sense of the dominant world. Building on Anzaldúa’s (1987) ‘borderlands’, McCarty (2014) takes sociolinguistic borderlands as “spatial, temporal, and ideological spaces of sociolinguistic hybridity and diversity” (p. 255) in which indigenous people defy dominant categories of language as they struggle to negotiate, resist, and transform the conditions of their own marginalization. As McCarty (2014) argues, sociolinguistic borderlands represent “the dynamic and complex sociolinguistic ecologies they [indigenous people] inhabit and give meaning to and that they simultaneously claim, contest, honor, and resist” (p. 265). The right to language policy recognizes complex sociolinguistic realities in which the marginalized language speakers enact fluid and dynamic language practices and negotiate contested language ideologies.

In this dissertation, the engagement of indigenous villagers, youth, and teachers in language policy dialogue is deeply grounded in their own sociolinguistic borderlands. The analysis of participants’ emergent ideologies, activism, and transformative agency clearly shows that indigenous people are in a unique position of borderlands in which simultaneity, fluidity, and in-betweenness become the norm rather than a choice (Bhabha, 1994). The right to language policy recognizes the lived experiences of subalterns in the borderlands and respects their right to be ‘in-between’. This perspective respects the fact that bi/multilingual people have “multiple ways of using...languages to voice an alternative worldview and a critical perspective” (García et al., 2006, p. 10), and that they “have multiple associations, visions, and voices, developed through [their] *ability to be in the middle*” (García et al., 2006, p. 10, emphasis added).

I argue that it is through empowering the subalterns to reclaim their sociolinguistic borderlands—which are now structurally and discursively threatened by the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies—that it is possible to reimagine equitable language policies and practices. As discussed in this dissertation, engaging indigenous people in exploring and analyzing their own sociolinguistic borderlands provides them with a sense of belonging, agency, and activism towards creating multilingual school spaces. This effort embraces simultaneity and fluidity as integral to indigenous people’s lived experiences and supports their “movement away from set patterns and goals toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p. 101). The sustainability of sociolinguistic borderlands is transformative and radical: it not only challenges the given identity of indigenous communities as an imagined monolingual community, but it also counters the ‘monoglot-centric’ ideologies of indigenous communities (McCarty, 2014; see also Webster & Peterson, 2011). McCarty (2014) argues that as an ideological space of sociolinguistic hybridity and diversity, sociolinguistic borderlands uphold indigenous people’s multiple associations, voices, and ways of using language, and opens up new possibilities for reimagining an equitable multilingual education policy.

The right to language policy recognizes the identity of indigenous people as knowers or givers of knowledge rather than disengaged colonial beings by engaging them in the making and remaking of language policies. This perspective calls for the continual engagement of the minoritized people in critical ideological analysis for building ‘ideological clarification’ (Fishman, 2000; Kroskrity, 2009) and ‘ideological becoming’ (Bakhtin, 1981) with regard to what policies and practices address their lived sociopolitical, linguistic, and educational experiences in sociolinguistic borderlands.

Conclusion

This study has discussed how engaged language policy contributes to language policy transformation by engaging indigenous villagers, teachers, and youth in critical dialogue towards decolonizing language ideologies. In keeping language ideology at the center of language policy transformation, the participants engaged in analyzing and negotiating the tensions between the dominant and alternative language ideologies in language policy in relation to their own lived sociopolitical, historical, cultural, educational, and economic conditions. While dominant language ideologies continue to impose monolingualism as the norm, engaged language policy contributes to building alternative ideologies of multilingual education; such alternative ideologies emerge from the engagement of language policy actors in understanding the tension between dominant and alternative ideologies.

The emergence of new ideologies, as portrayed in this dissertation, not only challenge the colonizing ideologies of language as a fixed and bounded object, but also embrace participants' 'ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1981). On the one hand, the ideological becoming upholds the participants' growing ideological awareness and, on the other, it represents their sense of agency and activism for language policy transformation. The participants' ideological awareness challenges the 'monolingual habitus' (Benson, 2013)—promoted by the nation-state and market-based ideologies—in their own socioeconomic, cultural, and educational lived experiences and embraces new ideologies which recognize language as a fluid and dynamic process. Indeed, ideological awareness strengthens critical consciousness about the “political dynamics and historical embedding” (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p. 3) of language practices that are recognized and derecognized in the current language policy discourses. This study shows that dialogical engagement contributes towards understanding how nation-state and neoliberal

ideologies which support monolingual ideologies in the guise of nationalism and the global market economy (Lin, 2013), respectively, are connected with historical and political injustice *with* the people who are most affected by these ideologies.

Another important aspect of ‘ideological becoming’ in this dissertation is concerned with how the people who are the most disengaged from the language policy creation and implementation processes can reclaim their own identity as knowers of what counts as equitable multilingual education. While challenging the nation-state and neoliberal ideologies, the indigenous villagers, youth, and teachers became social critics, advocates, and activists for multilingual education and reclaimed their subject position as critical agents for language policy transformation. Engaged language policy is particularly important for engaging language policy actors in exploring and analyzing how the market-based rationality of language policy—as seen in the current expansion of English as a *de facto* medium-of-instruction policy—is not only minimizing the entire discourse of multilingual education, but also exacerbating ‘epistemic injustice’ (Fricker, 2007) by posing challenges for bi/multilingual learners’ access to knowledge. This process evokes the traditionally disenfranchised indigenous people’s awakening of a sense of injustice (Deutsch, 2006) and engages them in the making and remaking of language policies with alternative epistemologies.

Although not a large-scale study, the engaged processes discussed in this dissertation point out that policy-makers should recognize the language minoritized indigenous people’s struggles, activism, epistemologies, and ideologies in framing multilingual policies and pedagogical practices. Rather than reproducing the monoglossic and monolingual ideologies, policies must focus on the translanguaging ideologies and pedagogies (García & Li, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012) that are deeply rooted in indigenous people’s sociolinguistic

borderlands (McCarty, 2014) and historical struggles to make sense of their multilingual world (Wyman et al., 2014). For this, it is necessary to focus not just on language or language practices, but also on social justice (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009; Piller, 2016; Tikly, 2016). From this perspective, the current discourses of multilingual education policies and pedagogies should go beyond liberal language-rights-based ideologies (see Freeland, 2013, for how this ideology is not adequate to address linguistic complexities) to instead pay attention to empowering language minoritized communities towards their right to change and make language policies.

I conclude by arguing that (re)imagining multilingual educational policies is an ideological process. It requires an engagement with understanding the intersectionality between multilingualism and sociopolitical power relations (e.g., Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Heller, 2007) and transforming colonizing ideologies from the bottom-up. Reimagining education from a multilingual perspective entails an engaged process of decolonizing monoglossic and monolingual ideologies and commitment towards supporting the ideological becoming of the subalterns. Only when subalterns are able to see themselves as ideological subjects, they speak (Spivak, 1988): they can then challenge colonial language ideologies—which create essentialist linguistic boundaries and support monolingualism in language education—and reclaim alternative ideologies embedded in their own lived experiences and sociocultural values. Engaged language policy, as discussed in this dissertation, calls for dialogic engagement *with*, not *for*, the subalterns in decolonizing hegemonic language ideologies for equitable multilingual education. However, it is important to recognize that engaged language policy is not focused on language policy as an end result, rather it emphasizes the *processes* in which language policy actors are engaged in exploring, analysing, and transforming language ideological issues in language policies and practices.

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Appendix 1: Members of the NNEPC

Chairman: Sardar Rudra Raj Pandey, Director of Archeology, Chairman of the Board of Education, Government of Nepal.

Secretary-Treasurer: Trailokya Nath Upraity, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal.

Educational Advisor: Dr. Hugh B. Wood, Professor of Education, University of Oregon, USA.

Members:

Itihas Siromani Babu Ram Acharya (Historian and Educationist)

Karunakar Baidya, Machhendra Institute

Padma Prasad Bhattarai, Vice-Principal, Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya

Kaisher Bahadur K.C., Public Service Commission

Ratna Bahadur Bist, Law Commission

Mrs. Burhathoki, Headmistress, Padma Kanya Vidya Shram

Jagat Bahadur Burhathoki, Professor of Geography, Tri-Chandra College

Bhaba Nath Dhungana, Secretary, Land Reform Commission

Ashutosh Ganguli, Professor of Mathematics, Tri-Chandra College

Mrs. Chandra Gurung, Home Economics Training School

Bijaya Nandan Joshi, Headmaster, Judhodaya Public High School

Shyam Raj Dhoj Joshi, Headmaster, National Teacher Training Centre

Yadu Nath Khanal, Head, Department of English, Tri-Chandra College

Murari Krishna, News Editor, Nepal Radio

Mrs. Chandra Mahat, Headmistress, Montesori School

Bramhi Datta Pandey, Professor of Botany, Tri-Chandra College

Gopal Pandey, Secretary, Nepal Shikshya Parishad

Nayan Raj Pandey, Director, Sanskrit and Nepali Studies

Shanker Deva Panth, Principal Nepal National College

Amrit Prasad Pradhan, Professor of Chemistry Tri-Chandra College

Bhairab Bahadur Pradhan, Principal, Durbar Intermediate College

Rudra Dass Rajbanshi, Technical School

Mrs. Rana, Head, Female Hospital

Kula Ratna, Engineer, Public Works Department

Jitendra Bahadur Saha, Director General of Public Instruction, Government of Nepal.

Bal Krishna Sama, Poet and Dramatist

Ashutosh Sen, Principal, Tri-Chandra College

Deva Nath Sharma, Member, Public Service Commission

Tulsi Bahadur Shrestha, Montessori School

Soma Nath Sharma, Principal, Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya

Pushkar Shumshere, Head, Nepal Bhasha Prakashini Samiti

Govinda Mohan Srivastava, Lawyer

Bajra Kant Thakur, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Education

Sarada Prasad Upadhyaya, Assistant Director for Public Instruction, Government of Nepal

Tirtha Raj Upraity, Headmaster, Dilli Bazaar Adult School.

Evaluators

Romy Alexander, Ford Foundation Representative, Small Industries Specialist

Krishna Raj Aryal, Instructor, National Teacher Training Centre

Surya Bikram Jnewali, Retired Headmaster, Government School, Darjeeling

Floyd Dowell, USOM Technician, Village Development Programme

Dr. W. Machler, UNESCO Representative to Nepal, Engineering Institute

Miss Ellen Moline, Ford Foundation Representative, Home Economics

Father Marshall D. Moran, S. J., Principal, Godavari School

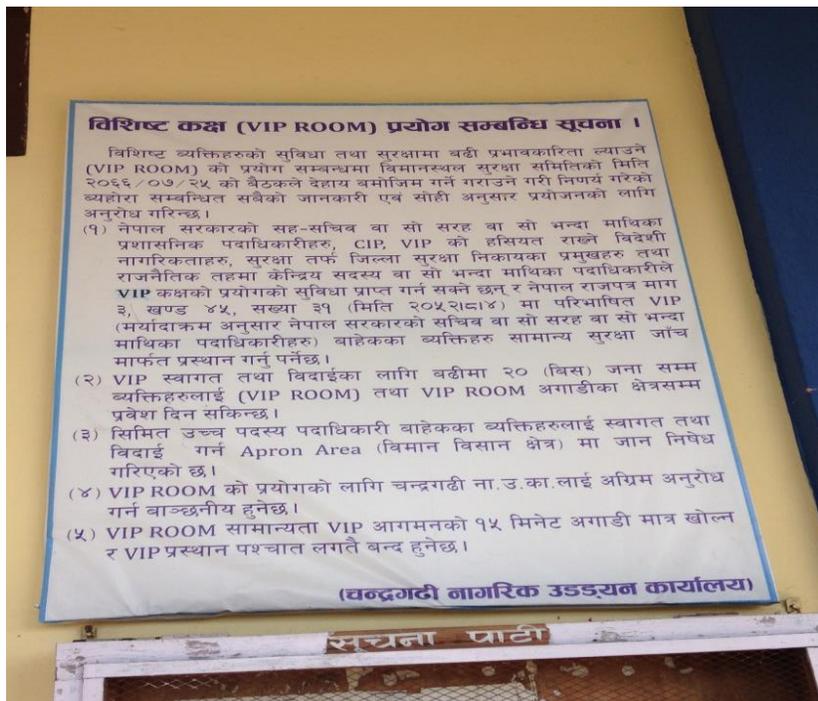
Donald Portway, Former UNESCO Representative to Nepal

Dirgha Man Shrestha, Instructor, National Teacher Training Centre

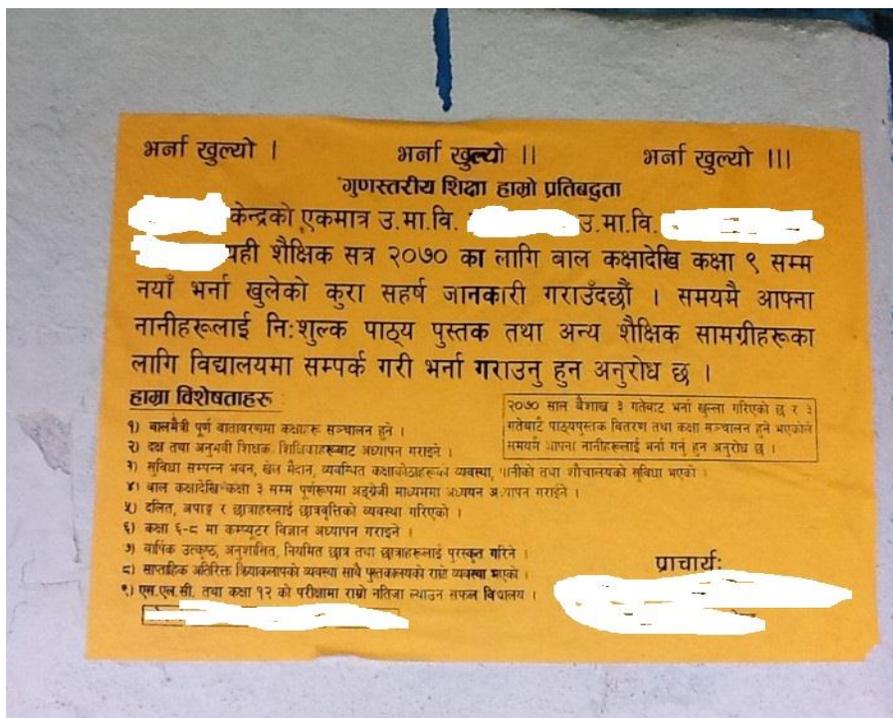
Rama Prashad Tandukar, Instructor, National Teacher Training Center

Mahendra Bahadur Thapa, Instructor, National Teacher Training Center

Appendix 2: Public Signs in Nepali



(Note: This public notice board is from one of the local airports in eastern Nepal. @Prem Phyak)



(Note: This public sign is an advertisement for a public school; it states that the school focuses on teaching totally in the English medium to guarantee 'quality education'. The name of the school and phone numbers are deleted for anonymity. @Prem Phyak)

Appendix 3: Members of the National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission

Coordinator: Mr. Tilbikram Nernbang (Bairagi Kainla)

Members:

Mr. Bhim Bahadur Tamang, Social worker, Dolakha

Dr. Harsha Bahadur Buda Magar, Social worker, Sidhharthanagar, Rupandehi

Mr. Dhana Bahadur Lamichhane Gurung, Language activist, Pokhara, Kaski

Dr. Yogendra Prasad Yadava, Reader, Central Department of English Tribhuvan University

Mr. Kasinath Tamot, Lecturer, Patan Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University

Dr. Nobel Kishor Rai, Reader, Department of Language Arts, Tribhuvan University

Mr. Amrit Yonjan Tamang, Language activist, Tiplung, Ramechhap

Dr. Hemanga Raj Adhikari, Professor, Department of Language Arts, Tribhuvan University

Mr. Umashankar Dwivedi, Language activist, Birgunj, Parsa

Mr. Sitaramsharan Chaudhari, Lecturer, Thakurram Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University.

Appendix 4: Examples of Newspaper Articles

Article 1

Govt schools go English

Aim to challenge private schools

KHANDBARI: At a time when private schools have hiked fees by 50 per cent from this academic session, the government schools across the district have initiated teaching-learning activities in English at cheaper price.

Twenty government schools have already started teaching-learning activities in English.

Jaljala Lower Secondary School located at Jaljala VDC established 'Jaljala Secondary Wings' aiming at promoting English language. Likewise, Bageswori Higher Secondary School has started running primary level classes in English medium.

"The private schools have increased fees indiscriminately. How can we afford our children's education?" questioned Sunita Kafle, a guardian.

The parents have also been attracted to the government schools after the schools started running classes in English.

"We have started classes in English language to challenge the increasing commercialisation in education," said Sumana Shrestha, principal, Jaljala Lower Secondary School.

In the meantime, 401 community schools across the district have pledged to carry out teaching-learning activities in English medium from the next academic year.

Meanwhile, Sankh-uwasabha District Education Office has urged the parents not to pay the fees hiked by the private schools recently.

District Education Officer Dirghadhoj Chapagain said he was ready to assist the government schools if they wanted to manage education in English medium.

On the other hand, the guardians have demanded that the education office should not allow opening new private schools in the district.

There are 15 private schools in Shankhuwasabha district where English is the means of instruction.

Dambar Prasad Barakoti, principal, Sunrise Boarding School, admitted that the school hiked the fee after it increased pay for its staff.

Meanwhile, DEO today called all the owners of the private schools to fix the fee structure.

"Private schools are cheating the guardians on the pretext of quality education in English medium," said Pushpa Kumar Koirala, a teacher.

(Source: Republica. Published 2010-11-12)

Article 2

Pupils throng English-medium community schools

SHER BAHADUR KC

BUTWAL, May 1: A community school here in Butwal has been facing a problem of plenty at a time when public schools across the country are struggling to attract students.

Kanti Higher Secondary School at Hatbazar, Butwal-6 could not entertain all the students thronging it for admission after it made arrangements for free education in English medium.

“Our seats were full after the first two days of admissions. We apologized to the guardians and students for not being able to admit them all this session and we are now focusing on the development of infrastructure to take in more students in the next session,” Principal Govinda Gyawali said.

Gyawali said the school took the step of teaching in English as community schools, which are unable to compete with private schools in quality of education, are facing the prospect of shutting down for lack of students.

The school plans to run one section each in the 8th, 9th and 10th grades in English medium-- there are two sections for Nepali medium in each of these classes --but with the number of students seeking admission it could easily have run other sections in English as well. There were 38 new admissions in the 10th grade, 33 in 9th and 32 in 8th this session.

The school also teaches all students up to 4th grade in English. The District Education Office, Rupandehi said many community schools in the district have started to teach in English medium from this session. Principal of Shanti Namuna Secondary School in Manigram Ghanashyam Gyawali said 225 students studying in private schools have joined his school this session alone.

While Kanti Higher Secondary School doesn't charge anything as it can manage expenses on its own, Shanti Namuna is charging a very small amount compared to private schools. Keshav Bhandari of Karhiya-8, whose son Nishant passed 9th grade from New Horizon Boarding School in Butwal, said, “I got him admitted at Shanti Namuna after it started teaching in English. He is enjoying the new school”.

(Source: **Republica**. Published on 2011-05-01)

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