

Fostering social cohesion in ethnolinguistic communities through mother tongue-based initiatives in Nepal

Dhan Bahadur Tamang

Humanities and Social Sciences, Pokhara University, Pokhara 33700, Nepal; dhantamang@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: In Nepal and other regions, fostering social cohesion within ethnolinguistic communities is recognized as a vital factor for fostering social prosperity. This research paper presents an integrated framework developed through an extensive literature survey, incorporating the perspectives of ethnolinguistics and social cohesion. The study examines social cohesion using mixed methods, exploring its domains and correlation with linguistic theories. Special attention is given to the role of social prosperity and how this study impacts attitudinal and behavioral aspects of social cohesion. The study's findings underscore the significance of interconnected social relations, a sense of connectedness, and shared common goods as essential elements for fostering practical social harmony. Notably, the research emphasizes the critical role of mother tongue-based educational activities in empowering ethnolinguistic communities, catalyzing sociocultural transformation, and promoting identity. It is revealed that these initiatives contribute to poverty reduction and foster gender equality and social inclusion. Moreover, the research advocates language-based interventions as a pivotal strategy for enhancing social cohesion. By recognizing language as a critical element that binds communities, this study aims to create a more fruitful investigation and provide practical, scientific, and managerial contributions in fostering social cohesion within ethnolinguistic contexts.

KEYWORDS: community empowerment; ethnolinguistic communities; language-based intervention; mother tongue-based education; social cohesion; social prosperity; sociocultural transformation

1. Introduction

This study explores the role of ethnolinguistic communities in fostering social cohesion, focusing on five communities in Nepal: Western Tamang, Aathpariyia Rai, Urawn, Newar, and Rajbanshi. These communities have historically been dispersed across the east and mid-hills and the Terai regions. Empowering these ethnolinguistic communities is regarded as crucial for achieving social prosperity and fostering social cohesion. Nepal's social landscape is complex, encompassing gender, caste, ethnicity, and urban/rural living. Including ethnolinguistic communities in empowerment initiatives are seen as a potential avenue for their advancement of social prosperity and for fostering social cohesion.

Regmi (2014) defines social empowerment as a multifaceted process enabling individuals to control their lives. It involves developing individuals' power and ability to act, empowering them to address crucial issues within their lives, communities, and societies. This process occurs on multiple levels,

including individual, group, and community, and spans various sociological, psychological, and economic aspects (Conger and Kanungo, 1998).

Social cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which members of a society feel connected through shared values, trust, a sense of belonging, and active participation. It plays a vital role in a society's prosperity and stability and can be assessed through various indicators, encompassing dimensions like "social relations, connectedness, and focus on the common good" (Croissant and Walkenhorst, 2019, p. 12). Measuring social cohesion can vary across cultures and societies (Schiefer and van der Noll, 2016). There is a need for valid and reliable research to address the social cohesion challenges faced by ethnolinguistic communities, primarily focusing on the potential of Mother Tongue-Based Initiatives (MTBI).

Hence, the problem statement for this study is formulated to assess the extent to which ethnolinguistic communities are being promoted toward social cohesion through mother tongue-based initiatives. The paper explores the diverse roles of mother tongue-based initiatives and how language, literacy, and development are interconnected in promoting social cohesion.

2. Objective of the study

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of mother tongue-based initiatives on the extant social cohesion in Nepal's ethnolinguistic communities. The study aimed to assess the contribution of mother tongue-based initiatives to empower communities and promote social cohesion among diverse ethnic communities. The study was conducted with a focus on answering specific research questions, such as:

- 1) How do MTBIs help to empower ethnolinguistic communities to promote social cohesion?
- 2) What are the impacts of MTBI in preserving ethnic culture and mother tongue-based educational practices?

3. Literature review

This study revolves around the concept of social cohesion, represented by the level of organizational sophistication and cohesion within ethnolinguistic communities. Community organizations founded and driven by community members have been found to bring about significant improvements, such as enhancing the stability and physical well-being of neighborhoods, creating new services to address social issues, fostering community growth, and fostering a sense of unity within the community (Ghimire, 2006). These community organizations provide the necessary environment, connections, facilities, and administrative support for individuals to take more control over their lives.

In the context of Nepal, the 2011 Census identified 123 national languages, with Nepali being spoken as their mother tongue by 44.6% of the population. Other languages that are commonly spoken in Nepal include Maithili (11.7%), Bhojpuri (6.0%), Tharu (5.8%), Tamang (5.1%), Newar (3.2%), Bajjika (3.0%), Magar (3.0%), Doteli (3.0%), and Urdu. Nepali has been Nepal's primary language and medium of instruction for a long time. Of the 123 mother tongues recognized officially, 70, or 56.9%, are categorized as minority languages (Banjara, 2019).

Nepal's rural culture is the foundation of the country's vibrant overall culture. While some may attempt to contrast urban and rural cultures hierarchically through community groups, it is essential to recognize the relevance of both in their respective settings. Rural culture plays a critical role in rural development, especially considering that most of Nepal's population resides in rural areas, indicating that

urbanization has not entirely overshadowed the country’s rural spirit. Rapid technological advancements also impact rural areas, and understanding this influence is crucial for empowering communities (Koirala, 2010; Dhakal, 2018).

Besides, there is a significant gap in social inclusion across various aspects of human development in Nepal, with some groups being more excluded than others (Gurung et al., 2014). Social exclusion is a significant issue for marginalized groups, which ultimately leads to inequality and hinders development. Bridging gaps and ensuring equal opportunities for participation and access to resources is crucial for promoting social cohesion and justice (Levitas, 2005). According to Lo Bianco (2013), the languages used in education can promote social cohesion within communities where minority languages are spoken. Therefore, social cohesion plays a crucial role in sustainable development among ethnolinguistic communities in Nepal. Maintaining languages in education can help address poverty, education quality, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and climate action (Banjara, 2019).

This study adopts Bernard’s perspective on social cohesion, which comprises a multidimensional construct. **Table 1** illustrates the six dimensions of social cohesion at the intersection of domains and the nature of social relations, as Bernard (1999) proposed and further developed by Chan et al. (2006). As shown in **Table 1**, Bernard’s perspective on social cohesion consists of a multidimensional construct. The rows represent domains, while the columns represent the nature of social relations. According to Acket et al. (2011), at the intersection of these two concepts, there are six dimensions of social cohesion:

- 1) Insertion/Exclusion: Refers to shared capacities within the community, promoting inclusivity.
- 2) Equality/Inequality: Addresses the equal distribution of chances and conditions among community members.
- 3) Affiliation/Isolation: Focuses on shared common values and a sense of belonging within the community.
- 4) Participation/Passivity: Involvement of community members in the management of public affairs and the third sector.
- 5) Acceptance/Rejection: Embracing pluralism and accepting differences among community members.
- 6) Legitimacy/Illegitimacy: maintaining public and private institutions that effectively represent the people and their interests, acting as mediators within the community.

In this framework, social cohesion is considered a characteristic of social organizations or institutions rather than just their constituents. It involves the interactions between individuals, groups, organizations, and society or government. Understanding and analyzing these dimensions will provide valuable insights into the social cohesion dynamics within ethnolinguistic communities and their impact on community empowerment and development (Dickes and Valentova, 2012; Chan et al., 2006).

Table 1. Bernard’s view on social cohesion.

Domains	Nature of Relations	
	Formal/Attitudinal	Substantial/Behavioral
Economic	Inclusion/exclusion	Equality/inequality
Political	Legitimacy/illegitimacy	Participation/passivity
Sociocultural	Acceptance/Rejection	Affiliation/isolation

Source: Bernard (1999).

Dickes and Valentova (2012) concisely summarize the core concepts of social cohesion, highlighting its multidimensional nature. They explain that social cohesion consists of two main dimensions: first, it

assesses social connectedness in various life domains, such as political and sociocultural spheres; second, it encompasses both subjective representations (attitudes) and behavioral outcomes (involvement). This multifaceted nature of social cohesion encompasses various aspects of individuals' social interactions and engagement. Furthermore, social cohesion should be viewed as a dynamic concept, where different components of social cohesion may sometimes be in tension, reflecting the complexities and challenges of fostering cohesion within communities.

Jerard and Suresh (2022) refer to the components of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's domain and dimensions of social cohesion, which are as follows:

- 1) **Trust in People:** This component revolves around the level of trust individuals have in others within their community or society. High levels of trust contribute to community members' sense of security and connectedness.
- 2) **Connectedness:** This dimension relates to the degree of connectedness and belonging individuals feel within their community. It encompasses social inclusion and a sense of being part of a larger social fabric.
- 3) **Focus on the Common Good:** This component emphasizes the collective welfare and interests of the community. It reflects how much individuals prioritize the well-being of the community as a whole over individual interests.

These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and assessing social cohesion within communities. By examining trust, connectedness, and a focus on the common good, researchers and policymakers gain valuable insights into the strength and dynamics of social cohesion, aiding efforts to promote community engagement, empowerment, and social well-being. Based on the literature review, the following integrated conceptual framework, as shown in **Figure 1**, was designed as a roadmap for this study.

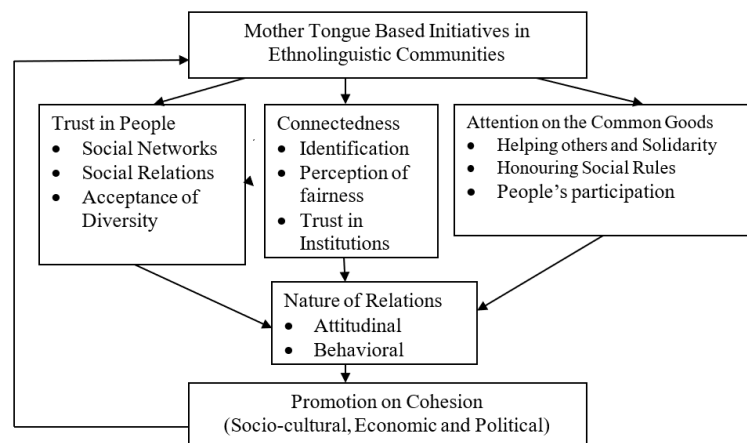


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1 suggests that mother tongue-based initiatives significantly foster social cohesion within ethnolinguistic communities. These initiatives align with the three dimensions of social cohesion: trust in people, connectedness, and focus on the common good. Each of these dimensions further encompasses three attitudinal and behavioral relations, contributing to measuring sociocultural, economic, political, and social cohesion within the communities.

The attitudinal and behavioral relations associated with each dimension of social cohesion further delve into how individuals' attitudes and actions contribute to the sociocultural, economic, and political aspects of social cohesion within ethnolinguistic communities.

Researchers and policymakers can develop targeted interventions that address these communities' specific needs and aspirations by recognizing and understanding the impact of mother tongue-based initiatives on social cohesion. By aligning the initiatives with the dimensions of social cohesion, efforts can be made to strengthen trust and connectedness and focus on the common good, ultimately leading to greater community empowerment, sociocultural transformation, and sustainable development within ethnolinguistic communities.

4. Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was used to achieve the goals of this study. This included research design, setting, sample selection, sampling strategy, data collection tools, report development, and data analysis. The data-gathering process included several instruments and techniques to comprehensively understand the subject matter (Vivek and Nanthagopan, 2021). The following data collection methods were utilized:

- 1) Desk Reviews: Relevant literature and existing studies on mother tongue-based initiatives, social cohesion, and empowerment in ethnolinguistic communities were reviewed to provide a foundational understanding of the topic.
- 2) Case Studies: In-depth case studies were conducted to explore specific instances and experiences related to mother tongue-based initiatives in the five ethnolinguistic communities of interest: Western Tamang, Newar, Aathparya Rai, Uraun, and Rajbanshi.
- 3) Site Visits: The researcher visited the local communities to gather firsthand information and observed the implementation of mother tongue-based initiatives and their impact on community empowerment and social cohesion.
- 4) Focus Group Discussions (FGD): Focus group discussions were conducted with community members to gain insights into their attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of mother tongue-based initiatives and their impact on social cohesion and empowerment.
- 5) Key Informant Interviews: Key informants, such as community leaders, educators, and policymakers, were interviewed to gather expert opinions and valuable insights on the subject matter.

The data collected through these diverse channels were quantitative and qualitative, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the current status of mother tongue-based initiatives on empowerment and social cohesion within ethnolinguistic communities. The communities included were western Tamang, Newar, Rajbanshi, Uranw, and Athpahariya Rai. Data analysis focused on examining the dimensions of inequality and social capital formation, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities for fostering social cohesion and community empowerment.

By employing a mixed-methods approach and utilizing multiple data collection instruments (McKim, 2016), this study presented a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the impact of mother tongue-based initiatives on social cohesion and empowerment within ethnolinguistic communities. The findings from this methodology can contribute valuable insights to policymakers, researchers, and practitioners working towards promoting inclusive and cohesive communities.

5. Findings

Ethnolinguistic communities in Nepal face significant challenges in their language usage. Despite efforts on social transformation and community empowerment through mother tongue-based initiatives, studies show that progress is unsatisfactory. The study explored a high rate of mother tongue-based livelihood and educational activities, which are the critical factors related to ethnolinguistic community

empowerment in Nepal. Many challenges associated with implementing plans and policies at the operational level resulted from poor service delivery and poor access to and utilization of information and services.

One of the most important case studies of effective MTBIs for community mobilization in the sample regions was discovered to be the residents of the ethnolinguistic communities. The community focused on gathering indigenous information, holding cultural parades in the village, creating mother-tongue-based materials, and encouraging residents to prioritize teaching their children their mother tongue. One of the Community Learning Center (CLC) facilitators in Jhapa from the Rajbanshi community described her thoughts on the usage of her mother tongue as follows:

There is a change in literacy classes. There are two parts. One is literacy, and the other is social transformation. We did not just teach A, B, C. There is a belief that you should also teach ABC and teach about social change. So, we noticed many changes in literacy when we had practical interaction learning in our language through stories, discussions, songs, etc. One of the examples of changes is that after literacy class, almost all the participants built a toilet on their initiative. Generally, Rajbanshi people believe we should not plant a banana tree in the corner of the farm. After we discussed superstitions through a story in the literacy classes, one of the participants convinced her father-in-law to plant the banana tree. She told her father-in-law, 'I will be responsible if something happens there because of it.' Then, she planted the banana tree. Now, it has become an example for other community members, too. Some participants became literacy teachers in the Nepali language because they had already completed literacy classes in their mother tongue. Some participants had dropped out of school; they rejoined the school. What empowerment!

In the same way, most FGD participants concurred that promoting mother-tongue education, managing diversity by addressing the underprivileged and marginalized, and engaging with various stakeholders based on their needs for socioeconomic promotion are responsible for the current increase in MTBIs. While discussing the impact of a mother tongue-based literacy program, a female member of the Rai community shared her thoughts,

I am glad to attend a six-month literacy class in my mother tongue. I experienced many changes in my life because of this study. I was unable to recognize any alphabets. I thought I was unlucky because I could not read or write. After the literacy class, I can write my name and read books. I have attended several women's meetings, and now I am happy because I can put my signature on the paper. I can use simple math, too, like addition, multiplication, subtraction, etc. Literacy helped me read and learn Nepali, too. More opportunities will come to me in the future.

The participants cited how the MTBI coverage produced in recent years has acquired peace and harmony in society as grounds for enhancing their effectiveness while working with others.

In one of the mother tongue-based schools, a tri-lingual approach is being practiced with Nepal Bhasa, Nepali, and English. The students are from different linguistic backgrounds. However, these students have advantages in learning these languages from the beginning of their formal schooling. Mother tongue-based initiative gives both a sense of social harmony and academic achievement. The principal of the school recounts a triumphant story of the early days. In an interview, she said,

In the early years, we continued teaching students in Nepal Bhasa until grade eight. When starting grade 9th, many parents withdrew their children from school, thinking they would fail the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam because of Nepal Bhasa. However, we continued the class with twelve students. We worried very much about their final SLC exam (grade tenth). When we got

their results, it was a big surprise for us because 50% of students passed the exam at the distinction level, and 50 got first division. It was a full satisfaction in my life. These graduates work in different capacities in Nepal and abroad.

While assessing quantitative information, this study incorporated the benefits, impacts, and preservation of ethnolinguistic values and socioeconomic development of the ethnolinguistic communities. The indicators of the system were used to evaluate the sociocultural development status of the sample communities as a means of promoting a sense of identity, participation in the promotion of indigenous knowledge programs, Multilingual Education (MLE) awareness camping in the community, increasing cooperation, cultural event celebration, involvement in community learning centers, and promotion of local culture. **Figure 2** displays how respondents rated the indicators.

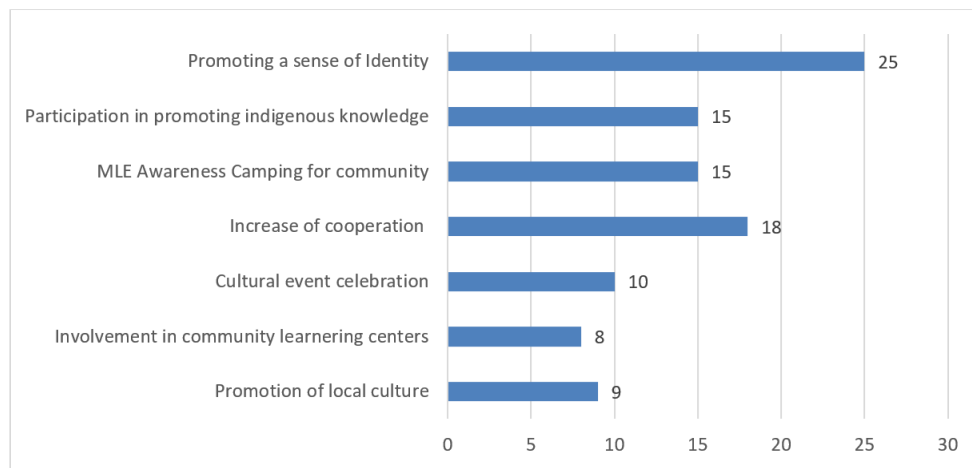


Figure 2. The status of the sociocultural dimension of social cohesion.

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of the respondents (25%) rated promoting a sense of identity, only 8% rated for involvement in community learning centers, and 9% for human resource capacity building. The second primary recommendation was an increase in cooperation by 18%. The recommendation for increased cooperation further emphasizes the significance of collaboration and mutual support in fostering social cohesion through the mother tongue-based initiative. During the interview, one of the village leaders said, “By communicating with other ethnolinguistic communities in their native language, we can build mutual respect and understanding amongst cultures.” This statement illustrates the importance of using the mother tongue for the sociocultural dimension of social cohesion.

In the same way, the benefits from the MTBI were calculated based on indicators including the feeling of social safety, getting indigenous knowledge and skills, better learning outcomes, passing cultural traditions down to the next generation, increasing motivation to work together, and making communication comfortable. **Figure 3** shows the different ratings of MTBI’s benefits.

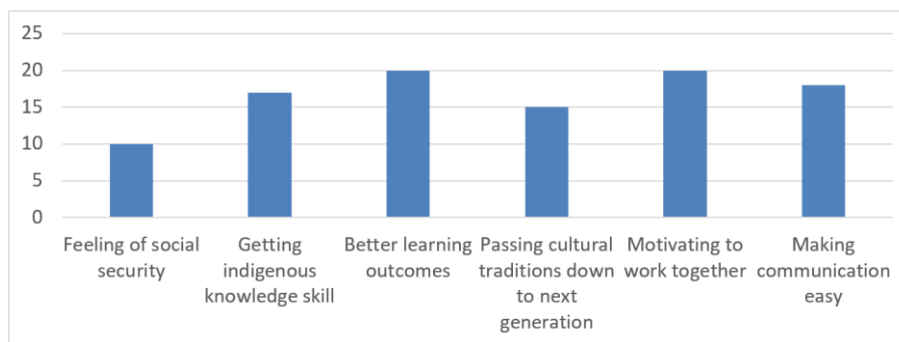


Figure 3. Benefits of MTBI.

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Figure 3 demonstrates that most of the respondents from the two groups, including better learning outcomes (20%) and motivation to work together (20%), claimed the benefits of MTBIs. Only 10% of respondents emphasized the feeling of social security as the benefit of MTBIs. This result reveals that initiatives prioritizing mother tongue improve academic performance and create a positive and collaborative social environment, leading to better learning outcomes and motivation. This data also supports the statement by one of the headteachers of mother tongue-based schools. When asked about the benefits of MTBIs, he said,

“When we started teaching classes in the children’s mother tongue for the first time, the parents were thrilled to see their children showing a keen interest in studying at school. We organized several workshops to create educational materials, and many parents actively participated by sharing their local cultural songs and stories. This created a sense of ownership among the parents, and they felt proud to contribute towards their children’s education.” Parents’ involvement in educational workshops fosters pride, benefits students, and creates a supportive community that values education.

Socioeconomics is one of the significant aspects of social cohesion. The relationship between MTBI and the community’s socioeconomic development was evaluated using the indicators of developing traditional skills, running literacy classes, creating opportunities for employment in the local areas, fostering indigenous knowledge for economic activities, and preserving cultural heritages. Figure 4 displays the respondents’ various ratings of the contribution of socioeconomic development through MTBI.



Figure 4. Contribution of MTBI on socioeconomic development.

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Figure 4 shows that 35% of the respondents identified developing traditional skills as one of the significant contributions of MTBI. Only 5% rated preserving cultural heritage for socio-development in the indigenous communities. This figure presents a positive attitude towards MTBI and recognizes its potential to contribute to the economic development of their communities in various ways. However, the respondents also seemed to prioritize the practical and instrumental aspects of MTBI over the cultural and identity aspects, which may reflect the challenges and pressures that ethnolinguistic minorities face in a globalized and competitive world.

Likewise, the effects of MTBI on a sense of equality and affiliation were assessed using a variety of metrics, such as participating in Community Learning Center (CLC) and MLE schools, joining local organizations, expressing voices in community meetings, attending mother tongue-based workshops, increasing practice of mother tongue use, engaging in cultural programs. **Figure 5** displays the current state of the respondents' ratings on the impact of MTBI on equality, affiliation, and participation.

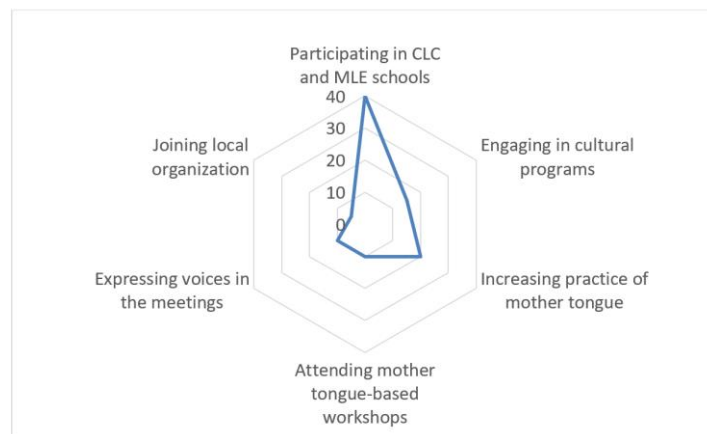


Figure 5. The impact of MTBI on equality, affiliation, and participation.

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Figure 5 shows that 40% of respondents rated participating in CLC and MLE schools, 15% rated engaging in cultural programs, 20% rated increasing the practice of their mother tongue, another 10% expressed their voices in community meetings, and 5% rated for joining local organizations. One of the village leaders, who attended several mother tongue-based workshops at CLC and MLE schools, said, “Our native language is a powerful tool for social activism, and within our communities, we can use it to speak out against social injustices and fight for equality.” This statement represents how MTBI empowers local people through equality, participation, and affiliation.

Poverty alleviation is one of the significant elements of social prosperity which may foster social cohesion. The future potential MTBI approach to poverty alleviation was rated with the following indicators as running functional literacy classes, promoting and marketing indigenous products, participating in income generation training, empowering indigenous leaders to create language preservation initiatives, implementing MLE policy by the government, increasing MTBI schools and CLCs, and integrating local languages in the school curriculum. **Table 2** displays the participants' opinions on the efficacy of various potential measures for reducing poverty in ethnolinguistic communities.

Table 2. The potential MTBI approach to poverty alleviation.

SN	Strategies	Participation (%)
1	Running functional literary classes	20%
2	Promoting and marketing indigenous products	13%
3	Participating in income generation training	17%
4	Empowering indigenous leaders to create language preservation initiative	10%
5	Implementing MLE policy by the government	5%
6	Increasing MTB schools and CLC	28%
7	Integrating local language in the school curriculum	7%
	Total	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

The members of the ethnolinguistic community identified various MTBI empowerment possibilities that ethnolinguistic communities may employ to maximize their economic progress. Most participants (28%) agreed that the most excellent method for reducing poverty is to adhere to MTBIs with inclusion rights. Similarly, 20% of respondents rated running functional literacy classes in the communities. Similarly, 17% of respondents chose to participate in income generation training. During the focus group discussion, while discussing the benefits of the literacy program, one of the participants shared, “I completed mother tongue-based literacy classes that focused on improving reading, writing, financial, and entrepreneurial skills. As a result, I started my successful grocery store, which led to economic growth for my family.” The success story of this participant demonstrates how access to quality education in one’s mother tongue can lead to personal and economic growth, ultimately contributing to the community’s overall development.

In order to ensure that their sociocultural activities and members’ behavior comply with their ethnic principles, the Newar and Tamang groups, according to the author’s survey, have their codes of ethics. Such codes of ethics are a collection of precise guidelines that establish standards for professional behavior and are based on the values and ideals of the relevant communities. Members can make decisions more easily when clearly stated norms and procedures are in place because they act as a tool for empowerment. **Table 3** shows the central ethnolinguistic values connected with community members in the targeted areas they belong to.

Table 3. Promoting key ethnolinguistic values through MTBIs.

Area	Community members	Key Social Values
Home	Family head and members	Respect and love
	Relatives	Personal relationship
	Neighbors	Relationship
Workplace	Employees	Learning and growth
	Nonprofit organizations	Productive assistance
	Local authority	Transparency
	Organizations	Protection

Source: Literature reviews and findings from research.

These values can be guiding points or strategic ways for the community members to strengthen the MTBI program through an empowerment process for social cohesion.

6. Discussions

The discussions surrounding language diversity and preservation are multifaceted and often contradictory. Most of the population in certain regions possesses proficiency in multiple languages, contributing to linguistic richness. The resurgence of indigenous languages and dialects plays a crucial role in preserving communities' linguistic and cultural uniqueness. It is essential to prioritize protecting languages at risk of extinction, as they hold significant cultural value.

However, there are differing viewpoints on the significance of learning one's mother tongue. Some argue that everyone should be fully literate in their mother tongue, as it facilitates straightforward communication and understanding (Kadel, 2010; Malone, 2009). They emphasize the simplicity and speed individuals can learn and comprehend their native language. In contrast, others question the necessity of being fluent in one's mother tongue, suggesting that a universal lingua franca is sufficient for effective communication (Dhakal, 2021). This perspective may stem from misunderstanding mother tongues' values and cultural importance.

Furthermore, there are instances of individuals effortlessly learning new languages when exposed to different linguistic environments (Fillmore, 2020). Nepali students studying abroad, for example, quickly adapt and pick up the host countries' languages, such as China or Russia. This demonstrates the adaptability of individuals in learning new languages when required. Everyone does not need to speak and comprehend foreign languages as long as the individual has access to appropriate language learning resources when required.

A divergent viewpoint proposed by Dahal (2000) suggests that a dialect is not considered a language if it lacks a written script. However, this view disregards the fact that numerous languages do not have a written form worldwide. It is crucial to acknowledge and support the development and preservation of all languages, whether they have a written script or not.

In conclusion, discussions on language diversity and preservation encompass various perspectives. Recognizing the significance of indigenous languages and dialects, protecting endangered languages, and promoting multilingualism can foster cultural preservation and understanding. Emphasizing the importance of mother tongue proficiency and acknowledging the value of all languages, irrespective of their written form, can contribute to a more inclusive and culturally rich linguistic landscape, fostering social cohesion in ethnolinguistic communities.

6.1. Inclusion/Exclusion through MTBI

Few Marginal and impoverished women were discovered to have engaged in MTBIs. Fewer persons were actively working. Many participants concurred that bringing together a small group of poor and excluded individuals around shared principles, values, and norms would enhance the usefulness of MTBIs (Gurung, 2006). Participating in literacy programs, training facilities, and school students all lack discrimination.

The mother tongue-based MLE was deemed necessary for the targeted populations, such as marginalized, excluded, and poor, to engage them in movements for livelihood enhancement. The participants highlighted the necessity to provide awareness programs through workshops, training, and other means and subsidies and aid to marginalized, excluded groups of people and poor women. They also requested that mother tongue-based literacy classes for illiterate members be made mandatory.

6.2. Developing indigenous skills in linguistic diversity

The research found the public, private, and governmental collaboration programs successful. Numerous ethnic and linguistic groups operated enterprises according to a specific ancestor's occupation. Individuals continue to share traditional work and utilize other people as human resources to advance their economic status. Particularly in the Newa communities, MTBIs have been crucial in transferring traditional knowledge from parents to the younger generation (Kandel, 2010). However, people feel threatened by the loss of conventional occupations because they cannot maintain their way of life and sense of community. The MTBIs in the communities of Aathpariya Rai and Rajbanshi, as well as in Uranw, have improved the quality of life for residents by providing mother tongue-based skills training. These are the signs of developing social cohesion in the ethnolinguistic communities. Furthermore, the study demanded that MTBIs move beyond their current practice and toward empowering ethnolinguistic communities. The small number of members would also make it easier for small groups to participate in MTBIs because of the scarcity of individuals in peripheral communities. Future mother tongue-based learning centers would be preferable.

6.3. Socially responsible mother tongue-based educational practices

In the past ten years, there has been a noticeable shift away from adopting more responsible MTBIs in response to regulatory pressures, public complaints, and pressures from special interest groups and toward proactive results (Regmi, 2012). There is evidence that socially responsible behavior might enhance participation in MTBIs with competition, possibly contributing to social cohesion. Typical activities might consist of the following:

- 1) Developing educational services to adhere to or go above suggestions and criteria more significant ethnolinguistic conservation,
- 2) Improving processes, which may involve minimizing the degree of cultural mismatch and eliminating specific sorts of language invasion from one culture over another
- 3) Discontinuing readymade imported learning material offerings that are considered harmful for displacing local materials but not illegal to run educational institutions,
- 4) Choosing mother tongue-based MLE materials that are the most ethnolinguistic, community-friendly,
- 5) Developing programs to support groups of all ages in the ethnolinguistic community's well-being,
- 6) Measuring, monitoring, and reporting on objectives and actions that are responsible for promoting MTBIs,
- 7) Establishing standards for MTBI communications and suitable methods of delivery,
- 8) Increasing the accessibility of mother tongue-based MLE services for people with disabilities.
- 9) Making decisions considering the sociocultural impact of these decisions on local communities.

Reduced operating expenses, financial incentives from regulatory bodies, and improved teacher productivity and retention are all potential outcomes of MTBIs. Learning can enhance mother tongue-based learning product quality, construct community positioning, create identity preference, and foster mutual respect, among other possible benefits.

6.4. Stakeholders' engagement in collaboration

The ethnolinguistic community benefits from important stakeholders' systematic and ongoing participation in several ways. An ongoing conversation with stakeholders is essential for creating an innovative atmosphere and identifying potential hot spots for social reform (Bension, 2005). People can

better comprehend the educational environment's intricacy and modern trends that adhere to Western culture, which aids them in developing their long-term strategic objectives. The most incredible way to develop a mutually trusted connection between right holders and duty-bearers is through face-to-face interactions and the capacity to keep tight ties with stakeholders. An outsider's viewpoint enables the community to define its goals and assess its actual performance properly. The community may benefit from having strong and intimate ties with stakeholders as a source of information. It is crucial to continuously consider stakeholders' positive and negative effects, which help foster social cohesion.

7. Conclusions

Based on this study's observations and data analysis, mother tongue-based initiatives have emerged as a contrasting and empowering approach for mainstreaming ethnolinguistic communities. These initiatives have been instrumental in focusing on and preserving local communities' indigenous knowledge, culture, traditions, and worldviews. Beyond language preservation, MTBI has validated social participation and sought justice for the rights of indigenous people in a multilingual and multicultural nation. By creating an environment that promotes social cohesion, MTBI has addressed the social, cultural, psychological, and economic marginalization experienced by these communities.

The importance of promoting social cohesion has been realized through mother tongue-based initiatives within multilingual education. However, the people have contrasting desires to educate their children in English or Nepali. Despite this, non-formal educational initiatives, particularly mother tongue-based literacy classes, have proven highly beneficial to many individuals. These classes have facilitated quick learning of reading and writing in the mother tongue, serving as a foundation for learning Nepali. The use of the mother tongue in community-based learning centers has been widespread, making it a more effective medium for acquiring various skill developments compared to learning through other languages.

Challenges also exist despite the promising prospects of empowering communities through mother tongue-based initiatives. Societal transformations have been observed through MTBI practices, but there is a pressing need for language policies and advocacy to support and promote these initiatives. Raising awareness among community members about the values and scope of MTBI is crucial, as is encouraging indigenous community members to recognize and appreciate their knowledge and role in fostering social cohesion. Further assessment of the level of social cohesion is necessary to prepare for community transformation through MTBI.

The current situation calls for collective efforts from all stakeholders to enhance mother tongue-based initiatives and promote social cohesion. To achieve this, agencies and organizations must collaborate to develop and implement effective MTBI policies and practices. By doing so, MTBI can continue to play a pivotal role in empowering ethnolinguistic communities, preserving their cultural heritage, and fostering social cohesion within the diverse landscape of Nepal.

8. Implications

The results of this study have important implications for policymakers. MTBI (Mother Tongue-Based Initiatives) can be an effective strategy for reducing poverty as it empowers ethnolinguistic communities, preserves their linguistic and cultural rights, and promotes social cohesion. Policymakers can use this evidence to develop language policies that prioritize the promotion of mother tongue-based initiatives and inclusive education. By recognizing and supporting the importance of MTBI, policymakers can create a conducive environment for sustainable development and social prosperity.

The study highlights the need for a rights-based approach in MTBI programs. Development workers can use its findings to design effective models catering to ethnolinguistic communities' needs, thus enhancing the impact of their initiatives.

Besides the development workers, educators working with Indigenous knowledge can take inspiration from this study's approach. MTBI can be a valuable guideline for educators to adapt and incorporate indigenous skills, technology, and knowledge into the learning process. By valuing and integrating indigenous knowledge, educators can create culturally responsive and contextually relevant educational experiences for students, fostering a stronger connection between the community and its heritage.

Furthermore, the study indicates that community members can actively promote social cohesion by participating in group activities, sharing ideas, and engaging in social interactions. Community members can strengthen their sense of belonging and community empowerment by acknowledging their contributions.

Overall, the implications of this study extend to various stakeholders involved in MTBI implementation and community development. By embracing these implications, policymakers, development workers, educators, and community members can collectively work towards preserving linguistic diversity, empowering communities, and fostering social cohesion in Nepal and beyond.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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