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# Translanguaging Practices in EFL Classrooms: Teachers' Perspectives from Darchula

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## Abstract

The concept and strategy of translanguaging are increasing in multilingual English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms to promote students' academic performance by using their multi-linguistic resources. Teachers and learners often have experiences using two or more languages for pedagogical purposes where translanguaging practices are implemented. Translanguaging pedagogy uses the students' existing linguistic knowledge to learn new language skills. Against this backdrop, this research studies EFL teachers' perspectives towards translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms. This study used a case study of the qualitative method as a research design. I collected data for this study using semi-structured interviews and selected the research participants through purposive selection. The participants were four English teachers from two secondary schools located in the Darchula district of Nepal. I utilized keyword analysis to analyze the data. Based on the results, all participants used translanguaging in different situations in their EFL classrooms. They were using translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms with positive attitudes although they had different feelings towards translanguaging. Moreover, most EFL teachers indicated that the space for translanguaging practices would be enhanced more in multilingual EFL classrooms in the coming days. These findings shed light on the significance and use of translanguaging as multilingual pedagogical practices and further research directions.

**Keywords:** Multilingual classrooms, translanguaging, English teachers, case study, Darchula district

## Introduction

The concept and strategy of translanguaging are increasing in education to promote students' academic performance by using their multi-linguistic

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resources (the use of English language and mother tongues of learners such as Darchuleli and Nepali for making learners feel easy to understand the contents of language classrooms). Teachers and learners often have experiences using two or more languages for pedagogical purposes where translanguaging practices are implemented. Translanguaging pedagogy uses the students' existing linguistic knowledge to learn new language skills (Phyak, 2018). The students will gain more advantages from translanguaging practices. First, translanguaging helps us achieve deeper insights into the learning material because we utilise all our linguistic repertoire. Second, the language they have not yet mastered will be strengthened. Third, parents who speak minority languages can help students' development in minority languages by communicating in that language at home. Finally, it enables students who have better English proficiency to help those who do not (Baker, 2001).

Translanguaging practices offer significant benefits for effective learning in multilingual classrooms; however, their implementation in EFL classrooms remains a challenge (Rasman, 2018). Many schools, influenced by an 'only English' mindset, do not permit translanguaging, emphasizing the exclusive use of the language defined in national school curricula and policies, and viewing translanguaging as a potential source of linguistic ambiguity (Silwal, 2021).

Additionally, there exists another tension concerning translanguaging's implementation – the perspective of those who fear that accepting fluid language practices among bilinguals might weaken the non-dominant language. Canagarajah (2011) highlights the importance of studying attitudes towards translanguaging to grasp its pedagogical possibilities for success. Understanding these perspectives can help educators navigate the challenges and opportunities of integrating translanguaging into educational practices.

We can understand the attitudes of EFL teachers towards translanguaging practices in their classrooms based on their real experience by researching them. As the policymaker in the classroom context, teacher policy enactment plays a significant role in supporting or constraining the pedagogical goals including the decision to embrace or not translanguaging strategies. The decision must be made based on considerations related to the teachers' beliefs of translanguaging benefits and challenges that can also be revealed in the study of attitude.

There are several studies (Khan et al., 2020; Romanowski, 2020; Silwal, 2018) on the attitudes of teachers towards translanguaging in multilingual settings after Cen Williams introduced translanguaging as a pedagogical practice in Welsh English classrooms. Some studies revealed almost all positive findings reflecting teachers' receptive stance (Khairunnisa & Lukmana, 2020; Yuvayapan, 2019).

During the teaching and learning process, most teachers opted for involving languages other than English to facilitate them in achieving pedagogical purposes while not forgetting the students who encountered difficulties in learning English. In general, the present study extends what previous scholars have done by employing a case study design and involving a few participants.

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the attitudes of EFL teachers regarding teacher-directed and student-directed translanguaging practices in Nepalese EFL classrooms. The research aimed to answer two key research questions: firstly, exploring how EFL teachers describe and interpret their attitudes towards teacher-directed translanguaging in these classrooms, and secondly, examining their attitudes towards student-directed translanguaging in the same context.

### **Literature Review**

Translanguaging, which involves the use of a bilingual person's entire linguistic repertoire to maximize communication in multilingual settings, has been recognized as a valuable pedagogical tool for addressing language learner diversity, particularly in Nepalese EFL classrooms (Garcia & Lin, 2017). Researchers like Khan et al. (2020) conducted quantitative studies to explore EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding translanguaging as a teaching strategy in their multilingual classrooms. While these teachers demonstrated awareness of the concept of translanguaging, they were not actively using it as a scaffolding method.

In higher education settings, researchers such as Silwal (2021) have highlighted the potential of translanguaging pedagogy in fostering effective teaching and learning processes. However, the implementation of translanguaging as a scaffolding pedagogy in multilingual classrooms faces obstacles due to the prevailing 'only English' mentality among some academic institutions, teachers, and parents. Studies by Yuvayapan (2019) have shown that English language teachers hold positive attitudes towards translanguaging in their classrooms, despite facing challenges due to monolingual school policies.

While Neupane (2021) found that EFL teachers were generally positive towards using translanguaging in English language teaching, incorporating students' native languages into the classroom presented significant challenges. Nonetheless, translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms have the potential to foster a conducive learning environment for diverse learners, aiding the development of weaker languages and facilitating home-school links (Baker, 2001). Studies like those conducted by Yuvayapan (2019) and Silwal (2021) have also shown the overall positive stance of most EFL teachers towards translanguaging practices.

However, despite the existing research on the subject, the Nepalese context lacks comprehensive case study designs to delve deeper into translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms of the Darchula district. Therefore, further investigation and exploration in this field are warranted to gain more detailed insights into the implementation and effectiveness of translanguaging strategies in the specific setting of Nepalese EFL classrooms.

### **Methods and Procedures**

The research paradigm chosen for this study was interpretivism, guided by the research purpose and questions, which focuses on understanding social reality from multiple perspectives and individual perceptions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Guba, 1990). Adopting a case study as the qualitative research method (Phyak et al., 2023), the study aimed to explore the attitudes of four secondary-level English teachers from model secondary schools in Darchula towards teacher-directed and student-directed translanguaging practices.

The participants were selected purposefully based on their direct experiences with translanguaging and their willingness to share their thoughts and experiences in EFL classrooms. Three participants had less than ten years of teaching experience, while one senior teacher had over ten years of teaching English. All participants were proficient in at least four languages, including English, Hindi, Nepali, and their indigenous language, such as Darchuleli.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary research instrument used to collect data, allowing for flexibility in exploring the participants' attitudes and experiences regarding translanguaging practices in the EFL classroom context. The interviews were conducted one-on-one using an interview schedule to ensure confidentiality and encourage open discussions.

The data analysis procedure involved data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Through keyword and sentence analysis, the participants' attitudes were categorized as positive, negative, or mixed based on their verbal expressions of feelings, beliefs, and intentions. The results were presented in tables to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' attitudes towards translanguaging practices (Seale & Charteris-Black, 2010). Translanguaging Theory offers a comprehensive framework to explore how EFL teachers and students use translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy to address language learner diversity and foster inclusive learning environments (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). This research approach aimed to gain valuable insights into the effective integration of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in multilingual EFL classrooms in Nepal.

## Results and Discussion

The Results and Discussion section presents the findings of this study on EFL teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging practices in multilingual classrooms in the Darchula district, Nepal. The section explores teacher-directed and student-directed translanguaging strategies, revealing valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges of integrating native languages alongside English in EFL classrooms.

### Teachers' Attitude towards Teacher-Directed Translanguaging

Teachers' attitudes towards teacher-directed translanguaging were unanimously positive, with all EFL teachers recognizing the value of integrating students' native languages alongside English for improved comprehension and learning. However, some teachers expressed concerns about striking a balance between using native languages and promoting English proficiency. The key themes extracted from their responses are presented in the following table:

Table 1 illustrates the teachers' attitudes towards teacher-directed translanguaging.

**Table 1**

*Teachers' Attitude towards Teacher-Directed Translanguaging*

	Affect (Feeling / Emotion)	Cognition (Belief / Knowledge)	Conation (Intention / Behavior)
T1	Mixed	Positive	Positive
T2	Positive	Positive	Positive
T3	Negative	Positive	Positive
T4	Negative	Positive	Mixed

Most teachers express a positive attitude towards teacher-directed translanguaging which is reflected in the eight positive comments that can be seen in the table. There are also two negative comments while two other comments are mixed.

### *Affect*

Each participant feels different emotions towards teacher-directed translanguaging. Teacher 1 has mixed feelings. Rather than mentioning certain emotions that can be categorized as pleasant or unpleasant, Teacher 1 reports that the teacher's use of languages other than English namely Nepalese and Darchuleli is something normal. "I feel it is normal considering students' class. In class IX, I

used Nepali and Darchuleli more often but in grade X or higher, it has been reduced gradually because the students have become familiar with English.”

Unlike Teacher 1, Teacher 2 has a more positive feeling. She admits that she feels comfortable using languages other than English in class. “It is easier and more interesting to make class meaningful and effective when I often use Nepali or Darchuleli along with English. Most students in my class have poor English in government primary schools. Even, when they are already in grade IX now, I feel that I still must use Nepali and Darchuleli to make sure that all of them understand the lesson.” For Teacher 2, using Nepali and Darchuleli along with the English language in her EFL classrooms plays a great role in addressing the needs of learners who have different language backgrounds and English proficiency. Employing translanguaging can close the gap between the student’s proficiency level caused by the national curriculum provision.

Thus, the teacher’s use of Nepali or Darchuleli is felt more relevant. By using students’ native languages, the teachers can engage all students with diverse profiles. They will become more active while they receive linguistic input from the teacher and further, while they are required to produce adequate linguistic output in meaningful interactions and collaborative dialogue.

Teachers 3 and 4 express negative feelings towards teacher-directed translanguaging. Teacher 3 says that he feels disappointed. “What I feel is a disappointment. I teach English so I should use English in my class. When in my teaching I use Nepali or Darchuleli language that means I don’t train them to speak or listen to English.” Meanwhile, Teacher 4 feels sad when she must use Nepali or Darchuleli in the EFL class. “It saddens me to use Nepali or Darchuleli instead of English in class. It is an English class and not translated English.”

Both statements indicate that both teachers prefer English as the classroom language to the other students’ existing languages. However, the idea of isolating the target language (which represents the monolingual ideology) has been long debatable in language teaching especially when it is implemented in a multilingual context (Canagarajah, 2011). The use of target language-only neglects the nature of how bilinguals think, understand, and achieve in the real-world context where emergent bilinguals are frequently captured to translanguaging in and outside the classroom as many studies have revealed (Alby et al., 2017).

Although many teachers still insist on the use of target language only to make sure that students are on the right track in the learning target language, as implied by teacher 3, there is no significant increase in student target language use when the teacher uses the target language exclusively or almost exclusively. Even the use

of target language-only in learning may result in students' mutism and decreasing interaction in the classroom as what happens in India. To avoid this unsupportive classroom environment, translanguaging may come as a pedagogical tool to create a more desirable and interactive classroom.

### ***Cognition***

Despite various emotional responses regarding teacher-directed translanguaging, the classroom observations captured all participants to translanguaging in their EFL class. Two EFL teachers in Darchula shuttled between English and Nepali. Besides, two teachers in Darchula incorporated English, Nepali, and Darchuleli in some typical situations during the teaching. When they were asked to clarify why they employed translanguaging, all participants associated teacher-directed translanguaging with positive attributes which indicated their positive beliefs as well. In their comments, every participant tends to relate their translanguaging strategy with the following positive outcomes.

Firstly, translanguaging enables students to achieve a better understanding of the teaching materials. Secondly, translanguaging enables students to achieve a better understanding of the given instruction. For example, Teacher 4 mentions: "It is more effective to make them understand the material and simple classroom instruction. Sometimes I must repeat the same instruction in Nepali to make them understand what to do in my class. Using Nepali fits my students who are not so good in English". The teacher mentions clearly that her translanguaging assists her students in digesting the material and understanding the classroom instruction.

Meanwhile, Teacher 3 also says: "I mean in English class, 80% of languages must be English. I use Nepali because if I speak all English, no reaction from students." The teacher indicates that translanguaging encourages learners to take active participation in the teaching-learning process. These findings are in line with Wang's who concludes that teachers' translanguaging can serve as an explanatory and managerial strategy (Wang, 2016). It means that teachers can translanguaging as a strategy to explain the concepts or teaching materials and to manage their classroom through instructions that can be understood by students.

Sometimes, teaching materials and classroom instruction delivered through the target language cannot be absorbed by all students at the early stage of language learning because of the lack of processing for meanings (Baker, 2001). Therefore, teachers can employ other languages like Nepali or Darchuleli as resources to open students' access to essential information, detailed explanations, or teacher clarification during class.

Regardless of the two positive attributes explained previously, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 also associated teacher-directed translanguaging with two other positive attributes. Firstly, translanguaging saves students from learning fatigue. Secondly, translanguaging supports low English proficiency students. For instance, Teacher 1 says: “Sometime, learners may be tired and bored during the teaching-learning process, and I used their mother tongue to make them feel good and relaxed. They feel at home when I use Nepali or Darchuleli because that language is the language they speak with their family at home.” The teacher insists that there are some situations in which students may be fatigued when they are constantly subjected to monolingual exposure through the activities of listening, speaking, reading, or writing in English. To release them from the learning fatigue, and at the same time keep them on-task, teachers can explain concepts, clarify, or ask questions in students’ home language. It may be an effective way to solve their fatigue because Siegel (2023) also reports that students themselves tend to translanguaging when they experience L2 fatigue or overload. Their translanguaging activities are captured in their notes during the target language listening activities.

Teacher 2 also mentions: “Using English only in the EFL classroom doesn’t help the low English proficiency students as what I said before that some students in my class have a poor base of English. I must use Nepali or Darchuleli”, Teacher 2 highlights teacher-directed translanguaging as a support for low English proficiency students. Imposing English only in EFL classes could mean leaving the low English proficiency students without adequate support for learning because of their limitation as emergent bilinguals to engage in meaningful classroom interaction.

Therefore, teachers need to open more opportunities for all classroom participants to engage in classroom communication. By translanguaging, more students are included with all the linguistic repertoire they have. Even students with low English proficiency are going to be able to learn and become more active in the classroom. A previous study indicates that translanguaging is desirable by most EFL teachers for this reason. Most EFL teachers tended to support translanguaging as a beneficial teaching and learning tool because it was assumed to help the lower proficiency students (Khairunnisa et al., 2020) obtain better teaching and learning results.

### ***Conation***

For the intentional behaviour, all participants hold a positive stance regarding teacher-directed translanguaging except teacher 4 who has a mixed stance. Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3 agree that in the future they would need to translanguaging considering the potential advantages as described in the previous part.



For example, Teacher 2 says: “The institution where I work is not an international school that usually attracts students with good English proficiency. So, I don’t think that I would use English only.” The teacher is not sure that in the future she will have students with good English proficiency. This type of student tends to opt for international schools while her school is not one of them. Therefore, she would rely on translanguaging for her future English teaching.

Meanwhile, Teacher 4 argues that the decision to translanguaging would depend on his future students’ English proficiency. “It depends on the students. If I teach low proficiency students, I’ll use Nepali in class since they won’t understand a thing if I speak in English.” Teacher 4 would employ a more flexible strategy depending on students’ profiles and needs. If the students still have low English proficiency, their home language would be employed. Otherwise, if the students already have high proficiency meaning that they could understand the topics and materials delivered in the target language, she will employ English only.

### **Teachers’ Attitude towards Student-Directed Translanguaging**

Teachers’ attitudes towards student-directed translanguaging displayed variations, with some supporting unrestricted use of native languages and others advocating controlled usage primarily for comprehension challenges. This diversity underscores the complexity of implementing student-directed translanguaging in EFL classrooms. Key themes from teachers’ responses on this aspect are presented in the following table:

Table 2 describes teachers’ attitudes towards student-directed translanguaging.

**Table 2**

*Teachers’ Attitude towards Student-Directed Translanguaging*

	Affect (Feeling / Emotion)	Cognition (Belief / Knowledge)	Conation (Intention / Behavior)
T1	Mixed	Positive	Positive
T2	Positive	Positive	Positive
T3	Mixed	Positive	Positive
T4	Mixed	Positive	Positive

Regarding student-directed translanguaging, most teachers express once again a positive attitude which is reflected through nine positive comments that can be seen in the table. Three other comments are categorized as mixed.

## *Affect*

No participant feels negative emotions towards student-directed translanguaging. While Teacher 2 expresses a positive feeling, Teacher 1, Teacher 3, and Teacher 4 indicate mixed feelings. Teacher 2 says that she feels happy when students' translanguaging leads them to become more active and capable of finishing the given task. "I mean if they speak up, ask me questions in Nepali and Darchuleli, and then get explained and it results in their capability to finish the given tasks correctly, I feel beyond happy." The teacher highlights the practicality of allowing student-directed translanguaging.

For teacher 2, if students' use of Nepali and Darchuleli increases their participation and performance on the given task, the strategy should be employed. EFL teachers must be more practical, anything useful to achieve the primary goal should be strategically employed including allowing students to translanguaging (Wang, 2016).

The three other teachers are mostly hesitant about allowing students' translanguaging in their EFL class. Teacher 1 and Teacher 4 say that they are not angry or happy at students who use languages other than English. In the learning process, student-directed translanguaging is normal. Meanwhile, Teacher 3 says: "I am disappointed when they use Nepali mostly. Using too much Nepali is not good for them and I may fail because the learning goals are unachieved. But when they start to mix the languages or use more English than Nepali, I'm grateful". On the one hand, the teacher feels disappointed if students use more Nepali without any effort to involve the target language. On the other hand, he feels grateful if students mix the languages, and use Nepali and English back and forth, within or between sentences. It is more acceptable.

The teacher implies that student-directed translanguaging may lead to a language other than English being used in the EFL class. If English is not dominant, other languages can be used excessively, and it is assumed to harm students' target language learning. The teacher is also worried about the curricular goals achievement when Nepali is overused. Teaching and learning English in the Nepalese EFL context has goals to achieve in line with the national curriculum. There are a series of core competencies and basic competencies students need to achieve by the end of the course. Those competencies seem hard to be elicited by the students when during the process they get used to using more Nepali.

## *Cognition*

Although some participants expressed a feeling of hesitation towards student-

directed translanguaging, the findings revealed that all participants allowed student-directed translanguaging in their EFL class. All participants were asked why they allowed students to trans-language-associated student-directed translanguaging with positive attributes. Teacher 1 relates student-directed translanguaging with the positive outcome as it enables the student to perform their knowledge. She mentions, “I let my students speak Nepali or Darchuleli so that they can deliver what they truly mean and know.” The teacher believes that student-directed translanguaging helps the students to deliver their actual knowledge about a topic or the answer to a given question. Sometimes, students may already know about something, but they do not know how to say it in the target language. They wish to participate but at the same time, they encounter difficulties engaging if the teacher demands too much English to be used.

Thus, allowing students to use their existing languages may solve the problem. It helps them demonstrate what they truly know in a co-construction dialogue in which their understanding is mediated by each other. Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 associate student-directed translanguaging with creativity. Teacher 2 says: “We need to appreciate students’ effort to speak English even though they insert some Nepali and Darchuleli words in their utterances. It is a creative work.”

Meanwhile, Teacher 3 also says: “When they speak English and then mix it with Nepali, the good point is, it helps them to get out of trouble, they can answer a given question even in broken English but that means they can explore themselves.” Both teachers assert that students are creative linguistically. Their efforts to use English by mixing their utterances with some Nepali and Darchuleli words must be appreciated. It proves that they maximize all linguistic resources they have for communication purposes. This creativity through translanguaging is also emphasized by Wang (2019). Creativity refers to the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language. In translanguaging, students have more freedom to select all resources drawn from their linguistic repertoire to deal with their speaking problem.

Teacher 4 relates students’ translanguaging with another positive outcome as it facilitates students’ discussions. She mentions: “I notice my students almost always speak Nepali within groups or with their friends. I allow them to speak Nepali if they discuss the given task or the content material. It may help them to get a better understanding of each other.” The teacher admits that her students use Nepali multiple times, especially in student-student interaction. It is important for students’ learning especially when they discuss the task and content material to elicit better understanding. This finding is like the previous findings revealed by Wang and Rasman. Wang reports that students in Mainland China often interact

with each other using multiple languages to translate questions raised by teachers to classmates sitting nearby (Wang, 2016). Rasman also reveals that some students may independently scaffold to solve the given task during a group discussion (Rasman, 2018). It is proven that until the use of languages other than English namely Nepali and Darchuleli, the task is unsolved, and the students do not realize the mistranslation they have done.

### ***Conation***

Envisaging their future EFL class, all teachers have a positive stance towards students' translanguaging. All teachers open the opportunity for student-directed translanguaging in their future EFL classes as they say they would encourage students to use their existing languages in learning. For example, Teacher 4 says: "It depends on my students' English proficiency level which is impossible that they all would have had excellent English in Grade IX or X. I'd prefer they mix the languages, not too much Nepali". The teacher still believes that her future students will need Nepali in the class. She is not sure that her students would already have high English proficiency in Grades XI or XII. Therefore, she would still provide translanguaging space in her future EFL class. Nepali would be allowed but the students were not expected to use it frequently.

### **Teacher-Directed Translanguaging**

In general, teacher-directed translanguaging was conducted by all participants as explanatory and managerial strategies. For explanatory strategies, the teacher provided scaffolding for meaning-making activities such as explaining grammar rules and lexical uses, translating new words and elaborating concepts. Meanwhile, the managerial strategies by using translanguaging were reflected in the teachers' ways of providing operational instruction such as giving commands for classroom activities, giving feedback and assignments, and checking the comprehension of learning content. Only by using students' home languages, students could give the appropriate reaction towards what had been said by the teachers. They could raise questions, answer teachers' questions, and interact with the teacher during the EFL class.

### **Student-Directed Translanguaging**

Unlike teacher-directed translanguaging, this type of classroom translanguaging served mostly as an interpersonal strategy (Wang, 2016) in student-student interaction. The students often interacted by using multiple languages to translate questions raised by teachers to classmates sitting nearby or to finish the given task when they had to work in small groups. Using their languages helped

them consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the material in the lesson. Utilizing translanguaging practices in the context of the two prevailing languages has the potential to establish a flexible environment for imparting and acquiring content knowledge (Sah, 2020). It enabled students who had higher English proficiency to assist the lower ones without waiting too long for teachers' further explanations about every learning problem they might encounter. Their understanding was mediated through their stronger languages.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the research findings and discussion of the study, it is concluded that the participants of the study have a positive attitude towards translanguaging practice in the EFL class. Their positive attitude is illustrated by their dominant positive evaluative judgments towards both teacher and student-directed translanguaging in terms of affect, cognition, and conation. Despite feeling various emotions towards the practice, all participants associated both types of classroom translanguaging with positive attributes. Moreover, almost all participants also positively intend to translanguaging in their future EFL class. The participants' positive attitude towards translanguaging is reflected in their daily teaching.

This article captures translanguaging practice as the prevalent practice in the participants' EFL class. In the EFL class in Darchula where the teachers express positive feelings towards teacher-directed translanguaging and student-directed translanguaging using English and Nepali or Darchuleli takes place. Translanguaging serves as a translation tool to reinforce classroom instructions so that students can better understand the instructions. It is also beneficial during students' discussions to finish the given task. The contribution of this study is particularly in revealing teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging and how the attitude is reflected in the Nepalese real teaching situation. Amid Nepalese EFL teachers' highly receptive stance towards translanguaging, some teachers are aware that translanguaging practice involving teachers' and students' all linguistic repertoires may be risky as well. When the use of languages other than English is excessive, students may not develop. Subsequently, the pedagogical goals are also unachieved. However, this research is limited to teachers' attitudes and their implications in EFL classrooms in a limited area of Nepal.

Thus, future studies must include a bigger scope and more importantly find out how to translanguaging in Nepal where hundreds of indigenous languages are spoken, and this super-diversity may be so challenging in classroom translanguaging.

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