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**A CASE STUDY OF
ENGLISH-MEDIUM EDUCATION
IN BHUTAN**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the implementation of the policy for English-medium education in government-run schools in Bhutan, a small multilingual developing country in the eastern Himalayas. It identifies factors influencing its effective implementation, plus policy and practice measures to improve learning outcomes for students. It takes as a theoretic framework an approach known as ‘content and language integrated learning’ (CLIL). This involves integration of language and subject teaching.

The study addresses the following research question: How can implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education be enhanced? Data to address these questions were gathered through a literature review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and classroom observations. The study also draws on personal experience.

The findings reveal that implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium government-run education could be significantly enhanced. Students are not attaining control over English at desired levels of schooling; classroom practices favour didactic teaching-learning approaches; teachers’ tend to teach toward terminal examinations and adhere to traditional teacher and student roles; and subject teachers do not consistently support students’ English language development. The study also found that many stakeholders, including policy-makers, teachers, curriculum developers and teacher trainers lack awareness of the concept of language-related disadvantage in education and approaches for more effective second language-medium teaching and learning. This includes a lack of language-sensitive classroom practices in both language and subject classes.

These findings highlight the need for teachers to make different methodological choices inside classrooms. To do this, teachers should become skilled and confident in the use of classroom practices which support students’ English language learning. Key stakeholders, particularly policy-makers, teachers and teacher educators, must understand and accept the need for further policy and practice measures to support language-sensitive teaching-learning approaches for English-medium education in Bhutan. The implications of these findings for policy, practice and future research are further elucidated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---------------|
| ABSTRACT..... | 2 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 6 |
| ABBREVIATIONS | 7 |
| CHAPTER ONE: Introduction | 8 |
| 1.1 Background and context | 8 |
| 1.2 Education in Bhutan..... | 10 |
| 1.3 English in education in Bhutan | 12 |
| 1.4 Rationale | 13 |
| 1.5 Main research question, sub-questions and approach used | 21 |
| 1.6 International dimensions of the research | 22 |
| 1.7 My role in the research | 24 |
| 1.8 Organization of the thesis | 25 |
| CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review..... | 27 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 27 |
| 2.2 Searching the literature | 28 |
| 2.3 Fundamentals of CLIL..... | 29 |
| 2.4 Lessons learned from international experience..... | 30 |
| 2.5 Importance of oral production | 33 |
| 2.6 Importance of classroom interaction..... | 35 |
| 2.7 Role of subject teachers | 37 |
| 2.8 Teacher preparation | 41 |
| 2.9 An example of CLIL in the developing world: Namibia..... | 43 |
| 2.10 Literature on Bhutan | 45 |
| 2.11 Summary | 48 |
| CHAPTER THREE: Methodology | 50 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 50 |
| 3.2 Philosophical orientation | 50 |
| 3.3 Methods and tools for data collection..... | 52 |
| 3.4 Data analysis and management..... | 62 |
| 3.5 Triangulation..... | 64 |
| 3.6 Reliability and validity..... | 65 |
| 3.7 Ethical considerations | 66 |
| 3.8 Limitations of the study | 69 |
| 3.9 Summary | 70 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| CHAPTER FOUR: Findings | 72 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 72 |
| 4.2 Perceptions of the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education | 73 |
| 4.3 Factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education | 82 |
| 4.4 Summary | 96 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion | 98 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 98 |
| 5.2 Overview of main findings | 99 |
| 5.3 Perceptions of the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education | 102 |
| 5.4 Factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education | 109 |
| 5.5 Summary | 119 |
| CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions | 122 |
| 6.1 Introduction..... | 122 |
| 6.2 School and classroom policy and practice reform measures | 123 |
| 6.3 Teacher education policy and practice reform measures | 127 |
| 6.4 Curriculum and assessment policy and practice reform measures | 132 |
| 6.5 Areas for further research and inquiry | 135 |
| 6.6 Personal reflections | 137 |
| 6.7 Final conclusions | 140 |
| REFERENCES..... | 143 |
| APPENDICES | 152 |
| Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide | 152 |
| Appendix 2: Focus group discussion guide | 153 |
| Appendix 3: Classroom observation guide | 157 |
| Appendix 4: Description of schools included in the study | 158 |
| Appendix 5: Data codes and sub-codes | 160 |
| Appendix 6: Suggested actions for enhancing implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education | 163 |
| Appendix 7: Classroom and outside classroom practices to support CLIL..... | 165 |
| Appendix 8: Other policy and practice reform measures | 169 |

List of Tables and Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1: Research sub-questions and data collection methods | 53 |
| Table 2: Focus groups | 58 |
| Table 3: Coding themes | 62 |
| Table 4: Reasons for a lack of change in classroom practices | 90 |
| Table 5: Classroom approaches subject teachers can use to support students' English ... | 93 |
| Figure 1: Growth in the number of schools and institutes in Bhutan, 1961-2012 | 11 |
| Figure 2: Teacher skills and practices for effective second/foreign language-medium education using a CLIL approach | 49 |
| Figure 3: Factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan's English-medium policy | 96 |
| Figure 4: Five areas of competence for teachers in Bhutan for effective English-medium teaching | 101 |
| Figure 5: Stakeholder perceptions of students' English proficiency | 105 |
| Figure 6: Stakeholders' perceptions of teachers' English proficiency..... | 107 |
| Figure 7: Summary of the factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education..... | 119 |
| Figure 8: Areas for policy and practice reform to enhance the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education | 123 |
| Figure 9: School and classroom policy and practice measures to support English-medium education | 127 |
| Figure 10: Teacher education policy and practice measures to support English-medium education | 132 |
| Figure 11: Curriculum and assessment policy and practice measures to support English- medium education | 134 |
| Figure 12: Children in a typical primary school classroom | 159 |
| Figure 13: Students in an English-medium lower secondary school English class | 159 |

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| B.Ed. | Bachelors of Education |
| BCF | Bhutan Canada Foundation |
| CLIL | Content and Language Integrated Learning |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| EMI | English Medium of Instruction |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| GNH | Gross National Happiness |
| ICT | Information-Communications Technology |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| IOE | Institute of Education |
| L1 | First/Mother Tongue Language |
| L2 | Second/Foreign Language |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| NAPE | New Approach to Primary Education |
| PP | Pre-Primary |
| RGBOB | Royal Government of Bhutan |
| SSI | Semi-Structured Interview |
| TOFEL | Test of English as a Foreign Language |
| UN | United Nations |

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine current implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium government school education. It seeks to identify policy and practice measures which, if implemented, may enhance implementation of the policy and lead to improved learning outcomes for students. It takes as its central theoretic framework an approach known as 'content and language integrated learning' (CLIL). CLIL involves the integration of language teaching into the learning of other subjects (Marsh, 2011). The study recommends bringing a language-sensitive approach to classroom practices, teacher education and other key areas of education in Bhutan. It proposes measures drawn from what is known about effective second/foreign language-medium teaching-learning, consistent with the CLIL theoretical framework, to enhance implementation of Bhutan's English-medium education policy.

1.1 Background and context

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a small, landlocked developing nation in the eastern Himalayas. It has a population of approximately 750,000 people of which an estimated 37 percent now live in urban settlements (World Bank, 2013). From a largely rural subsistence farming-based economy only 40 years ago, Bhutan has more recently undergone rapid modernization.

Bhutan is linguistically diverse. The national language, Dzongkha, is derived from the classical Tibetan language, 'Choekey'. Nepali is widely spoken in the south of the country and Tsangla (also called 'Sharshopka') in the east. Numerous other languages and dialects are spoken in other parts of the country. In Thimphu, the capital city, every language of Bhutan can be heard (Van Driem, 1994). The official languages of the civil service are Dzongkha and English. Most formal sector employment options require competence in both languages. The aim of the language policy for education in Bhutan is that all students attain functional proficiency in both Dzongkha and English. It is a requirement to pass in both subjects as well as Mathematics to be promoted to the next grade level.

Since embarking on the path of modern development in the 1950s, Bhutan has cautiously been finding its place in an increasingly globalized world, moving from relative isolation to greater regional and global connectedness. The country has gained considerable recognition over recent years due to growing international interest in and the emergence of an expanding body of academic inquiry into the country's homegrown development

philosophy of ‘Gross National Happiness’, or ‘GNH’. GNH is a holistic and sustainable approach to development which balances material and non-material values with the belief that humans seek to attain happiness. The concept of GNH consists of four pillars: (a) fair socio-economic development, (b) conservation and promotion of a vibrant culture, (c) environmental protection, and (d) good governance. The four pillars have been further developed into nine domains (Bhutan Center for Gross National Happiness, 2012):

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. living standard | 5. community vitality |
| 2. health | 6. good governance |
| 3. culture | 7. balanced time use |
| 4. education | 8. ecological integration |

Bhutan has also become increasingly well known as an exclusive tourist destination where visitors are required to pay a minimum daily rate of US\$250 to visit the country during peak tourism months. This is consistent with the Royal Government of Bhutan’s (RGOB) policy of sustaining ‘high revenue-low impact’ tourism. Tourism is the primary source of foreign currency earnings for the country.

Bhutan has shown solid progress in human development, particularly in urban areas, with increasing availability and use of public services throughout the country and is on track to achieve most of the MDGs by the 2015 target date (World Bank, 2013). In education, net primary school enrollment and primary completion rates in 2012 were 96 percent and 97 percent, respectively (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012). Despite impressive development gains, a number of worrisome social issues are emerging. There are rising juvenile delinquency problems, especially in Thimphu and peri-urban settlements which are experiencing increasing rates of alcohol and drug abuse. Youth unemployment has risen rapidly to 13 percent from 9.9 percent in 2007 and 2.2 percent in 1998 (World Bank, 2013).

Despite expansion of basic education, the nation’s skills base is narrow and Bhutanese youth have insufficient exposure to practical and applied studies which can equip them with the skills required for employment in expanding sectors. Bhutan’s small civil service is the first and most coveted career option for most school graduates. However, civil service employment is increasingly unavailable as the number of secondary- and tertiary-level education graduates increases annually and openings in the civil service

decrease. Shortcomings in the skill base include deficiencies in language, particularly English, which the education system seeks to address.

British envoys sent to Bhutan by the East India Company in 1774 were the first speakers of English to visit the country. However, English's real prominence in Bhutan only started in the second half of the twentieth century when it was introduced as the medium of instruction in schools. As a result of its inclusion as a core feature of school education, English has become a pervasive presence in Bhutanese society. As Phuntsho (2013) notes:

English is now filling the linguistic gap and slowly emerging as an effective lingua franca so much so that even a leading monastic figure has recently suggested that English may be adopted as the national language. (p.60)

In earlier times, Bhutan's predilection for English stemmed from the influence of India. More recently, however, the role of English as the language of globalization is the main reason for its intense growth in Bhutan (Phuntsho, 2013).

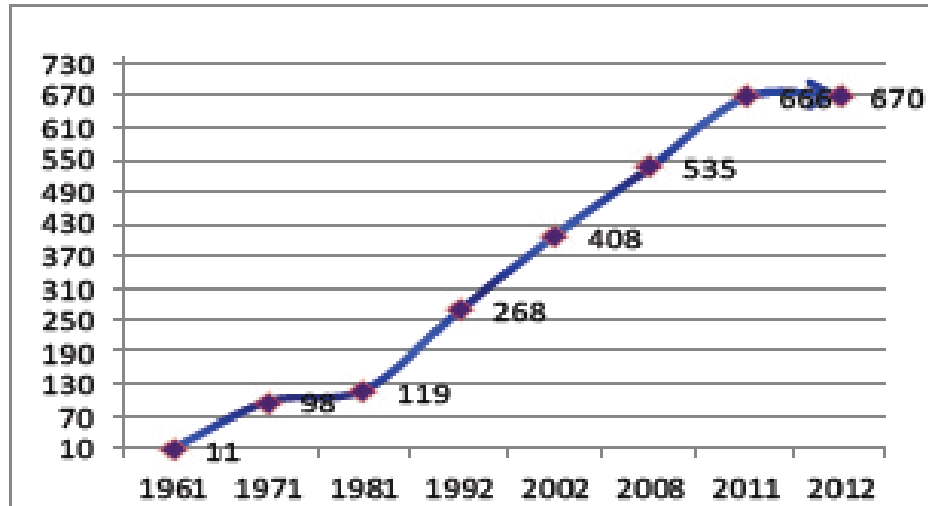
1.2 Education in Bhutan

The formal education system in Bhutan runs from pre-primary (kindergarten) to tertiary education. There is a seven-year primary education cycle, including one year of pre-primary education, followed by six years of secondary education leading to tertiary education. The secondary cycle of education (grades 7-12) is comprised of three levels: lower, middle and higher secondary school. Each level is of two years' duration. Entry into grade 11 depends on students' performance in the Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education examination at the end of grade 10 for which English is a compulsory subject. Students not selected for government-run education because they did not meet thresholds which are set annually for national examinations may attend private secondary schools and tertiary institutes (Royal Education Council, 2012).

Prior to Bhutan's First Development Plan (1961–66), there were only 11 schools operating with 400 students enrolled. In 2012, there were 670 education institutions¹ with approximately 200,000 students enrolled. This steep growth over approximately 50 years is illustrated in Figure 1, 'Growth in the number of schools and institutes in Bhutan, 1961-2012, below' (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2012).

¹ This includes primary and secondary schools, early childhood care and development centers and tertiary and vocational institutes.

Figure 1: Growth in the number of schools and institutes in Bhutan, 1961-2012



Bhutan now has achieved nearly 100 percent enrollment and gender parity to the end of grade 10, defined as the end of ‘basic education’ (Royal Education Council, 2012, p.23). Rapid expansion of the education system, particularly steep during the 1990s and 2000s, is aligned to Bhutan’s efforts to attain international ‘education for all’ targets (Royal Education Council, 2012). This has placed considerable strain on the education system in terms of financial, material and human resources. Today almost all children of school-going age are enrolled in Bhutan’s network of schools across the country.

Bhutan’s education planners and policy-makers have sought to move away from traditional didactic ‘chalk and talk’ teaching approaches based on its tradition of monastic education and the schooling which predominated in neighbouring India. Both traditions encourage rote learning and memorization of content with a heavy emphasis on examinations. Many reforms have been financially and technically supported by Bhutan’s development partners², including reform of teacher education, textbooks and curricula. A notable reform effort took place at the primary school level in the late 1980s, the ‘New Approach to Primary Education’ (NAPE), introducing child-centered, activity-based learning. Although NAPE was formally abandoned in the mid-1990s, ongoing curriculum reform efforts have continued to emphasize child-centered, activity-based learning, particularly at the primary level.

² Development partners supporting education system development in Bhutan include the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Program (WFP) (RGOB, 2008).

1.3 English in education in Bhutan

Bhutan's English-medium policy is a prominent feature of the country's system of government-run education which distinguishes Bhutan from other countries in South and East Asia where local/national languages are most often used for instruction at the primary level (Farrell et al., 2011).

From almost the very start of Bhutan's system of formal education under reign of His Majesty the 3rd King of Bhutan³, the country has had an English-medium education policy whereby English is used to teach all subjects across the curriculum⁴. Bhutan's first formal schools which opened in the mid-1950s used Hindi as the medium of instruction due to the easy availability of textbooks and other materials from India (Van Driem, 1994, p.6). In 1964, RGOB instituted the English-medium education policy which remains in effect today. The adoption of English as the medium of instruction was done in recognition of the fact that in order for Bhutanese to gain access to learning beyond basic education, particularly for higher technical and professional training, they would be obliged to leave Bhutan to pursue further studies elsewhere. Many Bhutanese pursue higher education in India or further afield in countries⁵ where English is the main language used (Masani, 2012).

The teaching-learning of English in Bhutan is guided by a 2002 policy document issued by MOE entitled, *'The Silken Knot: Standards for English for Schools in Bhutan'* (Centre for Educational Research and Development, 2002). Other policy statements are found in the forwards and introductions to English textbooks, teacher guides and assessment manuals (Bhutan Board of Examinations, 2011, Ministry of Education, 2007). *The Silken Knot* sets out standards and indicators of levels of achievement for each of the major areas of English usage: speaking, listening, writing and reading in both literature and language. As the document notes:

The standards are statements of what the public can expect students to know and be able to do in English when they graduate from the school system. The indicators of levels of achievement are used to show the progress that students make towards those standards as they move through each

³ 1952-1972

⁴ Except for instruction of the national language, Dzongkha.

⁵ The first Bhutanese students sent further than India went to New Zealand, Australia, the UK, Canada and USA.

of the class years PP-12 (Center for Educational Research and Development, 2002, p.2)

The preamble to the document presents a number of ‘vision statements’ describing the goals of Bhutan’s education system, in general, and of the teaching of English, in particular. For example, it states that:

- We believe that our educational system should ensure a learning environment in which all our children can learn and achieve their own individually configured excellence – an environment that nurtures their unique talents and creativity;
- We believe that teaching and learning comprise a holistic process that connects ideas and disciplines to the personal experiences, environments and communities of students; and
- We believe that teaching should be dynamic and reciprocal, and that teachers should integrate their knowledge of subjects, students, the community and the curriculum to create a bridge between learning goals and learners’ lives (p.2).

The document acknowledges that language develops in a social context and that students’ learning is fostered by sharing their ideas and understanding of the texts they study. It stipulates that teachers must engage students in conversations that are rich in ideas and more and more complex in the patterns of language they display (p.2). In its forward to the section on speaking and listening, it states that learning these language skills is part of an ‘active process’ and that classrooms in which they are learned must “by definition be active places” (p.2).

Although English is the medium of instruction, there is little importance placed on oral fluency or communicative competence. This can be attributed, in part, to cultural norms which encourage modesty and not ‘speaking out’⁶. This is also a result of adherence to outmoded teaching methodologies and lack of attention to the importance of supporting language proficiency across subject areas. Consequently, the role of language in education, in general, and English, in particular, is a key factor impacting the overall effectiveness of Bhutan’s system of government-run education (Royal Education Council, 2012).

1.4 Rationale

This research aims to fill a gap in the literature as the first to specifically examine implementation of Bhutan’s English-medium education policy. Given the prominence of

⁶ This becomes particularly pronounced for girls once they reach the secondary levels.

English as the medium of instruction in Bhutan's system of government-run education, it is important to more clearly understand how effectively the policy is being implemented.

Additional impetus for carrying out this study is based on the following six points:

- a. Perceived disjuncture between policy and practice
- b. Perceptions of low English proficiency of Bhutanese students
- c. Future education consequences
- d. Future employment consequences
- e. Maximizing investments in the education sector
- f. Personal experience

a. Perceived disjuncture between policy and practice

The Royal Government of Bhutan's clear policy of English-medium education and English's dominance in Bhutan as the medium of official correspondences and written communication (Phuntsho, 2013) informs the rationale for inquiry into this professional practice. Given this unambiguous policy stance and English's prominence in Bhutanese society, this study seeks to gain a better understanding of a possible disjuncture between what is stated in education policy which guides the teaching-learning of English and what happens in practice in both in English language and English-medium subject classrooms.

I have undertaken numerous informal observations of English classes during school visits over the course of the last decade as part of field tours in my capacity as team leader for two World Bank-financed education projects in Bhutan. The policies and learning goals described in *The Silken Knot* have been in effect during this period.

For example, the language competencies expected grade 8 students are to:

- Communicate effectively in most practical and social situations
- Demonstrate control of common sentence structures
- Take an active part in discussions showing understanding of ideas and sensitivity to others
- Follow most formal and informal conversations at a normal rate of speech
- Demonstrate an expanding inventory of vocabulary (p.9)

Teachers are expected to "create opportunities for students to speak in a variety of social and formal situations" (p.12) and to create "classrooms where purposeful conversation, dialogue, and informal debate happen regularly" (p.14).

At grade 11, students are expected to:

- Explain their position on and understanding of complex issues
- Maintain and develop their talk purposely in a range of contexts
- Make a range of contributions which show that they have listened perceptively to the development of a discussion
- Demonstrate apt use of vocabulary
- Participate in a variety of contexts, public or otherwise, using appropriate intonation and emphasis
- Lead routine meetings and manage interactions in small groups (p.10)

Classroom observations combined with my assessment of students' English proficiency at various levels of education lead me to believe that these learning goals, as described in *The Silken Knot*, are not being met. Specifically, teachers' purposeful establishment of an active, dialogue-rich classroom environment is not something that I have witnessed in most of the classrooms I have visited in Bhutan.

This research aims to better understand this possible disjuncture between policy and practice.

b. Impressions of researchers and educators

A number of Bhutanese researchers have examined Bhutanese students' educational achievement, including achievement in English. These include Dorji (2005) who examined the quality of education in Bhutan, annual reviews by the Royal Education Council (2009, 2011) to assess student learning and a National Education Framework (Royal Education Council, 2012) which serves as a foundation policy document for Bhutan's education system development.

Dorji concluded that language, and specifically English as the medium of instruction, are factors which negatively impact effective student learning. He recommends that teachers learn specific approaches for teaching English as a second/foreign language. The Royal Education Council concluded that secondary students have an inadequate familiarization with English for it to be used as the language of instruction across the curriculum (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2008b). The 2011 Annual Status of Student Learning exercise, which assessed core competencies for students in grades 4, 6 and 8 for English, Mathematics and Science, indicated that English oral proficiency is not assessed at all (Royal Education Council, 2011). This suggests that oral fluency is not a priority for the teaching and learning of English and undermines claims by policy-makers that

competency in the four language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening speaking) is sought in Bhutan's English-medium education system. This lack of competency across the four language skills, especially oral fluency, constitutes much of the rationale for this research.

An expatriate native English-speaking teacher provided the following example of an average grade 12 student writing extracted from an argumentative essay about the current ban on the sale of tobacco products in Bhutan. This example highlights numerous problematic issues of vocabulary, grammar and overall mastery of English usage after 13 years of English-medium instruction:

Bhutan in this twenty first centuries with the peoples' intelligences and idea people tries to ignore and go on to fulfill their desires. Initially people believe that our country is Buddhist and religious and consumption of tobacco is contrast to with our religion. As the country develops and being far advance in this stage, people do not think about the consequences of upcoming future. Ban of tobacco is significance in our country. Ban of tobacco can quit tobacco since it is not seen and handed. (Shmitt, 2013)

Western-trained native English-speaking teachers in Bhutan express concern about their students' English proficiency. These teachers, many of whom have extensive experience teaching learners of English as a second language in their home countries, have shared with me their feelings that Bhutanese students' difficulty in acquiring adequate English proficiency negatively impacts their ability to learn across the curriculum through English.

Graddol (2005) notes that in English medium of instruction (EMI) systems, English is often treated as a 'generic skill' which students are expected to possess. This, in turn, leads to an insufficient focus on the teaching English as a second/foreign language. Clegg (2009) similarly observes that if a learner is not fluent in a second language, using it as a medium of learning makes learning difficult.

This research seeks to better understand these concerns and, if validated, suggest remedies.

c. Future education prospects for Bhutanese youth

Bhutan seeks to expand its tertiary education sector as increasing numbers of students complete the full cycle of secondary education. Each year, more and more Bhutanese

youth are seeking admission into tertiary level institutes in Bhutan and abroad. Most English-medium institutes abroad require prospective foreign students to pass an internationally recognized English language proficiency examination, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Bhutanese students often have to take the test(s) more than once in order to attain a score which is acceptable for admission into a tertiary-level institute abroad. This suggests that the English proficiency attained during their schooling in Bhutan does not effectively equip them to succeed on standard international English proficiency tests, despite having studied English and through English for the entirety of their schooling in Bhutan.

Examiners for internationally recognized tests of English in Bhutan have shared with me their impressions of the struggles which Bhutanese secondary school and college graduates face when taking these examinations. They report that Bhutanese students have a particularly difficult time with the oral fluency component of these exams. Additionally, questions which require analytical or critical thinking in English are reported to be particularly difficult for many Bhutanese students. Examiners surmise that Bhutanese students' inability to benefit from their well-honed memorization skills combined with an overall lack of language and analytical abilities prove particularly problematic for them when taking these tests.

d. Future employment prospects for Bhutanese youth

Bhutan aims to diversify its economy beyond its main economic engine of hydropower generation for sale to India and expand employment opportunities for the growing number of Bhutanese youth who have completed the full cycle of secondary education and beyond. Two sectors which hold potential for creating jobs are tourism and ICT-enabled services, both of which require a minimal level of functional English proficiency, particularly oral skills.

Tourism: After decades of relative isolation, Bhutan aims to expand its tourism sector as it recognizes the potential of tourism as a source of hard currency revenue. Many tourists visiting Bhutan come from English-speaking countries, notably the United States (Dema, 2012). From only five years ago when approximately 25,000 visitors came to the country, in 2012 more than 105,000 tourists visited Bhutan. While a large proportion of tourists hail from neighbouring India, a considerable and growing number come from

other, mostly developed countries. English is the dominant language of tourism worldwide and used as a lingua franca for many non-English speaking tourists (Simion, 2012). Consequently, RGOB seeks to ensure that Bhutanese employed or seeking employment in the tourism sector possess the knowledge and skills required to welcome and cater to the increasing number of predominately English-speaking tourists who pay a high daily tariff per person to visit the country.

ICT: RGOB recently established the country's first ICT-enabled services facility, the Thimphu TechPark⁷, located in the outskirts of the capital city. It seeks to attract foreign companies specializing in ICT-enabled services which wish to establish new operations in Bhutan. Thimphu TechPark aims to generate employment for educated youth and further RGOB's efforts to diversify the formal sector economy beyond hydropower.

In 2012, a foreign firm specializing in call center customer support for clients in Britain and the United States established operations in the Thimphu TechPark. Its decision to set up business in Bhutan was based, in part, on Bhutan's reputation for having English-speaking secondary school and college graduates. However, operations ceased after only one month with the company citing low levels of English proficiency among its newly-hired Bhutanese workforce. Its management said that the new Bhutanese recruits needed further training in English. In particular, it cited problems with English grammar, the neutralising of accents and basic telemarketing skills. Call center workers' were unable to engage in simple conversations with customers and relied on antiquated means of address. These concerns were noted in the local press:

While talking with clients, employees are required to not only talk about the product but also "small talk". This includes talking about subjects that may range from the weather to sports, not in Bhutan, but in the client's country...other aspects like not calling clients 'sir' or 'madam', as is common in South Asian customs, will be communicated to trainees (Dorji, 2012).

The company was obliged to organize intensive English-as-a-second language training for new hires.

Employment in both the tourism and ICT sectors requires oral fluency in English which is not emphasized in Bhutan's education system. These skills are also not fostered through chalk-and-talk, rote teaching-learning methodologies which Bhutan's Ministry

⁷ The park has been established with financing from the World Bank based on a public-private partnership model.

of Education has sought to replace with more communicative classroom approaches. Limited oral fluency and confidence in speaking English poses potential barriers for Bhutanese school graduates' formal sector employment success. In particular, low levels of English oral proficiency limit Bhutanese graduates' participation in ICT-enabled services- and tourism-related employment in Bhutan's increasingly diversified economy.

e. Maximizing investments in the education sector in Bhutan

Between 1998 and 2011, RGOB availed of US\$42.5 million in concessional financing from the International Development Association⁸ for school construction (World Bank, 2011). According to the 2013 *State of the Nation* address of the Prime Minister of Bhutan to parliament, RGOB allocated approximately US\$176 million to the education sector, or 13 percent of total government expenditure during the 10th Five-Year Plan period⁹ (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2013). In the 2009/10 budget, education had the largest percentage share of government spending among all sectors, with 16 percent of the national budget allocated to it (Choden and Sarkar, 2012). Given the substantial expenditure made over the last three decades by RGOB for education system expansion and development, it is important that these investments are maximized by ensuring that quality teaching-learning takes place in schools.

There is concern within both RGOB and among its development partners about whether current classroom practices are suitable for achieving the desired learning outcomes. As noted in a completion report for a World Bank-financed education project which supported, among other inputs, the development of new mathematics curricula and textbooks at the primary and secondary education levels (World Bank, 2006):

[the project] introduced a number of initiatives aimed at improving teaching-learning processes which, in most cases, were unfamiliar to teachers as they differed markedly from their own learning experiences as children. It is not unexpected, therefore, that teachers would have difficulty comprehending and utilizing new approaches to teaching-learning. (p.8)

Although most financing to Bhutan's education sector has been highly concessional¹⁰, it has nonetheless added significantly to Bhutan's levels of sovereign debt which will have to be serviced by future generations of Bhutanese. As most such investment has been

⁸ The concessional lending arm of the World Bank Group.

⁹ 2008-2013

¹⁰ Interest free or low interest credits and loans.

used to establish new school infrastructure, if what happens inside classrooms is largely ineffective, such costly investments will have limited impact on improving the quality of education overall.

f. Personal experience

A key rationale for this study arises from my own classroom observations and interactions with Bhutanese students, educators and policy-makers over the course of my 25-years professional involvement in Bhutan's education sector. During this time I have worked as a teacher, education specialist and development program manager with three of Bhutan's key development partners for education sector development¹¹.

I initially worked in Bhutan as a volunteer primary and junior high school teacher during the late 1980s and early 1990s when NAPE was first introduced. Prior to the introduction of NAPE, I witnessed firsthand the prevailing teaching-learning methodologies characterized by teacher-centered 'chalk-and-talk' approaches which encouraged memorization and rote learning by students. Kindergarteners sat in rows on the grass outside their classrooms taking 'final examinations', even though most of them did not yet know how to hold a pencil. The majority of teachers at that time were from India, many of whom viewed student participation as a loss of teacher control in the classroom. They encouraged the memorization of large amounts of vocabulary, including antiquated words and phrases¹². I felt a great sense of anticipation and hope that NAPE would bring more effective and enjoyable teaching-learning into Bhutan's schools.

During later stays in Bhutan as the Education Project Officer for UNICEF (1996-1999) and as the first World Bank Representative to Bhutan (2009-2012), I observed low levels of English proficiency, particularly oral fluency, among Bhutanese secondary school students. In addition to frequently being struck by students' lack of oral and written fluency and listening comprehension, I have also received consistent feedback from employers who express dismay over low English proficiency among school leavers seeking employment. As a researcher, I wish to better understand the reasons for such poor proficiency.

Summary: There are indications that Bhutan's policy of English-medium instruction is not being implemented effectively. Low English proficiency among many Bhutanese

¹¹ World University Service of Canada, UNICEF and the World Bank

¹² For example, one student in grade 7 wrote me a note stating, "*When I saw Sir's shining face come over the hill, I reached the zenith of my glory*".

students in secondary schools and beyond suggests that schools are not producing graduates with adequate fluency in English, despite many years of both studying English and other subjects through English. One can surmise, therefore, that a key goal of Bhutan's education policy is unfulfilled. This outcome has potentially serious consequences for the employment and future education prospects of Bhutanese youth.

Bhutan's official school curriculum discourages rote learning and memorization. However, based on my and others' observations and assessment (Chatwin and DeCamp, 2011, Dorji, 2005, Royal Education Council, 2011), there has not been a pronounced shift away from didactic teaching methodologies nor the emergence of language-rich classrooms in Bhutan's government-run schools. Current teaching-learning practices continue to rely heavily on rote learning and memorization, as reported by Bhutanese educators and returned and serving expatriate native English-speaking teachers.

My own observations over the last 25 years also indicate that rote learning and memorization are still widely used, particularly in secondary schools. Despite wide-ranging reform efforts in the areas of curriculum and textbook development and teacher training, including for the teaching-learning of English, many teachers continue to use outmoded 'chalk-and-talk' teaching approaches. The need to shift toward more modern teaching-learning strategies is supported in a 2009 report of the Royal Education Council:

In Bhutan, the Ministry of Education has recognized that for education to keep pace with today's rapidly changing world there is a need to replace traditional rote learning with 'learning with understanding', defined as "learning how to learn, being able to think on one's feet, critical thinking skills and application skills. (p.7)

In responding to these concerns, this study examines current implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. It seeks to identify lessons from the large body of literature on second/foreign language-medium education globally and, in particular, associated classroom practices. It is hoped that these lessons will be useful in the Bhutan context.

1.5 Main research question, sub-questions and approach used

The study explores the following central research question using a CLIL theoretical framework:

How can implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education be enhanced?

More specifically, it seeks to better understand:

- a. What is already known about good practice for English as a second/foreign language-medium education in schools?
- b. What perceptions surround implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?
- c. What factors influence effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?
- d. What are the implications for policy, professional practice and research?

1.6 International dimensions of the research

This study has clear international and intercultural dimensions. Research for the study was conducted in Bhutan. Given the growing importance of English as a global lingua franca, English is now seen as part and parcel of Bhutan's participation in both regional and global economic, social and cultural activities. As Marsh (2006) states:

In the past, other languages have assumed the role of 'lingua franca' in a given territory or socio-economic domain. But now, and over the next fifty years, English is viewed as the language which will be increasingly used to serve the demands of the globalizing economies. (p.29)

The number of people worldwide using English as a foreign/second language and/or as a language of instruction is large and growing. It is estimated that there are now more non-native speakers of English around the world than native speaker users of English (Maley, 2009).

Yet the global spread of English has not been without controversy. As Yano (2001) notes:

The global spread of English is rapid and extensive, but the spread itself is ambivalent. On the one hand, English has the essential value of being a means of global communication....On the other hand, the global spread of such a powerful and convenient common language is driving minor languages to extinction. (p.120)

Murata and Jenkins (2009) identify two contradictory notions of the global spread of English. The first focuses on the influence and value of English as a means of communication at far-reaching levels of culture, economy, education, politics, science and technology. It assumes ‘ownership’ of English by native speakers of English who are the main beneficiaries and executors of English’s power and prestige (Crystal, 2003). The second describes English as it is used in international and intercultural settings as a means of communication both for interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers, and increasingly interactions in English between non-native speakers for which English serves as a lingua franca.

The use of English as a medium of instruction in education systems, particularly in the developing world, has raised questions about whether it exacerbates societal inequalities or reduces them. Tembe and Norton (2011) cite the example of Uganda where rural parents and communities express anxiety over their children’s lack of access to English in the education system which they believe is essential for future academic and economic advancement. Conversely, Williams (2011) argues that African children educated in languages other than their mother tongue are at a disadvantage.

While these ideological debates are acknowledged, it is not the objective of this study to examine these issues. Rather, this study focuses on the current implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education in order to strengthen both the policy and practice surrounding it.

Bhutan’s aim to be part of an increasingly globalized world is closely tied to its use of English as the medium of instruction in its system of government-run education. As noted in the National Education Framework of the Royal Education Council:

English is seen as the most advantageous language to assist Bhutan in the articulation of its identity, the modernization of its outlook and interactions with the international community. English will enhance Bhutan’s capacity to participate more effectively and purposefully in the global community. English as an international language of opportunity is the preferred choice to meet Bhutan’s requirements of a globalizing world by enabling the educated younger generations to develop adequate competence in a language of wide international communication. (2012, p.77)

Given the importance of English to Bhutan for global connectedness, this study’s examination of the effectiveness and potential of its English-medium education policy is relevant for the purposes of an international education inquiry.

1.7 My role in the research

This research employed a reflective practice approach to understanding the research question. Reflective practice can be an important tool in practice-based professional learning settings where individuals learn from their own professional experience. The concept of reflective practice centers around the idea of life-long learning where a practitioner analyses his/her professional experience in order to learn from it (Bracken and Bryan, 2010).

I have had a long-standing interest in language and language learning. After a first experience as a primary school teacher in Bhutan in the late 1980s, I returned to Canada to pursue a Master's degree in Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. Teaching English-as-a-second language to foreign students at my university helped solidify an interest in language teaching and learning. Personally, I have embarked upon my own path as a language learner, first learning a Bhutanese language while living in a village in eastern Bhutan, learning French while working as a development practitioner in Africa, learning Nepali while conducting research for my Master's degree in Nepal and learning Spanish while working for the World Bank which uses Spanish as an official working language. My motivation for pursuing this specific area of inquiry stems largely from having gained much both personally and professionally from Bhutan and, therefore, wanting to identify a research topic which I thought would be of use to the country to improve its education system.

My role in the research is as both an insider and an outsider. Insider research is based on the notion that particular individuals or groups have 'monolithic' or 'privileged' access to specific kinds of knowledge (Merton, 1972). A fundamental distinction between an 'insider' and an 'outsider' in the research process is that the insider is someone whose biography or characteristics (gender, race, sexual orientation, class, etc.) permit the researcher to have a familiarity with the group or issues being researched. An 'outsider' does not possess this knowledge or familiarity prior to entry into the group or subject area for the purposes of carrying out the research (Griffith, 1998).

As an insider, I bring my own long experience of Bhutan's education system to bear in my understanding of the research questions. I have witnessed Bhutan's education system grow and develop over time as a teacher in rural primary and lower secondary schools 25 years ago and then as program manager for large education projects supported by two key development partners. I also consider myself to be an insider in light of my long

personal and professional association with many policy-makers and senior RGOB officials, particularly in the education sector. This affords me access to information and viewpoints which may not be available to others. It also allows me to be sensitive and responsive to traits and characteristics of Bhutanese society and people which would not likely be apparent to those with less experience and knowledge of Bhutan.

For example, as a former English teacher in Bhutan, I pay careful attention to the proficiency of Bhutanese English speakers. When speaking with students, I modulate my own speech to account for their limitations as second/foreign language learners. Despite my attempts to speak slowly, clearly and repeat myself in comprehensible ways, I still find that many students in middle and higher secondary school are unable to understand simple verbal communication and correctly use basic grammatical constructions after ten or more years of English-medium education. Tourists (“outsiders”), on the other hand, often express surprise and admiration of how well Bhutanese speak English.

The dimensions and characteristics for defining oneself as an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ ring true for me in carrying out this research in Bhutan. I am clearly an ‘outsider’ as a Canadian expatriate living in Bhutan and working for international development organizations. At the same time, I am an ‘insider’ having lived in Bhutan for many years and with long personal and professional relationships with many of the people who participated in this study. To that end, my over two decades’ involvement in Bhutan’s education sector has been brought to bear in all aspects of this research.

1.8 Organization of the thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the thesis topic, including its background and context, rationale, research questions, the study’s international perspective and my role in the research.

Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to the research questions.

Chapter 3 presents the field study’s methodology.

Chapter 4 draws out the study’s findings in relation to each research question.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the literature review.

Chapter 6 provides suggestions for policy, professional practice and future research, as well as personal reflections and final conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework to guide further development of this study. It critically reviews literature on a teaching-learning approach known as content and language integrated learning (CLIL). CLIL has been widely used to help maximize the effectiveness of second/foreign language medium of instruction education systems.

The theoretical lens developed to engage with the context and research information arose from an initial searching of the literature on second/foreign language-medium education. CLIL featured prominently in the literature. CLIL also resonated with me personally given my experience of English in Bhutan's education system and French immersion in Canada where family members and friends have attained functional fluency in French through school immersion programs. My own experience as a language learner has taught me that the most effective way to learn a second/foreign language is by using it purposefully for the creation of meaning.

This literature review also addresses the first research sub-question:

What is already known about good practice for English as a second/foreign language-medium education in schools?

The next section presents the strategy used for searching the literature on CLIL. This is followed by six sections which discuss key features of a CLIL approach:

- i. Fundamentals of CLIL
- ii. Lessons learned from international experience
- iii. Importance of oral production
- iv. Importance of classroom interaction
- v. Role of subject teachers
- vi. Teacher preparation

These are followed by a description of the implementation of a CLIL approach in a developing country, Namibia, which has relevant parallels to the Bhutan context. The chapter continues with a presentation of literature specific to Bhutan. It ends with a summary of the salient features of CLIL.

2.2 Searching the literature

The literature was initially searched using the Google internet search engine with the following strings of key words: ‘English-medium education’, ‘content and language integrated learning’, ‘ESL’, ‘teacher English language proficiency’ and ‘language across the curriculum’. The use of these terms revealed a broad range of articles, publications and other literature. The search then identified further relevant literature through the searching of bibliographies and references from key articles initially identified. The search continued using the online library services of the World Bank Group and the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London. Key words used for the librarian-assisted literature searches included: content and language integrated curriculum; English-medium education; English-medium education in developing countries; CLIL teacher preparation; CLIL curriculum development; and CLIL curriculum reform.

Documentation was accessed through the IOE e-library website, searching approximately 15 data bases¹³ and accessing approximately 400 articles based on the following criteria: (i) most up-to-date research carried out in these areas of inquiry; and (ii) most relevant to the research questions. This included research carried out in the context of developing countries, research which addressed the classroom practices of teachers having limited second (or, specifically, English) language proficiency and research in contexts where a second language of instruction is not the language used outside the school/classroom setting.

The search revealed that there is no published literature specifically pertaining to the use of CLIL in Bhutan. A limited number of assessments have been carried out by the Ministry of Education and the Royal Education Council. There are also several Master’s Degree theses by Bhutanese scholars on diverse issues pertaining to language in education¹⁴, a pre-departure report for MOE jointly prepared by two expatriate native English-speaking volunteer teachers and a expatriate academic consultant’s report financed by a multilateral development partner agency prepared for MOE.

The following sections present some of the literature on CLIL, its fundamental tenets and examples of its use in several contexts.

¹³ Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts; Australian Education Index; British Education Index; Cambridge Journals Online; Directory of UK ELT Research; ERIC; Google Scholar; IOE Digital Education Research Archive; JSTOR; Oxford Journals Collection; Sage Journals; UNESCO Documents and Publications; and World Bank Documents and Reports.

¹⁴ Such as, for example, the teaching of reading in grade 4 in rural schools.

2.3 Fundamentals of CLIL

CLIL focuses on integrating the teaching of language skills and learning of subject content (e.g. science, mathematics) in the same classroom simultaneously (Barwell, 2005). The major difference between teaching using a CLIL approach and teaching subject content in a mother tongue language is that CLIL involves additional language learning objectives and specific opportunities for communication and language use (Hartiala and Turun, 2000). CLIL is consistent with communicative, task-based¹⁵ and content-based language teaching.

To acquire the range of skills needed for successful second language learning, a CLIL approach emphasizes skills development as a unified process in the four key language-learning areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing (Graser, 1998). It supports the notion that fluency in a target language is best achieved by its use as a functional medium of communication and information, not by making the target language the object of analysis in class (de Graff et al., 2007).

Learners with inadequate comprehension of the second language through which learning takes place do not grasp the meaning of texts. Rather, they develop survival strategies which inhibit acquiring meaning and adopt a ‘surface approach’ to learning which focuses on what appears to be the most important topics or elements (Zeng, 2007). They then try to reproduce them accurately. In doing so, they do not see interconnections between elements or the meaning or implications of what is learned, instead concentrating only on surface features or ‘signs’ of learning (Marton and Saljo, 1976). Time pressures brought on by teachers who believe that they have to ‘get through’ the textbook or curriculum, heavy assessment in examination-driven systems, a ‘cold’ classroom climate with students in rows and little by way of visual aids combined with lecture-style teaching encourage such surface learning. In some cultures, children are expected to listen rather than to ask questions of adults. These approaches not only run counter to the usual goals of learning, in general (Biggs, 1990), but to the goals of language learning, in particular.

Conversely, a CLIL approach emphasizes meaningful learning and assessing for higher order cognitive outcomes, rather than content that has been memorized. A learning environment that encourages ownership of what is being learned and learner activity,

¹⁵ Tasks all share one thing in common: they involve communicative language use in which the user’s attention is focused on meaning rather than on linguistic structure (Nunan, 1989).

rather than passivity, encourages deeper learning (Biggs and Telfer, 1987). In advocating for a sensitive and collaborative integration of language and content where language teaching is integrated into the learning of other subjects, Marsh (2011, p.1) observes that “teaching in English can easily lead to language problems, [but] teaching through English can unleash language potential.”

This section has discussed how CLIL provides a means of teaching subject content through the medium of a language which is still being learned. CLIL differs from simple English-medium education as learners are not expected to have the English proficiency required to cope with subject content before commencing study. To do this effectively, however, classroom teaching must provide the necessary language support alongside the delivery of subject content.

The next section describes experiences of CLIL in two developed countries and lessons learned from both.

2.4 Lessons learned from international experience

French immersion in Canada: French immersion in Canada is a content-based approach to learning French that integrates language teaching into the rest of the school curriculum. English speaking students are taught subjects such as social studies, math and science in French (Roy, 2008). This model shares the pedagogical belief that second language instruction integrated with instruction in academic or other content matter is more effective for teaching second languages than methods which teach a second language in isolation. While some evaluations of French immersion have been critical (Hammerly, 1989, Mannavarayan, 2002, Wente, 2013), it has been called “among the most interesting and effective innovations in second language education during the last three decades” (Genesee, 1994). French immersion in Canada emerges prominently in the CLIL literature as an example of good practice in the simultaneous teaching of both language and content. For this reason it is examined and discussed in this study.

Johnson and Swain (1997) identify three common characteristics of immersion programs:

- The second language is the medium of instruction
- Exposure to the second language is largely confined to the classroom
- Students enter with similar (and limited) levels of second language proficiency

Proficiency in the target language is not seen as a prerequisite to academic development, but rather as a co-requisite. The classroom and school are designed to create a base and establish a speech community in both the classroom and school so that children are able to acquire language under naturalistic conditions (Genesee, 1994). By making the target language the medium of all (or most) activities in the classroom and school, learners are given extensive exposure to the target language and varied practice opportunities. It is expected that learners will gain greater mastery of the target language and exhibit other non-linguistic outcomes such as higher willingness to communicate, lower communication anxiety, and higher perceived communicative competence (Baker and MacIntyre, 2003).

Krashen (1985) states that the only way to learn a language naturally is through comprehensible input. Other researchers have similarly emphasized that language learning is a social process (Lantolf, 1994) fostered by rich experiences in the first and target languages in school (Bournot-Trites and Reader, 2001). Cazden (1988) describes classrooms as sociolinguistic environments in which participants make use of language to establish a communication system. Similarly, Consolo (2001) highlights the importance of the classroom as a sociolinguistic environment for language learning: “[the] input for language acquisition is expected to be generated by means of classroom interaction” (p.42).

Graser (1998) emphasizes the lesson planning challenges and dual roles facing teachers in an immersion context for effective language and content learning:

Immersion teachers do have a challenge to consistently plan lessons by playing the double role of the whole language teacher and the content teacher. This is key to the learning of our students and will produce more effective language learners in future. (p.4)

French immersion’s focus on language use allows students to have authentic audiences that motivate oral and written communication (Roy, 2008) through collaborative tasks that help learners reflect on their own language production as they attempt to create meaning (Swain, 2001). These are important elements for the establishment of language-rich classroom and school learning environments.

CLIL in the Netherlands: CLIL is offered in a variety of forms within Europe. In the majority of cases, schools offer a form of CLIL in which subjects are taught in at least two different languages – the official state language plus a foreign language, usually English. The formal adoption of CLIL approaches in Europe finds its origins in a 1995

European Commission document on education '*Teaching and learning. Toward a Learning Society*'. It declares that proficiency in three European Community languages is an objective and that teaching content in a foreign language is a way to achieve it (Novotna, 2001).

CLIL is widely used in the Netherlands where the language of instruction, in addition to Dutch, is generally English. The main aim of CLIL in the Netherlands is functional, that is, it seeks to develop proficiency in a foreign language alongside knowledge of a non-language subject area. Taking authentic learning material as a starting point, CLIL encourages task-based use of language that is organized around the understanding and interaction of subject-related topics (de Graff et al., 2007).

Data gathered in the Netherlands show that students who have followed a CLIL curriculum reach higher levels of proficiency in English than their peers without any negative effects on their academic proficiency in their first language or on other school subjects (de Graff et al., 2007). Both teachers' and students' attitudes are generally positive, with each group considering this type of education as an interesting challenge rather than an obstacle (de Bot, 2002). It has been observed that subject teachers can profit from effective language-pedagogical approaches. Similarly, language teachers can profit from effective CLIL experiences. In sum, both subject and language teachers can learn from each other when working within a CLIL framework (de Graff et al., 2007).

CLIL in Canada and the Netherlands underscore four key tenets of CLIL which make it an effective teaching-learning approach:

- Frequent shifts in focus from content to language bring students' attention from the instruction of subject content to instruction about language form. This is aligned to the theory of 'counterbalancing' (Genesee, 1994). As a classroom teaching methodology, this helps enhance their awareness of learning both language and content simultaneously (Skehan, 1998, Lyster, 2008).
- Students who have extended opportunities for classroom discourse in the target language are at an advantage for acquiring oral production skills. Integrating approaches that provide opportunities for extended student discourse is particularly beneficial for second/foreign language learning in school settings (Ellis, 1984).
- A combination of counterbalancing, frequent opportunities for student discourse and the use of instructional materials which contain communicative tasks that

focus systematically on language form (Genesee, 1994, Swain, 2001) yield enhanced student learning of targeted grammar and language structures (Day and Shapson, 1991, Harley, 1993, Lyster, 1994).

- Good instruction for students, in general, tends to be good instruction for English language learners, in particular. This is characterized by the establishment of meaningful, context-rich, participatory learning environments (Goldenberg, 2008).

The challenge for the effective teacher in a second/foreign language medium of instruction system is to make both subject content and language accessible to second language students who may lack both the language and conceptual skills to acquire new knowledge (Uys, 2006).

The next sections examine two key features of a CLIL approach: (i) the importance of students' oral production; and (ii) the importance of classroom interaction. From a CLIL perspective, these are known elements of good practice for ensuring effective implementation of second/foreign language medium of education policies.

2.5 Importance of oral production

Oral language functions as the foundation for literacy (Fillmore and Snow, 2000). In CLIL settings, intensive instruction to support oral production has been found to be of particular benefit (Celaya, 2010). Pedagogic ideas which generate involvement in the language classroom typically depend on oral communication among class members as a major element (Allwright, 1984). In a study of effective classroom practices in French immersion programs in Canada, Swain (2001) concluded that "students should get more opportunities for sustained oral use of the target language" (p.47).

In typical classrooms, the most important asymmetry in the power balance between teachers and students is over control of the right to speak. Put in the bluntest terms, teachers have the right to speak at any time and to anyone (Cazden, 1988). In a study of teacher talk in Spain, Ribas (2010) found that teachers often control patterns of classroom communication through how they use language. Teachers do most of the talking during the class, control the topic of discussion and determine who may talk and when. Students' chances to speak are limited and depend largely on teachers' turn-allocation decision-making, the nature of questions they ask and the feedback they provide to student responses.

In soliciting teachers' views on why students are often reluctant to speak in class, Ribas reported:

After listening to many English teachers from different schools, there is a general feeling of frustration due to students' low rate of participation in classroom interactions. In fact, there is always the same complaint: "*our students know very little and make no effort to speak English*". This statement is obviously very hard on students and apparently frees teachers of any kind of responsibility. (p.4)

Ribas further observed that a common pattern found in classrooms is one in which teachers start off with a general question to the entire class, but when no one volunteers an answer, they resort to asking individual students as a means of sustaining interaction. In doing so, teachers tend to "allocate turns to the brightest students from whom a response is usually assured" (p.15). Additionally, teachers often ask 'closed' questions, that is, those for which there is only one acceptable answer. Shy students often take 'private turns' by making comments in a low voice for themselves and/or those nearest to them. If these go unnoticed, shy students can feel neglected and unwilling to participate in future occasions. These classroom practices are likely to restrict student output as students are reduced to a passive role of answering questions and carrying out teachers' instructions.

Tsui (1995) identified the following common factors that contribute to students' reluctance to participate orally in classrooms:

- *Students' low English proficiency*: It is not so much that students do not know the answer, but that they do not know how to express it in English;
- *Second language classroom anxiety*: This is caused by students having to master the target language and perform in that language at the same time;
- *Students' pressure*: the pressure to give the right answer and the fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by peers;
- *Teachers' incomprehensive input*: teachers often do not give clear instructions or explanations, and students are too shy to seek clarification;
- *Teachers' intolerance of silence*: teachers asking one question after another without giving students time to answer can be caused by pressure to go through the curriculum, the fear of students getting too noisy or the belief that effective teaching requires the nonstop imparting of knowledge;
- *Teachers' subconscious choice to allocate speaking turns*: teachers allocating turns to the brightest students results in weaker students feeling ignored and makes them even more reluctant to participate; and

- *Students' cultural background*: some competent students may be reluctant to participate because they do not want to stand out from the rest, especially those from some Asian cultures which emphasize modesty.

Teachers can solve anxiety or fear problems by creating a relaxing classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable to try out the target language and make mistakes (Ribas, 2010). Under a CLIL approach, classroom talk becomes more like informal conversation (Cazden, 1988). To achieve this, teachers must learn how to monitor their oral interactive practices in their lessons and lead conversations with their students that reflect a cohesive academic topic and the conversational features of interpersonal communication (Pessoa et al., 2007).

The importance of oral production has been discussed in this section as a key element of CLIL and good practice for supporting English as a second/foreign language medium of instruction. Teachers play the central role for creating a classroom environment conducive to students' oral production and must learn and use teaching strategies which get students producing language.

According to the literature, classroom interaction is another fundamental precept of CLIL which is essential for effective teaching-learning in a second/foreign language. This is examined in the next section.

2.6 Importance of classroom interaction

Hall and Verplaeste (2000) postulate that language learning is a social enterprise, jointly constructed and intrinsically linked to students' repeated and regular participation in classroom activities. It is through talk that knowledge is constructed and "it is essentially in the discourse between teachers and students that education is done or fails to be done" (Edwards and Mercer, 1987, p.101).

Most classroom discourse, however, consists of what van Lier (1996) describes as the 'initiation-response-feedback' (IRF) model: the teacher initiates talk (almost always with a question), the student responds and the teacher evaluates the response. Using an IRF approach, students' responses are boxed in between a demand to display knowledge and a judgment about its correctness. This makes every student response a sort of examination, leading to reluctance on the part of students to 'be called upon' and participate. As van Lier notes:

The IRF structure does not represent true joint construction of discourse, but rather makes it unattractive and

unmotivating for students to participate in classroom interaction since their responses may be evaluated or examined publicly, rather than accepted and appreciated as part of a joint conversation. (p.151)

Classrooms are social systems (Cazden, 1988) and lessons are socially constructed events, no matter how much teachers dominate nor how compliantly students react (Allwright, 1984). However, in bringing in cultural factors, Fillmore and Snow (2000) describe the classroom dynamics found in some Asian cultures which emphasize modesty, noting that “only rude and poorly reared children would speak up in the presence of an authority figure like the teacher” (p.23). Cazden contends that in order to bring about more interactive classrooms consistent with a CLIL approach, teachers must shift from using a series of closed questions toward authentic dialogue, arguing that: “This is more than a change in surface verbal behavior. It is a different conception of knowledge and teaching” (p.59). A classroom atmosphere which supports interaction is evidenced by students’ ability to work in groups, their confidence to use language in group or class discussions and their willingness to ask questions if they do not understand (Crandall, 1998).

Allwright (1984) highlights the role of the teacher in establishing the appropriate socio-emotional atmosphere for language learning, arguing that “teachers should enter the classroom with at least a general idea of the sort of socio-emotional climate they would like to establish” (p.164). She emphasizes the importance of establishing ‘practice opportunities’ in the course of classroom interaction to allow students to practice whatever they are trying to learn in terms of content or skills. Another way of creating practice opportunities which encourage students to speak is through students practicing routine learning strategies, such as asking for help, seeking clarification with word meaning, pronunciation or spelling. Allwright suggests that an additional benefit of classroom interaction is related to the transfer of classroom learning to the ‘real world’. She notes:

We should not expect our learners to be able to use their classroom learning outside the classroom if they have never really had much opportunity to practice in circumstances at all similar to ‘real life’. (p.157)

The organization of the classroom’s physical environment is also important for fostering interaction and oral production by students, particularly how students’ seating is arranged. Cazden (1988) observed:

One primary teacher who valued real discussion, but admitted difficulty in getting it to happen, told me that she tried to avoid looking at the child who was speaking. She felt it encouraged the speaker to make eye contact with peers and made it more likely that another child would self-select to be the next speaker. These changes cannot happen unless students can see one another. Discussion is almost impossible – for anyone, not just students – when seats are in rows. (p.58)

Numerous researchers agree that collaborative/cooperative learning, along with opportunities for students to engage in extended English discourse, are effective instructional features for English language learners (Arreaga-Mayer, 1998, August and Shanahan, 2006, Genesee et al., 2006, Gersten and Jimenez, 1994).

This review of the literature has highlighted two areas of good practice for implementing English as a second/foreign language medium of education policy in schools using a CLIL approach: (i) oral production and (ii) classroom interaction. The classroom environment needed to foster these must be established by the teacher. Since most class time is spent in subject classes, not language classes, the role of subject teachers is crucial for ensuring that these pedagogic features of classroom activity occur as part of regular teaching. The next section examines this as an essential feature of the CLIL approach.

2.7 Role of subject teachers

There is consensus in the literature that since the majority of students' time is spent in subject classes, subject teachers must play an important role in supporting students' language development (Fillmore and Snow, 2000, Short, 2002, Al-Ansari, 2000, Uys, 2006, Crandall, 1998, Schleppegrell et al., 2004, Klaassen, 2002, Echevarria et al., 2004). As Echevarria (2004) explains:

The effective second/foreign language medium of instruction teacher knows about second language development, possible defects in the language usage of second language learners and the ways in which the teacher may understand and develop the communicative powers of his or her learners. (p.25)

Learners' language proficiency will not improve unless they receive specific and consistent feedback on their language usage (Klapper and Rees, 2003, Parkinson, 2001). Subject teachers who do not possess knowledge and skill in the medium of instruction to enable them to teach functional language skills may be jeopardizing students' ability to

use language effectively, not only in school, but in all aspects of their lives (Fillmore and Snow, 2000, Short, 2002). This concern is shared by Crandall (1998) who highlights the risk posed by subject teachers who fail to support students' language development:

An education system is in jeopardy when teachers are unable to help English language learners understand academic concepts through the language they are still learning. Subject content teachers are not only co-responsible for the teaching of language skills, but also play a pivotal role when it comes to learners' acquisition of academic literacy. (p.2)

Although many subject teachers in second/foreign language medium of instruction systems acknowledge their responsibility for the teaching of language skills, the majority fail to perform these duties in the classroom (Uys et al., 2007). Research which examined South Africa's system of English-medium education (Uys, 2006) offers four reasons why subject teachers are often unable and/or unwilling to assist learners in their English language development:

- Lack of awareness of their inability to meet the language-related needs of their pupils;
- Lack of the knowledge and approaches for teaching the four language skills and the insight to identify strategies to promote effective second/foreign language medium of instruction;
- Lack of the oral and written language proficiency needed to assist learners in the acquisition of academic literacy; and
- English language courses in teacher training programs which often range from general, generic communications to the study of literary texts. (p.20)

Novotna (2001) asks, "What attitudes, what professional skills are to be acquired for the teaching of subject content through the medium of the English language?" (p.122).

Attitudes are relevant given that subject teachers often do not believe it is their responsibility to support students' language learning and/or hold blaming, judgmental, condescending or non-positive attitudes toward their students (Ribas, 2010). Uys found in South Africa that many subject teachers believed that "the teaching of language skills was not their responsibility and worried about completing a full syllabus if too much time was spent focusing on it". (p.14)

Clegg's (2009) research examined a number of English as a second/foreign language-medium education systems worldwide. It revealed that not only are teachers with limited

proficiency unable to serve as good models of language use, but that they can also become unhappy and dissatisfied professionally. He notes:

It is not professionally gratifying to teach a subject badly in a language you are not comfortable with, when you know you could do it better if you were working in the learners' L1 [first language]. Teacher dissatisfaction is a potential problem in system-wide programmes of L2 [second language]-medium education. (p.52)

Uys (2006) also found that the majority of subject teachers possessed neither the methodological or presentational skills needed for effective second/foreign language medium of instruction and were unable to promote development of the four language skills among their students. Carless (2003) notes that a lack of subject teachers' proficiency and confidence in English inhibits them from using open-ended task-based activities in the classroom, including encouraging students' oral production and fostering classroom interaction.

Uys' research also revealed a significant rural-urban divide in teachers' own language proficiency. Rural teachers were found to be struggling with inadequate proficiency in English along with a greater reliance on teacher-centered classroom practices:

[the rural] teacher frequently stumbled over terminology and mispronounced words and emphasized listening as a learning strategy. The teacher appeared to fulfill his teaching duties by delivering the content in a mode that was convenient to him and required little preparation. He seemed unaware of the notion of developing his learners' ability to engage in academic discourse. (p.16)

In Indonesia, Coleman's (2009) research revealed that the teaching workforce is not ready to function in English and "more than half of all teachers possess a level of competence which is even lower than 'elementary'" (p.67).

Second/foreign language medium of instruction teachers need proficiency which allows them to act as role models for language use and pronunciation to their learners (Klaassen, 2002, Titlestad, 1999). Fifteen percent of teachers in the South African study made frequent spelling errors of common words, lacked cohesion and sufficient and/or appropriate vocabulary, and could not sufficiently organize and/or communicate their ideas. Sixty-eight percent were incapable of recognizing and correcting grammatical and spelling errors in their own work. The result of these shortcomings is that teachers are

not able to draw learners' attention to and provide support for their language form and usage (Uys, 2006).

Teachers should not only be 'linguistically competent', but also able to manage classroom interaction in a way that motivates and encourages student participation (Consolo, 2001). Subject teachers must help children learn and use language for academic discourse in different school subjects and make them aware of how language functions in various modes of communication across the curriculum. Teachers must create a classroom language environment which optimizes language and literacy learning (Fillmore and Snow, 2000). To achieve this, subject teachers require training in specific strategies and techniques.

Naves (2002) identifies teaching strategies of successful CLIL subject teachers: (a) exhibiting active teaching behaviours, such as clearly giving instructions, ensuring learners' engagement in instructional tasks by maintaining task focus; (b) pacing instruction appropriately; and (c) communicating their expectations for students' success. Naves further notes that in presenting new information to be learned by students, successful CLIL subject teachers use appropriate strategies such as demonstrating, outlining, using visuals, building redundancy, rephrasing, scaffolding and linking new information to learners' prior knowledge in order to make input comprehensible and context-embedded. Klaasen (2002) identifies teachers' own language proficiency, methodology and presentational skills as three areas where subject teachers should display specific behaviours. Other researchers (Echevarria et al., 2004, Short, 2002) agree on pedagogic approaches which second/foreign language medium of instruction subject teachers should adopt:

- plan content and language objectives for each learning task
- design suitable and appropriate materials
- encourage purposeful interaction
- create a classroom atmosphere and attitudes that promote language acquisition and conceptual development
- employ fair and appropriate assessment strategies

Collaboration between subject and language teachers is also important. The language skills introduced in the language classroom should also be promoted and developed by subject teachers (Crandall, 1998, Schleppegrell et al., 2004). This means that both language and subject teachers should be aware of what is being taught in other classes so

that they may plan their lessons to support their colleagues' teaching-learning goals, particularly around language.

This section has presented evidence from the literature on the important role which subject teachers should play to support students' second/foreign language development. This is to be achieved by lesson planning which focuses on both language and content for each learning task, and the establishment of a classroom environment which encourages oral production and classroom interaction. Subject teachers must also possess a level of personal language proficiency which allows them to serve as models of good language use for their students.

We next turn to the important role of teacher preparation. The following section discusses how pre- and in-service teacher training should support both language and subject teachers in using language-sensitive teaching approaches, consistent with the CLIL theoretical framework.

2.8 Teacher preparation

Several researchers agree that both subject and language teachers require training in specific language teaching strategies that enhance teaching effectiveness and support students' language development (de Graff et al., 2007, Echevarria et al., 2004, Fillmore and Snow, 2000, Lui, 2009, Medgyes, 1994, Morain, 1990, Swain, 2001, Uys, 2006). Uys et al. (2007) conclude that there is a need to develop appropriate training courses for subject teachers, as training in second language medium of instruction for teachers is one of the most important factors for improving students' academic literacy. Fillmore and Snow (2000) describe the short-comings of much of the existing teaching force in second/foreign language medium of instruction education:

Too few teachers understand the challenges inherent in learning to speak and read Standard English. Most have not had well-designed professional preparation for their current challenges. (p.3)

A subject teacher training program model is proposed by Uys (2006) which aims to achieve the dual objectives of: (a) ensuring that teachers' own English proficiency is sufficient for them to be good models for their students; and (b) ensuring that teachers' are able to apply methodological and presentational skills to enhance and promote learning. The learning outcomes of this course are competence in the four language skills

(speaking, listening, reading and writing), competence in presentational skills and competence in methodological skills .

Another model for teacher preparation focuses on equipping teachers with prescriptive classroom practices which encourage students' oral production and classroom interaction. Prescriptive classroom practices are described in the literature as having the potential to help promote the effective implementation of policies which aim to encourage participatory classroom environments. As Brown and Edelson (2003) note:

Of all the different instruments for conveying educational policies, they exert perhaps the most direct influence on the tasks that teachers actually do with their students each day in the classroom. (p.1)

In a 2010 New York Times Magazine article entitled, '*Can Good Teaching Be Learned?*', Green (2010) describes 19 practices which teacher training colleges want every student teacher to master before graduation. These include skills related to special knowledge for teaching, plus broader classroom management skills, such an ability to "establish norms and routines for classroom discourse" (p.44). Another example from the United States is the 'The Daily Cafe', a series of literacy tasks which students complete daily while the teacher meets with small groups or confers with individuals (Boushey and Moser, 2013). Most of these prescriptive classroom practices concern the "mechanics of teaching, the secret steps behind getting and holding the floor whether you're teaching fractions or the American Revolution" (Green, 2010).

Finally, effective second/foreign language medium of instruction is enhanced by teamwork among teachers to support school-level language policies which, among other objectives, encourage teacher collaboration around issues of language. Language and subject teachers must be working off 'the same page' – sometimes literally, if not figuratively -- at all times to support students' language development and ensure they have the language skills needed for effective learning across the curriculum.

This section has discussed the importance of teacher preparation for orientating all teachers, and particularly subject teachers, to the language deficiencies and needs of students learning across the curriculum in a second/foreign language. Teacher preparation using a CLIL approach should ensure that teachers possess adequate personal language proficiency to serve as models of good language use for their students, theoretical knowledge about language and language acquisition, plus methodological and presentational skills for effective teaching in a second/foreign language.

The next section describes implementation of a CLIL-based teacher support program in a developing country context similar to that of Bhutan.

2.9 An example of CLIL in the developing world: Namibia

Collaboration between a Finnish university and education authorities in Namibia provides a useful example of how introducing language-sensitive teaching-learning through a CLIL approach can be used to improve English-medium education in a developing country context.

Background: The project was carried out between 2000-2002 under the auspices of the Ongwediva College of Education in conjunction with the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, the Namibian National Teachers Union and the Association of Teachers of English in Finland (Marsh et al., 2002). It examined the relevance of CLIL methodologies to teacher education needs in Namibia based on an in-depth analysis of teaching-learning problems specific to the use of English as a medium of instruction in the country's government-run schools. It had the dual aim of identifying methodological success factors in second language-medium education and demonstrating how teachers' language and methodological skills could be upgraded for more effective teaching-learning across the curriculum through the medium of English.

The researchers and project designers asked themselves: *“What are the key features of the form of language-sensitive teaching which is [sic] appropriate to countries such as Namibia?”* (Clegg, 2002, p.11). The project concluded that while teachers' own language proficiency required improvement through long-term development, to successfully teach through the medium of English, greater understanding of 'language-sensitive methods' was needed (Marsh et al., 2002).

Challenges: Namibian teachers reported experiencing many problems with the teaching of all subjects in English. They cited, in particular, a lack of exposure to English, especially in remote rural areas where English is viewed as a foreign language for many learners as well as for some teachers (Hatutale, 2002). Many teachers and learners face problems using English as a medium of instruction because many teachers have limited English. They also lack knowledge on how to use a second/foreign language for teaching and learning (Shikongo, 2002).

Implications for policy and practice. The project team determined that all teachers and stakeholders outside the school (i.e. policy-makers, administrators, etc.) must assume

greater responsibility for nurturing language development given that language is the platform on which all learning takes place (Marsh, 2002). In the policy realm, four main actions are needed to ensure that English as a second/foreign language-medium education is supported using language-sensitive methodologies consistent with a CLIL approach:

- all stakeholders, especially policy-makers, must understand the concept of language-related disadvantage in education and the specific approaches needed for second language-medium teaching-learning;
- the education service must be able to call on expertise for in-service and pre-service teacher-training for second language-medium teaching-learning;
- teacher educators must apply language-sensitive practices to the training of teachers and ensure high standards for language-sensitive practice (Clegg, 2002); and
- content teaching professionals must consider the importance of materials development as a means of complementing language-sensitive classroom methodologies (Marsland, 2002, p.20).

The Namibia project identified 20 classroom practices for all teachers to use in order to support learning in a CLIL framework (Marsh, 2002). They are presented in Appendix 7, 'Classroom and outside classroom practices to support CLIL'. Many are similar to the prescriptive classroom practices used in some teacher training programs in the United States, discussed in section 2.8.

This section has described the application of a CLIL approach in a developing country where English as a second/foreign language is the medium of instruction for government-run education. It has described actions for improving teaching-learning through a second/foreign language across the curriculum. It highlighted the importance of subject teachers for supporting students' language development through the use of language-sensitive classroom methods and the need for teacher training to equip all teachers with methodological skills to support student learning in a second/foreign language. It underscored the need for all stakeholders, especially policy-makers, to understand language issues in education and be aware of the specific approaches needed for supporting effective second language-medium education.

2.10 Literature on Bhutan

This section presents a summary of available literature specific to Bhutan which makes reference to students' English language development and/or assesses Bhutanese students' language proficiency and its impact on learning across the curriculum. It includes an overview of several Masters of Education (M.Ed.) degree dissertations written by Bhutanese educators who studied at the University of New Brunswick (Canada) between 1999 and 2003. It also includes observations from an international education consultant who has examined teaching-learning practices in Bhutanese multi-grade¹⁶ classrooms and schools.

In his review of education quality in Bhutan, Dorji (2005) discusses difficulties faced by Bhutanese learners and identifies English-medium instruction as a contributing factor. He points out the urgency for teachers to understand this challenge and adopt language-sensitive teaching methodologies. He also addresses the issue of teachers' own English proficiency:

One of the factors that affect learning in our schools is the language. It seems that this difficulty will continue to prevail in our schools until such time that our language teachers have grasped the power of teaching English as a second language. The power of teaching English here means [teachers'] proficiency in the language as well as realizing the need to do this equally effective [sic] for the learners. (p.167)

A 2012 study carried out by the Royal Education Council found that students lack basic competence in English and the ability to relate it to their everyday lives (Royal Education Council, 2012):

The majority of students are unable to understand core concepts and apply knowledge to real-life situations, across grades and subjects, indicating a major gap in the levels of understanding. If children do not acquire competency at the primary level, particularly in English, they will encounter serious learning challenges later. (p.35)

Several Bhutanese M.Ed. candidates commented on students' English proficiency (Chhogyel, 2001, Dyenka, 1999, Wangmo, 2003, Yanki, 1998, Zangmo, 1999). One observed in her study of the teaching of high school English in Bhutan that: "I was disappointed when many of my grade 9 and 10 students could not read, write, speak and

¹⁶ In a multi-grade school there are classrooms in which the teacher, teaches student of two or more classes in the same classroom during one timetabled period.

listen effectively in English” (Dyenka, 1999, p.129). Zangmo (1999) studied the teaching of English in lower secondary schools in Bhutan and found that:

Bhutanese children are unaccustomed to expressing their ideas in English and most of them are reluctant to speak: what they say is often halting and unidiomatic. Comprehension is made difficult by soft voices and so most of the oral lesson classes are useless since one can hardly hear what the child is saying. This is caused by the lack of confidence that children have. (p.69)

Zangmo also described teachers’ classroom methodologies wherein “some teachers resort to making their children memorize everything so that they need not think of creative ways of teaching” and added that “the teaching of the English language is tedious both to the students and the teachers” (p.71). The prevalence of such classroom methodologies was similarly observed by Yanki (1998) who reported:

There was a lack of practical experience for the students and a dependence on the lecture method by teachers. Lesson development seemed to be mostly structured around asking questions and recording answers on the chalk board. (p.35)

Yanki further observed an over-emphasis on passive, rote learning by students because, she speculates, many teachers have not received training in active approaches to teaching. She discusses the tendency of teachers to be ‘covering the syllabus’ and preparing for external examinations, rather than focusing on student learning, stating: “we are so conscious of covering the syllabus, quantity coverage rather than quality coverage, that we tend to overlook the main areas” (p.57)

Wangmo (2003) reviewed student assignments which revealed an emphasis on surface features of writing rather than the communication of meaning. She identified a disjuncture between what is prescribed in Bhutanese teacher guides and curricular materials, what the education literature says and what happens in classrooms in Bhutan, stating that:

The actual practices in classrooms are far from being similar to what the literature states about various methods, principles, and strategies for teaching. (p.112)

She concludes that subject teachers must be made aware of their role in supporting students’ language development. She suggests five approaches which can be used to

support students' writing in English while simultaneously encouraging their oral production:

- View improvement of student writing as your responsibility
- Let students know you value good writing
- Regularly assign brief writing activities in your class
- Teach writing when you are not an English teacher
- Give students opportunities to talk about their work (p.118)

Chhogyel (2001) also recommends that Bhutanese teachers use more interactive classroom methodologies, stating:

Teachers should be encouraged to use more interactive teaching methods. Role plays, debates, group discussions, field trips and use of different resources should be encouraged. (p.91)

In a review of multi-grade teaching-learning in Bhutanese schools, mainly in remote parts of the country, Pridmore (2009) found evidence of quality gaps in classroom observations, including students commonly involved in passive learning. She also found that most teachers can talk theoretically about a range of strategies to encourage 'learning with understanding', but that this understanding on the part of teachers is not translated into their classroom practice. She speculates that one reason for this could be that pre-service training lacks sufficient teaching practice for teachers to develop skill and confidence and that their own education and training does not model the type of teaching and learning methodologies they are expected to use once they become teachers. Finally, she describes how the physical arrangement of many classrooms where students are seated in rows and columns, which she also observed in teacher training institutes, runs contrary to the type of teaching-learning environment which Bhutan's curricula and policy documents prescribe.

This section has presented literature specific to the Bhutan context. It describes challenges Bhutanese students face in learning all subjects through English in the absence of support for language development. It describes how much of what takes place in Bhutanese classrooms is contrary to a CLIL approach. Specifically, it highlights the prevalence of teacher-talk dominated classrooms, a lack of opportunities for students' oral production and classroom interaction, and barriers to student learning posed by teachers' own levels of English proficiency. It describes a prevailing lack of

understanding and use by teachers of language-sensitive methodologies, particularly in subject classes.

2.11 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of literature pertaining to CLIL to develop a theoretical framework for this study. It has defined CLIL as an approach for teaching and learning which simultaneously focuses on both language and subject content and has provided examples of CLIL in both developed and developing country contexts.

In answering one of the study's research sub-questions, "*What is already known about good practice for English as a second/foreign language medium of education in schools?*", this literature review has presented a number of key features of CLIL which, according to the available literature, represent good practice for second/foreign language-medium education. These include the importance of students' oral production, the importance of classroom interaction, the role subject teachers must play to promote second/foreign language learning, and the important role of teacher training programs to equip teachers, especially subject teachers, with knowledge and skills for using language-sensitive teaching methodologies in their subject classrooms.

The examples of Canada and Namibia are presented as they are both relevant to an examination of language in education in Bhutan. The experience of French immersion in Canada underscores two fundamental aspects of effective CLIL-based teaching-learning which are instructive for Bhutan's use of English as its medium of education: (i) the importance of student's oral production through sufficient practice opportunities, including classroom interaction; and (ii) the importance of using only the target language for classroom and school communication. The example of Namibia is relevant as it is, like Bhutan, a developing country which uses English as the medium of education, yet where English is not commonly used in many parts of the country and exposure to it is limited to school for most students.

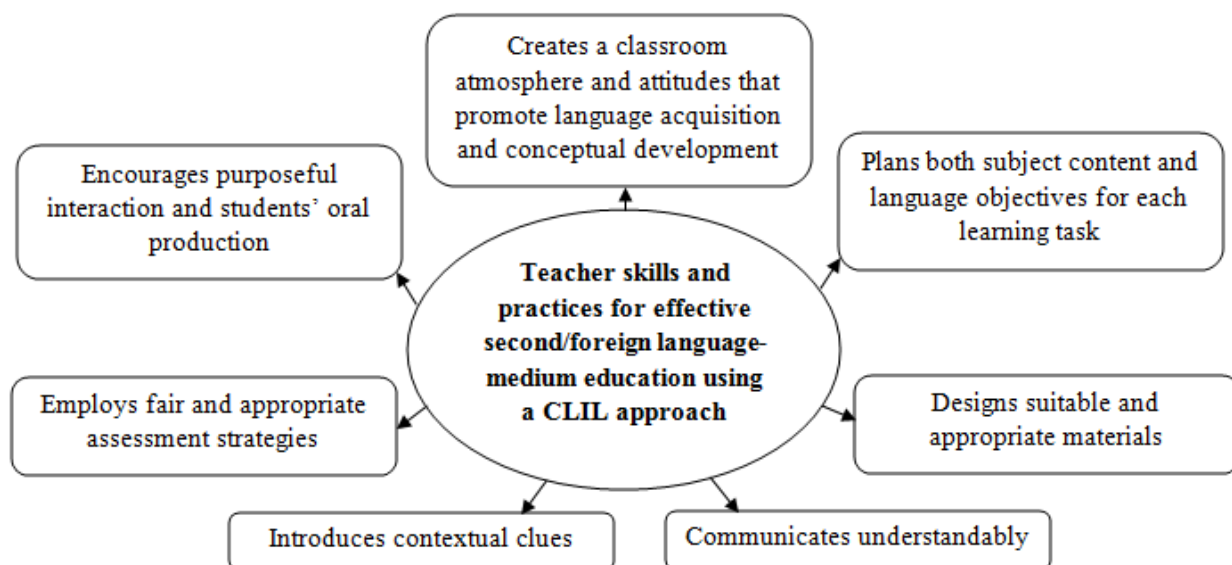
A key factor for successful learning in an English as second/foreign language medium of instruction system is teachers' own English proficiency. Teachers should be good models of both spoken and written English for their students. When teachers are confident in their own proficiency, they are better able and more likely to use CLIL classroom techniques to support students' language development and their acquisition of subject content in a second/foreign language. It is important, therefore, that pre-service teacher preparation includes training in two key areas:

- English language improvement for trainees
- classroom approaches which support learning in a second/foreign language

One area of learning for prospective teachers can be the acquisition of prescriptive classroom routines which encourage students' oral production and classroom interaction. Many of these routines are centered on basic principles of and skills for effective classroom management.

Figure 2, 'Teacher skills and practices for effective second/foreign language-medium education using a CLIL approach', presents some of the key skills and classroom management techniques which all teachers using language-sensitive teaching approaches, consistent with the CLIL theoretical framework, should understand and use in order to effectively teach across the curriculum in a second/foreign language setting.

Figure 2: Teacher skills and practices for effective second/foreign language-medium education using a CLIL approach



Finally, greater collaboration between teachers is required to ensure that students have repeated opportunities across subjects for language production and continuous practice, particularly oral production. This is best achieved when subject teachers are aware of the language issues being addressed in language classes and language teachers are aware of what is being taught in subject classes. Both language and subject teachers can then reinforce and utilize what the other is teaching to maximize students' opportunities to practice how language is used across the curriculum.

The next chapter presents the methodology for carrying out the field study in Bhutan.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the approach used for designing and carrying out the research. The chapter is composed of six sections. The first section discusses the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the study. The second section presents the overall research strategy used, including methods and data collection tools. The third section describes how data analysis and management were carried out. The fourth section provides a discussion of validity and reliability. The fifth section discusses ethical concerns in carrying out the study. The last section presents the study's limitations.

3.2 Philosophical orientation

In his discussion of the purpose of research, Postlethwaite (2005) states that “research is the orderly investigation of a subject matter for the purpose of adding to knowledge” (p.1). Langenbach et al. (1994) define research as “an activity that makes an impact on theory” (p.1). My task in carrying out this research is to explore policy and practice around English-medium education in Bhutan and, based on a better understanding of these phenomena gained through the research process, to identify measures to further support its effective implementation.

I come to this research as a development practitioner with 25 years' involvement in the education sector in Bhutan. In shifting gears from development professional to researcher, I began by examining different philosophical underpinnings and paradigms of social science research. This helped me identify an appropriate paradigm to explore the construction of knowledge and social reality which reflects my own ontological and epistemological beliefs and which I deem appropriate for addressing the research questions of this study.

Ontology and epistemology. An ontological stance refers to the nature of reality and being (Bergstrom, 2000, Mack, 2010). Ontology describes our view, whether claims or assumptions, on the nature of reality, created in our minds (Flowers, 2009). In questioning whether one's experience of a phenomenon is what *is* really happening or what one *thinks* is happening, Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) contend that when applied to complex phenomena such as culture, power or control, one must decide to either accept that reality exists only through one's experience of it (subjectivism) or that it exist independently of one's experience of it (objectivism).

Cohen et al (2011) describe two principle ontological approaches to research: (i) positivist and (ii) naturalistic. According to Johnson and Onwueghuzie (2004), positivist purists believe that social observations should be treated as entities in much the same way that physical scientists treat physical phenomena whereby the observer is separate from the subjects of observation. Naturalistic purists, on the other hand, contend that multiple-constructed realities exist and that time- and context-free generalizations are neither desirable nor possible. Research is, therefore, value-bound and the knower and known cannot be separated.

Epistemology concerns how reality is measured and what constitutes knowledge of it (Flowers, 2009). Crotty defines it as “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretic perspective and, thereby, in the methodology” (1998, p.3). Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) describe epistemology as ‘knowing how you can know’. They highlight the inter-dependent relationship between epistemology and ontology, claiming that one both informs and depends upon the other. Together, ontological and epistemological assumptions make up paradigms.

Three key paradigms are: (i) positivist/normative; (ii) constructivist/interpretive; and (iii) critical (Mack, 2010, p.5). These are discussed in more detail in the next section.

Research paradigms. The *positivist/normative* paradigm emphasizes the scientific method, statistical analysis, and generalizable findings. This method usually involves the use of control and experimental groups and a pre/test post method (Mack, 2010). By contrast, the *constructivist/interpretive* paradigm emphasizes the ability of the individual to construct meaning and the need to consider human beings’ subjective interpretations and their perceptions of the world as a starting point for understanding social phenomena (Ernest, 1994). The *critical* paradigm is a deliberately political reading of education and research which aims to describe an existing situation, understand the reason(s) for it, question the legitimacy of those reasons and set an agenda to improve an existing situation (Cohen et al., 2011). The critical educational researcher aims not only to understand or give an account of behaviors in societies, but also to change these behaviours (Mack, 2010).

‘Methods’ refers to the range of approaches used in research to gather data to be used as the basis for inference and interpretation and for explanation and prediction (Cohen et al., 2007). One’s assumptions about the constructs of social reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) influence the choice of methods for uncovering knowledge of

relationships among phenomena and social behavior (Mack, 2010). Positivist methods include experiments, surveys and tests. Naturalistic or constructivist methods include interviews, observation, thick description, narratives, documents and ethnography (Cohen et al., 2011). The critical paradigm uses dialogic methods, methods combining observation and interviewing with approaches that foster conversation and reflection (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

This research employed a constructivist paradigm using qualitative data collection methods, described in the next section. It adopts a constructivist paradigm because examination of education practices, how teachers and students communicate and interact with each other and the complex forces that influence their choices and behaviours are best understood through qualitative means which seek to understand what people say about what they do and why they do it.

This section has outlined and defended the ontological, epistemological and paradigmatic orientation of this study. It explains why the choice of paradigm has been made in designing and carrying out this research. The next section describes the research strategy employed for conducting the field study.

3.3 Methods and tools for data collection

Research designs are frameworks and strategies used to transform research questions into research projects (Robson, 2011). In line with an approach described by Cohen et al. (2011), several kinds of data and the methods for collecting them were identified for this study which together have yielded answers to the research questions. This approach was expected to improve understanding of the accounts given by different social actors and provide a means to triangulate data across participants and methods of data collection (Robson, 2002). Patton (2002) describes such multiple methods research as:

[To be] inquiring into a question using different data sources and design elements in such a way as to bring different perspectives to bear in the inquiry and, therefore, support triangulation of the findings.

As a researcher, I sought to examine what I understand to be a socially constructed reality in the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium government-run education¹⁷.

¹⁷ This research did not examine private schools in Bhutan which use the same curricula as government schools and constitute approximately five percent of all schools in the country.

This inquiry into the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education has been carried out using a country case study approach. It examines the situation of a single country, Bhutan, in order to better understand issues surrounding implementation of its English-medium education policy. As the focus of this research is the effectiveness of the policy’s implementation (rather than, for example, students’ levels of English attainment) and it seeks to first examine perceptions around the policy’s implementation, it employs a qualitative research approach. This methodology aimed to provide an in-depth investigation into the use of English as a medium of instruction in Bhutan, grounded in existing theory and clear evidence-based guidance on possible reform strategies to enhance it.

This research employed three methods to collect qualitative data:

- a. semi-structured interviews
- b. focus group discussions
- c. classroom observations

It also uses a review of literature and reflections based on personal experience to address the research questions. Table 1, ‘Research sub-questions and data collection methods’, presents the research sub-questions and data collection methods associated with each.

Table 1: Research sub-questions and data collection methods

| Research Question | Data Collection Method |
|---|---|
| What is already known about good practice for English as a second or foreign language medium of education in schools? | Literature review |
| What perceptions surround implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education? | Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions |
| What factors influence effective implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education? | Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions Classroom observations |
| What are the implications for policy, professional practice and research? | Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions Classroom observations Personal reflections |

The use of these data collection methods in the study is detailed in the following sections.

a. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are an important data collection tool in qualitative educational research (Tierney and Dilley, 2002). McDonough and McDonough (1997) describe interviewing as a particularly useful approach for eliciting information and feedback from those for whom English is a second language because it allows for one-on-one interaction that is sensitive to individual differences and nuances of emphasis and tone.

Verma and Mallick (1999) present three broad categories of interviews: (i) *structured interviews* where interviewers use a list of prepared questions which cannot be altered; (ii) *unstructured/open-ended interviews* where the researcher's starting point is a set of broadly defined objectives which, in turn, permit the interviewee to exercise considerable freedom in his/her responses; and (iii) *semi-structured interviews* which have an overall structure, yet allow for greater flexibility within that pre-set structure. Semi-structured interviews allow for a middle ground between pre-determined self-contained categories of tightly structured interviews and the more open and less predictable approach of unstructured ones (McDonough and McDonough, 1997).

The most widely used approach for conducting semi-structured interviews is where the researcher uses a tape recorder to record individual participants' feedback to questions (Tierney and Dilley, 2002). Padgett (1998) notes that audio-taping interviews permits the interviewer to focus on what is being said while simultaneously noting major points and observations in writing. This complements taping as it provides a means of cuing the researcher to follow-up on specific points later and facilitates focus on key parts of the interview during transcription.

Interviews in the study. This study makes use of semi-structured interviews which were carried out face-to-face with key participants. Participants represented a range of stakeholders in the Bhutanese education system. These included MOE officials, officials from tertiary institutes, teacher trainers and private sector employers. Non-Bhutanese participants included expatriate development practitioners, education specialists and secondary school native English-speaking English and subject teachers working in Bhutan under a volunteer development assistance program.

The choice of semi-structured interviews was based on the following reasons:

- semi-structured interviews allowed me as interviewer to remain in control and have flexibility to pursue unexpected strands of discussion as a means of

fostering richer interactions and more personalized responses (McDonough and McDonough, 1997);

- semi-structured interviews provided for depth of feeling which can be more readily ascertained by giving opportunities to probe and expand interviewees' responses;
- semi-structured interviews allowed for deviation from a prearranged text and to change the wording of questions; and
- semi-structured interviews allowed for negotiation, discussion and expansion of interviewees' responses while imposing an overall shape to the interview to prevent aimless rambling (Opie, 2004).

Each interview was conducted between me and a single participant and lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Each participant was informed that they would not be named in the study, but identified by their professional role (e.g. 'curriculum specialist', 'expatriate teacher'). Participants provided verbal consent¹⁸ to participate in the study and to be tape recorded. Each interview was recorded in its entirety and transcribed verbatim. Transcribed texts became the data which were analyzed. Limited notes were taken during each interview to highlight key issues for follow-up and to guide follow-on questions. Participants were encouraged to seek clarification on any aspects of the research and were informed that they could withdraw from the interview at any point.

All interviews were conducted in English. Language posed no barrier to carrying out this research. English is the medium of school instruction in Bhutan and is widely used for official communication. Educated Bhutanese who participated in this study are sufficiently proficient in English.

Purposive sampling was used to select key informants as a means of ensuring their 'fitness for purpose' for providing feedback on the research questions (Cohen et al., 2007). Participants were included in the sample based on my judgment of the extent to which they possess in-depth information and knowledge about the research topic based on their roles, power, access to networks, expertise or experience (Ball, 1990).

¹⁸ Written consent was not sought as many of the interview participants were individuals who knew me from prior professional interaction and in order to maintain an informal tone to the discussions.

Participants selected for semi-structured interviews had a role in one or more of the following:

- decision-making for language-in-education, subject education or general education policy and practice in Bhutan
- teaching in Bhutan
- teacher education/training
- hiring educated Bhutanese youth for employment requiring English.

Twenty-two key participants were selected for semi-structured interviews. These were divided in six groups and sub-groups:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Policy makers/education leaders (4) | 4. Expatriate native English-speaking teachers (5) |
| 2. Curriculum and assessment professionals (4) | 5. Employers (3) |
| 3. Teacher trainers (2) | 6. Development practitioners (4) |

There were both male and female participants. Of the 22 participants, ten were female. No gender-based selection was carried out. The identification of participants was based solely on their role in the education system.

The semi-structured interview guide is presented in Appendix 1, 'Semi-structured interview guide'.

b. Focus group discussions

Focus groups are defined as guided open-ended group discussions (Robson, 2002, Cohen et al., 2007). As Kruger and Casey (2000) point out, the purpose of focus groups is to promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure in which people can share ideas, experiences and attitudes about an issue or topic. As a method, focus groups are based on two fundamental assumptions: (i) individuals can provide a rich source of information about a topic; and (ii) collective and individual responses generated in a focus group setting reveal information and material not as readily obtainable when using other methods (Glitz, 1998). Unlike individual-to-individual interviews, focus group discussions are a more active and dynamic type of social discussion, often resulting in a shared understanding of a problem or issue (Gillis and Jackson, 2002).

Focus groups in the study. Initial discussions with teachers and students were carried out as part of data collection piloting. These revealed the existence of both shared and divergent viewpoints on a number of matters pertaining to the research questions. Rather

than engaging in individual interviews, which I suspected would quickly lead to saturation with limited new information being revealed, the use of focus groups was selected as a data collection tool to allow for more dynamic discussion between participants and as a means of yielding new perspectives and insights. The goal of focus group discussions is to elicit individual views and perceptions about the topics of the research during the course of group discussions (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). Focus group discussions were conducted in English and care was taken to ensure comprehension on the part of all participants, especially students¹⁹.

Three issues associated with focus group discussions were considered: (i) composition; (ii) procedure; and (iii) data recording. These are detailed below.

The composition of focus groups aimed to enhance interaction among participants and strengthen the rigour of data (Burns and Grove, 2001). What is needed in a successful and dynamic focus group discussion is ‘commonality’ (Morgan, 1997). For this reason, a homogenous focus group discussion format was utilized for each of the three main groups of participants: (a) English teachers; (b) subject teachers; and (c) students.

Two schools were selected for conducting focus group discussions: (i) a higher secondary school (grades 9-12); and (ii) a lower secondary school (kindergarten to grade 8). These schools were selected as a means of capturing the experience and views of English, teachers, subject teachers and students at two distinct levels of education: (a) upper primary (grades 4-6)²⁰; and (b) secondary (grades 7-12). Detailed descriptions of these schools can be found in Appendix 4, ‘Description of schools included in the study’.

There were a total of six focus group discussions. Four were comprised of teachers -- two groups of English teachers and two groups of subject teachers from both the lower and middle/higher secondary levels of schooling. One focus group was comprised of middle and higher secondary school students (grades 9-12, age 15-18) and one group was comprised of lower secondary students studying in grades 6-8. Each group included both males and females. In the teacher focus groups, each group was made up of the entire corpus of either English or subject teachers at a single school. For student focus groups, participants were randomly selected from class attendance lists. The specific

¹⁹ With primary and lower secondary students, I carefully worded and articulated my communication with them to ensure full understanding on their part.

²⁰ Subject teaching in Bhutan starts in grade 4. From kindergarten to grade 3, a class teacher system is used whereby one teacher teaches all subjects to a single class.

composition of the teacher and student focus groups in the two schools is presented below in Table 2, ‘Focus groups’.

Table 2: Focus groups

| Focus Group | School type | Category and Number of Respondent |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | Lower secondary school | English teachers (6 total: all female) |
| 2 | Lower secondary school | Subject teachers (5 total: 3 female/2 male) |
| 3 | Lower secondary school | Students (9 total: 3 female/6 male) |
| 4 | Higher secondary school | English teachers (8 total: 6 female/2 male) |
| 5 | Higher secondary school | Subject teachers (7 total: 3 female/4 male) |
| 6 | Higher secondary school | Students (12 total: 6 female/6 male) |

All focus group discussions were held in classrooms or libraries in the schools and lasted for 45-60 minutes. I led each group as facilitator and one observer took notes to record details such as which participants spoke most/least, body language and any other notable features of the discussion. Seating was in a circle around a table. I sat in a position at the table that allowed for easy communication with each participant and the observer. Before focus group discussions were undertaken, general background information was collected, such as teachers’ years of teaching experience, subject specialization, students’ grade levels, age, subject interests, etc.

The format of the focus group discussions followed a ‘funnel approach’. This is a way of ordering questions so that general questions are asked before specific questions as a means of avoiding responses to specific questions which may bias answers to more general ones (ESOMAR, 2013). This approach helps ease participants into the topics of discussion and allows them to generate new topics early on (Eliot, 2011).

The start of each discussion was less structured in order to understand participants’ general perspectives. For English and subject teachers, this entailed initial discussion of their overall perceptions of students’ levels of English language proficiency. For students, this entailed initial discussion of any language difficulties they might face in subject classes. In the middle section, discussions were more structured in order to lead smoothly into more specific topics of interest to the study. At the end of each discussion, I verbally summarized the discussions as a means of synthesizing and confirming significant themes emerging from them. This ensured that the main areas of interest were covered and verified by participants (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999).

As facilitator, I was careful not to display greater knowledge in the area of inquiry under discussion than that of participants in order to enhance the flow of the discussion and facilitate the emergence of data (Morgan, 1997). My style of facilitation aimed to be ‘low control/high processes’ in which control over discussions was minimal, yet which allowed me to ensure that all relevant issues were covered. I encouraged all participants to speak as the participation of all members is an important feature of successful focus groups (Burns and Grove, 2001). In particular, I encouraged female participants to speak given that in Bhutanese culture females are often more reluctant than males to speak in a group.

Discussion guides used for each focus group are presented in Appendix 2, ‘Focus group discussion guide’. These were prepared in advance for each group of participants. They covered the topics and issues to be explored and their sequencing. They were designed with the overall research questions in mind and constructed to ensure that topics covered in the focus groups related to these research objectives (OMNI, no date).

After receiving permission from participants to record the discussions, data were collected using a digital voice recorder. All focus group discussions were saved on separate files in the recorder and later transferred to a computer for transcribing. Adjustments were made to the placement of the recording device within the circle of participants, away from windows and doors to minimize background noise. When transcribing the recordings, headphones were used for better understanding and clarity. As recording does not pick up all verbal behaviour or body movement (Polit et al., 2001), recording was accompanied by hand-written notes of non-verbal behaviours, such as head movements signaling agreement or disagreement, expressions of confusion, bewilderment, etc. Accounts of body language were documented during the discussions by me and/or the observer.

c. Classroom observations

Data from interviews and focus groups aimed to reveal participants’ perspectives on the research topics. Classroom observations, on the other hand, sought to reveal these phenomena in practice (Gillis and Jackson, 2002).

Three types of observations evaluated for this study are discussed in the methodology literature: (i) complete observer; (ii) complete participant; and (iii) non-participant observation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The first type was judged unsuitable for this study as it would not be possible in a school setting to be completely detached from what

is being observed and to document observational data without both teachers' and students' awareness. This could also raise ethical issues, such as carrying out observations without permission to do so. Complete participant observation was also considered as unsuitable as I could neither play the role of a teacher or a student. Therefore, a non-participant classroom observation approach was used for this study.

Classroom observations in the study. Classroom observations were used as a means of cross-checking what was told to me in interviews and focus groups through witnessing actual practices as they occurred in a natural setting. They allowed me to explore specific teaching-learning approaches claimed by teachers and other education practitioners, and to observe the actions of teachers and their efforts to impact students' English language development.

Six classroom observations were conducted in English and subject classes of approximately 50 minutes duration in two schools, a lower secondary school (kindergarten to grade 8) and a middle secondary school (kindergarten to grade 10). Schools were selected based on their level of education and proximity from Thimphu given time constraints for travel beyond the Thimphu valley. Classes were selected by school heads after I requested permission to observe both subject and English classes in each school.

During the observations, I followed a classroom observation guide. This is presented in Appendix 3, 'Classroom observation guide'. I took field notes about each classroom's physical environment, teacher behavior and demeanor, teaching strategies, context of the lesson, teacher comments, nonverbal student responses and specific student comments. Field notes were organized in table form under headings of *descriptive* and *reflective* notations (Creswell, 1998). Descriptive notes detailed the classroom's atmosphere, lesson context, and what teachers and students said and did in the classroom as the lessons took place. The reflective portion of the chart consisted of my thoughts, reactions and interpretations that occurred during classroom observations. Objective data were obtained from the school administration pertaining to the number of students in each class, gender breakdown and the number of teaching periods per week for a given subject, among others.

Teachers who agreed to participate in classroom observations were not included in focus group discussions. This would have alerted them to my areas of interest and could have influenced their classroom behaviours. Teachers were assured that no data from

observations would be shared with others, including superiors, and that no information pertaining to their specific identities would be divulged.

3.4 Data analysis and management

a. Semi-structured interview data

For analyzing the interview data, I employed a systematic approach to identify emerging patterns or trends relevant to the research questions. This was achieved through systematically reducing, coding and synthesizing the data. Analysis of the interview data was an intrinsically iterative process which followed the following steps suggested by Cohen et al (2011):

1. generating natural units of meaning
2. classifying, categorizing and ordering these units of meaning
3. structuring narratives to describe the contents
4. interpreting the data

To generate natural units of meaning or themes, interview transcripts were intensively read and re-read to identify common ideas presented by participants in relation to the research questions. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) describe the importance of reading and re-reading data. This is necessary in order to become thoroughly familiar with the data as a means of identifying patterns of interest, unexpected themes, contradictions or inconsistencies which suggest different points of view or competing explanations in answering the research questions.

For this study, emergent themes were identified for the purpose of selecting units of analysis. These could be a word or a theme (Polit et al., 2001) found to be repeated in discussions with the semi-structured interview and focus group participants. By identifying common themes emerging across interviews and focus group discussions, the data analysis exercise aimed to extract individual themes as units for analysis (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). The next step was to classify, categorize and order these emerging themes by assigning codes. Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasize the importance of coding data to reduce the possibility of data overload through careful data display. Themes were coded using nVivo software for qualitative data analysis. Table 3, 'Coding themes', presents a list of coded themes aligned to research sub-questions.

Table 3: Coding themes

| Research Sub-Question | Code |
|--|--|
| What perceptions surround implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' English proficiency • Teachers' English proficiency • Effectiveness of implementation of English-medium policy |

| | |
|---|---|
| What factors influence effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of subject teachers • Teachers' instructional practices |
|---|---|

Appendix 5, 'Data codes and sub-codes', presents a more comprehensive list of both main codes and sub-codes.

Once all interview participants' comments were entered into nVivo, I reviewed the entries and categories of responses and consolidated overlapping categories. The next step was to use the findings from the data analysis to inform the narrative in the findings chapter.

b. Focus group discussion data

This study adopts a pragmatism perspective which is commonly associated with mixed methods research (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). It focuses on the issue to be researched and the consequences of the research, and accepts that there are singular and multiple realities which are subject to empirical inquiry to solve practical problems in the real world (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). This calls for, as a first step in the analysis, identification of 'first order concepts'. This was followed by categorization of emerging themes which were assigned codes. The same codes used for the semi-structured interviews were used for the focus groups. All data collection methods were employed to answer the same research questions. A final step in the analysis involved a deductive or retroductive research strategy of exploring possible explanations for differences and similarities in the perspectives of the different sets of participants (Blaikie, 2007).

c. Classroom observation data

As described by Robson (2002), this study employed a number of tools to support rich recording of classroom observations. In addition to using a classroom observation guide (see Appendix 3, 'Classroom observation guide'), field notes were taken which included the use of 'memory sparkers', or notes which briefly highlight interesting comments and inconsistencies. Drawing from Cohen et al (2011), analysis of classroom observation data included: coding, classifying, categorizing, identifying nodes and connections, summarizing, creating narrative accounts, constant comparison, thematic analysis, patterning and quantizing, that is, noting the frequency of key events observed.

In line with the recommendation of Charles (1995), I followed four steps for the analysis of classroom observation data: (i) identification of topics; (ii) clustering of topics into categories; (iii) forming categories into patterns; and (iv) proposing explanations from

what the patterns suggest. After all data had been collected from classroom observations, I went through my field notes and the classroom observation guide several times and returned frequently to the research questions to make sense of the information gathered.

Using the questions as an initial set of number codes, I marked my notes and classroom observation forms to categorize possible topics for later elaboration under each question. Categories emerging from the observation sheet also produced topics that added to those which emerged from the notes. Activities, procedures and events which took place in classrooms and captured in field notes and observation forms were entered into codes in nVivo. These represented the broad topics discussed in the next chapter, Findings. These were the major findings of the study from the classroom observations.

Following the extraction and analysis of the data obtained from the three main data collection methods described above, triangulation was used to draw connections, illustrate patterns and validate data across different data collection approaches and groups of respondents. This process is described in the next section.

3.5 Triangulation

Triangulation of data is founded on the premise that numerous observations of a datum (a single unit of data) are better than one. The phrase, '*triangulation*' suggests that three separate observations are required in order to achieve a more accurate observation. (Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000). Padgett (1998) notes that triangulation is commonly used as a means of enhancing rigor in qualitative research.

Triangulation is done by cross-checking information and analysis stemming from different research areas to generate findings (Global Environment Facility, 2010). Cohen and Manion (2000) define triangulation as an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint" (p.254). Altrichter et al. (2008) state that triangulation "gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation" (p.147), whereas O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) posit that triangulation is a "method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (p.78).

There are several types of triangulation. First, triangulation by method refers to the deployment of different methodologies in the same study (Cohen and Manion, 2000). Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches is the most common triangulation-by-method strategy (Padgett, 1998). Second, triangulation by data source refers to the use of

different types of data as a means of corroboration (ibid). Both types of triangulation were used for this study. Bechhofer and Paterson (2000) refer to two additional types of triangulation: (i) weak triangulation and (ii) strong triangulation. The weak form is where there are multiple observations of something using the same method; the strong form is where several observations are made using different methods.

This study attempted to make use of strong triangulation through the use of different methods of data collection and the collection of sufficient amounts of data through each method. Triangulation was used both within each data collection method and between data collection methods. As a standard set of questions was posed to all semi-structured interview participants, interview data were triangulated across participants to confirm and contrast the perspectives, positions and interpretations provided.

A systematic approach to data analysis was used to draw meaning from the data for answering the research questions. The next task was to determine the extent to which the data were truthful and reliable for answering the research questions.

3.6 Reliability and validity

Reliability refers to the degree to which an approach to measuring something renders consistent results (Postlethwaite, 2005). Golafshani (2003) describes reliability as the ability to have a stable measure of something which gives similar and repeatable results. Reliability also refers to the extent to which measurement instruments are free from error and is an indication of consistency between two or more measures of the same thing (Mertons, 1998). According to Cohen et al. (2000), in conducting quantitative research, reliability is synonymous with consistency and replicability over time across instruments and groups of participants. However, as Golafshani (2003) notes in explaining the distinction between measures of reliability and validity:

Although the researcher may be able to prove research instrument repeatability and internal consistency, and, therefore reliability, the instrument may itself not be valid.
(p.599)

This refers to the difference between a measure being replicable, that is, if it is reliable, and the extent to which it is truthful, that is, if it is valid.

A test or measure has validity is when a measurement approach measures what it is intended to measure (Postlethwaite, 2005). Validity is generally concerned with the extent to which researchers are observing or measuring what they think or wish they are

measuring (Punch, 1998). Cohen et al. (2011) state that in qualitative research, validity is addressed through honesty, richness, authenticity, depth, scope subjectivity, strength of feeling, captured uniqueness and through idiographic statements. It is further supported by the nature of participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher (Cohen and Manion, 2000). Cohen et al. (2000) further observe that the most straight-forward way of ensuring greater validity in qualitative research is to minimize the various possible forms of bias, including: (i) characteristics of the interviewer; (ii) characteristics of the participant; and (iii) the substantive content of questions. Broadly, this study attempted to enhance the validity of the instruments used by adhering to the above-mentioned features.

In addressing trustworthiness in an inquiry, the aim is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). To achieve trustworthiness of the data and their analysis in the present study, triangulation was employed as a means of comparing data from different sources (Elliot, 1991). Patton (2002) supports the use of triangulation, noting that, "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data" (p.247). Huberman and Miles (1994) emphasize the importance of triangulation for improving the reliability and validity of qualitative research. They note that triangulation has two aspects in social science research: (i) as a 'mode of enquiry' for verification, "by self-consciously setting out to collect and double check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence"; and (ii) for ensuring that understandings or perceptions are more generalisable if they appear in more than one source (p.88). Both these approaches were used in this study by utilizing different data collection methods and a range of sources within each method.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Debate over the ethics of social research has developed significantly over the past three decades with the understanding that ethical issues may arise at any stage in the research, starting with the nature of the research, and continuing with its context, procedures adopted and methods of data collection (Cohen et al., 2007). Standard and widely accepted sets of principles which guide the conduct of social research are found in various codes of ethics published by recognized associations (Ramcharan and Cutcliffe, 2001). These include guidelines for ethical research practices set out by the British Sociological Association (2002) and British Educational Research Association (2011). These codes of ethics were used to guide this research.

Factors accounted for in this research to help ensure its ethical ‘correctness’ include: (i) acquiring informed consent; (ii) safeguarding privacy; (iii) assuring confidentiality and/or anonymity; (iv) not accessing the field in deceptive or fraudulent ways; (v) preventing harm for the subjects arising out of research; and (vi) ensuring that printed data is kept locked in a secure location and that access to electronic data is password protected. These represent standard ethical practices in conducting social sciences research (Bulmer, 1982).

The research topic of this study was neither highly sensitive nor likely to trigger strong reactions among participants as could be the case for a topic concerning, for example, advantages of elite groups or gender-based differences in a system of English-medium education. There were, however, ethical considerations which had to be considered. My principle ethical considerations were fourfold:

1. Any possible effect of my privileged place in Bhutanese society as a long-standing participant in the education system there and, more recently, as the World Bank Representative to Bhutan;
2. The possibility of introducing bias in the data given my long association with Bhutan’s education sector and issues raised in this research;
3. Participants’ identities, even if unnamed, could be readily discerned given the small size of Bhutanese society and possibly impact them negatively if comments or viewpoints can be attributed to them; and
4. Sensitivities around interviewing both young people who may not fully understand the purpose of the research and/or feel compelled to participate in it, and teachers who may feel inadequate and/or diminished if my questions lead them to reflect negatively on their own professional practice.

I addressed the first ethical concern pertaining to my privileged place in Bhutanese society by inviting each semi-structured interview participant to share his/her views concerning their interest in the research topic while considering their prior association with me. Each participant stated that the topic is of interest to them and that their prior knowledge of me in no way influenced their willingness, or otherwise, to discuss the research topic. It is my belief that participants were willing to speak with me honestly about the issues raised in the research and that what they told me was not ‘what I wanted to hear’. This belief is founded on the consistency of responses received and the fact that many respondents were comfortable in being constructively critical of the education

system which they are a part of. Additionally, a limited number of participants indicated disagreement with the premise of particular questions. This indicated to me that participants were not shy to register disagreement and/or contrary viewpoints and assumptions.

I informed each participant that this inquiry was in no way associated with my previous role as World Bank Representative to Bhutan. I do not believe that any undue pressure was brought to bear to secure participants' cooperation nor did I unduly benefit from my privileged place in Bhutanese society in carrying out this study.

Regarding my second ethical consideration concerning the introduction of bias in the data given my long association with Bhutan's education sector and issues raised in this research, the main action taken on my part to mitigate this was to carefully construct my questions. I endeavoured to word my questions such that they were in no way 'leading'. I ensured that my questioning was carried out in a manner that solicited as clean and unbiased feedback as possible. The presence of an observer during focus group discussions further helped to ensure objectivity.

Regarding my third ethical consideration pertaining to participants' identities, I informed each participant that they would be identified only in broad terms by their professional role (e.g. 'Curriculum Specialist' rather than 'Chief Curriculum Specialist, English Division'). Each participant agreed to be identified in this manner and none expressed any reluctance to be identified as such.

The fourth ethical consideration pertained to sensitivities around interviewing young people who may not fully understand the purpose of the research or who may feel compelled to participate in it, and teachers who may feel inadequate or diminished if my questions lead them to reflect negatively on their own professional practice. To address this, I ensured that all questions were posed and comments were made in as thoughtful a manner as possible. With student participants in focus group discussions, I ensured that I used simple, comprehensible language, particularly for explaining the purpose of the research given what was undoubtedly their unfamiliarity with issues of education policy and practice²¹. I was cognizant of not appearing to be critical of their teachers for whom they hold great respect. With teachers, I was careful to emphasize what I viewed to be

²¹ As a former junior high school teacher in Bhutan, I have a sense of what language is appropriate for students and an understanding of the cues and other markers which indicate full comprehension and comfort on students' part.

the positive aspects of their classroom practices. Any discussion of alternative classroom practices was presented simply as ideas which they might wish consider and they were invited to seek further clarification on ways to carry them out if they were interested and motivated to do so.

With all participants and groups of participants, I was sensitive to the issue of gender, ensuring that female voices were heard and that females' participation was supported as thoughtfully and meaningfully as possible. This included ensuring that seating arrangements were amenable to female participants feeling comfortable in the physical space and that adequate time was provided for them to provide feedback.

3.8 Limitations of the study

As Guba and Lincoln (1994) point out, “no construction is or can be incontrovertibly right” (p.108). Researching how human beings behave and act requires the use of multiple methods and different assumptions for explaining individual and social activities. The dynamics of classrooms and schools are complex. Understanding why teachers do what they do, why students behave as they do and the forces which influence their interactions are open to interpretation (Pring, 2000). The methodological choices used in this study to identify and understand these factors have inherent limitations.

For this research, the following aspects of the study need to be considered insofar as they may constitute limitations of the study:

a. Lack of sample selectivity for semi-structured interviews

Sampling for the semi-structured interviews sought to ensure a broad range of participants. Consequently, it included education policy-makers, Bhutanese and expatriate education specialists, Bhutanese and expatriate private sector employers, expatriate academics, expatriate teachers and Bhutanese technical specialists.

For carrying out the semi-structured interviews, the study could have benefited from more selectivity in two ways. First, a diverse range of participants was particularly useful for understanding perceptions of Bhutanese students' and teachers' English proficiency. However, participant diversity was less instructive on technical and professional issues of teaching and learning and for gaining a better understanding of teachers' methodological choices. Second, for addressing the research sub-question concerning factors which influence implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education, a narrowing of the sample to focus mainly on Bhutanese and expatriate

English and subject teachers might have been instructive. This could have more efficiently ring-fenced issues of classroom practice and helped me to better understand and clarify teachers' thinking about their daily methodological choices.

b. Lack of more extensive classroom observations at varying levels of education

The six classroom observations that were conducted specifically targeted different levels of education (i.e. grades 4, 6, 8 and 10), plus a mix of English and subject classes (i.e. social studies, integrated science, geography and physics). However, it may have been more informative to conduct observations in a larger number of classes and to have included observations at the higher secondary level (grades 11 and 12). Data from interview and focus group discussions suggest that higher secondary students have markedly better English proficiency. It would have been helpful, therefore, to examine whether higher levels English proficiency in the classroom setting at this level of education translate into differences in students' English oral production and/or willingness to participate in various types of classroom interaction. For completeness of the data set, observations in higher secondary English and subject classes should have been carried out, but were not owing to scheduling constraints around the timing of mid-term examinations.

In addition to ensuring the availability of more comparable data, it would also have been useful to examine: (i) whether higher student English proficiency impacts teachers' choices around teaching methods which, in turn, may support language; and (ii) whether teachers are inclined to engage in more frequent use of communicative and collaborative activities with higher English proficiency students. However, data gathered for this study on the frequency of student interaction and English language production at the tertiary level suggest that there may not be significant differences found at the higher secondary level.

c. Data collection on teacher education programs

More extensive examination of the teacher education program in Bhutan, including observations of teacher training classes in the country's two teacher training institutes, would have been useful. Time constraints, partly impacted by the institutes' summer holiday calendars, prohibited more in-depth data gathering from them.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has described the design of the research, the methods adopted and procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. It outlined the study's ontological and epistemological approach, describing the use of a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm for carrying out the research. It outlined the data collection methods and tools used for the research. It discussed the specific data collection strategies and format used and how the data were analyzed and interpreted. It described how data were triangulated to generate meaning within and between data collection approaches. Finally, it addressed issues of validity, reliability and ethical considerations, and discussed the limitations of the study.

The next chapter presents the study's findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the field study in Bhutan to start to address the main research question:

How can implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education be enhanced?

It does so by using data collected to answer the following two research sub-questions²²:

- What perceptions surround implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?
- What factors influence effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?

The chapter is divided into two sections which address the research sub-questions above:

- a. Perceptions of the implementation of English-medium education in Bhutan
- b. Factors influencing implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education

As detailed in the previous chapter, data presented in this chapter were gathered through 22 semi-structured interviews (SSI) with Bhutanese policy makers, teacher trainers, education specialists, expatriate native English-speaking teachers and education specialists; private sectors employers and other education stakeholders in Bhutan. Data were also collected through six focus group discussions (FGD) with lower and middle secondary school English and subject teachers and students, as well as through six classroom observations (COB) in lower and middle secondary school English and subject classes. Data were triangulated across data collection methods and participants to cross-check the information gathered, increase its trustworthiness and identify commonalities, outliers, trends and themes in the data.

²² Research sub-question (a) *What theories support effective English as a second or foreign language medium of instruction and what is already known about the effectiveness of such instruction globally?* is addressed in Chapter 2, Literature Review; research sub-question (e) *What are the implications for policy, practice and research?* is addressed in Chapter 5, Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations.

4.2 Perceptions of the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education

This section presents data on participants' perceptions of:

- a. Students' English proficiency
- b. Teachers' English proficiency
- c. Effectiveness of the implementation of Bhutan's English-medium policy

a. Students' English proficiency

This section discusses participants' perceptions of Bhutanese students' English proficiency as expressed in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. It also provides my views as a researcher based on my interactions with and observations of students during focus group discussions and classroom observations. It describes three broad categories of response: (i) there is a range of proficiency among students; (ii) students' proficiency is good or adequate; and (iii) students' proficiency is poor or deteriorating.

Range in students' proficiency. A wide range in levels of English proficiency among students emerged as a strong theme, with over half (13 sources, 17 references) of the 21 SSI participants who provided feedback on this claiming this to be the case. While a limited number of students have quite high proficiency for both informal communication and academic purposes, many are very weak. One female expatriate native English-speaking high school teacher, one of three interviewed for this study, stated: "I find it interesting how some can speak almost nothing and others you can have quite a good conversation with" (SSI#12). In a FGD with secondary subject teachers (FGD#4), all agreed that there is a large group of average students, a small number of students who exceed expectations with quite high proficiency and a group of students whose English is very poor. In another FGD with lower secondary school subject teachers, a female subject teacher observed:

I would say average only, average. Of course we have out of 100, maybe five percent they are excellent, but again you have 70 percent all average. (FGD#2)

This view was shared by a senior male MOE official who commented:

I think it is quite varied. On one hand, the level of English is very good, but that is on one extreme end. We also have

in the middle, people who are average, who can find their ways [sic] using that, and at the other end we may have people who are struggling. (SSI#4)

Three more participants (SSI#2, FGD#1/2) emphasized that the bulk of students have average proficiency. As a subject teacher commented: “you have 70 percent all average” (FGD#4).

Views were also expressed about how students’ English proficiency differs between levels of schooling, with some in lower grades outperforming those in higher grades. A male curriculum specialist, one of three interviewed for this study, observed:

There are children who exceed my expectation in speaking and conversing. But there are also some who don’t perform at the expected level. You talk to students in lower secondary school, they speak so well. Sometimes you come across university graduates who speak terrible English. (SSI#3)

One teacher in a FGD claimed that students’ English is improving as they move up through the levels of schooling, noting that by higher secondary school²³ most are fairly proficient:

In school we see a lot of improvement in students. When they are in grade 9, they are a bit poor, but as we move on, by the time they are in grade 12, they are quite good. Most are quite good as they go up. (FGD#4)

Students’ levels of English proficiency can also differ within a single class of students, despite the fact that they may have moved through all levels of schooling together. As described by an expatriate teacher:

It varies greatly, even within one class. Within one section of 35 or 40 students, there will be a huge variety of English ability. I find [that] interesting because they mostly have been in the same school and the same system since they were in PP [kindergarten]. (SSI#12)

Five (SSI#9/10, FGD#1,2,4) of 21 respondents from both SSIs and FGDs commented on the impact of both family background and the effect of living in urban areas as factors which they believe impact students’ proficiency. A high school subject teacher stated: “Urban students are good in English and if they have educated families” (FGD#4).

²³ grades 11 and 12

Good or adequate student proficiency. Some participants (8 sources, 13 references) expressed views that students' English proficiency was adequate or good. Participants made particular reference to three characteristics of good proficiency: (i) current proficiency levels are an improvement over earlier times; (ii) urbanization impacts English proficiency; and (iii) that Bhutanese students' English proficiency, especially in speaking, exceeds that of students' in other countries of the region.

A curriculum specialist observed in reference to a perceived improvement in students' English proficiency over earlier times and the impact of urbanization: "Over the years it has improved, particularly in urban areas" (SSI#5). Nine of 21 SSI participants (14 references) expressed a belief that students from urban areas have better proficiency in English. They attribute this mainly to family background and exposure to media. As a private school director noted: "In urban schools, if you come from a family where English is spoken, children already have an advantage" (SSI#10). During a FGD with lower secondary English teachers, one female teacher commented: "[In] urban areas especially, they get really lots of exposure and then even class PP [kindergarten] can speak English really well" (FGD#1). In a FGD with secondary subject teachers, a male teacher suggested that urban students have better English because of greater access to media and printed materials in English: "[Students] from urban areas watch English movies and read novels" (FGD#4). In reference to Bhutanese students' ability compared to others in the South and East Asia regions, a curriculum specialist remarked:

On the whole, comparatively, based on my interaction with people in S. Asia, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand – Bhutanese in general, the educated population, do make use of English in a good way. We are doing quite ok. (SSI#3)

Poor or deteriorating student proficiency. By contrast, poor or deteriorating levels of proficiency were noted by 14 of 21 SSI participants (15 references). A curriculum specialist said: "If I compare the past and the present, the standard has been deteriorating, especially with our present students" (SSI#1). An expatriate teacher commented on her grade 9 students' English proficiency:

They will catch a few words. They don't understand directions – as simple as "put your name on the top of the page" as opposed to the bottom....those direction go by for 40-50 percent of the students. (SSI#13)

Eight of 21 participants (10 references) said that students' English proficiency is below the expected standard. Comments from a female English teacher trainer, one of two teacher

trainers interviewed for this study²⁴, suggest that students are below the standard prescribed by MOE:

Looking at the students, they are below standard. I'd say they are not very competent as required by the standard, as mentioned in the guides and in the document where it says that by X level the student should have achieved Y competency. Generally speaking, the standard required and the actual attainment do not match. (SSI#6)

Two participants (3 references), a male expatriate education specialist and a male expatriate college English instructor, claimed that given the number of years that students in Bhutan study English and through English, their proficiency should be higher. The education specialist observed that: "The level of oral English is not as good as it ought to be given the amount of time that they spend doing things in English" (SSI#21).

The findings of classroom observations were consistent with perceptions expressed by most SSI participants (14 sources, 15 references), indicating that students' English proficiency is lower than expected per standards set out by MOE for their grade level (Center for Educational Research and Development, 2002) and is limited overall. In two classes observed, a grade 4 social studies class and a grade 10 physics class, students' English writing was limited to verbatim copying from the blackboard or the textbook (COB#1/6). In all classes observed, students did not use full sentences, responded to teacher questions haltingly and/or responded with one-word chorus answers. During informal discussions with students, including secondary school students, before and after classroom observations, it was necessary to repeat simple questions (e.g. "what is your favorite subject?", "what did you have for breakfast?") several times and use hand gestures to be understood.

Perceptions of students' levels of English proficiency find concurrence around the existence of a wide range in students' proficiency, even within a single class of students. It is generally felt that urban students have better proficiency than rural ones and that family background is an important determinant in students' English proficiency. Overall, however, it is felt that students' English proficiency is below what could be expected given the number of years of study of English and through English.

b. Teachers' English proficiency

²⁴ One male subject teacher trainer and one female English teacher trainer were interviewed for this study

This section discusses participants' perceptions of Bhutanese teachers' English proficiency as revealed in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. It describes four broad themes: (i) there is a range of proficiency among teachers; (ii) teachers' proficiency is good or adequate; (iii) teachers' proficiency is poor or inadequate; and (iv) teachers' ability to serve as models of good English language use for their students.

Range in teachers' English proficiency. A range in levels of teachers' English proficiency was noted by six²⁵ of 22 participants (6 references) who provided feedback on this issue. An expatriate education specialist said: "Some are very good. Some are very poor" (SSI#21). A senior MOE official suggested that there are some teachers who are unable to help their students given their own lack of adequate proficiency: "It is like the students....there is a large continuum with some who cannot help the students because they themselves need help" (SSI#4).

Good or adequate teachers' English proficiency. Four participants²⁶ of 22 (4 references) believed that teachers' English proficiency is good or adequate for functioning as teachers. An English teacher trainer commented: "I think all are at the required competency level" (SSI#6). This belief was echoed by another teacher trainer who said: "On average they are quite ok. Their level is quite high" (SSI#7).

Seven of 22 SSI participants²⁷ (9 references) said that science teachers have better English among secondary teachers, largely as a function of: (i) having attained better results in high school and college, thus qualifying them to teach science; and/or (ii) having done well in science while in school because of better proficiency in English. A curriculum specialist said: "People who do good in science and math seems [sic] to also do good in languages" (SSI#3). Two participants (2 references) said that those who enter the profession as science teachers may be better suited as English teachers. A high school English teacher observed during a FGD that: "If a science student goes into education, they will teach science, but they actually should teach English" (FGD#3). Of the six classroom observations undertaken for the study, only once was a notation made that "[the] teacher has pretty good English". This occurred in a grade 10 physics (i.e. science) class (COB#6).

²⁵ One senior MOE policy maker; one examinations board official; one English proficiency test examiner; two expatriate teachers; one expatriate education specialist

²⁶ One curriculum subject specialist; two teacher trainers; one private sector employer

²⁷ Two curriculum specialists; one examination board official; one teacher trainer; one expatriate teacher; one private sector employer; one secondary school English teacher

Poor or inadequate teachers' English proficiency. Fifteen²⁸ of 22 SSI participants (60 references) shared views regarding teachers' English proficiency. Half of these respondents (11 sources, 5 references) said that teachers' English proficiency is poor or inadequate. A curriculum specialist who provides in-service training to subject teachers said:

Generally, it is not that good. I've done several workshops with groups of teachers. When they present in workshops you could deduce that it needs a lot of improvement. (SSI#3)

This was echoed by a male examinations board official who described both subject and English teachers' English proficiency as: "Quite bad, actually" (SSI#5). Seven participants²⁹ (8 references) said that teachers' English proficiency is inadequate for them to perform well as teachers. A tertiary level policy-maker commented: "On average I say it probably isn't appropriate or as good as we'd desire our teachers to be. It is not up to the mark, generally" (SSI#8). An English proficiency test³⁰ examiner noted: "Generally I think it is not as good as it should be" (SSI#9). An expatriate teacher shared her doubts as to whether teachers possess even the same proficiency which their students are expected to have:

All of the teachers, especially the teachers teaching English, unfortunately, their level of English is not even close to being what I feel should be sufficient to teach at a secondary level, especially the higher secondary level. How can they possibly teach a class 10 level poem if they can't understand a class 10 level poem themselves? (SSI#12)

Classroom observations revealed findings consistent with the views expressed by SSI and FGD participants. A grade 4 social studies teacher demonstrated lack of control over both present tense subject-verb agreement and the use of plurals, informing students that: "Goat is also important for Bhutanese farmer" (COB#1). A grade 6 English teacher demonstrated a lack of control over basic subject-verb agreement in questioning her students on the sequence of events in a story, "Do anybody know?" (COB#3). A grade 10 English teacher showed pronunciation problems, pronouncing 'crystals' as "christ-als"

²⁸ Two curriculum specialists; one senior MOE policy-maker; one exam board official; two teacher trainers; one tertiary education policy maker; one college English instructor; two expatriate teachers; one English proficiency examiner; two private sector employers; one expatriate education specialist; one expatriate academic

²⁹ Three expatriate teachers; one curriculum specialist; one expatriate education specialist; one English proficiency test examiner; one tertiary level policy maker

³⁰ An internationally recognized test of English proficiency required for study at universities in many English-speaking countries

(COB#5). A grade 9 geography teacher mispronounced ‘loamy’ as “loomy” when discussing types of soil (COB#4).

Four SSI and FGD participants³¹ (6 references) provided views as to why teachers’ English proficiency is low. Three noted that the most qualified candidates with higher academic achievement do not enter the teaching profession. As an official of the examinations board commented:

Our teachers have not become teachers because they wanted to be teachers. They didn’t qualify for better jobs. Those people have become teachers. They joined teaching as a last option. Our teachers don’t have the intellectual capacity or good command over language. (SSI#5)

An expatriate teacher suggested that low English proficiency among teachers constitutes a policy disjuncture in the education system in Bhutan, stating:

To me then the whole education system contradicts itself because if they want English medium, but yet their English teachers are the weaker students in university – to me that is a contradiction in policy and practice. (SSI#12)

Perceptions of teachers as models of good English. Seven of 22 SSI participants (7 references) discussed whether teachers can serve as models of good English for their students. All participants who commented on this issue agreed that teachers should be models of good English, yet in Bhutan at present most are not. An official from the examinations board stated: “I really doubt if our teachers have that capability to role model” (SSI#5). In reflecting on the ability of teachers at the college level, an expatriate English instructor explained:

Those people are considered to be the best English speakers at [name of college]. I’d doubt whether that person [referring to a specific teacher] has the English proficiency needed to provide a good example for the university students and to be a role model. (SSI#15)

Six SSI participants³² (6 references) discussed what they view to be the impact of teachers’ English language proficiency on students, and teachers’ capacity to serve as good models of English usage for them. All participants who responded on this issue noted that low proficiency among teachers negatively impacts students’ ability to learn English and

³¹ One examinations board official; one English proficiency test examiner; one expatriate teacher; one secondary school English teacher

³² One English proficiency test examiner; two expatriate teachers; two private sector employers; one high school English teacher

subjects taught through English, attributing this to teachers' inability to be good role models of language. A private sector employer noted: "It is definitely true that students' proficiency is very much affected by the teachers" (SSI#17). This was reinforced by the English proficiency test examiner who said:

"Part of why students are not doing so well in English is because teachers themselves are not proficient in English. Because of that the students are not that good". (SSI#9)

An expatriate teacher expressed dismay at the proficiency of some of her English teacher colleagues:

They come to me to proof read [the exam] to find out if the questions are ok, if they made any mistakes. Sometimes it's quite shocking. The grammar and the spelling and sentence structure isn't really all that much better than their students. (SSI#12)

One SSI participant reflected on the role of teacher training colleges to support teachers' English proficiency, suggesting that training colleges should play a bigger role in ensuring that those entering the teaching profession have adequate English competence:

The teacher training program should be helping teachers to understand how to improve their own linguistic skills and teaching teachers how to improve their students' linguistic skills. (SSI#21)

This section has provided SSI and FGD participants' perceptions of teachers' English proficiency and evidence from classroom observations. While it has revealed a belief that there is a range in teachers' English proficiency, there is broad concurrence on four key points: (i) many teachers lack the proficiency needed to serve as models of good language use for their students, (ii) among secondary school teachers, science teachers are often found to have the best English; (iii) low proficiency among teachers negatively impacts students' language learning; and (iv) teacher training programs should ensure that teachers possess adequate English proficiency.

The next section presents perceptions of key stakeholders about the effectiveness of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education.

c. Effectiveness of the policy's implementation

This section discusses participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. Nineteen of 22 SSI participants (74 references) provided their views on the policy's effectiveness.

Ineffective policy implementation. Ineffective implementation of Bhutan's English-medium policy was mentioned by a majority of participants (12 of 19 sources, 16 references). A curriculum specialist suggested that implementation of the policy does not meet the expectations set out by MOE: "It is not as effectively implemented as envisioned" (SSI#3). An expatriate academic with many years' experience in Bhutan's education sector observed: "It's in trouble" (SSI#22). Another expatriate education specialist suggested that the policy may not be fully understood by educators since teachers value students' acquisition of content over the attainment of skills and competencies, both in language and non-language subjects:

I think the policy is not 100 percent understood by teachers in terms of the emphasis on skills rather than on content knowledge. (SSI#20)

Seven participants (11 references) offered reasons for ineffective policy implementation. Four (SSI#3/10/17/21) cited teachers' lack of English proficiency. One pointed to a lack of leadership in schools "Heads of schools are more occupied with administrative jobs than supporting the implementation part as instructional leaders" (SSI#2). An expatriate teacher attributed ineffective policy implementation to pressure on teachers to cover the syllabus and complete the textbook before the end of the school year. She noted: "In Bhutan it is all about "how do I get through this book?"...forget the learning outcomes, just get through the book" (SSI#16). Two participants (SSI#4, FGD#3) described the prevalence of code-switching between Dzongkha/local languages and English as evidence of ineffective implementation.

Three participants (SSI#20/21/22) offered suggestions for improving implementation of the policy. Two (SSI#21/22) suggested that students would engage more meaningfully in the learning progress through performing tasks in the classroom which require authentic use of language, rather than rote learning and memorization of subject content. This approach was seconded by an expatriate academic who shared her experience of good practice for supporting students' second/foreign language learning in North American schools:

Everything we know about good teaching, about engaging kids, focusing on them as individuals, how they become

good thinkers would help develop their language more. If we use those strategies they'd be using their language and increase their oral proficiency. All those things would help improve English language usage. (SSI#22)

Effective policy implementation. Several opposing views suggested that Bhutan's policy of English-medium education is effectively implemented (7 sources, 8 references). Three³³ of 16 participants (SSI#1/4/5) who provided feedback on this issue expressed general views of the overall effectiveness of the policy's implementation. A senior officer in the curriculum department stated: "I think it is quite successful" (SSI#1). An official from the examination board similarly noted: "I think it is implemented very effectively" (SSI#5). Two SSI participants³⁴ (SSI#7/17) claimed that the mere fact that subjects are taught in English is evidence of effective implementation. A private sector employer explained: "I think the schools are implementing it religiously. All the subjects are really taught in English" (SSI#17). However, an expatriate education specialist made a distinction between the policy being implemented and the extent to which it is being implemented effectively, stating: "It is being implemented in that it actually happens. How effective it is is another question" (SSI#21).

Summary. This section has presented data on the effectiveness of the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. There is consensus around the policy not being implemented as expected or intended. The next section presents data on participants' views on the factors which influence the policy's implementation.

4.3 Factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education

This section describes factors which influence implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education based on data obtained through SSIs, FGDs and classroom observations. Data are presented which describe three overarching factors influencing its implementation:

- a. English as a barrier to learning across the curriculum
- b. Classroom and instructional practices
- c. Subject teachers' role in supporting language development

a. English as a barrier to learning across the curriculum

³³ One curriculum specialist; one senior MOE policy maker; one exam board official

³⁴ One teacher trainer; one private sector employer

This section presents data on participants' perceptions of when students in Bhutan should have attained adequate English proficiency to learn across the curriculum. It also addresses the possible dual challenge posed by having to acquire both language and content simultaneously at the secondary education level.

At which point should students have sufficient English proficiency to effectively learn subject content?: Sixteen SSI and two FGD participants (56 references) responded to a question about when students should have attained adequate proficiency in English between PP and grade 12 in order to effectively learn subject content. A majority (14 of 20 respondents) of participants who responded to this question believe that students should have adequate proficiency in English at or before the end of the junior high school level at grade 8. Expecting that students should have sufficient proficiency at an earlier stage, one subject teacher trainer explained: “We are aiming at the end of primary education, that is seven years of education up to grade 6” (SSI#7).

When asked if they believed that students were gaining control over English at the grade level expected, seven of 16 SSI participants³⁵ (8 references) said they believe that this is not happening. An English teacher trainer stated, “No, it isn't happening” (SSI#6). Only two³⁶ of 16 participants (2 references) suggested that it is happening. An expatriate secondary school teacher puzzled over why students' proficiency is so limited given the number of years which they study English and through English:

They do study English for many years. It does make me wonder why they are struggling so much with English at the secondary level. (SSI#12)

An expatriate academic who studies French immersion in Canada noted that: “[Children] are fluent [in French] by grade 4” (SSI#22). When asked what is needed for Bhutanese students to achieve sufficient control over English by the end of primary schooling, the same participant elaborated:

Lots of language, lots of reading, lots of writing, lots of talking, lots of speaking, lots of listening. Lots of chances to hear good English spoken. (SSI#22)

A number of respondents mentioned the need for students to have adequate English proficiency at the time of transitioning from primary to secondary schooling³⁷. An

³⁵ Two curriculum specialists; one exam board official; one teacher trainer; one English proficiency test examiner; one private sector employer; one secondary school English teacher

³⁶ One senior MOE policy maker; one teacher trainer

³⁷ From grade 6 to grade 7

expatriate teacher (SSI#12) and a secondary subject teacher (FGD#4) made specific reference to the importance of students entering secondary school with sufficient control over English for learning across the curriculum. In a FGD with secondary subject teachers, one teacher elaborated on the same point:

[They need control over English] by the end of grade 6.
They join secondary at grade 7 and they really need
[English] language going into secondary, so the foundation
should be there by grade 6. (FGD#4)

Students battle both content and language in secondary school. Twenty-one SSI and FGD participants were asked for their reaction to the statement: “*At the secondary school level, students are challenged by both content and language*”. Sixteen participants (25 references) agreed with the statement. A senior MOE official said: “Unless they have got some command over English, it will be difficult for them to handle other subjects” (SSI#4). An expatriate teacher gave an estimate of the proportion of students in her classes who struggle with language while trying to learn subject content:

I feel that more than 50 percent of the kids do not have
adequate comprehension of English that is being used in
the classroom to learn their topics or subject material.
(SSI#13)

The operator of a private school added: “I think that is a huge challenge” (SSI#10). In a FGD with secondary school subject teachers, one teacher explained:

If you are good in English, you can do well in other
subjects. If you are poor in English, your performance in
other subjects will be hampered. (FGD#4)

This belief was echoed by secondary school students in a FGD. One student, a male in grade 11, said: “Yes. Many a times [sic] we don’t understand whatever comes to us” (FGD#5). An expatriate college instructor similarly voiced concern about whether students are able to grasp subject content delivered through English: “They are struggling with understanding what the text is about from the language side. That is a really big barrier for them” (SSI#15).

Eleven of 21 SSI participants (17 references) provided examples of students’ facing difficulty in acquiring subject content due to difficulty with language. In a FGD with secondary English teachers, one teacher commented:

We had one question about the setting of [a] story. They
did not understand the question. They answered the wrong

thing. Only a couple of students understood the question. The problem is they read the question, but they lack the understanding. (FGD#3)

Presenting an opposing view, five of 21 SSI participants (SSI#3/7/8/9/17) disagreed that students are challenged by both content and language. A private sector employer stated:

I would not totally agree with that. Although their command over the language is not really good, I think they, in general, are able to grasp the content. (SSI#17)

This view was supported by a subject teacher trainer who noted: “I would say that is not a big issue” (SSI#7). Two participants (SSI#3/9) made specific reference to the fact that by the higher secondary level³⁸, students’ grasp of English should be adequate to understand the content of subject classes. A proficiency test examiner said: “By grade 10 they can understand the concepts better because they do have the language” (SSI#9).

Six of 21 participants (SSI#12/13/14/21; FGD#2/4, 10 references) provided explanations for why students face the dual challenge of language and content. An expatriate education specialist described a lack of teaching of functional English at the primary level as problematic:

In the lower years they are not sufficiently introduced to functional English. I believe it all comes back to functional English. If you have to understand content, you need to have a fairly good grasp of functional English in all the four skills. (SSI#21)

Two expatriate teachers and one expatriate education specialist (SSI#12/13/21) believed that vocabulary used in subjects at the secondary level is too difficult: “The level of language that they are expected to be able to read from grade 4 up is too difficult for them” (SSI#13).

Summary. This section presented data on perceptions on the English proficiency students need to effectively learn subject content. It also presented data on participants’ views about whether students are battling both content and language at the secondary level. A majority of respondents believe that students are not gaining adequate proficiency in English early enough in the 13 years of English-medium education between PP and grade 12. Consequently, they are challenged by both language and content in secondary school.

b. Classroom characteristics and instructional practices

³⁸ Grade 11 and 12

Classroom characteristics and instruction practices represent one set of factors influencing implementation of Bhutan's English-medium education policy. This section presents data on these factors, which include:

- classroom physical characteristics
- instructional practices
- teachers' support for students' English development
- teachers' verification of student comprehension
- use of teaching-learning materials
- code-switching
- traditional teacher-student roles
- effect of examinations

It also presents data describing participants' views on why these practices prevail in Bhutan's schools.

Classroom physical characteristics. Data collected during classroom observations revealed that classes ranged from 19 students (COB#3) to 45 students (COB#1). The proportion of girls in each class, with the exception of one (COB#3), was either half or more the total number of students. Boys and girls were seated together in all classrooms with the exception of one (COB#5) which only had a single table of both boys and girls, with all the other tables comprised of same gender students.

In four of the six classes observed (COB#1/2/5/6), desks were arranged in rows facing the front of the classroom. In two classrooms (COB#3/4), desks were arranged in a U-shaped configuration. All classes appeared 'traditional' in terms of the placement of desks and students. In all classes, there appeared to be no systematic presentation of visual aids; what was presented was limited mostly to students' own work. In four of six classes (COB#1/3/5/6), student work on the walls was too small and/or placed too high up to easily see. In two classrooms (COB#5/6), despite the presence of lighting fixtures and windows, no lights were used and classrooms appeared dark.

Instructional practices. The most frequently observed teaching approach was the delivery of facts (COB#2/4/5/6), sometimes read verbatim from textbooks (COB#5), followed by confirming questions to which students provided one-word chorus answers (COB#2/4/5/6). In two classrooms (COB#2/5), the teacher used the textbook as the sole reference without using the blackboard or any other visual or teaching aids. Other approaches observed included:

- the teacher asked students to read directly from textbooks (COB#5/6)
- the teacher wrote on the board directly from the textbook (COB#1)
- the teacher instructed the children to open their books to a particular page from which the teacher read verbatim (COB#1)
- the teacher asked students to explain something in their own words (COB#3)

The majority of classrooms observed were dominated by teacher talk (COB#1/2/3/5). In these classes, the teacher did over 90 percent of the talking, offering students little or no opportunity to speak. In three classes, the teacher engaged in no communication whatsoever with individual students (COB#1/5/6). In five of six classrooms (COB#1/2/4/5/6) observed, the teacher never left the front of the room. In one classroom (COB#1), the teacher always had a stick in his hand. Only in one classroom (COB#3) was the teacher observed circulating the room, moving between student tables to engage with students. Observations recorded in one classroom stated that the “Class is slow and boring – deadly silent” (COB#5). In three of six classes (COB#1/2/5), there was no explanation at the start of the class of the lesson’s objectives. In the other three classes (COB#3/4/6), the teacher started the class by stating, “Today we will...”.

Teachers’ support for students’ English development. In two classes, no reference was made to students’ English nor was any support given to improve it (COB#1/6). In four classes (COB#2/3/4/5) observed, the teacher made specific reference to students’ English. Feedback from teachers about students’ English took the following three forms:

- the teacher repeated what the student said to model correct usage (COB#2)
- the teacher made specific reference to students’ grammatical or pronunciation errors to correct usage (COB#3/4/5)
- the teacher informed students of shortcomings and advised the student to “try harder next time” (COB#4)

In all classes observed, no effort was made by teachers to pre-teach vocabulary from textbooks or vocabulary to be used during lessons.

Teachers’ verification of student comprehension. The most common approach teachers were observed using to confirm student comprehension was through the use of confirming questions, such as “Is it clear?”, “Do you agree?”. This was noted in all six classes observed. In response, chorus answering by students was observed in all classes, either with students affirming in unison (e.g. *Teacher*: “Do you understand?”; *Students*: “Yes Ma’am!”) (COB#4) or students repeating the last word the teacher said, (e.g. *Teacher*:

“They can earn lots of money. They can earn lots of...?”; *Students*: “money”) (COB#1). In three classes (COB#3/5/6), the teacher asked students to say if they had any doubts or problems (e.g. *Teacher*: “If you have any doubt, please tell. Sure?”).

Use of teaching-learning materials. In three classrooms (COB#1/4/6), the teacher pasted printed materials in the form of charts or diagrams on the blackboard. In all cases, these materials were too small to easily see, particularly from the back of the classroom. In one classroom (COB#3), the teacher used an overhead projector to present a topic with transparent slides which were readily seen from anywhere in the classroom. In two classrooms, teachers’ blackboard writing was either almost illegible (COB#4) or too small to be easily viewed (COB#1).

Code-switching. Teachers’ frequent use of Dzongkha was noted in two classes (COB#3/6), mostly to confirm understanding of a concept earlier explained in English (COB#3) or as a tag question ending to solicit confirmation of understanding (COB#6). In one class observed (COB#6), the teacher frequently used a common Dzongkha tag ending (“..., *tub-la?*”) to verify students’ understanding. A subject teacher in a FGD explained why Dzongkha must be used at times: “Sometimes we use native language as well, Dzongkha, to explain difficult terms in [sic] native language” (FGD#2). In another FGD, a secondary English teacher admitted to the use of Dzongkha during English classes, but insisted that it is used only on rare occasions:

When we teach in class and the children are unable to understand the concepts when I’m teaching them in English, I try to supplement with Dzongkha. First I try to break it into simpler expression in English. If this does not work, then I am left with no option but to speak Dzongkha.
(FGD#3)

Traditional teacher-student roles. The traditional roles of teachers and students was cited by an English proficiency test examiner who associated them with a lack of oral production in classrooms: “One thing is the traditional role of the teacher and the students” (SSI#9). This viewpoint was shared by a curriculum specialist who said: “Most of us were brought up in that system and we still follow the old habits and approaches” (SSI#1). The operator of a private school added: “[Teachers] teach the way they were taught” (SSI#11).

The tendency to ‘do things as they have always been done’ extends to teaching approaches used in in-service teacher training programs. A curriculum specialist described how approaches in teacher training institutes mirror what happens in

classrooms: “[In-service training] is similar to what is happening in the classrooms. It is basically ‘telling’ mode. What is happening in the workshops is exactly what is happening in the classrooms” (SSI#3). Three of 16 SSI and FGD participants (SSI#3/5, FGD#3) attributed this to the influence of Indian teachers in earlier times when the majority of teachers at the secondary level were from India and prior to the introduction in India of child-center teaching methodologies. This is described by a curriculum specialist: “Secondary schools used to [be] dominated by Indian teachers. They are not so flexible or open to outside ideas. Most of us are products of that” (SSI#3). An inability of teachers to ‘do it differently’ stemming from a lack of awareness of how to use different methodologies was cited by some participants as a reason why classroom practices are slow to change. An expatriate teacher shared a view of her colleagues’ competency in some key areas of language teaching:

If I went and asked English teachers, “How do you teach the skill of listening? How do you teach the skills of reading, of writing?”. They don’t have training in that, they don’t know. I’m finding the teachers I’m working with don’t have strategies for that. (SSI#13)

Another expatriate teacher commented on teachers’ lack of comfort, fearing a loss of control in the classroom, to explain why teachers have a difficult time teaching differently: “It is that control in the classroom and teachers not knowing how to teach in a communicative method” (SSI#16). A different expatriate teacher described her experience of trying to use different methodologies in her school and the negative reactions she received from colleagues:

The majority of teachers want a quiet classroom and do not use a communicative method. If you had a school where there were more teachers using communicative methods, it actually might tip the balance. You might have the reticent teachers saying, “Maybe that is ok”. For example, I would sometimes get comments from other teachers telling me that my classroom was too noisy. Clearly how I taught was out of the norm. (SSI#14)

Effect of examinations. The effect of terminal examinations on teaching practices was cited by five participants (SSI#9/12/13/19, FGD#3) as a reason why teaching practices are slow to change. An English proficiency test examiner said: “The teacher thinks at the back of their mind of the exam. The syllabus has to be completed. So you don’t have time for group work, discussions” (SSI#9). In a FGD, a high school English teacher noted how teachers’ preoccupation with examinations ‘crowds out’ time for doing a variety of

activities in classrooms: “In grade 10 and 12 where there are the board exams, so that is why they do not get time to do all these activities” (FGD#3). An expatriate secondary teacher described how teachers “teach to the test”, excluding oral language skills:

They are working toward an exam that doesn’t test all those skills. Only reading comprehension and writing are tested, so that’s what they work on. (SSI#13)

Reasons given for the prevalence of instructional practices. Sixteen SSI and FGD participants (90 references) offered explanations as to why, despite significant reform efforts in several areas of education system functioning in Bhutan over the last two decades, classroom practices have not changed markedly. Seven reasons were provided to explain why this might be the case, as presented in Table 4, ‘Reasons for a lack of change in classroom practices’.

Table 4: Reasons for a lack of change in classroom practices

| Reasons for lack of change in classroom practices | Sources (n=16) | References |
|---|-------------------|------------|
| Lack of student engagement | 9 | 15 |
| Lack of support from school heads and colleagues | 6 | 10 |
| Teachers teach the way they were taught | 6 | 8 |
| Inadequate in-service teacher training | 5 | 7 |
| Influence of India | 5 | 6 |
| Teachers competency | 5 | 6 |
| Effect of examination system | 5 | 6 |

As the most common reason given for a lack of change in classroom practices, nine participants mentioned a lack of student engagement, citing the following factors to explain student behaviour:

- students rely on teachers to ‘give’ them ‘the answer’ (4 sources, 8 references)
- students do not feel responsible for their own learning (4 sources, 4 references)
- students lack confidence (3 sources, 3 references)
- students are reluctant to speak and interact (2 sources, 2 references)
- student are preoccupied with getting the ‘right’ answer (2 sources, 2 references)

The issue of students’ reliance on teachers to ‘feed’ answers to them was noted by an expatriate college English instructor:

There is a big reliance on anything important [teachers] say is on the board and all you have to do is sit in your seat and copy down what is on the board. Then you memorize it and pass the exam. (SSI#15)

A private school director described a generally passive learning style of Bhutanese students stemming from how they have been taught:

It is hard trying to do things differently with Bhutanese children because they are not used to a more interactive teaching style. (SSI#11)

A passive approach on the part of students is attributed to a preoccupation with getting the 'right' answer and students' inability or unwillingness to give opinions. An expatriate teacher explained:

If you ask them an opinion question, they are terrified because they don't want to get it 'wrong'. They are terrified. They just want 'the answer'. (SSI#12)

An expatriate academic highlighted the importance of students' active involvement in their own learning: "If we don't make them responsible for their own learning, they don't learn as well" (SSI#22).

Summary. This section presented data on classroom and instruction practices. It provided evidence of a reliance on teacher-centered instructional practices which predominately utilize teacher talk and didactic, lecture-style methods offering students little opportunity to speak or interact. A number of reasons were given to explain why teaching practices have largely remained unchanged over the last two decades, despite numerous reform efforts toward child-centered, activity-based teaching-learning. These include teachers' lack of familiarity with and inability to implement more communicative approaches, examination pressures and a focus by teachers on 'getting through' the textbook. It also describes the effect of teachers' own experience when they were in school and the role of examinations. The next section presents data on the role of subject teachers for supporting students' English language development in Bhutan's English-medium education system.

c. Subject teachers' role in supporting language development

This section presents data on the role of English-medium subject teachers in supporting students' English language development. Two broad categories of response are reported: (i) how subject teachers support students' English language development; and (ii)

collaboration between subject and English teachers to support students' English language development.

How subject teachers support students' English language development. Twenty-three participants (190 references) from SSIs and FGDs provided their views on the role which they believe subject teachers should play to support students' English development. Respondents were first asked if they believe that subject teachers have a role in supporting students' English language development. Seventeen stated that subject teachers currently do or should play a role in supporting it. In stating that subject teachers should play a role to support students' English language development, a curriculum specialist said:

Yes, yes. They do have an important role. Especially in earlier days it used to be left to the English teachers. Now, in general, the teachers see it as part of their role. Whether you teach English, maths or any subject, language is the most important thing. (SSI#1)

The operator of a private school concurred:

Of course they do. Whatever language input children are exposed to is from teachers. Everybody has to develop [students'] proficiency if we are going to continue as an English-medium country. (SSI#10)

Six participants (25 references) offered examples of how subject teachers support students' English language development. Four teachers in FGDs (FGD#1/2/3/4) cited the practice of subject teachers providing on-the-spot correction of students' English errors during class. A subject teacher in a FGD explained how she helps students with language: "We encourage the students to say the answer in full sentences and with proper grammatical order and pronunciation" (FGD#2).

Attention to language by subject teachers has been accounted for in the reform of the country's mathematics curriculum carried out grade-wise over the past five years³⁹. Two curriculum specialists (SSI#2/3) described how the newly revised mathematics curriculum adopted good practices from North America focusing on oral communication and encouraging student talk during class:

We have said that communication is now one of the processes that is forefront in the math curriculum. Communication, meaning a lot of discussions and

³⁹ Financed by a concessional loan from the World Bank which I managed as project Task Team Leader.

expressing ideas and encouraging children and giving them opportunities to express their ideas, even simple ideas. We said this is critical not only for maths alone, but for children's language and social development for their confidence. (SSI#3)

When asked if the shift toward a focus on language in subject curricula is happening in other subject areas, the same curriculum specialist replied: "No, this is just for math. It was done quite silently. You have to do what is your area and you don't get time to influence others" (SSI#3).

Specific teaching approaches which subject teachers can use to support students' English language development in subject classes were mentioned by 14 participants. Table 5, 'Classroom approaches subject teachers can use to support students' English', lists classroom approaches mentioned in order of frequency.

Table 5: Classroom approaches subject teachers can use to support students' English

| Classroom Approach | Sources |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Pre-teach vocabulary | 6 (SSI#10/12/13/14/20; FGD#3) |
| On-the-spot correction | 5 (SSI#1/3/7/9/22) |
| Make reference to language while teaching | 4 (SSI#3/7/16/22) |
| Correct language in homework and assignments | 2 (SSI#7/22) |
| Encourage children to speak and interact | 2 (SSI#3/16) |
| Include more questions requiring language production on exams | 1 (FGD#3) |
| Role model language while teaching | 1 (SSI#7) |
| Teach reading strategies (i.e. main idea) | 1 (SSI#11) |
| Use dictionaries | 1 (FGD#3) |

Pre-teaching vocabulary was highlighted by six of 23 participants as being an important way for subject teachers to support students' English. As the operator of a private school noted:

The subjects have specific vocabulary. Why don't these teachers take a moment to teach the vocabulary instead of just teaching the content and take for granted that these children know the meaning of the vocabulary? (SSI#10)

On-the-spot correction was similarly singled out by five of 23 participants as being important for subject teachers to do while teaching. As an expatriate academic said:

Feedback has to be immediate, detailed, specific...all of those things in order for it to be effective. Circling a mistake is not going to help them....they don't even look at it, especially if all they are looking for is the number mark at the top of the assignment. (SSI#22)

A lower secondary subject teacher in a FGD emphasized the importance of all teachers consistently paying attention to language and correcting students' written work:

They really need to look into their grammar, language structure, everything. If all the subject teachers look into that, especially while correcting notebooks, papers and when responding to questions, if everybody's concerned and if they look into all these areas, I'm sure [the] English language would improve. (FGD#1)

When asked for their views in response to the statement "*In an English-medium education system, all teachers are English teachers*", nine participants (14 references) provided responses. All agreed with the statement. As a senior curriculum specialist said: "When I was teaching I used to say "Whenever you are teaching any subject, you are a language teacher" (SSI#1). During a FGD with secondary English teachers, all eight participants in the group agreed with the statement (FGD#3).

Classroom observations in subject classes revealed scant evidence of support from subject teachers to help students improve their English (COB#1,2,4,6). Only in one class did the teacher comment on a students' English, stating: "You can improve. You have a few mistakes in grammar" (COB#4).

Collaboration between subject and English teachers to support students' English language development. Nine participants (17 references) addressed the issue of collaboration between subject teachers and English teachers around students' English language development. According to an expatriate teacher, no such collaboration takes place beyond requests from subject teachers to English teachers for clarification of their own language use:

No, I haven't [seen collaboration]. Aside from a subject teacher coming to me for clarification of something in the textbook or to proofread something he's written for the students...but that's not really collaboration, that's just me helping them with their English use. But actual collaboration between subject and English teachers – unfortunately, no, I haven't seen that. (SSI#12)

Secondary English teachers in a FGD said that little collaboration takes place, and not on a regular basis: “It doesn’t happen officially, but informally we talk with them” (FGD#3). A teacher in the same FGD described the mindset of both teachers and students which identifies English teachers as having sole responsibility for supporting students’ English:

Sometimes the subject teachers, if they see a problem with the students’ English, they come and say, “You are the English teacher, look at the mistakes this child is making”. I think it is not only my responsibility as an English teacher. (FGD#3)

Another English teacher in the same FGD concurred:

Even the subject teacher can correct it. If they correct it, it is better because the student is thinking, “Oh, it is not only the English teacher, even other teachers are concerned about language”. (FGD#3)

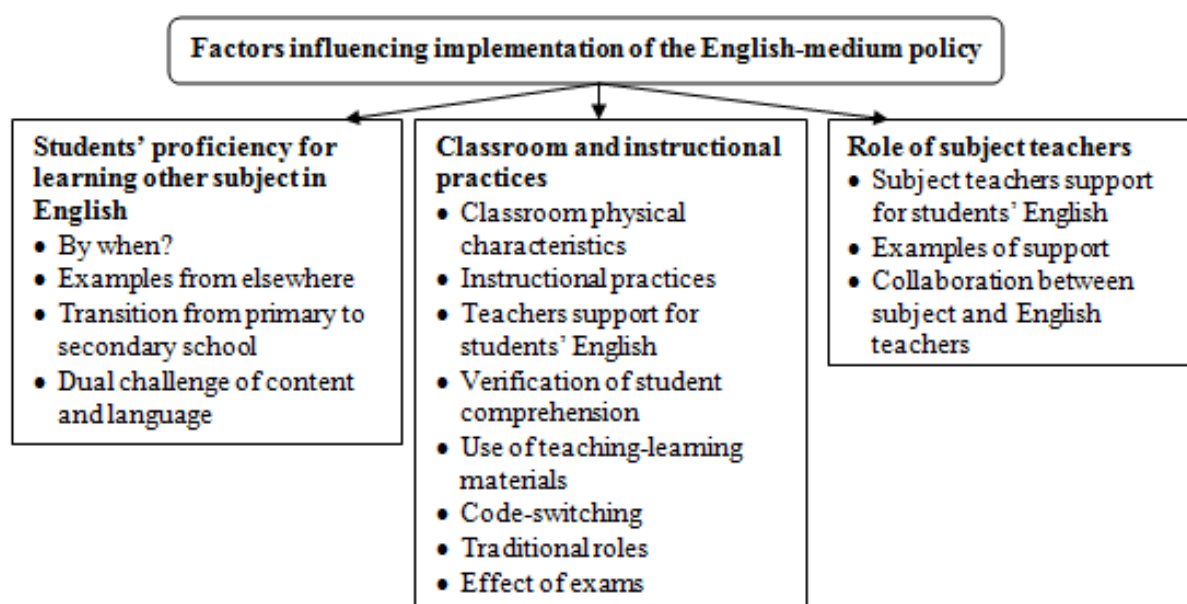
Opposing views claiming collaboration between subject and English teachers were heard in FGDs with both subject and English teachers. Some teachers stated that collaboration between subject and English teachers takes place on a regular basis. Such collaboration is described by an English teacher in a lower secondary school:

In our school it’s happening. If the subject teacher is not able to fix up the grammar, they ask help from the English teachers. We sit together and discuss about [sic] it and we go about how to do [it]. (FGD#1)

Another teacher in the same FGD said: “Yes, it happens every day actually” (FGD#1). A third teacher described the type of help English teachers provide to subject teachers: “Some [subject] teachers come and ask “is the spelling correct?”. We look into it and help them” (FGD#1).

Summary. This section has presented data on the factors influencing implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education. Figure 3, ‘Factors influencing implementation of Bhutan’s English-medium policy’, shows the three areas and sub-areas for which data were obtained.

Figure 3: Factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan's English-medium policy



Data gathered for this study center around three areas pertaining to the effectiveness of implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education: (i) how and when students should be proficient in order to effectively learn other subjects through English; (iii) classroom and instructional practices; and (iii) the role of subject teachers. They indicate that students are not sufficiently proficient in English early enough as they progress from kindergarten to grade 12 to effectively learn other subjects through English. They also suggest that classroom and instruction practices are not supportive of students' English language development and that subject teachers do little to support it.

4.4 Summary

The findings presented in this chapter address two of the study's research sub-questions: (i) What perceptions surround implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?; and (ii) What factors influence effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?

They reveal widely held perceptions that there is a considerable range of English proficiency among students. It is, however, on average lower than it should be given the number of years students study English and study other subjects through English. Teachers' English proficiency is widely perceived to be inadequate, particularly for the purposes of modeling good English for their students. Participants also identified factors which they attribute to ineffective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. These include:

- frequent code-switching between English and Dzongkha/other local languages by teachers during English-medium classes
- teachers' own lack of English proficiency
- a focus on the teaching of content rather than academic skills and competencies

Factors influencing the effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education include:

- students not attaining control over English at desired levels of schooling
- classroom practices favouring didactic teaching-learning approaches
- teachers' tendency to teach toward terminal examinations
- adherence to traditional teacher and student roles
- a lack of effort by subject teachers to support students' English language development

Triangulation of data revealed trends in the patterning of responses by different participant groups. Expatriate native English-speaking teachers and other non-Bhutanese participants uniformly held beliefs that both students' and teachers' levels of English proficiency were lower than expected given the number of years which study in English has taken place and expectations of the profession, respectively. Similarly, teacher trainers shared uniform beliefs that teachers' levels of English proficiency were adequate to work effectively as teachers. No consistent patterns emerged among education policy makers and education sector specialists (e.g. curriculum developers, examination officials, etc.) based on their specific professional roles.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the study's findings which are elaborated in the context of the theoretical framework described in Chapter 2, Literature Review.

CHAPTER FIVE: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study examines current implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium government-run school education. It has explored how implementation of the policy is perceived by key stakeholders and factors which may influence its effective implementation. It has also identified policy and practice measures which may improve learning outcomes for students across the curriculum.

The significance of this research is three-fold:

First, the findings provide evidence of ineffective implementation of Bhutan's English-medium education policy. The study identifies classroom practices and other factors which contribute to this outcome. Evidence gathered from the study suggests a disjuncture between policy and practice. This should be addressed in the interest of Bhutan's children and youth whose academic and professional futures may be impeded by their school experience.

Second, the findings have identified strategies which have the potential to improve the quality of education in Bhutan by ensuring that children and young people, especially those who are disadvantaged, are able to benefit from more effective teaching-learning approaches. These approaches recognize and address, through pedagogic means, the challenges of teaching and learning across the curriculum through a second/foreign language and are supported by a wide body of international research in this area, as presented in Chapter 2, 'Literature Review'.

Third, the findings have the potential to influence the way teaching and learning is understood by key stakeholders, including policy-makers, educators, students and parents. They stress the central role of language in learning and the importance of language-rich classroom and school environments for academic learning in a second/foreign language. Through understanding and using language-sensitive approaches for second/foreign language-medium education, both teachers and students could find greater satisfaction and benefit from the teaching-learning process. This would also require doing away with embedded notions that teaching and learning should not be fun, exciting or enjoyable for both students and teachers.

This chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, the main findings of the study are presented and their significance is discussed. The next section provides

discussion and critical analysis of stakeholders' perceptions around implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. The third section discusses and analyzes factors which influence implementation of the policy in the context of the study's CLIL theoretical framework and findings. The chapter concludes with a summary.

5.2 Overview of main findings

The findings from the field study reveal significant shortcomings in the outcomes of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. These are evidenced by the many school leavers who are perceived to have low English proficiency despite many years of studying English and the study of other subjects through English. The findings describe similar shortcomings among teachers in terms of their own levels of English proficiency and capacity to implement the English-medium policy effectively. They also reveal widespread perceptions of ineffectiveness in the implementation of the country's English-medium education policy.

These findings have helped identify possible factors influencing the policy's implementation, including:

- students not attaining control over English at desired levels of schooling
- classroom practices favouring didactic teaching-learning approaches
- teachers' tendency to teach what they believe will appear on terminal examinations
- an emphasis on student learning of content rather than the acquisition of skills and competencies
- adherence to traditional teacher and student roles
- traditional and uninspiring classroom physical environments
- a lack of subject teachers' support for students' English development

The study also found a lack of awareness on the part of many stakeholders, including policy-makers, teachers, curriculum developers and teacher trainers of the concept of language-related disadvantage in education. There is also a lack of awareness, particularly among teachers, of the specific approaches needed to support more effective second/foreign language-medium learning across the curriculum. This failure to recognize, understand and address the challenges students face in learning in a second/foreign language partly explains the absence of language-sensitive classroom practices in both language and subject classes. This deficit in Bhutan's system of

English-medium education leaves students disadvantaged in terms of both their capacity to acquire English as well as to learn subject content through English.

The findings of the literature review suggest that the CLIL framework could be relevant and appropriate for addressing these shortcomings. At present, many of the main features of a CLIL approach are missing from Bhutan's system of English-medium education.

These include:

- teachers' lesson planning which accounts for both content and language learning objectives
- establishment of a language-rich classroom atmosphere which promotes both language acquisition and conceptual development through purposeful classroom interaction and students' oral production
- teachers' modeling of good language use
- fair and appropriate evaluation techniques
- the use of appropriate materials

Despite these shortcomings in the policy's implementation, Bhutan's policy framework and its underlying principles reflect a CLIL orientation. There appears to be, therefore, a contradiction between policy and practice.

Over the last two decades Bhutan's education sector reforms have drawn on high quality international technical assistance, reflecting global good practice, in areas such as curriculum development, in-service teacher education and textbook design, among others. For example, international technical assistance was used in the early 1990s during the introduction of NAPE⁴⁰. Twenty years later, *The Silken Knot*, Bhutan's policy framework for the teaching-learning of English⁴¹, was also crafted with international technical assistance to bring global good practice into the teaching-learning of English in Bhutan.

These sound policy and theoretical frameworks appear, however, not to have been meaningfully translated into practice, especially in classrooms, according to the results of this study. Bhutan's education policy states that learning should take place in an environment which nurtures students' unique talents and creativity (Centre for

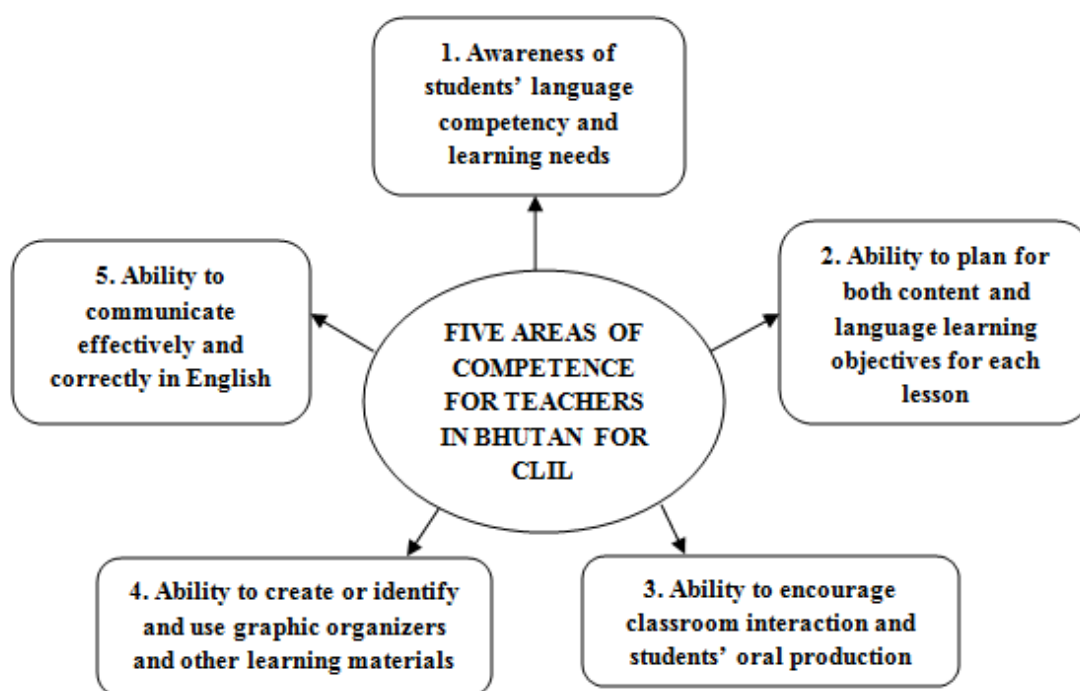
⁴⁰ British technical assistance was rendered through curriculum design experts and teachers in the field supplied through Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).

⁴¹ Prepared with technical assistance from language arts experts from the University of New Brunswick (Canada).

Educational Research and Development, 2002). This will not likely happen as long as classrooms are dominated by teacher talk and students' oral production is limited to chorusing one-word answers. The findings of this study suggest that these and other practices which are unsupportive of effective English-medium education are prevalent in Bhutan's classrooms.

These shortcomings are primarily aligned to teacher competencies and practices. Therefore, a new conceptual model of teacher competencies is proposed which is tailored to the Bhutan context. It presented below in Figure 4, 'Five areas of competence for teachers in Bhutan for effective English-medium teaching'. It defines the key competencies which Bhutanese teachers should possess in order to employ language-sensitive teaching approaches consistent with a CLIL theoretical framework. This study suggests that these competencies are required for effective teaching-learning across the curriculum in Bhutan's English-medium education system.

Figure 4: Five areas of competence for teachers in Bhutan for effective English-medium teaching



The model underscores the central role of teachers for establishing, shaping and managing the learning environment and the need for teachers to make good choices about classroom practices to support student learning in a second/foreign language. These approaches are discussed in a wide body of literature, as outlined in Chapter 2, 'Literature Review'. At the foundation of the model are recognition and understanding on the part of policy-makers, teachers and other education system stakeholders of the

challenges students face in learning across the curriculum in a second/foreign language and the need for specific approaches to address them.

The next section provides analysis of the findings pertaining to the second research sub-question:

What perceptions surround implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?

It examines within the theoretical framework used for the research stakeholders' perceptions of students' and teachers' English language proficiency. It also discusses stakeholders' perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education.

5.3 Perceptions of the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education

Students' English proficiency. There is a range in levels of English language proficiency among students in Bhutan. Within a single class, including among students who have studied together during their entire school lives with the same teachers at the same schools, there is a wide range in ability. While a few demonstrate good English proficiency and are able to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, the majority possess English proficiency below what would be expected given the number of years they have studied English and studied other subjects through English. This includes school learning during the age and stage of children's cognitive development when they can acquire language relatively effortlessly if provided with the right learning environment. This 'missed opportunity' constitutes a significant shortcoming in the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education.

In order to succeed in Bhutan's system of English-medium education, students should progressively attain the levels of English proficiency defined for specific grades. These are described in the country's policy for English learning, *The Silken Knot* (Center for Educational Research and Development, 2002). If students are able to achieve an adequate level of English proficiency by the end of primary schooling, after seven years of English-medium instruction, they would be better prepared to face the challenges of learning other subjects in secondary school where more complex language use is required. However, without adequate mastery over English upon entering secondary school, students face the dual task of acquiring both content and language

simultaneously. This double-barreled challenge stems mostly from deficiencies pertaining to language, not subject content, given that acquiring subject content depends first and foremost on the ability to effectively use language. This puts many students at risk of not succeeding academically and has serious potential consequences for their future academic and employment prospects.

The literature points to successful second/foreign language-medium education programs where proficiency in the language of instruction is not a prerequisite for learning subject content. Examples of this include French immersion in Canada and English-medium education in the Netherlands. In both examples, proficiency is achieved over time through the establishment of speech communities in classrooms (Genesee, 1994). In Bhutan, however, there does not appear to be the establishment of classroom speech communities in English which foster both language and content learning. Many Bhutanese students, particularly at the secondary level, cannot participate in classroom speech communities, nor do the teaching practices observed in this study contribute to their establishment. As an essential part of establishing classroom speech communities, Johnson and Swain (1997) describe how effective immersion education is characterized by students who possess similar levels of second language proficiency. In Bhutan, English-medium education cannot be understood to be in-line with either the Canadian immersion or Dutch CLIL models given the wide range of English language proficiency among Bhutanese students at the same grade level which, in turn, impedes the establishment of a speech community in the classroom.

In Bhutan, there are perceived differences in English proficiency levels between urban and rural students, with urban students understood to have higher levels of English proficiency overall. This is attributed to urban students' exposure to English language media and, particularly among elite families, the use of English at home. This finding is consistent with the urban-rural divide described by Uys (2006) whose research in South Africa showed higher levels of English proficiency among urban teachers. Better teacher proficiency is known to lead to better levels of proficiency among students (Klaassen, 2002, Titlestad, 1999). Given the perceived low levels of many Bhutanese teachers' English proficiency, combined with a lack of opportunity for using and practicing English in rural settings, one might assume that rural teachers' English proficiency would be lower than that of their urban colleagues. Further investigation is needed to confirm this and any effect it may have on implementation of Bhutan's English-medium education policy.

The study has also revealed stakeholder perceptions that students at the higher secondary level have adequate English proficiency overall. Given the gate-keeping function of grade 10 national board examinations, it is not surprising that students at the higher secondary level have better English proficiency. Students with lower English proficiency at the middle secondary level do not advance to the next level of schooling. Their inability to advance to the higher secondary school level may not be the result of their failure to grasp subject content, but may be due to insufficient proficiency in English.

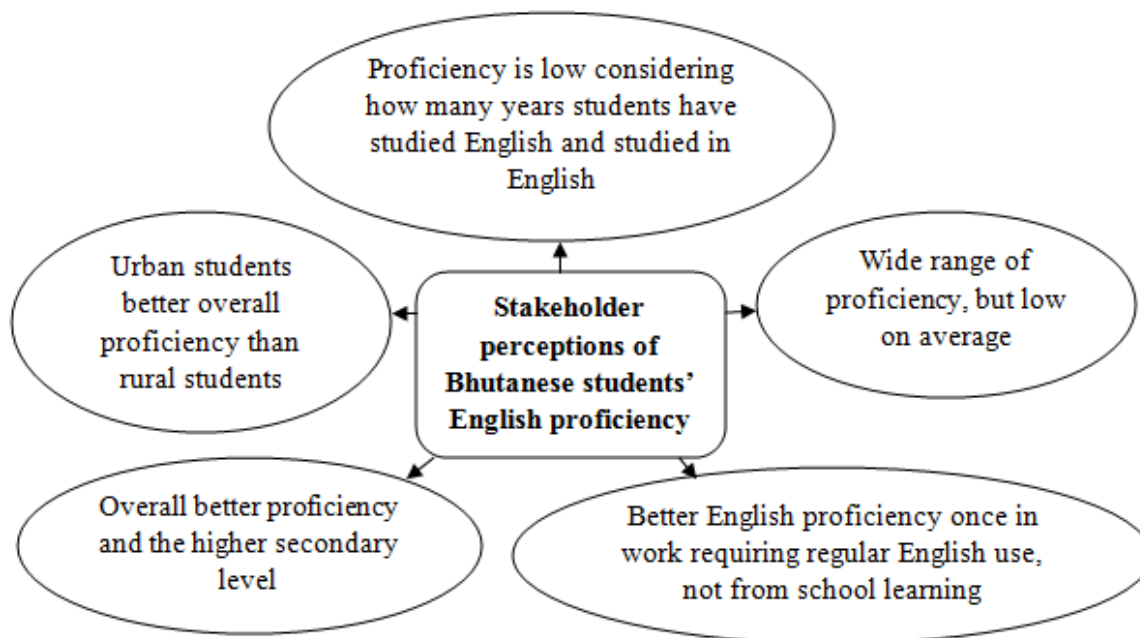
Expatriate teachers interviewed for this study believed that Bhutanese students' English proficiency at the secondary school level is low overall. Several stated that their students are unable to follow even simple instructions in the classroom. Marton and Saljo (1976) found that students with a poor grasp of the medium of instruction adopt 'survival strategies' when they are unable to comprehend what is happening in the classroom. A number of expatriate teachers commented on Bhutanese students' use of such strategies, including their need to 'get the right answer', ideally supplied by the teacher. Biggs (1990) suggests that this inhibits the acquisition of meaning. This focus by Bhutanese students on 'getting the right answer' is unsurprising if they are learning subject content in a language which they do not sufficiently understand nor are confident in using.

Many of the expatriate native-English speaking teachers interviewed for this study had extensive prior experience teaching in either French immersion programs in Canada or English second-as-a-second language programs for immigrant populations in North America. These teachers uniformly expressed dismay at the low levels of Bhutanese students' English proficiency given the number of years they have studied English. Of particular concern to them is whether their students can effectively learn in subject classes when they possess such weak proficiency in the language of instruction. Low English proficiency and limited oral production among Bhutanese secondary students was also confirmed through classroom observations undertaken as part of this study.

Finally, both anecdotally and in discussions held as part of this research, I have been told by many Bhutanese employed in jobs which require regular use of English that their English proficiency only improved once they had to use English for work. Their experience in school, on the other hand, did not equip them with adequate English proficiency, especially in speaking, for using English on a regular basis in the workplace.

Figure 5, ‘Stakeholder perceptions of students’ English proficiency’, provides a schematic representation of the common beliefs held by the study’s participants about students’ levels of English language competence.

Figure 5: Stakeholder perceptions of students’ English proficiency



Teachers’ English proficiency. The study revealed a considerable range in levels of English proficiency among Bhutanese teachers. The most common perception is that teachers’ English proficiency is below what would be expected of them to serve as models of good English for their students. This runs contrary to what the literature identifies as one of three key competencies which effective teachers should possess in second/foreign language-medium education systems: (i) good language proficiency in the medium of instruction; (ii) sound methodology; and (iii) good presentation skills (Klaassen, 2002).

Teacher trainers were outliers in terms of holding positive views of trainees’ English proficiency. They believed that most Bhutanese teacher trainees possess adequate English proficiency to perform well as teachers. This could reflect vested interests on their part to ensure that candidates in teacher training programs are shown in the best light. The literature identified in this study did not help explain this. This could, therefore, be another area for further inquiry.

The study also revealed widely held perceptions that science teachers have the highest English proficiency among secondary school teachers. This could be because they attained better marks during their own schooling and, subsequently, were steered into the

more prestigious and rigorous science stream once pursuing post-secondary studies, including teacher training. While nothing was identified in the literature related to this, based on my own experience, this may be explained by the fact that those who succeed in the science stream often do so because they have better English proficiency. This, in turn, allows them to learn more effectively across the curriculum, including in science.

There was consensus among participants that all teachers should be models of good English for their students. However, the study suggests that this is often not the case in Bhutan. Expatriate teachers in the study judged Bhutanese teachers' English proficiency to be low overall and questioned whether teachers are capable of effectively teaching students whose proficiency may, in some cases, exceed that of their own. Teachers' limited proficiency was confirmed in classroom observations of both English and subject teachers which revealed a lack of control over basic grammar and language structure at both the primary and secondary levels. The literature identifies this as a factor which negatively impacts students' achievement in second/foreign language-medium education. It indicates that teachers' inadequate second/foreign language proficiency prevents them from drawing learners' attention to their own language shortcomings and providing the language support which students need (Consolo, 2001).

Reasons for low levels of English proficiency among Bhutanese teachers include the fact that many who enter the teaching profession are those who could not qualify for other more prestigious career choices. Consequently, academically and intellectually weaker candidates go into teaching as a 'last resort' profession. This is something that has been described to me numerous times by people throughout Bhutanese society, including by those entering the teaching profession, often by way of lamenting their fate of becoming teachers.

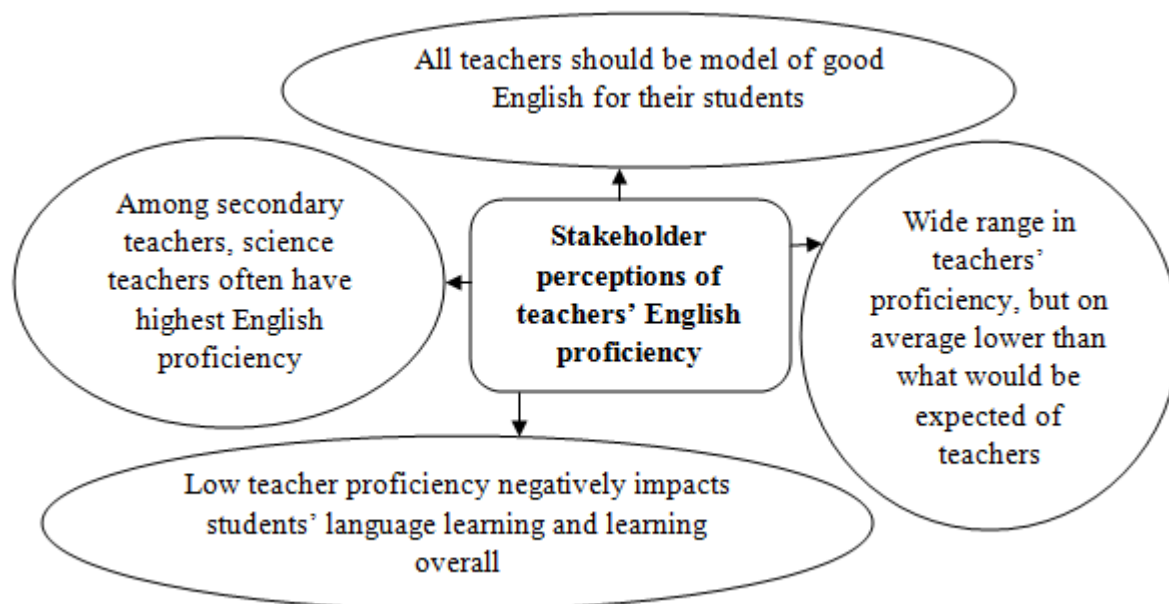
There was general consensus that teachers' low English proficiency has a negative impact on their students and helps explain students' low English proficiency. Echevarria (2004) describes the importance of teachers' being able support students' language acquisition in two ways: (i) by understanding the principles of second language development, such as the importance of oral production and interaction; and (ii) by having an awareness of the shortcomings in students' language use. The study suggests that many teachers in Bhutan lack both.

Teacher training colleges in Bhutan do not play a significant role in supporting trainees' English language development. There is a course of one-term duration offered in the first

year of teacher training called ‘English for Communication’ which provides general principles about language across the curriculum. It does not support trainees’ own English language proficiency nor equip them with strategies to support students’ language development. As described by participants in the study, the course is considered to be of little importance and not very useful. The literature indicates that teachers’ own language development and competence should be included as part of teacher training programs (Uys, 2006) toward ensuring that teachers are able to be good models of language for their students.

Figure 6, ‘Stakeholders’ perceptions of teachers’ English proficiency’, provides a summary of the study’s findings pertaining to participants’ perceptions of teachers’ English proficiency.

Figure 6: Stakeholders’ perceptions of teachers’ English proficiency



Effectiveness of the English-medium policy implementation. The findings of this study reveal widely held stakeholder perceptions that implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education is largely ineffective and that the policy is not being implemented as planned. This is evidenced by:

- teachers’ focus on student learning of content over skills and competencies
- teachers’ preoccupation with covering the syllabus (often equated with ‘getting through’ the textbook)
- a heavy emphasis on examinations

- the use of outmoded and ineffective instructional practices in classrooms
- the widespread practice of code-switching in classes that should be taught only in English

These phenomena are addressed in the literature. Teachers' focus on content rather than competencies is discussed by Ribas (2010) who refers to the use of fact-based, closed questioning by teachers which requires students to regurgitate content. Marton and Saljo (1976) describe how learners with inadequate language comprehension are unable to understand the meaning of what they are learning and, instead, try to reproduce content accurately through memorization. Biggs (1990) discusses the tendency of teachers to respond to time pressures to 'get through' the textbook or curriculum, the effect of heavy assessment in examination-driven systems and lecture-style methodologies. These are all contrary to language-sensitive approaches within a CLIL theoretical framework which emphasize students' understanding and ownership of what they are learning (Biggs and Telfer, 1987).

The importance of making the second/foreign language the medium of all (or most) activities in the classroom and school through discouraging code-switching is discussed by Baker and MacIntyre (2003). They stress that exposure solely to the second/foreign language offers students varied practice opportunities and, in turn, yields greater willingness on the part of students to produce language. This helps students overcome anxiety around communicating as they become more habituated to using English regardless of whether or not their usage is accurate all the time. My own experience as a teacher in Bhutan and from talking to Bhutanese students indicate that they have enormous anxiety around being 'called upon' in class to answer teachers' questions out of fear of getting the answer wrong and being ridiculed by peers. This dynamic is discussed by van Lier (1996) who describes how if every student response becomes a sort of mini-examination, the chances for authentic classroom discourse and students' willingness to produce language orally are greatly diminished.

The next section examines and critically analyses within the theoretical framework used for the research the factors which the study identifies as having an influence on the policy's implementation.

5.4 Factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education

This section provides analysis of the findings pertaining to the third research sub-question:

What factors influence effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education?

Students' lack of adequate English proficiency, particularly at the secondary level, is both the result of ineffective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education and, subsequently, contributes to its ineffective implementation. This is reflected in widely held stakeholder perceptions that students lack the proficiency needed to effectively learn across the curriculum despite many years of studying English and through English. Students do not effectively learn if they have poor skills in the language needed for learning (de Graff et al., 2007, Graser, 1998, Marton and Saljo, 1976) and those unable to grasp subject content due to low language proficiency are challenged by subject content and language simultaneously.

Some teachers in the study believed that while many of their students may possess adequate English comprehension, they are unable to express themselves due to poor oral skills. This endorses the findings of Tsui (1995) whose research in English-medium schools in Hong Kong found that many students suffer from classroom anxiety caused by having to master and perform in a second/foreign language at the same time. Oral production, therefore, becomes limited for many students (Celaya, 2010, Fillmore and Snow, 2000). Crandall (1998) attributes students' lack of confidence to use language in classroom discussions to the absence of classroom environments which support interaction. Other literature, including the considerable volume of research on French immersion programs in Canada, indicates that context- and language-rich learning environments are needed for effective learning in second/foreign language-medium education systems (Swain, 2001).

With Bhutan's current policy of English-medium instruction starting at kindergarten, Bhutanese students could gain adequate mastery over English by the end of primary school at grade 6 after seven years of English-medium schooling. The experience of French immersion programs in Canada demonstrates that it is possible for children to be functionally proficient in a second/foreign language even prior to that point in their schooling (Genesee, 1994). In Bhutan, having adequate proficiency in English by the end

of primary school is of particular importance for students' successful transition to secondary schooling where a greater number of subjects are studied. Bhutanese scholars Denka (1999) and Zangmo (1999) both refer to the language struggles Bhutanese students face once in secondary school if their primary education has not equipped them with the language skills they need. Other research emphasizes the importance of student discourse and oral production as key instructional requirements for English language learners (Arreaga-Mayer, 1998, August and Shanahan, 2006, Genesee et al., 2006, Gersten and Jimenez, 1994). Based on the results of this study, particularly drawn from classroom observations, neither student discourse nor oral production are emphasized in Bhutan's government-run schools.

The study has revealed four factors which influence the effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education:

- a. Teachers' classroom and instructional practices
- b. The role of subject teachers
- c. School and system issues
- d. Culture and attitudes

The next sections discuss these and draw conclusions relevant to the Bhutan context.

a. Teachers' classroom and instructional practices

The study reveals that Bhutanese students' learning is inhibited by a lack of language-sensitive classroom practices. First and foremost, this calls for the establishment of a language-rich learning environment which, based on the available literature on effective teaching-learning in a second/foreign language, is needed for learning across the curriculum.

The study suggests that the following six areas of classroom practice and characteristics impact the effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education:

- Classroom interaction
- Students' language practice opportunities
- Teachers' verification of student understanding
- Code-switching
- Classroom physical arrangement
- Teachers' movements and the use of teaching-learning aids

Classroom interaction. Classroom interactions observed in this study were largely limited to: (i) teachers asking questions and students providing one-word chorus answers; and (ii) teachers writing on blackboards and reading verbatim from textbooks. Classrooms were found to be dominated by teacher talk with little opportunity for students to speak or interact with each other or their teacher. There was also little use of language-focused classroom talk intended to draw students' attention to language. While Bhutanese curricular and teacher guides prescribe interactive teaching practices (Wangmo, 2003), it appears that the use of outmoded, didactic teaching methods remains common in Bhutan (Yanki, 1998). Pridmore (2009) similarly found that multi-grade lessons in many Bhutanese schools were mostly teacher-led and content-based and that active learning activities were often avoided by teachers who deemed them too time consuming and/or unimportant for student learning.

Possible explanations for the continued use by Bhutanese teachers of non-interactive approaches based on the data collected for this study include: (a) teachers' perceptions of a lack of student engagement or interest in interactive classrooms; (b) lack of support from heads of schools and other colleagues, particularly older, more senior teachers, for using innovative teaching practices; (c) the influence on teachers' classroom methodological choices of how they were taught as children; (d) inadequate teacher training and teacher competency; and (e) the effect of examinations.

Adherence to traditional modes of classroom management and teacher talk-dominated teaching approaches may also stem from teachers' beliefs, rooted in cultural norms and expectations, around the appropriate roles of teachers and students. Teachers have expressed to me their reluctance to use activity-based, interactive teaching methods for fear 'losing control' of the class, emphasizing the importance of having a quiet, 'disciplined' classroom. In this study, this was evidenced by comments from Bhutanese teachers to expatriate colleagues chiding them for having 'noisy' classrooms. This phenomena is described in the literature, including in Tsui's (1995) research carried out in Hong Kong where traditional notions of classroom discipline based on Chinese cultural norms and expectations were found to be strong and influential.

There appears to often be a tendency on the part of teachers in Bhutan to keep doing things the way they have always been done. The literature suggests this may occur in the absence of theoretical or practical training for teachers on alternative teaching methodologies (Morain, 1990). In Bhutan, this appears to be compounded by what is

reported, particularly by expatriate teachers, as apathy on the part of many teachers toward learning about and adopting new classroom practices. Expatriate teachers often describe Bhutanese counterparts as dismissive of activity-based, child-centered teaching approaches during school-based professional development workshops which expatriate native English-speaking teachers have led. Some Bhutanese counterparts claim that interactive teaching approaches are inappropriate for Bhutanese children because “that is not the way Bhutanese children learn”. These attitudes impede teachers’ adoption of language-sensitive teaching methodologies.

Such mindsets suggest that many teachers in Bhutan are unaware of or do not understand the shift in thinking about how children learn, driven by acceptance of social constructivism⁴² as a paradigm for teaching and learning. Teachers who accept a social constructivist paradigm encourage child-centered, active learning and social interaction with other children. They view cognitive development as a linguistic dialectical process of student learning through shared problem-solving experiences whereby children carry out tasks according to their own ability and are supported by others to complete what they are unable to do. This is what Vygotsky has called ‘scaffolding’ (Pridmore, 2009). A CLIL approach seeks to change teachers’ lack of activity characterized by a disregard for learner engagement and disinterest in establishing a language and activity rich classroom environment (Naves, 2002).

Students’ language practice opportunities. Allwright (1984) highlights the importance of a classroom environment which fosters interaction to support student learning in a second language-medium environment. Ribas (2010) found that in classrooms where teachers do most of the talking, student participation is limited to narrow parameters set by the teacher, such as giving one-word answers in response to teachers’ fact-checking questions. Many Bhutanese classrooms, particularly at the secondary level, according to evidence gathered in this study, appear to function this way. They offer students no (or few) practice opportunities, thus limiting students’ chances for using language. These findings are supported by my encounters with many Bhutanese youth who have completed the full cycle of secondary schooling, yet are unable to carry on a simple conversation in English. I attribute this, in part, to the fact that they were not encouraged to engage orally in classrooms where oral production and classroom interaction were not focused on as skills to be learned and used. Outside the school environment, these skills,

⁴² Social constructivism views knowledge as being socially created.

if learned in school, would give them the ability to engage in conversation and common everyday discourse in English.

The literature underscores how a lack of student participation in classrooms may arise from fear of getting answers wrong in response to teachers fact-based questioning (Ribas, 2010, van Lier, 1996). Those struggling to understand English and unable to express themselves in English are effectively silenced. A classroom environment which does not provide a safe and comfortable place for students to speak is not conducive to language acquisition or learning in general (Allwright, 1984). Teacher-centered classroom practices which restrict students' interaction and willingness to speak in class inhibit students' language development. This appears to be the case in many Bhutanese classrooms

Teachers' verification of student comprehension. Teachers observed in the study showed superficial verification of student comprehension. Assessment of student comprehension was done predominately by asking students if they are clear about the last thing the teacher said. In a parroting manner, students chorus-answered acknowledgement that they understood (e.g. "yes, Sir" or "yes, Madam"). The initiation-response-feedback, or IRF, teaching method (van Lier, 1996) used by many teachers in Bhutan demands uniform feedback from students via one-word chorused answers. This is not conducive to creating a classroom language environment which encourages discourse (Fillmore and Snow, 2000). No real 'discourse' can be so limited on the part of one party in a discussion.

Teachers' assessment of students' knowledge based on students' one-word chorus answers also cannot be considered to be a fair or appropriate means of evaluation. The literature identifies fair and appropriate evaluation in second/foreign language-medium learning as a pedagogic necessity (Echevarria et al., 2004, Klaassen, 2002, Short, 2002). For a teacher to accept one-word chorused answers from students as verification of comprehension suggests two key assumptions on the part of teachers: (i) the only thing students need to know is what they can display by verbal regurgitation; and (ii) further probing in a non-examination type manner to assess student comprehension is not necessary or worthwhile. This calls for a fundamental shift in the mindset of teachers about what it means to be a teacher and the nature of the learning process. The literature identifies an evolution in teachers' thinking about what they do in classrooms and how

students learn as being fundamental to the successful implementation of a CLIL approach (Cazden, 1988).

Code-switching. Code-switching was found to be prevalent with teachers using Dzongkha or other local languages to foster student comprehension, including in English language classes. A common explanation from teachers for why they code-switch is that if they do not use local languages, students will not understand what they are trying to teach them. While this may indeed help students to understand a particular concept or word in a given moment, it does little for developing learners' second/foreign language proficiency over time. It also does not conform to what the literature describes as a fundamental necessity for effective second/foreign language-medium education, that is, the sole use of the target language. In the Canadian French immersion model, for example, teachers use only French both in the classroom and around the school (Johnson and Swain, 1997). In Bhutan, lax enforcement of school language policies, where they exist, and the frequent use of local languages in classes where only English should be used are detrimental to students' English language development.

Classroom physical arrangement. The physical arrangement of classrooms observed in the study was found to be quite traditional with students sitting in rows and columns, few visual learning aids on display and, in some cases, dark classrooms. A traditional classroom arrangement of students in rows and columns was observed to be commonplace in Pridmore's (2009) review of multi-grade teaching in Bhutan. Cazden (1988) notes that classroom discussion and interaction are hampered by students seated in rows. The traditional arrangement of many Bhutanese classrooms is, therefore, not supportive of a language-rich, interactive environment which encourages students' oral production and interaction.

Teachers' movements and use of teaching-learning aids. Teachers were observed in the study to rarely leave the front of the classroom from where lessons were taught almost entirely through the delivery of facts, followed by confirming questions to which students provided one-word answers in unison. The main teaching aid was observed to be textbooks, with minimal use of blackboards and only the occasional use of other teaching-learning aids, such as overhead projectors. The visual aids observed were mostly too small to be seen by everyone in the classroom and offered few visual clues or graphic representations to meaningfully support learning.

b. The role of subject teachers

Subject teachers have an important role to play in supporting students' language development in second/foreign language-medium of education systems. This is well documented in the literature (Fillmore and Snow, 2000, Short, 2002, Al-Ansari, 2000, Uys, 2006, Crandall, 1998, Schleppegrell et al., 2004, Klaassen, 2002, Echevarria et al., 2004).

This study revealed a mixed picture in terms of the extent to which Bhutanese subject teachers feel responsible for supporting students' English language development. While many acknowledged that they have a role in helping to improve students' English, others felt that supporting students' English was not their responsibility, but solely that of English teachers. The literature explains that subject teachers' lack of attention to language is not uncommon, even if they acknowledge their role for supporting students' language development when asked about it (Uys et al., 2007).

Whether or not subject teachers feel that they should play a role in students' English language development, it appears that in Bhutan subject teachers are largely unaware of how to do so. The study reveals that subject teachers draw on limited options for supporting students' language development. This suggests that they lack the knowledge and skill for teaching the four language skills, plus strategies for promoting language learning in a second/foreign language-medium environment. For example, the pre-teaching of new vocabulary in subject classes is one of the most basic ways that subject teachers can support second/foreign language development (Uys, 2006).

Teachers observed in this study did little or nothing by way of preparing their students for the language demands of lessons to familiarize them with vocabulary they may not already know. Subject teachers' support for students' English was limited mainly to on-the-spot correction of students' grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation mistakes. Other approaches included giving generic and unspecific feedback (e.g. "try harder next time"), repeating what students said to demonstrate correct usage and correcting grammar and pronunciation. There was no evidence of subject teachers' lesson planning which targets specific language features to be used in subject classes. Subject teachers were not observed to engage in classroom activities which encourage student language production. There was no evidence of subject teachers drawing students' attention to language in their written assignments. In general, there was little support for students' English in subject classes.

The literature informs us that in order to achieve academic literacy in various subject areas, students require support from subject teachers to help them acquire the vocabulary and usage aligned to specific subject disciplines (Crandall, 1998). In Bhutan, subject teaching is often carried out as if it is assumed that students already have the language proficiency needed to learn in that subject. When students in second/foreign language-medium subject classes cannot grasp the meaning of what is being taught, they resort to surface learning strategies, such as memorization (Marton and Saljo, 1976). This appears to be what is happening for many students in English-medium subject classes in Bhutan.

c. **School and system issues**

This study identifies two school and system issues which influence implementation of Bhutan's English-medium policy:

- collaboration between teachers
- examinations

Collaboration between teachers. The literature (Crandall, 1998, Schleppegrell et al., 2004) identifies collaboration and cooperation between teachers around students' language development as a key feature of effective second/foreign language-medium education within a CLIL theoretical framework. While teachers in this study expressed beliefs in the importance of collegial collaboration and communication around student language learning, there was scant evidence of meaningful collaboration taking place in schools in Bhutan. Collaboration reported by teachers was limited to superficial exchanges of information about student progress and subject teachers seeking clarification from English teachers on their own English usage in teacher-set examination papers. There was no evidence of teachers collaboratively focusing on student language learning and/or joint lesson planning to specifically target language development.

Teachers should communicate regularly about students' competencies and learning needs, particularly around English since language is a common element for both subject and language learning. The result would be fewer disappointing surprises and criticism by subject teachers over students' language problems, such as teachers' criticism of students who do not know how to use a dictionary. Instead, teachers should understand that all teachers, not only language teachers, are responsible for supporting students' language development and skills, such as dictionary use.

Even more critical is collaboration and coordination among same-grade teachers to ensure that teachers systematically foster the development of the same language skills and competencies in their students. There was no evidence found in this study of subject and English teachers addressing common language issues in their respective classes. The literature underscores the importance of supporting and promoting in subject classes what is taught in language classes (Crandall, 1998, Schleppegrell et al., 2004). Students who are simultaneously challenged by both language and content require that all teachers be aware of and address their language needs consistently.

Examinations. Examinations were found to influence teachers' choice of teaching approaches and to reduce the likelihood that they will try new ones. By focusing on examinations, many teachers tend not to deviate from the content they believe will appear in them. This makes teachers reluctant to have students do group work and engage in other interactive activities for fear of 'running out of time' to complete the syllabus prior to examinations. As Biggs (1990) observed in Hong Kong, heavy assessment in examination-driven systems encourages surface approaches to teaching-learning, rather than meaningful learning which seeks to attain higher order cognitive outcomes (Biggs and Telfer, 1987). With examinations that mostly assess students' ability to memorize content rather than competencies, there is less need to use teaching approaches which help students make meaning of what they are learning (Marsh, 2002).

Bhutanese teachers both admit to and are reported by others to focus on the content which they believe will appear in examinations, particularly for high stakes examinations at grades 10 and 12. Several teachers and education policy makers described an emerging trend in grade 11 where teachers are 'skipping over' grade 11 content to start covering grade 12 material which they believe will appear on grade 12 examinations. MOE officials are discouraging teachers from engaging in this practice, emphasizing that grade 11 content provides the foundation for students to acquire what will be taught in grade 12. It appears, however, that the powerful pull to go directly to what will appear on examinations wins out. Additionally, in English language classes it appears that students' oral fluency is less important to teachers because it is not tested as part of examinations.

d. Culture and attitudes

The study identified two issues pertaining to culture and attitudes which influence implementation of Bhutan's English-medium policy:

- a culture of shyness
- teachers' blaming students

Culture of shyness. Bhutanese culture emphasizes modesty and respect for elders and people of higher status⁴³. It is not uncommon in Bhutan to see people partially covering their mouths with their hands and slightly bowing while speaking to someone of higher rank, such as a teacher, government official, religious figure, foreign visitor, etc. Fillmore and Snow (2000) discuss how such cultural practices spill over into the classroom setting and dissuade children from speaking in class. This is noted in the literature as being prevalent in some Asian cultures which emphasize modesty and respect for others (Tsui, 1995).

Bhutanese shyness to speak is considered to be an endearing trait of the country's culture. However, from a pedagogic standpoint it does little to support second/foreign language learning. It is important, therefore, that classrooms adhere to a different set of 'cultural rules' where both students' oral production and classroom interaction are encouraged. This should not be considered disrespectful, but rather simply as different operating principles which are both allowed and expected inside classrooms. This requires that teachers change their thinking about how classrooms are managed and have a clear understanding of how a language-rich classroom should look and sound.

Teachers' blaming students. Many teachers in Bhutan approach student learning and academic competency with an attitude of condescension and blame. I have observed the blaming of students by teachers, typically over students' learning and classroom behaviours. This often takes the form of exasperated complaints by teachers, such as, "Oh, these students are all dullards!" or "Most failed the exam". Research in Spain found that such behaviours are inherently hard on students and absolve teachers of any responsibility (Ribas, 2010). According some teachers, students are responsible for teachers' use of didactic, teacher-talk dominated instructional approaches (Tsui, 1995).

This study also suggests that many teachers in Bhutan feel that students do not take responsibility for their own learning and prefer to be 'spoon fed' by teachers. This takes place, however, in the apparent absence of any reflection on teachers' part as to why students might be so passive in class. As the literature indicates, teaching practices which

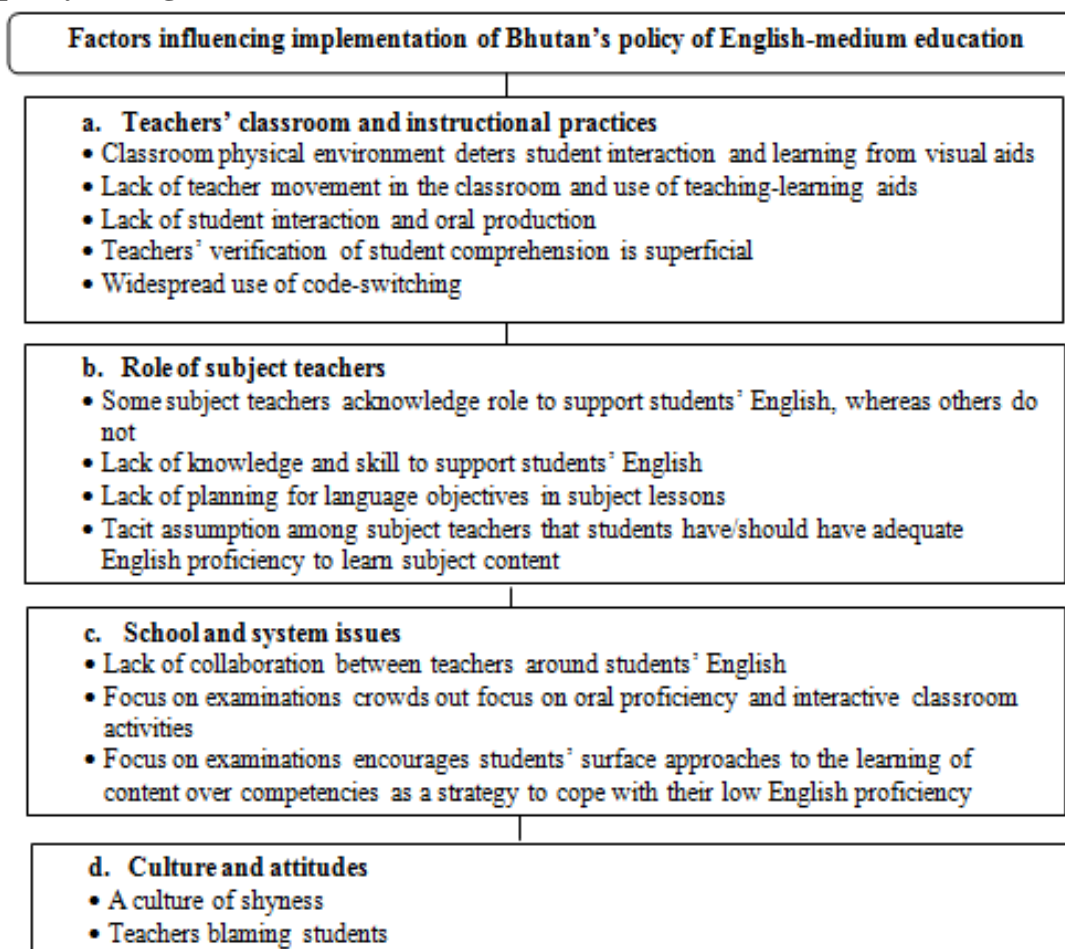
⁴³ This is consistent with traditional Bhutanese manners dictated by a code of behaviours unique to Bhutanese culture called '*Driglam Namza*' (which literally translates to 'customs and traditions').

emphasize the continuous display by students of the ‘right’ answer leaves them with few options and little motivation for communicating in the classroom (Allwright, 1984).

A lack of creative ways to engage students in the learning process comes as no surprise since many teachers in Bhutan entered the profession as a last career option. As the literature notes, professionally apathetic teachers’ negative attitudes toward students combined with career dissatisfaction have a negative effect on student learning (Ribas, 2010).

Figure 7, ‘Summary of the factors influencing implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education’, presents the key factors which this study identifies as having an effect on the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education.

Figure 7: Summary of the factors influencing the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education



5.5 Summary

This study has revealed a lack of awareness on the part of many stakeholders, including policy-makers, teachers, curriculum developers and teacher trainers of the concept of language-related disadvantage in Bhutan’s system of English-medium education. It has

also revealed a lack of awareness of the specific approaches for effective second language-medium teaching-learning consistent with a CLIL theoretical framework. A lack of attention on the part of subject teachers, in particular, to students' language needs, plus the absence of language-sensitive classroom practices in both language and subject classes impede student learning in a second/foreign language across the curriculum (Clegg, 2002).

The case of Bhutan provides a good example of what Marsh (2011) describes as the possibility of teaching in English as a second/foreign language which can yield either language potential or language problems. After more than 13 years of English-medium instruction, many Bhutanese students have inadequate control over English as evidenced by their inability to effectively communicate in English orally and in writing. Academic learning in subjects taught through English is hampered by both content and language, particularly at the secondary level. As a result of inadequate proficiency in English, many students appear to resort to surface approaches to learning (i.e. memorization). This suggests that teaching through English in Bhutan yields more language problems than language potential.

The findings of this study offer a conceptual framework of desired CLIL teacher competencies and practices specifically tailored to the Bhutan context. In-line with CLIL-grounded teaching-learning approaches for enhancing implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education, teachers in Bhutan should attain and demonstrate the following:

- an awareness of students' language competency and learning needs
- the ability to plan for both content and language learning objectives for each lesson
- the ability to encourage classroom interaction and students' oral production
- the ability to create or identify and use graphic organizers and other learning materials
- the ability to communicate effectively and correctly in English

These competencies describe the minimum knowledge and skills which all teachers, both subject and English teachers at all levels of education, should possess in order to support student learning across the curriculum in Bhutan's system of English-medium education.

The first priority is for teachers to understand and accept the challenges which students face in learning subject content through English as a second/foreign language. The second, third and fourth priority competencies pertain to classroom practices. They all share the importance of maintaining a dual focus on both language and content at all times in the teaching-learning process. The fifth competency concerns teachers' own English language proficiency which should be high enough for them to serve as models of good English for their students.

It could be argued that teachers' own proficiency should rank higher as a priority competency. However, some research (Johnson and Irujo, 2010, Norris, 1999, Lui, 2009) suggests that even if teachers' own language competency is below what would be expected or desired of them as teachers, as long as they are able to create a language-rich classroom environment which encourages student language production and interaction, then their own proficiency is less crucial for effective teaching-learning to take place.

The next chapter contains the study's main conclusions and offers suggestions for policy and professional practice. It discusses how the 'problem' of learning through English in Bhutan's schools can be turned into a 'potential' for learning both language and subject content. This is done through examination of the implications of this study for policy and professional practice. These are followed by concrete, doable measures to enhance the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

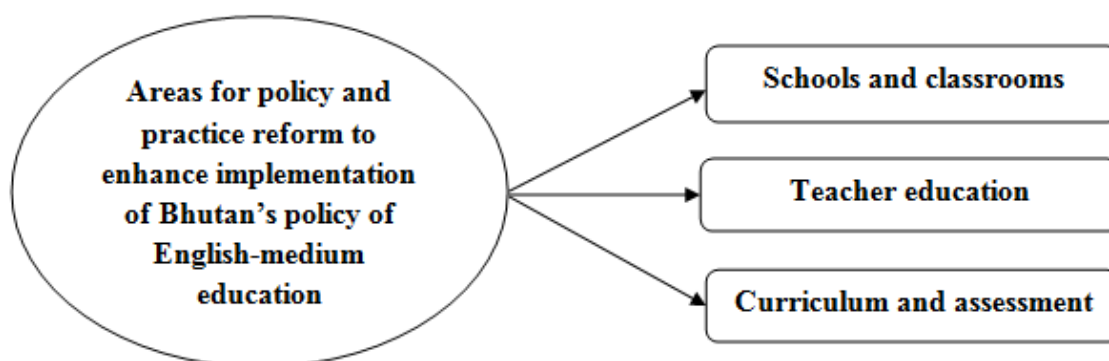
This chapter discusses the implications of the study's findings for policy and professional practice in Bhutan's education sector. It presents options for reform of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education and offers suggestions for enhancing its implementation in specific areas of education system functioning. It identifies issues which may warrant further research to build on the knowledge which this study has generated. The chapter ends with personal reflections and final conclusions.

This examination of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education concludes that the country's policy framework is sound overall. The policy describes the type of teaching-learning environment and classroom approaches, as discussed in Chapter 2 'Literature Review', which are known to be effective for both language acquisition and learning across the curriculum in a second/foreign language. These encourage children's active engagement in the classroom, the use of multiple teaching-learning strategies and strongly encourage student language production (Center for Educational Research and Development, 2002). However, if Bhutan's policy of English-medium education and its underlying pedagogic principles were meaningfully translated into practice in schools and classrooms, one would not encounter teachers' widespread use of lecture-style teaching approaches, students' chorusing one-word answers and graduates of Bhutan's education system having a tenuous mastery of English grammar, structure and vocabulary, leaving many unable to engage easily in conversation in English. On the contrary, one would find teachers of both language and subject classes anticipating students' language challenges, carefully planning lessons which address them and consistently using classroom teaching-learning approaches which support English language learning and the learning of subject content through English. This study concludes that the lack of effectiveness of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education is less attributable to shortcomings in the policy, per se, than to how the policy is being implemented in schools and classrooms and, importantly, the methodological choices teachers make each time they step into the classroom.

While the policy is deemed to be sound overall, limited reform measures aimed at bringing about changes in professional practice could be helpful for promoting greater understanding and use of language-sensitive teaching methodologies in both language and subject classes. This study recommends reform of policy and professional practice in

three key areas to bring about better learning outcomes in Bhutan’s system of English-medium education: (i) schools and classrooms; (ii) teacher education; and (iii) curriculum and assessment. These areas are shown in Figure 8, ‘Areas for policy and practice reform to enhance implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education’.

Figure 8: Areas for policy and practice reform to enhance the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education



The following sections describe suggested reforms in these areas.

6.2 School and classroom policy and practice reform measures

The experience of French immersion in English-speaking communities in Canada, far from Canada’s French-speaking communities⁴⁴, provides evidence that effective language learning and the learning of subjects through a second/foreign language are possible even if learning is largely confined to schools and classrooms (Swain, 1978). As the literature discusses, in order for this to be achieved, all teachers must be conscious of their own language use, vigilant about using only the target language⁴⁵ in the classroom and employ language-sensitive teaching approaches. Students’ oral production and classroom interaction are two key pedagogic features which support learning across the curriculum in a second/foreign language. Teachers who are unfamiliar with or unmotivated to use classroom practices which encourage oral production and classroom interaction should be equipped with methodological tools to make them a regular part of their teaching.

With the exception of a small population of urban elites, most Bhutanese students have little exposure to English outside of school. It is the responsibility of schools, therefore,

⁴⁴ Mostly in Quebec, but also in parts of New Brunswick, Ontario and Manitoba.

⁴⁵ In the case of Bhutan, the target language could be either English or Dzongkha depending on the grade level and subject being taught. Some subjects in lower primary grades are taught in Dzongkha.

to ensure that students have sufficient opportunities to hear and use English while in school. Ensuring that language policy is translated into action in schools to support both language acquisition and subject learning in a second/foreign language should be the role and responsibility of all teachers at all times. Once classroom patterns for language use are established, they become second nature for both students and teachers alike.

The following three sections highlight areas of school and classroom policy and practice which could be addressed to enhance implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. They are:

- a. limiting code switching
- b. adopting language-sensitive classroom practices
- c. encouraging collaboration between teachers around language

The common element of each is that they increase focus and attention on language use by acknowledging and addressing the dual challenges of language and content facing both teachers and students in the teaching-learning process in Bhutan.

a. Limiting code-switching

A number of schools observed in this study were reported to have a school language policy in effect. These policies were described mostly in terms of which languages are to be used in school, when and for what purposes. For example, one school designated alternate days for the use of Dzongkha and English and mandated that morning assembly activities (e.g. student speeches, announcements, etc.) and other activities outside of classrooms be conducted in one or the other of these languages. However, despite the presence of such policies in many schools, this study concludes that the use of code-switching remains prevalent, particularly in English-medium subject classes.

To address code-switching, school-level language policies should be more rigorously enforced. A first step would be to make teachers aware of the pedagogic limitations of code-switching for effective second language-medium learning which, in turn, impacts subject content learning in a second language (Echevarria et al., 2004). A second step would be for school and other education leaders (e.g. Ministry of Education officials at the central and district levels) to monitor and address code-switching in schools.

Increased attention to code-switching would require that education authorities and school leaders support teachers in a move away from it. Incentives to encourage teachers to adopt more effective teaching approaches could include additional performance pay, the

assignment of leadership and mentoring roles and other types of professional recognition, including priority for transfers to more sought-after school locations. If necessary, sanctions could be imposed for teachers unwilling to curb their use of local languages in classes where only English should be used. These varied approaches can be instituted simultaneously to ensure that the exclusive use of English in English-medium classes and other classroom and school situations becomes second nature for both teachers and students alike.

b. Adopting language-sensitive classroom practices

A second area of possible school- and classroom-level reform of policy and practice encourages all teachers to adopt language-focused activities in classrooms. Classroom-based in-service teacher training could be used to impart these skills. This is discussed in detail in section 6.3, ‘Teacher education policy and practice reform measures’. School heads could also be trained in and made responsible for supporting teachers’ use of them. Bhutan has prior experience in employing such approaches, particularly at the primary education level, as was the case with NAPE in the late 1980s. Three approaches for establishing language-sensitive classrooms across the curriculum are discussed in the following sections:

- Prescriptive classroom practices
- Attention to language in subject classes
- Language-sensitive activities in/out of classrooms

Prescriptive classroom practices. A classroom environment which is supportive of language learning and learning through a second/foreign language can be achieved through the use of prescriptive teaching-learning routines, such as ‘The Daily Cafe’ (Boushey and Moser, 2013) from the United States, discussed in section 2.8, ‘Teacher preparation for CLIL’. Another is the model described by Green (2010) using 19 teaching practices to establish norms and routines for classroom discourse, emphasizing student oral production and interaction. Even if these activities comprise only a small proportion of class time each day in Bhutanese classrooms, they would be an improvement over exclusively teacher-talk-dominated classrooms where students’ oral production is limited to one-word chorused answers and many students are reluctant to speak at all. While unskilled teachers can benefit from such prescriptive approaches, more motivated and skilled teachers can embellish them beyond how they are intended to work, thus creating even richer and more engaging learning activities for students.

Attention to language in subject classes. All teachers should be encouraged to evaluate students' language use across all subjects as a means of focusing students' attention on the importance of language in non-language classes. Subject teachers should assess language use as a percentage of students' overall grade. Written feedback on students' writing assignments could make explicit note of language problems. Students could also be asked to re-draft assignments or parts of assignments to correct their own language errors. This would help them focus their attention on language. It would also help students understand that focusing only on the subject content of written assignments is insufficient, and that the accuracy of language use is important and subject to evaluation.

Language-sensitive activities in/out of classrooms. Numerous classroom practices consistent with language-sensitive approaches within a CLIL theoretical framework could be used in Bhutanese classrooms to support English-medium learning across the curriculum. These include, for example, the use of dictionaries, questions circles and role plays, among others, that encourage students' oral production and interaction. One very simple technique is to ensure that students always answer questions using full sentences. Bhutanese students have a tendency to respond to questions with one-word answers. This makes it impossible to assess their language competence and challenges as they have not produced enough language. Other practices to support language learning can take place outside of classrooms and are important for establishing a language-rich school environment. Appendix 7, 'Classroom and outside classroom practices to support CLIL', provides a summary of practices to guide teachers, school leaders and policy-makers toward improving classroom and school environments through the adoption of language-sensitive approaches.

c. Encouraging collaboration between teachers around language

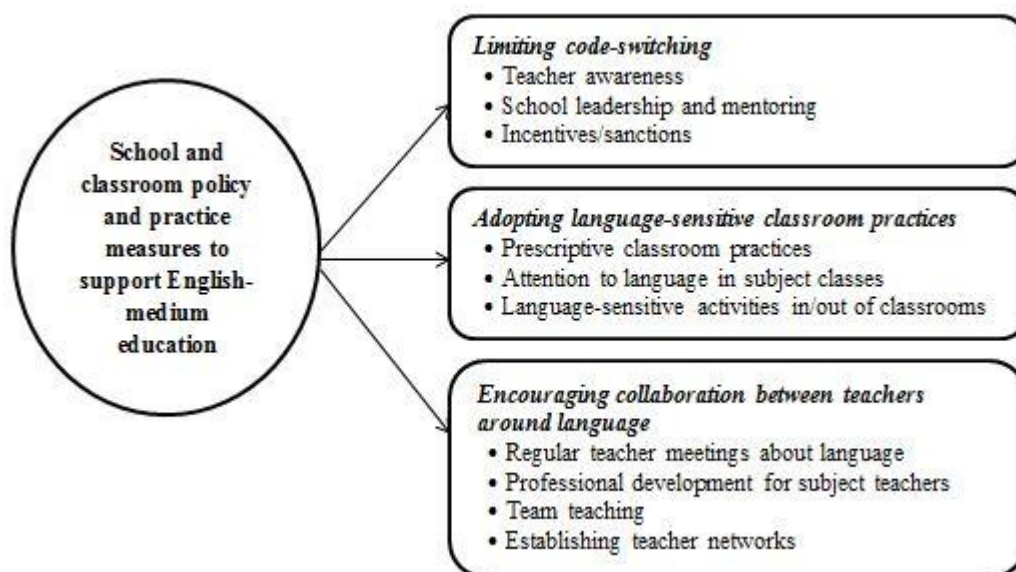
A third area of school- and classroom-level reform of policy and practice encourages greater collaboration between teachers, particularly between English and English-medium subject teachers. These could include the following reform measures:

- mandating regular meetings between teachers around students' language challenges in subject classes
- conducting on-going professional development activities to help subject teachers' acquire methodological approaches to support students' language learning in subject classes

- instituting collaborative team teaching whereby English teachers are present in subject classes as resource teachers to encourage students' oral production, bring students' attention to language issues in their writing and ensure that any language-related barriers to the learning of content are addressed and overcome
- establishing professional support networks among clusters of schools in the same geographical area to offer practicing teachers opportunities to share experiences, ideas and challenges in adopting language-sensitive teaching approaches

Figure 9, 'School and classroom policy and practice measures to support English-medium education', presents approaches for supporting more effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education in Bhutan.

Figure 9: School and classroom policy and practice measures to support English-medium education



The next section provides suggested teacher education policy and practice reform measures to support more effective implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education.

6.3 Teacher education policy and practice reform measures

The policy and practice implications of this research for teacher education programs in Bhutan are significant. This study has revealed widespread lack of familiarity among practicing teachers of language-sensitive methodologies to support students' language development across the curriculum. Teacher training must be carefully examined to

assess the extent to which the current training program equips future teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to support students' language development.

Two key policy and practice implications for teacher education are identified. First, teacher education in Bhutan should address the need to strengthen teachers' own English language proficiency. A second area of teacher education reform involves the imparting of language-sensitive practices to practicing teachers for use in both subject and language classes.

a. Improving teachers' own English proficiency during teacher training

A focus on teacher trainees' functional grasp of English, reflected in both their oral and written fluency, should be a core feature of teacher training for all teachers who use English as the medium of instruction. This could be achieved through the addition of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) training at all stages of teacher education. Second, teacher education should include continual assessment of teachers' own levels of English proficiency toward ensuring that upon graduation from teacher training all teachers' English proficiency is adequate for them to serve as good models of English for their students. To achieve this, trainees' English proficiency should be tested upon entry into teacher training and their language needs identified. Based on their assessed proficiency, trainees would be assigned to ESL classes followed by on-going proficiency testing to gauge progress.

As a benchmark of adequate proficiency which all teachers should attain prior to graduating from teacher training, the same proficiency level required for Bhutanese intending to study in English-speaking universities abroad could be adopted as the requirement for Bhutan's teachers. For example, a score of 6.5 on the IELTS examination could be used as the threshold which Bhutanese teachers must attain in order to teach in government-run schools and, importantly, to serve as models of good English for their students.

Benchmarking a specific proficiency level would bring two key benefits for overall education system functioning in Bhutan: (i) it would ensure that all teachers, both subject and language teachers, have a minimal level of English proficiency and establish consistency vis-à-vis English language capacity throughout the national teacher cadre; and (ii) it would give teachers exposure to the sort of language teaching-learning

practices through the course of their own ESL-based language learning that can be re-created with their students in their own classrooms later on.

b. In-service training in language-sensitive approaches for practicing teachers

Policy governing teacher education should promote the use of language-sensitive classroom practices for both language and subject teachers. However, the adoption of new and largely unfamiliar classroom practices to support language learning and subject content learning in a second/foreign language is difficult for many practicing teachers. Based on my own knowledge and experience of teachers in Bhutan gained over twenty-five years, this can be attributed to three main influences:

- teachers tend to rely on methods and approaches which their own teachers used when they were children in school
- teacher training is often delivered using lecture-style, teacher-centered, didactic methods, even though the topic of training is activity-based child-centered teaching methodologies
- teachers, particularly new ones, often receive little support from school leaders and colleagues when attempting to use innovative teaching approaches

Without firsthand exposure to other forms of classroom management and teaching methodologies, teachers often rely on what is most familiar to them, regardless of the methods taught in pre- and in-service training and guidance found in curricular and teaching guides. Instead, many teachers opt for the same methods used by their own teachers when they were in school. In Bhutan, given the presence of teachers from India over much of the last fifty years, the teaching approaches most familiar to many Bhutanese teachers are those which encourage memorization, teacher-dominated classroom discourse and student chorus answering. Policy governing pre-service teacher training must, therefore, aim to reverse the effect of trainees' own experience as children in school. Such policy would need to define how teachers can gain firsthand exposure to new techniques for classroom management and teaching. It should also describe how ongoing professional support will be made available to teachers to develop the skill and confidence for using language-sensitive classroom approaches.

Demonstration lessons in teachers' own classrooms. In Bhutan, teachers often attend centralized in-service training workshops during school holidays. When they return to their own classrooms, however, they do not use the new practices learned in training. One common reason which teachers give for not attempting to use new approaches is that they are constrained by the physical conditions of their classrooms, including overcrowding, unwieldy furniture, lack of space and inadequate lighting. While such classroom conditions undoubtedly pose significant constraints for teachers, they do not prevent the use of language-sensitive approaches. Much of what is doable and necessary for effective teaching-learning in a second/foreign language depends on how teachers use language and how they encourage students to use language in the classroom, not on classrooms' physical attributes.

Most teachers in Bhutan are unfamiliar with language-sensitive teaching approaches, which encourage students' oral production and classroom interaction, since they were not exposed to such approaches either as children in school nor during teacher training. It is not financially or logistically feasible for Bhutan's large corps of teachers, numbering in the thousands, to travel abroad to gain firsthand exposure to language-sensitive teaching approaches. It is feasible, however, to organize classroom-based teacher support programs to give teachers exposure to such practices in their own classrooms. Implementing such a program would require skilled classroom teachers who are familiar and comfortable with language-sensitive approaches and able to train other teachers. It would also require motivated practicing teachers interested in learning and using new methodological approaches in their classrooms. This approach was successfully adopted under the NAPE program through a network of dzongkhag (district) resource teachers who worked with practicing teachers in their own classrooms.

Mentoring. To improve how teachers perform in their classrooms, policy could mandate that a fixed number of in-class, mentor-style teaching demonstrations be carried out each year for practicing teachers. This could be combined with meaningful and deliberate follow-up by school heads or other education authorities (i.e. cluster resource teachers, district education officers). To kick start such an initiative, classroom demonstrations could be led by carefully selected and trained Bhutanese teachers working together with skilled and experienced native English-speaking expatriate teachers. The value of skilled expatriate teachers is that they typically bring well-honed language-sensitive teaching practices aimed at developing students' competencies, while simultaneously serving as models of good English. To sustain the adoption of new methods by practicing teachers,

it is important that demonstration lessons are followed-up with the mentoring of teachers in their own classrooms where they can receive immediate, specific and constructive feedback to reinforce their use of new approaches and skills.

Addressing teacher apathy toward new classroom practices. The study's findings suggest that some practicing teachers in Bhutan are apathetic about employing new approaches in their classrooms. This comes as no surprise given that many teachers in Bhutan enter the teaching profession because they have not qualified for more preferred career choices. This is despite the fact that teachers in Bhutan are civil servants with salaries, promotion opportunities and career ladders on par with other government employees. Consequently, for many teachers, making the additional effort to improve their professional practice is not a priority. Options can be considered for how to exit from the profession those whose classroom practices are detrimental to students and who demonstrate no inclination to change their teaching practices.

No doubt, this would be done for medical professionals who pose a risk to their patients' well-being, yet who see no problem with their professional practices. A comparison with the medical profession might not be entirely fair given that teaching does not typically involve matters of life and death. It remains, however, that as more people seek to enter the teaching profession out of an interest in teaching – rather than as a 'last option' career choice -- it should be possible to progressively replace teachers whose impact on children's learning is negligible or, in some instances, detrimental. In the meanwhile, to address the knowledge gaps, motivation and professional capacity of all teachers, in-service training should be provided to support them to acquire the knowledge, skill and confidence they need to use new teaching approaches.

One area of future study would be to examine options for drawing people into the profession who are highly motivated to be teachers. For this, I suggest that teacher recruitment and selection place greater focus on candidates' personality traits and attitudes over prior academic achievement and aptitude. This would be a first step in identifying and selecting people who are genuinely interested in teaching.

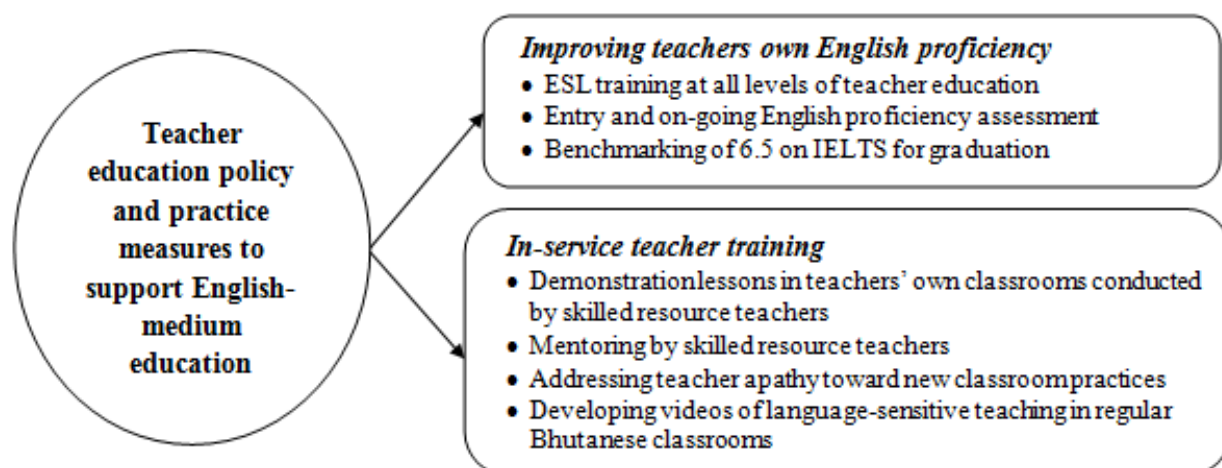
Developing videos of language sensitive practices in regular Bhutanese classrooms.

The number of resource teachers available to provide training inside other teachers' classrooms is limited. To expose both teacher trainees and practicing teachers to effective language-sensitive teaching approaches, videos filmed inside typical Bhutanese classrooms showing effective language-sensitive teaching practices could be developed

and used as part of both pre- and in-service teacher training in Bhutan. These videos would give teachers exposure to methods and techniques which any teacher can use in their own classroom to create a richer, more language-focused learning environment, despite the physical and resource limitations many face in their own classrooms. This would be a relatively cost-effective means of providing teachers with exposure to good teaching methodology. It would also allow for meaningful follow-up discussions between trainers and trainees about what they saw in the videos, which can be viewed and discussed as often as necessary.

Figure 10, ‘Teacher education policy and practice measures to support English-medium education’ summarizes approaches for supporting future and practicing teachers’ understanding and use of language-sensitive practices in classrooms in Bhutan.

Figure 10: Teacher education policy and practice measures to support English-medium education



The next section discusses policy and professional practice measures to bring curriculum and assessment in-line with a CLIL approach to promote language-sensitive teaching methods in Bhutan's schools and classrooms.

6.4 Curriculum and assessment policy and practice reform measures

Curriculum. Curriculum reform of subjects taught in English should include enhanced support for language learning through the incorporation of language-sensitive activities within a CLIL theoretical framework into new curricula, teacher guides and teaching-learning materials (i.e. textbooks). This could include the use of ‘counter balancing’ whereby teachers continually switch focus between language and content, as discussed in section 2.4. The fact that Bhutanese students, particularly at the secondary level, are challenged by both language and content in subject classes warrants more careful and

deliberate attention to language in curricula, teacher guides and teaching-learning materials across all subject areas. This approach could also benefit the teaching-learning of subjects taught in languages other than English (e.g. Bhutan history taught through Dzongkha).

In terms of the general nature of the English curricula used in Bhutan, it is recommended that English classes, particularly at the upper primary and lower secondary levels⁴⁶, adopt an approach more in-line with ESL-style teaching-learning, rather than the current focus on literature. Once students have gained sufficient functional proficiency in English and have the confidence to use English with reasonable grammatical accuracy, appropriate structures and vocabulary, as prescribed in MOE's policy framework, the study of literature would then be more appropriate and meaningful for learners.

For example, an alternative to the heavy use of literature could be the use of music lyrics for language teaching. 'Cloze' exercises, where words from song lyrics or other writing, are omitted⁴⁷ so that learners must identify missing words based on the context of the overall piece, are both useful and enjoyable for learners. Songs played in class give students the opportunity to improve their listening skills and, at the same time, practice reading from handouts of the printed lyrics. Once a cloze exercise is completed and the missing words are identified, students' focus can be drawn to the meaning of the song. This offers rich opportunities for whole class discussion as well as numerous other activities, including role playing of the events described in songs, which encourage students' oral production and classroom interaction. Young people are particularly drawn to music, particularly music that is popular for their age group. Through the use of music, students' attention is keenly focused on learning materials which are rich in language.

Assessment. Two possible shifts may be considered in the area of assessment toward enhancing implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education. First, English oral proficiency should be assessed at all levels of education. Given the heavy use of examinations in Bhutan, the exclusion of oral proficiency as part of examinations diminishes the importance of speaking as a language skill to be mastered and an essential part of language learning. For high-stakes examinations at grade 10 and 12, some proportion of marks should be based on students' oral language competence. Assuming

⁴⁶ grades 4-6 and 7-8, respectively

⁴⁷ The omission of words can be random (e.g. every 5th or 8th word) or deliberate (e.g. articles, prepositions, etc.)

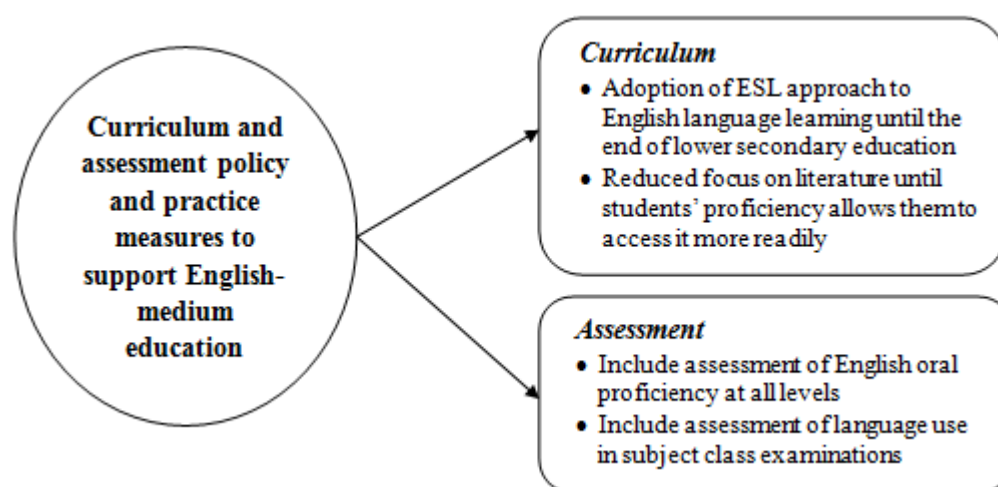
that Bhutan's use of examinations will prevail for some time to come, testing oral proficiency as part of examinations will bring increased focus on it as a key language competency. This would help strengthen implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education.

To achieve this, the Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) should identify an objective approach to testing students' oral proficiency. Objectivity would be essential for two reasons: (i) in many cases, teachers lack adequate proficiency to be reliable examiners of students; and, relatedly, (ii) given the high stakes nature of examinations at grades 10 and 12, it would be important to ensure objectivity of testing in the minds of both parents and students.

A second assessment area which warrants reform concerns the use of students' language in subject class examinations. Subject teachers report that they usually do not assess language as part of their marking of subject class examinations; rather, they focus solely on whether students are able to demonstrate adequate knowledge of subject content regardless of language use. A focus on language in subject class examinations would signal to both students and teachers that language is important and would help focus their attention on language in English-medium subject classes.

Figure 11, 'Curriculum and assessment policy and practice measures to support English-medium education', presents these options to promote more language-sensitive approaches in Bhutan's education system.

Figure 11: Curriculum and assessment policy and practice measures to support English-medium education



Appendix 8, ‘Other policy and practice reform measures’, offers suggestions for activities which draw on potentialities identified in other sectors, particularly tourism, to expand Bhutanese students’ exposure to English in meaningful and authentic ways outside of schools and classrooms. Students in most parts of Bhutan have limited exposure to English outside of school. Many tourists who visit Bhutan are native English speakers or are speakers of other languages, yet have good English proficiency. Interaction with tourists can be used to create opportunities for Bhutanese students to engage in authentic communication in English. Two proposed measures are presented: (i) classroom activities which prepare students for more meaningful and productive interaction in English with tourists; and (ii) a teacher-tourist visitor program for short stays in Bhutanese schools by practicing native English-speaking teachers from Western countries who would establish ‘chat corners’ where students have opportunities for authentic communication in English.

This section has discussed three broad areas for policy and practice reform to enhance implementation of English-medium education in Bhutan. They focus on schools and classrooms, teacher education and curriculum and assessment. They are identified, based on the findings of the study, as doable measures to bring about meaningful change in Bhutan’s schools for improving implementation of the country’s English-medium policy. Appendix 6, ‘Suggested actions for enhancing implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education’, presents a summary of measures to enhance implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education.

The next section explores areas for further research and inquiry based on the findings of this study.

6.5 Areas for further research and inquiry

This research into the implementation of Bhutan’s policy of English-medium education raises a number of issues which may warrant further research and inquiry. Three are discussed below:

- urban-rural differences
- teacher education
- bilingual education

Rural-urban differences. The majority of Bhutan’s population is still rural. As English is less prevalent in rural areas where students have few, if any, opportunities to practice

English outside of school, more emphasis could be placed on ensuring that classrooms in rural areas are as language rich as possible. Students who eventually transition from rural to urban/peri-urban areas to continue their education should be able to do so without being unduly disadvantaged by language.

An area for future inquiry would be to examine what happens when children from rural schools enter urban/peri-urban schools, typically at the first grade of lower secondary school⁴⁸. It would be important to better understand the specific challenges they face by learning through English and identify ways to support them. One approach would be to investigate options for drawing skilled and motivated teachers into rural areas toward ensuring that teachers in rural areas are among the most capable and motivated for supporting students' language development.

Teacher education. A second area for future research concerns current practices in teacher training colleges. Future inquiry could seek to better understand how teacher education programs prepare future teachers to support language learning across the curriculum. This could include examination of how teaching approaches described and prescribed in MOE curricular documents, teacher guides, teaching-learning materials and assessment manuals are imparted in teacher training programs. This could help address any disjuncture between prescribed teaching-learning approaches which teachers are expected to adopt once in schools and those used in teacher training institutes.

Bilingual education. A fourth area for future research concerns the challenges which many Bhutanese students face in the studying of two additional languages upon entry into school. Dzongkha is not the mother tongue spoken by many Bhutanese children. These children are confronted with two foreign languages upon entering school. Future research could examine the learning challenges some children in Bhutan face across the curriculum given the need to quickly acquire two foreign languages simultaneously from kindergarten, and identify strategies for ensuring that children are able to become functionally proficient in both languages by a pre-determined point in their education, based on evidence of how this is successfully achieved elsewhere (e.g. Netherlands where students learn English plus a second European language other than Dutch).

It is hoped that this study will ignite research agendas in these areas.

⁴⁸ grade 7

6.6 Personal reflections

The journey for me as a researcher conducting this study has been enriching and informative on many levels. My 25-year association with Bhutan and involvement in the development of its education sector offer me valuable insights accumulated over time. These have shaped my thinking and informed my beliefs, both of which have been applied in carrying out this research. The opportunity to undertake a systematic inquiry into the role of English as a medium of instruction in Bhutan, a fundamental aspect of Bhutan's education system, has helped me to better understand the current challenges and opportunities facing decision-makers and education practitioners on both a daily basis and over the longer term to improve government-run education in the country.

Twenty-five years after first coming to Bhutan as a teacher in two remote schools, I occasionally meet my former students. They are now middle-aged men and women, some in high-status professions (e.g. two are district court judges) with families of their own and children in school. One thing that I believe I taught them when they were my students was not be afraid to speak English. Some thank me for this all these years later and tell me how it is a skill which has since served them well in both their educational and professional endeavours. My wish is that all children and young people in Bhutan's system of English-medium education would be able to say the same thing many years after finishing school.

If I had the opportunity to carry out this study again, I would do two things differently. First, I would spend more time in classrooms documenting teachers' use of English and the support they give for students' English language development. This would provide more robust data about what happens inside classrooms and more forcefully supplement my own understanding and perceptions based on the dozens of visits to classrooms and schools I have undertaken over the years outside of this study. Second, I would have spent more time examining what happens in teacher training institutes. While this study included interviews with teacher educators, it would have benefitted from observations and data collected in teacher training sessions and through discussions with trainees.

As a researcher, this study has taught me to validate and explore my own assumptions about education through what is described and discussed in the literature on CLIL. By being made aware of and assessing practices elsewhere, I have understood that the challenges facing Bhutan as it struggles to successfully implement its policy of English-medium education are not unique. Rather, the experiences of other countries, particularly

those in the developing world, such as Namibia, are valuable for helping Bhutan identify and manage its own next steps for improving implementation of its policy of English-medium education.

I have also come to better understand why teaching across the curriculum through a second/foreign language requires special skills and effort on the part of teachers. These skills can be learned. In Bhutan, teacher trainees, who themselves are products of a didactic, teacher-centered, examination-driven system which places little or no emphasis on the role of language, must ‘un-learn’ the out-dated approaches used to teach them when they were in school. These must be replaced with new teaching methods which encourage students’ oral production and classroom interaction. By moving from cheerless, stressful, fear-inducing and boring teaching methods toward more engaging, exciting and enjoyable methodologies described in a CLIL theoretical framework, teachers will improve their teaching and gain greater professional satisfaction. Similarly, not only would students’ learning increase, but their enjoyment of the learning process would be enhanced as well.

There is a growing sense of awareness in Bhutanese society, as reflected in social media, of some of the current limitations of Bhutan’s government-run education system. Many comment on the extent to which the education system does not foster creativity, critical thinking or analytical skills among students. Of particular concern is the system’s excessive focus on examinations and the extent to which examination-heavy assessment practices run contrary to the objectives of fostering children’s intellectual and academic progress. As this study observes, Bhutan’s heavy focus on examinations also runs contrary to the effective and meaningful acquisition of English. It fosters a near complete disregard for the development of oral language skills and effectively crowds out classroom activities deemed unimportant for preparing students for examinations.

The classroom observations carried out as part of this study’s data collection, plus school visits I have undertaken over the years, have offered me a noteworthy, and rather ironic, insight. Despite the considerable emphasis in Bhutan on ‘*Driglam Namzha*’, which translates into “order, discipline, custom, rules, regimen” (Wikipedia, 2013), I have found many classrooms, especially at the primary level, to be quite unruly. Children who are free from other classes peer into classroom windows, while those inside fidget, switch seats, toss things at one another and pay scant attention to the lesson being taught. Teachers are often left to just stand at the front of the classroom shouting at children to

be quiet when not randomly selecting individuals to answer fact-drive, examination style questions.

This suggests to me an overall lack of classroom management on the part of some teachers which aims, first and foremost, to ensure that all students are paying attention and engaged in the learning process. This comes as no surprise, however, given the uninspiring learning environment of many classrooms where children parrot answers, do not understand much of what is being taught given language barriers, sit in abject fear of being ‘called upon’ and copy verbatim what is read aloud from textbooks and written on the blackboard.

It is ironic that many teachers in Bhutan shy away from teaching approaches which encourage student oral production and classroom interaction fearing a loss of control in the classroom when, in fact, many classrooms already appear to be lacking focus and control. Classrooms where children are encouraged to speak and interact may indeed at times be ‘noisier’ than those where teachers do most (or all) of the talking. In such classrooms, however, skilled and confident teachers are always in control. Not only would children’s active engagement through oral production and interaction foster more learning, as the literature on second/foreign language medium education attests, it would also make learning more enjoyable. I believe that, at present, many children in Bhutan’s schools lose out on both counts.

Many expatriate teachers come to Bhutan with high expectations of Bhutanese students’ levels of English and overall academic competence. These are quickly dashed after a short time in schools when they gain a more realistic understanding of education in Bhutan. As one expatriate teacher noted in a personal communication explaining reasons for not extending her contract to teach for a second year in Bhutan:

Few, if any, of us were ready for the incongruities between the GNH-inspired vision of education expressed to us on our arrival and the dysfunctional, even reprehensible, reality of schooling in Bhutan...The most common complaints about the system here are, in no particular order: the lack of effective oversight by administrators; the curriculum; and, most damaging of all for higher secondary students, the exam system. (Shmitt, 2013)

Expatriate teachers report that once they have gained a more realistic understanding of how Bhutan’s education system works, much of their work in schools is an uphill battle. Many state that they are resigned to ‘do their best’ with their own classes of students,

recognizing that the shortcomings they encounter each day in schools are, in fact, systemic issues which can only be changed overtime. Much of what they report as frustrating about teaching in Bhutan suggests challenges related to problems of low levels of professionalism in the teacher cadre and negative attitudes which some teachers hold toward both students and their profession.

Many expatriate teachers attribute this to the fact that a large proportion of teachers in Bhutan joined the profession as a last option career choice. This, coupled with the fact that many Bhutanese teachers rely on the out-dated, didactic, uninspiring and often fear-inducing methods which were used by their own teachers when they were in school, leads to unsatisfactory experiences in classrooms and schools for both teachers and students alike.

What may be second nature for expatriate teachers from the West vis-à-vis the use of child-centered, activity-based teaching methods which encourage students' oral production and classroom interaction are completely foreign to most teachers in Bhutan. It is for this reason that concerted effort must be made to give teachers firsthand exposure to different ways of teaching. It is hoped that such efforts will yield not only improved learning outcomes for students, but also greater professional satisfaction for teachers who will discover the enjoyment and fun of teaching children who are willing and eager to learn and for students whose creativity, inquisitiveness and individuality will find greater expression. Bhutanese children and youth deserve more from the education they are receiving, especially in terms of learning English as the medium of instruction for most subjects.

6.7 Final conclusions

This study concludes that the implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education reflects a disjuncture between policy and practice. Official government policy clearly states that the teaching of English is to be done in a language-rich environment where students are able to use language in different ways through purposeful dialogue in a social context. What is actually happening in classrooms appears to be markedly different from what is described and prescribed by education policy. Efforts by subject teachers to support students' English in subject classes is almost non-existent, at worst, and superficial and lacking in pedagogic impact, at best. Many Bhutanese teachers justify the use of didactic, teacher-centered approaches in the classroom because "that is

the only way Bhutanese students can learn”. This is patently untrue based on my own experience as an English teacher in Bhutan’s schools.

When I taught English in Bhutan in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I focused heavily on students’ oral language production using various approaches, including questions circles, role plays, dialogues, story chains and song lyrics, among others. Occasionally, my teacher colleagues commented that my classroom was ‘too noisy’. I was satisfied and proud that an initially impossibly shy and passive group of students had transformed within weeks into a room full of ‘chatter boxes’. Most importantly, my students appeared to enjoy learning English and I enjoyed teaching them. This tells me that Bhutanese children are no different from children anywhere else. Given the right learning environment, Bhutanese children can be highly proficient in English, excel academically across the curriculum and discover the fun of learning. A poignant moment in a focus group discussion with secondary students conducted for this study occurred when I asked a group of students if classroom learning was fun. The answer was a resounding “no”. I found that to be both unfortunate and unnecessary.

Key stakeholders, particularly policy makers, should understand the need for language-sensitive teaching-learning approaches in second/foreign language-medium education. I hope that this research helps to pave the way in Bhutan for the development of a teaching force with the language-sensitive awareness, language and methodological skills and motivation needed for effective teaching-learning in the country’s English-medium education system.

Education policy-makers in Bhutan are confronted with a daunting task as they seek to ensure that both English and Bhutan’s national language, Dzongkha, are recognized, included and mastered as core features school learning. That a sizeable proportion of children enter school with limited, if any, familiarity of either language requires careful planning and, in particular, specialized knowledge and skill on the part of teachers tasked with supporting their learning in two foreign languages simultaneously. Many of the suggestions which this research makes for improving the teaching-learning of English could be applied equally to the teaching-learning of Dzongkha.

Bhutan has achieved much in the education sector over the last two decades, particularly in terms of the remarkable enrollment gains and expansion of its education infrastructure. Much of the sector’s policy development and philosophical underpinnings of the pedagogic approaches it promotes represent good practice globally. What is needed now

is additional effort to turn a well-articulated vision and policy describing how education should be and what learning can look like into reality in Bhutan's schools and classrooms. With well-informed decision-making leading to targeted reform measures to change professional practice in key areas, it can happen.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide

Preamble: The following 15 questions were asked to most respondent (see Box X, above). This allowed triangulation of data across all key respondents. Other questions were asked to individual respondents based on their particular area(s) of expertise and professional responsibility.

1. What is your overall impression of Bhutanese students' English proficiency?
2. How effectively would you say Bhutan's policy of English-medium education starting in kindergarten to grade 12 is being implemented?
3. What challenges do students face learning all subjects through English?
4. Respond to this statement: At the secondary school level, students are a battling both language and content.
5. Respond to this statement: In an English-medium system, all teachers are English teachers.
6. At which point in the 13 years from kindergarten to grade 12 would you expect children to have good control over English?
7. Is there a role for subject teachers to support English language development?
8. What is your impression of teachers' own English proficiency?
9. Would it be useful to include English language development and proficiency testing in teacher training programs?
10. I note limited oral proficiency among secondary school students who can tell me about a sonnet, but can't give me clear, grammatically correct instructions to get from A to B. What do you attribute that to?
11. Would it be useful to test oral fluency at the secondary level to encourage greater focus on it?
12. What are your thoughts regarding the teaching of English using an ESL approach vs. a literature approach?
13. Would it be useful to have a taxonomy of teaching routines for teachers?
14. Despite many reforms in Bhutan's education system over the last 20+ years, why have things not changed much in terms of classrooms practices?
15. Over the next five years, what priorities would you identify for enhancing English-medium education in Bhutan?

Appendix 2: Focus group discussion guide

A. English teachers

Part 1: Introduction script

Good morning/afternoon. My name is XXX and I'm here today with my colleague, YYY. We are very pleased you have agreed to join us today. We are here to listen to your views on how Bhutan's policy of English-medium education can best serve the students of Bhutan. The focus group is part of research I am undertaking toward a Doctor of Education degree at the University of London.

We want to hear from everyone in the room and there are no right or wrong answers. We are pleased you can be part of this group because we think you have important ideas regarding this topic of discussion. Don't hesitate to speak up when you have a point you would like to make.

I will be moderating the session and we will be keeping a record of this discussion so that I don't have to take notes. I like to follow what is being said and then go back later to review what you said again so I can accurately convey your ideas and opinions.

I will not refer to any participant by name in the report I prepare, and information will be kept confidential and used only by me to prepare my report. I will be making recommendations about how to improve students' English language proficiency and will make a copy of those recommendations available to you.

Part 2: Questions for the discussion

Question #1: I would like to begin by going around the table and asking each of you to tell us a little about yourself, in particular, how long you have been teaching, what classes you are teaching this year and any other basic information you wish to share by way of introduction.

Question #2: I would like to hear your feelings about your students' English language proficiency. How well do your students speak English?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Can most of your students read and write English with understanding and reasonable accuracy?
- Can most of them speak to you fluently in English and with confidence?
- How well do they understand you when you speak English to them?
- How well can they read and understand the textbooks in English?

Question #3: Do your student have enough English language proficiency to learn well in school?

FOLLOW-UP:

- If yes, what helped them to become proficient? If no, what hindered them?

Question #4: Are there any subjects in which lack of English language proficiency particularly prevents them learning well?

FOLLOW-UP:

- How do you know?

Question #5: Do you think that subject teachers have any role in supporting their English language development?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Have you ever communicated or collaborated with subject teachers on the matter of students' English? If so, can you tell me about that?
- Can you think of any ways that subject teachers can support students' English development, in particular during subject classes?

Question #6: I have found that many Bhutanese students have difficulty communicating verbally in English to me. What do you think are the reasons for that?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Are oral communication skills emphasized in English classes? If not, why?
- What changes would be needed anywhere in the education system to put increased focus on the development of oral communication skills?

Part 3: Summary script

This has been a very interesting discussion for me and I hope for you as well. Let me briefly summarize what I have heard from you today, and please let me know if there is anything that you think needs to be further clarified.

[Moderator then summarizes the discussion]

I would like to thank you for sharing your thoughts with me on the issues which were raised. I will share my findings with you.

I wish you all a good day/evening.

B. Subject teachers

Part 1: Introduction script

[same as for Focus Group #1]

Part 2: Questions for the discussion

Question #1: I would like to begin by going around the table and asking each of you to tell us a little about yourself, in particular, how long you have been teaching, what classes you are teaching this year and any other basic information you wish to share by way of introduction.

Question #2: I would like to hear your feelings about your students' English language proficiency. How well do your students speak English?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Can most of your students read and write English with understanding and reasonable accuracy?
- Can most of them speak to you fluently in English and with confidence?
- How well do they understand you when you speak English to them?
- How well can they read and understand the textbooks in English?

Question #3: Do your student have enough English language proficiency to learn well in school?

FOLLOW-UP:

- If yes, what helped them to become proficient? If no, what hindered them?

Question #4: Are there any subjects in which lack of English language proficiency particularly prevents them learning well?

FOLLOW-UP:

- How do you know?

Question #5: Do you think as subject teachers that you have any role in supporting students' English language development?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Have you ever communicated or collaborated with the English teachers on the matter of students' English?
- If so, can you tell me about that?
- Can you think of any ways that you as subject teachers can support students' English development?

Question #6: I have found that many Bhutanese students have difficulty communicating verbally in English to me. What do you think are the reasons for that?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Are oral communication skills emphasized in English classes? If not, why?
- What changes would be needed anywhere in the education system to put increased focus on the development of oral communication skills?

PART 3: Summary script

[same as for Focus Group #1]

C. Students

Part 1: Introduction script

[same as for Focus Group #1]

Part 2: Questions for the discussion

Question #1: I would like to begin by going around the table and asking each of you to tell us a little about yourself, in particular, how long you have been at this school, your

favorite subject and any other basic information you wish to share by way of introduction.

Does anything prevent you from learning well in the classroom?

What helps you learn well in the classroom? What makes it difficult to learn well in classroom? (have to use Dzongkha if they don't understand the question) (if they don't refer to language, then put in a probe (i.e. do you always understand what your teacher says when he/she is speaking English?). Don't want closed questions. Less I say the better.)

Question #2: You all take subject classes such as chemistry, geography, history, etc. which are taught in English. During a subject class, have you ever felt that you were not able to understand something because you didn't understand the English?

Question #3: When you are in your subject classes, do the teachers ever point out any errors you make in English or do any other things during the class to help improve your English?

FOLLOW-UP:

- Can you think of any way in which teachers in your subject classes could help you improve your English?

Question #4: I notice in Bhutan that students are often shy to speak English. Of course, it is sometimes hard to speak with a stranger, especially a foreigner. But can you think of any other reasons why students find it difficult to use English for verbal communication?

Part 3: Summary script

[same as for Focus Group #1]

Appendix 3: Classroom observation guide

Part 1: Classroom Organization

1. Draw or describe the room arrangement.
2. Describe what you see and hear in the classroom and how you feel about what is taking place.
3. Describe any classroom routines and procedures.

Part 2: Lesson and Instruction

1. How does the teacher begin the class? Do the students appear engaged? Are all students able to follow the lesson with understanding?
2. Does the teacher make the lesson's objectives clear to the students?
3. Describe instructional strategies the teacher uses that you found effective.
4. Time on task – for how much of the lesson time are student's actively learning?
Are there any opportunities for social learning to support language development (e.g. group discussion work)?
5. Do all students participate in the lesson? Do they do the learning tasks? On the seating chart, place an X on students called on to answer questions during the lesson.
6. Does the teacher make any specific references to students' English?
7. Does the teacher pre-teach any key vocabulary that students might not know?
8. Explain how the teacher gives directions to the class. Do all students understand these directions?
9. Does the teacher assess student learning during a lesson. If yes, how?
10. On the chart showing room arrangement, sketch the teacher's movement during the lesson.
11. Does the teacher use any learning materials in this lesson? If yes, how?
12. Record examples of how the teacher talks to the students and how the students talk to the teacher and to each other. Do student speak fluently and with confidence?
13. Give examples of feedback the teacher gives students.
14. Does the teacher encourage students to communicate with him/her or each other during the lesson?
15. What opportunities are given for students to speak in English to the teacher during the lesson/speak to each other. Do the students and the teacher speak in their own language at all?
16. How does the teacher close the lesson?

Appendix 4: Description of schools included in the study

1. Chamzamtog Lower Secondary School

This school is an urban day school located in central Thimphu, Bhutan's capital city. The school ranges from grades PP to 8. The total school enrollment is 1,152, comprised of 747 male and 805 female students. The school has 60 teachers, of which 59 Bhutanese and 1 non-national (Indian). The school is comprised of six buildings made up of a central administrative block with the principal's and vice-principal's offices, staff room and administrative offices. There are four double-story classroom blocks of six classrooms each and two low-rise (i.e. single story) bungalows of older construction housing four classrooms each. There is a moderate sized football ground in the middle of the school compound, as well as basketball and volleyball courts, and student toilets in the school grounds.

2. Punahka Higher Secondary School

This school is a peri-urban boarding school located in Punahkha Dzongkhag approximately 2.5 hours drive from Thimphu, Bhutan's capital city. The school ranges from grades 9 to 12. The total school enrollment is 696, comprised of 353 male and 343 female students. The school has 38 teachers, of which 32 Bhutanese and 6 non-national (5 Indian/1 American). The school is comprised of four main buildings made up of a three-story central administrative block with the principal's and vice-principal's offices, staff room, administrative offices and classrooms. There are three double-story classroom blocks of four classrooms each. There is a moderate sized football ground above the main school buildings, as well as basketball and volleyball courts, and student toilets in the school grounds.

3. Kuzshuzchen Middle Secondary School

This school is a peri-urban boarding school located in Thimphu Dzongkhag approximately 30 minutes drive from Thimphu, Bhutan's capital city. The school ranges from grades PP to 10. The total school enrollment is 428, comprised of 221 male and 207 female students. The school has 22 teachers, all of which are Bhutanese. The school is comprised of six main buildings made up of a two-story central administrative block with the principal's and vice-principal's offices, staff room and administrative offices. There are four double-story classroom blocks of four classrooms each. There is a

moderate sized football ground above the main school buildings, as well as basketball and volleyball courts, and student toilets in the school grounds.

Figure 12: Children in a typical primary school classroom



Figure 13: Students in an English-medium lower secondary school English class



Appendix 5: Data codes and sub-codes

| Codes | Sub-codes |
|--|--|
| Students' levels of English proficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boarding helps improve students' English • comparison to Dzongkha proficiency • difference between private and government schools • expected level or comparison to prescribed standard • family background • fear of making mistakes • girls' issues • grade 11-12 students have better English • lack of exposure and opportunities to practice • lack of reading culture • level deteriorating or poor • level is good • need for more teaching-learning materials • proficiency is all due to teachers' input in schools • promotion without merit • range of ability • reasons • South Asia/regional comparison • speaking-writing • students' lack of originality and free thinking • students not understanding the teacher • teachers' misconceptions of fluency • urban-rural differences |
| Effectiveness of implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adherence • code switching • comparisons to elsewhere • Dzongkha's/other languages' role • expectations • mostly effective • multi-lingualism in Bhutan • not effective • reasons • role of subject teachers • validity of policy • ways to improve implementation |
| Role of subject teachers to support English language development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • barriers to subject teachers supporting English • changes needed for subject teachers to support English • collaboration with English teachers • directives for subject teachers to support language • English teachers' belief that subject teachers support English • examples of how it is happening • examples of how this is not happening • should mark for language • should not mark for language • teacher training • view that it is English teachers' responsibility • what subject teachers can do • change type of exam questions -- more explanation questions • correcting language in homework and assignments • encourage children to speak and interact |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on language while teaching • on-the-spot correction • pre-teach vocabulary • role model language • teach reading strategies (i.e. main idea) • use dictionaries • yes have role, but not happening • yes, subject teachers have a role |
| Students battle both content and language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree • disagree • examples of students not doing well because of language • not a big issue • reasons for this • ways to mitigate this |
| Priorities next 3-5 years to improve English-medium education in Bhutan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change classroom practices • changes to the learning program and materials • exposure to english outside school • focus on primary education • focus on teachers • proficiency screening for teachers • reduce class sizes • reduce teaching load • reforming exam and assessment system • stopping use of other languages • teacher recruitment • teacher training |
| Students' control over English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adherence to policy of English medium • adherence to prescribed standards • between grade 4-7 (magic window) • difference with French immersion in Canada • dual roles of Dzongkha and English • examples from elsewhere • should have control by grade 10 • should have control by grade 4 or 5 • should have control by grade 6 • should have control by grade 7 • should have control by grade 8 • should have control by grade 9 • is that acceptable (i.e. being proficient by then) • it is happening • it is not happening • role of mother tongue • role of parents and community • what is needed to be proficient by end of primary |
| Classroom practices have not changed in 25 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree with that observation • class time not fun • cultural norms • do not agree -- some teachers are very good • effect of exam system • effect of textbooks • focus on 'getting through the syllabus' • heavy workload of teachers • influence of India |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issues with in-service training • lack of motivation on the part of teachers • lack of support from heads of schools and colleagues • need better teacher training • no nape approach at secondary level • non-use of teaching guides and manuals • students do not engage enough • English is a burden • lack of confidence • lack of interaction in the home with parents and family • lack of key skills, e.g. use of dictionary • reluctant to speak and interact • students don't feel responsible for own learning • students only focused on getting right answer • students rely on teachers to give the answer • students unfamiliar with what they are learning • teachers doing it the easy way • teachers lack exposure to other ways of teaching • teachers not competent enough • teachers teach the way they were taught |
| Assessment of levels of teachers' English proficiency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact on students • not very good • range of ability • reasons for poor proficiency • role of teacher training • rural and urban differences • science teachers have better English • selection and requirements for teacher training • some good • teachers as role models of English |
| Challenge of learning all subjects in English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence of problems with English causing problems in other subjects • if English poor, can't absorb content of other subjects • impact of exam system • lack of attention to English by subject teachers • multiple challenges • no major challenges • science students have better English • shift in demands and approach from grade 3 to 4 • some students do poorly in subject because of English, not the subject, per se • specific vocabulary for each subject • starting in pp (too early) • students can't express themselves • textbooks too difficult |
| All teachers are English teachers in an English-medium system | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agree • divergence with practice • links to official policy • practices elsewhere |

Appendix 6: Suggested actions for enhancing implementation of Bhutan's policy of English-medium education

| Suggested Actions | Timeframe | Preliminary steps required |
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| Initial use of mother tongue (Dzongkha) education to grade 3 | Within next five to ten years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review by MOE policy makers of international literature on the benefits of mother-tongue education • Development of action plan for instituting curricular and textbook reforms |
| School language policy to curtail code-switching in English-medium classes | Immediate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiteration by MOE to district education officers, school heads and teachers of the importance of maintaining an English-only policy in English-medium classes • Monitoring by school heads • School-based professional development program on how to maintain an English-only class environment |
| Use of prescriptive teaching routines to encourage students' oral production and interaction | Within next two years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a toolkit of prescriptive teaching routines • Pre- and in-service training for teachers on how to use them |
| Introducing language-sensitive content into curricula | Progressively over next ten years starting immediately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review by MOE policy makers of international literature on the benefits of language-sensitive curricula and teaching approaches • Technical assistance to progressively revise curricula and textbooks • Pre- and in-service training of teachers in language-sensitive teaching approaches |
| Introducing more ESL-style teaching in upper primary and lower secondary levels | Progressively over next ten years starting immediately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance to revise curricula and textbooks • Pre- and in-service training of teachers in ESL teaching approaches |
| Introducing ESL for all teacher trainees during all years of teacher education | Within next five years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance to develop curricula and learning materials • Training of teacher educators |
| Verifying teacher trainees English proficiency before entering the teaching force | Within next five years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RUB decision-making on benchmark of adequate proficiency which teachers must possess • Technical assistance on how to institute testing regime |
| Examining oral proficiency in grade 10 and 12 | Within next five years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance to develop options for how to carry out oral assessments • Development of testing tool |
| Employing expatriate native English-speaking teachers as resource teachers | Immediate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement with agencies supplying expatriate teachers on the fielding of resource teachers • Development of incentives for expatriate teachers to serve beyond an initial year in Bhutan • Awareness campaign for district education officers, school heads and teachers on role of resource teachers to ensure collaboration |
| Establishing guided dialogues between tourists and students | Within next five years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement between MOE and Tourism Council of Bhutan on concept • Design of a pilot activity to test initiative |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of sample dialogues • Pre- and in-service training of teachers on how to use dialogues with students |
| Teacher-tourist visit program | Within next five years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement between MOE and Tourism Council of Bhutan on concept • Design of a pilot activity to test initiative • Establishing advertising campaigns with school boards in developed English-speaking countries |

Appendix 7: Classroom and outside classroom practices to support CLIL

| Area of Practice | Details of practice |
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| Classroom Practices | |
| Acoustics: <i>classroom sound quality</i> | Poor acoustic conditions result in problematic learning environments regardless of language. When learning takes place through the medium of a second language, such problems become compounded. Although attention can be given to how speech, by both teachers and learners is projected in the classroom, lowering of any unnecessary noise thresholds should be given continuous attention. |
| Articulation and Voice Projection: <i>hearing and being heard</i> | Inappropriate volume or articulation in English by teachers and learners will inevitably hinder good learning performance. Spoken language, particularly in large classes, must be pitched at an appropriate level in order that everyone can hear as clearly as possible what is said. This is of particular importance for learners working in a second language. |
| Assessment: <i>judging performance</i> | Testing of subject content needs to be done so that language does not interfere with success in showing understanding of the topic at hand. The way in which questions are structured and tests administered must be particularly sensitive to language barriers. |
| Classroom Organization, Methodology and Interaction: <i>learning through teamwork</i> | Pair and group work can enhance learning through providing opportunities for learners to communicate with each other to reach a common goal. It allows for the threat of any language obstacle that might result from excessive teacher talk to be negotiated by learners on their own terms. Different types of group formation allow use of forms of cooperative or collaborative learning. These have much to offer in large classes where there is heterogeneity of competence both in terms of subject learning and language. |
| Comprehension Checks: <i>are you with me?</i> | Extensive use of comprehension checks is necessary in second language-medium education due to the added language burden. |
| Feedback: <i>balancing positive and negative feedback</i> | Errors, due to language or cognition, should be commented upon in a manner that is encouraging as well as instructive. Constructive criticism, balancing positive and negative feedback, allows for the emotional needs of learners with regard to language obstacles to be balanced against content learning problems. Standard phrases for giving and explaining feedback needs to be learnt and used so that learners themselves remain motivated toward learning the content, and not become withdrawn because of linguistic inabilities. |
| Interactional Discourse: <i>learning to communicate</i> | The impact of teacher talk as monologue is unlikely to be as effective as cooperative techniques that lead to differing forms of interactive and communicative talk. Conceptual entrenchment of new topics can be supported through dialogic forms of communication. Methodologies suitable for this type |

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| | of second language-medium education are generally highly communicative. Cooperative learning techniques that allow for learners to work collaboratively in differing forms of groups is one of a variety of successful means by which to elicit and develop forms of interactional talk and communication. |
| Language-support Activities: <i>focusing on language and content simultaneously</i> | To encourage teachers to use a wide variety of activities which allow the learning context to be as linguistically rich as possible so as to develop opportunities for meaningful language practice between the teacher and students, and the students themselves. |
| Language-medium Bridge: <i>switching from one language of instruction to another</i> | The transition from teaching through local languages and English at Grade 5 should be done so as to smoothen transition of language medium so as to 'nurture an asset and not weaken an inheritance' ⁴ A methodological bridge should be implemented by those teachers involved, spanning Grades 2 – 5, which reflects understanding of the stages of second language acquisition. In this respect the language of both instruction and materials should complement the reality of language development. |
| Learner Error: Correction <i>learning from mistakes</i> | The negative consequences of inappropriate student error correction can have a profound impact on certain types of learners. The result is found in reduced student motivation and reluctance to actively participate in classes. Mistakes in English language can be 'corrected' in different ways, either directly or indirectly, and strategies can be implemented which make the process of correction non-threatening and constructive. For example, the mistakes of one learner will almost certainly apply to others, and thus noting of errors over a period of time followed by block teaching correct usage can be highly beneficial. |
| Linguistic Evaluation: <i>Understanding language complexity</i> | It is necessary for teachers to have sufficient interest and skill in evaluating and monitoring the cognitive and linguistic complexity of methods and materials on a continuous basis. This allows them to be as aware of the learners' needs and perspectives as possible. |
| Linguistic Simplification: <i>being simple but not simplistic</i> | The 'step-by-step' use of spoken English reportedly commonplace should not be considered 'poor speaking practice'. In second language-medium education it is normal that teachers find themselves simplifying their speech, and the manner by which they present ideas. |
| Repetition: <i>reinforcing learning</i> | Formulating the same thing in different ways through repetition, reformulation and paraphrasing is a common feature of good teacher talk in second language-medium education. |
| Routines: <i>predictable traffic signals of teacher talk</i> | Teachers need to develop, introduce and continuously use a range of phrases for language routines for classroom |

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| | management in relation to instruction, organization and personal communication with learners. |
| Thinking and Study Skills for Linguistic and Cognitive Demands: <i>learner strategies in handling content and language</i> | <p>Identify and build a core vocabulary of key concepts that the teacher can use accurately, which are systematically learnt by students. Teach the language markers (e.g. key phrases) and linking words (e.g. it, they, here), used in English that are used to signal textual and semantic relationships of specific types (e.g. describing shapes and spatial relationships; logical sequences (such as cause and effect) finding causes, purposes, conditions and results; giving and following instructions; asking for and giving directions and information; handling similarities and differences and identifying contextual clues and seeing implications; making explanations; comparing and contrasting, defining and classifying, and making predictions. Introduce different forms of note-taking practice, in particular types that are ‘framed’ with some text already given with gaps that are filled out during a lesson. Re-examine English language reading skills, particularly with regard to handling difficult words, skimming and scanning text, identifying and matching key information through sense relationships, and text organisation (e.g. discourse structure and paragraphing). Teach the principles for interpreting non-linear texts (e.g. diagrams, graphs, drawings) Teach how to use differing forms of dictionary.</p> |
| Trans-languaging: <i>switching from one language to another</i> | <p>Use of a home/community language during a lesson, for instance in group work, is a contentious issue in the Namibian context. A pragmatic approach that allows for flexibility on a case-by-case basis would be optimal. Enforcement of “English only” in certain types of class works</p> <p>against the interests of learners, teachers , schools and ultimately the surrounding society. Trans-languaging (often referred to as code-switching) can be considered as a strategic means by which to improve message comprehension.</p> |
| Visuality: <i>hearing and seeing</i> | <p>Gesture, demonstration and illustration should be used to make meaning as clear as possible. Although traditionally more common in the teaching of younger learners, it is part of a communicative style which could be more fully utilized in all levels of teaching. Linguistically complex descriptions can be more easily understood through use of non-verbal explication.</p> |
| Outside Classroom Practices | |
| Activating English in the Environment: <i>using English outside the classroom</i> | <p>In some environments, the use of English outside the school is minimal. Although the role of the school is limited in terms of ensuring the use of English outside in the surrounding community, some steps could be taken to activate the use of English in the surrounding social environments given the direct relationship between use of English outside of the school and superior school performance.</p> |

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| <p>Extra-curricular Activities: <i>learning by doing</i></p> | <p>Extra-curricular activities, organized by teachers possibly in conjunction with others in the community can provide alternative opportunities for language development that may be beneficial for a wide range of learners. Leisure-based (sports, games) and special interest language groups/clubs can provide alternative contexts for activating learners to use English in non-threatening contexts. Building linguistic self-confidence for better performance in the classroom is one key goal of this type of endeavour.</p> |
| <p>School Language Policy: <i>working together towards agreed principles</i></p> | <p>Teachers within a school, and the learners and parents they serve, need clarification on how to handle language medium issues. In order that a coherent and predictable language policy is implemented it is necessary that one exists for any given school in any given context. This is particularly important in terms of trans-languaging (see below). Thus it would be optimal if each school establishes a language policy which not only confirms national requirements but also situational strategies employed by the school to best manage situational needs.</p> |

Appendix 8: Other policy and practice reform measures

Interaction between Bhutanese students and tourists is often limited to students' requesting candy, money, pens, etc., or to brief and halting questions from students' such as: "Where from?", "Which country?". These attempts to engage tourists often end with students' shyly running away.

Tourist-student practiced dialogues. To create opportunities for more authentic communication between students and tourists, a set of practice dialogues could be developed which students could learn and practice in school. Tourists could be informed upon arrival in Bhutan that Bhutanese children study in English and enjoy practicing English with visitors. As a means of fostering authentic English dialogue between tourists and school children, tourists could be given small laminated cards with talking points to use as conversation prompts when they meet Bhutanese students. These talking points would mirror dialogues which students have practiced in school. Although this approach may appear at first glance to be overly prescriptive, it aims to help steer conversations between students and tourists away from the current practice of children asking for gifts and/or conversation-limiting questions toward more authentic dialogue in English. It emphasizes for students that English is something they learn in school in order to use in real situations outside of the classroom and that they should seek out opportunities to practice English whenever possible. This approach would have the added benefit of being a sort of 'values education' whereby children are taught that tourists are not in Bhutan to give them things for free, nor should tourists should be asked to do so. It would also result in a 'win-win' situation insofar as Bhutanese children would gain opportunities for authentic dialogue in English and tourists would be left with a positive impression of eager, polite and engaging Bhutanese school children.

Teacher-tourists. Another possibility for increasing students' exposure to English outside of the regular school program would be the establishment of a concessional tourist tariff which is affordable for teachers from native English-speaking countries. Many Western teachers may wish to visit Bhutan during their long annual holidays (i.e. during the summer months in North America and the UK), but would find the current tourist tariff too costly⁴⁹. A concessional rate could be established for 'teacher-tourists'. The requirement for such a visit by a teacher-tourist would be that a fixed proportion of their time visiting Bhutan must be spent in a local school where they would act as language resources. Visiting teacher-tourists would not be integrated into the formal school timetable, but would be included in the learning program as facilitators for leading 'chat corners'. Groups of students would take turns visiting the chat corner for talking sessions with the teacher-tourist in their school. This would provide children with an opportunity for authentic communication with native English speakers and, at the same time, generate additional tourism revenues during what are typically the lean months for tourism in Bhutan during the summer monsoon season. This would have the additional benefit of bringing tourism earnings to parts of the country not typically visited by tourists and encourage community-based tourism-related businesses, such as the provision of lodging and other related services.

⁴⁹ US\$250/day including lodging, food and guide