Enhancing language skills transfer and transition across L1, L2, and L3 in MTB-MLE: teaching strategies and common language competency framework used in Rajbanshi MTB-MLE program, Nepal

By Sunita Maharjan and Philina Ng

These days, the impact of globalization is easily felt in the rural areas of many developing countries. In Nepal, being proficient in the national language, Nepali, is no longer sufficient. Learning an international language like English is seen as the way to secure a better future. For children from rural non-Nepali speaking communities, having to learn Nepali (L2) and English (L3) in the early grades, and study other subjects using Nepali or even English as the language of instruction (LoI) within a short period is a tall order.

This presentation shows how the Rajbanshi Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program in Nepal makes learning more achievable for non-Nepali speaking children using strategies to encourage language skills transfer across three languages, and an extended period of bilingual language of instruction (LoI) to smooth the transition from L1 to L2 LoI. L1, L2, and L3 are introduced progressively across the first three years of the six-year kindergarten to primary grade 5 program. As many language competencies are shared across languages and even across scripts, whenever appropriate new language competencies are first taught in L1 and later reinforced in L2 and L3. The three language subjects also share some common activities to help students see similarities and learn to transfer skills across languages. The project team also developed a common language competency framework to show the contents and activities connection across the three languages, hopefully making the assimilation of three languages and two scripts within a short period more manageable for students.