

LINGUISTIC EQUITY AND PRACTICES IN THE SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM OF MULTILINGUAL MYANMAR

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This research explores the concept of linguistic equity in Myanmar's school education system, focusing on how language practices impact students in a multilingual society. Myanmar is home to over 100 languages, yet Burmese dominates as the main medium of instruction in schools. This creates challenges for ethnic minority students whose native languages are often excluded, raising concerns about fairness in education and the preservation of their cultural identities. Despite the government's efforts to reform the education sector and promote inclusivity, there remains a significant gap between policy intentions and their actual implementation, particularly in ethnic minority regions. The research problem centers on the disparity between the country's language policies and the educational realities faced by students from non-Burmese-speaking communities. These students often experience educational disadvantages due to the limited use of their native languages in classrooms, which hinders their academic performance and engagement. The objectives of this study are to examine how linguistic equity is addressed in schools, evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies, and identify the key challenges that prevent equitable educational opportunities for all linguistic groups in Myanmar. The research employs a qualitative methodology and documentary approach, with data collected in high schools across Myanmar. Data collection instruments focus primarily on published works by various authors and include in-depth interviews based on open-ended questions conducted with teachers and students. The data analysis involves thematic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns related to linguistic equity and its impact on educational outcomes. The findings indicate that while some schools have adopted bilingual or mother tongue-based education models, these initiatives face numerous challenges. Schools often lack the necessary resources and teacher training, and political or administrative barriers further hinder progress. As a result, students from ethnic minority backgrounds continue to face disadvantages in accessing quality education and achieving academic success. The study concludes that there is an urgent need for more comprehensive and contextually appropriate educational policies that genuinely promote linguistic equity. Improving teacher training, providing adequate resources, and fostering stronger cooperation between local and national authorities are essential steps toward creating a more inclusive and fair education system in Myanmar.

Keywords: Linguistic equity, multilingualism, educational reform, Myanmar