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RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring Students' Beliefs and Attitudes on the Use of English as a Medium of Instruction at Secondary Level: A Case Study

1Saiqa Aftab* , 2Dr. Uzma Sadiq and 3 Rabia Alam

1. Visiting Lecturer, Department of English Language and Literature, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University, Lyari Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2201-2343
2. Associate Professor, Department of English, Division of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Education Lahore, Campus Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of English, Division of Arts and Social Sciences University of Education Lahore, Campus Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author	saiqatunio62@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present case study explores students' beliefs and attitudes on the Use of English as a Medium of Instruction at Secondary Level. The population of the study is the students of public schools at Khairpur Mir's. The study follows a mixed-methods design based on student responses to the surveys and interviews, aiming to identify and understand their perceptions of English Medium Instructions (EMI) on the aspects of comprehension, involvement, and general learning. It also implies the identification of the perceived benefits and challenges of the current EMI based on students' attitudes toward studying in their L1 or other languages. Ultimately, the study is focused on the student's voices and their lived experience to establish how the EMI affects one's academic success, level of cultural inclusiveness, and belonging to the learning environment. Therefore, this study contributes to the ongoing discussion about the optimal EMI and, through the student's perspective, helps policymakers to make informed decisions based on the considerations of student success and inclusive learning environments.

KEYWORDS	Education In Pakistan, Linguistic Study, Mode Of Instruction, Mother Language

Introduction

In educational discussion, the question of the most appropriate EMI has always been one of the most debated. Advocates of mother tongue instruction emphasize the cognitive benefits of learning in the native language by the fact that it leads to a better understanding of the material, aids the comprehension of complex concepts, as well as contributes to the strengthening of cultural identity. The sign of that statement is the rapid spread of the mother tongue instruction policy all around the world. Global language supporters, in turn, highlight the numerous advantages of using a language that is widely spread across the globe, English in particular (Rawashdeh et al. 2021). Among the most frequently named advantages are better economic prospects, access to a larger body of learning resources, as well as the development of communication skills in an ever-increasingly interconnected world. The current situation that exists in the public schools of Khairpur Mir is usually a vast spectrum of advantages and disadvantages that are linked to the available EMI. Even though students may benefit from using a global language and acquire better job prospects due to this, the possibility of language-related concerns in a classroom can create significant difficulties. Students' interaction, understanding, and general academic performance may suffer when they struggle to comprehend complex academic subjects or play an active role in class dialogue or when they are secluded due to

language disparities (Baker, 2001). The feelings of alienation are likewise feasible. Therefore, studying this issue through the lens of student aspirations, expectations, and views to see what benefits and drawbacks the existing EMI has paramount importance (Pereira, etal. 2020). The goal of this research is to provide an accurate picture of how the language used in the schools of Khairpur Mir affects children's schooling.

Literature Review

For a very long time, the selection of the medium of instruction has been at the center of a heated debate in education, whereas it has always been noted with regard to its effect on the children's learning and academic outcomes. The purpose of the current study was to focus on the experiences of the children in public schools in Khairpur Mir, where the EMI can be claimed to be different from the first language they speak. While focusing on understanding the impacts of the above phenomenon adequately, the study also involved the following review of literature concerning the advantages and disadvantages of several EMI approaches. Advocates of mother tongue instruction emphasize the highlighted cognitive benefits that come with studying in one's first language.

According to Cummins, studying in the mother tongue supports the development of a deeper understanding, which is vital for the proposition of the acquisition of difficult concepts and formation of cultural identity. Baker stated that such research had been conducted and provided further evidence on the claim. It emerged that the children who studied in their first language outperformed the students who studied in a second language. Conversely, proponents of a global language, such as English, discuss the opportunity to create room for better economic opportunities and the availability of broader educational materials. Skutnabb-Kangas recognizes the potential economic benefits of English proficiency whereas she also addresses the threat of marginalizing the minority languages and cultures outside the current educational systems.

Substantial insights would be gained from conducting a study that investigates the lived experiences of students in several EMI situations. In a study conducted by MacSwan in 2005 the experiences of bilingual students in Canada was researched. The research designed aimed to explore the experiences of these students because of their struggles with trying to juggle two languages in the classroom context. Similarly, in a research inquiry carried out by Garcia in 2009, the investigation focused on the intricate relationship between language and identity. The specific focus of the inquiry was on the potential for language barriers to fuel feelings of seclusion or compartmentalization and discourage the learner's ability to actively partake in learning opportunities. Extensive research endeavors have been undertaken in numerous studies to bridge the gap between MTI and global language instruction. These have been achieved through examining various training methodologies that are bilingual or multilingual. In his proposition of bilingual education as an idea in 2001, Cummins recommends the incorporation of the first language with a second language in the educational context. The objective of this method is to unearth the cognitive advantages of MTI while also preparing students for the challenges of global encounters.

Some recent studies have taken a more macro approach by focusing on what EMI implies for precise learning outputs. One of the studies was done in more recent times by Schlechter in 2012. This study investigated how EMI impacts the achievement of mathematical goals. According to the results published, the average mathematical achievement of learners that learn mathematics in their mother language exceeds that of students who learn in their non-native language.

It is the data obtained from the study, and that was the conclusion. What followed a similar line of inquiry was done by Flores et al. in 2017, who examined the correlation between EMI and science learning. The outcomes established the importance of providing both culturally relevant and linguistically stale science education. In conclusion, the body of available evidence paints a confusing picture about optimal EMIs in various educational contexts, even though MTI offers cognitive and cultural rewards; the potential costs of language barriers and lack of access to insightful idea from all over the world cannot be dismissed. This is because MTI is a global language. While it is possible to gain valuable insights by continuing to examine how various bilateral and multilingual pedagogies work and looking at the experiences that actual learners have already had. This study will contribute to that ongoing conversation and will help inform the blanket conclusion maker to make wise decisions in line with the student's performance and cultural sensitivity in the learning and educational realm. This will be achieved by utilizing the critical review of current literature and focusing on the particular context of Khairpur Mirs.

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no substantial difference in student comprehension, engagement, or cultural identification between students who are educated in the current EMI and those who are instructed in their native language.

Alternative hypothesis (HA): There is a significant difference in student comprehension, involvement, or cultural identification between students who are educated in the current EMI and those who are instructed in their mother language.

Material and Methods

The methodology that was applied in this study was a mixed-methods approach where both qualitative and quantitative approaches of data collection were combined in the use. Quantitative data was achieved through a sample survey that involved a questionnaire among a portion of the pupils that can be considered as a reflective sample of the students in the public school. The survey was useful in collecting data information about the demographics of the students accessing the public school, their perceptions of the benefits and demerits of the current EMI, and the impact of EMI to the education experience. Qualitative data was on the other hand collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with a selective group of the students to obtain more extended insight into the students' thoughts and attitudes toward language use. This happened by exploring the student's further to explain their experiences and the challenges they presented in the proper language and language use. The quantitative data was then analyzed using statistical approaches to obtain patterns and other trendiness in the responses by the students. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis to create meaningful categories and themes used to answer the research question issues.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the theoretical framework that highlights the intricate relationship between what a language conveys and how that language is acquired; it is guided by two main theoretical perspectives:

Mother Tongue Instruction and Cognitive benefits

This research was guided by the theory explaining MTI's cognitive benefits, often widely referred to as the common underlying proficiency theory by Cummins. The theory explains that when a student studies in the language he/she knows best, she has a cognitive

advantage in understanding complex educational concepts because her existing language and cognitive structures help him/her learn the new knowledge better. This view is complemented by Baker ; she stated that students instructed in their mother tongue have achieved better academic performance, meaning the first language offers a strong cognitive development' base . However, while these theories provide insight into the cognitive benefits of MTI when the EMI is changed, they do not show what students think and experience in class.
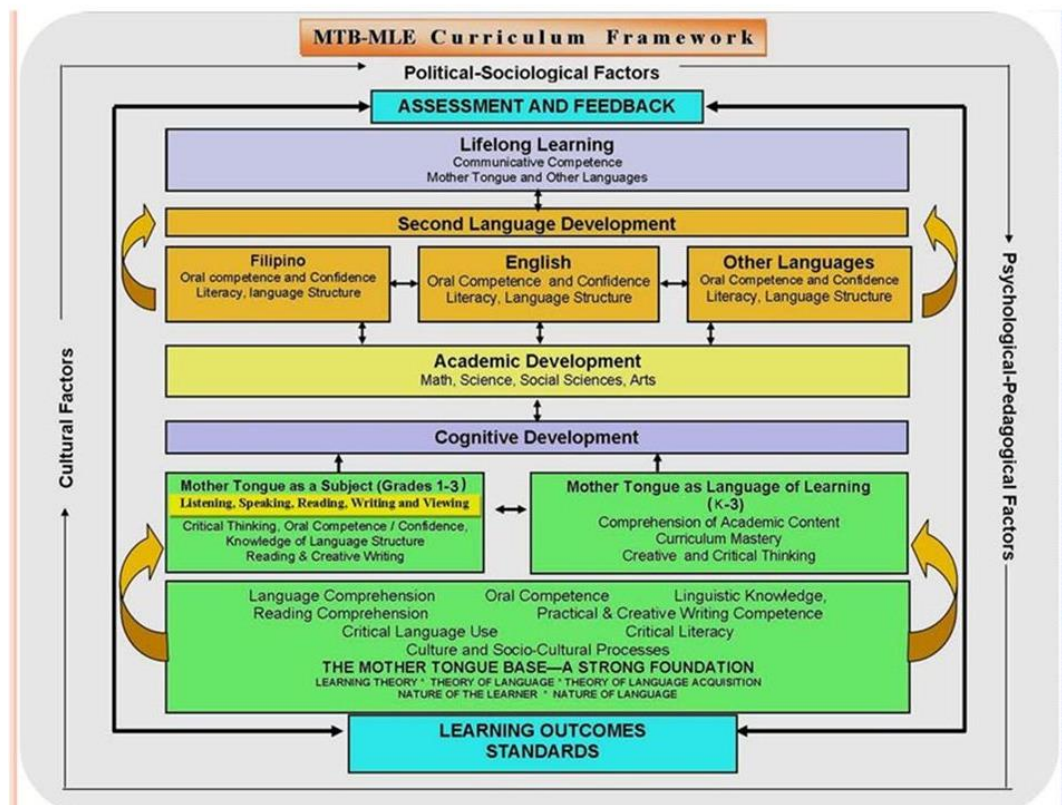

Figure 1: Mother Tongue Instruction and Cognitive benefits Framework

Identity and Language – Sociocultural aspects

The second theoretical perspective is identity and language use. It has been presented by Garcia. On one hand, people have difficulties in expressing themselves in the target language because it does not allow students to talk about their experiences. On the other hand, people have a sense of identity and feelings of belonging when they use their first language. Additionally, this perspective acknowledges the notion of language as a source of people's identities and where a language barrier is experienced the students could develop a sense of isolation while in the class. Finally, it acknowledges the conditioning of minority languages by the majority, this has been done by Skutnabb-Kangas. It asserts that while being very significant in the community, fewer voices are being heard, and some are being suppressed. Thus, these two perspectives influence my research by looking at how an EMI affects students' learning and cultural journey, and identity in the public secondary schools of Khairpur Mir.
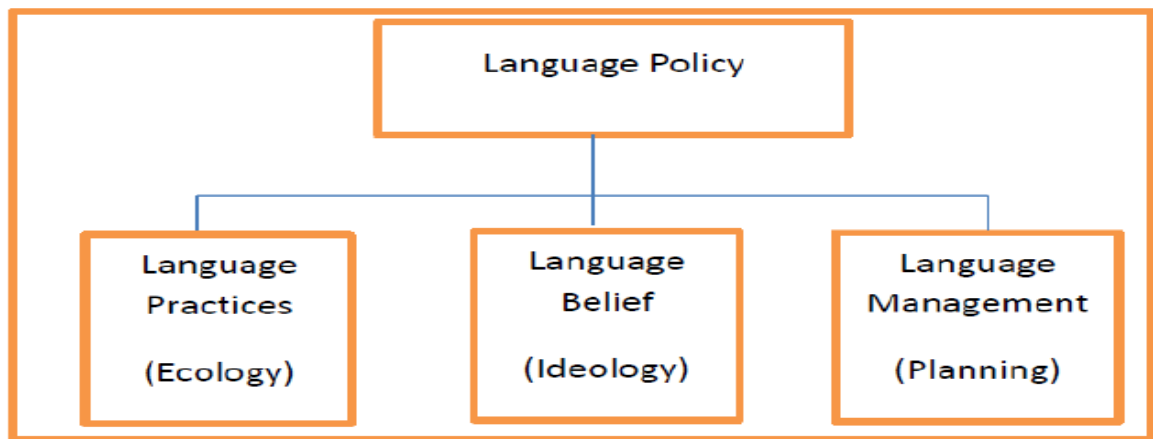
Conceptual Model

Figure 2: Conceptual Model Framework

Data Analysis

In fact, through the lens of students' perspectives, this mixed-methods research explored the existing advantages and disadvantages of the current EMI in public schools of Khairpur Mir's. More specifically, it provided valuable insights into the ways language affected student comprehension, learning experience and cultural identity. Based on what was presented above, the findings of the current research are the following. From the point of comprehension and engagement: this research suggests that, according to the outcomes of quantitative factors, while there are undoubtedly certain benefits of acquiring language on a global scale, some students do not feel comfortable to process complex academic material delivered in a foreign or additional language to them. These claims were supported by qualitative interviews where students mentioned the issues of active participation in the discussions in the classroom and collaboration with each other due language barriers. Thus, the results are that the existing EMI can be limiting in terms of comprehension and engagement of a significant part of the student population. From the perspective of cultural identity and sense of belonging: while some students would consider it beneficial to speak the global language for their future, others see it as a force to isolate from their culture and native language.
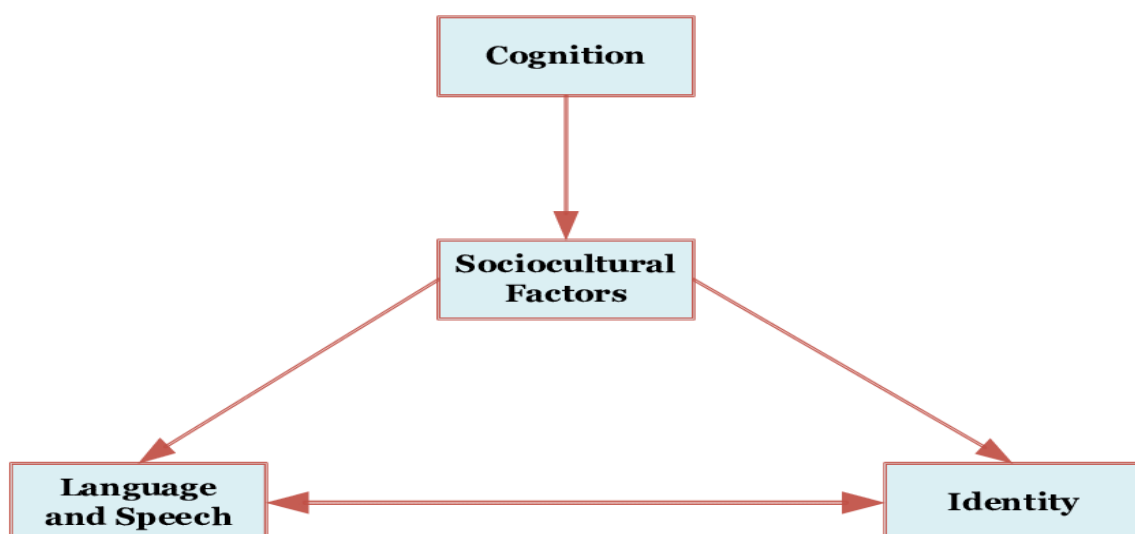

Figure 2: Perspective of cultural identity and sense of belonging

These findings are also in alignment with the theoretical framework for there is always a risk that the minority languages might marginalized in the educational system focused solely on the EMI. From the standpoint of students' attitudes and preferences: while most of the learners have expressed the desire of using more of the target language due to its economic benefits, still, an important part of them would like to see their mother tongue more integrated. Such findings suggest that the EMI may not be one-size-fits-all. Additionally, all of the above results suggest that the relationship between the EMI, comprehension, engagement, and comprehension is complex. While learning the global language has evident advantages, this very process involves a lot of barriers and by doing so, creates the risk of losing preexisting knowledge in terms of cultural. Therefore, the current research implications are that the strategy of teaching has to consider both the cognitive advantages of MTI, students' cultural knowledge and awareness and the possible benefits of using bilingual or multilingual approach to make the studying environment more inclusive.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 1: Beliefs Regarding the Role of Mother Language

Role of Mother Language	Advantages	Disadvantages	Others
Strongly agree	40	1	2
Agree	20	1	8
Neutral	20	0	4
Disagree	10	0	2
Strongly disagree	10	0	2
Total	100	02	18

Table 2: Role of Mother Language

Chi-Square Tests			
Value		df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.627	12	.014

Using the chi-square test with 12 degree of freedom, it is found that p<0.05 indicates that there is a significant difference between urban and rural women's perception about the role of books and magazines in women empowerment. As the p-value is less than chosen significance level (0.05): Thus null hypothesis rejected.

The present study, which was conducted in public schools in Khairpur Mir's, used a mixed-methods research design to investigate how the current Ministry of Education impacts the learning experiences and cultural identities of individual students. Overall, the study provided a comprehensive perspective on the advantages and disadvantages associated with the current EMI of this country, and its results could be employed to inform educational policy and practice. This was achieved by analyzing a combination of the quantitative data obtained through a survey and qualitative data obtained through semi structured interviews. A fine line must be walked between understanding and engagement. While the results of the quantitative analysis suggested that some students are cognizant of the potential advantages of acquiring global language skills through the current EMI, a significant portion of respondents indicated the difficulty they had grasping the more complex academic material when it was presented in a language that was not their L1. This is consistent with the results of related studies such as the framework developed by Cummins, which indicates the cognitive benefits of MTI and the possible

learning challenges for students who struggle to communicate due to language barriers. It's possible that students who are having difficulty communicating with their peers due to language barriers will have difficulty understanding new concepts, following instructions, and participating in classroom discussions, which could impact their grades. Feelings of alienation and an inability to express themselves and engage with the class material due to language barriers were identified from the students' perspectives in the qualitative interviews, reinforcing the survey data, which indicates that students felt this way. This is consistent with the argument made by Garcia about how language barriers may impact students' ability to be engaged and connected in the schools' culture.

The results of the research presented above demonstrated that the current EMI grants the students access to be able to acquire global languages. However, it is done at the potential cost of restraining the full extent of student comprehension and engagement to acquire such among a major section of the students. Therefore, an elaborate examination of the current EMI has to be done, and ponders on the appropriateness of transitioning to the instructional methods that accord the focus on student comprehension and activity engagement in the learning process.

The interview outcomes. Also, the research has revealed the potential negative impact of the EMI on the cultural identity of students and their at-hominess sentiments in the school atmosphere. A majority of students reported to feelings of isolation and disconnect from their cultural heritage due to limited inclusion of their home language in the learning setting. Many of the respondents have recognized the importance of learning global languages for future opportunities, but at the same time, most of the students have reported that they share this sentiment. As Skutnabb-Kangas has reflected on her anxiety that the education institutions will marginalize minority languages by absolute focus on one language of instruction. Students, according to the interview findings, seemed to make it clear that they thought that their home language and the people's experiences in the culture went disregarded in the school environment. As a result of this, they would have alienated feelings, which may have a negative impact on how they feel about belonging in the school community. This is where cultural awareness and the utilization of values from their home language may significantly count in solving the problem.

Students' Attitudes and Preferences

Based on the analysis of the responses to the survey and the transcripts of the interviews, it is possible to observe a wide range of views that students have toward the EMI. While some students believed that the use of the global language should be expanded, mainly motivated by the potential economic gains in the future, a significant majority demanded their local language should play a more serious role in the curriculum. In this context, the uniform method of the EMI might not be able to satisfy the needs and demands of students. It is in line with the theoretical framework, which understands the need to prioritize a cognitive basis for MTI but at the same time realizing that language barriers may undermine the extent of student involvement and cultural identification. The global language and the local languages spoken by the students should be treated equally in terms of importance, and the educational policies and practices should seek to ensure a balance through addressing this duality. Next steps: Achieving a more inclusive learning environment In general, the research has provided a comprehensive picture of a complex interconnection between the EMI, student understanding, involvement, and cultural recognition. There are significant barriers related to language issues that impede the full development of the student experience and the feelings of loneliness. Although the existing EMI may come with prospective advantages for the student to obtain global language abilities, the research has also identified the downsides.

Considering the discussion above, several important points may be inferred through the findings of this research's investigation:

- Education Should Prioritize Student Comprehension First and foremost, education should prioritize student comprehension and feature methods that ensure all students comprehensively acquire academic information. For instance, MTI for English for Basic Courses, supplementary language support, and various instructional techniques for different language proficiencies all may be considered options.

- Increase Student Engagement and involvement Language disadvantages are frequently a barrier to student engagement and involvement in the class. Active participation, student collaboration, and a more equitable class dynamic can be promoted by fostering the use of both the global and local students' languages. Cultural identity can be acknowledged by integrating home language and cultural achieving subject matter into the syllabus. Cultivate cultural awareness and belonging in the classroom. This may be accomplished through the selection of culturally appropriate teaching materials, a recognition of the significance of various diverse origins, and encouraging students to use the EMI in local languages.

- Investigate Bilingual or Multilingual Teaching Approaches. The findings suggest that both bilingual and multilingual teaching techniques should be given serious consideration for a comprehensive approach. Students may benefit from MTI, allowing them to be more prepared for an international future while also preserving and fostering their mother tongue identity. Policies or practices that create the environment in which all students, irrespective of their native language background, may excel academically, feel cultural pride, and reach their full potential. This approach can only be achieved by recognizing its importance and adopting a new approach to EMI. Furthermore, this research study in Khairpur Mir's public schools contributes insights to the EMI conversation as it adds to a growing awareness of implications. Finally, it opens the door to additional research about how different language techniques can successfully and equitably promote learning.

Discussion

The assessment of the student attitudes and preferences helped in revealing that there is a broad spectrum of requirements and aspirations among the student population. For instance, while some students agreed that they have to learn a global language, a large part of them insisted that their mother tongue should be integrated not to such extent. The finding was based on the fact that quite a few students admitted the importance of the acquisition of languages for their life and career opportunities. Therefore, what the phenomenon emphasizes is the necessity to move away from a universal approach to pedagogical policies and practices, which prioritize either global or native languages. The optimal solution, thus, is to take into consideration both languages because such a practice highlights the importance of both. The extra is the example of the approach:

Using the teaching of MTI for fundamental courses and offering more language assistance can ensure that all students have a solid knowledge of the material learned in order to maintain a high level of academic achievement. It is necessary to use both the global language as well as the students' native languages inside the confines of the classroom in order to cultivate active participation, collaboration, and a more inclusive atmosphere for all children. Integration of segments of home languages and cultural

experiences is also integral to inculcating a sense of belonging and cultural understanding in the educational system. Systems that are more inclined toward bilingual or multilingual teaching approaches should be thoroughly studied in order to provide a balanced approach to enable students to gain command of both their own language and the global one. It is essential to create an environment where each child- irrespective of the native language in which they were brought up- should feel respected, culturally linked and motivated to be their best in the context of education. This can effectively be endeavored by promoting the above-discussed strategies. The current research conducted within a specific context of public schools in Khairpur Mir's schools offers vital insights to the current discourse on EMI. The research was appropriately carried out with the aim of achieving the stated purpose. This research also sets the ground for future research on the efficacy of the different language-oriented teaching strategies in generating inclusive and successful learning experiences for all children. Surely, research in this area will be conducted in the future.

Advantages

The use of a mother language as the EMI has the following advantages:

- The ability to communicate effectively in a global language such as English can provide access to a greater range of job options and educational resources that extend beyond the confines of the local setting. There are also economic benefits.

- The ability to communicate and work together with a larger variety of individuals in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected is something that students learn through global communication experiences.

- Exposure to a Wide Range of Cultures: Learning a global language can provide exposure to a variety of cultures and points of view, which can lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world around us.

Disadvantages

The use of a mother language as the EMI has the following disadvantages:

- Language Barriers: Students whose native language is different from the EMI may have difficulty understanding complicated academic information, which might impede both their comprehension and their academic achievement.

- Language challenges can make it difficult for students to actively participate in classroom discussions, explain themselves clearly, and completely engage in the learning process. This can be a barrier to engagement and participation.

- An excessive focus on a global language as the medium of instruction (EMI) may result in a disconnection between students and their original language and cultural heritage, which may in turn increase the likelihood that students would experience emotions of alienation and marginalization.

- It is essential to keep in mind that the aforementioned advantages and disadvantages are broad concepts, and that the precise impact of the EMI will vary based on the circumstances, the student population, and the implementation tactics that are utilized.

Conclusion

Researching the benefits and disadvantages of the EMI offers important information that we can later help create educational policies and practices that focus on student success and their overall development. When seen through the lens of students' beliefs and attitudes, such an inquiry can show us how we might work towards setting up educational environments that not only prompt students to engage and understand but also give them a pleasant learning experience. As previously stated, while we do not provide any new knowledge on the EMI that is not covered in previous works, this study was able to yield fruitful results because we have demonstrated the EMI's critical effect on learning from multiple perspectives. The public school of Khairpur Mir's was my research focus for this research project, where I utilized the mixed-methods methodology. The goal of this research project was to investigate how the current medium of instruction affects children's learning experiences and cultural identities. By looking at responses to both the quantitative survey and qualitative interview transcripts, we were able to gain helpful insight into the intricate connection between language and learning in a variety of educational settings.

Based on the undertaken research, it was identified that the existing EMI has some potential benefits, but it also has to come at the cost of students' understanding and involvement, for a large portion of the students that may struggle with the language barrier. This was revealed under the designed study. As a result of such findings, ensuring the use of the methods that assist in the development of comprehension and active inclusion is another direction. For instance, applying the MTI for the core subject may be a solution, as in combination with additional language support it may assist in achieving the abovementioned objective. One more aspect that the research identified is the capacity of the current EMI to influence cultural identity and reduce the level of involvement of some of the students in the context of the school program. This could be proven by the previous studies. Students may feel alienated or distanced due to the fact that the EMI does not include their language. In order to address such concern, it is essential to provide students with the desired SLL, as in such a way, it will be easier to align the learning environment to be accessible for students from various backgrounds. Again, it can be only possible if the change is introduced.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of English as a medium of instruction at the secondary level in Khairpur Sindh, Pakistan:

1. There is dire need to implement comprehensive training programs for teachers to enhance their English proficiency and teaching methodologies. This will ensure that they can effectively deliver content in English and support students in overcoming language barriers.

2. Administration should establish additional language support mechanisms, such as language labs, after-school tutoring, and language proficiency workshops. These can help students improve their English skills outside the regular classroom setting.

3. Higher authorities should revise the curriculum to include more interactive and engaging content that can facilitate better understanding and retention of material taught in English. There is also need to incorporate bilingual teaching methods where necessary to bridge comprehension gaps.

4. Administration should provide adequate resources, including textbooks, digital learning tools, and other educational materials in English, to both students and teachers. Ensure that these resources are accessible and cater to the diverse needs of the student population.

5. Teachers should engage parents and the local community in the educational process to create a supportive environment for students. Workshops and awareness programs can help parents understand the importance of English proficiency and encourage them to support their children's learning at home.

6. Instructors should conduct regular assessments to gauge students' progress in English proficiency and adapt teaching strategies accordingly. Solicit feedback from students to identify specific areas of difficulty and address them promptly.

By addressing these areas, educational stakeholders in Khairpur Sindh can enhance the effectiveness of English as a medium of instruction, ultimately improving students' academic outcomes and future opportunities.

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