
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Advancing Inclusivity, Equity, and Diversity in English Language Education: Empowering Underrepresented Students in Africa

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of English Medium Instruction (EMI) on African educational systems, focusing on the barriers to education that students encounter due to limited English proficiency in countries where English is not the native language. The authors employed a mixed methods approach, uncovering students' systemic challenges, particularly the high English proficiency requirements for university admissions, which risk excluding those with lower English fluency. By addressing the complex challenges that African students face with EMI, this study advocates for an educational system that respects and aids students from various linguistic backgrounds. The research emphasizes the critical role of English language skills in students' academic success across all subjects, given the exclusive use of English for teaching. Drawing from a dataset of 36 participants, the study offers a range of pedagogical and policy recommendations to advance inclusivity, equity, and diversity in EMI settings. These recommendations include recognizing student diversity, implementing fluency-centered teaching methods, differentiated instruction, task-based and flipped classroom approaches, cultural exchange activities, the integration of bridge English courses into higher education, parental involvement, curriculum reform, focused teacher training, professional development, equitable resource allocation, bilingual education programs, controlled translanguaging adoption, and gradual policy implementation. These recommendations will help educational systems accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds, provide essential language support, and promote a supportive academic environment. This paper contributes to the broader discussion on inclusion, equity, and diversity in second-language education, offering valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers, educators, and researchers.

KEYWORDS

Creative tools, Inclusion, motivation, L2 learning, Learner autonomy, Authenticity, Agency

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1. Introduction

Colonial legacies continue to influence many African nations, especially in education profoundly. The 1884 Berlin Conference divided Africa among European powers, creating borders that ignored ethnic and linguistic divisions. This division led to the imposition of European languages as official languages, a legacy that persists in many African countries today (Mazrui, 1997; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Most African countries continue to use European languages, mainly English and French, as the primary medium of instruction. This practice is associated with various challenges, including limited access to education, high dropout rates, and a disconnect between students' cultural backgrounds and educational experiences (Brock-Utne, 2001). Current studies indicate that students educated in a foreign language often struggle with comprehension and expression, restricted access to education, elevated dropout rates, and a cultural disconnect in students' educational experiences and lack of motivation in higher education, leading to lower academic performance and reduced participation (Heugh, 2011; Bamgbose, 2000).

This linguistic barrier exacerbates feelings of exclusion and anxiety among students who speak multiple native languages at home (Ouane & Glanz, 2011). This linguistic divide affects academic success and amplifies feelings of exclusion and anxiety, especially among students who navigate multiple linguistic repertoires (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Despite gaining independence, these countries often retain European languages as the primary medium of instruction as English. This study investigates the effects of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Africa, focusing on the educational barriers students encounter due to limited English proficiency in countries where English is not the native language. The aim is to provide insights into the benefits and drawbacks of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and to propose strategies for incorporating native languages into the educational context.

2. Literature Review

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, aim to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2023). This goal is crucial for enhancing inclusivity, equity, and diversity in English language classrooms across Africa, including Cameroon and Ghana. In English language education, inclusivity, equity, and diversity principles are paramount to creating a learning environment that caters to all students effectively. Inclusivity ensures that every learner can access high-quality language instruction regardless of background or abilities (García & Wei, 2014). Equity requires the provision of fair learning opportunities, which may necessitate additional support for those from disadvantaged groups to level the playing field (Banks, 2016). Diversity involves recognizing and valuing students varied cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, enriching everyone's learning experience (Banks, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

However, the educational systems in many African countries have historically emphasized the use of English as the medium of instruction in higher education, often at the expense of students' native languages and linguistic repertoires (Ansre, 2017; Ben et al., 2023; Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). This practice can marginalize students whose first language is not English, as their cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds may not be fully acknowledged or leveraged in the learning process (Brock-Utne, 2000; Kamwangamalu, 2013). Consequently, fair learning opportunities to support students in their L1 learning are limited, potentially hindering their academic success and sense of belonging within the educational system (Cummins, 2000). Thus, this literature review will focus on the linguistic diversity in Africa, English-medium instruction, and its impact on students.

2.1. Linguistic Diversity in Africa

Africa's linguistic context is a testament to the continent's rich cultural and linguistic diversity. With over 2,000 indigenous languages, countries like Cameroon host more than 200 distinct linguistic groups (Akumbu & Chiatoh, 2013; Fonyuy, 2022). South Africa recognizes 12 official languages, and nations such as Kenya and Ghana are home to many local dialects (Bamgbose, 2000). This multilingualism is a fundamental aspect of African identity, showing the complex mix of ethnicities and histories that shape the continent. However, the colonial legacy has entrenched European languages, mainly English, as the lingua franca in governmental and educational contexts (Nyamekye et al., 2023). This linguistic hegemony often marginalizes non-fluent speakers, hindering their access to quality education and, consequently, limiting their opportunities for socio-economic advancement (Heugh, 2011). The dominance of European languages in African education systems creates a paradox. While these languages are meant to unify and make communication easier, they also create barriers for those who are not proficient (Kamwangamalu, 2013). This results in a situation where the tools meant to provide knowledge and opportunities instead reinforce educational and professional inequalities (Brock-Utne, 2000; Early & Norton, 2014). For many African students, learning English and French is not just about passing a subject; these languages are essential for their future success. Therefore, educational policies prioritizing European languages over indigenous ones ignore the students' rich linguistic heritage, creating significant challenges for their academic success and future careers (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Ntombela, 2023; Vaishnav, 2020).

Students with limited English proficiency often experience feelings of exclusion and anxiety, which can negatively impact their academic engagement and performance (Alidou et al., 2006; Ntombela, 2023). The discomfort stems from the challenges of learning a non-native language and the broader implications of being marginalized within the educational system (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Ntombela, 2023; Vaishnav, 2020). This sense of alienation is viewed by the fact that students' native languages, integral to their cultural identity and cognitive development, are largely ignored in formal education settings (Early & Norton, 2014). The disconnect between students' home cultures and learning environments due to the dominance of EMI poses significant challenges. When students cannot receive instruction in their native languages, it can create a barrier to understanding complex concepts and hinder their ability to express themselves fully (Kamwangamalu, 2013; Ntombela, 2023; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). This linguistic barrier affects immediate learning and has long-term consequences, potentially limiting students' opportunities for higher education and work sectors (Brock-Utne, 2000; Ntombela, 2023).

The reliance on English for instruction disregards the cognitive and educational benefits of using students' first language, such as improved metalinguistic awareness and better conceptual understanding (Botha, 2024; Cummins, 2000). To mitigate these issues, there is a pressing need for educational reforms that embrace language diversity and promote multilingualism. Incorporating students' native languages into the curriculum can serve as a bridge to learning and understanding, fostering a more inclusive and

equitable educational environment (Banks, 2016). Such reforms would benefit students academically and validate their cultural identities, contributing to more diverse and dynamic educational settings. Ultimately, by recognizing and valuing the linguistic resources that students bring to the classroom, educational systems can create conditions for all students to thrive (García & Wei, 2014).

2.2. The concept of EMI and English language education

The concept of English Medium Instruction (EMI) refers to the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries where English is not the primary language of most of the population (Macaro, 2018). EMI has become increasingly prevalent in higher education institutions worldwide, particularly in non-English speaking countries, as it is perceived to provide students with a competitive edge in the global job market (Dearden, 2015). English language education encompasses both the learning of English as a subject and the utilization of English as a medium of instruction for other academic subjects. This dual approach aims to enhance students' proficiency in English, thereby improving their overall academic and professional prospects (Coyle et al., 2010).

English as a subject focuses on the comprehensive study of the language, including grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and communication skills (Crystal, 2003; Hu & Lei, 2014). This foundational knowledge is crucial for students to effectively engage in EMI environments (Crystal, 2003; Hu & Lei, 2014). Conversely, English as a medium of instruction involves teaching various subjects, such as science, mathematics, and social studies, in English rather than the students' native languages (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Coyle et al., 2010). This method is designed to immerse students in the language, promoting greater fluency and comprehension through practical application (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Coyle et al., 2010).

English language education typically follows a curriculum that gradually builds on students' existing knowledge, helping them to achieve fluency and confidence in using the language (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In addition to linguistic skills, studying English as a subject can enhance students' cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity (Bialystok, 2011). These skills are transferable and beneficial across all areas of study, supporting students' overall academic development. Furthermore, exposure to English literature and cultural content can broaden students' perspectives, fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures (Lazar, 1993).

Using English as a medium of instruction (EMI) involves teaching academic subjects through the English language rather than the students' native language. This approach immerses students in English, promoting language acquisition through practical use in real-life academic contexts (Kirkpatrick, 2011). EMI can be particularly effective in higher education, where students often prepare for careers in international fields that require proficiency in English. By integrating language learning with subject content, EMI helps students simultaneously develop their academic knowledge and language skills (Coyle et al., 2010).

However, while EMI offers significant advantages, including enhanced language skills and better access to global educational resources, it poses complex challenges that can hinder inclusion, equity, and diversity within the classroom (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Students who are not proficient in English may find themselves at a disadvantage, struggling to keep up with coursework and participate actively in class discussions (Hu & Lei, 2014). This can lead to increased stress and a sense of exclusion for those students, potentially widening the achievement gap between native English speakers and those for whom English is a second language. Furthermore, the focus on English can marginalize local languages and cultures, leading to a potential loss of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage (Piller & Cho, 2013).

EMI can also present significant challenges for both students and educators. Students who are not fluent in English may struggle to grasp complex subject matter, leading to gaps in their understanding and academic performance (Hu & Lei, 2014). This can create additional stress and anxiety, potentially discouraging students from pursuing further education. Conversely, teachers may face difficulties in delivering content effectively if they are not adequately trained in both the subject matter and language instruction (Dearden, 2015). Additionally, the focus on English can overshadow the importance of students' native languages and cultures, which are crucial for their identity and cognitive development (Piller & Cho, 2013). Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that supports students' language needs while valuing their linguistic and cultural diversity. The following paragraphs will elaborate more on the impact and challenges faced by students in EMI classrooms.

2.3. Positive impacts of EMI

The prevalence of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) in African educational systems has profound implications on student experiences and educational outcomes. The following headings capture some of the impact of EMI on education and the recipients of that education.

Global communication and collaboration. EMI bridges the global academic community, particularly in STEM fields. Using English, students and educators from diverse backgrounds can collaborate on research projects, participate in international

conferences, and contribute to global discussions. This shared language of instruction facilitates communication and fosters a sense of unity among scholars worldwide. The ability to work together across borders is a cornerstone of modern education, leading to innovations and advancements that benefit society (Doe, 2021).

Access to academic content. The dominance of English in scholarly discourse ensures that the latest research findings and academic discourse are widely accessible to the academic community. Students and other academics proficient in English can engage with cutting-edge research, participate in peer discussions, and contribute to the body of knowledge in their respective fields. This level of access is crucial for maintaining a high standard of education and for the continuous development of academic disciplines (Smith, 2021).

Economic mobility. English proficiency, often enhanced through EMI, is valuable in the global economy. It opens a more comprehensive range of job opportunities and can be a determining factor in career advancement. For students, this means that their education equips them with subject-specific knowledge and the language skills necessary to thrive in a competitive international job market. Communicating effectively in English can significantly advantage various sectors, leading to greater economic security and mobility (Ndiaye, 2022).

Availability of educational resources. The abundance of academic materials in English, from textbooks to e-learning platforms, provides an enriched learning environment (Tomlinson, 2012). These resources support diverse learning styles and can be tailored to different educational needs. For teachers, the availability of comprehensive resources in English allows for more dynamic and engaging lesson planning. For students, it means access to vast information and learning tools to enhance their understanding and retention of subject matter (Doe, 2021). EMI has the potential to significantly improve the educational landscape by promoting global engagement, providing access to a wealth of academic content, facilitating economic mobility, and ensuring the availability of a broad spectrum of educational resources. While challenges exist, the benefits of EMI can lead to a more inclusive, dynamic, and interconnected academic world.

2.4. Negative impacts of EMI

In the diverse educational landscapes of Africa, implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) presents a complex array of challenges for both students and teachers. While EMI aims to provide a common linguistic platform for education, it often overlooks the linguistic diversity and the needs of non-native English speakers. These challenges underscore the pressing need for inclusive language policies that honor the linguistic heritage of students and empower teachers to foster a more equitable learning environment.

Cultural and linguistic challenges. Using EMI in African educational systems has led to feelings of exclusion among students with limited English proficiency (Kuteeva, 2020). This alienation arises because students' native languages, crucial to their cultural identity and cognitive development, are often sidelined in formal education settings (Milligan et al., 2020). The disconnect between students' home cultures and learning environments can create barriers to understanding complex concepts and hinder their ability to express themselves fully. This linguistic barrier affects immediate learning and has long-term consequences, potentially limiting students' opportunities for higher education and employment (Alidou et al., 2006; Early & Norton, 2014; Kamwangamalu, 2013). To address these challenges, there is a need for educational reforms that promote language diversity and multilingualism. Incorporating students' native languages into the curriculum can serve as a bridge to learning and understanding, fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. Such reforms would benefit students academically and validate their cultural identities, contributing to a more diverse and dynamic educational setting (Banks, 2016; García & Wei, 2014).

Limited access to educational resources. African students face significant challenges due to language policies favoring English over native languages (Ntombela, 2023). The scarcity of academic resources in indigenous languages hinders learning, as students have limited opportunities to engage with materials that resonate with their cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Brock-Utne, 2000; Early & Norton, 2014). This lack of access can lead to a disconnection from the educational content and decreased academic motivation (Nyamekye et al., 2023). Teachers also struggle to provide comprehensive instruction when they cannot offer resources in the student's first language, potentially compromising the quality of education (Alidou et al., 2006).

Struggles with class participation and assignments. As a result of EMI, students often struggle to articulate their thoughts during class discussions and in written assignments (Cummins, 2000; Milligan et al., 2020; Ntombela, 2023). This linguistic barrier can cause frustration and disengagement, as students may feel inadequate or embarrassed by their level of English proficiency. Teachers face the challenge of assessing students' knowledge fairly when language proficiency interferes with the ability to demonstrate understanding. They must find a balance between language development and content mastery, which can be a daunting task (Dearden, 2014).

Standardized testing and university admissions. High-stakes tests and university admissions that require advanced English proficiency disproportionately affect students who are not native English speakers (Li et al., 2018; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). These students are at a disadvantage compared to their native English-speaking peers, which can lead to unequal opportunities for higher education and professional advancement. As a result, teachers are challenged to prepare students for these exams, often allocating significant time to English instruction at the expense of other subjects (Coleman, 2010).

Teacher preparedness and professional development. Teachers themselves often need help with EMI, mainly if they are not fluent in English (Hasana & Utami, 2019). They may need more confidence in their ability to teach effectively in English, which can impact their performance and their students' learning experience (Macaro, 2015). Professional development opportunities are crucial for teachers to improve their English proficiency and teaching methodologies. However, such opportunities are often scarce, leaving teachers to navigate the complexities of EMI with limited support (Macaro et al., 2018). The implementation of EMI presents numerous challenges for both students and teachers. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes increasing access to resources in native languages, providing support for language development, and ensuring fair assessment practices. Additionally, investing in teacher training and professional development is essential to enhance the effectiveness of EMI in diverse educational settings (Dafouz, 2018; Yuan, 2020).

3. Methodology

This study investigated EMI and its general impact on students' academic success in an African context, as well as Africans' perceptions of using their native languages as the language of instruction. The data was collected between April and May 2024 from participants born and educated in five African countries. The investigators utilized a mixed-method research design to answer the research questions. A 30-item questionnaire was developed to facilitate this process.

3.1 Research Questions

Considering the challenges that EMI in African contexts presents, this study sought to address the following research questions:

1. How does English medium- instruction impact the academic success of African students?
2. What challenges do African students face in English-medium instruction environments due to limited English proficiency?
3. What are the perceptions of African students on the effectiveness of policies incorporating native-language instruction in the curriculum?

3.2. Participants and sampling

Investigators sent out about 45 invitations to potential participants in this study. The qualifying criteria were to be an African who has been educated in the educational system of the country of nationality to at least the high school level. Five sub-Saharan African countries, namely, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa, were selected for this study because almost all sub-Saharan African countries (except Ethiopia) were colonized by Europeans and have, as a result, resorted to the adoption of a European language as both the official language and language of instruction. Except for Cameroon, a predominantly francophone country with an English minority, all the other countries included in this study are former British colonies and, therefore, anglophone countries.

Table 1: Distribution of participants according to nationality (N=36)

Country	Count	Percentage
Cameroon	10	27.8
Ghana	19	52.8
Nigeria	1	2.8
Kenya	4	11.1
South Africa	2	5.6

Out of the 45 invitations, 36 responses were received. Figure 1 shows the percentage of participants from each country. Ghana (52.8%) and Cameroon (27.8%) were the most represented countries. Kenya (11.1%) and South Africa came in third and fourth place, respectively, while Nigeria (2.28%) was the least represented country. Even though participants are connected by their continent of origin, they differ in their academic backgrounds. Figure 1 shows the educational background of the participants.

Table 2: Academic background of participants (N=36)

Level of education	Percentage
Graduate	50.0
Undergraduate	41.7
High school leaver	8.3

As shown in Table 2, 50% of the participants hold a graduate degree (either a master's or PhD), 41.7% hold bachelor's degrees, and 8.3% are high school leavers.

3.3. Instrumentation and data analysis

For this study, a 30-item questionnaire was created by the investigators to collect the data required to answer the research questions. The questionnaire has four major sections: a) participants' background information, b. English proficiency and access to education, c) the impact of English-medium instruction on academic success, and d) strategies for promoting inclusivity and equity in an English-medium setting. The questionnaire consisted of both quantitative and qualitative items. The quantitative items were Likert scale question types, while the qualitative items were a mixture of multiple-choice, close, and open-ended questions.

Investigators created the questionnaire on Google Forms, collected data over one month, and then analyzed it with descriptive statistics. The quantitative data was collected and analyzed via Google Sheets. On the other hand, the qualitative data was analyzed in Google Sheets for codes and categories first from the literature and then from those that emerged from data during analysis.

4. Result

To answer the first research question, the investigators asked respondents if English-medium instruction has impacted their academic success. The influence of EMI on the educational success of participants was investigated from two angles: a) general impact and b) whether participants would have been more successful academically if their native language was the medium of instruction. Table 2 shows responses to the general impact of EMI on participants.

Table 3: Responses to whether EMI impacted their academic success (N=36)

Response	%
yes	16.6%
not sure	5.6%
no	77.8%

As shown in Table 3, an overwhelming majority of participants (77.8%) reported that their educational outcomes were not influenced because the language of instruction was English. 16.6% of participants, on the other hand, agreed that the language of instruction impacted their education. However, 5.6% of the participants were still determining if EMI influenced their educational success. Table 4 presents participants' opinions on their academic success if the language of instruction was their mother tongue.

Table 4: Responses to whether participants would have been more successful academically if the language of instruction were their native language (N=36)

Response	%
yes	16.7%
not sure	30.6%
no	52.7

52.7% of the participants reported that mother tongue instruction would have had no impact on their educational outcomes, as opposed to 16.7% who believe they would have been more successful academically if they had been taught in their first language.

Nevertheless, 30.6% of participants are still determining the potential influence their first language would have on their academic success.

In this section, respondents were asked about the challenges they faced in EMI due to limited because of English not being their first language. First, a set of challenges based on the literature were presented to the participants. Table 5 shows how participants responded to these challenges.

Table 5: General challenges faced due to EMI (N=36)

Challenge	%
Difficulty understanding lectures/materials in English	13.9%
Challenges in expressing thoughts/ideas in English smoothly	22%
Low scores on English proficiency exams/tests required for admission or class promotion	5.6%
Limited access to English-language resources/materials	27.8%
None of the above	47.2%

While almost half of the participants (47.2%) were unaffected by these challenges, 27% experienced English language-related problems due to limited access to English language resources. Again, 22% had trouble expressing their thoughts in English during lessons, while 13.9% needed help understanding lectures or material in English. However, only some participants (5.6%) scored low grades on English tests required for class promotion or school admission. Subsequently, the investigators offered the participants an opportunity to report any other challenges experienced apart from those presented in Table 6 through an open-ended question. 13 comments were recorded and are presented below.

Table 6: Self-reported challenges faced due to limited English skills (N=13)

Challenge	count
poor academic performance	2
discrimination	2
barrier to higher education	5
lack of access to employment opportunities	1
low self-esteem	1
other	2

From Table 6, the biggest challenge that the participants encountered was the barrier to higher education due to their limited English proficiency (five counts). The other most experienced challenges are poor academic performance and discrimination, with two counts each. The following are some participant comments on the difficulties they faced due to their limited English proficiency.

Table 7: Sample comments on the impact of EMI

Participant	C, country	Comment
Manga	Cameroon	Applying to Universities abroad, especially the UK, USA and Canada requires me to get very high IELTS/TOEIC score to be able to secure admission to my university of choice.
Alex	Cameroon	Some Universities in the English part in my country won't accept or admit student with low English proficiency, thereby causing them to enroll in other Universities in the French speaking region of the country in which their French proficiency is lower than English causing them to get very low grades.
Aku	Ghana	I could not apply to go to Law school directly after high school because I scored a B3 grade in English.
S'bu	South Africa	Having lower grades because I could not write my answers correctly in English.

These comments show that almost all these participants have been denied higher education opportunities in desired institutions at home and abroad.

The following section will examine the perception of the effectiveness of policies aimed at instituting mother-tongue instruction in Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa. Participants' perceptions will be presented in three phases: 1) agreement with the effectiveness of mother-tongue instruction, 2) why this policy will succeed, and 3) sample comments. Table 8 shows the agreement with the effectiveness of the policy.

Table 8: Agreement on the effectiveness of native languages as medium instruction (N=36)

Opinion	%
Mother-tongue instruction is going to be effective	13.9%
Not sure	25%
Mother-tongue instruction is not going to be effective	61.1%

As Table 8 shows, most of the participants (61.1%) do not agree that using native languages in their respective countries as the medium of instruction will be successful. While only 13.9% are optimistic, 25% are on the fence. The reasons for these opinions are presented below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Respondents’ opinions on why the adoption of native languages as the medium of instruction will not succeed (N = 36)

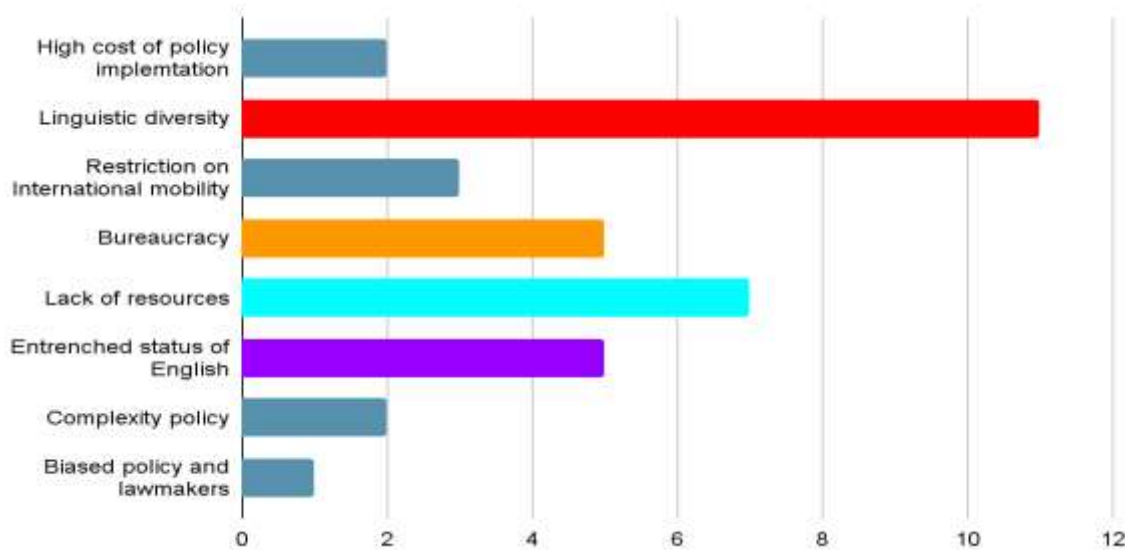


Figure 1 shows that the linguistic diversity of the participating countries emerged as the dominant reason native languages will not succeed as the language of instruction in these countries. Lack of resources ranks second, followed by the entrenched status of English in society and bureaucracy. The following are some comments supporting why the linguistic diversity of these countries will be a significant roadblock to implementing this policy.

Table 9: Sample comments on why the adoption of native languages as the medium of instruction will not succeed.

Participant	Country	Comment
Manga	Cameroon	Implementing a policy to teach math and science in native languages in Cameroon might face challenges due to the country's linguistic diversity. Cameroon has over 200 different linguistic groups
Aku	Ghana	Ghana has multiple local languages, so it could be difficult to get teachers to teach in all those multiple languages
Adhra	Kenya	it will be difficult because there are very many languages in Kenya and classes consist of children from different native languages.
S'bu	South Africa	there are 12 official languages in South Africa. To prioritize 1 language over others is a highly political topic, as other languages would feel neglected.

These comments further buttress Figure 1’s indication that the linguistic diversity of most African countries will make implementing policies geared toward using indigenous languages as languages of instruction almost impossible.

5. Discussion

This section highlights the study's findings and how they answer the research questions. Regarding the first research question, which sought to ascertain the impact EMI had on participants' academic success, the results indicate that the educational experiences and outcomes were not significantly influenced by the language of instruction, English. This outcome is unsurprising because most participants are from anglophone countries and have graduate degrees. This characteristic of these participants suggests prolonged exposure to the English language, which might have boosted the participants' proficiency and eroded the

challenges experienced over time. In addition, this result indicates that even though the challenges associated with EMI in African countries are widespread to almost all countries, students from anglophone countries might have an edge over other students educated in non-anglophone countries.

Considering this discovery, teachers and institutions who educate Africans in international settings must strive not to treat their African students as a monolith: English language requirements and expectations of learning outcomes must be adjusted accordingly. Despite these challenges, some participants also acknowledged the merits of an EMI education. These merits include ease of access to educational and employment opportunities at home and abroad, as evidenced by Ndiaye (2022), and a cost-effective alternative to native languages as the language for education vis-a-vis the opportunity cost of producing teaching and learning materials and training teachers in the swarm of indigenous languages.

The second focus on inquiry was centered on the challenges African students face in English-medium instruction educational environments due to limited English proficiency. Like the results for the research question, almost half of the participants reported that they had no challenges in their English-medium educational experience. However, the other half consented to have experienced challenges reported in previous studies. These challenges include 1) challenges expressing ideas in English during lessons (Cumins, 2000 & Dearden, 2014), 2) difficulty in understanding lectures or materials in English, and 3) limited access to English learning materials (Brock-Utne, 2000; Early & Norton, 2014). Furthermore, for a long time, barriers to higher education rooted in African students not satisfying English language requirements have been widely reported by scholars, including Coleman (2010), Early and Norton (2014), and Ouane and Glanz (2011). These reports are expected not only for previous studies but also for present studies. Some participants recounted that universities they desired denied them admission because their English scores did not meet the required standards.

An example is Aku from Ghana, who could not enroll in law school because she had a B- in English. Other participants mentioned Western universities' strict IELTS and TOEFL requirements that they desire to study at. In addition, the results also evidenced that in Cameroon, students from the anglophone minority are sometimes denied admission to universities in the English-speaking part of the country. Such applicants are left with no choice but to enroll in universities in the French-speaking part of the country despite having limited to zero fluency in French. Students' academic success in this predicament can only be guaranteed if measures for inclusivity and equity are advanced to remedy this situation. Without precise interventions, English medium instruction will only exacerbate existing inequalities in education, just as Milligan et al. (2020) and Ntombela (2023) opined. This finding also sheds a broader light on the inequalities regarding access to higher education among the 54 countries of the continent. Poor academic performance also emerged as one of the problems faced by participants. This problem, unaddressed, ultimately evolves and affects students in future life endeavors, both educational and economic.

The final research question focused on participants' opinions on the effectiveness of a policy to adopt indigenous languages as the medium of instruction. Regarding this question, participants agree more that such a policy will not be practical or feasible for several reasons. Even though the linguistic diversity of Africa is widely viewed as one of the features that sets the continent apart, it emerged as the principal reason indigenous languages could not be used as the language of instruction. Given that in a typical classroom in most sub-Saharan African countries, almost every student speaks a first language different from classmates' or teacher's, deciding which language would serve as the language of instruction would be arduous. This situation, among other reasons, further strengthens the advocacy for European languages as languages of instruction, marginalizing learners who are not fluent in these foreign tongues, as opined by Heugh (2011).

Nevertheless, European languages present a cost-effective means to train teachers in African countries such as Cameroon and Ghana, which have over 250 and 80 indigenous languages, respectively. Training teachers in all the recognized native languages might result in the general cost of education ballooning at astronomical rates that these countries might currently not be in a financial position to support. The same situation applies to producing and procuring educational materials such as textbooks. Educating Africans in their languages is laudable, as this policy is already in force in other countries such as Japan and Germany. Japan and Germany have successfully implemented this policy because they are primarily monolingual and have the resources to finance the policy. On the other hand, most African countries lack both linguistic homogeneity and economic means, which could foster the successful implementation of this policy. For this reason, proposals to include native-language instruction in the curriculum in African countries might remain a dream for a long time.

Another reason participants may have rejected the idea of educating young Africans in indigenous languages is the resulting restriction of such curriculum's social, economic, and international mobility. Most African languages have yet to be developed to gain prominence worldwide for commerce and education. As a result, to be educated in one's native tongue in Africa would almost certainly cripple the individual in their options for jobs, educational opportunities, and social mobility both at home and abroad. This unfortunate reality renders native African languages undesirable in academic and formal contexts.

6. Recommendations

The questionnaire results reveal an educational context rich in cultural and linguistic diversity yet facing the challenge of integrating this diversity into the learning process. Teachers are tasked with acknowledging this diversity and harnessing it as a strength. In the evolving landscape of education, pedagogical strategies must adapt to meet the diverse needs of students, particularly in settings where English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is employed. Effective pedagogy recognizes the varied backgrounds of learners and seeks to enhance fluency, engagement, and comprehension through innovative instructional methods. The following recommendations aim to foster an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that supports both students and teachers in EMI.

6.1 Pedagogical recommendations

Acknowledge student diversity. Recognizing students' diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds is crucial in an EMI context. Teachers should create an inclusive classroom atmosphere where all students feel valued and supported. This process involves understanding students' unique learning styles and challenges and incorporating multicultural content that reflects the students' experiences and identities. For example, a literature class could include stories from various African, Asian, and Latin American cultures, allowing students to see their own experiences reflected in the curriculum and to learn about their peers' backgrounds. By doing so, educators can promote a sense of belonging and encourage active participation from all students.

Fluency-focused instruction. Fluency in English is essential for students' academic success in EMI settings. Teachers can implement classroom activities prioritizing language practice in authentic contexts to develop this fluency. This setup might include debates, presentations, or peer discussions encouraging students to use English practically. Such activities improve language skills and build confidence in using English in academic and social settings. Fluency-focused instruction can be achieved by integrating language learning with content. For instance, a science teacher might use project-based learning where students create presentations on environmental issues in English, thereby practicing language skills while engaging with scientific content.

Differentiated instruction, flipped classrooms, and cultural show and tell. Active differentiated instruction tailors learning experiences to meet individual student needs. Task-based activities provide hands-on opportunities for students to apply their knowledge. At the same time, flipped classrooms allow students to engage with lecture content at home and focus on interactive classroom learning. Cultural show-and-tell activities celebrate students' diverse backgrounds and can be used to enhance language skills and cultural awareness. Differentiated instruction can be exemplified by providing varied reading materials at different levels of English proficiency, ensuring all students can participate. Task-based activities might include group projects that cater to various learning styles. Flipped classrooms could involve students watching a video lecture at home and then engaging in interactive activities in class. A culturally responsive teaching approach can be seen in "cultural show and tell" activities, where students share artifacts or stories from their cultures, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation among classmates. These strategies help to ensure that all students can access the curriculum and participate fully in the learning process.

Development of bridge English courses in higher education. Bridge courses in English can provide a vital link for students transitioning to higher education where EMI is prevalent. These courses focus on academic language skills and subject-specific vocabulary, preparing students for the rigors of university-level studies. For example, a university could offer a course focusing on academic writing in English, helping students develop the skills necessary for success in their degree programs. By providing such courses, institutions can support non-native English speakers in overcoming language barriers and succeeding academically.

Involvement of parents and communities. Engaging parents and communities in the educational process is critical to supporting students in EMI environments. Schools can offer workshops and resources to help parents understand the curriculum and become active participants in their children's education. Community involvement can also provide additional language practice opportunities and cultural enrichment, further aiding students' development. Community and parent support can also be integrated with technology by creating online forums where parents can discuss their children's progress and share resources. Schools can also host virtual cultural exchange events where students and parents from different backgrounds can connect and learn from each other.

Controlled adoption of translanguaging in the classroom. Translanguaging involves strategically using students' first languages alongside English. This approach can aid comprehension and allow students to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire when learning new concepts. However, it must be carefully managed to ensure that it supports, rather than hinders, English language development. Teachers should receive training on effectively integrating translanguaging techniques into their instruction. For instance, translanguaging can be carefully incorporated by allowing students to use their native languages during brainstorming sessions before composing essays in English. This approach can help students clarify their thoughts and express complex ideas more effectively when they write in English.

6.2. Policy recommendations

The results underscore the necessity for comprehensive policy reforms to foster an inclusive and equitable English education setting. These reforms must address the diverse needs of students and educators, ensuring that all stakeholders are equipped to thrive in an English-mediated educational environment. The following policy recommendations, expanded with practical examples, aim to guide academic institutions in integrating these policies effectively.

Teacher training and professional development. Ongoing professional development programs are essential to ensure teachers are well-prepared for EMI. For example, schools can implement regular training workshops focusing on innovative EMI teaching strategies, classroom management in multilingual settings, and cultural sensitivity. Additionally, universities' partnerships can provide teachers access to the latest research and teaching methodologies.

Equitable resource allocation. Equitable resource allocation is critical for an inclusive education system. This could mean providing schools with additional funding to purchase bilingual textbooks and learning materials or investing in technology that supports EMI, such as language learning software and online resources that cater to different proficiency levels.

Bilingual education programs. Implementing bilingual education programs can bridge the gap between students' native languages and English. For instance, schools could offer classes taught in both the local language and English, allowing students to learn content while simultaneously developing their English skills. This approach respects students' linguistic heritage while preparing them for a globalized world.

Curriculum development. Curriculum development should reflect the needs of a diverse student body. Schools might collaborate with local communities to integrate cultural knowledge into the curriculum, making it more relevant and engaging for students. Additionally, curricula can be designed to build English proficiency progressively, incorporating language support at every stage of education.

Gradual policy implementation. Gradual implementation of EMI policies allows for adjustments based on feedback and outcomes. Starting with pilot programs in select schools can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of EMI strategies. This measured approach ensures that policies are tailored to the specific context of each educational setting, leading to more successful integration over time. By implementing these pedagogical recommendations, teachers can create a learning environment that acknowledges and celebrates their students' diversity, leading to a more inclusive and equitable classroom. Integrating these strategies can enhance the educational experience for all students, ensuring that every student can succeed. Similarly, by adopting these policy recommendations, academic institutions can create a supportive framework for English education that values diversity and promotes equity. Such policies benefit students by providing the tools to succeed academically and empowering teachers to deliver high-quality instruction in an increasingly interconnected world.

6.3 Suggestions for future studies

In the quest for inclusive education, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) should be tailored to fit every student's unique cultural and linguistic background rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach (English). This means curricula and teaching methods must be developed with a deep understanding of local educational norms, values, and practices. For example, in a community where storytelling is a central tradition, EMI could incorporate narrative techniques into teaching various subjects, aligning with students' cultural experiences. For EMI to succeed, there must be deliberate and sustained investment in human and educational resources. This includes training teachers to be proficient in the content and the language of instruction and providing schools with the necessary materials and technology to support EMI.

Suggestions for future studies. Research in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is vital for understanding its effects and guiding future educational policies. Here are expanded recommendations for research areas:

Longitudinal studies. Longitudinal studies would track the progress of students and teachers over an extended period to gauge the sustained impact of EMI. Such studies could explore how EMI influences students' career paths or teachers' professional development.

Comparative studies (Anglophone vs. Non-Anglophone Countries). Comparative studies between anglophone and non-anglophone countries can shed light on EMI implementation's different challenges and successes. Researchers could compare student proficiency in English and content knowledge acquisition across different linguistic backgrounds. These research recommendations aim to better understand EMI's role in education and its broader societal implications. By exploring these areas, stakeholders can make informed decisions to optimize EMI for diverse educational settings.

7. Conclusion

In the quest for inclusive education, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) should be tailored to fit every student's unique cultural and linguistic background rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach (English). This means curricula and teaching methods must be developed with a deep understanding of local educational norms, values, and practices. For example, in a community where storytelling is a central tradition, EMI could incorporate narrative techniques into teaching various subjects, aligning with students' cultural experiences. For EMI to succeed, there must be deliberate and sustained investment in human and educational resources. This includes training teachers to be proficient in the content and the language of instruction and providing schools with the necessary materials and technology to support EMI.

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